

Does God Care What You Eat?

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This booklet is a short version of a longer book. To learn more information about the book, turn to page 22 of this booklet.

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Introduction

Imagine a big plate of hot food in front of you. Your mouth probably waters as you think about it. Now, consider this: would you eat anything put in front of you?

We all have standards as it relates to different things. For instance, you limit the amount of time you spend in hot weather because you can have a heat stroke. If you go out into hot weather, you must stay hydrated. Before you go out into cold weather, you dress appropriately.

You also have standards when it comes to eating. You purposely limit the amount of food you eat because you will get sick if you eat too much. There are probably certain foods that you do not like. Did you know that God also has certain foods He likes and others He dislikes?

One of the first instructions given to man and woman in the Garden had to do with what they ate. “16 The LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; 17 but you shall not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; for in the day that you eat of it, you will surely die’” (Gen. 2:16-17).

Apparently, God does care what we eat! In this booklet, you will learn God’s instructions for food. It is the way that will bring prosperity to your health and spiritual blessing.

Chapter 1

Does God Care What You Eat?

As mentioned in the introduction, one of the first instructions God gave to mankind in the Garden had to do with food. Special designations for food is a theme found throughout the Bible.

You are probably familiar with the story of Noah and the Ark. God commanded Noah to build an Ark so that his family would be protected from the flood. The historical account of these events is found in Genesis chapters 6 through 8.

God told Noah that this flood was going to come upon the entire world. To save some of the animal life, God asked Noah to take some of every kind of animal with him onto the Ark. It is commonly taught that Noah took two of every kind of animal onto the Ark.

In Genesis 7:1-2, God said to Noah: “Come with all of your household into the ship, for I have seen your righteousness before me in this generation. 2 You shall take seven pairs of every clean animal with you, the male and his female. Of the animals that are not clean, take two, the male and his female.” We learn from these two verses that Noah was told to take with him seven pairs of clean animals and two pairs of unclean animals. This is an important detail!

Why would Noah take with him seven pairs of clean animals and only two pairs of the unclean? First of all, Noah later used clean animals to make sacrifices to God. In Genesis 8:20, the Bible reads, “Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal, and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.” In verse 21, we learn that God was pleased at this sacrifice. The clean animals were needed to please God. Secondly, Noah and his family ate meat. This means there needed to be more clean animals than unclean animals.

With the example of Noah, we can see the continuing theme of

God making a distinction between that which should be eaten and that which should not be eaten. There were more clean animals taken on the Ark than unclean animals. How do we account for the difference between these two kinds of animals? The distinction is not made clear in Genesis, but later in the Bible it is.

When God brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, He gave them instructions about how to live their daily lives. We find these instructions in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. In these books, we learn instructions about how to treat our neighbors with love (Leviticus 19:11-18). We also learn about God's dietary expectations for our lives. Each of these dietary instructions has medical reasons; they will promote good health.

In Leviticus Chapter 11, God clarifies the difference between clean and unclean animals. He gives specific instructions about each of them. In Leviticus 17:13-16, we are taught to drain the blood from our meat before we eat it. God also instructs us not to eat any animal that is found dead. Animals that are found dead might have diseases which can cause illness or death to those who consume them. In Deuteronomy 14:22-26, we learn that during the appointed times, called the Feasts of the Lord, we are to buy the foods we enjoy eating. Other simple instructions about food are found in the Bible. Consider the following:

“...wine that makes the heart of man glad, oil to make his face to shine, and bread that strengthens man's heart” (Psalm 104:15).

“...but that we write to them that they abstain from the pollution of idols, from sexual immorality, from what is strangled, and from blood” (Acts 15:20).

“Be no longer a drinker of water only, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities” (I Timothy 5:23).

Chapter 2

Leviticus Chapter 11

Recall from the last chapter that Noah took seven pairs of clean animals and two pairs of unclean animals on the ark. Later in the Bible, God specifically designates animals as either clean or unclean. This is found in Leviticus chapter 11. Below this paragraph, we have listed these animals with examples and Bible references to each one.

