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Introduction

You Came with an Owner's Manual

Would you like to feel better, lose some weight, lower your cholesterol, and get fit?

Do you believe in the Bible? Do you believe that the wisdom found within its pages still applies today?

If so, *Eating By The Book* may be what you're looking for.

According to scripture, God's plan for you is that you live your life *abundantly* (John 10:10). Most would agree that having good health is a big part of that abundance.

In *Eating By The Book* you will be challenged and encouraged. Challenged to consider the application of God's Word regarding your health today. Encouraged by the discovery of simple, practical steps you can take to maximize the health of your body that is so fearfully and wonderfully made. You'll learn how to lose weight and keep it off. You'll also learn how

to prevent the two biggest killers of Americans today. And finally, you'll discover what the Bible specifically has to say about what your family eats for dinner tonight.

We don't need science to confirm God's Word, but isn't it nice when the secular world finally starts to catch up to the truths of the Bible? In just the last several years scientific research is beginning to make a case for the benefits of faith. Everything being equal, it appears your religious faith can have a profound effect on your health. In over 200 studies that have looked at the role of religion and health, the conclusions suggest a strong relationship.

In over 200 studies that have looked at the role of religion and health, the conclusions suggest a strong relationship.

For example, a study at Dartmouth Medical School found that heart surgery patients who drew comfort and strength from their faith had a death rate three times lower than those who did not. Another study of 400 hospitalized heart patients discovered that intercessory prayer may actually work. (As believers we know it does, but to get the world to

acknowledge that there might actually be something there is amazing.) In the 10-month study, half the patients had people praying for them, the other half did not. The half being prayed for, incidentally, *did not know* they were being prayed for. Those receiving prayer needed less medicine and had lower blood pressure, less congestive heart failure, and fewer heart attacks!

Isn't it interesting that God tells us in Matthew 18:19 "Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven."

A review of the scientific literature shows that the influence of religious faith can also result in

- Reduced blood pressure
- Increased survival rates
- Less alcohol, cigarette, and drug use
- Less depression, anger, and anxiety
- A greater sense of happiness and well-being
- Greater marital satisfaction and stability
- Less stress and fewer psychological problems
- Better self-esteem

Now, some might argue that those with religious beliefs are healthier because their religion prohibits or discourages their involvement in dangerous activities like smoking and using drugs. While that certainly may be part of the answer, your body doesn't care *why* you're not smoking—it simply appreciates the fact that you're not! Even so, studies that factored out these dangerous lifestyle habits *still* found a protective effect from faith.

In other words, researchers compared religious people who smoked with atheists who smoked and still found that the people of faith had better health! In spite of that faith, however, the health experience of many Christians often looks very similar to that of nonbelievers because their lifestyles are not that much different from the world's. The grocery cart of a Christian looks about the same as that of someone who has never opened a Bible. That's too bad, because God's Word has *a lot* to say about what you eat.

When Moses came down from Mount Sinai God gave His people these simple commandments for life (Exodus 20:3–17):

Jehovah's Top Ten List

1. You shall have no other gods before me.
2. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them. . . .
3. You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.
4. Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. . . .
5. Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.
6. You shall not murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

Not a bad list. Do you know of a better set of rules to live by? Would even nonbelievers benefit from following them?

As Christians we are now, in fact, saved from the curse of the law. But it still shows us what God desires in our life. If we are indeed born-again Christians, then our desire should be to please the Lord. If the law shows us what pleases God, then surely our desire should be to do what pleases Him. But not out of obligation so much as out of joy and thankfulness!

Jesus said he came not to destroy the law but to fulfill it (Matthew 5:17). But that word "fulfill" has an unfortunate

sense of completion or finality about it. A better interpretation of the original Greek word is to re-establish or re-affirm. When Christ came he confirmed the law as the standard of righteousness.

It is not legalism to desire to follow God's law. Legalism is trying to establish your righteousness with God outside of Jesus Christ.

The Ten Commandments are from the Old Covenant. Jesus Christ is the New Covenant. But those commandments are still as beneficial today as when they were first given 3,500 years ago. Imagine what a different world we'd have if people everywhere made their daily decisions based on these ten guidelines to life.

Would the United States have one of the highest murder rates of any industrialized nation in the world? Not if everyone practiced "You shall not murder," and "You shall not covet." If people didn't lie as a matter of course in everyday modern life, this world would be turned upside down! Time and time again, God continues to prove the timeless nature of His Word.

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What you eat or don't eat certainly has *nothing* to do with your eternal life. If you've accepted God's gift of Jesus Christ as your only means of salvation, then according to the Bible you *are* saved. *Period.* Hopefully the actions you take after receiving that salvation will reflect the new person you've become. But it's clear that modern-day Christians are no longer spiritually bound to the Old Testament dietary laws.

However, you may still get physical benefit from following those dietary laws! Our bodies, our digestive systems, and the enzymes that break down our food are basically the

same today as they were when Abraham was alive. The human body has not changed that much in 3,500 years. Christ's resurrection changed the nature of our spiritual relationship with God, but it didn't change the nature of our physical bodies.

Someday we will have a new temple, but right now we have the old-fashioned kind, the kind that gets sick, the kind that dies. Our spiritual relationship with God no longer requires us to follow the dietary laws, but we may still want to because of the truth and wisdom of the Old Testament. When we as New Testament believers apply that truth and wisdom today, we can expect to benefit by doing so.

God's wisdom never ends. And just as an automobile owner's manual tells us how to work on a particular model, God's Word tells us how to work on the human model. There has never been a better guide for living life than the Bible. It shows us how to be a better spouse, parent, and businessperson. It tells us how to handle our money, our anger, our sorrow, and our joy. God's owner's manual also reveals how to experience the abundant health that God wants for His children.