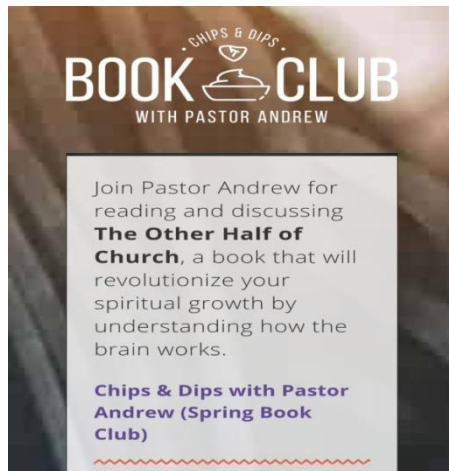


## Gluttony

### Introduction:

Pride, envy, anger, sloth, greed, gluttony, lust - the Seven Deadly Sins - are the greatest obstacles to bring joy and flourishing as disciples of Jesus. In this series, ***Taming The Monster Within***, we've been looking at the Seven Deadly Sins the church fathers considered mortal and deadly; today we'll be looking at gluttony (from the Latin *gluttire*, to gulp down or swallow).<sup>1</sup>

Cf. Chips & Dips Book Club



We seem to have no problem joking about chips, chocolate, or whatever junk food that we like and crave all the time.

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<sup>1</sup> MARY EBERSTADT says, "This capital vice, in our age of plenty, may be both the most ubiquitous of all the Deadlies, and the one to which many of us wrongly

We are constantly tempted to

***gorge, guzzle, and gobble up***

whatever food or snacks dished out by our host;

and we are promised to have an ***out-of-this-world experience*** in this or that restaurants - ***we are eating ourselves into oblivion***:

Dr. Glovioell Rowland, a psychologist and researcher, suggests that

***people are killing themselves with a fork!***

Prov. 23:2 says,

**"Put a knife to your throat if you are given to gluttony ..."**

We are living in ***a confusing as well as a paradoxical culture of shame and obsession*** – a world in which ***the yins and yangs are pulling just as hard***:

the desire to ***devour that big chunk of meat*** and then ***plunge into that 'sinfully good' desert*** is often followed by ***a guilty conscience and a gruelling 45 mins. workout!***

While we look for the best ***all-you-can-eat buffet***, we also lust after ***the skin and bones images*** around us every day!

believe ourselves immune." ["The Seven Deadlies Revisited, Part Two: Gluttony." *The Catholic Thing* (October 16, 2008).]

Rebecca De Younge raises the questions:

**“But what if gluttony isn’t first of all about overeating or being overweight, about dieting and doughnuts?**

**What if being fat is not sinful?**

**What if most of the gluttons among us are not those who tip the scales, but the average Christian consumer?**

**Can the health-food eaters and the gourmets be as gluttonous as the junk-food junkies?”**

Traditional Christian teaching down through the ages has suggested the following evidence of gluttony:

***Eating ...***

***Too Much***

***Too Soon***

***Too Expensively***

***Too Much Fuss***

While we usually associate gluttony with eating too much, the other four also underlines

***a loss of self-control over food and drink,  
different ways of focusing on food  
or preoccupying with what or how we eat  
rather than loving and serving people first.***

The most basic, simple truth about gluttony is this:

it’s all about **craving for personal pleasure –**

***excessive,  
immediate,  
tangible self-satisfaction,  
thus elevating our own wants above any other good things.***<sup>2</sup>

A glutton can apply to **over-indulgence** for “toys, television, entertainment, sex, or relationships. It is about an excess of anything.”<sup>3</sup>

***To be a glutton is ...***

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Matt. 4:1ff. - Satan’s first temptation against Jesus.  
“Gluttony, after all, is food worship. It’s table idolatry. It’s more about the direction of our loves than it is about the contents of our cupboards.” (Johnathon Bower)

<sup>3</sup> Chris Donato, Gluttony and Temperance,  
<http://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/gluttony-temperance/>

***to be obsessive with things that give the person pleasure,***

***to have an excessive indulgence to satisfy whatever longings with no thought of God or others.***

In order to overcome the sin of gluttony, we must have ...

**ONE Determining Mindset,**

guided by **TWO Essential Truths,**

and cultivate **THREE Life-shaping Habits.**

Let me unpack this for you.

**ONE Determining Mindset:**

In 1C10:31 Paul urges all believers to adopt a Christian mindset that should govern our attitudes, feelings, and behaviours:

**“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it for the glory of God.”**

In his article, “Rx for Gluttony” Dennis Okholm writes, **“Gluttony is deadly when a person makes a god of the belly.”**

In the words of Paul in Phil. 3:19, the enemies of the cross are those whose stomach is their god; and their mindset is expressed in the slogan, “Let’s eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die.”

Just like any other kinds of addiction, **gluttony is God being substituted by self-indulgent behaviours manifested in obsession with food or anything else that feeds selfish pleasures.**

While food itself and the act of eating are God’s gifts, gluttony is when we are dominated by these gifts and thus become pleasure or thrill seekers.

But the Christian mindset is etched in the words of Paul, “Whether eat or drink, do it for the glory of God.”

