



This article is part of a series focusing on stewardship of the body through healthy choices. It is not intended to replace medical advice from your doctor. Rather, it is to provide a biblical framework for healthy choices.

Eat your Veggies!

"Then God said, 'I give you every seed -bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food... I give every green plant for food.' And it was so." (Genesis 1:29-30)

How often did your mom have to encourage you to eat your veggies during your childhood years? Were there ever times when you tried to hide brussels sprouts underneath your napkin or "accidentally" knock the cauliflower on the floor? Maybe it was the threat of punishment or the bribe of dessert that finally convinced you to clean your plate!

Children may not understand the value of good nutrition. They may not appreciate their parents' prodding. But there is timeless wisdom to that parental encouragement.

Imagine the world prior to the fall into sin and the subsequent curse. The soil was nutrient rich and unpolluted by contaminants. Though it was God's Word that produced life and caused plants to grow, it is fascinating to see the source of plants. **"The land produced vegetation"** (Genesis 1:12). Ponder for a moment - you can eat a small squash seed and gain from it a few calories, vitamins and minerals. But if you plant it in the soil, that squash seed will grow and draw from the soil many daily servings of Vitamin A, Magnesium, Vitamin C, Potassium and Calcium (in the case of butternut squash). All the nutrients needed for life are found in the ground and plants are God's tool for bringing those nutrients from the soil to our stomachs in an edible way.

The original humans that God created were vegetarians. They were able to receive more than adequate protein and healthy fats from nuts, seeds and legumes. When God made mankind, he blessed him with seed-bearing plants for food. But it wasn't until after the worldwide flood that God specifically gave permission to eat meat. God said, **"Everything that lives and moves about will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything"** (Genesis 9:3). It is noteworthy that God supplied all that was needed to sustain healthy human life through plants. It's also interesting to see how much longer people lived prior to the flood than they do today (Just read through the genealogy in Genesis 5). We might also consider Daniel's health challenge as

recorded in Daniel 1. For a modern example, in his book, *Super Immunity*, Dr. Joel Fuhrman describes a 12-year study of Seventh-Day Adventists who ate a primarily vegetarian diet (this population group was specifically chosen because of their healthy diet and lifestyle). The women in the study group outlived the average female life-span by over six years and the men in the study group outlived the average male life-span by over nine years (for further research consider - Joel Fuhrman, M.D., *Super Immunity*. HarperCollins. 2012. pg. 137).

As Christians, our main goal in life is not to outlive our neighbors. Ultimately, we are citizens of a heavenly kingdom and we eagerly await Christ's return and our resurrection. However, while we are here on earth we desire to be wise stewards of the resources God has provided. I'll be honest, I enjoy a delicious steak or a slice of hickory smoked bacon! In my Christian freedom, I can celebrate these delicious treats from our awesome Creator God. But I also recognize that reducing my meat intake and increasing my vegetable, fruit, nut and seed intake will have a positive impact on my overall health and wellness.

Are there simple meal choices that you can make in the coming weeks to increase your vegetable, fruit, nut and seed intake? How about making your own trail mix using berries, almonds and sunflower seeds? Perhaps this healthy snack could replace another less healthy snack option. Or how about giving more thought to what vegetable you are serving for dinner? Often, we indicate what we are having for dinner based on the meat ("we're having pork-chops," or "we're having grilled chicken"). What if instead we made the vegetable into the main dish with a small serving of meat on the side?

To reiterate, there are no New Testament dietary restrictions. But our food choices can fall under the arena of stewardship as we utilize God's creation for healthy living. **"So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."** (1 Corinthians 10:31)