

Are You Settling for These Unhealthy Sin Substitutes?

This past weekend, I was speaking with some people at my congregation after service was over during a meal. The person who asked knew I was trying to live a healthier lifestyle so they started to hand me a diet drink. I told them I preferred unsweetened tea to soda, and when they passed me my drink, they also gave me a small container filled with sugar substitutes. I politely took the container, placed it on the table and went on with my meal, choosing to simply drink the tea without any sugar or sugar replacement.

Later that evening I began to ponder this moment. For some reason, my mind kept returning over and over to this simple interaction, which normally would have been forgotten in moments. I knew that this thought was lingering in my mind because there was more to it than a simple conversation about tea. So I stopped what I was doing and looked at a can of diet soda and read the ingredients. I found out that in order to replace sugar, the manufacturers had to add many other chemicals, which, while not being sugar, are in many cases more harmful to the human body than sugar would have been in the first place. I studied further and found that, contrary to the advertisements and promotions, most people who drink diet sodas gain more weight than those just drinking regular sugar sodas.

After finding out this information, I began to seek the L-RD about why I couldn't shake the conversation from my mind. Through prayer, I found that just as people believe that diet sodas and other diet foods can help them be healthier, many people try to apply the same principles to their spiritual lives. In other words, we use reduced calorie sins. While we won't watch television programs or movies with nudity, we will watch "reduced sin" programs that use innuendo and promote

sexually immoral relationships. While we don't see the actual sin through the gateways of our eyes, the sin enters our minds through our thoughts and imagination, which many times are more dangerous than just seeing with our eyes.

We may not use curse words, but we will use "reduced sin" words, which, while not the actual words, have the exact same intent of the heart. These "reduced sin" efforts, just like diet sodas or reduced fat products, can be very harmful to our spiritual man, because we have convinced ourselves that we are doing something healthier, while we have really only exchanged the type of damage we are doing to ourselves. And in many cases, the self-deception is worse, because we actually convince ourselves that the spiritual poisons we have chosen replace the obvious sin, but they only open the door for greater deception to enter our hearts and minds.

"Now the Spirit clearly says that in the last times some will depart from the faith and pay attention to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils" (1 Tim. 4:1). {eoa}

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