

Can I Eat Anything? Food Principles that Are in Effect for Believers Today

How Shall We Then Eat?: God's Guidelines for Eating for Today's Believers (Part 2)

Gen 1:29-30 – And God said, "See, I have given you every herb [that] yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food.³⁰ "Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which [there is] life, [I have given] every green herb for food"; and it was so.

Biblically, what you eat is not all that important. Much more important is why you eat, and how your eating affects others.

Review:

Basic Bible Food Facts:

- Regarding PERMISSION – Every Creature Is Good for Food

For every creature of God [is] good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. (1 Timothy 4:4-5) [This seems to relate to "meat," not plants per se. Some plants are poisonous, and plants were not the object of OT regulation. The broad scope of "every" creature reflects what Noah was told.]

- Regarding PURITY – Food Itself Doesn't Defile (Dirty) a Person

So Jesus said, "Are you also still without understanding? Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are [the things] which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man." (Matthew 15:16-20; cf. Mark 7:15-23) [Note that Jesus said this while under the Law. There were restrictions placed on people by God regarding clean and unclean food. However, the Law seemed to be a "schoolmaster" in this area as well. Based upon the open nature of eating meat given to Noah, the point of the Law was not one's food so much as it was something that revealed one's heart in the eating. The OT Law restrictions were more of a test of obedience – a lesson in holiness and separation. God just used food, a daily necessity, as part of this "lesson."]

- Regarding POSITION – Food Itself Does Not Bring Us Closer to God, Nor Does It Push Us Away from God

But food does not commend us to God; for neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we do not eat are we the worse. (1 Corinthians 8:8)

- Regarding PURPOSE – Food Is Primarily for Nourishment (Health), Not for Enjoyment (Hedonism)

²⁹ And God said, "See, I have given you every herb [that] yields seed which [is] on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food.³⁰ "Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which [there is] life, [I have given] every green herb for food"; and it was so. (Gen 1:29-30)

Remove falsehood and lies far from me; Give me neither poverty nor riches-- Feed me with the food allotted to me; Lest I be full and deny [You], And say, "Who [is] the LORD?" Or lest I be poor and steal, And profane the name of my God. (Proverbs 30:8-9)

¹⁷ Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.¹⁸ For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple. (Rom 16:17-18)

¹⁸ For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, [that they are] the enemies of the cross of Christ:¹⁹ whose end [is] destruction, whose god [is their] belly, and [whose] glory [is] in their shame-- who set their mind on earthly things. (Phi 3:18-19)

Some Key Teachings of Jesus Regarding Food:

- Live by the Word of God Rather than the Wants of Your Body

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.² And when He had fasted forty days and [forty] nights, afterward He was hungry.³ Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."⁴ But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'" (Matt 4:1-4)

- **Rest in the Provision of God Rather than in Worry About the Pursuit of Needs**

Give us this day our daily bread. (Mat 6:11)

²⁵ "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? ²⁶ "Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷ "Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? ²⁸ "So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; ²⁹ "and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰ "Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, [will He] not much more [clothe] you, O you of little faith? ³¹ "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³² "For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³ "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. (Matt 6:25-33)

²⁵ And when they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, "Rabbi, when did You come here?" ²⁶ Jesus answered them and said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. ²⁷ "Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him." ²⁸ Then they said to Him, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" ²⁹ Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent." (John 6:25-29)

- **Be Directed by the Father, Rather than by Food**

³¹ In the meantime His disciples urged Him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." ³² But He said to them, "I have food to eat of which you do not know." ³³ Therefore the disciples said to one another, "Has anyone brought Him [anything] to eat?" ³⁴ Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work. (John 4:31-34)

- **Use Food as a Way to Serve Others, Rather than just the Way to Stay Alive**

³⁴ "Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: ³⁵ 'for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; ³⁶ 'I [was] naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.' ³⁷ "Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed [You], or thirsty and give [You] drink? ³⁸ 'When did we see You a stranger and take [You] in, or naked and clothe [You]? ³⁹ 'Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' ⁴⁰ "And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did [it] to one of the least of these My brethren, you did [it] to Me.' ⁴¹ "Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: ⁴² 'for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; ⁴³ 'I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.' ⁴⁴ "Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?' ⁴⁵ "Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do [it] to one of the least of these, you did not do [it] to Me.' ⁴⁶ "And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." (Matt 25:34-46)

8 "Key Questions" that Define Our Responsibility Regarding Food Today

1. PURPOSE – Why Am I Eating? (cp. Jesus and Stones; Daniel) (God's goal is not necessarily to keep us fed!)

Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. (1Co 10:31)

"Say to all the people of the land, and to the priests: 'When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh [months] during those seventy years, did you really fast for Me -- for Me? 'When you eat and when you drink, do you not eat and drink [for yourselves]? '[Should you] not [have obeyed] the words which the LORD proclaimed through the former prophets when Jerusalem and the cities around it were inhabited and prosperous, and the South and the Lowland were inhabited?'" (Zec 7:5-7)

¹⁵ Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that *is* in the world-- the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life-- is not of the Father but is of the world. ¹⁷ And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. (1Jo 2:15-17)

Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. (1Co 7:5)

⁴ But in all *things* we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses, ⁵ in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings; ⁶ by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, (2Co 6:4-6)

²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; ²⁶ *in* journeys often, *in* perils of waters, *in* perils of robbers, *in* perils of *my own* countrymen, *in* perils of the Gentiles, *in* perils in the city, *in* perils in the wilderness, *in* perils in the sea, *in* perils among false brethren; ²⁷ *in* weariness and toil, *in* sleeplessness often, *in* hunger and thirst, *in* fastings often, *in* cold and nakedness-- ²⁸ besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. (2Co 11:25-28)

