

Faculty Work Comprehensive List

2-2-2016

How Then Shall We Eat?

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Recommended Citation

DeRoo, T. (2016). How Then Shall We Eat?. Retrieved from https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/faculty_work/445

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How Then Shall We Eat?

Abstract

"God asks no less from us than that we be creatively faithful in all things, even what we put into our bodies, to the best of our abilities and understanding."

Posting about food and faith from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/how-then-shall-we-eat/>

Keywords

In All Things, food habits, natural foods, Christian stewardship

Disciplines

Christianity

Comments

In All Things is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service](#) at Dordt College.

How Then Shall We Eat?

▫ inallthings.org/how-then-shall-we-eat/

Tanya De Roo

When I was first asked to write about food and faith, I felt some hesitation. It's hard not to feel that taking a position on why one does anything as a "Christian" implies a judgment on all Christians who don't do the same. This is unhelpful and alienating. Yet, as a Reformed Christian, I believe that all parts of my life should be informed by my faith, and this includes how I feed my body.

As I am enjoying a cup of coffee while I write, I will begin here as a way to illustrate what I mean. There is not just an economic dimension to buying coffee (*what is the cheapest brand?*), but also an ethical one (*what coffee company pays its workers a just wage?*), an aesthetic dimension (*what coffee tastes the best?*), a biotic dimension (*what coffee is harvested in sustainable ways that care for the earth and what brands do not contain harmful pesticides and chemicals?*), and even a social element (*what brand of coffee says to my guests that I value them and care enough to serve them a special thing?*)

I believe that one part of being a Christian is deciding what is the most faithful way to prioritize and answer the questions listed above. So, I think about all these things when I buy and prepare food. It's time-consuming, error-prone, complicated, and messy. I don't do it perfectly and I am sometimes misinformed. I do it in community with others, and I learn from them. I am patient with myself, and I make changes slowly – I deliberately make compromises because, sometimes, other parts of our lives matter more than what we eat. For example, we get take-out pizza now and then when we are too busy to cook and we eat a lot of fast food on road trips because it's convenient and a special treat.

Perhaps most importantly, I recognize that there is a lot of privilege involved in having the time, education, and resources to think about and act on these things. So, I'm not offering a one-size-fits-all template for biblically sound eating here. There is no such thing. Rather, I'm offering a few ways our family has tried to love God and our neighbors through our eating habits (while living on a tight budget), and I'd love to hear how other people have answered these questions differently for themselves in the comments section.

1. We choose to eat organic. There is lots of conflicting research on whether or not the use of pesticides on food is harmful to humans and/or the environment, and this is not the place to unpack these arguments. We choose to support farmers who farm sustainably, who balance care for creation with making a profit and who do not exploit their workers. We buy our clothes and furniture second-hand and cut out other luxuries in our lives to absorb the extra cost. We began replacing conventionally farmed foods with organic ones gradually and now have found a reasonably-priced source for almost all food we buy, anywhere from Costco to a local Co-op.

2. We choose to eat local first. We support our friends and local farmers who raise organic, hormone-free chicken, pork, grass-fed beef, fruit, vegetables, and eggs. We do this because we care for small businesses and because they provide us with quality food that doesn't require much transportation. We are fortunate to have these sources so close by.

3. We choose to grow some of our own food. We keep a backyard garden and preserve food for the winter by canning and freezing the extras. Our children enjoy helping us and they have learned a lot from watching their food from seed to harvest. We also save and trade seeds, which makes this a significant source of free food.

4. We choose not to eat many processed foods. Again, this is not the place to debate the health merits of processed versus unprocessed foods, but we enjoy cooking, we appreciate food for its aesthetic and social dimensions, and we make the time for the preparation and eating of food. This has become central to our family's life.

5. We eat at least one vegetarian dinner a week. Usually we make a plain bean and rice dish, similar to what many families around the world eat every day. We do this to save money on meat, to help the environment, and to remind ourselves that most of the world eats very simply and often very little. We eat in solidarity with them to remind ourselves to be grateful and to be generous.

6. We choose to share our meals with others as often as we can. Food is a way our family gives back and shares God's blessings with our neighbors. We tell people we love them by offering them the best we can make and serve, and we enjoy and are blessed by people's company around our table.

Admittedly, these decisions are somewhat based on context (we live where it's easy to access local food and to garden), skills (we like to cook and do not find it a chore), priorities (we arrange our budget so we can afford to eat more expensive food), and time (I stay home right now, so I have time to research, shop, garden, cook, entertain, etc). Other families have other situations which require them to make different choices, and ours may not always look as it does now, especially as I rejoin the workforce more full-time in the next few years.

Regardless, I would encourage all Christians to ask themselves some important questions about why they buy and eat the foods they do. As with every dimension of our lives, God asks no less from us than that we be creatively faithful in all things, even what we put into our bodies, to the best of our abilities and understanding.