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Frank W. Nelte

### **BIBLICAL GUIDELINES FOR A GOOD DIET**

60 years ago Mr. Herbert Armstrong used to say that medical doctors are focused on treating symptoms of sicknesses and diseases, while ignoring the causes of those sicknesses. That statement is no longer true today. Today there is a concerted effort by a very large number of researchers to seek out and to understand **the causes** of all health problems, so that those causes can then be dealt with.

In fact, today there is a considerable degree of understanding that many health problems can be led back directly to **problems with our diets**, problems with the things we eat and drink and otherwise take into our bodies. It has been repeatedly demonstrated that many health problems are due to things like nutritional deficiencies, or to the excessive consumption of certain things, or even the consumption of “junk foods” in general, or to toxins in the air we breathe and in the water we drink, or to our body’s inability to correctly process certain foods, etc. It has been shown that altering our diets, or adding certain nutrients to what we normally eat can have a major positive impact on our overall health.

And so we have seen **a proliferation of diets** that are presented to the public as the best ways to live. Very many diets are focused on helping people to lose excess weight. Others claim to be the healthiest ways we can possibly live. Others focus on building more muscle tissue. And others again focus on confronting specific health problems.

A major problem for us ordinary folk confronted by this plethora of nutritional advice is that **there is so much disagreement** amongst those who would teach us the best possible diets for our circumstances.

Some diets tell us to eat a lot of carbohydrates, while other diets tell us to severely restrict the consumption of carbohydrates. Some diets recommend the avoidance of fats, while others encourage us to eat a lot of fat. Then there are high protein and low protein diets. And then there are vegetarian diets and diets that encourage eating lots of meat. All these various diets promise us very desirable results.

But all these conflicting recommendations can create a lot of confusion for us. Should we eat meat or not? Should we be worried about cholesterol or not? What about eggs and dairy products? Is a high carbohydrate diet good for us, or is it bad for us? Is a vegetarian diet really good for us, or will it create nutritional deficiencies? What about eating fruits high in sugar? Do we really need vitamin and mineral supplements to stay healthy? What types of oil and fats should we include in our diet? Is butter bad for us? Should we eat margarine instead? To all of these questions we can find contradictory answers.

So what is the best diet for people in God’s Church? Does the Bible have anything to say about what we should eat and drink?

## **SOME BIBLICAL INSTRUCTIONS**

For us the obvious first consideration is that we abide by the instructions God has given us in Leviticus 11 and in Deuteronomy 14.

Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, **These are the animals which you shall eat** among all the animals that *are* on the earth. (Leviticus 11:2)

The next verse spells out the attributes such animals must have.

Whatsoever **parts the hoof**, and is clovenfooted, *and* **chews the cud**, among the animals, **that shall you eat**. (Leviticus 11:3)

This group of animals includes cattle, sheep, goats, buffalos, and various varieties of deer and antelopes. As a matter of interest, giraffe also possess these two attributes, and are therefore clean animals. I am not saying that you should start to eat giraffe meat. I am merely saying that giraffe qualify as clean animals. On the other hand, animals that only have one of these two attributes are not to be eaten by us.

In addition to these animals there are also “clean birds” like chicken, turkey, ducks, geese, quail, etc., that we may eat.

Deuteronomy 14 then adds the fish we may eat. They also have to have two distinct qualities, so that we may eat them.

**These you shall eat** of all that *are* in the waters: **all that have fins and scales** shall you eat. And whatsoever has not fins and scales you may not eat; it *is* unclean unto you. (Deuteronomy 14:9-10)

Thus we are not to eat any fish or water creatures that do not have both, fins and scales.

I might add here that these two attributes **should be readily apparent to us**. If we need to debate whether a specific variety of fish has scales or not, then that is not a variety God created as food for human beings. If we need a magnifying glass to find a scale somewhere on a specific fish variety, then that also is not what God was talking about. Fins on a fish are immediately obvious to us. A water creature does or does not have fins. And likewise, **scales need to also be immediately obvious to us**, to meet God’s requirements.

