



Prayer, church and diet

By Geoff Forster

Here are a few ideas on what can help us with our health and wellbeing.

Prayer

Prayer for Healing is a tricky, complex topic. Peter Fenwick, former office-bearer of the UK scientific and Medical Network, and leading expert on Near Death Experiences, has reported on various double-blind randomized control trials involving prayer for groups of people. One example, as regards *in vitro* fertilization: 8% for the group not prayed for, 16% for those who were. 26% the conception rate for the control group, but for the prayed-for group, 50% - a highly significant result.



There is also the famous San Francisco cardiac experiment, where one group of patients was prayed for, and the other wasn't. Striking differences emerged. Of course it can be objected that there is something rather unseemly about such investigations. Moreover, those in the control group may well have been engaged in prayer quite independently. At all events, such explorations are thought-provoking.

Church

In *The handbook of Religion and Health* (OUP) by Koenig *et al.*, various studies have shown that regular churchgoers as a group have significantly better records than those who seldom or irregularly did so. For instance with a sample of 500, regular churchgoers had 4 days in hospital in the previous year, while the others had 12. Various factors are mentioned associated with churchgoing that are beneficial for health, such as mutual support, shared sense of purpose, and discouragement from alcohol and tobacco.

Diet

An aspect of diet worth considering is *vegetarianism*. Numerous comparative studies have shown that vegetarians have significantly better results than others for a variety of health issues, such as cancers, osteoporosis, cardiac problems and kidney disorders.



Other issues here are:

Physiological, Anatomical. Alkaline saliva, length of intestine, weak stomach acid, shape of teeth - all such are arguably related to vegetarians than to carnivores.

Dietary. Meat is deficient in fibre and hydrocarbons.

Economic. A meat-based diet is significantly dearer than an equivalent vegetarian diet, in terms of proteins per 100 grams or proteins per 100 calories.

Environmental. It has often been pointed out that one of the most effective ways to reduce greenhouse emissions and so curb climate change is the adoption of the vegetarian diet. Significantly, less space is need for foods production and significantly less water consumption. It takes 20 times more water to produce 1 kg of meat than to produce 1 kg of vegetables.

Ethical. Cruelty is not infrequently involved in the raising of animals for meat production, and during the actual slaughter.

Answers to crossword on the last page.

- | |
|---|
| Across |
| 5. COLERIDGE 6. WILSON 7. WEBS 8. WISDOM 9. BELLS |
| Down |
| 1. KELLER 2. JERUSALEM 3. BED 4. NEW CHURCH 7. WOMB |