

What the Bible Says About Eating Good Food



SABBATH—JUNE 12

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Genesis 1:26–30; Genesis 7:1, 2; Genesis 8:20; Leviticus 11; Deuteronomy 14; Proverbs 23:19–21; Acts 10:1–28; Romans 14:17; 1 Timothy 4:1–5.

MEMORY VERSE: “So eat and drink and do everything else for the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31, NlrV).

A WRITER ARGUED AGAINST BELIEF IN GOD. He believed only in the real world, only in real things.

He said, “Man is what he eats. Period.”

What he said may be going too far, but he does have a point. It is true that we are more than what we eat, but what we eat helps make us what we are. Our blood, bones, fat, and tissues¹ all are fed by the food we put in our bodies. We know that if we stopped eating, we would die. We know, too, that our food influences² our bodies in many ways. Anyone who has ever eaten too much, or eaten the wrong things and become sick, knows how much food influences our bodies and minds. Diet can influence our thoughts, which should come as no surprise. This is because our brain is central to thought. And our brain is influenced by³ the foods that feed it.

This week we will study diet. Diet is an important part of a healthy lifestyle.

To view and/or download a Hope Channel show on this week's lesson, visit www.lifesbeat.org.

1. tissues—the materials that form the parts in a plant or animal.

2. influences—to have power, or an effect, over persons or things.

3. influenced by—to be affected or changed by the power of another person or thing.

SUNDAY—JUNE 13**THE ORIGINAL (FIRST) DIET
(Genesis 1:26–30)**

What does the Bible in Genesis tell us about the original diet? What might it mean that both the people and the animals had almost the same diet?

God planted a garden full of fruits and nuts for our first parents. We only can guess how different these fruits and nuts may have been from what is available to us today. We can guess that there were many different colorful fruits and nuts given by God in the Garden. We can imagine the tree of life planted near the beautiful river. The tree bears (gives) 12 crops of fruit, probably one kind of fruit every month. The leaves were for healing of all peoples and for the prevention⁴ of all diseases and sickness. This is how the apostle⁵ John describes the tree in Revelation 22:2, 3. This description of life in Eden is so short that we are left with many unanswered questions. But we do know Adam and Eve enjoyed food from one tree in the Garden that is no longer available to us.

Science shows that a vegetarian⁶ diet is healthier than a diet high in meat and full of fat. The Adventist Health Study, done by Loma Linda University, compared⁷ Seventh-day Adventist church members in the United States who share almost the same lifestyles except for diet. One group of people ate a lacto-ovo vegetarian diet (plant food plus eggs and milk). They were compared with another group of Seventh-day Adventists who eat red and white meats in their diet. The study shows that the vegetarians had less heart disease, less types of cancers, less hypertension (high blood pressure), less diabetes,⁸ less dementia,⁹ and less osteoporosis (bone weakness). The study also shows that the Seventh-day Adventist vegetarians enjoyed 8 to 10 additional healthy years of life by eating more whole grains, fruits, vegetables, legumes,¹⁰ and nuts. They also ate less refined¹¹ grain products, sugar, and prepared foods. Other studies done in Europe, Australia, and South America support these findings. More than 400 reports on the health of Seventh-day Adventists have now been published in scientific journals.

4. prevention—the act or practice of stopping something bad from happening.

5. apostle—a disciple (follower) of Jesus who preached and taught the gospel (the good news about Jesus) after Jesus returned to heaven.

6. vegetarian—a person who does not eat meat.

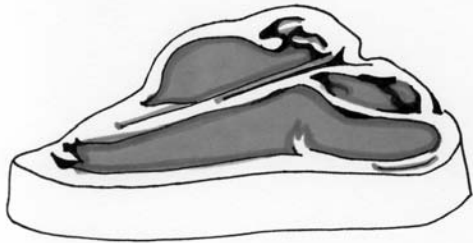
7. compared—to show how two or more things are the same.

8. diabetes—a serious disease in which the body cannot properly control the amount of sugar in the blood because it does not have enough insulin (a substance that the body makes and uses to turn sugar into energy).

9. dementia—the loss of memory and the ability to think clearly.

10. legumes—plants, such as pea or bean plants, with seeds that grow in long cases called pods; also, these seeds can be eaten as food.

11. refined—free of unwanted substances; such products include refined flour, oil, and sugar.



A vegetarian diet is healthier than a diet high in meat and full of fat.

Some people may make diet the most important part of their religion. They think that the stricter the diet is, the holier the person is. At the same time, why is it important that we watch our diet and try to eat as healthfully as we can?

MONDAY—JUNE 14

THE POST (AFTER) FLOOD DIET (Genesis 9:3, 4)

As Christians we should not forget the fact that the first sin of humankind¹² was due to appetite.¹³ Adam and Eve were told not to eat of a certain tree (Genesis 2:16, 17). But they ate of it anyway (Genesis 3:6). This was sin, pure and simple. We must be careful not to make an idol (false god) out of diet. But we also must not think that proper diet is not important. From so many voices, we need wisdom to find the right balance in how we should eat and drink.