Together these are the only dietary instructions God gave Israel when God brought Israel out of Egypt.

Now obviously, it is not that these dietary instructions applied only to Israel, but somehow not to other nations. **These instructions apply to all human beings** in every nation. In Old Testament times God

was not dealing with any nations other than Israel. Specifically, God did not give any other nation laws regarding a code of conduct. But God's laws apply as much to other nations as they do to Israel. Likewise, God also did not instruct other nations regarding how they should live, and what they should eat. But the laws regarding which animals God created for us to eat apply to people in all nations, not just to Israel.

In each of the three categories consisting of land animals, birds, and water creatures, God provided a considerable variety of animals we may eat. Now the requirements God established for each category were not arbitrary. Those requirements identify the attributes of all the animals, birds and fish that God created as potential food sources for human beings.

All other animals, birds and water creatures were not and are not intended by God to be eaten by human beings. That's what God determined. These distinctions between clean and unclean animals (i.e. having or not having the God-identified attributes) already existed **before the flood** in the days of Noah, and that was centuries before the nations (i.e. the 12 tribes) of Israel came into existence. Just before the flood God instructed Noah to take different numbers of clean and unclean animals into the ark. This means that Noah clearly understood the distinction between clean and unclean animals.

Of every **clean animal** you shall take to you by sevens (i.e. seven pairs), the male and his female: and of **animals that are not clean** by two (i.e. one pair), the male and his female. (Genesis 7:2)

The point is that the categories of clean and unclean animals existed long before the nations of Israel made a covenant with God. God created this distinction between clean and unclean animals for the benefit of all human beings. Eating **unclean animal products** will have **a negative impact** on a person's health, though that negative impact is usually not readily apparent in the short term.

Now back at the time of Adam's creation God had also given Adam certain guidelines regarding what he (and by extension all human beings that sprang from Adam) might eat.

## **ORIGINAL DIETARY INSTRUCTIONS**

When God created Adam and Eve, they clearly needed some guidelines regarding what they were to eat. And so God told Adam:

And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, **Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat.** But of the tree of the perception of good and evil, you shall not eat of it: for in the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die. (Genesis 2:16-17)

At the time of his creation Adam was **forced to be a vegetarian** for at least the first few months of his life, if not longer. That's because he could not have eaten any of the clean animals before they had had the opportunity to reproduce, and for their offspring to grow to a size suitable for slaughtering. And while for some clean birds that might have been only a few months, for other animals it might have been a whole year or longer.

This is assuming that God already intended Adam to eat the clean animals.

I cannot prove this, and it doesn't make a difference one way or the other. But I suspect that **God's original intention** was that human beings would be **vegetarians**, but also eating eggs and milk products like cheeses and butter and cream. At any rate, even assuming that God was going to allow Adam to eat meat, a vegetarian diet was all that was available for Adam's first few months of life, simply because there were no clean animals available for him to slaughter.

Well, if God didn't originally intend human beings to eat any animals, then why did God already establish the distinction between clean and unclean animals? If those animals aren't going to be eaten, is the category "clean animals" actually needed?

**Yes, it was needed.**

While perhaps (i.e. this is my speculation) originally God did not intend for human beings to eat any animals, God was going to provide two very important animal products for the human diet. I believe that from the beginning God intended people to **eat eggs** and to **drink milk**, and to eat all the products that can be made from milk, products like cheese, butter, yogurt, sour milk, cream, kefir, buttermilk, etc. And in order to identify **which eggs** we may eat, and **which milk** we may drink, God established the category of clean animals already at the time of Adam's creation.

Regarding the consumption of milk:

Over 80% of all milk consumed worldwide comes from cows, around 15% comes from buffalo, about 2% comes from goats, 1% from sheep and ½% comes from camels. Considerably less than ½% each accounts for the consumption of milk from yak, horses, donkeys, reindeer, moose, alpaca and llama. Somewhere on earth people consume the milk from all 12 of these animals.

