

TAKE AIM, DON'T MISS! DEALING WITH THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS – THE SIN WE DON'T TAKE SERIOUSLY ENOUGH! –



I have a friend named David who had a friend named Bob, who was OBSESSED with food. He loves to connect everything with food, and eats like a champ. His favorite dish? Mashed potatoes mixed with chocolate chip cookies! I also have a friend I haven't seen in a while, who I do NOT like to go out to eat with and visit, b/c until his plate is cleaned, we will not even talk to me! Waiter brought out a brownie, & I honestly thought he was going to ask this brownie to marry him . . . I was waiting for a PROPOSAL. And I ministered to a girl in a former church who was obsessed with food in that she always thought she ate too much . . . even though she was so thin, she would have to run around in the shower to get wet! Kept laxatives in her purse, and could self-induce vomiting. Oh, and she was very critical, condescending towards, and self-righteously

dismissive of those who ate more than her (which was almost everybody!). What do all those folks have in common? They're all fighting the sin of gluttony! And losing the fight.

If there's a sin we all (speaking of and to myself) tend to be dismissive of, or a sin we tend to rationalize away, it's the sin of GLUTTONY. How easily it falls off our "vice" radar – especially on Thanksgiving! Or we tend to "project" this sin onto those who are overweight (as we make judgments about them, based on appearance). We also tend to justify ourselves as we stuff ourselves into stupefaction [Dad, (smiling), loosens his belt and proclaims, "I have sinned!"] Gluttony is a VICE that holds us in its grip, and we can dig ourselves into a grave with a SPOON as easily as we can with a shovel.

What IS "gluttony"?

**** It's the vice of a DISORDERED APPETITE (something is "out of whack" about your appetite) and the result of FLABBY thinking about what the Bible says about FOOD. ****

Did you know? FOOD plays a central role in the drama of redemption! The Fall, the Exodus, the wilderness wanderings, the "scandal" of Jesus' eating habits, the book of Revelation, and two food-related practices the grow us spiritually . . .

According to Genesis 3, humanity's fall took place dia an act of CONSUMING FOOD (the forbidden fruit syndrome which people still are manipulated by, "DON'T!" we hear, and we think in terms of "DO!") The PASSOVER was commemorated with a MEAL. In the wilderness, there's the provision of MANNA. JESUS was the subject of much scandalous talk by the religious "gatekeepers" of his day b/c Jesus DINED with sinners and those deemed as "unacceptable" by those in power, b/c table fellowship was a sign of deep friendship. Even in the early church, controversy swirled over

the question “WHO can you eat with?” Of course, the Bible ends with the Marriage Supper of the Lamb! Food’s actually a big deal in the Bible! Later on the 2 food-related practices that help us grow . . . In fact, 1 of the 1st things the BIBLE tells us about food is . . . **Food’s a GIFT from God!**

1. Let’s consider the GIFT of food.

The whole of Scripture affirms the gift of food is evidence of God’s GOODNESS to us. **How should we receive food?** (Cf *Genesis 1:29; Psalm 104:14-15; John 6:11 1 Timothy 4:1, 3-5*) From the get-go in the Bible (Genesis 1), God GIVES us food; and even today, the conditions necessary to grow food are the result of God’s mercy, God’s kindness. If we follow the eg of Jesus, when we break bread, 1st thing we do is give thanx! This giving of thanx is not PROFUNCTORY but a PRIORITY. [“ . . . The prayer @ the meal (which Mom referred to as “time to slop the hogs”, was roughly the same thing as saying, “Gentlemen, start your engines!”] When we eat, we are to receive, enjoy, and give thanks to the One Who is the Ultimate GIVER of every good gift! [Billy Graham, “Being an atheist must be like eating a good meal and enjoying it thoroughly but believing there was no cook in the kitchen preparing the meal.”] Food is a GIFT, but like any GIFT, **FOOD can become an IDOL.**

2. Let’s consider the IDOLATRY of food.

We see this in *John 6:25, 26* Jesus chastised people who followed Him only b/c by following Him, they would receive the ultimate “meals on wheels”. Here’s JESUS before them, the ONLY ONE who can fulfill their spiritual appetites, and they’re more concerned about DINNER than they are about the fact that GOD IS AMONG THEM!

