

To Each Member of the Family

Every one of us is part of some family - known or unknown. We have a need to belong. For most of us, the family provides the ingredients required to fulfill this need - to be a part of a close-knit group.

Yet families function effectively only as each individual participates for the good of the whole. Each member affects every other member, and the combined effort is greater than if each member were to function alone. In this sense this book is planned to help the individual to develop his own potential and to encourage the development of the strengths and to fulfill the needs of all of the other family members. Working together to support the goals of the family will enable each person to make the most of family living.

This book can help you to understand what makes you tick. You might even find some undesirable traits of personality that you wish were different. Suggestions for change will help you to be a different person in a matter of weeks if you make a decided effort to change. You will discover many exciting facts about how your mind and emotions operate. By understanding yourself better you will be better able to understand the other members of your nuclear and extended family. With God's help, life can become a new adventure for you and your family.

Several chapters deal with fairly predictable consequences of particular kinds of family interactions. Some of these outcomes should be avoided and others should be sought after.

Each period of life has its own unique potential for Christian development in the family context - infancy, childhood, adolescence, youth, adulthood and the grand old years. The smile of an infant, the curiosity of a child, the questioning of the adolescent, the first love of a bride and groom, and the laughter in the eyes of an older man - all contribute to the life-style of the family.

Family fun is the ingredient that gives us those pleasant memories. Even when life seems to tumble in and problems seem insurmountable for the time being, laughter can ease the burdens. To cap it all off we included some positive suggestions for putting together the best in family living.

May God add His blessing to this effort in behalf of families.

Elden and Esther January 1979

Chapter 1

You Have What It Takes!

If you handed me a penny, that penny would not be the same as the one you handed me! The penny that I would have would be older than the one you handed me. It would be smaller and lighter than the one you had, because some of the molecules would have been rubbed off by the friction of handling. It would be a different temperature and would be covered with a different coating of dust. Even the magnetic and gravitational lines intersecting it would be different than those lines intersecting the penny that you had. So, by the exacting standards of technology, the penny that you handed me would have become a different penny - changed!

Everything in this world, whether living or not, is undergoing change. You are changing day by day. Forces within you, and forces from without, are influencing you to bring about change.

You will go from reading this book a different person - changed! You will never be the same again! Millions of chemical molecules are hustling and bustling inside a hundred billion brain cells and ten trillion body cells, and you could never be the same!

God Planned for Your Unlimited Potential

When God formed your prototype, Adam and Eve, He was forming the original pattern from which you were to be made. God had great plans for you, and so when He made your prototype, the Scripture says, "in the likeness of God made He him; male and female created He them...." Genesis 5:1, 2. Think of it! Like God! In His image, dynamic, vibrant, with an infinite capacity for growth and change.

Imagine the excitement throughout all the angelic hosts and unfallen worlds as they watched God form this earth and all that is in it. They watched it all - the light, the atmosphere, the water, the plants, the sun, moon, and stars, the creatures of the sea, the fowl of the air, the animals and the little creatures of the land. The angels and unfallen worlds watched it all, a step at a time, day by day. The creative wisdom and power of God was being displayed before their eyes! Then, moment of moments - they watched God bend low, trace His own image upon the dust of the virgin ground, and breathe into it the very

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breath of Deity! The form stirred! It came alive! It stood, tall and majestic! Adam, the crowning act of God's creation! "Human beings were a new and distinct order.... God created man a superior being; he alone is formed in the image of God."¹ "As man came forth from the hand of his Creator, he was of lofty stature and perfect symmetry."²

Then God created the woman from Adam's rib to stand at his side and give honor to the Creator. "Eve was not quite as tall as Adam. Her head reached a little above his shoulders. She, too, was noble, perfect in symmetry, and very beautiful."³

Some research indicates that infants who develop poor body symmetry are more limited in their intellectual development. There seems to be a positive relationship between the degree of body symmetry and intellectual capacity.

When God created man, "it was His purpose that the longer man lived, the more fully he should reflect this image [the image of God in which he was created].... All his faculties were capable of development; their capacity and vigor were continually to increase."⁴

After nearly six thousand years of the degenerating effects of sin, you are still a wonder-type of God's original creation.

