

Should Seventh-day Adventists Stock-Up on Food?

Some Seventh-day Adventists, concerned about rising costs, troubles in the economy, and looming world crises are asking “Should we stock-up on food?” This is an important question, and one for which we can turn to inspiration for an answer. But, as is often the case, many have attempted to settle the question without looking at all that inspiration has to say about this. One statement, frequently quoted, generally brings an end to discussions about preparedness and long term food storage:

“The Lord has shown me in vision, repeatedly, that it is contrary to the Bible to make any provision for our temporal wants in the time of trouble. I saw that if the saints have food laid up by them, or in the fields, in the time of trouble when sword, famine, and pestilence are in the land, it will be taken from them by violent hands, and strangers would reap their fields. Then will be the time for us to trust wholly in God, and He will sustain us. I saw that our bread and water would be sure at that time, and we should not lack, or suffer hunger. The Lord has shown me that some of His children would fear when they see the price of food rising, and they would buy food and lay it by for the time of trouble. Then in a time of need, I saw them go to their food and look at it, and it had bred worms, and was full of living creatures, and not fit for use.” (Maranatha, p. 181)

While this quote could be interpreted to mean that we should not practice any food storage plan whatsoever, a careful look at the facts reveals otherwise. First, notice an important qualifier in this quotation – three significant words: “time of trouble.” The warning was against stocking up for the “time of trouble.” This refers to the time after the close of probation when the plagues begin to fall (not the “little time of trouble” as will be seen in the next quotation and further quotes.) In fact, she goes on in the next paragraph to clarify what time she is speaking of:

“Houses and lands will be of no use to the saints in the time of trouble, for they will then have to flee before infuriated mobs, and at that time their possessions cannot be disposed of to advance the cause of present truth. . . .” (Maranatha, p. 181)

It is interesting to consider some examples of Mrs. White’s own practice with regard to food preservation and storage. These examples make it quite clear that she believed in food preservation and storage that would last many months. Notice the following:

“I find Sister Nelson to be a faithful, economical housekeeper. She has been very busy canning fruit and drying corn. The others have not been able to help her much; for they have all been busy on the writings. But Mrs. Nelson does not complain. She sees what needs to be done, and does it. This is a great blessing.

“She has already canned one hundred and thirty-eight quarts of tomatoes, sixty quarts of loganberries, and seventy-five quarts of applesauce, besides cherries, peaches, and apricots. We hope to have 200 quarts of tomatoes put up. We have nearly a bushel of sweet corn dried, and have had sweet corn on the table nearly every day for two or three weeks.” (Manuscript Releases, vol. 7, p. 119)

“Each year we put up not less than six or eight hundred quarts of canned fruit. We have peaches, apricots, nectarines, grapes, plums, and tomatoes canned.

“I have given you these particulars so that you may know all about our ways and practices, which may differ from your present style of living. We are all in good health with the exception of Sister Eliza Burnham, who occasionally has nervous headaches. Sister Burnham is a superior editor. Marian Davis also is authority on the class of books we send to the world.” (14Manuscript Releases, vol. 14, p. 332)

While there might be a variety of opinions on just how long “six or eight hundred quarts” of fruit would last, we can see in the following quotation that Mrs. White had prunes on hand a year after they had been dried:

“I have on hand a large quantity of last year's prunes. I should be glad to give these to our people in the South. But I have not money to pay the cost of transportation. Have you any suggestion to make as to how these prunes could be sent South? Please mention this in your next letter.” (Manuscript Releases, vol. 7, p. 120) (These remarks were made in the context of writing about the current year’s prunes which were then being dried.)

Clearly, Mrs. White did believe in food preservation and storage that would last for many months. Keep in mind that this approach had nothing to do with stock piling for the time of trouble. It was rather a prudent and reasonable way to live. In our modern age of supermarkets when some people shop between meals, this seems very foreign to us. Yet there are three good reasons to adopt a food storage plan.

Three Reasons to Adopt a Food Storage Plan

1. Self Sufficient Living - God’s plan for His people in the last days is that they will be growing their own food:

Contributes to Economic Security.—“Again and again the Lord has instructed that our people are to take their families away from the cities, into the country, where they can raise their own provisions; for in the future the problem of buying and selling will be a very serious one. We should now begin to heed the instruction given us over and over again: Get out of the cities into rural districts, where the houses are not crowded closely together, and where you will be free from the interference of enemies.” (Adventist Home, p. 141)

In order to provide food for our families, consideration must be given to food storage to deal with the off season months and times when some crops may do poorly due to climatic or weather issues. In this context, a one year food supply would not be unreasonable.

By the way, notice in the quotation above that providing our own food will be important in a time when “the problem of buying and selling will be a very

serious one.” This is clearly an allusion to the time when Sunday legislation reaches a level of “no buying or selling” for Sabbath keepers.

It’s good to remember that the first and foremost reason to be growing our own food is that this is an integral part of true education:

“In God's plan for Israel every family had a home on the land with sufficient ground for tilling. Thus were provided both the means and the incentive for a useful, industrious, and self-supporting life. And no devising of men has ever improved upon that plan. To the world's departure from it is owing, to a large degree, the poverty and wretchedness that exist today.” (Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, 275-276)

2. Advantages of higher-nutrient, non-GMO and organically grown foods:

The second reason for adopting a food storage plan is that growing our own food is the best way to insure nutrient value. It is also the only way to be certain that unwanted pesticides aren’t used and that our food is coming from non-GMO seeds. As we saw above, the only way to avail ourselves of home grown food year around is to have a working food storage plan.

The idea that God’s people should not have to depend on food grown elsewhere is not new, as we can see in the following quotation:

“Our schools should not depend upon imported produce, for grain and vegetables, and the fruits so essential to health.” (Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 6, 179)

If this is true for our schools, how much more for our homes?

3. Preparedness for emergencies and disasters

The third reason to adopt a food storage plan has to do with the unexpected. We have often seen in the news when hurricanes or other disasters strike how quickly the supermarket shelves are swept bare. Such interruptions in the food business aren’t a problem for those who have a long term food storage plan. We have every reason to believe that such situations will only increase in the coming days. Doesn’t it make sense that God would have His people in a position to help others rather than needing to be helped?

How Can I Get Started?...

There is a wealth of information on the internet regarding food storage. You will see that many of these sites are maintained by Mormons, who are taught the importance of a food storage. There is a new blog on the topic which we have started which will grow as we add more information. You can find it at - <http://www.longtermfoodstorage.org>.