



Foreword Dr. Rex Russell

Good Housekeeping magazine lends its name to certain products by stamping them with the Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval. It's a way to endorse good products for its readers. Similarly, I am pleased to give my "seal of approval" to Hope Egan and Amy Cataldo's *What the Bible Says about Healthy Living Cookbook*. It is, in many ways, the long-awaited companion to my book, *What the Bible Says about Healthy Living*.

First, a little history and a short update on my health. If you read my book, you might recall that I was diagnosed with juvenile diabetes when I was thirteen years old. At that time I was told I could expect to live about twenty more years before serious complications would shorten my life. I immediately had two thoughts. The first was, "Why me?" The next was, "God, use this to help people come to know You." I also clearly remember my mother's response. She said, "Rex, God loves you. You can meet this challenge." She went on to become my constant encourager. Only now do I know how her heart probably ached. Mothers want to fix things, but she could only turn me over to the Lord.

As a boy of thirteen, age thirty-three seemed pretty far off. But each day was a reminder that

I had a serious illness. I had to learn how to give myself daily injections. I had to pay attention to what I ate. I had to be aware of how I felt, and I had to test my blood sugar levels several times a day. I was susceptible to various infections, and I developed numerous cysts and boils. For a very active teenager, diabetes was a very inconvenient illness.

Despite health issues related to diabetes, I lived a fairly normal life. As I look back, one of the gifts that my mother gave me was the mindset to view my diabetes as a challenge. As I grew up, facing challenges was a great motivator. I loved a challenge so much that I was—to put it mildly—competitive in both academics and sports. I played college football for my beloved Oklahoma State University. In my senior year I was named Academic All-American, and I was one of seven students chosen to be a Scholar Athlete of the Year by the Football Hall of Fame.

After I graduated, I attended medical school at Baylor University in Houston. While I was at Baylor I met my wife, Judy, and we were married during my senior year. I did my radiology training at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, and then I began a radiology practice in Fort

Smith, Arkansas. Judy and I had two sons, and we lived a fairly normal life.

However, at the predicted age of thirty-three, the two big Ds—Diabetes and Death—began their inevitable merger. My kidneys, arteries and eyesight were deteriorating. I continued to have small vessel hemorrhaging in my eyes, and the retina in each eye needed laser therapy every month. The doctors feared that the hemorrhages and laser scarring would eventually lead to blindness. In addition, my legs began swelling, and I developed almost monthly abscesses that had to be drained. The unrelenting and unsightly abscesses became such a source of embarrassment to me that I went to different doctors to have them drained. This embarrassment just added to my overall misery.

Desperate, I searched for anything that might alleviate my health crisis. I exhausted myself searching for medical answers. I gulped down vitamins and mineral supplements—sometimes fifty a day. I searched and researched. With my health rapidly deteriorating, I was depressed, emotionally drained, and spiritually empty. My mother used to tell me, “Rex, when you don’t know what to do, just say, ‘Lord, help me, help me to figure this out.’” I had used the “help me prayer” so much that it was worn out around the edges.

One evening, I was sprawled out on the couch in a funk—but still with a Bible in my hand. I read Psalm 139:4. The psalmist, in praise, lifted his voice to God and said, “I am fearfully and wonderfully made.” I saw no comfort in that claim. I was angry. I said, “God, if I am so wonderfully made, why am I so sick? Why

didn’t You give us a way to be healthy?” And then, like a feather making a gentle descent, The Question dropped into my mind: “Have you read my Instruction Book?” No longer the one asking the questions, I felt compelled to answer the one God posed to me. I began a journey to discover what the Bible says about healthy living.

I had a deep belief that the God who created me was also the One who, years ago, heard a little thirteen-year-old boy say, “God, use this to help people come to know you.”

The resources for my journey were the Bible, prayer and scientific inquiry. I began to search for hidden treasures, old and new. Since then, I have realized the truth of what a friend of mine often says: “God is a Pointer. He leads by pointing. The first step is ours.” God’s question, as God’s questions often do, pointed me to His Word: “Have you read my Instruction Book?” I started my search somewhat skeptical that there would be any relevant health information in a book that was written so long ago. I was fearful that if I found any answers, other physicians might just roll their eyes in ridicule. But I was committed, so I examined God’s Word and any laws and commands that related to health.

