

Addicted to Food (and/or Exercise)

Jim Newhesier

I. Introduction.

- A. Food and body idolatry are 'big' issues in our culture.
- B. Food creates many counseling issues.
- C. The Bible has a lot to say about food.
 - 1. God has given us a variety of good food to enjoy to His glory. Gen. 1:29-31 9:3, I Tim. 4:3-5, Ps. 105:14-15
 - 2. The first sin had to do with sinful eating. Gen. 3
 - 3. Many other subsequent sins have had to do with food. Gen. 25:27ff 27:1ff, Heb. 12:14-17, Num. 11:4-6, Ps. 78:18, Ex. 16:2ff
 - 4. Plentiful food is a blessing of the Old Covenant. Dt. 28:4-5, Ps. 111:5
 - 5. The curse for covenant unfaithfulness is shortage of food. Dt. 28:17, 23-24, 33, 38-40, Isa. 3:1
 - 6. Plentiful food is also a New Covenant blessing. Mt. 6:31-33
 - 7. God gives food to mankind as a common grace blessing. Acts 14:17 He even feeds animals and enemies. Ps. 136:25, 145:15, Mt. 5:45
 - 8. God brings people together in fellowship around food.
 - 9. Your heart is more important than your body. I Ti. 4:8, I Sam. 16:7, Luke 12:23, Pr. 31:30, I Pe. 3:3-4, I Co. 8:8
 - 10. Our need of food reminds us of our complete dependence upon God. I Ki. 17
 - 11. Physical hunger symbolic of our spiritual need. Mt. 5:6, I Pe. 2:2-3, Ps. 34:8
 - 12. Spiritual food is far more important than earthly food. Mt. 4:4, Dt. 8:3, Jo. 6:31ff
 - 13. Will we eat in the New Heavens and the New Earth? Lu. 24:30, 41-43, John 12:12, Rev. 2:7, 19:9
 - 14. There is no biblical command to be thin.
- D. The Bible also talks about exercise.
 - 1. Bodily discipline does have some profit. I Tim. 4:8
 - 2. Physical exercise is used illustratively of spiritual discipline. I Co. 9:24ff

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II. Sins of the body.

- A. Gluttony and overeating. Prov. 23:21
 - 1. The excessive love for and use of food. Phil. 3:19
 - 2. Gluttony violates the sixth commandment. Ex. 20:13, I Co. 6:19-20, Ecc. 5:12
 - 3. Gluttony can be a sin against your spouse. I Cor. 7:3ff, Song of Solomon
 - 4. Gluttony is often associated with other sins. Dt. 21:20, Pr. 23:20, 28:7, 23:21, Mt. 6:25ff, Col. 3:9, Eph. 4:25, Phil. 2:3-4, I Cor. 10:10
 - 5. Gluttony can make you less useful to God. I Co. 10:31, 6:19-20
 - 6. Not all gluttons are fat.

- B. Excessive devotion to physical fitness can also be sinful.
 - 1. One's quest to obtain the perfect body can lead to other sins. Js. 4:6, Eph. 4:19, II Pe. 2:2, Luke 21:34, Mt. 6:25ff
 - 2. Making everything in your life revolve around your quest for the perfect body.
 - 3. Some are legalistic about food. I Tim. 4:3, Col. 2:16ff
 - 4. Those who idolize the perfect body sometimes become anorexic or bulimic.

- C. Food is not the problem. The root sin is idolatry. Ex. 20:3-5, Phil. 3:19, Deut. 6:4, Isa. 55:1-2, Ezek. 14:1-11, Jer. 2:13
 - 1. Food idolatry. Js. 4:1-2
 - 2. Fitness idolatry.
 - 3. You can be both a glutton and make fitness an idol – exercise bulimia.