"God endowed man with so great vital force that he has withstood the accumulation of disease brought upon the race in consequence of perverted habits, and has continued for six thousand years. This fact of itself is enough to evidence to us the strength and electrical energy that God gave to man at his creation. It took more than two thousand years of crime and indulgence of base passions to bring bodily disease upon the race to any great extent. If Adam, at his creation, had not been endowed with twenty times as much vital force as men now have, the race, with their present habits of living in violation of natural law, would have become extinct."⁵

Your fantastic powers of brain and body, still capable of unbelievable development, are a testimony to the wonderful creation of God in the Garden of Eden. The marvels of the electron microscope and the genius of modern technology have penetrated just a fraction of your unbelievable capacity for change and growth.

Your Unbelievable Brain

In 1968, Dr. John R. Piatt, eminent neurologist, biophysicist, and social psychologist, announced that rather than the conventionally quoted figure of twelve to fourteen billion brain cells, our brain has more like one hundred billion nerve cells. There are about one

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thousand interconnections or “synaptic junctions” per cell, or about one hundred trillion (100,000,000,000,000) interconnections in all. If we used some thirty thousand new connections every second of our lifetime, we could not use them all. Beyond all of this, in every single cell (this also includes approximately ten trillion cells in the rest of the body) the DNA information capacity represents about thirty times the number of letters in the Encyclopaedia Britannica. To the mathematician, that is about 6×10^9 ! If the DNA in all the ten trillion cells in your body were stretched out end to end, it would reach across the entire solar system!⁶

At the close of class one day in graduate school, I asked my professor, a believer in the theory of organic evolution, “How does evolutionary theory explain the development of a human brain that has the capacity for problem-solving far beyond any need in a lifetime? According to the evolutionary theory an organism develops its equipment only if that equipment is needed for survival.” He answered that evolutionary theory had no satisfactory explanation for that. And then he asked, “Why do you think the brain has so much more capacity than we could possibly use in our lifetime?” I thought I saw a twinkle in his eye when he asked that question, and I guessed that he might be expecting a sermon since he knew I was a clergyman. Of course, I couldn’t disappoint him, so I answered, “I believe that when God made the first man in His own image, he didn’t intend that he should live for sixty, seventy, or even a hundred years. God planned that man should live for eternity. So he equipped him with a brain that could be fascinated with an infinite universe for a never-ending eternity!” Kindly, but seriously, the professor said, “You may have something there.” What a challenge!

As one author puts it, “Every human being, created in the image of God, is endowed with a power akin to that of the Creator, - individuality, power to think and to do. The men in whom this power is developed are the men who bear responsibilities, who are leaders in enterprise, and who influence character. It is the work of true education to develop this power; to train the youth to be thinkers, and not mere reflectors of other men’s thought.”⁷

Some time ago I read of a huge whale that was beached because he got into water that was too shallow for whales because he was chasing minnows!

Man was made for the deep. The vast expanse of God’s great universe is his for living in God’s ever-expanding eternity. While the

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mad world goes on chasing minnows, move out into the deep to develop your tremendous powers for God. Only then can God use you in making the most of family living.

Fascinating Facts About You

Some psychologists have discovered powerful nerve centers in the human brain. Tiny pain centers to warn us of destroying agents, pleasure centers to signal the fun of living. Affection centers for the physical expression of love and caring, hostility centers to express hatred for sin. Hunger centers to tell us when we need more food and a satiety center to help control the body weight (some of ours are not functioning too well!). Sleep centers to bring rest to our brain and body, and waking centers to awaken and alert us to the challenges of the day.

It is our conviction that as you discover these exciting facts about your brain and nervous system you will not only see how you can achieve your fullest potential, but you will see how you can help every member of your family to achieve his or her fullest potential. When problems arise, as they surely will in any family that grows together, you will be better equipped to handle these problems or solve them. You will understand what makes other members of your family tick! You will be better informed so that you can help to make family living the exciting adventure it deserves to be.

