

Part 35: How To Not Be A Glutton

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I heard a story this week of a men's discipleship group where one man asked for help. His wife was leaving town for the weekend and he opened up to his brothers about need help resisting temptation. Immediately the other men thought about temptations to lust and pornography, but the man continued and said, "I know as soon as she leaves I'm going to order a large pizza and sit down on the couch with a tub of ice cream."

The other guys laughed, feeling an immediate sense of relief, but the confessor pressed in again and said, "I know God cares about gluttony, and I know I'm prone to sin in this area and I need help."

Coming from another perspective, one critique of Christian sexual ethics is to say, "Why does the church care so much about homosexual marriage when the Bible gives three times more prohibitions of gluttony than it does same-sex relationships." Is it hypocritical to care about what the Bible says about sex while being unconcerned about what the Bible says about Cinnabon?

So how should Christians view gluttony? Is it to be laughed at? Is it to be elevated above sexual ethics?

This is where we need God's word to bring us wisdom, and this is what Solomon does for us in the book of Proverbs.

What we see in God's word is that there is a big difference between one night of weakness in the bedroom and one night of weakness at the buffet, just as there is a difference between one who murders someone with their hands, and between someone who biblically speaking murders someone with hostility in their heart.

Yet, even in right priority don't we find it easy to act as if our relationship towards food and gluttonous desires are harmless at best and embarrassing at worst? God's word brings balance, conviction and correction to all of our areas of weakness and that is what we are going to look at today. Because what we are going to see this morning in Proverbs is this: **Behind our relationship to food are the realities of our hearts.**

We are going to see this in three ways as we take a little tour of the book of Proverbs this morning. First we are going to see **Gluttonous Indulgence**, then we are going to look at **Gluttonous Ignorance**, then lastly we are going to see **Gluttons Redeemed** with a couple points of application in closing.

With that said, let's examine our first collection of verses from Proverbs 25 and then we will dive into our first point: **Proverbs 25:16,27-28.**

If you have your Bible open, most of us probably are on the same page as Proverbs 24:14 in which Solomon commends to us the Lord's wisdom as honey. Yet not too far removed from honey in a positive sense, Solomon already warns of eating honey in a gluttonous, indulgent and unrestrained way.

He's not warning here about people too consumed with God's word, he's concerned here with people too consumed with literal honey. Here we see our first point today: **Gluttonous Indulgence**.

I believe it is Paul Tripp who says that one of the most common sins of man is to take a good thing and make it into a God thing. This is what is being warned against here with honey.

We know this indulgence don't we!

Social media quickly takes normal, loving parents and turns them into evil scientists. My loving wife, once discovered something called the cupcake challenge on the internet. She baked a cupcake for our three year old, and set her at the table with it, and secretly posed her camera to record her. Then my wife left the room and told my daughter not to eat the cupcake.

Why do we do this to our kids? Because we know the power of Proverbs 25:16, we know that honey will call us to throw aside all of our self-control and to go full Winnie the Pooh on the honey jar.

But remember what we read earlier in **Proverbs 23:1-2**.

Solomon wants us to be cautious of our desires for food. He wants us to exercise restraint and not excess.

There have been times in history where halls were created for people to literally go and vomit up their food so that they can go back to eating in the dining hall. While we'd like to think ourselves a bit more civilized don't we sometimes eat until we have made ourselves uncomfortable?

To just look at America's culture is to see eating disorders that stretch from over eating to under eating. Some eat and vomit out of guilt, others eat and vomit out of guiltless consumption. But in such an unhealthy culture don't we find the warning of Proverbs 25:16 to be needed today?

So how do we understand the biblical realities behind something which plagued Solomon's culture and our modern one?

Solomon often speaks of the adulterer, the one who gives way to sexual temptation. He often speaks of the drunkard, the one who is always looking for his next inebriated experience. But Solomon often speaks of the drunkard in context with the glutton.

From a Christian perspective it's really easy to identify the heart issues and dangers of the first two. We see that sexual sin involves intimate, vulnerable, relational action and potential damage with another image bearer. We know that drunkenness disassociates our mind and our bodies from what is true and real.

For the sake of clarity, there has been far more damaging sins done under the guise of sex and drunkenness than there has gluttony. But to respond to that by saying gluttony isn't dangerous, even if it is less damaging, is to be foolish.

It's almost as if we are prone inside of the church to say: well I can't blow off steam with an affair or with a drunken party, but I can go and eat honey until it satisfies me. It seems like a safe place to exercise excess, but this is where Solomon wants us to see that this indulgence is a window into our hearts!

Look again at what he says in **Proverbs 25:27-28**.

Unrestrained indulgence in the food of your choosing is a sign of your lack of self-control, and is oddly and interestingly enough attached to a pursuit of one's own glory. What leads to gluttony? An uncontrolled consumption of the physical world in search of one's own comfort. It's a lack of self-control which tragically leaves you, your heart and your hopes totally exposed in the midst of a war. It is to be pillaged by your own heart because we lack the discipline to say no.

How concerned should we be about this lack of discipline? In Proverbs 30, another teacher named Agur warns of four people who cause the earth to tremble. Among those four, in Proverbs 30:22 is "a fool when he is filled with food."

