

Faith and Diet:
Christianity
and
Vegetarianism/Veganism
Christian Vegetarians & Vegans UK
CVVUK - an ecumenical not-for-profit organisation

God's Plan:

In the first Chapter of Genesis we are made aware of God's plan for creation:

V28. God blesses Adam and Eve:

'Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Earth! Take charge!
Be responsible for fish in the sea and birds in the air,
for every living thing that moves on the face of Earth.'

V29-30. Then God said, 'I've given you
every sort of seed-bearing plant on Earth
And every kind of fruit-bearing tree,
given them to you for food.
To all animals and all birds,
everything that moves
and breathes,
I give whatever grows
out of the ground
for food.'
And there it was.

V31. God looked over
everything
he had made;
it was so good,
so very good!

(The Message)



Copyright Maria Slough Photography

It is important that after giving Adam and Eve charge of the animals, in the next sentence God directs them to a vegan diet - it is clear that the animals are not given to them to eat.



A plant-based diet is still a good plan today: good for our health, for the environment, for animals and for feeding the world's hungry.

God's Animals:

The Old Testament requires that animals be well treated before slaughter (Deut.5.12-15, 22.10, 25.4, Lev.3.1, 22.27-28) and its detailed laws prevent inhumane slaughter (Gen. 9.4, Lev.17, Deut. 12.13-27, Acts15.19-21).

But in the modern meat industry there is routine cruelty, including factory farming, long-distance transport and butchery processes that cause great suffering.

In dairy farming, calves are removed from their mothers soon after birth. Mother cows are known to search and call frantically for their newborn offspring.

In the egg industry, male baby chicks are killed soon after birth, often by cruel methods.





Dairy cows and egg-laying hens are routinely slaughtered as soon as they are past their prime production phase.

In intensive farming animals are treated as commodities but research increasingly shows that animals express emotions and behaviours

comparable to our own: distress, fear, anger, affection, curiosity, playfulness and problem-solving. And not only animals; birds, fish and octopi also show complex sentient behaviour.

Vegans often cite concern about animal cruelty as their main reason for changing to a vegan diet. But there are other equally valid ethical reasons for a Christian to follow a plant-based diet.

God's Earth:

As noted in Genesis 1.29, God did not originally intend that humans would eat animals. At creation, God gave humans plants and fruit for food. Our consumption of meat is a consequence of turning away from God's original plan for us. Isaiah envisions a renewal of creation so that the wolf, lamb, calf and child live peaceably together (11.6-9, 65.17-25).

It is not possible for the present consumption of meat, dairy products and eggs to continue as animal farming uses many times more land, water and energy than arable farming, with a much greater carbon footprint.

In the 2006 report, *Livestock's Long Shadow*, it was noted that 30 per cent of the Earth's land mass was being used to raise animals for food (including grazing and feed crops).

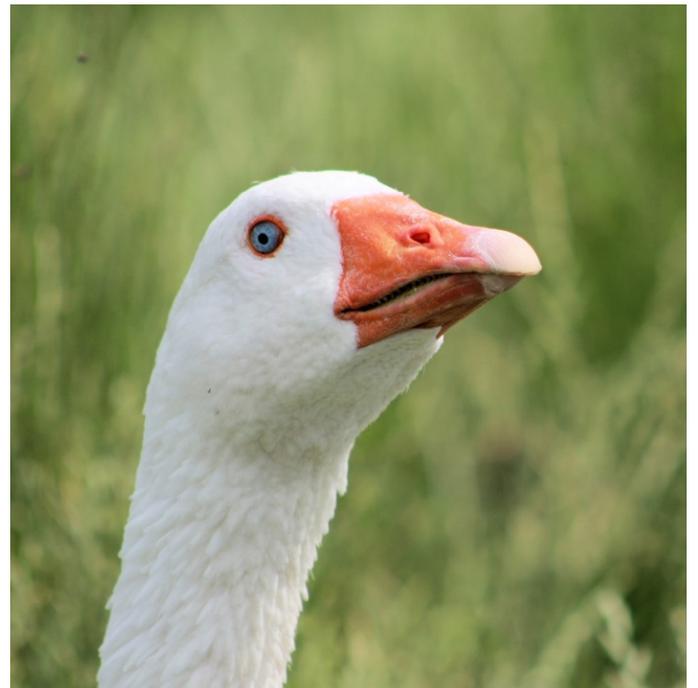
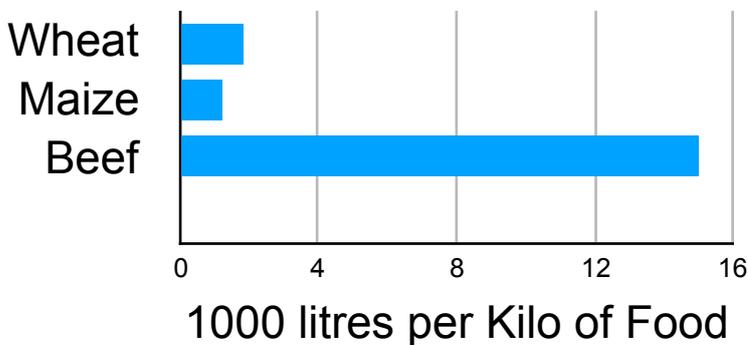




Livestock is responsible for about 14.5 per cent of global greenhouse gases - more than the global transport sector - and is one of the most important contributors to climate change. (UN FAO 2013).

