

CREATION HEALTH

Your Diet and Your Destiny

Millions of Americans sat glued to their television screens Sunday night, August 28, 2011, watching the CNN special, *"The Last Heart Attack."*

Sanjay Gupta, CNN's chief medical correspondent, interviewed former President Bill Clinton about the significant changes he had recently made in his diet following coronary bypass surgery. When Dr. Gupta asked Mr. Clinton if he was a vegan, Clinton responded, "I like the stuff I eat - the vegetables, fruits, beans - the stuff I eat now." *Do you call yourself a vegan?* Gupta asked. "I suppose I am," the former President responded, "if I don't eat dairy, meat, or fish." According to Dr. Dean Ornish, one of Mr. Clinton's medical advisors, the former president had dramatically reduced his chances for a heart attack with his new dietary regime. Other medical experts testified throughout the one-hour special on the health benefits of a plant-based diet.

Mr. Clinton is in very good company. The just-released *Vegetarianism in America* survey, published by *Vegetarian Times*, shows that 3.2% of adults in the U.S., or 7.3 million people, follow a vegetarian-based diet. In addition, 10% of adults in the U.S., or 22.8 million people, say they largely follow a vegetarian-inclined diet.

A brief list of a few of the world's leading past and present vegetarians might surprise you -

- Greek philosophers, Plato and Socrates were vegetarians
- Scientists, Isaac Newton and Albert Einstein were vegetarians
- Inventors, Thomas Edison and Henry Ford were vegetarians
- Painters, Leonardo Da Vinci and Vincent Van Gogh were vegetarians
- Writers, Mark Twain and Ben Franklin were vegetarians
- Humanitarians, Clara Barton and Rosa Parks were vegetarians
- Entertainers, Jerry Seinfeld and Carrie Underwood are vegetarians.

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THE EDEN DIET

Getting back to the basics is essential for good nutrition. We were created in a Garden, and the closer we return to garden living the healthier we will be. When our loving Creator outlined His premier health plan for the entire human race, He instructed our first parents with these words: "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." (Genesis 1:29). It is fascinating that God begins His dietary instructions with the word, 'see.' It is as if He was saying, "Look around you at the fantastic menu I have designed to keep you in health. Take in the array of colours and the abundant variety of fruits, nuts, grains, legumes, and vegetables. All this is yours. Enjoy. Eat until your heart is content, and it will be." Can you imagine Adam and Eve's amazement as they gazed upon trees laden with fruit and vines full of the earth's abundance? There were fields of golden waving grain and vegetables of all sizes, shapes, and colours. Our first parents must have been incredibly excited with the menu of good things that our heavenly Father had prepared for them. The sights and smells of the garden must have overwhelmed their senses. Their hearts must have rejoiced, recognizing that, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning." (James 1:27).

Eating a plant-based diet of fruits, nuts, grains, legumes, and vegetables, like the Creator designed, provides us with the highest quality fuel for our bodies. Such a diet is rich in fibre, vitamins, and other nutrients. And people who eat only plant-based foods have reduced rates of heart disease, cancer, and stroke. They live as much as 11 years longer than those who eat the highly-refined, typical, American diet, high in dairy, fats, and animal products.

VEGETARIANS AND HEART DISEASE

Heart disease remains the leading cause of death in the United States for men and women. Dr. Caldwell B. Esselstyn Jr., internationally-known surgeon, researcher, and clinician at the Cleveland Clinic, is convinced that heart disease can be prevented, reversed, and largely eradicated. Dr. Esselstyn argues we must do much more than focus only on the symptoms of heart disease. We must get to the root of the problem and focus

on the cause. He puts all of his heart disease patients on a total plant-based diet and his success rates are remarkable.

Multiple international studies reveal that regular consumption of a plant-based diet reduces the risk of heart disease. Researchers from Loma Linda University found that vegetarians are at lower risk of developing long-term health complications, including heart disease, diabetes and stroke, compared to non-vegetarians.