III. How can those who are stuck in sinful patterns change?

- A. The change we seek is unique. Col. 1:28, I Tim. 1:5
 - 1. Our goal is not merely to be thin or to impress other people, but to please and glorify God. Col. 1:28, I Co. 10:31, II Co. 5:9
 - 2. It is not what you eat which makes you a sinner, but what is in your heart. Mark 7:14ff, Js. 1:14ff, Jer. 17:10
 - 3. The change we seek is not outward and physical but inward and spiritual.
 - 4. Seek first God's kingdom and don't worry (think) so much about food. Mt. 6:33

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- B. Change begins with the gospel.
1. Law alone will not change you. Col. 2:23, 19, Rom. 8:3-4, Gal. 3:3
 - i. Scripture generally begins with the indicative, what God has done for us, as the ground for imperatives.
 - ii. New Testament commands and exhortations are grounded in the gospel. Eph. 4:9ff, 5:2, 25ff, Rom. 15:2-3, 7
 - iii. Some think of the gospel exclusively for justification, but don't realize its relevance for sanctification. Gal. 3:3
 - iv. Some biblical counselors move too quickly to the imperative (what we do) without placing enough emphasis upon how the gospel is the basis of change.
 2. You are accepted by God, not based upon how thin you are, but because of the perfect righteousness of Christ. Phil. 3:9
 3. What matters most is not what other people think of you, or even what you think of yourself, but your status with God. Pr. 29:25, I Co. 6:9-11, II Co. 5:17, Ro. 6:11
 4. If change begins with the gospel, how do unbelievers lose weight? Mt. 12:43-45
 5. Only believers are able to please God. Rom. 8:5-8, 14:23, Heb. 11:6, I Co. 10:31
 6. We change not through self-reliance, but in total dependence upon God. Jo. 15:5, 8
- C. Understanding your union with Christ is the key to your growth in holiness. Ro. 6:1ff
1. Paul anticipates an objection to the gospel. Rom. 6:1-2a
 2. You can't go on sinning because you are united to Christ. Rom. 6:2b
The gospel rightly understood promotes holiness. Titus 2:14
 3. Your old self has died and you are a new person in Christ. Rom. 6:2b-4a, 8-10, Gal. 2:20, Col. 3:3-4
 4. You are united with Christ in His resurrection. Rom. 6:4b-5, 8
 5. You have been set free from slavery to sin (including gluttony) to serve righteousness. Rom. 6:6-7, 9b, 15-22, Isa. 61:1
 6. Now, live in light of who you are in Christ. Rom. 6:12-13
 7. No temptation has to overcome you. I Co. 10:13
 8. How does this work itself out in practical terms?

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- D. Christ is better than gluttony (and all of the other idols which tempt us). Isa. 55:1-2, Jer. 15:16, Ps. 34:8, Mt. 11:28ff, Jo. 6:53ff, 4:10, 7:38, Gen. 39:9b, Prov. 9:1ff
1. Your gluttony never satisfies you. Ecc. 6:7, Micah 6:14
 2. Christ alone satisfies -- eat at the Lord's table. Prov. 9:1ff, John 6:53-58

IV. We are responsible to exert effort towards change.

- A. Change takes place through the means our exerting effort and acting obediently. Rom. 6:12-13, 8:13, 13:14, Titus 2:11-12
1. Some wrongfully stop with the indicative, declaring what God has done for us in Christ, while neglecting the imperatives of what God calls us to do.
 2. Immediately after telling us to consider our identity in Christ, Paul exhorts us to take action against the lusts of the flesh. Rom. 6:12ff
- B. Repent (put off). Isa. 55:6-7, 1:18, II Co. 10:5, I Jo. 5:21
1. Stop blaming God for your failure. James 1:13
 2. Repent of food and body idolatry. I Co. 6:12-13, 10:12, Pr. 16:8, 11:2, Js. 4:6, Acts 12:22ff,
 3. Learn to resist inward temptation. I Cor. 10:12-13, James 1:14ff, Mt. 26:41
 4. Take radical steps to remove outward temptation. Mt. 5:29-30
 5. Whatever cannot be eaten in faith is sin. Rom. 14:23
- C. Put on glorifying God in your eating and how you care for your body. Titus 2:11-12
1. Love the LORD and feast (spiritually) at His table. Ps. 16:11, 1:2, 73:25, 42:2, 63:1, Prov. 9:1ff, Isa. 6:4, 26:9, 55:1-2, John 6:53ff, Ecc. 6:7
 2. Express prayerful dependence upon God for your food and health. Mt. 6:11, Ps. 40:17, 69:33, 72:13
 3. Never eat without giving thanks for the food God gives you. I Ti. 4:3-5, I Co. 10:30-31, 11:24
 4. Be content with the quantity and quality of food God provides for you. I Ti. 6:6ff, Phil. 4:11