Let's look at other fascinating facts about the equipment God has given us. For example, in every cell of the body we have two kinds of energy: genetic or inherited energy which is often referred to as "vital energy,"⁸ and generated energy provided by the food we eat and the other elements of the environment we take into our system each day such as water, sunshine and fresh air. Vital energy is never replaced once it is used up. As vital energy is consumed, our productivity decreases and our life is shortened. When vital energy is reduced, it is more difficult to keep our normal energy level up with the food we eat, *etc.* It is much easier for us to become cranky and irritable. Overwork, excessive or prolonged stress, and the excessive stimulation of our nervous system are some of the ways in which vital energy is depleted.

Another exciting fact about our equipment is that every receptor cell is a transducer. It transforms the energy of the environment such as light, sound, heat, cold, the chemical energies for taste and smell, pressure and many others into nerve energy which is then transmitted

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to specific areas of our brain so that we see, hear, feel warmth or cold, taste and smell. These receptors and their corresponding brain centers are affected in their ability to function up to their fullest potential by the way we treat them. For example, animals reared in the dark and never exposed to light are blind. The receptors in the retina of their eyes were deprived of the stimulation of light for so long that they lost their capacity to transform light energy into nerve energy. The corresponding brain centers for these rods and cones of the retina may also have lost some of their capacity to function.

Children reared in extremely culturally deprived environments are mentally retarded. Their receptors and brain cells have not been activated by the wide variety of experiences available in normal environments and therefore have lost their ability to respond. Babies who have not been fondled and caressed, and have not experienced the physical expressions of love and caring, lose the ability to appreciate and give physical love and affection and may even die from emotional starvation. Psychologists call this phenomenon of starving our receptors “stimulus deprivation.” For our receptors to function up to their fullest potential they must be stimulated moderately by the specific energies for which God made them.

Overexcitation or excessive stimulation of these receptors and their corresponding nerve pathways and brain centers can give you tired nerves or even break down your nerve tissue. For example, the prolonged exposure of rock-band members to their own loud rock music was shown to decrease their ability to hear sound. Factory workers exposed to the loud noises of machinery wear earmuffs or plugs to protect their hearing receptors from the overstimulation of excessive noise. Welders must shield their eyes from the excessive brightness of the acetylene flame to prevent blindness caused by the breakdown of the nerve receptors in the retina of the eyes. Excessively hot or spicy foods diminish the ability of the taste buds to discriminate the fine, delicate flavors of many foods.

Excess in Anything Is Counterproductive

We need to guard against excesses of any kind. We need to teach our families to enjoy in moderation the wide variety of wholesome experiences that life has to offer. “Every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.” 1 Corinthians 9:25.

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It is easy for people to become addicted to stimulating experiences. The nervous system demands more, that it be whipped continually, to keep up the new level of excitement. Anything less becomes boring. And so the adolescent clings to his rock music, the pill-popper clings to his “uppers,” the heavy jogger craves his “positive addiction,” the compulsive novel reader devours one exciting novel after another, and the late-night TV watcher is glued to his set. The unfortunate tragedy about all of this is that maintaining a satisfied state requires louder and louder rock music, more and more exhilarating drugs, exciting novels and late night TV shows. Anything less stimulating is utterly boring.

We conducted an experiment with college students, asking them to listen to a variety of music randomly sequenced on a lengthy tape. The subjects listened through padded earphones and were blindfolded to keep out visual distractions. They could adjust the volume level to their liking at any time. The variety of music included church hymns, gospel music, classical music of various composers, western music, rock, waltzes, jazz, and simple folk tunes. The students were hooked up with an electroencephalograph and other instruments that recorded their autonomic-nervous-system responses.

One interesting observation was that every new piece of music produced a distinctly different brain-wave pattern. In fact it was easy to tell when a new piece of music began, simply by looking at the brain-wave recording. Whenever hard rock appeared on the tape something interesting happened. Not only was the brain-wave pattern different, but the amplitude or intensity of the brain-wave recording steadily increased or cumulated with the steadily recurring “digging” beat during the first few moments. Then the brain wave slowly decreased to a level that was significantly lower than the level at the beginning. As the amplitude in the wave pattern approached the baseline, the subjects in the experiment turned the volume up. The amplitude in the wave pattern increased abruptly and then decreased at a much faster rate. Each time the decrease approached the baseline the students increased the volume. Other music did not produce these effects so obviously. Hard rock seemed to have a cumulative stimulating effect on the brain that is similar to the effect of certain drugs. The highs could not be kept high without increasing the intensity of the stimulation. My guess is that lower levels of stimulation following such highs might even tend to depression.

