

## **Bad Diet Ideas Hebrews 13:9-10 8/24/03**

Well, I asked my very helpful and efficient ministry partners to come up with some diet suggestions. And here they are in no particular order. The top five church ladies diet program.

1. Pig out diet – eat what you want as long as you take a number of supplements including: Dermalin APG, Luprinol, Lipo-peptide, The patented ECA Stack, Maximum strength human growth hormone, Thyrostart, and the Stimulant Free Weight Loss System (an added plus to this diet is that you do not have to do “any good old fashioned exercise” in order to lose weight.
2. The “Waterfall” diet – you reduce weight by “treating the seven types of fluid retention”. The web site advises that “death may occur” and you should “utilize this diet at your own risk”.
3. The “Lose Weight While You Sleep Diet” – Hypnosis followed by listening to a series of tapes while you sleep for reinforcement.
4. The “Un-Diet” – there is no “counting carbs, fat grams or calories” and you can still lose up to a pound a day by utilizing the art of “food combining”. One recommended day’s breakfast, however, consisted of “having celery sticks with some decaf coffee or tea with cream, if you like”.
5. And, the one I mentioned – the “Reach for your mate instead of your plate” diet which advises you to divert your attention from food to affection.

I think I better stick to Atkins. It is amazing to me the vast array of diet ideas that come across our paths on a regular basis. Reader’s Digest, 60 minutes, the check out line at the grocery store and a whole variety of infomercials claim to have the secret to easy and permanent weight loss. The issues of food and diet have long made their way into the larger discussion of personal faith a piety. And in our text this morning the author addresses it again. Hebrews 13:9-10 ***Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings. It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace, not by ceremonial foods, which are of no value to those who eat them. We have an altar from which those who minister at the tabernacle have no right to eat.”*** **Well, this was an ongoing problem in the early church.** *Paul addressed it repeatedly. First I Corinthians 8:8 But food does not bring us near to God; we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do.* In Romans 14:14 & 17 Paul makes it clear *As one who is in the Lord Jesus, I am fully convinced that no food is unclean in itself. But if*

*anyone regards something as unclean, then for him it is unclean.... For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit,"*

From the very beginning of our Lord's ministry foods, washings and the cleansing of eating implements become a real hot button with the religious leaders of the day. Jesus addressed this in a variety of places but the conclusion was stated with great clarity in Mark 7:18-19. "*Are you so dull?" he asked. "Don't you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him 'unclean'? For it doesn't go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of his body." (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods "clean." )*. Although Jesus made himself clear the early church continued to struggle as it sought to draw the difference between what was acceptable and what was perhaps culturally or socially offensive. Most of the NT writers dealt very clearly in a similar fashion with this divisive issue but it did not nor has it even yet died down. After the end of the Apostolic era it continued to be an **ongoing conflict in church history**. The church in both the west and then the east approached the topic often drawing together food and faith, diet and spirituality in ways that Jesus specifically forbade. And no church is guilt free in this. The orthodox, the Roman Catholic and the post-Reformation Church all fell into the trap of believing spirituality was fed through limiting or forbidding certain foods. For the sake of brevity I will avoid the more extreme teachings but at one time or another the following was prohibited in the mainstream of Christian faith: meat, wine, chocolate, coffee, alcohol, and tobacco.

And I must say that it is at times an **ongoing conflict in today's church** although it has been expressed in some rather different ways. Many churches and church groups continue to make a case for or against certain foods and beverages in belief that it is a Biblical measurement of spiritual maturity. Our friends in Ukraine concluded that the drinking of blood and cow's milk by the Massai people of Kenya excluded them from the kingdom of God. There has also arisen over the past 15 years a whole sub industry amongst Christians that often times communicate that spiritual depth is

in proportion to one's mid-section girth. And often times this message is communicate in very subtle and not so subtle ways.

Can we return to our text? For our text is abundantly clear that there is only one bottom line diet that is both life giving and everlasting. It is the diet of grace. It is the clear and unavoidable teaching of Jesus and the writes of the NT that food does not have spiritual value and that abstinence some saving virtue. Now, I will be the first to admit that we do not know the specifics of the food problems in the church at Rome that was made up of believing Jews. We don't know if it had to do with the Jewish food regulations or if there were specific pressures existing by some outsiders.

What we do know is that the remedy and the cure for this argument was grace. In God's eyes our being nourished regularly by the proclamation of God's grace was all the sustenance one needed to grow spiritually. And so this morning, I want to feed you. Just sit back for a few minutes and be nourished by grace.

Acts 15:6-11 The apostles and elders met to consider this question. After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: "Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He made no distinction between them, and us for he purified their hearts by faith. Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear? No! We believe it is through the **grace** of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are."

I Cor. 1:1-4 I always thank God for you because of his **grace** given you in Christ Jesus. For in him you have been enriched in every way--in all your speaking and in all your knowledge-- because our testimony about Christ was confirmed in you. Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. He will keep you strong to the end, so that

you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.

Eph 2:4-10 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions--it is **by grace** you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches **of his grace**, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is **by grace** you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Wonderful Grace of Jesus