

Giving in to Your Flesh vs. Biblical Choices

A few years ago, I was buying some new clothes to wear on a series of episodes on Christian television. The salesman, a seasoned pro with a very good eye, picked out some blazers, slacks and shirts, and after trying them on, I made my final selection.

It was only then that I discovered the prices on these items, expressing my surprise out loud. In response, the salesman said something that stayed with me. Allow me to share it with you here.

For those who know me, I have never been a sharp dresser (you don't associate the word "stylish" with me), and I have never spent a lot of money on clothes. So, I was a bit surprised to hear the price tag on one particular blazer.

The salesman, a colorful fellow with a catchy name (something like Michelangelo if I recall) said to me, "I once talked with a Lexus car dealer. He told me I could buy a cheaper car, which would give me short-term satisfaction but long-term disappointment. Or I could pay more now, giving me short-term sticker shock but long-term satisfaction."

I agreed with him in principle, and since I was not paying for the clothes out of my own pocket, I bought the blazer, along with the other items.

A few days later, when I did the TV shoot, recording more than 20 episodes in two days and changing shirts or slacks or blazers after each episode, some of the staff commented to me, "That one blazer looks really good on you!"

They could tell the difference in quality too.

But this article is not about clothing, nor is it about spending lavish amounts of money on our wardrobes. (Be assured that my library is worth *many* times more than my wardrobe!)

But it *is* about the principle of short-term gratification vs. long-term satisfaction, a principle found over and again in the Bible.

Think of Esau, who sold his birthright to his brother Jacob because he was hungry and wanted some food. He discarded something of lifelong, generational value to fill his stomach once. How carnal.

Think of Solomon, the wisest man who ever walked the earth, but destroyed the united kingdom of Israel because of his insatiable lust for one more woman. How foolish.

Think of ministers over the years who brought reproach to the name of Jesus, shamed their families and congregations, and undid decades of ministry work because they couldn't say no to the flesh. How tragic.

Yet on some level, this is something all of us do, overindulging in food or going into debt or disclosing a secret or having an affair or committing a violent act because we couldn't say no in the moment.

We *needed* that release. That food tasted too good. We had to have that product. The secret was too juicy. The person was too attractive. Our anger was too strong.

Whatever it was, be it large or small, we yielded to the pull of the moment, only to regret it the next day (or, in some cases, for many days or years to come).

Was it worth it? No!

On Wednesday, August 24, I celebrated eight years of healthy living, all by the grace and mercy of God. (When people tell me how disciplined I am, I ask them, "Then why did it take me

59 years to break my bad eating habits?”)

It is true that, every day, I have to say no to my flesh. I have to refuse to eat more nuts, even though they are raw and organic. I have a certain, small amount, and that's it. I have to limit myself to one, 140 calorie health bar (it tastes like chocolate to me; to others, it would taste like beans).

I do have an absolutely massive salad each day, filling a four-quart bowl with all kinds of sumptuous veggies. And I do have three good meals a day, but rarely with any meat (on average, once every week or two, normally grilled chicken). And I thoroughly enjoy the healthy foods that I eat.

But I abstain from dairy, flour and sugar and follow Dr. Joel Fuhrman's "eat to live," plant-based guidelines. And I do this 24/7, regardless of what occasion we're celebrating or where I'm traveling worldwide. Cheating is not an option.

But the long-term satisfaction is wonderful. Absolutely wonderful!

I can't describe how good it feels to weigh 180 lbs. rather than 275 lbs. (I'm about 6 feet 2 inches in height.)

I used to have several headaches a week. I have had virtually no headaches in eight years, meaning roughly 1,250 headaches avoided. Think of that!

Instead of high blood pressure, my blood pressure is optimal.

Instead of my bad cholesterol being high and my good cholesterol being low they are totally reversed.

Instead of lots of lower back pain, there is none. None!

My immune system is massively better than it used to be. My energy level is terrific. (Although I don't jog much, I ran a mile on my treadmill a few weeks ago in 7:34, and I'm 67 years old.)

The list goes on and on.

To say it once more: the long-term satisfaction is wonderful. Absolutely wonderful!

Again, my only boast is in the Lord. I was the poster boy for unhealthy eating for decades (not gluttony, but unhealthy eating). I was addicted to chocolate and sweets. I was a pizzaholic. I hardly ate any fruit and very little vegetables.

So, if God could help me, He could help you too. (For the journey that Nancy and I took, check out our book *Breaking the Stronghold of Food*.)

But this article is not just about food. It is about a principle.

Think about it next time when you are about to do something you will regret.

Do you want short-term gratification with lasting regret? Or will you choose short-term discipline with lasting satisfaction?

Make the right choice today. You will thank yourself tomorrow.
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