Now besides cows, sheep and goats **other clean animals** in this list (i.e. they have cloven hooves and chew the cud) are buffalo, yak, reindeer and moose.

**Unclean animals** in this list are camels, horses, donkeys, alpaca and llama. We are not to drink the milk from any of these animals.

So while over 98% of all the milk that is consumed worldwide comes from clean animals, somewhat less than 2% comes from unclean animals which are domesticated in certain areas of the world.

The establishment of clean and unclean animals at the time of Adam's creation made clear that human beings were not to use the milk from any unclean animal.

To get back to God's original intentions for the human diet:

By the time God led Israel out of Egypt, **that original intention had clearly been changed**. At the time of the exodus God added specific animals and fish to the human food supply. And those instructions are applicable for us today.

The literal tree of the perception of good and evil, which God had placed in the garden in Eden, does not exist anywhere on earth today. So avoiding that tree is not a consideration in selecting plant foods which we may eat. Thus when it comes to the plant-based part of our diet, then all the plants that grow anywhere are potentially available as food sources for us human beings.

It is up to us to figure out for ourselves what plants are good for food, and what plants are toxic for us. And that responsibility creates something of **a problem** for us. Here is how.

It is easy to identify the plants that cause either death or serious suffering very quickly. We can figure that out **from the people who died** or suffered greatly within an hour, or within days after ingesting those plants. For example, we know about poisonous mushrooms, because in the past people have died fairly quickly from eating those mushrooms. The same is true for other poisonous plants.

The problems for us are when the **negative effects** of ingesting certain plants **only** become apparent **after some years** of eating or otherwise ingesting those plants. The principle here is that ingesting plants that kill us within days we will very willingly reject, because we don't want to die. But other plants, that contribute towards killing us only 20 or 30 or 40 years after we have been ingesting them regularly, will not be rejected so easily. For those 20 or 30 or 40 years before they killed us, we became accustomed to ingesting those plant products. And our bodies may even have developed a certain craving for those products. In short, we may have become addicted to those plant products before their consumption contributes to killing us.

Anyway, the bottom line for us is that when it comes to eating products that were produced by the soil, we ourselves have to make the decisions what to ingest and what not to ingest. In the area of "plant nutrition" God has not given us any laws or restrictions.

**We ourselves are responsible for rejecting substances that are not good for us to ingest.**

Consider the following:

By not specifically telling us to not eat certain plants or plant products, that does not mean that therefore it is okay for us to eat or otherwise ingest any and all plant products we want to eat. **It is not a case of: if God hasn't forbidden it, then it's okay for us to consume it.**

That approach of "if God hasn't forbidden it ..." assumes that God looks upon us as dummies! We supposedly can't figure out for ourselves what plants actually harm us.

God has not specifically told us to not eat poisonous mushrooms. But **we know** that God does not really want us to eat poisonous mushrooms, because that would kill us. We are to “glorify God in our bodies” (see 1 Corinthians 6:20), and **knowingly** eating poisonous mushrooms would amount to committing suicide, and that certainly does not glorify God. The same applies to knowingly consuming any other poisonous plant products where we know that consuming those plants will eventually kill us.

And regrettably most of the time we are not interested in establishing **the principle that applies to consuming any non-animal products**. Many of us in the Church of God much prefer to stick to the letter of the law. We don't recognize that **God has made all of us individually responsible** for shunning **any non-animal product** which is known to adversely affect our health, obviously in addition to the animal products God specifically instructs us not to eat.

The principle here is this:

God really expects us to reject **any plant product** that we know will **damage our health** in some way!

This is, for example, the reason why members of God's Church are instructed to not smoke. It is well-known that smoking kills millions of people around the world every year. But this principle is by no means limited to smoking. It also applies to any product where **we know** that consumption will damage our health in some way. But we would rather not make a list of the products that are known to destroy our health, because that would include many items that we really love to eat and drink. So we focus on the letter of the law, and meticulously avoid looking for the principle that is involved in the things we eat and drink.