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5. Be content with the body God has given you. Ps. 139:13-14
6. Live a life of self-discipline/control. I Co. 9:27, Gal. 5:22-23, II Pe. 1:5-7, 9
7. Honor God with your body. I Co. 3:16-17, 6:20
8. Your motive for obedience is crucial.
9. Look forward to the day when these bodies will be perfected. Phil. 3:21

D. Practical things which you can do.

1. See a physician before attempting any significant change in your lifestyle.
2. Make a plan for how you will eat and exercise. Prov. 21:5, I Tim. 4:8
3. Keep a record of what you eat.
4. Eat slowly and thankfully. I Tim. 4:4-5
5. It is better to establish wise God-honoring habits which will last a lifetime than to go on a temporary radical diet.
6. Take a day off from food (fasting) and feast at the Lord's Table.
7. Seek godly accountability. Heb. 3:13, Ecc. 4:9-12
8. Beware of legalism. I Tim. 4:3

- E. Your change can have effects which will glorify God. I Co. 10:31, 6:19-20, Acts 12:21ff

V. What determines when and whether change takes place?

- A. We experience a variety of outcomes in our counseling.
- B. Sometimes change doesn't take place in the life of a counselee because he/she is not regenerate. John 15:2, 6, Phil. 1:6, I John 2:3-4, Mt. 7:16ff
- C. Be careful not to wrongfully judge someone who is overweight. Mt. 7:1ff
- D. Personal revival is like corporate revival: God sees fit to sovereignly work in powerful ways in the lives of His people at certain times. Jo. 3:8 15:5, Ps. 71:20, 85:6
 1. We cannot through our counseling skill or technique change people.
 2. God alone must do it. John 15:5

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- E. God uses various means to bring about change.
 - 1. His Word is a powerful agent for change. II Ti. 3:16-17, Heb. 4:12-13, Ps. 119:25, John 15:7
 - 2. We should pray for God to revive us and our counselees. Ps. 119:25, 37, 40, 88, 107, 149, 154, 156, 159
 - 3. Sometimes the Lord brings circumstances into our lives to change our course. Ps. 119:67, 71, Heb. 12:4-11, John 15:2, James 1:2ff
 - 4. Sometimes God sends a Nathan to admonish us. Ro. 15:14, Ga. 6:1-2, II Sam. 12
 - 5. Participation in the church community encourages to good deeds. Heb. 10:24-25

VI. Conclusion.

- A. Food is important.
- B. Food is a symbol of our need of God.
- C. God wants us to change and to bear fruit for His glory. John 15:8
- D. The gospel is the key to change. Rom. 6:11, John 15:1ff, Isa. 55:1-2
- E. We are responsible to exert effort to change. Matthew 14:22-33
- F. Recommended Resources.
 - 1. Cleveland, The Lord's Table.
 - 2. Fitzpatrick, Love to Eat Hate to Eat.
 - 3. McCoy, Shannon, "*How for Habitual Overeaters*" in Women Counseling Women, edited by Elyse Fitzpatrick.
 - 4. Piper, A Hunger for God.
 - 5. Welch, Addictions: A Banquet in the Grave.