

Does God Care About Your Weight?

“Does God really care about our weight?”

A young woman emailed me that question recently after reading about my Christian weight loss success story. I gave her the short answer, but it inspired me to look deeper at the subject.

In this article, I want to share my answer to that question, as well as some other controversial questions surrounding weight loss programs for Christians, and then my thoughts on the ideal Christian weight-loss program.

The questions I will answer include:

- Does God really care about our weight?
- Can I “shame and guilt” my way into changing?
- If I fall short in my weight loss plan, do I disappoint God?
- What is the best Christian weight loss approach?
- Can I eliminate the desire for quick fixes?

So let's get started with the questions.

1. Weight doesn't matter. No, God does not care what you weigh. The Bible says man looks on the outside but God looks on the heart (1 Sam. 16:7). God loves you just as much at a size 28 as at a size 8. Nothing you do can make Him love you more than He does now.

What *does* God care about? Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. We are called to glorify God in body and spirit (1 Cor. 6:19-20). In John 15:8, Jesus tells us how we glorify God: “By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.”

The fruit Jesus is talking about is the fruit of the Spirit. We are to bear *much* love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (see Gal. 5:22-23).

Any thoughts or behavior in your life that have become weeds hindering the fruit that you bear concern God. In my case, compulsive overeating was that behavior—one that I was using to hide myself from emotional pain. My excess weight was just an outward manifestation of what was going on in my heart.

So you see, the real issue is not about size but stewardship. God can teach you how to become a good steward of your body and remove the hindrances that keep you from bearing fruit. Humble yourself and pray the same prayer that King David prayed in Psalm 139:23-24:

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.”

Caring for your body requires wisdom and balance. Only with God’s help can you gain both. As I learned to build my health through following godly wisdom in my eating behavior and through disciplining my body with regular exercise, my weight took care of itself.

I’ll discuss this point more later in the article.

2. Can I “shame and guilt” myself into changing? I’ve read many articles about weight loss for Christians, and some seem to endorse the “shame your way to change” approach. But that approach does not work. Well, not for long!

Why? Because shame and guilt ignore the grace of God. Trying to use shame as a motivator ultimately leads to frustration, hopelessness, discouragement and depression.

But meditating on the grace of God, His goodness, and His love

for you constantly leads to a renewed heart and inspires repentance (a change of heart and mind). You acknowledge that God personally formed every part of your body skillfully and wonderfully, and you want to honor Him by taking care of it.

A change in daily behavior is evidence of true repentance.

3. If I fall short in my weight loss plan, do I disappoint God? The other issue I've seen is Christians thinking they are disappointing God by falling short in their weight-loss plan. But this, too, is an error in thinking. Disappointment comes about when you expect something of a person and are surprised when they don't come through. But God already knows everything about you. He knows about your mistakes before you make them! So how can you ever disappoint Him? Not only that, but He already has a plan in place to help you recover!

Secondly, there is really no way that you can fall short if you use each mistake as a building block, not a stumbling block. What can you learn from the mistake that can propel you forward?

God is ever patient in teaching you the right way and leading you in the way you should go. Remember Philippians 1:6: "Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ." With that in mind, resolve to never give up on yourself. Hold fast to your confidence.

4. What is the best Christian weight-loss approach? Scripture says the kingdom of God is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. So any thoughts or behaviors that are contrary to God's word, that take away your joy and that disrupt your peace concern God. All of these hinder your ability to fulfill the purpose for which God created you.

Remember how Jesus said that His food was to do the will of God? As His disciples, it is our mission as well.

Let me cover what should be different in how a Christian approaches weight loss. The differences arise from:

- Our identity
- Our reason
- Our methods

Our Identity

We are disciples of Jesus Christ, and our aim is to walk as He walked. In Revelation 1:5-6, we are told that Jesus, through His sacrifice, has made us kings and priests to God. In Romans 5:17, Scripture says we who have received the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness will reign in life through Jesus.

In contrast, I remember my past struggle with emotional eating issues. I felt out of control with certain foods, feeling they controlled me rather than me reigning over them! And I felt powerless to change the other habits that led to my weight gain.

It was only by assuming my true identity in Christ that I gained victory. When I had a severe chest pain at 240 pounds and God whispered to me, "It is not supposed to be this way," then I chose to believe Him. I had to open myself up to His leading in the way it was supposed to be.

In the process, I admitted my weakness; I asked God for help in prayer daily and walked out the guidance He gave me daily in rooting out the habits that were destroying my health.

I also learned to appreciate my body as the temple of the Holy Spirit. It was not an overnight change, but it certainly is a lasting one!

