

Synergy

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The whole is greater than the sum of its parts

When we start to examine the food made for us by our Creator a little more deeply we can begin to see a wisdom expressed here that goes far beyond simply providing the nutrients needed by the human body.

There are over 600 bioactive nutrients in a blueberry, over 900 in a clove of garlic. There are over 5000 nutrients in various fruits and vegetables that have been identified – and that is just the ones we know about so far. There are probably thousands more waiting to be discovered. Scientists are forever looking to discover the one magic nutrient that will cure this or that disease – so they can encapsulate it and sell it to you. Natural remedy advocates are constantly recommending multiple supplements from various plants or herbs for certain conditions – often in special proprietary formulations or special extraction processes that they would also like to sell to you. But pills or capsules simply cannot mimic the balanced natural combination of phytochemicals found in fruits and vegetables.

When isolated, a pure compound may lose its bioactivity or not behave the same way as it would in the whole food. Researchers in this field now propose that the additive and synergistic effects of phytochemicals in fruits and vegetables are responsible for their potent antioxidant and anticancer activities. The benefit of a diet rich in fruits and vegetables is now being attributed to the complex mixture of the phytochemicals present in whole foods. This explains why no single antioxidant can replace the combination of natural phytochemicals. The evidence suggests that antioxidants and other bioactive compounds are best acquired through whole food consumption, not from dietary supplements. Daily consumption of a wide and variable variety for whole fruits and vegetables is the best strategy for reducing chronic disease and attaining optimum health.

Meta-analyses of hundreds of studies involving hundreds of thousands of experimental subjects overwhelmingly show **no long-term benefit** for vitamin supplements. And there are worrisome findings

that certain vitamins may even increase diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and cancer. Omega-3 fat supplements that are now so heavily recommended have no long-term benefits and increase the risk of diabetes. This scientific data has been available for over a decade and reconfirmed over and over again and yet the public desire for a quick fix continues to drive the supplement market to ever higher profits.

Plant food combinations

Each plant has its own unique profile of bioactive phytochemicals and every plant is different. And when we combine several of these plants at a meal there is a synergistic effect where the total benefit of that meal exceeds the additive effects of all its parts. When you measure the antioxidant value of raspberries and adzuki beans as one study did and then measure the antioxidant value of the two foods combined the result was that the combined value was far more than the sum of the two foods separately.

Other studies looked at anticancer effects of food combinations. In one study, they looked at the effect of grapes on breast cancer cells and it showed a significant decrease, and then they tested onion and found it had an even greater effect in reducing the breast cancer cells, so then they tested a mixture of only half grape and half onion – you would think that result would fall somewhere in between the two averaging each other out – but no, it was way more effective than either one had been alone, even though each was at only half concentration as when first tested. The synergistic combination of all the phytochemicals in the two foods added together was much more powerful.

Antioxidant synergism and cancer

There are antioxidant tables showing the ORAC value for different foods – often misused by supplement manufactures to promote their products. But does the total antioxidant value of the foods we eat really make a difference in our health? Apparently, yes. Looking at gastric cancer (the second most deadly cancer there is) researchers stated: “Dietary antioxidant capacity intake from different sources of plant foods is associated with a reduction in the risk of gastric cancer.” Notice that they are talking about dietary sources from whole plant foods – not from supplements. A careful systematic review of all the studies done on antioxidant supplementation for the prevention of gastric cancer show that not only do pills not help, but taking antioxidant vitamin supplements actually increases the overall mortality from gastric cancer. The thousands of phytochemicals in the plant foods all working together – probably in many complex ways unrelated to their antioxidant properties – reduced the risk of gastric cancer. But the taking of the supplements apparently unbalanced these complex networks of interactions in a negative way increasing the mortality.

The complexity of the wisdom of God

Apparently, the thousands of compounds God created in the food He made for us all work together in mysterious complex networks of chemical reactions – many of which we don't yet understand. It is not just the isolated properties of a particular phytochemical – but rather the complex interactions of all of the thousands and thousands of phytochemicals found in all the different foods working together that produces life and health and well-being. His wisdom in designing the complex networks of chemical reactions that produce health and prevent disease and even heal and repair cellular damage is amazing and we cannot improve upon it. We can only make it worse in our attempts to isolate and emphasize and supplement certain compounds. We can't improve what God in His wisdom has made perfect.

He designed the human body with all of its complex organs and cells and systems and he designed the perfect complement to sustain and maintain it throughout eternity. We would do well to appreciate his wisdom and bow down before it and in simple trusting faith take it just the way he gives it. On the day that he created the human race he pointed out the plants and trees with all of their fruits and seeds and said: "These shall be your food." We cannot improve upon that.

Spiritual whole foods

This synergy seen in our food is but an illustration inviting us to consume more completely and entirely the blessings he has for us in our spiritual food as well. Don't let someone isolate out for you a single truth and take that as all you need – study in detail and believe all the truth in His Word. Referring to the Lord's Supper He says to us: "*Take and eat.*" and "*Drink ye all of it.*" The depth and synergy of the Bible truths of salvation goes far beyond a simple "pill" of forgiveness. Many will be lost while believing that confessing, repenting and being forgiven is all that is necessary to enter the gates of heaven. There is a complex interlocking network of Bible truths and we need all of them for spiritual health – they are all important. The healing and restoring of the human soul by faith in the righteousness of Christ, recreated in us through the indwelling of His Spirit, is necessary for our transformation into citizens of His Kingdom.

He is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory in the sight of all the universe as an example of His wisdom and power. May we always eat fully of all that he provides for us.

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