



DISCOVERING REVELATION

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How to Postpone Your Funeral

The Bible is full of good advice for getting more out of life. In John 10:10, Jesus assures us that His desire is for us to live a more abundant life! In 3 John 1:2, John indicates a desire for his friends to be healthy both spiritually and physically!

The ancient Greeks made a great distinction between the physical and spiritual parts of our lives. To them, spiritual things were important; physical things weren't nearly as important. Their ideas made their way into Christianity over the years, and *we* started to assume that our God isn't interested in our physical well-being. The Bible, however, reveals a close relationship between a spiritual relationship with God and our physical well-being. In Exodus 15:26 and 23:25, God told the Israelites that if they maintained a close relationship with Him, and followed His commands, they would enjoy better health. God describes Himself as the "Lord that healeth thee."

One of the first principles to better health is to be sure that you are right with God. Good spiritual health will spill over into your physical health.

The second principle is simple: What you put into your body is what you will get out of it. Don't forget: Your body is not your own! 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20 teaches that God has purchased our bodies with the blood of His Son—they belong to Him. That makes our bodies very expensive and valuable property—and knowing that they belong to somebody else ought to prompt us to take better care of them! What is the best way to take care of them? Check out the Owner's Manual—the Bible!

Think about some of the things people routinely put into their bodies—and then are surprised when they get sick! More than 1.2 billion people worldwide, for example, still smoke cigarettes, even though on a worldwide basis, smokers die 22.5 years early! One cigarette has 1.2 milligrams of nicotine in it—enough to kill seven people if it were injected directly into their veins. On top of the nicotine, cigarette smoke contains more than 4,000 chemical compounds, including arsenic, hydrogen cyanide, mercury, carbon monoxide and lead. Even though we have known about the dangers of smoking for several generations now, hundreds of thousands of people continue to die each year because of this deadly addiction.

We are supposed to glorify God in our bodies (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20). Can you smoke to the glory of God? Of course not. Even though the Bible doesn't say, "Thou shalt not smoke," the principles are clear: thou shalt not kill! Smoking is a slow but sure death. The good news is that God is bigger than any addiction and can give you victory over it. If you struggle with a cigarette addiction, talk to someone about it—we would be delighted to help!

Another poisonous substance people routinely put into their systems is alcohol, even though passages such as Proverbs 20:1; 23:29-33 and Isaiah 5:22 are clear that God warns us to stay away from it. We are not even supposed to look at it! Alcohol has left a string of broken homes and ruined lives in its wake. It has been

linked to stomach cancer, liver damage, brain damage, heart disease, fetal deformities, and dozens of other illnesses that kill people. Clearly, Christians cannot drink liquor to the glory of God! It impairs our judgment, lowers our inhibitions and robs us of the sobriety we need to make good decisions in this critical hour of earth's history.

Some will argue, however, that Jesus provided alcohol at the wedding feast in Cana (John 2). The governor of the feast, however, was clearly sober after an entire day of drinking wine—he was able to tell that Jesus' wine was good! (John 2:9, 10) In the Bible, both grape juice and alcoholic wine are simply referred to as "wine." Which kind do you suppose Jesus would provide, when He was always so concerned about pain, suffering and disease? The answer is obvious—it was grape juice—*non-alcoholic wine*. You couldn't picture Jesus giving out beer at one of your parties, could you? Can Christians drink alcohol to the glory of God? Absolutely not!

There are some things that a Christian simply shouldn't be putting into his or her body, because they damage the fine workings of the human machine. God asks us to take the best possible care of the one body He gave us. It has to last a lifetime! So what *should* we put into our bodies? Genesis 1:29 reveals that the original diet prescribed for humans was a vegetarian diet. Adam and Eve did not slaughter animals in the Garden of Eden. Today, nutritionists are telling us that more fruits and vegetables and less fatty meat and cholesterol would be much better for us.

The Bible reveals vegetarianism as the *ideal* diet, but doesn't require it. Eventually, God gave us permission to eat meat—but not just *any* meat. He made a clear-cut distinction between clean and unclean meats.