A leading physiological psychologist on a visiting lectureship showed some slide projections on the screen depicting extensive

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research on the effects of commonly used stimulants such as tea, coffee, the cola drinks, aspirin, the amphetamines and many others. He also showed the effects of different, commonly used tranquilizers. In every instance, with prolonged use, the stimulants became depressants and the tranquilizers became stimulants! It seems that after a time the nervous system tends to overreact to abnormal stimulation.

As early as 1890 Ellen White wrote: "Tea and coffee produce an immediate effect. Under the influence of these poisons the nervous system is excited; and in some cases, for the time being, the intellect seems to be invigorated, the imagination more vivid. Because these stimulants produce such agreeable results, many conclude that they really need them; but there is always a reaction.

"The nervous system has borrowed power from its future resources for present use, and all this temporary invigoration is followed by a corresponding depression. The suddenness of the relief obtained from tea and coffee is an evidence that what seems to be strength is only nervous excitement, and consequently must be an injury to the system."⁹

Speaking of sexual excesses, Ellen White writes: "Very many families are living in a most unhappy state because the husband and father allows the animal in his nature to predominate over the intellectual and moral. The result is that a sense of languor and depression is frequently felt."¹⁰

Of Elijah's spiritual high she writes, "A reaction such as frequently follows high faith and glorious success was pressing upon Elijah.... He had been exalted to Pisgah's top; now he was in the valley.... He had been exalted above measure, and the reaction was tremendous."¹¹

It doesn't really matter what the source of stimulation is - drugs, beverages, music, TV, reading, food, sex, and even religion - excessive highs are usually followed by correspondingly low levels of depression. It is the law of the nervous system.

Training Your Taste Buds

Parents often have difficulty teaching their children to enjoy certain nourishing foods. Often these parents themselves are "fussy eaters," setting a bad example for their children. Taste buds grow and die every day. Your taste buds can be trained to enjoy virtually any nourishing food. In fact, you don't really taste in your taste buds. They are only the receptors that transform the chemical energy into nerve energy that travels to your brain. You taste in your brain! It's amazing how your

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mind affects your taste. Have you ever reached for a glass of milk fully anticipating the taste of fresh whole milk only to discover that it was buttermilk? Even if you like buttermilk, it just didn't taste good that time! Your mind was thinking fresh milk.

We conducted an experiment in which a group of students were blindfolded. We then asked them to identify the flavors of Jello - raspberry, lime, lemon, and orange. Would you believe that they were unable to do so any more than if they guessed without tasting - because they couldn't see the colors! Yet when looking at the colors they were sure they could taste the difference!

On another occasion, when one of our grandsons was about 4 years old, he took a bite of yellow summer squash only to make an awful face, spit it out and cry. I turned to the little fellow and said: "That tasted awful, didn't it?" You should have seen the surprised look on his face. To think Grandpa understood! Then I added, "That squash didn't taste good at all, but it has some good things in it to help make your eyes strong and healthy so that you can see real well. Maybe you won't even have to wear glasses like your grandpa has to. Let Grandpa tell you how you can make that awful-tasting squash taste better. Just cut a tiny piece - make sure it is real small so you can barely taste it. If you just eat those tiny pieces, one at a time, it'll begin to taste better and better. But you mustn't take a big piece. Because then it will taste awful!"

His tear-marked eyes looked into mine as he listened intently. Then he tried it. When he cut the first little piece and was about to put it into his mouth, I said, "No, No! That's too big. It must be real tiny!" He put it back on his plate and cut it still smaller. "That's better," I said. Of course, it was so small that he could hardly taste anything. "Now, take a spoonful of something you like from your plate. Then you can try another tiny piece of squash. Make sure it's very small, though," I continued.

The little lad did as he was told and asked, "Is this one all right, Grandpa?" "Yes, that's much better - just a tiny piece." After two or three more such trials, the little fellow said, "It's beginning to taste better already, Grandpa!"

And so it was! He was learning to train his taste buds by small exposures to the distasteful, following each by a rewarding taste, all the while expecting the distasteful to begin tasting good. An important lesson in neural adaptation for all of us. God made our nerves to adapt.

