A Christian View of Food

Given the amount of space given to the topic in Scripture, eating can be a major source of spiritual stumbling or growth. Assorted sins surround an abuse of food, as do opportunities to do well.

Broad Biblical Principles Regarding Food

1. Foods are not equal. Some meals are better than others: in quality, in health benefits, and in taste. As a general rule, healthy eating is a good thing. But this is a spiritual issue only in terms of *stewardship and general wisdom*. It is not a case of spiritual defilement.

2. God is primarily concerned with what our hearts love and choose, than what we swallow. Rom 14:17, Heb 13:9

3. The true defilement of any food has to do with what the human heart thinks about it and how it uses it, not what the substance itself is (Mark 7:15-19). . “The sin is never in the food because Jesus declared all foods clean. The sin is always in the sinner. This means that we can sin with our food but we cannot sin by food.” Wilson, Douglas. Confessions of a Food Catholic (p. 32). Canon Press.

4. Jesus declared all foods clean.

> Mark 7:18-19. *... Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him, because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?" (Thus He declared all foods clean.)*

5. **Every** food can be sanctified by receiving it with thanksgiving.

> 1 Timothy 4:3-4. ... *men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from*
>
> *foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude*. Eating is a gift from God to be enjoyed both as a means of nourishment and as a pleasure.

6. A concern for God's glory should govern our eating habits.

> 1 Corinthians 10:31. *Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God*.

Particular Sins With Food

1. Gluttony

Proverbs 23:20-21. *Do not be with heavy drinkers of wine, or with gluttonous eaters of meat; for the heavy drinker and the glutton will come to poverty* ...

Titus 1:12-13. *One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." This testimony is true*. *For this reason reprove them severely so that they may be sound in the faith* ...

Ecclesiastes 10:17. *Blessed are you, O land, whose king is of nobility and whose princes eat at the appropriate time—for strength and not for drunkenness*.

2. Anorexia & Bulimia

> Greedy eating. The *binge* behaviour of bulimia falls under the same condemnation as gluttony. Proverbs 25:16. *Have you found honey? Eat only what you need, that you not have it in excess and vomit it.*

3. Pride (Mark 7:2)

Frowning upon the spirituality and morality of another for food choices is simply pride. Religious disapproval of food without clear disapproval from God is a species of pride. When different preferences turn into judgements of wrongdoing, we have crossed a line. e.g. eating foods with preservatives, foods with refined sugar, genetically modified foods, foods farmed by food corporations, foods with carcinogens, high fat, MSG, Aspartame.

While genuine allergies are a painful cross to bear, some Christians place their personal health over the importance of table fellowship with other Christians. Charity towards another's food scruples is necessary. “At the same time, we need to reject, and reject with godly vehemence, every attempt to bind the consciences of the saints with regard to what they may eat (Col. 2:20–23). We defer to the weaker brothers at lunch, which is not the same thing as letting them teach on this.” (Wilson)

4. Legalism

“In the nineteenth century there were prominent liberal and sectarian theologians who believed that the sinfulness of man could be curbed through diet and hygiene. John Harvey Kellogg, a Seventh-Day Adventist, invented corn flakes as a meatless breakfast food designed to reduce the sexual drive. Control of ‘bestial sexual impulses’ was linked in the popular imagination, both sectarian and liberal, with a bland diet devoid of alcohol, coffee, tea, tobacco, condiments, and largely devoid of meat. Assumption of this diet would reduce what is today called libido, and this reduction of the ‘animal’ in man would be passed on to one’s children, who would grow up with less ‘original sin.’ Salvation through diet passed into the popular imagination through the writings of liberals like Horace Bushnell, sectarians like Kellogg and Charles Finney, and cultists like Mary Baker Eddy. As a result there is a pervasive orientation toward dietetic theology in American Christianity that colors our discussion of the Sinaitic dietary laws. Wilson, Douglas. Confessions of a Food Catholic (pp. 25-26). Canon Press. Kindle Edition.

One's standing with God or spirituality does not hinge on whether one does or does not eat certain foods.

> Colossians 2:16-17, 20-21. *Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day—things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ .... If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, "Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!"*

5. Perfectionism & Idolatry

Even among Christians, it is common to see people fretting constantly about the levels of toxicity in their bodies courtesy of Certain Corporations (fear), the fattening effects of that entirely unnecessary cheesecake they had at lunch (shame), and the fact that the coffee beans for their mocha were picked by an underpaid laborer in the third world (guilt). Wilson, Douglas. Confessions of a Food Catholic (p. 34). Canon Press. Kindle Edition.

When fear, guilt, and shame dominate every meal, idolatry is present.

Doug Wilson: Christians who feel guilt over their decisions of what to eat need to go to sleep on the roof, like Peter did, so that they might see the entire inventory of General Mills

lowered in a sheet from heaven. If your food is your guilty pleasure, or if your parsimonious disapproval of others is your guilty pleasure, then it is time to bring your kitchen (and all the cupboards therein) to the feet of Christ.

1 Timothy 4:1 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. (1 Tim. 4:1)

6. Financial Foolishness

Paying three times as much for a really good apple is a fine thing to do, so long as you know that you are doing it. But if you think that you are a humble creature of the soil because you are whooping it up on luxuries is one of the oddest things that I have ever seen in my life. Wilson, Douglas. Confessions of a Food Catholic (p. 22). Canon Press. Kindle Edition.

Shouldn't Christians Prefer Natural or Organic Foods?

The problem with the word *natural* is that it is never clearly defined.

All of creation is now cursed. Now this means that we cannot point to anything in the created order and justify its use in a particular way simply on the basis of its being "natural." Nor can we reject anything on the basis of it having been "processed." The creation around us is a damaged good, and this means that when we point to a particular aspect of it, we are not yet clear whether we are pointing to an aboriginal good, or to one of the defects introduced by the Fall.

So those Christians who use "natural" and "organic" as terms of praise, and who eschew the use of "chemicals" in food preparation are failing at three places. First, as I have noted, they are not applying the doctrine of the Fall. They are not capable of finding any food in this world that has an unfallen nature, for which natural would work as a term of unqualified praise. Second, they are not able to find a food anywhere that is not made out of chemicals. Chemical-free food would a sight to behold, and a miracle in its own right. And third, they are giving weight, and moral weight, at that, to standards that have little to do with objective value and much to do with marketing.

What about boycotts? Should we support animal cruelty/ bad practices?

The question of supporting or boycotting practices that are present in the larger economy is difficult to answer, because it is impossible to be consistent, except where evildoers are known to you.

Does buying meat from the shambles in Corinth (1 Cor. 10:25) help provide an income stream for the idolatrous temple services? Sure it does, but who is worried about it? Not God! God has other ways of affecting their income stream (Acts 19:24–27). Buy their meat, but not their silver figurines.

If we know our neighbour is harming animals (Prov 12:10), we can deal with that – by reporting him, exposing his cruelty, or not buying from him. But accounts of farms far away really should not move us.

"With regard to any claim that matters enough that we need to check it , the Bible teaches that we look for external corroboration, internal consistency, and a clear willingness for the claim to be falsified. " In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established

” (2 Cor . 13:1). “But neither so did their witness agree together ” (Mark 14:59). “He that is first in his own cause seemeth just; But his neighbour cometh and searcheth him” (Prov . 18:17).