



JOYFUL, COMPASSIONATE EATING

HONORING GOD'S CREATION



In many ways, moving toward a plant-based diet glorifies God. It makes us healthier, happier servants of God, and it avoids the animal cruelty, environmental damage, and human misery associated with factory farms.



GOD'S ANIMALS

Jesus said that God feeds the birds of the air (Matt. 6:26) and does not forget sparrows (Luke 12:6). In their own ways, God's creatures demonstrate a full range of feelings – curiosity, pleasure, playfulness, love, joy, fear, anger, pain, and suffering:

- Cows play and enjoy each other's company.¹
- Pigs are intelligent and curious, and they form bonds with one another and other species.²
- Chickens have distinct personalities and can learn their names.³
- In many ways, the animals people eat are just like the animals we love as pets.⁴

And yet, in the United States, nearly all farmed animals live in intensively crowded, dirty, smelly, windowless factory farms, where animals suffer greatly. For example:



Hog Farm Management advised, "Forget the pig is an animal. Treat him just like a machine in a factory."
©CIWF



They shall not hurt or destroy
in all my holy mountain.

Isaiah 11:9

- Castration, debeaking, and other painful mutilations are routinely done without pain-relief.
- Egg-laying hens are crammed into cages so small they can't spread their wings.
- Pregnant pigs spend months in stalls so narrow they can't turn around.
- Millions of baby chicks are mailed via the U.S. Postal Service each year. Although injury and death rates are high, producers regard chicks as cheap and not worth the cost of humane transport.⁵
- Mother cows grieve for days or weeks after their calves are taken from them so humans can drink their milk.⁶
- Today's factory farmers seem to embrace any practice that increases profit, regardless of how much animal pain, suffering, and death it inflicts.⁷



- Living in miserable conditions that frustrate nearly every instinctive desire they have, factory-farmed animals never have a good day.



“Veal” calves can’t turn around for their entire lives of 18-20 weeks. ©CIWF

When we avoid the products of cruel farming practices, we are showing love and respect for creatures who trust us and want to befriend us. Those who consume the products of factory farms are sponsoring cruelty. What does this say about their faith? Can we profess faith that God is good if we believe that God approves of cruelty to animals?

What animal agribusiness doesn't want you to know.

Because compassionate people oppose cruelty to animals, the animal agribusiness industry has been doing its best to hide the truth from the public. Animal agribusinesses and their friends in

many state legislatures have passed “ag-gag” laws. These laws make it a crime to photograph or otherwise expose how God’s animals are routinely abused on factory farms.

What does the Bible say about meat?

The Bible does not prohibit eating meat in all circumstances, but most Christians today have easy access to a wide variety of healthful plant foods. Indeed, the Bible depicts a plant-based diet as God’s ideal. In Eden, all creatures lived peacefully, and God told humans to consume only plant foods (Gen. 1:29–31).

Several prophecies, such as Isaiah 11:6–9, foresee a return to this vegetarian world, where all



Rescued cow living in a sanctuary.

Blessed are the merciful.

Matthew 5:7



creatures and a little child coexist peacefully. Accordingly, seeking this harmonious world, Jesus taught us to pray, “Thy will be done, on earth as in heaven” (Matt. 6:10).

For a discussion of biblical passages related to meat eating, see all-creatures.org/plies.htm.

Does God care for animals?

Genesis 1:21-22 relates that, after God created animals, God blessed them and called them “good.” In Genesis 2:18-19, God made animals as Adam’s helpers and companions. The Bible repeatedly describes God’s concern for animals and forbids cruelty.⁸ Jesus said, “Blessed are the merciful [Matt. 5:7], yet no mercy is shown for nearly all farmed animals. Should not the Golden Rule (Matt. 7:12) – treat others as you would like others to treat you – guide how we treat animals?



Hens in battery cages have about ½ sq. ft. per bird. ©CIWF

When we consume the products of factory farming, we are telling factory farmers: I approve. Do it again.

Rev. Frank L. Hoffman



Don’t laws protect farmed animals?

In the United States and many other countries, “standard procedures” on farms are all legal, regardless of the pain and suffering they cause. Practices such as bodily mutilations, which would warrant felony animal cruelty charges if done to a dog or cat, are perfectly legal when done to a pig or chicken. At the slaughterhouse, “humane slaughter” laws are weak and poorly enforced, and they exempt the slaughter of birds. Laws



Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.

Luke 6:36

to improve conditions on farms would be desirable, and an even more effective way to prevent animal abuse is to reduce or eliminate the consumption of animal products.

What about "humane meat"?

Even though farmed animals do not always suffer equally, it is never humane to kill a young, healthy animal. People should know that terms like "farm fresh" have no meaning, and "organic" and "local" do not mean "humane." "Free range" can and usually does involve intensive confinement and painful mutilations. And, small farmers have generally embraced the same or very similar practices of large corporate animal factories.