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Keeping a Healthy Conscience

God's only access to our inmost soul is through the nerves of our brain.¹² It is important that we keep those nerves healthy. While we are not certain about the precise location of the brain centers that make us sensitive to moral and ethical issues we like to think that God has reserved a special cluster of brain cells through which His Holy Spirit brings penetrating conviction and judgment that affects our entire being. Why shouldn't He, since, as we have seen, He has special brain-cell clusters for taste, smell, hunger, thirst, sexual arousal, fear, anxiety, pleasure, etc.? Frontal lobotomy and brain maturation studies support the notion that these conscience centers may indeed be in the frontal lobe.

Psychologists and theologians are generally agreed that without the conscience civilization would soon cease to exist.¹³ However, they are not agreed as to the nature and the source of conscience.

Carl Jung has pointed out that inasmuch as many have been willing to die for conscience' sake while holding to views contrary to all they have been taught, conscience must be something more than the indoctrinations of family and society.

Theologian Nicolas Berdyaev believes that conscience is not of social origin at all. He believes conscience to be the voice of the unfallen part of human nature - the divine image in man. He says, "Conscience is that aspect of man's inmost (unfallen) nature which comes into contact with God, is receptive to His message and hears His voice."¹⁴

Ellen White has said, "Conscience is the voice of God, heard amid the conflict of human passions. When it is resisted, the Spirit of God is grieved."¹⁵

We understand the Scripture to speak of conscience in three ways: (1) a set of nerve cells in the brain,¹⁶ (2) the experience of a pricking conviction,¹⁷ and (3) the still, small voice of God.¹⁸

It is important that we heed that still, small voice every time it speaks its faintest whisper;¹⁹ that we follow that deep inner conviction,²⁰ and preserve the sensitivity of our brain cells to these communications from God.²¹

Satan is anxious to desensitize those brain centers that would arouse our moral, ethical, and spiritual convictions. The indulgence of appetite, an unhealthful diet, self-abuse, frivolous amusements, listening to and reading portrayals of debasing crime, and even

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disregarding one ray of light from God all contribute to desensitizing the conscience.^{22 23 24 25 26 27}

On the other hand, Bible study and prayer, along with a faithful obedience to our conscientious convictions, will awaken, sensitize, and strengthen our conscience.

In moral, ethical, and spiritual issues, God informs our intellect. Through our conscience He convicts us to do what we believe and understand to be right. With our will we choose to obey or disobey that still small voice.

Our perceptions of God's truth may be limited, or even distorted. But if we have a sincere purpose to do His will, He will continue to teach us. See John 7:17. Our sincere purpose to obey Him will always be reflected in how we relate to our conscience - His special communication link to our soul in moral, ethical, and spiritual issues.

Ellen White has said, "Light comes to the soul through God's Word, through His servants, or by the direct agency of His Spirit, but when one ray of light is disregarded, there is a partial benumbing of the spiritual perceptions, and the second revealing of light is less clearly discerned."²⁸

God is prepared to bypass our five senses that may pick up distortions of truth from our depraved environment and to speak directly to our soul through the nerves of our brain. His impressions will always be in harmony with His Word, of course.²⁹ That Word teaches us to walk in obedience to our conscience,³⁰ and to the light that "shineth more and more unto the perfect day."³¹

The Will

In the city of New York some of the greatest office buildings are erected. They are so tall that in order to withstand the wind pressure strong iron rods, called wind anchors, are drilled into the solid rock far below the surface. Each of us is drafting plans - not for low structures, but for tall, strong, magnificent characters in our children. We must, therefore, plan to fasten anchors deep in the foundation of the characters of our children so that when the mighty pressures of life come, their "superstructure" will not fall. Almost every day we read or hear of some person whose character building has collapsed. The wind anchors of character were not put in. In fact, these can be put in most effectively when the character foundations are being laid during early childhood.

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The world is always looking for men and women who can be depended upon, who are not for sale, who are honest and true to the inner core; men and women who know their message and tell it; men and women who know their places and fill them, who know their own business and attend to it; men and women who will not lie, shirk, or steal, who are not afraid to say “No” with emphasis, and who are not ashamed to say, “I can’t afford it” or “I can’t afford to.”