Our Reason

Jesus said in John 4:34, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work." As Christians, that is our

mandate as well. However, when I was obese and really examined my thoughts, I was shocked to discover how much of them centered around food, not on doing my Father's will. My main source of joy was thinking about what I was going to eat and when.

But an effective Christian weight-loss program teaches us to restore a right relationship with food. God created food for us to enjoy, to give us energy and to provide the raw materials for our bodies to repair and rebuild themselves. But food was never meant to control our lives.

Hebrews 12:1 urges all of us, "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us."

Our Methods

An ideal weight-loss program for Christians would use biblical principles to guide us into reaching our best weight.

When I created Take Back Your Temple, one of the guiding Scriptures was this one from Proverbs 23:1-3:

"When you sit down to eat with a ruler, consider carefully what is before you; and put a knife to your throat, if you are a man given to appetite. Do not desire his delicacies, for they are deceptive food."

Two principles are given regarding eating: eating with wisdom and eating with self control.

Eating With Wisdom

You are the ruler in this case, since most of the time you are serving food to yourself. So the guidance is to consider your food carefully—not be anxious over it, not worry over it, but do consider it.

One thing to consider first is what a privilege it is to have

food to eat at all. As you know, many people in the world do not have food, so it's not a small thing that you have the ability to get food. That's something to be grateful for.

With being able to get food comes responsibility to ensure that the food you eat helps you and doesn't hurt you. Scripture says that some food is deceptive. Many modern processed foods (those found in a bag, box or can) impair your body's natural hunger/fullness signals, which can lead to out-of-control cravings and overeating. Remember the potato chip slogan, "Bet you can't eat just one"? It is true! That statement applies to many junk foods, and the manufacturers like it that way. The more you eat, the more money for them.

So make it your business to learn about the foods you tend to eat and the effect they have on your body. I advise you to pay at least as much attention to what you put into your body as what you put on it.

When you shift your focus from losing weight to building health, your body will naturally reach the weight that is best for you.

Eating With Self-Control

The bible puts it bluntly: "Put a knife to your throat if you are a man given to appetite." One of the fruits of the Holy Spirit is self-control. You already have it, but like any muscle, it must be exercised to grow stronger.

One aspect of self-control is to learn to eat when your body is hungry. If you have a weight problem, chances are you have disconnected from your body's natural hunger signals.

Proverbs 23:21 says, "For the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, and drowsiness will clothe a man with rags." The implication here is that when you practice gluttony (overeating), you become drowsy, and when you are drowsy, your judgment is impaired.

To hear the voice of the Holy Spirit, your mind must be alert and sharp. But if you are going through life with brain fog (as I was when I overindulged regularly with food), then you are more likely to make decisions that you will regret later.

Discipline Your Body

I believe that increasing your physical strength enhances your mental and emotional strength. In 1 Corinthians 9:27, the apostle Paul says, “But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.”

A regular exercise program shows you vividly that your body is your servant, not your master. Remember that as you go about the work God has called you to: Your spirit does not get tired, but your mind and body can.

So you want to do everything you can to improve your physical strength, endurance, and flexibility so that your physical condition can better respond to spiritual demands.

Eliminate Quick Fixes

I don't believe it is possible to eliminate the *desire* for a quick fix. I think that is part of our sin/flesh nature. It's like little children on a road trip to Disney World continually asking their parents, “Are we there yet?” When little children want something good, they don't want to wait to get it. They want it now!

But as mature believers, we recognize the truth of the Scripture that says that we inherit God's promises through faith and patience (Heb. 6:12). Patience is part of the fruit of the spirit, and as I mentioned previously with self-control, it must be exercised to grow (Gal. 5:22).

With that being said, you'll never get to “Disney World” as long as you stay at home. You have to get on the right road to

it. Then once you are on the road, you can enjoy the trip by reminding yourself that you will get there in time—encourage yourself continually. You can also amuse yourself by making your goal a game daily. For example, count how many healthy choices you make each day, and every day try to match or beat your previous score.

Finally, enjoy the scenery along the way. Notice yourself getting stronger, fitter, faster than you were before. Notice better muscle tone. Notice less shortness of breath. All of these will ensure you will not only enjoy your ideal size when you get it, but enjoy yourself all the way to it.

I hope this article clearly provides my stand on some controversial Christian weight loss questions. And if weight is an issue for you, ask God to show you wisdom in how to handle it.

I am not special—the victory He gave to me, He can give to you!

Kimberly Taylor *is a certified wellness coach and author of the ebook Take Back Your Temple.*