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GROUP STUDY GUIDE

Should Christians Keep the Bible's Food Laws?

TEACHING SUMMARY

The Bible includes laws about what foods God's people should and should not eat. These instructions are found in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14. According to these passages, certain animals are considered unclean and are not meant to be eaten.

God explains that these food laws are connected to the call for His people to be holy. Being holy means being set apart and devoted to God. Because of this calling, God gave His people instructions about their conduct, including what they eat.

Some believers today believe these food laws are no longer relevant. They point to passages in the New Testament that appear to say that nothing is unclean or that believers may eat any food.

However, the New Testament passages often discussed in this debate use two different Greek terms that are translated as "unclean." One word refers to foods that God's Law identifies as unclean. Another word refers to food that was considered defiled according to human traditions.

In the time of Yeshua, some religious leaders taught that food could become defiled if it was touched with unwashed hands or if it came into contact with certain people. These ideas were traditions that went beyond what the Torah required.

When Yeshua addressed these issues, he rejected these extra traditions rather than the commandments of God. In Mark 7, the discussion is about food being defiled by unwashed hands, not about animals prohibited by the Law of God.

Similarly, in Romans 14, Paul discusses disputes about food that had been handled by Gentiles and considered defiled according to tradition. Paul encourages believers to

maintain unity and avoid unnecessary conflict, even if they disagree about these traditions.

In Acts 10, Peter receives a vision of animals and is told not to call what God has made clean “common.” The meaning of the vision is explained later in the passage: it is about people, not animals. God was showing Peter that Gentiles should not be considered unclean or excluded from fellowship.

These passages do not abolish God’s food laws. Instead, they address traditions and social barriers that had developed around food.

The Bible teaches that believers should pursue holiness in every part of life. This includes the choices they make about what they eat.

SUMMARY POINTS

- God gave food laws in Leviticus and Deuteronomy.
 - These laws identify certain animals as clean and others as unclean.
 - God’s people are called to be holy and set apart.
 - Some New Testament passages discuss traditions about food.
 - Two Greek terms translated “unclean” have different meanings.
 - Yeshua rejected human traditions that went beyond Scripture.
 - Paul encouraged unity among believers regarding traditions.
 - Peter’s vision in Acts 10 concerned people, not animals.
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FILL-IN-THE-BLANK

Basic

1. The Bible’s food laws are found in _____ and _____.
2. God calls His people to be _____.
3. Certain animals are described in Scripture as _____.
4. Some traditions taught that food could become defiled by _____ hands.
5. Yeshua criticized traditions that _____ God’s commandments.
6. Paul encouraged believers to maintain _____ with one another.

7. Peter's vision in Acts 10 ultimately concerned _____.
 8. God desires holiness in every part of our _____.
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Challenging

1. The Greek word referring to foods prohibited by God's Law is _____.
 2. The Greek word referring to food considered defiled by tradition is _____.
 3. The Pharisees criticized the disciples for eating with _____ hands.
 4. In Romans 14, Paul discusses meat sold in the _____ marketplace.
 5. Paul refers to believers with strict traditions as the _____.
 6. The vision given to Peter helped him understand that Gentiles were not _____.
 7. The Bible calls believers to be faithful in both _____ things and large responsibilities.
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GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think God gave instructions about food in Scripture?
 2. What does it mean to be holy in daily life?
 3. How can traditions sometimes interfere with God's commandments?
 4. Why was unity between Jewish and Gentile believers important in the early church?
 5. What lesson does Peter's vision teach about how believers should treat others?
 6. How can believers today pursue holiness in everyday choices?
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ANSWER KEY – GROUP GUIDE

Basic

1. Leviticus / Deuteronomy
2. Holy
3. Unclean
4. Unwashed
5. Reject
6. Unity
7. People (Gentiles)
8. Lives

Challenging

1. Akathartos
2. Koinos
3. Unwashed
4. Roman
5. Weak
6. Unclean
7. Small