A British study found that daily consumption of fresh fruit was associated with a 24% reduction in mortality from heart disease, and a 32% reduction in death from some types of vascular disease, compared with less frequent fruit consumption. Daily consumption of raw salad was associated with a 26% reduction in mortality from heart disease.

A number of studies have shown that legumes lower blood cholesterol levels, improve blood sugar control, and lower triglyceride levels. Since beans are good sources of soluble fibre, vegetable protein, and polyunsaturated fat, consuming a diet rich in legumes will lower the risk of heart disease.

The reddish pigment found in fruits, such as strawberries, cherries, cranberries, raspberries, blueberries, grapes, and black currants, is very effective in protecting against heart disease because they inhibit LDL cholesterol (bad cholesterol) buildup and also contribute to healthy blood flow.

A plant-based diet is protective against coronary heart disease. This certainly does not mean that it is impossible to get a heart attack if you eat solely a plant-based diet, but it does mean that your chances of a heart attack are considerably less.

The benefits of a plant-based diet go far beyond heart disease. The rates for most cancers are reduced as well.

Vegetables, fruits, and other plant foods are rich sources of antioxidant nutrients (like vitamins C and E, beta-carotene, and other carotenoids) that may protect our cells from damage by cancer-causing agents, halting the earliest processes that lead to cancer. In addition, they contain thousands of phytochemicals (natural substances in plants) that appear to protect against cancer in a variety of ways.

A major report published by the World Cancer Research Fund in 1997 recommended we lower our risk of cancer by choosing predominantly plant-based diets rich in a variety of vegetables, fruits, and legumes.

More than 200 studies have revealed that regular consumption of fruits and vegetables provides significant protection against many types of cancer. People who consume higher amounts of fruits and vegetables have about half the risk of cancer.

About 3 dozen plant foods have been identified as possessing cancer-protective properties.

A DIET FOR SPIRITUAL HEALTH

But no matter how healthy and tasty a plant-based diet is, eating it will not enable you to live forever. You may add 10 years or more to your life, and that is significant, but eventually you still will die. We live in a fallen world in which sickness, suffering, and death are part of this planet. This is why Jesus so powerfully said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4). Our Creator envisions far more for us than 10 extra years on this planet. In fact, He envisions eternity for us. His Word contains the guidelines for living a happy, healthy life here, and it also contains the guidelines to enable us to live forever. It provides the spiritual diet that ensures our eternal destiny - a menu for here and the hereafter.

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THE WORLD'S BEST SELLER

The Bible is still the world's best-seller with 83 million copies sold a year. Americans spent \$2.4 billion on Bibles in 2006 - yet the Bible still remains one of the least read books. According to the Barna Research Group, 93% of all households in the US own one or more Bibles, but only 12% read the Bible every day, and 57% do not read the Bible at all during a typical week. There are hidden treasures yet to be discovered in the eternal, life-changing truths of God's Word that are so relevant for our lives today.

Here are three universal truths about the Word of God:

1. God's Word is eternal.

Speaking of the eternal nature of His Word, Jesus declared, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away." (Matthew 24:35). The Old Testament prophet Isaiah confirms this eternal truth - "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the Word of God stands forever." (Isaiah 40:8). Everything around us is temporary. It ages so quickly. The car you buy today needs repairs tomorrow. The clothes so in vogue today are faded and out of fashion tomorrow. The latest computer is soon ready for tomorrow's scrap heap of outdated technology.

In a world of rapid change and uncertainty, God's Word is eternal. It is a reliable guide. Its principles provide a solid foundation for living today, tomorrow, and forever. Throughout the centuries it has been attacked, vilified, and challenged, but it has stood the test of time.

Bernard Ramm, PhD, professor of philosophy and religion, who wrote 18 books and influenced an entire generation of theologians, stated his confidence in the Bible in these words: "No other book has been so chopped, knifed, sifted, scrutinized, and vilified. What book on philosophy or religion or psychology of classical or modern times has been subject to such a mass attack as the Bible? With such venom and skepticism? With such thoroughness and erudition? Upon every chapter, line and tenet? The Bible is still loved by millions, read by millions, and studied by millions."