¹⁰ But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity. ¹¹ Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: ¹² I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. ¹³ I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. (Phi 4:10-13)

⁸ You are already full! You are already rich! You have reigned as kings without us-- and indeed I could wish you did reign, that we also might reign with you! ⁹ For I think that God has displayed us, the apostles, last, as men condemned to death; for we have been made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men. ¹⁰ We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are distinguished, but we are dishonored! ¹¹ To the present hour we both hunger and thirst, and we are poorly clothed, and beaten, and homeless. (1Co 4:8-11)

2. PEOPLE – What Impact Does It Have on Others? Will eating help or hinder anyone?

- ***Enhancing fellowship with believers***

⁴² And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. ⁴³ Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. ⁴⁴ Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, ⁴⁵ and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. ⁴⁶ So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved. (Act 2:42-47)

- ***Excluding fellowship with believers who walk in sin***

⁹ I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. ¹⁰ Yet *I* certainly *did* not *mean* with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. ¹¹ But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner-- not even to eat with such a person. ¹² For what *have I to do* with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? ¹³ But those who are outside God judges. Therefore "put away from yourselves the evil person." (1Co 5:9-13)

- ***Encouraging or deferring to weak believers and confused unbelievers***

¹ Receive one who is weak in the faith, *but* not to disputes over doubtful things. ² For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats *only* vegetables. ³ Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him. ⁴ Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand. ⁵ One person esteems *one* day above another; another esteems every day *alike*. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. ⁶ He who observes the day, observes *it* to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe *it*. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks. (Rom 14:1-6)

¹³ Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in *our* brother's way. ¹⁴ I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that *there is* nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him *it is* unclean. ¹⁵ Yet if your brother is grieved because of *your* food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died. ¹⁶ Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil; ¹⁷ for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸ For he who serves Christ in these things *is* acceptable to God and approved by men. ¹⁹ Therefore let us pursue the things *which make* for peace and the things by which one may edify another. ²⁰ Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things

indeed *are* pure, but *it is* evil for the man who eats with offense.²¹ *It is* good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor *do anything* by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak. (Rom 14:13-21)

⁴ Therefore concerning the eating of things offered to idols, we know that an idol *is* nothing in the world, and that *there is* no other God but one.⁵ For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords),⁶ yet for us *there is* one God, the Father, of whom *are* all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom *are* all things, and through whom we *live*.⁷ However, *there is* not in everyone that knowledge; for some, with consciousness of the idol, until now eat *it* as a thing offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled.⁸ But food does not commend us to God; for neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we do not eat are we the worse.⁹ But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak.¹⁰ For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols?¹¹ And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?¹² But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ.¹³ Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble. (1 Cor 8:4-13)

- **Exemplifying Christ's concern for the Body**

²⁵ In the same manner *He* also *took* the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink *it*, in remembrance of Me."²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.²⁷ Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks *this* cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.²⁸ But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.²⁹ For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.³⁰ For this reason many *are* weak and sick among you, and many sleep.³¹ For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged.³² But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.³³ Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another.³⁴ But if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, lest you come together for judgment. And the rest I will set in order when I come. (1Co 11:25-34)

3. PROCLAMATION – What Message Is It Sending to Others?

²⁴ Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's *well-being*.²⁵ Eat whatever is sold in the meat market, asking no questions for conscience' sake;²⁶ for "the earth *is* the LORD'S, and all its fullness."²⁷ If any of those who do not believe invites you *to dinner*, and you desire to go, eat whatever is set before you, asking no question for conscience' sake.²⁸ But if anyone says to you, "This was offered to idols," do not eat it for the sake of the one who told you, and for conscience' sake; for "the earth *is* the LORD'S, and all its fullness." (1Co 10:24-28)

4. PURCHASE – What Does It Cost Me?

⁷ For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you;⁸ nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you,⁹ not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us.¹⁰ For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.¹¹ For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies.¹² Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread.¹³ But *as for* you, brethren, do not grow weary *in* doing good.¹⁴ And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed.¹⁵ Yet do not count *him* as an enemy, but admonish *him* as a brother. (2Th 3:7-15)

5. PROVISION – Am I Content with What God Has Provided?

⁶ Now godliness with contentment is great gain.⁷ For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out.⁸ And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.⁹ But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all *kinds of* evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.¹¹ But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. (1Ti 6:6-11)

6. PROTECTION – What Is My Authority? Is It True to What the Bible Teaches?

¹ Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,² speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron,³ forbidding to marry, *and commanding* to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.⁴ For every creature of God *is* good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving;⁵ for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.⁶ If you instruct the brethren in these

things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed. ⁷ But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness. ⁸ For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. (1Ti 4:1-8)

7. PARTICIPATION – What Does It Connect Me To?

¹⁴ Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. ¹⁵ I speak as to wise men; judge for yourselves what I say. ¹⁶ The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? ¹⁷ For we, *though* many, are one bread *and* one body; for we all partake of that one bread. ¹⁸ Observe Israel after the flesh: Are not those who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? ¹⁹ What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything? ²⁰ Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons. ²¹ You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons. ²² Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He? ²³ All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify. (1Co 10:14-23)

"Both the great and the small shall die in this land. They shall not be buried; neither shall men lament for them, cut themselves, nor make themselves bald for them. Nor shall [men] break [bread] in mourning for them, to comfort them for the dead; nor shall [men] give them the cup of consolation to drink for their father or their mother. Also you shall not go into the house of feasting to sit with them, to eat and drink." (Jer 16:6-8)

8. PERSUASION – Am I Unsure If I Should Eat? (Am I Convinced That It Is OK?)

¹⁴ I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that *there is* nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him *it is* unclean. (Rom 14:14)

²³ But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because *he does not eat* from faith; for whatever *is* not from faith is sin. (Rom 14:23)