

Cholesterol and Heart Healthy Lifestyle in the Bible

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“Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, ‘Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see.’ So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days.” - Daniel 1:11-14

"This is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever you live: You must not eat any fat or any blood....The Lord said to Moses, ‘Say to the Israelites: ‘Do not eat any of the fat of cattle, sheep or goats.”- Leviticus 3:17; 7:23

The scriptural verses stated above are a clear instruction and teaching on a heart-healthy diet for God’s people. God Himself was the One who gave this dietary law/regulation as it is His perfect will for His people to live a long and healthy life. However, it takes responsibility, awareness and education, and action (obedience) on the part of His people if they were to live a long and healthy life.

Based on the Scripture, some foods such as fat and blood in the animal products are dangerous and will ruin one’s health. It will make a person unhealthy and will shorten his/her life span. On the other hand, there are certain types of foods such as fruits, vegetables and sufficient water that can help heal our body as well as keeping it strong and healthy. This was the dietary regulation that Daniel and his friends followed for two reasons – one was to keep themselves ritually clean before God, and secondly, to live in obedience to God’s will. And the result was excellent health and long life.

This principle of healthy living still applies today. God expects us to be health-conscious and learn to seek His will pertaining to the care of our body. God is the best doctor/physician of all physicians. He is the greatest dietitian, wellness and fitness instructor of all. He knows the way to live with optimum physical, spiritual, emotional and mental health. Let us seek Him, and obey His ways and will for our lives. Thus, we will be more effective in our service to God, and in fulfilling our mission to the church and to the world.

God expects His people to trust and obey Him even if He doesn’t explain it to them why they were not supposed to eat fat from meat. I believe if God had been talking about technology, computer, medical and health terminologies His people would not have been able to understand it. Thus, instead of saying, “Don’t eat cholesterol,” God would just tell them “Don’t eat fat from the animal products as this won’t be good for your heart.” It is fascinating to me how The American Heart Association (AHA) explains and describes cholesterol:

Cholesterol is a waxy substance that comes from two sources: your body and food. Your body, and especially your liver, makes all the cholesterol you need and circulates it through the blood. But cholesterol is also found in

foods from animal sources, such as meat, poultry and full-fat dairy products. Your liver produces more cholesterol when you eat a diet high in saturated and trans fats. Excess cholesterol can form plaque between layers of artery walls, making it harder for your heart to circulate blood. Plaque can break open and cause blood clots. If a clot blocks an artery that feeds the brain, it causes a stroke. If it blocks an artery that feeds the heart, it causes a heart attack

Wow! This gives us more understanding as to why God prohibits His people from eating fat from various types of meat. Though we need cholesterol, our body (the liver) already produces enough of it. I do not think the AHA is engaged in Faith and Medicine as we are in our congregation. However, the AHA scientific study on cholesterol and the dangerous consequence of it reveal that, if not managed well, it will clog the heart and brain arteries which will eventually lead to heart disease, heart attack and stroke. This study by the AHA confirms what God is saying in the Scripture. So, go healthy in the grace of God; follow His dietary law – avoid animal fat, eat more fruits and vegetables, and drink sufficient water. The Bible remains true and relevant even to our time today. It is a great source of information for healthy living and many aspects of human affairs.