According to Genesis 9:3, 4, what

change came to the human diet because of the Flood? How was this different from the diet before the Flood in Genesis 1:26–30? Why do you think this happened? How does this change show an even greater problem brought to the earth because of sin?



We need wisdom to find the right balance in how we should eat and drink.

The Flood destroyed all vegetables and plant life on the earth. So God gave humans permission to eat animals. What a great change in the whole balance of relationship between people and animals. We are so used to it today that we surely do not fully understand what a terribly great change this must have been.

How do the verses in Genesis 7:1, 2 and Genesis 8:20 do away with the idea that the difference between clean¹⁴ and unclean¹⁵ meats began with the Jewish nation?

12. humankind—all the people of the world.

13. appetite—a desire for food or any strong desire.

14. clean (meats)—accepted by Jewish law as fit for eating.

15. unclean meats—forbidden (not allowed) by Jewish law to be eaten.

These verses prove that the difference between clean and unclean meats did not start with the Jewish nation. How could it have, when there were no Jews or Jewish nation at this time? No question, God called the Jews out and made them a separate people under Him. He gave them a detailed list of the difference between clean and unclean meat. Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 give very clear explanations on this topic. There has been some argument among religious and medical people about the reasons for the difference between clean and unclean meat. But the health part seems one of the clearest reasons. Many of the unclean animals are not the most healthy things a person can put in his or her body (such as rats, pigs, snakes, and vultures). God wants us to take care of our bodies. So it would make sense that He would show us what things are not good for us to eat.

TUESDAY—JUNE 15

FOOD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT (1 Timothy 4:1–5)

What is Paul saying in 1 Timothy 4:1–5? Does this mean that we can now eat unclean meat?

In this case, Paul was dealing with false teachings that would forbid believers to partake of (take part in; have) two things that God gave people at Creation, food and marriage. The foods involved are all foods that

God had created for people to eat. We should not misunderstand Paul's words to mean that unclean foods were "created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth" (1 Timothy 4:3, NIV). If not, then what? A rat should be eaten "with thanksgiving"?

In his letters to the Romans and the Corinthians (Romans 14; 1 Corinthians 8:4–13; 1 Corinthians 10:25–28), Paul warned the Christians about the widespread practice in the Gentile (non-Jewish) world of offering flesh food to idols. Early Christians struggled with the question of whether the eating of such food was an act of pagan¹⁶ worship. Those strong in their faith did not believe it was. So they could eat food offered to idols. Those who did not have such a strong faith used only vegetables, which were not offered to idols. Paul urged that no one should criticize (put down; think badly of; treat unfairly) those who ate only vegetables or judge those who "eat all things" (Romans 14:2, NKJV) as food.

What is wrong with using Acts 10 as proof that the New Testament has removed the difference between the clean/unclean foods? Read Acts 10:28.

Where are you in the whole question of diet? What improvements do you know that you should make in what you eat, in how you eat it, or even in how much you eat?

16. pagan—having to do with the worship of many gods or goddesses or the earth or nature.

WEDNESDAY—JUNE 16**A BALANCED DIET
(Proverbs 23:19–21)**

What important health principle do we find in Proverbs 23:19–21? How can we learn to use this principle (rule) for ourselves, in the area of health and temperance?¹⁷

Being a vegetarian does not always mean you are eating a healthy diet. At the same time, being a meat eater is not the only thing that defiles (destroys) your body temple. Other things are important for a good diet too.



Grains, fruits, nuts, and vegetables prepared in a simple way make the most healthful and nourishing diet.

You could be a vegetarian but at the same time be eating too much fat, too much salt, or too much sugar. All of these can lead to many serious

health problems such as diabetes, heart attacks, stroke,¹⁸ and cancer.

Or you could be just eating too much food. You can be on the strictest total vegetarian diet possible. But because you eat too much, you could become overweight with some very negative health effects (results).

In diet, temperance is important. Too much of even good food can be harmful to your health. The idea is to eat as many different kinds of food as possible. This certainly will help to meet all the food requirements that your body needs. At the same time you need to be careful about not overeating and weakening your health. Balance is the key.

Our church does not make a vegetarian diet a test of fellowship.¹⁹ And it should not either. Many faithful Seventh-day Adventists choose not to be vegetarians. But what are the advantages²⁰ of being a vegetarian if you are in a position to get enough of the right foods for a proper diet?

THURSDAY—JUNE 17**DIET TODAY (Romans 14:17)**

How are we to understand Romans 14:17 in connection with the whole question of diet and

17. temperance—not overdoing anything we do; taking good care of our health by avoiding habits that are not healthy.