Antibiotics have been massively overused by farmers in intensive farming. The WHO concludes this is a significant contributor to the emergence of antibiotic-resistant bacteria that affect human health.

Water Consumption





World Hunger:

Jesus said 'For I was hungry and you gave me food' (Matt. 25.35).

As the global population increases, so does world hunger. Every year tens of millions of people die from starvation and related diseases.

At present, more than one third of the world's harvested grain is fed to animals being raised for slaughter. Converting these plant foods to meat wastes most of the protein and calories and all the fibre. For every 100 calories of cereals fed to animals, only 17-30 calories will be made available to humans as meat (CIWF website).

Changing from stock to arable will greatly reduce food waste. Far more people can be fed directly from plant foods. It takes 6kg of plant protein to produce 1kg of animal protein (The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition 2003).

Your Health:

The New Testament values good health and Paul teaches that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit (3 Jn v2, 1 Cor.6.19). We should therefore care for our bodies so that they may be used in God's service.

A plant-based diet, rich in vegetables, fruit and whole grains is beneficial in reducing obesity and high blood pressure and offers protection against diabetes, various cancers and heart disease.



Biblical Teaching:

The Book of Genesis tells us there was great violence and depravity in the generation before The Flood, with people murdering each other. The implication of this and of the Covenant with Noah was that cannibalism had been common. So in the Covenant, we see that God lowers the moral requirements:

Genesis 9.4. 'All living creatures are yours for food; just as I gave you the plants, now I give you everything else. Except for meat with its lifeblood still in it - don't eat that.'

This concession was to control the sin of mankind: the eating of the meat of animals was the lesser evil to cannibalism, but would still satisfy their craving for flesh. (Deut. 12:20)

The strict laws of ritual slaughter laid out here (and later in more detail in the Torah) required that the quickest, most humane method was used, as they were dealing with another creature with the same lifeblood as themselves. God's Covenant with Noah includes the animals - they are fellow creatures, not commodities to be used and abused. (Gen. 9:9-10)

Faith and Diet:

Through history, many Christians have applied their faith to their diet. Early Christian leaders recognised the harm meat does to the body and soul, and ate a simple plant-based diet, shunning excess.

Many Saints have believed that a vegan diet is compatible with a holy life, some notable examples being: St Paul, St Benedict, St Columba of Iona, St Cuthbert of Lindisfarne, St Martin de Porres.

From St Francis to William Wilberforce, Christians throughout history have been moved by the bible's condemnation of animal cruelty and have taught that we have a duty of mercy.





Major Evangelical figures have recognised the personal and social value of abstinence from meat. These include John Wesley (Methodist), Charles Spurgeon (Baptist) and William Booth (Salvation Army).

Being a Vegetarian/Vegan Today:

It is not necessary in a society of plenty to stick with the carnivorous diet allowed for a fallen world. It has never been easier to follow, and be healthy on, a vegan diet.

Many meat-eaters start by having some meat-free days, then move to a vegetarian diet, and every step in the right direction is good - for all the reasons given in this leaflet.

All major supermarkets and restaurants offer vegetarian and vegan options. And it is not a sacrifice to be a vegan - vegan meals can be delicious.

Vegetarian and vegan meals don't have to be complicated. If you are a beginner, look for a book with simple recipes. Ideas are available online and from vegan societies.

Cruelty to Animals

If consumers personally had to raise animals with the tortuous methods of intensive factory farming and then personally slaughter the animals they ate, very few would continue to eat meat. They would recognise that the abusive treatment of animals is morally wrong and would have no part in it.

Richard Alan Young, formerly professor of New Testament at Temple Baptist Seminary



‘As a sheep led to the slaughter . . . He was silent, saying nothing.’
(Acts 8.32 *The Message*)

‘Live out this God-created identity the way our Father lives toward us, generously and graciously, even when we're at our worst. Our Father is kind; you be kind.’ Luke 6:36 (*The Message*)

To become a supporter of
Christian Vegetarians and Vegans UK
or for more information please contact The Secretary
at: johnmerrickryder@gmail.com
or write to: The Vicarage, Godshill, PO38 3HY

website: <http://www.christian-vegetariansvegans.org.uk>

Animal Photographs kindly supplied by courtesy of
Maria Slough Photography, and are copyright.
All the animals photographed are from
The Farm Animal Sanctuary, Evesham.

Printed Spring 2018