Four categories of clean animals that God says are ‘to eat’ or food:

- 1) Animals with a split hoof that also chew the cud** (cows, goats, lambs) Lev. 11:3
- 2) Animals with both fins and scales** (bass, trout, salmon) Lev. 11:9
- 3) Birds that are not prohibited in Leviticus 11:13-19** (chicken and turkey)
- 4) Insects with four legs for hopping** (locusts and grasshoppers) Lev. 11:21-22

Six categories of unclean animals that God says we are not to eat or touch their carcasses:

- 1) Animals that do not chew the cud and that do not have a split hoof** (pigs and camels) Lev. 11:4-8
- 2) Sea creatures without fins and scales** (catfish, shrimp, lobster, and all other shellfish) Lev. 11:9-12
- 3) Certain types of birds** (eagles, ravens, vultures) Lev. 11:13-19
- 4) Flying insects that do not have jointed legs for hopping** (hornets and bees) Lev. 11:20-23
- 5) Animals that walk on paws** (panthers, dogs, cats) Lev. 11:27-28
- 6) Certain animals that walk on the ground or crawl on the ground** (rats, weasels, lizards, snakes) Lev. 11:29-31

(This list is repeated in Deuteronomy 14:3-21)

A common misconception about Leviticus chapter 11 is that God is distinguishing between clean and unclean food. When you read the chapter, you will learn that God is distinguishing between clean and unclean **animals**. He only declares clean animals to be food. God gives four specific categories of clean animals in Leviticus 11 and six categories of unclean animals. God said that the clean animals are for us to eat, but we are asked by God to neither **touch nor eat** the dead body of an unclean animal.

As we look at this list, notice that God categorizes every animal as clean or unclean based upon their biological characteristics. This refers to how they were made by God. For instance, animals with both a split hoof and that chew the cud are clean. This would include goats, lambs, and cows. If an animal only has one of these characteristics, it is unclean. This would include pigs and camels.

To give you another example, sea creatures with both fins **and** scales are considered clean. This would include fish such as tilapia or salmon. Sea creatures with only fins **or** scales would be unclean. This would include all shellfish.

He said that the clean animals are to eat and the unclean animals are not to eat. They are simply unclean. Many of the animals that are unclean, such as pigs, shrimp, and vultures, are made to clean up the earth. God asks us not to eat these animals because they were not made for the human body.

In Leviticus 11, God is not putting an unnecessary restriction on us. In the introduction of this booklet, we discussed how each of us has our own restrictions in life. We have our own standards. As Christians, we want to have God's Word as the standard for our living. He gave us a dietary guideline for a way of life that will give us physical and spiritual health.

This booklet will help you to understand why God gave these distinctions. You will greatly improve your physical health and even see new spiritual growth by following them. You will never regret it!

In chapter 1, we reviewed how Noah could tell the difference between clean and unclean animals. Interestingly enough, Noah lived about 1,000 years before God spoke the dietary laws in Leviticus chapter 11.

Noah knew about the dietary laws long before they were given! This is amazing! In the beginning, the dietary laws were simply something humans already understood. The knowledge of it had been lost from Noah to the time Leviticus 11 was given. In Leviticus, God restored the understanding of clean and unclean animals to the world.

Chapter 3

Are the Dietary Laws Still Relevant Today?

In the last two chapters we reviewed how God emphasized the difference between clean and unclean animals in Genesis and Leviticus. Are the dietary laws still relevant today? Does time somehow lessen their meaning?

The very last book of the Bible is named Revelation. Towards the end, unclean animals are mentioned! Revelation 18:2 reads, “He cried with a mighty voice, saying, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, and she has become a habitation of demons, a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird!”

The Apostle Paul was one of the early ministers of Christianity. He instructed us to stay away from unclean animals. In 2 Corinthians 6:17, he wrote, “Therefore ‘Come out from among them, and be separate,’ says the Lord. ‘Touch no unclean thing. I will receive you.’”