And to be clear: this is not a matter where the Church makes a list of all the things we are not to eat or drink. What we eat and drink is not the Church's responsibility. **We ourselves** are individually responsible for what we eat and drink. And the principle that applies here is “to him that **knows** to do good, and does *it* not, to him it is sin” (see James 4:17). And on this subject different people have different levels of understanding.

Anyway, the sum total of all dietary instructions in the Bible is this:

1) Regarding eating plants, God has not set us any specific limitations. We ourselves have to figure out what plants to eat or take into our bodies in some way, and what plants not to eat or take into our bodies. This gives us a choice of **thousands of plants**, where we may eat the fruit and/or the seeds and/or the nuts and/or the roots and/or the leaves.

2) For eating animals, birds and fish, God has given us some very specific restrictions. But those restrictions still provide us with **a very large variety** of animals, birds and fish that we may eat.

3) We may also eat the **eggs** of clean birds, and the **milk products** from the milk of clean animals.

## **POTENTIAL PROBLEMS**

So these are the foods which God created for our bodies to process for growth and for energy, the foods **our digestive systems** were designed to deal with.

In order for our bodies to process all these foods efficiently, we must have a well-functioning digestive tract. Now while some digestive processes are already initiated in the mouth, digestion takes place primarily in the stomach and in the intestines. In the stomach foods are broken down by digestive acids. In the intestines those broken-down food components are then further processed by a vast range of intestinal bacteria, which permanently populate the human gut. Different food components require different colonies of bacteria to further process those components.

Now if the bacteria needed for the digestion of a specific food item are not present in the gut, then that food item will not be digested properly, and some or all of it will be passed out of the body in an undigested form. In that case the body is not able to access the potential nutritional value of the undigested items.

So two major potential problem areas with our bodies processing the foods we consume are: problems in the stomach, and problems in the gut. And **that is** where all kinds of specialized diets then enter the picture. Those diets are aimed at people whose digestive systems have an adverse reaction to specific foods. Examples of such foods which are for certain groups of people adversely perceived by the body, include things like: wheat, milk and dairy products, eggs, peanuts, fish, carbohydrates, citrus fruits, etc. And these are some of the things certain diets focus on avoiding.

In many cases the adverse reactions to such foods are caused by things that were added to those foods in the production process. This includes chemicals and hormones that were added to the feed for cattle and to the feed for chickens, chemicals that were added to the soil in which specific crops are grown, chemicals that were sprayed on growing plants, pollutants that were washed into rivers, lakes and oceans from which certain fish are then harvested, etc.

The problems don't lie with the foods God created for us. The problems are **the result of what we human beings have done** to the foods God created, as well as what we have done to our bodies.

Let's consider **one example** that causes a diet that is good for one person to be unfit for another person. Enter **broad-spectrum antibiotics**.

These antibiotics were designed to deal with a range of health issues, by killing off a wide range of disease-causing bacteria. The problem is that these antibiotics totally eradicate whole colonies of bacteria in the gut; not only the bad disease-causing bacteria, but also the good bacteria essential for digesting certain foods. Broad-spectrum antibiotics are really bad for our digestive tract.

Thus after someone has taken a course of such antibiotics, then colonies of good bacteria have also been destroyed, and they must therefore be reintroduced into the gut, to promote the digestion of

specific foods. While some strains of good bacteria may be re-established fairly easily, other strains of good bacteria may never fully recover from that exposure to broad-spectrum antibiotics. That in turn will then create digestive problems, where the person is unable to tolerate or process certain foods.

So in our over-medicated world today we find a whole host of digestive problems. Many of those problems are obviously caused by things other than broad-spectrum antibiotics. Those antibiotics are only one specific example amongst many other different causes. I am not trying to put all the blame on antibiotics, though antibiotics do hold a large share of the blame for problems with digestion.

But the result of all these things is that a diet that is good for one person may be totally unsuitable for someone else.