Wasn't this distinction only for the Jews? No. What was bad for a Jew was also bad for a Gentile! In Genesis 7:1, 2 we discover that Noah knew the distinction between clean and unclean animals *hundreds* of years before there were any Jews around!

Most unclean animals are simply scavengers. They eat the filth of the earth and clean up garbage and dead carcasses. They were never meant for food. When we eat scavengers, we pick up all the toxins they ingest when cleaning up filth! Leviticus 11 lays out principles for distinguishing between clean and unclean animals. Among the land animals, anything that has cloven hooves *and* chews the cud is considered fit to eat. Cows, sheep, moose and deer are fine; rabbits and pigs are not. Why not eat pig? Because it is one of the filthiest animals around. It will eat anything you throw its way, and as a result, it is often laden with disease.

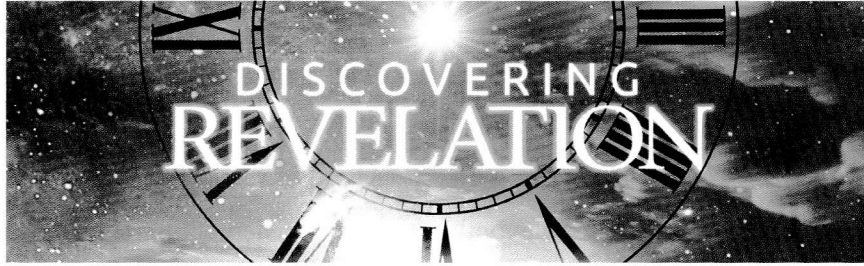
Among the fish, anything with fins and scales is considered clean. Salmon, trout and halibut are fine; catfish, eels, shellfish and crustaceans are not, because they are the scavengers of the sea. Shrimp and shellfish, for example, are known to feast on raw sewage and dead bodies. They were designed to filter poisons out of the sea, which is why they can be so lethal to those who eat them.

Among the birds, scavengers are definitely out. We don't typically eat many scavengers, but just in case, here is the general rule: it would seem that birds with a crop and a gizzard tend to be clean (like chicken, turkey, quail and pheasant).

Those who live by these rules of diet live better and longer lives! How serious is God about this? Isaiah 66:15-17 indicates that it is still an issue at the Second Coming. Romans 12:1 asks us to present our bodies as a living sacrifice to God, and He has given us all the information we need to take better care of them! Aren't you thankful He watches out for every detail in your life?

Some people have pointed to Peter's vision in Acts 10:9-17 as proof that Christians can eat what they please. This is not what this story is about! Verse 17 tells us that Peter had doubts as to what the vision meant—it clearly couldn't mean that unclean foods were suddenly healthy!

When the vision was over, a group of Gentiles appeared at the door, wanting to hear the gospel. Jews traditionally considered Gentiles to be "unclean." God was trying to prepare Peter, in a symbolic vision, to share the gospel with Gentiles. In Acts 10:28, Peter makes it abundantly clear what the vision meant: "God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean." This vision had nothing to do with pigs—it had everything to do with preaching the gospel!



How to Postpone Your Funeral

Life expectancy worldwide currently stands at 67.2 years. According to the World Health Organization, Japanese women can expect to live the longest—87 years on average. In the United States, the figure is 76 for males and approximately 81 for females. For Canadians, life expectancy is 80 years for men and 84 for women.

Wouldn't you like to postpone your funeral as long as possible—especially if you could be physically healthy and mentally alert during those extra years? That's what God wants for you as well.

SPIRITUAL HEALTH AND PHYSICAL HEALTH ARE CONNECTED

The Bible reveals a close connection between a strong spiritual relationship with God and physical well-being.

1. What did Jesus say is one purpose He had for coming to our world? (John 10:10)

This "abundant" life includes not only a rich spiritual life, but good physical health as well. The Apostle John wrote to the recipients of one of his letters, "Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers." (3 John 2)

2. What did God promise to do for the Israelites if they followed Him faithfully? (Exodus 23:25)

One of the basic principles of enjoying "abundant life" is to be sure you are right with God. Good spiritual health will spill over positively into your physical well-being.