In looking at the New Testament, Peter calls the churches in exile to exercise self-control in both his letters. Paul calls for self-control fifteen times: five times he teaches his young protégé Timothy to love it and stir it up in Ephesus, five more times Titus is instructed to establish his own church in Crete with the same care, writes of the need of self-control the church in Corinth and Galatia.

It is right and biblical to say that God cares more about our relationship to sex and drunkenness than he does our food. But it's actually behind our relationship to something as simple as the ordinary act of eating which reveals the temperature gauge of heart in ways we ought not to neglect.

For full disclosure here, I'm a glutton. There are certain foods that I know we cannot buy in my house because I will eat them not in moderation but in gluttonous ways. This sounds really silly to say, but you know the place where I experience some of the most spiritual trials of my life? Red Robin.

There are few things I love more than french fries and to go to a place which offers bottomless french fries is to bring my heart into an unfenced yard of danger. Food for me is a window into my own glory because it makes me feel glorious. It makes me feel comfortable. It makes me feel like I'm a god worthy of satisfaction.

But that's the danger of gluttony. It's not just an overeating issue, in fact it's not even a food issue. The Hebrew word for glutton has nothing to do with food. It's from a root which means: to shake out, or to squander. It means to be thoughtless, easily susceptible, bribable, able to be bought.

We can be gluttonous in our control over food, counting calories and enslaved to presenting a portrait of fitness to a watching world. There's no difference of heart between a man and his meat sweats, and your Thursday night of binge watching Netflix. Someone who is enslaved to counting calories isn't that far off from the thoughtlessness of having Amazon boxes show up at your house on the regular because you have no self-control over your online cart.

Sex is good. Alcohol is good. Food is good. Clothes are good. Fitness is good. And that's why they are dangerous. A gluttonous lack of self-control causes us to view these things as if we are God and we can tell them how they will satisfy us instead of seeing how instead the real God calls us to use them as he designed.

This is what leads us into our second point this morning: **Gluttonous Ignorance**.

I'm going to read for us from two chapters in Proverbs and I want you to note the connections Solomon makes in both passages: **Proverbs 23:19-21, 28:7**.

Did you see the two connections in both these passages? Solomon wants us to see both what the glutton proves to be ignorant of and second what he is prone to supplement that with. Solomon warns that the glutton is ignorant of an experience of God's faithfulness in his word, and instead prone to experience the excess of foolish companions.

The first thing is that the glutton is ignorant of God's wisdom. This ought to be a gut punch for us. It's easy to see our desire to overeat, overspend, and overwatch as a mere lack of self-control. But did you notice what was contrasted? Opposite the path of gluttony is the path of wisdom and the path of understanding.

In other words if we are so uncontrolled that we cannot say no to the compulsive desires of food, we are probably showing that we are not controlled enough to say yes to the rest of God's wisdom. If we are constantly thoughtless, which is the reality behind gluttony, towards our world, then we will also prove to be thoughtless and ignorant of God's good for us in his wisdom.

This is where food can act as a litmus test for our own hearts. If we don't trust that God will be faithful to us in saying no to another bowl of ice cream, do we really believe that God will be faithful to us when we say no to our lust for pornography? Or another glass of wine?

To put it positively, if we find ourselves to be happy even when we consume delicious food in moderation, don't we then find that God's word is actually for our good? That his command is actually to bless us and not to harm us? Then doesn't that bolster our confidence in the Lord when the decisions and stakes of sin are raised even higher?

How wonderful a picture does this paint of discipleship? Where does following Jesus begin? At the dinner table the night you first believed. To eat enough for ourselves is not ultimately a matter of the biological size of our stomach, but it is a reliance upon the God who made us. This is the son who understands the joy there is in following Jesus.

You see God is after more than our obedience in this area, he's after our joy. He knows the end of the drunkard and the glutton is poverty and rags. He wants to spare us from being a city raided and pillaged by every desire of the flesh, but instead he wants us to be deeply satisfied in him even as we eat and drink.

If you remember back to the days of Israel wandering in the wilderness, God saw their hunger and he met it with manna from heaven. Manna which didn't taste like a pre-packaged MRE of only utilitarian value, but manna which tasted sweet as what? Honey.

But what did God tell them? Take as much as you need to feed your family, but don't take any more. He wanted them to see that he would provide for them as they needed. But some of God's people doubted him, they packed their houses full of manna because they didn't believe God would be faithful and as God caused fresh manna to fall from heaven the next morning, the left over manna rotted with maggots and stank to high heaven.

But if we are honest how many of us would rather trust the immediacy of rotten manna on our counter instead of the empty table of faith? Behind our relationship to our gluttonous desires is our relationship to whether or not we believe God to be faithful to us.

If we don't believe God to be a companion in times of want, then we will turn to our fellow gluttons. This is the second thing Solomon points out. He warns us that to be ignorant of God's faithfulness to us is to keep company with gluttons and to share in their folly.