God has given each of us a will - the power to choose. Some confuse the terms will and willfulness, two decidedly different words. According to Webster the will is considered as “the power of choosing and of acting in accordance with choice;... sometimes, in a broader sense, a disposition to act according to certain principles or ideals.”

Let us consider the case of Bill. Bill was a college student who came into the office for vocational guidance. He was a senior, but he still didn’t know what he wanted to do for his lifework. We chatted a while, administered some tests, and drew up a personality-aptitude-interest profile. He scored at the two-percentile figure for personality integration. In other words, only 2 percent of the population scored lower than he did. His self-concept was ill defined. He did not know who he was. He had no value system by which to order his life. He had no definite plans and no long-range goals. He was like a ship at sea without a rudder and with no port in mind. He had no will - no strength of character - life was only a wish, a fleeting fancy, now and again.

I asked this young man to go back to the dormitory and reflect upon his value system, the values by which he could make decisions, and to come back the next week with a set of values that he felt deeply committed to live by under all circumstances.

The next week he came with his list. Across his face were deep lines of concern. Everything on the list had been crossed off! Handing it to me, he said, “This is terrible. I had to keep crossing my values off the list because I couldn’t see myself sticking by them all the time. I had only two left, honesty and fairness, and on my way over here I had to cross them out.” He lacked willpower because he had no stable value system to live by. He was unwilling to order his life in harmony with established principles. He operated by impulse and feeling. Somewhere along the way someone had failed to teach him that it was important to live by principle. He followed his own wishes and impulses. In other words, he was willful - “Governed by will without yielding to reason; obstinate, stubborn,...” according to Webster.

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On another occasion a young man came to my office at the insistence of his mother. He had been dismissed from several schools and was on probation for irresponsible behavior. We drew up a personality profile - his strengths and weaknesses - and talked about them together. His eyes lit up when he saw the qualities that made up his personality. Energy surged within him as he said, "This is really me, isn't it - and I've really got a lot of good things going for me - if I'd just get hold of these few bad ones." Giving the graph a second look he added, "Man, are they bad. But if I could lick them, I could really become somebody, couldn't I?" The will to become was born. He never gave the school another day of trouble. He had made a choice. He had enlisted his will to go places in life.

The will - what is it? How powerful is it? How can it be strengthened? "Will is a short term for voluntary action," according to Henry Goddard.³²

Dr. William Sadler says, "The will is the sum total of all positive mental activity, the summation of psychic choice and decisions."³³

Dr. Wilder Penfield, world-famous retired brain surgeon, told me in a private conversation, "The will is the spirit of man."

Ellen White, under divine inspiration says, "The will is not the taste or the inclination, but it is the deciding power which works in the children of men unto obedience to God or unto disobedience."³⁴

We shall long remember our visit with Dr. and Mrs. Wilder Penfield one August. Dr. Penfield, the founder of the noted Montreal Neurological Institute, is world famous for his work on the brain. He described in some detail some of his experiences in probing the exposed brains of conscious patients undergoing surgery for epileptic seizures. As he would touch the surface of the temporal cortex with a gentle electric current, his patient would relate an experience that had taken place many years before. The patient would be reliving that experience very vividly. He would see the people, the street corner, the barn - he would hear the sounds, the music, the conversations that took place years before - it was all there, permanently recorded in the brain, ready for a playback at the touch of a gentle electric probe. Dr. Penfield observed, "These studies have shown that everything we pay attention to has been permanently recorded in our brain."

He then talked about the will. He told us how that even while he was probing with his gentle electric current, he could engage the patient in conversation, and the patient could by the act of his will shut off the effects of the stimulation, not hear or see the playback, and attend to

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what the doctor was saying. And then he concluded, "The will of man is free. It uses the pathways of the brain, but it is not controlled by them. The will is free."

