

The Sin That's Eating Christians Alive

He's crafty. He's wily. He's a wolf in sheep's clothing. Many of us stop him when he comes at us with something we recognize as wrong like being tempted to pilfer funds no one will ever know are gone, go to a movie with that man or woman from the office who acts so much more interested in us than our spouse, drink and drive and hang out with folks who do. We can easily (I hope) say, "No!"

He's far more clever than to tempt us with the obvious. He's got his hand in something far more deadly than any of the things we ordinarily think of as sin, and yet it is one of the seven deadly sins. I am talking about the thing I've never heard even one pastor preach about or even talk about—gluttony, the sin that's eating Christians alive.

What Is Gluttony?

Several times the Bible mentions those who are gluttons and advises people not to associate with someone who is a glutton. The Weymouth New Testament translates one of the "acts of the flesh" listed in Galatians 5:19-21 as "riotous feasting," while the Wycliffe Bible calls it "immeasurable eatings." Others translate it as "orgies, wild parties, revelries" (Galatians 5:19-21, Weymouth New Testament, Wycliffe Bible, NIV, NLT, NKJV). These are all words for gluttonous behaviors.

The definition of a glutton is "one given habitually to greedy and voracious eating" (*Webster's Dictionary* online). Synonyms are overeater, hog and stuffer (*Webster's Dictionary* online). I will admit, this was my rebellion of choice. I saw it as the "sanctified sin" because I had never heard a pastor say it was wrong to eat until you were stuffed.

As a matter of fact, most joked from the pulpit about the

upcoming church carry-in supper as one where everyone would have to wear expandable clothes. As a sugar and comfort food addict and glutton, that just justified my chosen rebellion.

I Wore My Rebellion

At 430 pounds, I wore my rebellion where all could see it. There was no hiding my sin. It was always with me, but then no one dared mention it to me lest I point out their third piece of pie.

Yet, my sin, like many others God steers us away from, was killing me, eating me alive. I thank God for a rude cardiac surgeon who bluntly told me I'd be dead in five years if I didn't lose at least 100 pounds and keep it off. That was a wake-up call. However, it took several more years and many more circumstances before I owned my addiction.

Acting Against My Addiction

As any addict knows, to recover I had to do a 180-degree turn-around. I had to give up those things I craved, the things that if I ate them, I couldn't stop. I had to face my emotional demons and recognize how they impacted my relationship with God.

I changed physically. To date I've lost 265 pounds. I changed emotionally. I fully embrace my emotions and learn from them and how to handle them. I changed spiritually. I accept the glorious grace, strength, mercy and mystery of who God is and how He works in my life.

I stay away from foods with sugar and flour or that combination. This is true any place I am, even when others are eating other things. I stay true to my commitment because I have made an obedience commitment to my God to want Him more than the things I crave.

In addition, I am aware people are watching me to see if I

stay true to the journey God to which has called me. It is even more motivation to be obedient.

Hell of Food Addiction

I pray for divine encounters with people who suffered like I did for years because I know they want a way out of the hell of food addiction. Satan has gripped them by the stomach and won't let go. The way out is not easy, but it is possible when we submit totally to Him and desire to be transformed, changed from the inside out (Romans 12:2).

I have immeasurable compassion for those who are where I was. It's why I write books. When I was super morbidly obese, I wouldn't ask for help, but I would read a book. I just couldn't find one written by someone who had been where I was and had overcome.

It's why I speak and do radio and TV interviews. God has given me a platform. I use every opportunity to make the church aware that they must wake up to Satan's tactics before it is too late.

It's also why I do weight loss coaching. Food addiction is a true addiction and it takes someone to walk beside you to come out of where you are.

You can come out of the addiction by clinging so tightly to Jesus there is no reason to want anything else. His presence becomes "food and drink in the best meal you've ever eaten" (Matthew 5:6, MSG). However on some level, we want the food instead of Him. The church must make it their mission to find the "why" hidden in that statement.

Is Your God Your Stomach?

Paul told the church at Philippi, "Many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind

is set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Philippians 3:18-20, NIV).

Do you love Jesus? Do you love Him enough to break the stronghold certain foods have over your life? I'm telling you right now the serpent has many Christians by their stomachs. We've willingly allowed him to make our overeating, gluttonous ways a stronghold in our lives when the only stronghold should be occupied by God Himself.

I'm concerned about this sneaky deadly path he's led us down. We must do everything we can to win this food fight. We must embrace total transformation with everything that is in us.

I'm not talking about a diet, here though. I'm talking about lifestyle change. Are you ready?

Teresa Shields Parker *is a wife, mother, business owner, life group leader, speaker and author of Sweet Grace: How I Lost 250 Pounds and Stopped Trying to Earn God's Favor and Sweet Grace Study Guide: Practical Steps to Lose Weight and Overcome Sugar Addiction. Get a free chapter of her memoir on her blog at .*