

## Question:

Are Christians allowed to eat meat with the blood in it?

## Answer:

Let me give you the simple answer first. No.

It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. – Acts 15:28, 29

Now when we get to the more complicated answer there are so many things to consider we're in danger of becoming confused. First the story of Acts 15.

Some believers from Jerusalem (or at least from Judea) traveled to Antioch and started teaching the members of the Antioch church that they had to be circumcised or they would not be saved. We know from Paul's writings that circumcision in the flesh means nothing. It's one of those things where you aren't condemned for being circumcised and you aren't condemned for not being circumcised.

Paul and Barnabas immediately began to dispute these false teachers. Things got so bad that the church sent Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem to meet the apostles and elders and get their guidance. There were some believers who had been Pharisees, and these men said the Gentiles needed to be circumcised and needed to obey the laws of Moses.

This led, as you can imagine, to a great degree of “discussion.” Peter eventually spoke up:

“Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers were able to bear? No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are.” – Acts 15:7-11

Paul and Barnabas told stories of how they were making disciples of Gentiles

throughout Asia Minor. But it was James, not Peter, who issued the decision. You read what he decided in the verse with which I started.

You will notice that one of the stipulations was that the Gentiles abstain from food sacrificed to idols. Here is where we learn that not everyone agreed with James' choice. Paul would write later, in his first letter to the church at Corinth:

We know that an idol is nothing at all in the world and that there is no God but one. For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"), yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.

But not everyone knows this. Some people are still so accustomed to idols that when they eat such food they think of it as having been sacrificed to an idol, and since their conscience is weak, it is defiled. But food does not bring us near to God; we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do.

Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak. For if anyone with a weak conscience sees you who have this knowledge eating in an idol's temple won't he be emboldened to eat what has been sacrificed to idols? So this weak brother, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge. When you sin against your brothers in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause him to fall. 1 Corinthians 8:4-13

So, how's a Christian supposed to know what to eat and what not to eat? You could take the very conservative way and eat according to all the dietary restrictions of the Old Testament. And there are sound health reasons to avoid meat with blood in it. It's a generalization that girls who eat meat develop sexual maturity sooner than girls who eat a vegetarian diet. This is most likely because of the hormones in the blood.

I have avoided the issue by eating a vegetarian diet. But I wouldn't presume to tell someone else that they should or shouldn't eat certain foods. That's a personal choice between you and God. Today, in this country, we don't have the issue of food sacrificed to idols, but you still should be aware of the people

around you and be sure that what you do doesn't violate the conscience of someone else.

*NOTE: I might add that much of today's food has been offered to the idol of capitalist profits. If you don't think that's a god, look at where we print the words "In God We Trust." We eat food that's not that healthy. And the food's not that healthy because the company that prepares it isn't interested in providing good nutrition, but in getting you to buy lots of it.*

May God bless you as you continue to study his Word.

Elkanah