In the Bible, unclean animals are mentioned in the beginning, the end, and in between. This means they remain very important to us today.

If you remember from the introduction, I mentioned how there are standards each of us has in our own lives. For instance, you dress warm when it is cold outside. You limit exposure to heat. These standards do not change over time. They are standards humans have had since the beginning. Leviticus 11 is no different.

There are some people that say Jesus, Peter, or even Paul changed the dietary laws. Where did this idea come from? We will explore this using their own words.

Jesus made a very important statement in Matthew 5:17-18 that will help us understand this subject: “Don’t think that I came to destroy the law or the prophets. I didn’t come to destroy, but to

fulfill. For most certainly, I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not even one smallest letter or one tiny pen stroke shall in any way pass away from the law, until all things are accomplished.”

The first five books of the Bible are sometimes collectively called the Law of God or Torah. Jesus told us that He did not come to destroy or change the Law. In fact, He said that even when heaven and earth pass away, the Law will not be changed. Not even one letter will be changed! This includes the dietary laws. This means Jesus only came to affirm what was spoken in the Old Testament. He came to reveal to us the real meaning.

There is one particular passage that has been used to say that Jesus did away with the distinction between clean and unclean animals: Matthew 15:1-20 (repeated in Mark 7:1-23). Since unclean animals are mentioned in Revelation 18:2, this gospel passage must refer to something else.

Jesus was confronted by a group called the Pharisees. The Pharisees were an important sect of Judaism in Jesus’ day. They had a ritual hand washing that they performed before every meal. This was a tradition or man-made rule. In other words, it was not something God said to do.

Jesus and His disciples bypassed this tradition and just started eating. The Pharisees rebuked them for eating with dirty hands. Jesus corrected the Pharisees because they followed this man-made rule very strictly. However, they were very lax in keeping God’s commandments. Let’s read Matthew 15:1-20:

1 Then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem, saying, 2 “Why do your disciples disobey the tradition of the elders? For they don’t wash their hands when they eat bread.” 3 He answered them, “**Why do you also disobey the commandment of God because of your tradition?** 4 **For God commanded,** ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and, ‘He who speaks evil of father or mother, let him be put to death.’ 5 But you say,

‘Whoever may tell his father or his mother, “Whatever help you might otherwise have gotten from me is a gift devoted to God,” 6 he shall not honor his father or mother.’ **You have made the commandment of God void because of your tradition.** 7 You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, 8 ‘These people draw near to me with their mouth, and honor me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. 9 And in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrine rules made by men.’ ” 10 He summoned the multitude, and said to them, “Hear, and understand. 11 That which enters into the mouth doesn’t defile the man; but that which proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man.” 12 Then the disciples came, and said to him, “Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?” 13 But he answered, “Every plant which my heavenly Father didn’t plant will be uprooted. 14 Leave them alone. They are blind guides of the blind. If the blind guide the blind, both will fall into a pit.” 15 Peter answered him, “Explain the parable to us.” 16 So Jesus said, “Do you also still not understand? 17 Don’t you understand that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the belly, and then out of the body? 18 But the things which proceed out of the mouth come out of the heart, and they defile the man. 19 For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, sexual sins, thefts, false testimony, and blasphemies. 20 These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands doesn’t defile the man.”

First of all, the issue in this passage of Scripture has to do with eating with unwashed hands. **How** they were eating not **what** they were eating was the issue. Jesus concluded this controversy by saying, “These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands doesn’t defile the man” (Matthew 15:20). The whole point He emphasized was that this man-made ritual did not make a person defiled. By reading the context, we see that Jesus actually upheld keeping God’s commandments (such as honoring your father and mother). This was to refute traditions or man-made teachings.

The Apostle Peter was one of the first twelve disciples chosen by

Jesus. Peter was very devoted, but he had to let go of old ways of thinking. In Acts chapter 10, God corrects him on this issue.