## **FOOD CATEGORIES**

Nutritionists recognize that all these foods can be divided into three major categories of nutrients: proteins, fats and carbohydrates. Many foods contain portions of all three of these categories. Such foods are then assigned to the category that constitutes the greatest part of that specific food. Thus foods that are classified as proteins typically also contain lesser portions of fats and carbohydrates; foods that are classified as carbohydrates typically also contain lesser portions of proteins and fats; and foods that are rich in fats in many cases also contain lesser amounts of proteins and carbohydrates.

These three components make up the total calorie-intake of our diet. Where many diets then differ is in assigning different percentage requirements for each of these three food categories within the diet.

Now there is no indication in the Bible regarding what percentage of our ideal diet should be protein, what percentage should be fat, and what percentage should be carbohydrates. There is no hint at what might be ideal ratios for these food components in our diet.

While there are no additional instructions regarding what we may eat, let's examine a number of biblical events that can nevertheless teach us certain things about the foods we eat.

## **BIBLICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

From Leviticus 11 we already know that God created specific animals as food for human beings. But let's look at **the Passover** which God instituted for Israel.

And **they shall eat the flesh** in that night, roast with fire, **and unleavened bread**; *and* with bitter *herbs* they shall eat it. (Exodus 12:8)

In the Old Testament every Israelite was required to eat the Passover every year. That had a significant consequence, and that is this:



## It was impossible for God's people in the Old Testament to be vegetarians!

All Israelites were **commanded** to eat the **meat** of the Passover lamb. Eating that meat represented access to the sacrifice that Jesus Christ would later bring for our sins. So in the Old Testament a theoretical vegetarian would not have been able to eat the Passover.

Secondly, the observance of the Passover also made the eating of bread a significant part of the meal. So Israelites were also **expected to eat wheat**.

And eating meat and wheat at this one specific occasion in the year implied that meat and wheat would also be a part of their diet throughout the year.

Let's also consider how God fed Elijah, when God instructed Elijah to hide himself from Ahab.

And it shall be, *that* you shall drink of the brook; and **I have commanded the ravens to feed you there**. (1 Kings 17:4)

And **the ravens** brought him **bread and flesh** in the morning, and **bread and flesh** in the evening; and he drank of the brook. (1 Kings 17:6)

Here God fed Elijah with **bread and meat twice a day**. And all Elijah had to drink was water. So all that Elijah ate was **wheat and meat**. That went on

for weeks and probably a few months, until that small stream dried up (verse 7). Then God sent Elijah to live with a widow and her young son. And there the diet for all three people consisted of nothing except **wheat and oil** (1 Kings 17:12-16). And these two different diets were all Elijah ate for a period of "three years and six months" (see James 5:17-18).

Now for the first few months of that period, it is clear that **God wanted Elijah to eat meat!** That is why God caused the ravens to bring meat to Elijah. And equally, **God also wanted Elijah to eat bread** made from wheat. God did not give Elijah a choice regarding what Elijah could eat.

This incident in the life of Elijah should make clear that God intends human beings in this age to eat both meat and bread. Therefore **I personally reject out of hand any diet that categorically excludes meat or bread**.

Now let's go back to Joseph in Egypt.

We know about the seven years of plenty, followed by seven years of famine. That was God's doing. In order to help people through that seven-year famine, God chose to provide a huge abundance of **wheat**.

And Joseph **gathered corn as the sand of the sea**, very much, until he left numbering; for *it was* without number. (Genesis 41:49)

(Comment: In the Bible “corn” is always a reference to wheat, and not to maize.)

This event tells us that **wheat is a very desirable crop**, which God has specifically provided as food for human beings. Later Moses said:

And He humbled you, and suffered you to hunger, and fed you with manna, which you knew not, neither did your fathers know; that He might make you to know that **man does not live by bread only**, but by every *word* that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD does man live. (Deuteronomy 8:3)

This verse tells us that, as far as physical food is concerned, God provided **wheat** to be **a staple in the human diet**. It was the dominant food item in the Israelite diet. And wheat was eaten primarily in the form of bread. Bread was so dominant in the diet that the word “bread” came to represent the total food intake from all sources, as in “give us this day our daily bread”.