Ellen White put it this way: "The power of the will can resist impressions of the mind."³⁵

How powerful is the will? According to Ellen White the will is a means of controlling the imagination and can, in that way, resist disease.³⁶ "The mind and nerves will become stronger and more responsive and will also be a powerful soother of the nerves many times. If people would not yield to illness and be overcome by it and call on the power of the will to help get them well they would live and not die and be a blessing to the world."³⁷

We little realize the potential we have to accomplish for God and man. The will is free and powerful. But is it supreme? Dr. Sadler put it this way, "The will is not an all-powerful sovereign - it reigns on the throne of the mind as the sovereign of a LIMITED MONARCHY - limited by a chemical constitution and biologic by-laws. The eight or ten ductless glands constitute what might be called a 'board of chemical directors.'..."

"It is not my purpose in calling attention to the role of the ductless glands in human personality and behavior to discount or belittle the province of the will or the power of decision in the effort to master nerves and to control and direct human conduct. After all, will-decisions are the determining factor in all these struggles.... When the ductless gland system is normal, and when its secretions exert a favorable influence upon the nervous system, the individual will find it possible SPEEDILY to conquer his disordered nerves. On the other hand, when the endocrines are abnormal and when their hormones are irritating, overexciting, or unduly fatiguing to the nervous system, the patient has an uphill struggle; his goal of deliverance is farther off, and more persistent and protracted efforts must be made successfully to achieve the conquest of nerves."³⁸ Ellen White wrote, "There are some who use narcotics, and by indulgence are encouraging wrong habits that are obtaining a controlling power over the will, the thoughts, and the entire man."³⁹ In a later reference we read, "Many there are who stand at the parting of the ways. Every influence, every impression, is determining the choice that shapes their destiny both here and hereafter."⁴⁰ It appears then that there are factors that will overrule the power of the will - if we allow them to.

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There seems to be an optimum time for the training or the educating of the will. “Mothers, be sure that you properly discipline your children during the first three years of their lives.”⁴¹ The will must never be forced into subjection by severe and harsh discipline. The child should be given the opportunity to choose between acceptable alternatives. Even in the crib let the child choose between two rattles, or between the rattle and a ball. When it comes to principles of right and wrong the parent should guide and encourage the child in the making of the proper choice. As the child gets older, the parents should appeal more and more to the child’s reasoning ability. The child should be taught to respect the judgment of the teachers and parents, and in cooperation with them make the best possible choice.

The strength of the character is dependent on the strength of the will.⁴² Children that act like “tin soldiers” and are so “well-behaved” will most likely have been “trained” and not “educated.” The educating process takes time - more time than many a parent is willing or able to give. But those who do take time to explain in a few words the reason for any requirement, and are consistent in their own lives - examples of responsibility to God, the church and the state - will find it rewarding. Their children will develop as growing Christians, well-adjusted youth, and law-abiding citizens, ready to take their place in the homes of tomorrow.

If the will is not directed in the right way, it will easily be controlled by Satan. If you do not choose the right you have already made a wrong choice by default.

Through the so-called science of hypnosis, the will can be submerged by another human being.⁴³ By being submitted to the control of another the will becomes weakened and ineffective. William Sadler says that such a will is diseased!⁴⁴

We cannot overemphasize the necessity of developing the will. All members of the family should be taught how to choose in all areas of life as their capacity for responsible choices increases. For example, let them choose between two dresses or two suits when you are shopping for clothing. Let them choose between styles of shoes when shopping for shoes. Discuss with them the pros and cons, and then let them feel free to make their choice - don’t put them under pressure to choose what you prefer. If you insist on your choice, then you should never have asked for their choice.

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Sometimes parents say, “Would you like to take this to the garage?” We made this mistake and our children said, “If you didn’t want us to choose you should have said, ‘Please, take this to the garage.’” We got the message.

It is best to avoid asking children to make choices that are impossible for them to make at their age. For instance, when it comes to mealtime a parent will say, “What do you want to eat?” Or, the child is allowed to go to the kitchen and help himself to what he wants to eat. Some mothers think that this is an accomplishment for a child of six or seven! True, he can help set the table and do many helpful things to ease the role of the mother, but for that child to be responsible for what his body needs in nutrition is too much to expect.

I’ve heard children say, “I don’t like this,” or “I’m not going to eat that.” It would be much wiser to put good nutritious food on the table and talk happily about the wonderful food that God has provided for us. Let the children help prepare the food - even some that is not their favorite. Children like to taste what they have helped cook. Expect your children to eat some of everything that you have planned. Occasionally, if there are two protein foods on the table, you might let them choose one, but limit their choosing only to alternatives that will assure nutritional balance.

