

Should a Christian Have Weight-Loss Surgery?

A few months ago, a reader wrote to ask me about a controversial weight-loss issue (the reader's name has been changed):

Hello. I was wondering if I could get your opinion. Do you think surgery as a weight loss option is "against God"? I have struggled a long time, and am beginning to consider this option. Can it not be a blessing from God, having this technology and knowledge, to even be able to have this done? I know God can move mountains, including my weight. Does my interest in this mean a lack of faith? I know it is a gray area since the Bible doesn't specifically discuss this topic. I'd love to hear feedback from another Christian woman about this. I appreciate your wisdom, and please pray for me that I feel God's guidance. Also please pray for Him to free me from my obesity, and to know His will. Thank you. I've found your site recently and look forward to looking at it much more.—Blessings, Christine

I prayed before writing my response to Christine because I know how painful obesity can be. It is indeed a heavy burden, not only physically, but emotionally also. Here is my response:

Hi Christine,

Thank you for writing me! I saw your message just now and want to respond. You asked if I thought if weight-loss surgery is "against God." As you said, the Bible doesn't specifically say anything about that, so each believer needs to seek the Lord for themselves. But I can tell you the evaluation I've personally made.

Surgeries are generally used as a tool to fix something that

is broken. Do you believe that something is wrong with the way your stomach or digestive system functions? Or is the problem with your heart and mind and the obesity merely a side effect of your health habits? You see, I once counseled a woman years ago who had had weight-loss surgery—but had gained all the weight she lost back. She told me, “The surgery fixed my stomach, but it didn’t fix my head.”

That is what I want you to think about: What habits or conditions led you to become overweight? Will weight-loss surgery deal with that?

In my case, I became obese because of years of overeating as a means to manage my emotions. So having a doctor perform surgery to adjust the size of my stomach would not have helped me manage my emotions. It would not have helped me heal my emotional hurts nor my abandonment issues. I had to take that stuff to the Great Physician: Jesus.

He healed me. It was a slow process, and the weight didn’t come off overnight. But come off, it did! Through the process, I strengthened my relationship with God, learned even more how much He loved and accepted me, and gained inner peace. I wouldn’t trade that experience for anything.

I pray for God’s wisdom to guide you in this decision. —God bless you, Kim

Two things have strengthened my thoughts on this issue. I just read an article that caught my eye about the actress/singer Carnie Wilson entitled “Carnie Wilson Surgery for Weight Loss, Again.” It was the word *again* that stopped me in my tracks. I knew Ms. Wilson had gastric bypass surgery before, but I discovered from the article that she had gone back under the knife for lap band surgery after regaining the weight she lost from surgery the first time.

That’s the point; unless you deal with the issues and habits that caused you to gain weight in the first place, then a

surgeon's knife won't fix it.

In addition, I saw a commercial for the Dr. Oz show in which he called gastric bypass surgery "The Underperformed Surgery You Should Be Getting." I was appalled because Dr. Oz has great influence in the media and especially among women. Unless the obesity is caused by a physical issue with the digestive system that surgery can fix, and not by emotional issues and poor health habits, then I respectfully disagree with Dr. Oz.

My concern is that weight-loss surgery carries its own risks, among them infections, hernias and adhesions. I don't believe opening yourself up to these risks is optimal if there are natural alternatives available.

Again, it's about dealing with the cause, not just erasing the symptom.

I know losing weight can be slow. I know changing habits can be hard and frustrating. I know it is painful to open up old wounds and face past hurts or abuse if your eating habits are tied to that. But I also know that there is nothing too hard for God.

It takes time, a lot of patience and commitment to try new eating and exercise approaches until you find a healthy lifestyle that works for you. But if I had a choice between weight-loss surgery and losing weight the slower way by practicing good health habits, I'd choose the second option all day long because I love the person that I've become through the process.

To the lady I used to be who made the decision to lose weight the old fashioned way, I say, "Thank you."

Kimberly Taylor is the author of *The Weight Loss Scriptures*

and many other books. Once 240 pounds and a size 22, she can testify to God's goodness and healing power. Visit and receive more free health and weight-loss tips.

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