18. stroke—a serious illness caused when a blood vessel (carries the blood) in your brain suddenly breaks or is blocked.

19. fellowship—a group of people who have the same interests and beliefs.

20. advantages—things, events, or conditions (the way things are; a state of being) that can help a person gain what he or she wants.

health? What should we be careful about not going too far in?

As Seventh-day Adventists, we should be very thankful for the advice that we have received about health. The best medical science supports the basic principles of the kind of diet we teach. In Ellen G. White's last speech to the General Conference in 1909, she warned, "We do not make firm rules about diet. But we do say that in countries where there are plenty of fruits, grains, and nuts, flesh food is not the right food for God's people."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*²¹ for the Church, volume 9, page 159. In other words, if we can eat this way, we should try to do it. It does not make us righteous (Christlike). It does not make us holy. And it certainly does not put us in a position to judge those who do not eat the way we think is best. But eating a vegetarian diet can make us healthier. And who does not want good health?

Today, nutritionists (food experts) often show what is called a food pyramid. It is a diagram (picture) that shows what the best foods are and how much food should be eaten. At the bottom of the pyramid are the whole grains: breads, pasta, and brown rice. These should be eaten in the largest amounts, about 6 to 11 servings per day. The next level includes fruits and vegetables, which encourages about 5 to 9 servings per day. Next are dairy

products and eggs, about 2 to 3 servings a day. These can be important for vegetarians. In this way we can make sure that we get enough vitamin B₁₂ in our diet. Total vegetarians should take vitamin B₁₂ supplements. Almost at the top (which means these should be eaten in even smaller amounts) is the next group, which includes legumes, nuts, seeds, and meat substitutes for vegetarians. A nonvegetarian diet would include fish, fowl, and meat, but only in rather small amounts. Finally, at the top, are foods that require the smallest amounts. They are fats, oils, sweets, and iodized²² salt.

Our health is a valuable gift. Diet plays an important part in health. So it is wise for us to try to do the best we can in what we eat. How important for us to exercise self-control when tempted²³ to eat what we know is not good for us. God gave these truths to us for our good. When we choose not to obey, we hurt ourselves. And our loved ones are made to suffer too.



A food pyramid shows what the best foods are and how much food should be eaten.

21. *Testimonies*—the writings of Ellen G. White.

22. iodized—to treat with iodine (a chemical element that is used especially in medicine and photography).

23. tempted—to experience the desire to do, think, feel, or say what is wrong.

FRIDAY—JUNE 18

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Ellen G. White, *Counsels [Advice] on Diet and Foods*.

From the *SDA Church Manual*, we read, “Our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit. So we Christians are to care for them carefully. Along with ample [enough] exercise and rest, we are to eat the most healthful diet possible and avoid the unclean foods listed in the Holy Bible” (adapted).

Twenty-second Fundamental Belief:²⁴ “The original diet. The Bible does not criticize [judge against] the eating of clean animals. But God’s original diet for man did not include flesh foods. God did not encourage the killing of animals. A balanced vegetarian diet also is the best for health. And science offers increasing proof of this fact.”

The General Conference Nutrition²⁵ Council, in its Position Statement of 2006, titled *Vegetarian Dietary²⁶ Guidelines [Rules]* states, “We recommend a good amount of whole grains, vegetables, and fruits; a reasonable amount of low-fat dairy products; legumes, nuts, and seeds; a very limited use of foods high in saturated²⁷ fat, cholesterol,²⁸ sugar, and salt.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① What are some of the dietary challenges that you face in the area where you live? Is there plenty of food, which can cause people to eat the wrong foods or to overeat? Or is there a struggle to get enough of the right foods? What can you as a group do to help those who could be struggling either way?
- ② It is all too easy to take good principles too far, turning a good thing quickly into a bad thing. What are some of those things in our diet we need to avoid taking too far?
- ③ How should our understanding of our fallen human nature²⁹ influence our understanding of how important our bodies are? For example, we do not believe the soul is immortal,³⁰ and cannot be independent (free) of the body. Then should not we be more careful about how we treat our bodies? Explain your answer.
- ④ Many new Seventh-day Adventists do not know a thing about a healthy diet. How can we help them learn about this important topic in a balanced way? In other words, how can we teach them not to go too far in following the principles of health?

24. Fundamental Belief—one of the 28 basic beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

25. nutrition—the process of eating the right kind of food so you can grow properly and healthfully.

26. dietary—having to do with a diet (the type and amount of food that a person eats for a certain reason such as for better health or to lose weight).

27. saturated—used to describe a type of oil or fat that is found in foods such as meat and butter and that is bad for your health.

28. cholesterol—a substance found in the bodies of humans (people) and animals.

29. human nature—any of the qualities or aspects of humans (men, women, and children) that make us who we are. Without God, our natures are sinful, fallen, selfish, proud, unkind, and so on.

30. immortal—able to live forever; never dying.