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### Are You a Healthy Vegetarian?

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# Are You a Healthy Vegetarian?

Imagine you're on a long road trip and haven't passed any signs of civilization for miles. Your stomach is grumbling loud enough to hear over the radio. At the start of your trip, you had the foresight to pack snacks, but those are long gone.

Then you see it! Bob's BBQ is only three miles away—certainly not your first choice as a vegetarian but they're sure to have something you can eat. A few minutes later you find yourself eyeing the menu behind the counter: ribs, brisket, chicken.

"Don't worry!" Bob says. "All three are delicious! You can't go wrong."

"Do you have any sides?" you ask. "Maybe some mashed potatoes? Bread? A salad or something?"

"Oh, we actually just do the meat here," he replies. "Folks take it home and eat it with whatever they want! If you're not a ribs person, I recommend the brisket."

"It's just that I'm ... I'm a vegetarian," you explain.

Bob looks confused. "A vege-what?"

"Vegetarian?" It shouldn't be a question, but you've said it like one, so you follow up with, "It means I don't eat meat."

This sort of scenario has become much less common in recent years, but some of us can probably relate. Not eating meat is a seemingly concise way to explain vegetarianism, but the problem is that our diets, and our health in general, is not just about what we eliminate—it's also about what we include.

I grew up in a vegetarian home, and we were often reminded that avoiding meat was healthier for the human body. If that was truly the most important aspect of the diet, then shouldn't it be called, oh I don't know ... non-carnivorism? In my humble opinion, the hallmark of a true vegetarian diet should be the plethora of plants consumed, not merely the rejection of animal products.

It can be easy to equate restriction with health, but in His infinite wisdom, God created us to thrive

by adding, not just subtracting. It's why we should enjoy a bounty of nutrient-dense plants in our diet. It's also why most of us should move more, drink more water, get more sunlight and fresh air, rest more and spend more time with our Creator. These practices culminate in a lifestyle of abundance and are exactly what God had in mind when He made us. Sound familiar?

John 10:10 says, "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (NKJV).

But when the thief is active in our lives, he corrupts the concept of "abundance" so that it begins to seem like a burden. He skillfully compels us to add more of the things that, in actuality, create less. Less time, less energy, less joy, less hope.

So, what is filling you up today? Is your life defined by a lack of something or the abundance of Jesus? ■



▲ RACHEL KEELE

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