We are familiar with the two occasions when Jesus Christ miraculously provided **huge quantities of food** to feed crowds of around 10,000 people at each occasion; i.e. 5000 men besides women and children at one occasion (Matthew 14:21), and 4000 men besides women and children at the other occasion (Matthew 15:38).

In both cases the original food supply consisted of only 5 or 7 loaves of bread, plus two or more small fish. So in these instances Jesus Christ provided only **bread and fish** for these huge crowds to eat.

Thus any general diet that questions the role of bread and fish is clearly at odds with the Bible. In fact, wheat is the main food crop mentioned in the Bible; in the KJV it is always called “corn”.

Now let's look at what God intended to provide for Israel. Here is what God told Moses.

where clean meats are not available, or they are very difficult to obtain.

**The motivation** for excluding animal products from one's diet is a deciding factor. And believing that a vegetarian diet is better for us human beings is obviously at odds with God, who for this present age expressly provided clean animals as a form of food for us human beings. To claim that vegetarianism “is better for us” in effect says “**I know better than God what is good for us**”. But that is never a good position for any of us to be in.

For healthy people without certain health problems it can never be the case that eating the meat of clean animals is somehow morally or nutritionally inferior to not eating any meat at all. Eating or not eating clean meats is not a moral issue!

## **THE COMPONENTS OF A BIBLICAL DIET**

God has provided a great variety of foods that we may eat. This great variety includes the following things:

- 1) All the plants that grow in and out of the ground (fruits, vegetables, tubers, nuts, roots, leaves, seeds, etc.), with the understanding that we ourselves need to establish **which plants we should not eat**, because eating those plants will affect our health in a negative way; i.e. plants that will kill us, or make us sick, or adversely affect our minds (e.g. hallucinogenic drugs).
- 2) All the clean land animals, clean birds and clean fish,
- 3) Milk and milk products from the milk of clean animals,
- 4) Eggs from clean birds,
- 5) Honey,
- 6) Wine,
- 7) Salt,
- 8) Oils, olive oil being the prime example in the Bible,
- 9) Wheat, in the Bible mostly in the form of bread.

One restriction God spelled out is that we are **not** to eat the **solid fat** of the animals we slaughter for food. And it is also clear that in Old Testament times it was impossible for any Israelites to be vegetarians, because all Israelites were required by God every year to eat meat from the Passover lamb.

Right, so we have established all the components of a diet that has God's approval. What we have not established, and what the Bible does not reveal is **how much of each of these components we should include** in our diet.

And that is where a large number of today's selection of diets argue and squabble. And many diets reject some of the things that God specifically provided for the human diet.

## **WHAT RATIOS ARE BEST?**

With this list of items that God created for food for human beings, I personally reject any diet that categorically seeks to exclude any of the food categories God has provided for us to eat. We should not reject on principle anything God provided for us. I also reject any diet that excludes some of these food categories on supposed “moral grounds”.

**Do we have to eat** all the items God provided for us? No, of course not! That is why God provided such a vast range of foods for us human beings. No person on earth will ever be able to eat some of every single food God makes available to us. So we can choose what to eat, and what not to eat from amongst that huge selection. We have the freedom to like some foods, and to not like other foods. If we don't like the taste of something, then we don't have to eat it. That's our personal choice.

But our choices should not be based on categorically excluding some of these groups on claimed moral or ethical grounds, or for supposed efforts to “save the world from destruction”.

**Some of the diets I personally find unacceptable** include the following:

1) All forms of **vegetarianism**. God specifically created certain animals and their products (i.e. milk and eggs) as food for human beings. At the Passover God commanded every Israelite to eat some meat every year. And for Elijah God only provided meat and bread twice a day for several months, if not longer.

2) Any diet that eliminates all forms of **bread**. Throughout biblical history God repeatedly provided bread and wheat to deal with food shortages. And Jesus Christ created huge quantities of bread for two very large hungry crowds.