When it comes to foods that the children need to learn to like, it is simple to require that they eat just one spoonful. At our house, if they grumbled at one spoonful they got two and if they still grumbled they got a whole serving. Usually this happened only once - for each child. They learned their limits and responsibilities. Of course, their father was a good model - he enjoys good food!

I don’t remember my mother having any problems like this with the four of us. In the first place, she put so much tender, loving care into the preparation of the food that even the simplest dish was DEEElishous! - like potato soup and cornbread or vegetable soup and pumpkin turnover. We could smell her creations way down the road as we walked home from school. Besides, we didn’t have that much to eat - times were hard; money was scarce. It just might be that putting forth some extra effort may possibly help to teach our children what good nutrition is, and in their own homes they will model what we have taught them. Today with so much food and so many varieties it is more difficult for even parents to make the proper choices. Opportunities to choose and develop the will are everywhere in family life.

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Do your best to teach decision making in small things. Then, when it is time for your children to make major decisions, such as the choice of their lifework, their companion, and their God, they will make the right choices. God's plan for our character development is marvelous. To think that by making right choices we can become like Him is almost beyond comprehension.

One of the characteristics of an emotionally disordered person is the lack of willpower. For healing to occur the willpower must be strengthened. In fact, for any person to make the necessary changes in his personality it is essential to have a strong will. Here are some suggestions for strengthening the will.

1. Practice deciding things - making up your mind positively. Do this immediately after you have weighed the facts, and stick by your decision - willing to change only when the contrary facts are overwhelming. Remember, it is better to make a mistake than to sit on the fence of indecision! Most decisions can be changed at a later time if necessary.

2. Complete each job before you begin another. Don't flit from one thing to another and from one room to another - traveling in a circle. Do your best to dispense with your mail when you read it. Don't put it down to be picked up and read again before acting on it. Work with dispatch. Time yourself and improve your speed the next time.

3. Sometimes games can help develop the art of decision making. One young man, a patient in a mental hospital, wanted to play ping-pong. He would hold up the ball and the paddle and look as if he would begin the game - and then he wouldn't. This continued for quite some time. When he finally let go of the ball, could he ever play! He had me all over the other end of the table. His problem: he couldn't decide when to let go of the ball!

4. Do something disagreeable that needs to be done by somebody - everyday. Genesis 3:17; Matthew 10:38; 16:24. "Life is full of duties that are not agreeable, but all these unpleasant duties will be made agreeable by a cheerful performance of them because it is right. Taking an interest in the duties which someone must do, and striving to do them with the heart, will make the most disagreeable duties pleasant."⁴⁵

5. Roll out of bed as soon as you awaken after your planned hours of sleep. Be sure to make the plan the night before, and stick to it.

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6. Read deeply and thoughtfully, stretching your mind to understand and retain. Comics and popular novels usually weaken the will.

7. The will is strengthened by exercise, by self-denial and self-control. So practice denying yourself something harmless every day. Perhaps eat only one serving of some favorite dish or limit your fun time.

8. Link your will with divine energy. "The cooperation of the human will and endeavor with divine energy is the link that binds men up with one another and with God." "By yielding up your will to Christ, your life will be hid with Christ in God and allied to the power which is above all principalities and powers."⁴⁶

9. Practice healthful living - diet, rest, exercise - to tone up your system. Refrain from acts of self-abuse as this destroys the strength of the will.⁴⁷

10. Operate your life by plan, and not by impulse. Refuse to consult your feelings.

In summary, "The Spirit of God does not propose to do our part, either in the willing or the doing. This is the work of the human agent in cooperating with the divine agencies. As soon as we incline our will to harmonize with God's will, the grace of Christ stands to cooperate with the human agent; but it will not be the substitute to do our work independent of our resolving and decidedly acting. Therefore it is not the abundance of light, and evidence piled upon evidence, that will convert the soul; it is only the human agent accepting the light, arousing the energies of the will, realizing and acknowledging that which he knows is righteousness and truth, and thus cooperating with the heavenly ministrations appointed of God in the saving of the soul."⁴⁸

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