We're probably all familiar with the proverb Paul quotes in 1 Corinthians, "bad company ruins good morals." Aware of this most of us try not to closely relate to people who lead us into clear sinful situations. But here Solomon wants you to examine your friends in regards to their own relationship with the physical aspects of the world. Do your friends exercise self-control in their life, or are they prone to excess in ways which make you feel justified in shopping, eating, not-eating, media consumption whatever it is.

If we are unwilling to take God at his word, relying on him in tangible way which actually satisfies our hearts, then we will probably move towards gluttonous friends who promise to share with us the immediate realities of the world. We want someone to be with us and tell us that everything is going to be ok: though bare as a city without walls, here is promise of peace you've been waiting for.

But you'll never find that in the wisdom of the world. But God gives us and our sinful cravings somethings so much better. When Jesus came look what he was accused of: **Luke 7:33-34**.

Jesus came and associated with the gluttons. Why? Not because he was a glutton, actually as astounding as it is to consider, Jesus never over ate once. That's how perfect Jesus' obedience to God was.

Jesus hung out with sinners not to fill his own belly, but to fill us miserable gluttons with what he himself was filled with. Jesus came and related to gluttons perfectly so that he might offer us who experience only lack the fullness of satisfaction that comes in being restored back to God.

There is hope for gluttons because of what Jesus did to save us. This is our last point today: **Gluttons Redeemed**.

Look at how Proverbs presents a unique sort of satisfaction in **Proverbs 30:8-9**. What is the goal of this passage? Contentment. Contentment so that we might not be so full and think: "Who needs a God when cheetos can fill me like this?" Contentment that says, "Even in my moderate portion, Jesus is fully satisfying."

So how do we get contentment like this? Jesus played off of this desire to show us how he is the one who helps us in our gluttony. In John 6 Jesus had just fed five thousand people with fish and loaves, and this whole crowd is following him. Why? Because he seems to be the one who solves the fear of hunger. He is the one who gives food on demand. Here for the unrestrained glutton is the fountain of fish and chips.

Jesus knew that, so look at what he said: **John 6:26-29**.

Jesus provides all of the satisfaction and all of the glory we turn to the world's hunger for. But how does he provide it? Not in worldly excess or in austere stoicism, but instead in salvation by faith. That those who believe in Jesus are filled with the body and soul filling provision of God himself.

We often are scared to talk about gluttony because we are worried that the Bible is just another book of legalism. Overweight people find themselves shamed, fit people find themselves trapped to keep up the pace of keeping our body-as-a-temple at the pinnacle of fitness. But look at the beauty of the gospel: **1 Corinthians 8:8**.

Our food does not commend us to God. Not in how strict you observe to calorie counts or how enslaved you are to buffets. Jesus commends us to God by faith.

But to be commended to God by faith means that we now turn to our desires not as an attempt to earn our salvation, but to live faithfully inside of it.

I've said this before that the three primary idols of culture are food, alcohol and sex. All three of those are token signs of the gospel: Jesus is the groom who takes his bride in holy intimacy, Jesus's cup is the cup of true celebration over death and brokenness, and Jesus' table is the feast which fully satisfies us.

At every corner of our want stands the satisfying promise of our savior calling us to trust him as satisfying and not in the desires of the world.

So in closing, how do we apply this text on gluttony?

First, believe in Jesus. We can never say no to even the simplest desires of the world if we do not say yes to Jesus. But it means we need to understand how big the gospel is and how much Jesus cares for us. Giving our lives to Jesus in faith is giving the whole of our lives, our body and our soul. The Bible makes it clear that we are not one or the other, we are both body and soul. To trust Jesus with the salvation of your soul but not in the satisfaction of your body is to limit the size and scope of Jesus' love for you.

To recover a theology of our bodies and of our consumption I want to hold up two postures in application: discipline and doxology.

Paul encourages the church in Corinth with the promise of discipline in the same way an athlete disciplines his body for the race. Discipline holds up something bigger for us which gives us muscles that dig deep in times of trial.

One thing that helps with this is fasting. We fast because it forces us to rely on God for provision. Fasting is not fun, I've done it. But at the end of a fast I'm reminded that calories are not what sustains me, God is. So when you fast, take those moments of hunger and turn them into times of prayer. Be disciplined to rely on God when you are hungry and it will help you rely on God when you are full.

But the solution to gluttony is not a discipline which tries to treat food as an enemy of worship, the solution to gluttony is also to see food as a way to worship. That is to see food as part of our doxology.

We touched on this a little bit few weeks ago, but when God calls for us to see his word as honey, he intends that we know what honey tastes like.

This means that when we eat things that taste delicious we refuse to become enslaved to the food by placing to food in submission to the Lord. I want us to be the most foodie foodies in all Missoula.

I want us to eat delicious food and make delicious food and to acknowledge that every delicious morsel that hits our taste buds are designed by God to do so for our delight and that we might see the glory of God behind the goodness of food.

In this way we can turn back to the honey of Proverbs equipped with a wonderful tool. Where Satan and our hearts would want to use that sweetness to pull us away from a reliance upon God, we take that joy and we bring it back to the table of the Lord. We thank him for it. We remind ourselves that this joy is the Lord's joy and that every bite we have of something good, every day we are afforded enough calories to live, we are reminded of God's care for us in Jesus.