

Eat Your Peas!

By Pastor Greg
6-1-08

Mark 7:14-19

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Friday of this past week I was at the doctor's office for a routine check of my cholesterol. He tells me that cholesterol is a waxy substance manufactured by your liver that can clog your arteries when there is too much in your blood. And, of course, with my luck the liver does not have an on/off switch. Bad cholesterol can also come from the foods we eat (from Uncle Jake and from Southern Fried Steak). For the past eight years, I have been trying to keep this bad stuff from running amok, and it has really taken a lot of work (apparently I haven't been working hard enough based upon the frown on my doctor's face). For years, my mother told me to eat my peas. Now my doctor is telling me the same thing. Out of curiosity, I asked my doctor at what age I should have been concerned about this. He said based upon my numbers it should have been about a hundred years ago.

Apparently my diet of eggs, bacon, and spam (the meat, not the bad email) when I was younger did have an impact on the "cleanliness" of my body. I guess it's true that you are what you eat. Great. I suppose one of these days I'll start to look like a Cheerio. Anyway, my doctor is telling me that what goes into my body does affect my health and causes unclean arteries. I, on the other hand, want to point him to Mark chapter 7.

¹⁴ Then Jesus called to the crowd to come and hear. "All of you listen," He said, "and try to understand. ¹⁵ It's not what goes into your body that defiles you; you are defiled by what comes from your heart. ¹⁶ *Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand.* ¹⁷ Then Jesus went into a house to get away from the crowd, and His disciples asked Him what He meant by the parable He had just used. "Don't you understand either?" He asked. "Can't you see that the food you put into your body cannot defile you? ¹⁹ Food doesn't go into your heart, but only passes through the stomach and then goes into the sewer." (By saying this, He declared that every kind of food is acceptable in God's eyes.)¹ (Mark 7:14-19) Kinda makes you want to bring your Bible along to your next doctor's visit.

¹Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.

However, Jesus doesn't leave us there (rats!). He goes on to point out what He's really trying to get us to understand. ²⁰And then he added, "It is what comes from inside that defiles you. ²¹For from within, out of a person's heart, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, ²²adultery, greed, wickedness, deceit, lustful desires, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness. ²³All these vile things come from within; they are what defile you." ² (Mark 7:20-23) Yea, I know. Jesus isn't talking about physical health here. He's not giving a health class lecture on the four basic food groups or the digestive track. He's talking about the spiritual condition of our heart and our mind. Jesus says that out of a person's mind come the things that make us unacceptable before God, not in what we eat. But get this, these things that defile come from two different sources; they come from within the mind and from what we put in there as well.

We all fight a battle every day to keep our sinful nature in check. We struggle to subdue it. Within our mind there is a natural part of human nature that is both selfish and brutal. The Apostle Paul confesses for all of us, I believe, when he says, ²³But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. ³ (Romans 7:23). And from outside of our mind there are things both selfish and brutal as well. You don't have to look very hard to see all sorts of violence or greed. So if we face a battle daily from within, can you imagine how much more difficult the struggle becomes when we read, watch, and listen to those things that Jesus says will defile us.

Just as a conscientious parent will feed their children the foods that promote good health, a godly parent will do what they can to fill a child's mind with the things that lead to spiritual health. Nevertheless, a day will come when that child moves on; a day when they assume responsibility not only for their physical health but for their spiritual health as well. And I'm specifically thinking of graduates this day. Your parents have spent a great deal of time trying to get you to eat healthy foods. They have been trying to get you exposed to the things in this world that

²Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.

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promote a healthy spiritual life as well. But you are transitioning very soon. Very soon you may not have mom or dad around to question your eating habits or what you are feeding your mind. Very soon you may find yourself with no one watching over your shoulder to guide you in the choices you make.

That's why I want to pass along to you something that Paul passed along to his young friend Timothy **"But you are a man of God; so run from all these evil things. Pursue righteousness and a godly life, along with faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness."**⁴ (1 Timothy 6:11). In effect, Paul is telling Timothy to flee from the things that corrupt the mind, which sounds an awful lot like what my doctor is telling me to do with certain foods. "Eat your peas!" says Paul. Fill your mind with the things that lead to a healthy spiritual life.

I guess what I'm trying to tell you younger folks is that today I look back at my youth and can't help but think about all the years I spent filling my mind with the things of this world but only giving the things of God casual recognition from time to time. Is it any wonder then that my spiritual health suffered? If only I would have listened to my mother when she told me to eat my peas, I may not be struggling with my cholesterol now. And if I had taken an interest in my spiritual diet when I was younger, what difference might it have made now that I am older? Today I really wish I had spent more time and energy thinking and focusing on the Kingdom of God rather than the kingdom of man. So my advice to you is that as your life begins to change, remember to get plenty of rest, to eat healthy (no, Twinkie's are not great for supper), and to keep feeding your mind with the things of God.

⁴Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.