

From Our Pastor

February 3, 2018

Sabbath Greetings to Everyone!

Predictions made in the 1960-1990s, during the "science will solve all of our problems frenzy," often predicted continuing increases in longevity for people in developed nations. As recently as 2009, the "MacArthur Research Network on an Aging Society" released a report predicting that women soon would live to be 89 to 94 on average instead of the government's estimate of 83 to 85 years. For men, the group expects they will live to be 83 to 86 instead of the government's projection of 80 years average life expectancy in 2050." S. Jay Olshansky, co-author of the report (ABC News, Dec. 14, 2009) predicted, "Current advances in biomedical technology could lengthen lifespans...His aging group predicts these advances will fight diseases in a new way or even slow the aging process."

But as of 2015, the opposite is taking place in a striking way. NPR reported last month, "Life expectancy in the U.S. fell for the second year in a row in 2016, nudged down again by a surge in fatal opioid overdoses, federal officials reported "The last time the U.S. life expectancy dropped was in 1993 because of the AIDS epidemic. Life expectancy hasn't fallen two years in a row in the U.S. since the early 1960s." According to the latest analysis, U.S. life expectancy fell from 78.7 in 2015 to 78.6 in 2016. That follows a drop from 78.9 in 2014 that researchers hoped would be an aberration."

The government report blames the increasing death rate from drug overdoses as the cause of the decline, but other medical sources see additional causes. A year ago, research at Princeton University brought worldwide attention to the unexpected jump in mortality rates among white middle-aged Americans. That trend was blamed on what are sometimes called diseases of despair: overdoses, alcoholism and suicide. As one more example, the Office for National Statistics recently published, "Antibiotic resistance has caused a fall in life expectancy for the first time ... life expectancy in future years has been revised down after the statistics authority said that "less optimistic views" about the future had to be taken into account." In other words, perhaps we are popping too many pills.

Opinions on "improvements in medical science" had declined, the ONS said, and fears of the "re-emergence of existing diseases and increases in anti-microbial resistance" meant people would not live as long as was previously expected. Under the projection made in 2010, a baby girl born in 2016 could expect to live 83.7 years. This has now been revised down to 82.9. Baby girls born in that year were previously expected to live to 90.1 - this has now fallen to 88.3. Baby boys are also set to live less long, with children born in 2016 expected to live to 79.2, instead of 79.9, and those born in 2060 expected to live to 85.7 instead of 86.8.

The obesity epidemic, affecting nearly half of all US citizens and likely the most damaging health issue of our time, is also reducing life expectancy and quality of life. A study published in The Lancet Diabetes & Endocrinology concludes, "Obesity and extreme obesity can reduce life expectancy by up to eight years and deprive people of as many as 19 years of healthy living." WEB MD lists the health risks of obesity as: "Heart Disease, Stroke, High Blood Pressure, Diabetes, Some Cancers, Gallbladder disease, Osteoarthritis, Gout, Breathing problems such as sleep apnea."

While there are many causes of the recent declining longevity rate, the root cause for our problems is that as a nation we have abandoned the laws and principles given to us by our Creator God. Within God's word are many principles of healthy living for our bodies and our spirit. God told Israel years ago ... "You shall keep the commandment, the statutes, and the judgments which I command you today, to observe them. .. And the LORD will take away from you all sickness ..." Of these same laws, Solomon wrote in Proverbs, "My son, do not forget my law, But let your heart keep my commands; For length of days and long life and peace they will add to you. " (Proverbs 3:1-2).

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