Gluttony is about more than the amount of Pizza we consume. It’s about us making bodily APPETITES a priority over SPIRITUAL realities. (cf *Philippians 3:18-19*) Gluttony is a WORSHIP DISORDER.

Gluttony is the sin of looking to FOOD to satisfy the CRAVINGS of our souls for SECURITY, a sense of well-BEING, COMFORT, and CONTROL over our lives. (Ever seen anyone get ANXIOUS about not eating “on time”, whatever that means?) I knew a man who would NOT eat a sandwich for dinner. “That’s not dinner, that’s just a sandwich.” And the day was a bust. He would go to bed hungry. Ever heard of “COMFORT FOODS”? Of COURSE you have! Food consumption is a CONTROL issue. From early childhood years on, there’s a struggle for CONTROL that always has something to do with FOOD! For both overweight and anorexic, it’s I WANT to eat whatever I WANT to eat!

Here are 3 ways we can idolize food:

- **We idolize food by giving it too much IMPORTANCE.**

A classic Biblical example of this is...? And some insight from Edmund Pevensie...

As the firstborn, Esau was heir of Isaac and of God’s covenant promises to Abraham. The birthright was his. But one day Esau, an outdoorsy “man’s man,” came in from a grueling day in the field and caught an appetizing whiff of his brother Jacob’s homemade stew.

And Esau had to have it. He wanted it so much that he offered to trade his birthright for a single bowl. Esau sold the most important thing in his life to satisfy the cravings of his growling stomach. While I don't personally know anyone who has made the conscious choice to trade God's promises for a bowl of stew, a great many Christians do end up cultivating appetites and habits of consumption that become so enslaving that they try to push GOD / GOD'S WILL off the playing field of life, and onto the bench.

If Esau is the classic biblical example, perhaps Edmund Pevensie's inordinate hunger for Turkish Delight is the best-known illustration from children's literature. The story is from C. S. Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, where Edmund becomes the willing victim of a wicked Queen's seduction and lies. While attempting to gain information from Edmund, the Queen offers Edmund enchanted food. While he was eating the Queen kept asking him questions. At first Edmund tried to remember that it is rude to speak with one's mouth full, but soon he forgot about this and thought only of trying to shovel down as much Turkish Delight as he could, and the more he ate the more he wanted to eat, and he never asked himself why the Queen should be so inquisitive. But the thing about "enchanted Turkish Delight" says Lewis, is that "anyone who had once tasted it would want more and more of it, and would even, if they were allowed, go on eating it till they killed themselves." Edmund's appetite becomes all-consuming, even after he is reunited with his sister Lucy, and learns how evil the White Witch is. In spite of Lucy's warnings, "Edmund was already feeling uncomfortable from having eaten too many sweets, and when he heard that the Lady he had made friends with was a dangerous witch he felt even more uncomfortable. But he still wanted to taste that Turkish Delight again more than he wanted anything else." [Hedges, Brian (2014-10-30). *Hit List*, (pp. 93-94). Cruciform Press. Kindle Edition.]

- **We idolize food by treating it as an END in ITSELF.**

What's the motto of pagans and fools? (*Cf 1 Corinthians 15:32; Luke 12:19-20*)

The ONLY enjoyment you have is in this life, so eat, drink, and be merry . . . for we die and become food for worms. It's, in the words of John Belushi, "Live fast, die young, leave a good looking corpse."

Some insight from Augustine... and MREs ... Augustine says "We're PILGRIMS heading somewhere and longing for the land we're headed to. If you too comfortable, too satisfied with what fills your stomach on the journey, you'll lose interest in where you're headed? GOOD THINGS should PROPMT us to move on toward our destination and POINT US TO our destination.

