

3 Serious Questions for the Overeater

According to a 2012 Gallup poll, 27.2 percent of Americans are obese and 35.5 percent overweight. These figures probably come as no surprise to you, considering the pleasure-crazed, five-senses-satisfying society in which we live.

A short drive down the street will take you past (or straight to) fast-food restaurants whose aim it is to tempt your taste buds with mouth-watering burgers and crispy super-sized fries. A night at the movies often makes buckets of popcorn and liters of soda the main attraction. Birthday parties and holiday feasts boast platters and platefuls of casseroles, cookies, chips and dips to make merrier the celebration.

We often find ourselves eating not because we are hungry but because we experience fleeting moments of pleasure bursting from the flavors of our favorite foods. When those moments vanish, we're on to the next bite, and the next bite ...

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, *gluttony* is defined as "excess in eating or drinking." Having a slice of cake on our birthdays or enjoying a box of candy at the theater isn't gluttony. It's when the act of eating becomes excessive and all-consuming that it becomes gluttonous.

Unfortunately, we live in a culture that makes it all too easy, all too acceptable, to nibble to our hearts' content. We're encouraged by family members to go back for seconds and urged by advertisements to get the combo meal and super-size it. Rarely do people call our overeating to our attention, and so the notion that it is sinful and selfish tends to elude us.

If you struggle with gluttony, here are three questions that, when honestly answered and positively addressed, will not only kill cravings, but also replace them with a hunger for more of

God and a thirst to pursue His will for your physical health.

1. Is this meal needful or sinful? Sins can be readily identified with a simple question: Will doing this eventually harm me or someone else? From cigarette smoking to lusting, from cheating on a test to cheating on your spouse, every sin carries with it a harmful repercussion if we don't repent and turn back onto the narrow road. Smoking may lead to larynx or lung cancer, lusting to a pornography addiction and damaged relationships, and so forth. Gluttony sows seeds of obesity, which, when watered, consistently grow into fearsome, health-choking blossoms of diabetes, heart disease and cancer.

Don't be a slave to your appetite. Instead, strive to be a steward of the marvelous, masterfully designed body God's given you. You honor Him when you honor your temple with moderation and discipline and serve as a beneficial, even life-saving, example to others.

2. Why am I eating? People often eat when they feel bored, stressed, sad or celebratory. During moments of idleness, snacking seems a harmless "time out," an opportunity to pass the time and provide some pleasure before moving on to the next activity or appointment on our schedule. When stressful situations arise, many find comfort in a handful of candy. When people feel disappointed or rejected, they often turn to their favorite junk food to numb the sting of sadness. Others, after a fantastic day that couldn't have gone better, also overindulge in unhealthy foods and quantities out of sheer happiness.

First Corinthians 10:31 tells us to glorify God in everything we do, even eating and drinking. When you eat, do so to fill your stomach, not an emotional void you sense down in your soul. Of course, humans have been gathering around food to celebrate for thousands of years; there is nothing sinful about this! It is when the celebration turns into our own worship of food and feasting that we need to remind ourselves

of our calling to honor God with our bodies (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

3. Have you been in God's Word? Jesus said that “man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4, NIV). Often our physical hunger is a sign of spiritual malnutrition. When we neglect to spend time in the Scriptures, we deprive ourselves of the life-giving power contained in its living, active” words (Heb. 4:12)! We find solutions for our boredom, relief for our stress, remedies for our sadness and poetic expressions for our happiness when we dive into the pages of the Bible and let our spirits soak up its all-satisfying sustenance.

The next time your body tells you that you need a “food fix,” listen for what your spirit is asking for. It could very well be craving time with its Creator.

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