Why do people eat meat?

For many, it is the taste, texture, or convenience of flesh. However, as Christians, we must ask whether such desires reflect Christian values. Is eating meat really the right thing to do?

THE BENEFITS OF A PLANT-BASED DIET

Your Health: your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19)

When we eat right and exercise, we are better able to serve God. We feel more vigorous and alert, and we can attain and maintain a healthy weight. The American Dietetic Association, America's largest organization of food and nutrition professionals, notes that well-balanced vegetarian and vegan diets reduce the risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, cancer, and other conditions.⁹ The Mayo Clinic Health Letter similarly promotes a plant-based diet.¹⁰

For important plant-based nutrition information, see christianveg.org/nutrition.htm.

...and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Micah 6:8



Our Planet – being the best steward you can be

In Genesis 2:15, God instructed Adam to till and keep the Garden of Eden, and by analogy we may see caring for God’s Creation as our sacred task. The typical meat eater’s diet requires up to 14 times more water and 20 times more energy than that of a vegetarian. Indeed, current use of land, water, and energy is not sustainable, and resource depletion is already causing great hardships for humankind.

A recent report concluded that worldwide livestock production contributes 51% of humanity’s greenhouse gasses.¹¹ The most important thing people can do to reduce their contribution to global warming is to reduce their use of animal products.



Vegan ultramarathon champion Scott Jurek and other top athletes credit their plant-based diets. See ScottJurek.com.

Poor People – living simply so others may simply live

Christianity teaches that we should feed hungry people. Yet, while tens of millions of people die annually from starvation-related causes and close to a billion suffer from malnutrition, 37% of the world’s harvested grain is fed to animals being raised for slaughter; in the United States, the figure is 66%.

Only a fraction of what chickens, pigs, and other animals eat turns into edible flesh – most is needed to simply keep them alive or to grow body parts that people don’t eat. Consequently, farmed animals



Cattle ranching and feed crops for farmed animals are largely responsible for deforestation in the Amazon.



Inefficient conversion of grains into meat contributes to world hunger.

consume much more food than they produce. Converting plant foods to meat wastes 67–90% of the protein, up to 96% of the calories, and all of the fiber. Because land, water, and other resources are limited, the world can support many more vegetarians than meat eaters. As worldwide demand for meat has grown, the world's poor people have become increasingly unable to afford food of any kind.

Antibiotic Resistant Germs

Because stressed, overcrowded animals are vulnerable to infections, farmers routinely add antibiotics to their feed. This promotes the development of antibiotic-resistant “superbugs” that threaten humanity.

How can I take the first step?

If you're planning to move toward a plant-based diet, good for you! You can spare up to 30 land animals per year, and you can

significantly help your health, other people, and the environment.

And, doing this is actually a lot easier than most people think. There are many tasty, convenient, and nutritious non-animal foods. You will feel better as you gain energy and shed unwanted pounds. Local vegetarian groups are everywhere, offering social events, encouragement, support, and advice. Many vegetarian groups will gladly answer your questions.¹²



And God said,
“Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed...and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food.”

Genesis 1:29



Footnotes

Go to christianveg.org/footnotes/htm.



WHAT TO EAT?



When changing your diet, it may take time to explore new foods and develop healthier habits. There are many different products that are tasty, convenient, and nutritious – keep experimenting to find your personal favorites.

Nearly all grocery stores have vegan and vegetarian main course options, particularly Trader Joe's and Whole Foods. Similarly, restaurants of all types routinely offer plant-based meals – just ask!

Substitution Guide

You can continue to prepare your favorite dishes and avoid animal products by making simple substitutions:

Meat–There are many options, such as tempeh, tofu, or vegetarian meats (such as Beyond Meat, Tofurkey, Gardein, and Boca in the frozen food section).

Dairy–Use milks, cheeses, creams, yogurts, and frozen desserts made from soy, rice, coconut, or nuts. Nutritional yeast adds a cheesy flavor to foods. Replace butter with olive oil or trans-fat-free margarine.

Eggs–In baking recipes, use powdered egg substitutes, such as Ener-G Egg Replacer or VeganEgg, or replace each egg with half a banana or with 1 Tbsp. of ground flaxseed plus 3 Tbsp. water.



Resources

Christian Vegetarian Association:
ChristianVeg.org

Contact: CVA@ChristianVeg.org

Facebook: facebook.com/Christian-Vegetarian-Association-10156148652

Nutrition guide:
christianveg.org/nutrition.htm

Recipes:
all-creatures.org/recipes.html

Simple meal ideas:
christianveg.org/simplemeals.htm

Restaurant guide: HappyCow.net

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