In Acts chapter 10, Peter had a vision of a sheet coming down to earth. This sheet had all kinds of four-footed animals on it (clean and unclean). The Bible then reads:

13 A voice came to him, “Rise, Peter, kill and eat!” 14 But Peter said, “Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.” 15 A voice came to him again the second time, “What God has cleansed, you must not call unclean” (Acts 10:13-14).

Some people will use these verses to say that Peter was negating the dietary laws. If we keep reading the chapter, the meaning becomes clear.

In verse 17, we learn that Peter did not understand the meaning of the vision: “Now while Peter was very perplexed in himself what the vision which he had seen might mean...” In verse 19, he was still at a loss to the vision’s meaning: “While Peter was pondering the vision...”

Cornelius, a Gentile man, sent three men to find Peter. He wanted his household to hear the gospel message. When the three men arrived, Peter was reluctant to go. Why?

During that time period, the Jewish people believed that any fellowship with a non-Jewish person (called a Gentile or Greek) made them unclean. This was a man-made tradition, not a commandment from God. Peter eventually went with them. When he arrived at Cornelius house, he realized the meaning of the vision.

“He said to them, ‘You yourselves know how it is an unlawful thing for a man who is a Jew to join himself or come to one of another nation, but God has shown me that I shouldn’t call any man unholy or unclean’ ” (Acts 10:28).

God was showing Peter through the vision that Gentiles had been cleansed by God to receive salvation. There should not be prejudice towards Gentiles or anyone. Notice Acts 10:14. In this verse, Peter confessed he had never eaten anything unclean. This event happened years after Jesus died and resurrected from the dead. This is yet more confirmation that Jesus did not teach His disciples to eat unclean animal meat.

We can clearly see that this vision did not negate the dietary laws. It had to do with Gentiles being cleansed. Peter also wrote two letters for believers. In the first letter, he actually instructed believers to follow Leviticus 11.

In I Peter 1:13-16, he wrote, “13 Therefore prepare your minds for action. Be sober, and set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ— 14 as children of obedience, not conforming yourselves according to your former lusts as in your ignorance, 15 but just as he who called you is holy, you yourselves also be holy in all of your behavior; 16 because it is written, ‘You shall be holy; for I am holy.’”

Peter instructs us to be holy in everything we do. This includes eating! He then points us to the resolution. The phrase “You shall be holy; for I am holy” is a direct quote from Leviticus 11:44-45. Peter’s own testimony teaches us that he never ate anything unclean. In his letter, he also taught other believers to do the same.

The Apostle Paul was a special minister sent to spread the Gospel to Gentiles. Earlier in this chapter we quoted one of his letters. He specifically instructed Gentiles not to touch any unclean thing. There is one letter of Paul where he seems to contradict this view.

In I Timothy 4:1-6, Paul wrote: “1 But the Spirit says expressly that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to **seducing spirits and doctrines of demons**, 2 through the hypocrisy of men who speak lies, branded in their own conscience as with a hot iron, 3 **forbidding marriage and commanding to abstain from foods** which God created to be re-

ceived with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. 4 For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, if it is received with thanksgiving. 5 For **it is sanctified through the word of God and prayer.** 6 If you instruct the brothers of these things, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, nourished in the words of the faith, and of the good doctrine which you have followed.”

Notice how Paul started these verses. He began by referring to teachings that came from demons. Did a demon speak the dietary laws in Leviticus 11? Absolutely not! The Bible says that God spoke them. This one fact alone eliminates the possibility that these verses refer to the dietary laws!

Next, Paul addressed the two false teachings: 1) forbidding people to marry and 2) ordering others to abstain from “foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth” (verse 3). What is truth? Jesus said that the Word of God is truth (John 17:17). What are the foods that were created to be received with thanksgiving by the Word of God? Clean animals! Human consumption was one purpose for animals.

Paul then said that the animals God created are sanctified by two things: the word of God **and** prayer. Many people have simply read the prayer part and overlooked the rest. In the Word of God, pigs, shellfish, and other unclean animals were never set apart for humans to eat. The word sanctified simply means to be set apart. Prayer will not make a pig chew the cud. It will not make a shrimp grow fins and scales. God did not make these animals for human consumption. Only clean animals are set apart by the Word of God for food.