CARING FOR YOUR BODY IS IMPORTANT, BECAUSE IT BELONGS TO GOD

3. Does the way we care for our physical health say anything about the role of God in our life? (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20)

We belong to God through both creation and redemption. He made our bodies and knows how to keep them in peak physical condition. God's Holy Spirit lives in us as in a temple, and God warns us to be careful not to defile that temple. (1 Corinthians 3:16, 17)

Yet think about some of the practices that harm our health and defile our body temple. The Bible does not say, "Thou shalt not smoke," but does smoking glorify God? The health dangers of smoking are well known, yet nearly 1 billion people worldwide continue to smoke. Lack of exercise, overeating, using illegal drugs—all of these poor health habits do not glorify God.

4. What advice does the Bible give regarding the things we eat and drink? (1 Corinthians 10:31)

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5. What does God think about drinking alcohol? (Proverbs 20:1; 23:29-35)

Besides being linked to a number of illnesses, alcohol leaves broken homes and ruined lives in its wake. It lowers inhibitions and makes it impossible for us to make good decisions in this critical time of earth's history. It is impossible to drink alcohol to the glory of God!

We may have habits in these areas that have been built up over many years. We may not see how we can break them. But the good news is that God has promised to give us His grace and strength to follow Him in everything. No habit is too powerful for you to overcome in God's strength. (1 Corinthians 10:13)

GOD'S INSTRUCTIONS REGARDING THE FOOD WE EAT

6. What kind of diet did God give Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden? (Genesis 1:29)
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God's original diet for human beings was a vegetarian diet. Today, nutritionists still point to a vegetarian diet as ideal in many respects. Eating more fruits and vegetables, while consuming less red meat and cholesterol, would be much better for us.

After the flood, God gave permission for humans to eat meat—but not just any meat.

7. What clear distinction does God make between “clean” and “unclean” meat? (**Leviticus 11:2, 3, 9, 10**)

Animals acceptable for food must have a divided hoof and chew the cud. This includes animals such as cows, goats and deer, but it excludes pigs, horses, rabbits, etc. Fish that have both fins and scales may be eaten, but not shellfish or crustaceans—which function as scavengers, cleaning up the toxins and filth in oceans and rivers.

These are not simply arbitrary decisions on God's part. The more science learns about the nature of different animals, the more we discover that those God says we should not eat are often filled with diseases. People who follow God's health rules live better and longer!

8. How serious is God about His dietary and healthful living instructions? (**Romans 12:1, 2**)

These verses indicate that God's instructions regarding diet and lifestyle are still an important issue that He takes seriously. God asks us to present our bodies as living sacrifices to Him—holy and acceptable. We cannot do that if we are disregarding His will regarding the food we are putting into our bodies, and other negative lifestyle habits.



SOME OBJECTIONS CONSIDERED

9. Weren't these dietary rules applicable only to the Jewish people in the Old Testament? (**Genesis 7:1, 2**)

Noah knew about the distinction between “clean” and “unclean” animals at the time of the flood—hundreds of years before any Jews existed. What was an unhealthful diet for the Jews in Bible times is still an unhealthful diet for all of us today!

10. Didn't Peter have a vision in which God told him He had cleansed all the “unclean” animals? (**Acts 10:9-17**)

Some have mistakenly interpreted Peter's vision in this way. But read the whole experience carefully. (Acts 10:9-17) Peter himself interpreted the visions in these words: “God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean.” (Acts 10:28) The vision was not about “clean” or “unclean” animals, but about whether Gentiles were to be considered “unclean.”

As you consider your amazingly created body, it makes sense that God shares with us information about how to take care of it. Whenever you purchase a new car or even an external hard drive for your laptop computer, it comes with instructions.

God does not share with us lifestyle guidelines to make our lives miserable, but to make us healthier and happier people, so that we can say, “I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made!”

MY DECISION

- I want to glorify Jesus by living in harmony with His instructions for good health—and experience the abundant life He promises.

MY PRAYER

Father, help me to follow Your guidance in every aspect of my life—even in the way I live and the things I eat and drink. In Jesus' name, Amen.