MREs are MEALS READY to EAT, given to soldiers. These "meals ready to eat" provide food in a way that's designed to help soldiers accomplish their mission. That doesn't

mean they are tasteless. MREs include an entrée, but also a dessert or snack, a dry mix of coffee or something similar, along with packets of salt and pepper and Tabasco sauce. But the MRE is first and foremost functional. It's not a gourmet dinner, but a carefully packaged meal designed to provide soldiers in the field the necessary nutrition and sustenance needed to carry out their mission until they can return to base camp. And that means that soldiers have to subordinate their appetites to the demands of the mission. While the meals aren't unappetizing, their primary purpose isn't to satisfy every taste bud on every pallet, but to provide mission support with maximal efficiency and effectiveness. "Extending this analogy to our Christian life," writes DeYoung, "we can ask ourselves whether our eating habits are dedicated to SIMPLY serving our own pleasure or to serving our spiritual mission as witnesses and carriers of the Good News of the GOSPEL." [Hedges, Brian (2014-10-30). *Hit List* (pp. 95-96). Cruciform Press. Kindle Edition.] Do your APPETITES drag you down and hinder your witness?

- **We idolize food when we become SLAVES to our APPETITES.**
Here are some possible indicators of *food idolatry*:

- **Wrong USE of food.** Eating UNWISELY and disregarding the potential physical dangers of eating, but more importantly, eating without regard to reflection on the goodness of GOD and thanksgiving to God. This is usually seen in those who see a meal as a race to be run, with a clean plate as the finished line, and heading there as fast as possible. One of the problems in our daily lives is that many of us rush through the day, with no time for anything ... and when we have time to get a bite to eat, we gobble it down. That leads to stressful, unhealthy living. You take smaller bites, you chew each bite slower and longer, and you enjoy your meal longer. You digest better. You enjoy the food and have time to reflect on the ONE who gives you that food!
- **Wrong ENJOYMENT of food.** How much GRATIFICATION is food giving you, in and of itself? I cannot stress how important it is to let food POINT you to the GIVER, and to offer gratitude to GOD for His GIFT of food. Also, we ENJOY food too much when food becomes a source of SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS. That goes for the self-righteous DIETER who looks down his/her nose @ those who are NOT dieting, or worse, not dieting doing THEIR diet! It's one thing to say, "It would be good for you to try this." It's quite another thing to say, "You don't care about what you eat because you're not doing this." Or worse, "NO XN would eat what you eat!" That's a form of salvation by works! But also, the person who stuffs himself and then gets angry or resentful if people out of concern point out his/her habits of consumption is likewise setting him/herself up as the self-righteous judge of others. When it comes to food, **what we ALL need is REDEMPTION . . .**

3. Let's consider some REDEMPTIVE ANALOGIES of food.

If gluttony really is a WORSHIP disorder, the solution is to RELOCATE our WORSHIP.

Idolatry is an attempt to find in ANY CREATED THING (including food) what only the CREATOR can give you. Significance, security, purpose, identity, acceptance, belonging, love, whatever . . .

What is Jesus speaking of in *John 6:35ff*? JESUS is the source of life and joy. Jesus, like bread, bruised, baked in the fire of God's Wrath, and broken by your sin on the cross. When we feast of what CHRIST has done for us, we are fed, spiritually!

What two spiritual practices can actually deliver me from food idolatry?

- **The discipline of FASTING.**

(CF Matthew 4:2; 6:16-18; 9:15) We are EXPECTED to do this, forgoing physical desire for the intensification of SPIRITUAL desire. Amazing how FOCUSED you become when you're not FOCUSED on food!

The implications for fighting gluttony are obvious! Fasting forces us to control our physical appetites and train our spiritual appetites. Fasting also affirms that our PHYSICAL appetites are not ultimate!

- **The sacrament of the LORD'S SUPPER.**

(CF 1 Corinthians 11:26) TLS us a means of grace that nourishes us with the Gospel as it is visually displayed.

Again, the implications are obvious! We taste and see that the LORD is good. We think of CHRIST, who satisfies our deepest needs. ["We taste Thee, O Thou living Bread, and long to feast upon Thee still; We drink of Thee, the Fountainhead, And thirst our souls from Thee to fill."]