The first thing that caught my attention was that God wanted his people to be healthy. He said, “If you . . . keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have put on the Egyptians; for I, the LORD, am your healer” (Exodus 15:26). This and other verses cemented the idea that there was a relationship between God’s ordinances and the health of His people. I began to learn that God had laws and

commands relating to health. For example, in Leviticus He instructed the Israelites not to eat pork or shellfish. I wondered if there was some health reason for God telling His people to eat or not eat certain things. I wondered, “Did God have a healing and preventive medicine plan in the Hebrew Scriptures?”

One of my medical school mentors, Dr. Harold Dobson, often said, “When you see something that you perceive as a ‘truth,’ test it.” So I set out to test this pork and shellfish law. Now, let me tell you, I loved pulled pork. I loved pork sausage. I loved ham hocks. I could pile up a plate of shrimp and eat myself silly. I was not too enthusiastic about this test. But I believed I had found truth, and I told God I was going to test it. So I made a commitment to change the way I ate.

My first big test was eliminating pork, shellfish or any scavenger from my diet. About a month into my change, Judy and I realized that my abscesses were gone. I had been plagued by abscesses since I was a teenager. And now I didn’t have any? I also realized that my joints did not hurt. Was my arthritis really gone? Intrigued, I continued to study God’s health-related laws and ordinances.

About six months into my new eating pattern, I had a setback. Despite my findings and despite my improved health, I was tempted with, of all things, pork sausage. It happened when our family visited my parents in Oklahoma. Something happens in a parent’s heart when adult children come home to visit. They want to make their children happy, usually by preparing their favorite foods. Familiar

smells coming from the kitchen evoke pleasant memories. For me, it was the smell of sausage wafting up the stairs and sneaking into bed with me. How could I refuse my dad’s kind gesture? It would be like turning down his love. He cooked it for me. He cooked a lot of it for me. The simple fact was that I wanted some sausage. So I had a conversation with myself. First, I couldn’t hurt my father’s feelings. Second, I convinced myself (and told God) that I was just doing another “test” to make sure I was on the right track. By the time I got downstairs, the laughter in the kitchen and the smell of the sausage had mixed and mingled into a swell of childhood memories. I was a goner. I made a pig out of myself eating the sausage, and the next morning my hands were so swollen I could hardly open them. At that moment I was absolutely convinced that there was a health reason behind God’s dietary laws. “Thank you, Lord. Thank you,” I kept repeating. “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psalm 119:105).

But I was a scientist. Would science speak to the adverse health effects of eating pork or shellfish? Would science present any logical reasons for not eating them? As I researched, I found scientific literature that was full of information about the dangers of eating pork and other scavengers. Among other hazards, by their very nature, these creatures are laden with parasites, bacteria, viruses, toxins and infectious agents that can be transmitted to humans. I concluded that God did not intend for them to be our food.

Over my four years of study, God’s health

plan slowly began to fit together. Each time I looked at what the Bible said and then found confirmation in science, I would shake my head in amusement and smile with a grateful heart. Truly, we *are* fearfully and wonderfully made. As I studied, I began to organize what I learned around Three Principles. The result was the book *What the Bible Says about Healthy Living*. This book, which has now been published in five languages, focuses on three simple principles that have become helpful decision-making tools for the myriad of readers around the world who follow them:

Principle 1:

Eat only substances God created for food.
Avoid what is not designed for food.

Principle 2:

As much as possible, eat foods as they were created—before they are changed or converted into something humans think might be better.

Principle 3:

Avoid food addictions. Don't let any food or drink become your god.

Source: *What the Bible Says about Healthy Living* (Regal Books, 1996).

I faithfully lived out what I learned, and I have since experienced enormous positive health changes from applying the Three Principles to my life. I have not had an abscess in twenty years. I am virtually arthritis free.

Until just recently, I had 20/20 vision. It is now 20/40. Doctors marvel that I don't get infections like other diabetics. I have had the flu only two or three times in the last twenty-five years.

I have also heard from hundreds of people who testify to the health benefits they experience when they simply follow the Three Principles. Many people who struggled with obesity, arthritis, lupus or ulcerative colitis, for example, have shared stories about their health improvements that surprise even me. These and many other illnesses respond to eating the way our Designer intended.

Although I eat faithfully by the Three Principles, I do not presume they are a “cure-all.” I still face disease. I still have insulin-dependent diabetes. But the complications of my disease have been reversed and/or delayed. My Creator and Designer, my God and Redeemer is faithful to His Word. He has fulfilled the truth of His Law in my life. He will carry the Truth of His Word to you also.