We've seen how bread is almost always included in references to food. For Abraham it was “**bread** and wine”, for Elijah it was “**bread** and meat” followed by “**bread** and oil”, for God's Feasts it is “**bread** (i.e. corn) and wine and fat (i.e. oil) and meat”, for feeding huge crowds of 10,000 people it was “**bread** and fish”, for the 7-year famine in Egypt it was “**bread** (i.e. corn)”.

Christ's reference to “man shall not live by bread alone” is an acknowledgment that on the level of physical food bread is accepted as a significant component of the diet.

3) Any diet that categorically excludes **alcoholic drinks**. God brought wine to Abraham, and God encourages us to drink wine at His annual Feasts. God provides alcoholic drinks to be enjoyed in moderation. Excluding alcoholic beverages as a personal choice or preference is perfectly fine, and that is not the same as rejecting alcoholic beverages as unfit for human consumption.

4) Any diet that categorically excludes **eggs and dairy products**.

5) Any diet that promotes eating **the solid fat of animals**.

6) Any diet that categorically excludes **all fruits** or even just **specific fruits**. Fruits were the very first foods that God instructed man to eat. And almost all fruits were very specifically designed for human beings to eat.

7) Any diet that requires adherence to **specific ratios** for food items. I don't believe that God desires us to adhere to specific ratios. Yes, we certainly need to avoid extremes, like eating too much salt and like consuming too much wine. But if you want to just eat only bread or meat or eggs or bananas or apples or yogurt or carrots, etc. for any specific meal, then you certainly have the freedom to do so, **without fear of breaking some dietary principle**.

8) Any diet that tells me that we **cannot mix certain foods**. As long as the foods are a part of the list we have established, we should feel free to mix them as we choose. Now if it is clear that combining two specific foods will cause nausea or an upset stomach, then we should not mix them. But when that is not the case, then we must be free to decide for ourselves what foods to mix at which meal.

9) Any diet that attempts to prescribe **what category of foods** must be eaten **in the morning**, and **what foods** must be eaten **in the afternoon** or evening. For an extended period God had Elijah eating meat and bread for breakfast, and meat and bread again for dinner. So Elijah had protein and carbohydrates for breakfast, followed by protein and carbohydrates for dinner. And that was God's doing. Throughout human history the diet for most people was totally dependent on whatever food sources happened to be available.

10) Any diet that requires the addition of certain **exotic plants**, or the addition of very **specific supplements**. If it is a plant extract that has to be imported from India or China or the Himalayan Mountains or the Amazon forest, then that plant or supplement is **not needed** for our diet.

Occasionally, based on availability, adding certain plants or supplements is fine, but making that addition a requirement is not fine at all. Making it a requirement is simply making more money for somebody somewhere along the line. And as far as such supplements are concerned, we should always reject any supplements that include extracts from unclean sea creatures or from unclean animals or from toxic plants.

11) Any diet that views **certain foods** on our list as "**bad**" and seeks to exclude those foods completely.

12) Any diet that prescribes **the quantities of food** we are expected to adhere to. Any diet that tells me to eat "so many ounces of this, and so many ounces of that", etc. is not one I would ever consider accepting. I don't believe that that is the way God would like us to live ... weighing food portions and counting calories. Look at how God instructed Israel in the wilderness, when God provided the manna.

And when they did mete *it* with an omer, **he that gathered much had nothing over**, and **he that gathered little had no lack**; they gathered every man **according to his eating**. (Exodus 16:18)

Some people gathered more manna, and other people gathered less manna. Everyone gathered manna “according to his eating”. And that was fine. God allowed people to eat as much or as little as they felt like eating. If you felt like eating more, then you just gathered more manna the next day. Counting ounces or calories takes the joy out of eating, and it reduces eating to a “one size fits all” nuisance activity.

While processed foods don’t constitute any specific diet that is being promoted today, like most of you I also try to exclude **all processed foods** as much as possible. I suppose this depends on how we define “processed”. But I avoid the “food cocktails” produced in our food factories, things whose list of ingredients includes words that we can’t even pronounce properly. For me that includes junk foods and most instant foods. And you probably also already avoid most of those things.

