

How is Your Diet?

THESE days we are bombarded by the media about the necessity of having a healthy diet. There are hundreds, perhaps thousands, of diet and healthy food plans to be found in magazines and on the Internet, for anyone who desires to lose weight or is health conscious. There are the 'super foods', which we are told will improve and maintain our health because they contain all manner of beneficial vitamins and chemicals which our body needs.



The Flip-side

The flip-side of this is that if we don't care what we eat, abusing our bodies by solely eating junk food, or merely eating 'the wrong foods', our bodies will suffer and in extreme cases we may even shorten our lives! It is important we maintain a good diet to keep healthy, such as eating five

portions of fruit and vegetables per day, or other similarly reputable diet plans.

However, there is another diet from which we will gain great benefit, which will ultimately result in our living for ever! This diet can only be found in the Bible, which is the Word of God.

Daniel and His Companions

The book of Daniel in the Old Testament is where we have one of the first mentions of diet. We have the account of Daniel and his three companions Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, in their captivity in Babylon. They refused to eat the food and drink sent to them from king Nebuchadnezzar.

Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself (Daniel 1:8).

The chief of the eunuchs was afraid for the health of Daniel and his companions because of his request not to eat of the king's food (v10). Then Daniel said to him:

"Please test your servants for ten days, and let them give us vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then let our appearance be examined before you, and the appearance of the young men who eat the portion of the king's delicacies; and as you see fit, so deal with your

servants.” So he consented with them in this matter, and tested them ten days. And at the end of ten days their features appeared better and fatter in flesh than all the young men who ate the portion of the king’s delicacies (v12–15).

It was the faith of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah which brought this good health upon them. They trusted in God and didn’t want to be fed food that had probably been offered to Babylonian idols and was thus defiled.

The four were affected in a positive way by their diet, which was far healthier than the king’s portion as given to the rest of the young men. We can be quite certain that the Lord God was behind the amazing result of their simple diet of vegetables and water.

Ultimately, Daniel who loved God and who was “*greatly beloved*” (*Daniel 9:23*) was promised in the final verse of the book that he would be resurrected to eternal life and obtain his inheritance:

Go your way till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of days (12:13).

Certainly, Daniel received great benefit by being obedient to God’s commandments.

The Word of God

During the temptations of Jesus in the wilderness he quoted from Deuteronomy 8:3 and said:

Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4).

In fact, Jesus countered all three of the temptations which came to him in the wilderness, by quoting Old Testament verses. In Matthew 4:7 he quotes Deuteronomy 6:16 and in Matthew 4:10 it is Deuteronomy 6:13.

Jesus used the Word of God as a weapon to combat the temptation to disobey God’s commandments. The Word of God is described as “*the sword of the Spirit*” (*Ephesians 6:17*), and as Jesus showed it is the best defence in times of temptation.

The Word of God is also the means of our spiritual sustenance. A healthy person has a healthy appetite, whereas a sick person has little or no appetite. It is possible to gauge a person’s spiritual health by the state of their appetite for the Word of God; how much do they read it, how important is it to them in their lives? Conversely, someone who has little appetite for the



Word and godly things in general, will be spiritually unhealthy.

Food for a New Life

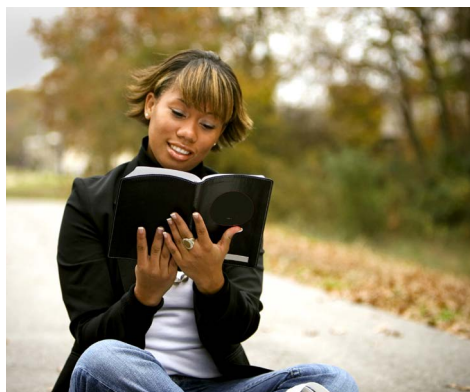
At baptism we symbolically die and rise again to a new life (Romans 6:3–5). We are then described as ‘putting on Christ’ and adopting a new spiritual outlook, very different from the ‘old man’.

Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin (Romans 6:6).

On rising out of the baptismal waters we are figuratively raised to a new life leading to the kingdom of God – God’s Way. In order to do this we find the letters of the New Testament full of valuable advice and guidance on how one should live this new life; after having been “baptised into Christ’s death” (Romans 6:3), as Paul says in the next verse:

Therefore we were buried with him through baptism into death that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life (v4).

An essential part of this new life is to ensure we don’t spiritually starve so that our new life withers away. In Jesus’ parable of the sower we are shown just how this can happen (Luke 8:5–15). We need to be spiritually nourished and built up, starting immediately we commence our new life in Christ. It isn’t enough to live off our natural food but the ‘food of the spirit’ which is



essential for salvation and eternal life in the kingdom. It is vitally important for our spiritual well-being that we are nourished by the food that really matters – the Word of God, and by putting it into practice.

As the Apostle Paul taught his young fellow-believer, Timothy:

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... 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 (1 Timothy 4:6, 8).

This is not to say we shouldn’t look after ourselves, or that we should neglect our physical health. It is a matter of putting our spiritual health first. This is the diet that really matters, and it is the only one that ultimately will provide us with unbounded good health, because it will give us life for evermore in the kingdom of God.

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