One might say that at age sixty-seven, I have lived on borrowed time. I would not put it that way. I live each day as a gift—a gift wrapped in the wisdom of God's Instruction Book. We are fearfully and wonderfully made.



About two years ago, I began to suspect a kidney transplant would be part of my future. My kidneys had served me well, but as expected, they were giving out. Finally, in September 2007 I was forced to go on dialysis. It all started when Judy and I were on a cruise with some

friends. We planned to go to a book festival in Frankfurt to celebrate *What the Bible Says about Healthy Living's* recent translation into German. As we floated down the Rhine, we would stop and shop at village markets, gathering what we could of fresh fruits and vegetables. Toward the end of the trip, we stopped at a little village where I purchased and ate a star fruit. That was the last thing I remember. Judy said that the next morning I was confused and that I became less and less alert as the day progressed. We boarded the plane for home, and about two hours into the flight she could barely get me to respond. It became apparent that I was slipping into a coma. The plane was diverted to Newfoundland, and I was transported back to the United States via medical transport and admitted to Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, where I remained in a coma for six days, lingering on a thin line between life and death. The doctors finally determined that I had gone into a coma from a neurotoxic reaction to the star fruit that I had eaten in Germany.

Star fruit is a yellow five-ribbed fruit that when cut crosswise forms a decorative five-pointed star shape. It has potent antioxidants and is high in potassium, fiber and vitamin A. Star fruit is a healthy snack and poses no problem for people with normal kidney function. However, because it has high levels of oxalic acid, it can cause a deadly neurotoxic reaction in people who have impaired or compromised kidney function.

At any rate, I arrived at the hospital in a coma and was immediately put on dialysis. To complicate my grave condition, I received an

injection from a tainted batch of heparin. My body reacted violently as soon as the heparin was injected. The heparin had an immediate and negative effect on my entire system, creating blood clots in various parts of my body and throwing me into intense pain. It damaged my nerves, leaving my left leg paralyzed and my right leg weakened. I remained in the hospital for three weeks and was flown home via medical transport. When I finally arrived home, a long journey of rehabilitation lay before me.

While I was in Boston not knowing whether I would live, a doctor came up to me, patted me on the leg, and said, "You are going to be all right because of the way you've lived." Those words melted into me like refined gold. They became a source of motivation and encouragement in the difficult days that followed. I returned again and again—and still do—to those encouraging words. I never saw that doctor again.

This has been a challenging year. I have gone through extensive rehabilitation on my left leg in order to learn how to walk again. I still receive dialysis three times a week, for four hours each time. I am thankful that I am scheduled for a kidney transplant in January 2009. It will be donated by my son, Randy. I cannot fit words around such an intimate and large gift of love. What can anyone say who is so overwhelmed by love?

My story would be incomplete if I did not mention my wife, Judy. It is our story. I would have literally died without Judy. She has been my rock, my solid and steady friend. She has kept me going when I would have laid down the challenge and just surrendered. She has

given me love, companionship and courage on each step of our journey and has made my life shalom, in the largest sense of the word.



Shortly after my book was published, many readers asked me to develop an accompanying cookbook. They wanted to apply biblical and scientific concepts to healthy eating, and they needed help to prepare recipes that were based on what the Bible says about food. Because their lives were busy, readers wanted recipes that were as simple as possible. They also wanted recipes that tasted good and were nutritious—“simple, tasty and nutritious” was the battle cry.

I knew a cookbook made perfect sense. But I also knew that a cookbook project was beyond my skill set. My one attempt to make Ezekiel bread did not go well. For some unknown rea-

son, it was stone hard and I was tempted just to lick the butter off and be done with it. This experience led me to the realization that a cookbook would have to be the labor of other hands.

God provided.

You can imagine my excitement when Hope and Amy called to tell me they had been inspired by the biblical approach of my book and its Three Principles to develop a cookbook—a cookbook with simple, tasty and nutritious recipes.

I am pleased to say their years of preparing, cooking, tasting and fine-tuning have paid off. I am grateful for their contribution to the *What the Bible Says about Healthy Living* family of resources. It is always humbling to realize that God is creative in the works He starts and leaves nothing lacking or undone. I am enthusiastic in my recommendation of the *What the Bible Says about Healthy Living Cookbook*.