So what false teaching is Paul referring to in I Timothy? The Catholic Church historically has taught that certain people (their priests) should not marry **and** that believers should not eat any meat on certain days, especially Friday (Catholic Encyclopedia 1907. Article: Abstinence). God never said to abstain from clean

animal meat on Fridays in the Bible.

Moreover, the Bible does not prohibit marriage for ministers. Priests were allowed to marry (Leviticus 21:1-15). Christ, our Lord and High Priest, is going to marry a bride (Eph. 5:22-32, Rev. 19:1-8). Marriage is permissible for believers and clean animals cannot be forbidden by man.

Noah is called a righteous man in the Bible (Gen. 6:9, Ez. 14:14, 2 Peter 2:5). If this righteous man knew the difference between clean and unclean animals, it is important for Christians today to know them as well. God declares the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:10).

Chapter 4

Why Did God Give the Dietary Laws?

Why did God give us the dietary laws? What lessons can we learn from them?

The first reason God gave the dietary laws has to do with holiness. In Leviticus 11:43-45, God said, “43 You shall not make yourselves abominable with any creeping thing that creeps. You shall not make yourselves unclean with them, that you should be defiled by them. 44 For I am The LORD your God. Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be holy; for I am holy. You shall not defile yourselves with any kind of creeping thing that moves on the earth. 45 For I am The LORD who brought you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.”

In the last chapter, we read that Peter quoted Leviticus 11:45 in I Peter 1:15-16. The primary reason why God gave these dietary instructions is holy living. The word holy simply means “set apart for God’s purpose.” Holiness is a lifestyle that represents the character of God. Notice that the call to obey Leviticus 11 is not to be Jewish or an Israelite, but to follow God. It is a selfless call.

Holiness involves specific behaviors that set us apart from the rest of the world to honor God. Secondly, holiness is a witness to the world. It allows those in the world to see the character of God manifested.

After all, God sent His Son to die for us. We owe Him everything. Our personal desires should not take precedent over representing Him.

The second reason why God gave the dietary laws is for our physical health. The consumption of pork has been linked to increased instances of Multiple Sclerosis (1) and heart problems (2). The meat, even when cooked properly, has high instances of pathogens and viruses (3). This includes Hepatitis E, Trichinosis,

Swine Flu, Nipah Virus, and Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome (PRRS). In 2013, 69% of pork samples contained *Yersinia Enterocolitica*, a bacteria that can cause illness (4). Pigs are growing resistant to the antibiotics that fight some of these bacteria. Shrimp and other shellfish are among the most common food allergies in the country. They have been linked to coronary artery disease (5) and also contain harmful bacteria (6).

I personally know a person who followed the dietary laws and within 3 months saw his blood pressure come down to a normal range and his cholesterol go down 100 points! That is just 3 months of following God's dietary guidelines.

God does not want us to do things that harm our own bodies or increase the risk of personal harm. Jesus came to give us an abundant life (John 10:10). Eating these animals restricts our own potential for success in life. When we are physically injured, it can hinder us from helping with the work of spreading the gospel.

The third and final reason that God gave these dietary guidelines has to do with spiritual health. As believers, we have an enemy called the devil who wants to kill, steal, and destroy. He wants to take from you. We can do things to protect our lives from the devil's influence. When we are walking with the Lord, reading our Bibles daily, and praying, it protects our hearts and minds from the devil's deception. The dietary laws are another way we can guard ourselves from unnecessary spiritual attacks.

God called the animals we cannot eat unclean. The Old Testament was written in the Hebrew language. The Hebrew word translated as "unclean" refers to moral and spiritual uncleanness. It is not an issue of physical uncleanness. In fact, God informs us that if we touch or eat an unclean animal, we will become unclean. This spiritual uncleanness will last until you wash with water and the next sunset is reached according to Leviticus 11:25 (sunset in the Bible marks the end of one day and the beginning of a new day).

There is a story in the Bible to help us better illustrate this point –

it is found in Mark 5:1-13.