The principles of God's Word will guide and shape our lives today as well. They will provide courage in times of fear, hope in times of sorrow, joy in times of disappointment, peace in times of anxiety, certainty in times of uncertainty, and guidance in times of confusion.

2. God's Word is life-changing.

The Word of God is life-changing. As you thoughtfully read it with an open mind and a willing heart, you will be changed. The apostle Peter stated it this way: "By which have been given to us exceeding great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." (2 Peter 1:4).

The miraculous stories of millions of changed lives through the centuries testify to the eternal life-changing power of the Bible.

A STORY FROM VIETNAM

Shortly after South Vietnam fell to the communists of the North, a young man named Hien, a committed Christian, was imprisoned on accusations of helping the Americans. His jailers tried to indoctrinate him against democratic ideals and the Christian faith. He was forced to read only communist propaganda, and the daily deluge of Marx and Engels began to take its toll. *Maybe, he thought, I have been lied to. Maybe God does not exist. Maybe the West has deceived me.* So, Hien determined that when he awakened the next day, he would not pray anymore or think of his faith.

The next morning, he was assigned the dreaded chore of cleaning the prison latrines. As he cleaned out a tin can overflowing with toilet paper, his eye caught what seemed to be English printed on a piece of paper. He hurriedly grabbed it, washed it, and after his roommates had retired that night, he retrieved the paper and read the words of Romans, chapter 8. Trembling, he began to read, "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose... For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:28,38,39).

Hien wept. He knew his Bible, and he knew that there was not a more relevant passage for one on the verge of surrender. He cried out to God, asking forgiveness. This was the day he had decided to give up the Christian faith. Evidently, God had other plans. Hien found more pages of the Bible as he continued to clean the latrines. God's Word transformed his life. There in that dreaded concentration camp he was filled with hope and courage. He learned later that one of the camp officials had found an English Bible and was using its pages as toilet paper. God works in mysterious ways. In the filth of a smelly Vietnamese prison camp's latrines, the living Christ gave a slender prisoner new hope through His Word.

As we fill our minds with the truths of the Bible, changes will occur in our lives, too. Simply begin with the Psalms or the Gospel of John, read a few verses at a time, and ask God to help you understand what you are reading, and apply it to your life. You will be amazed at the changes that begin to take place. What you are reading will shape your thoughts and fill the deepest longings of your soul. Best of all, the Bible's central character, Jesus Christ, will transform your life.

You may wonder how a book written over two thousand years ago is still relevant today.

"If any man is in Christ, He is a new creation; old things are passed away and all things become new"

3. God's Word is relevant to every generation.

The book of Hebrews makes this remarkable statement about the relevance of the Bible: "For the Word of God is living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit... and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Hebrews 4:12). Let's carefully analyze this Bible passage. First, the Word of God is living. It takes an active living force to change our lives and make us into new people. The Bible is not some ancient, musty old book that was relevant to a culture that existed millenniums ago. It imparts life today. Our passage says that the Word of God is powerful. The New Testament Greek word for powerful is *energes*. You guessed it - we get our English word energy from it. The living, powerful Word of God is filled with life-changing energy for our souls. It penetrates into the deepest parts of our being and completely transforms our lives.

Are you facing a major decision in your life? The principles of the Bible will be a wonderful guide to you.

Do you need hope and courage? A healthy dose of God's Word will revitalize your soul.

Has guilt stolen your joy and robbed your happiness? Christ is the centre of the entire Bible, and He will give you a new start.

Is there something missing in your life? Are you looking for a deeper purpose? Woodrow Wilson was right when he said that the Bible is "the key to your heart and happiness."

You, too, can thrive. You, too, can live life with purpose. You, too, can have a hidden source of strength. Our Lord speaks to you at this very moment through His Word, "...if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." (2 Corinthians 5:17). Will you open your heart to receive the strength He offers you right now?

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