Apart from staying within the confines of the list we have established, **I myself have never at any time adhered to any diet** that has been promoted in any diet book. I eat protein, fats and carbohydrates at any meal of the day, just as I feel like eating. I don’t have a specific diet regimen. My personal food preferences have always been for fruits and certain vegetables. So when fruits are available in abundance, then I usually eat more fruits and less proteins and fats. And when fruits are not available, then I eat more of the proteins and fats.

**Availability** is probably the main criterion for the diet that I follow. On our recent trip through Germany we were able to pick our own cherries on a cherry farm, at greatly reduced prices. So after that visit to the cherry farm I ate mostly big red cherries for the next three days. I wouldn’t call it a cherry diet, but for those three days generous quantities of cherries were the dominant food item in my diet. After that I went back to eating more of other foods.

Then there have been times when we were able to buy five pound blocks of various imported French and Italian cheeses (including Gorgonzola, etc.) for around \$2 per pound. At those times I have eaten more cheese for a while, and less of the other foods ... until those cheeses were eaten up, and then I went back to eating more of the other foods.

I don’t believe that God expects us to eat according to any specific regimen. When God told Adam “of every tree of the garden you may **freely** eat” (Genesis 2:16), then God was giving Adam the freedom to eat from those trees at any time of day, in whatever quantities Adam felt like eating. God didn’t expect Adam to count calories. The same point applies to the manna the Israelites ate in the wilderness. Some people ate greater portions of manna than some other people. And that was fine.

Now all the things I have been saying apply to people with average good health. My statements are not meant for people with specific health problems.

**When people suffer from specific health problems**, then they may well be asked to follow a very restricted food plan, a plan that is specifically aimed to positively influence the health problem they are experiencing. Some of the things I have said in this article may not apply in their specific circumstances. There are diets to deal with diabetes, with heart disease, with various cancers, with arthritis, etc. Many of those diets have achieved very positive results, and they are certainly acceptable for people with those health conditions.

My article is intended for the average Church of God member with average good health. It is not intended as advice for any specific health issue.

So in conclusion:

1) I believe that **there is no perfect ratio** of X% protein, Y% fat, and Z% carbohydrates that would be ideal for everybody. You like certain diets you have come across? Fine, try them out if you like. But don't view any of the diets as "the gospel truth about the human diet". Always **feel free to disagree** with any nutritional advice you find in some book or magazine.

2) Figure out **how many of the diets** that I find disagreeable **you also find disagreeable**. And then make those your own personal disagreements with any commercial diet.

3) Honestly evaluate **your own health circumstances**, in the context of your own age and physical condition, and then ask yourself if you have any health issue that might benefit from some changes in your diet. Or make an internet search for dietary remedies for the health issue you may have identified. Perhaps eating more or less proteins, carbohydrates or fats might improve your health? Perhaps eating raw foods may be beneficial for you?

4) And whatever food choices you may make, **make eating an enjoyable activity**, not an activity that amounts to fulfilling a duty to adhere to percentages and to specific categories of foods. You like a low protein diet? Fine, then eat a low protein diet. And if you like a high protein diet, that's also fine, so go ahead and treat yourself to a high protein diet. Be observant for any changes in your health, if you make any dietary changes.

5) If you notice health issues coming upon you, **consider reevaluating your own diet**, and perhaps making some changes. Search for right answers on the internet.

6) Whenever you find a diet that really impresses you, do yourself a favor. **Search the internet for critical reviews** of that "impressive diet". Then evaluate those critical reviews for yourself. Do the critics have valid points or not? Then you can decide on the merits of that "impressive diet".

7) Don't become a slave to someone else's ideas. **Make up your own mind** regarding what foods you will eat. And be willing to change your diet, if you find something that works better for you, obviously always within the confines of the list of foods God provided for us human beings.

And enjoy the foods you decide to eat.

Frank W Nelte