Mark 5:1-13

1 They came to the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes. 2 When he had come out of the boat, immediately a man with an **unclean spirit** met him out of the tombs. 3 He lived in the tombs. Nobody could bind him any more, not even with chains, 4 because he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been torn apart by him, and the fetters broken in pieces. Nobody had the strength to tame him. 5 Always, night and day, in the tombs and in the mountains, he was crying out, and cutting himself with stones. 6 When he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and bowed down to him, 7 and crying out with a loud voice, “What have I to do with you, Jesus, you Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, don’t torment me.” 8 For he said to him, “Come out of the man, you **unclean spirit!**” 9 He asked him, “What is your name?” He said to him, “My name is Legion, for we are many.” 10 He begged him much that he would not send them away out of the country. 11 Now on the mountain-side there was a great herd of pigs feeding. 12 **All the demons begged him, saying, “Send us into the pigs, that we may enter into them.”** 13 At once Jesus gave them permission. The unclean spirits came out and entered into the pigs. The herd of about two thousand rushed down the steep bank into the sea, and they were drowned in the sea.

In Mark 5:1-13, Jesus encountered a man who was filled with unclean spirits, also called demons. Jesus sent these unclean spirits into a herd of unclean animals. Notice that the unclean spirits actually asked Jesus to be sent into the heard of swine. This is not a coincidence.

What does this mean for us today? Remember that eating an unclean animal makes you unclean. Following these spiritual dietary laws protects you from unnecessary spiritual oppression! Eating unclean animals allows unclean spirits to more easily broadcast into your mind attitudes that can lead you astray. It can further the spread of physical sickness. It can be a hindrance to us experienc-

ing the **full** power of God in your life.

In II Corinthians 6:14-7:1, the Apostle Paul explains that not touching unclean things protects your body and spirit. In II Corinthians 6:17-7:1, he wrote: “17 Therefore “ ‘Come out from among them, and be separate,’ says the Lord. ‘Touch no unclean thing. I will receive you. 18 I will be to you a Father. You will be to me sons and daughters,’ says the Lord Almighty.” 7:1 Having therefore these promises, beloved, let’s cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

In this passage, we are directly instructed to abstain from unclean things. In addition to this, we are not to eat them. Paul concluded this section of scripture by saying that we should “purify ourselves from everything that contaminates **body and spirit** so we can perfect holiness out of reverence for God.” Abstaining from unclean animals is protecting your body and spirit. You are preserving your physical health so you can live a long and productive life for God’s Kingdom. You are also protecting yourself from unnecessary spiritual attacks.

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Conclusion

In conclusion, keep in mind that unclean animals do have a purpose in creation. They were not created in vain. When you study these animals, you will find that these animals are scavengers and carnivores. They were created to clean up the earth and help keep the cycle of life flowing for all creation. Since they clean up the earth, they take all of the waste of the earth into their bodies. This waste is absorbed into their meat. We definitely do not want to eat waste! These animals are good for creation, but **they were not created for the human body.**

Unclean animals are not fit for the human body. Consider that some plant life was not created for human consumption. Some berries can cause serious illness or even death if humans eat them.

The way of God is easy. It is not hard to abstain from eating these animals. You are going to enjoy life even more as you follow these powerful instructions. You are going to have a mental and spiritual clarity you have never experienced before. Your physical health will greatly improve. You will truly be living life to the fullness of what God intended for you. Jesus wants you to have eternal life, but He also came to improve this life as well. Your Father in Heaven does not want you to just live life barely making it; He wants you to thrive!

To learn more about this subject, order our book: “Clean and Unclean: A Guide to Living the Holy Life” Yours for only \$12.

You can also order this book from our website: www.hungryheartsmintistry.com on the BUY BOOKS page. You can also email us at hungryheartsmint@aol.com or write us at:

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Does God care what you eat? The entire Bible contains instructions to guide our daily lives in eating. In this booklet, you will learn about God's dietary instructions. You will learn how they are relevant today and why God gave them.



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