

Why Many Believers Overlook This Soul-Decaying Idol

I'm struggling with idolatry today, so I figured one way to do battle with it is to bring it into the light, enlist some of my favorite prayer warriors (you!), and hash it all out—right here in front of everybody. It's the same old idol I've told you about before. The one that knows no mercy and almost takes me under every time I give it just a little room.

The latest battle with my old enemy started when I was visiting a friend who was lying in the hospital bed with sky-high blood pressure. A couple of us were keeping her company while we waited for test results. Her emergency trip to the hospital had put us all in a “teachable” position with our health. We spent the morning doing a little Bible study together, checking out what the Word has to say about a brutal topic—what we eat and drink!

We started with this:

I urge you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service of worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God (Rom. 12:1–2).

That's pretty clear. When we live out the gospel, it's to be an evident transformation. That transformation isn't just heart transformation—although that's where it all starts. It begins with the heart, but it should affect our entire being. There is a literal and a spiritual aspect to presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice.

Paul takes a radical approach to getting that flabby flesh under control:

But I bring and keep my body under subjection, lest when preaching to others I myself should be disqualified (1 Cor. 9:27).

Everything We Do Should Glorify Him

One of my friends was sharing why she no longer goes to the race track to gamble. She said, “I never wanted anyone to have anything they saw me do that might detract from my commitment to Christ. I want everything I do to be something that glorifies Him.”

As she was sharing that, all I could think about is how I’ve stopped battling my idol and let it gain mastery over me again. I told her, “If people looked at my eating habits, I would be ashamed. I’m not glorifying God ... ”

How can I stand and teach the Word, challenge women to live passionately for Christ, when I have this unyielded area in my life? When I’m worshiping at the wrong altar? When I’m indulging in idolatry—feeding my flesh?

Food is not the problem. My heart is.

I love food. I love butter (and lots of it), cream sauce, chocolate, comfort food, creamy food, crunchy food, spicy food, sweet food, salty food, cheesy food, rich food, high-calorie-high-fat food. My love affair with food is unholy.

Enjoying God’s Gifts

God blesses us with all good gifts to enjoy, He pours out beauty, comfort, pleasurable experiences, abundant provisions—all to be enjoyed.

Command those who are rich in this world that they not be

conceited, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who richly gives us all things to enjoy (1 Tim. 6:17).

But true enjoyment of God's gifts comes through the holy practice and consumption of those gifts—not through the perversion of the good. Food is good and necessary. But food can become an idol. I don't just eat to live—I live to eat!

When I go beyond enjoying food within holy boundaries and indulge my flesh in unhealthy ways, when my cravings drive my decisions and I seek to find satisfaction through my belly, when gluttony becomes my practice, my approach to food is not glorifying God. In fact, it's idolatry.

Paul, again, gives a strong word about our physical appetites:

Their destination is destruction, their god is their appetite, their glory is in their shame, their minds are set on earthly things (Phil. 3:19).

Paul is speaking specifically of non-believers here, but it's interesting that one characteristic of these individuals is that they worship at the wrong altar. Their "god" is their belly, and they find no shame in looking to food for their joy, comfort and pleasure.

It could be alcohol. Maybe gambling, porn, or drugs, but for me ... food is my addiction.

Letting Christ Rule

In that little hospital room, each of us confessed our addictions. Each of us walked through the Scriptures and allowed the Spirit to confront us that morning. While writing this post, I had to text those two friends and ask for prayer ... while battling a major craving. I don't want to worship at that altar today. I don't want the desire for chocolate to

rule my life; I want Christ to rule my life. They prayed, and I planted Romans 12:1–2 a little deeper in my heart.

What altar are you worshiping at today?

Copyright © 2001-2016 *Revive Our Hearts*. **Kimberly** is the author of *Fierce Women: The Power of a Soft Warrior*. She and her husband coauthored the companion volume for husbands: *Men Who Love Fierce Women: The Power of Servant Leadership in Your Marriage*.” Kim enjoys connecting with women, and hearing what God is doing in their lives, through her website: where she encourages women to be students of the Word through her daily blog.