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Questions of the Week

Should Christians keep the dietary laws found in the Old Testament?

What does the Bible say about recreational marijuana?

Is having one drink occasionally wrong in the Christian walk?

What does the Bible say about secular music?

How can we respond to fellow believers who disagree with us & say we'll agree to disagree?

2

Q: Should Christians keep the dietary laws found in the Old Testament?

A: The Bible includes instruction regarding how Godly people are supposed to live on a daily basis.

The Mosaic Law is an early example of this.

Three categories of Mosaic Law:

Moral Laws: These include the Ten Commandments.

Ceremonial Laws: Pertaining to religious rites, festivals, and ceremonies.

Civil Laws: Regulations for daily living and societal governance.

3

A: The dietary laws are primarily found in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14. The details of the kosher dietary laws are comprehensive and can be complex, especially when one considers the oral tradition added to the biblical texts by rabbis. But these passages give a good understanding and starting point for what God had commanded the Israelites regarding clean ("kosher") foods under the Old Covenant.

4

A: When Jesus begins his ministry, He does not invalidate the Old Testament law. The Mosaic Laws were given for the good of humanity, and it was beneficial to follow them.

However, Jesus teaches that the fulfillment of the law is impossible even for the most holy of people.

The law demonstrates our desperate need for salvation, because the only One who can perfectly fulfill the law is Jesus.

5

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.

6

Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.
(Matthew 5:17-20 ESV)

7

A: Because of Jesus' death and resurrection, the New Testament describes a different relationship that believers have with the law. When believers trust Jesus alone for salvation, His righteous is imputed to us. Our inability to keep the law is atoned for by the shedding of His blood. This changes the way we view the law. It still has inherent value, but the purposes of the Gospel take precedence of the keeping of the law. We see this demonstrated in the way that views on ceremonial laws changed over time.

8

And he called the people to him again and said to them, "Hear me, all of you, and understand: There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him." And when he had entered the house and left the people, his disciples asked him about the parable. And he said to them, "Then are you also without understanding?"

9

Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?"
(Thus he declared all foods clean.) And he said, "What comes out of a person is what defiles him. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."
(Mark 7:17-23 ESV)

10

As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him. Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand. (Romans 14:1-4 ESV)

11

Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble by what he eats. It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble. The faith that you have, keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who has no reason to pass judgment on himself for what he approves. But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin. (Romans 14:20-23 ESV)

12

Q: What does the Bible say about recreational marijuana?

Is having one drink occasionally wrong in the Christian walk?

What does the Bible say about secular music?

A: There are several aspects of our modern society that do not, at first glance, appear to be referred to in Scripture. However, the principles that we learn from Scripture do have much to say about how we interact with cultural issues like these.

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A: Genuine believers must examine at least two areas when wrestling with using worldly things like marijuana, alcohol, or secular media:

Motivation:

Are these things more attractive than Jesus and His word? Am I using this thing to escape what God wants me to confront?

Content:

**How do these things impact my mind?
What do I learn by using them?**

14

A: Genuine believers have important decisions to make about how they interact with the world and all that it has to offer. These decisions will often put us at odds with the world, and sometimes at odds with each other. Scripture has some strong warnings about how we decide to interact with things of this world. If your convictions as a genuine believer allow you to partake of things like substances, alcohol, and secular culture, please consider these Scriptures:

15

**Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.
(1 John 2:15-17 ESV)**

16

**Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple... Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.
(1 Corinthians 3:16-17, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 ESV)**

17

**I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.
(Romans 12:1-2 ESV)**

18

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

19

**Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.
(1 Peter 2:9-12 ESV)**

20

Q: How can we respond to fellow believers who disagree with us & say we'll agree to disagree?

A: There are two common areas of disagreement among Christians: theology and practice.

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A: In case of a theological disagreement, consider which aspects of theology you are willing to die for and which ones are better left to be judged by God.

In case of a disagreement about practices, consider which aspects of practical living you are willing to sacrifice relationships over and which ones are better left to be judged by God.

Your choices in these areas will produce tension.

22

A: Paul lived in this tension and encouraged the churches to do the same. For example:

We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me." For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

23

May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

(Romans 15:1-7 ESV)

A: Paul saw the fruit of his ministry in the lives of the people who received the Gospel from him, but he still felt it important to write and remind them of truths that they may have forgotten.

24

**I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another. But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.
(Romans 15:14-16 ESV)**

25

A: When we come across believers with whom we disagree, we have a dual responsibility: to love them with the same grace we've received, and to point them towards the truth of God's word, not simply our version of it.

26

A: Agreeing to disagree is certainly possible:

**"Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all."
(Romans 12:16-18 ESV)**

27

A: Remember who the final judge will be:

Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; for it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God." So then each of us will give an account of himself to God. (Romans 14:10-12 ESV)

A: Finally, make sure that when you speak to someone else about an issue on which you disagree you have the right motives:

28

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace... Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. (Ephesians 4:1-3, 15-16 ESV)

29

A: Walking the line between living at peace with everyone and standing for the truth in a corrupt world is very difficult to discern. We will end up too far on one side or the other throughout our lives. The goal is to examine our interactions and discern how Christlike they are. Jesus is our perfect example of grace and truth (John 1:14).

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