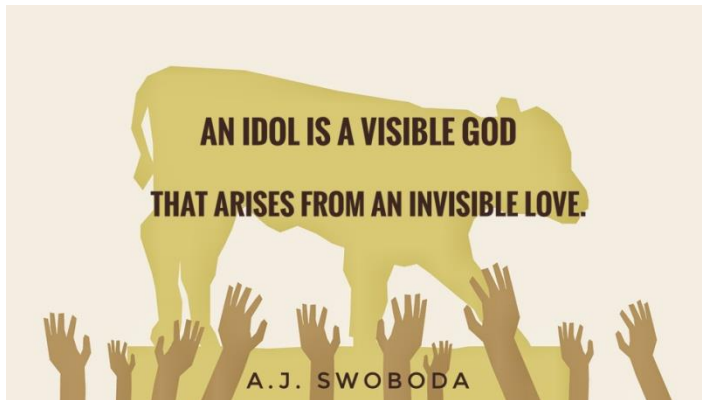
This brings us to the **TWO Essential Truths:**

**1. *Whatever controls me is my god.***

2 Pe. 2:19b “... you are a slave to **whatever controls you.**”

1 Cor. 6:12 “You say, ‘I am allowed to do anything’—but not everything is good for you ... I must not become **a slave** to anything.”

**The cry for personal freedom in doing whatever that pleases us is a call to slavery.**



The pleasure that one craves leads to **a downward spiral of narcissistic behaviour** which will end up in

**self-alienation,**

**social isolation,**

**and spiritual starvation.**<sup>4</sup>

And Os Guinness writes, “**gluttony grows from and leads to a terrible emptiness ... that is never satisfied ... The belly is stuffed, but the heart is hollow.**”

Self-idolatry leaves **no room** for any other beings because the cruel master of pleasure demands **every sacrifice and total obedience.**

But Scriptures declare that God is our only master who can **liberate us from sin, death, and force of darkness, so we**

**can live life to the full as we do God’s will/what is God-honouring and other-loving.**

## **2. Every part of my body matters to God.**

Rom. 6:13 “Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin. Instead, give yourselves completely to God ... **use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God.**”

**The spiritual identity of every believer is never divorced from the physical, emotional, intellectual, and social realms.**

God cares for our **whole being**, physical as much as spiritual, emotional as much as intellectual.

**“To be saved/redeemed” is to be whole,**

**to lead a wholesome, God-image-bearing life.**

St. Augustine says that “**what or how much food we eat makes no difference whatsoever when it comes to virtue, as long as we are eating in a way that is appropriate to our health.**”

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<sup>4</sup> Renowned psychologist Karl Menninger states that gluttony “represents a degree of self-love which is self destructive.”

The point is that we should be eating in a way that contributes our overall health and well-being, making sure that ***our bodies are functioning well***. (cf. Rebecca DeYonge)

How can we accomplish this?

Practice the following **THREE *Life-shaping Habits***:

1. ***Say “NO!” to temptation – look for a way out.***

1 Cor. 10:13 “No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; ***he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear***. But when you are tempted, he will also provide ***a way out*** so that you can endure it.”

The verse tells us ...

that temptations are here to stay as long as we are  
no this side of eternity,

that we all have these struggles in common,

and that by God’s grace we have the resources and  
ability to overcome temptations.

The point is to **train ourselves to always say “NO!” to our selfish pleasure, don’t give in without a fight:**

Ja. 4:7 Submit yourselves, then, to God. ***Resist*** the devil, and he will flee from you.

Be mindful of our circumstances, “triggers,” habits, and/or behavioural pattern – running away from temptation is running toward God - resistance means drawing close to God

2. ***Count your blessings everyday; thank God for what you don’t need.***

1 Tim. 6:6 “... ***godliness with contentment*** is great gain.”

Gluttony – self-indulgence – is a lot like ***greed***; it is ***the desire for more, to please ourselves in such a way that we no longer can fulfill God’s purpose for our lives.***<sup>5</sup>

**We are not created to live to eat**

**but to eat to live out God’s purposes.**

Moreover, eating is highly ***relational and social*** –

***Are we eating in a manner that the good of others being compromised by our cravings?***

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<sup>5</sup> “*The gluttonous eat with greed, not gratitude.*” (Rebecca DeYounge)

Augustine’s sage advice is that our intake of food should enable us to accomplish our God-entrusted purpose, callings, and mission.

***Is our spending on food in regard for those who are in need or less fortunate?*** (Cf. Rebecca DeYonge)

Instead of looking for what you are missing and forever seeking them in the wrong places,

form the habit of identifying what you have – all the blessings from God,

and thanking God for not having to deal with things that will **distract, deter, or derail you to accomplish His will and callings upon your life.**

### ***3. Practice regular fasting & prayer.***

Fasting and prayer are the **normal** practices of God's people in the OT and **assumed** as well as **reinforced** in Jesus' teaching and examples of NT churches. Jesus didn't say **if** you fast ... **if** you pray, but **WHEN** you fast and pray.

The word for "fast" in OT & NT denotes the idea of **self-denial**.

**If the essence of gluttony is self-indulgence,  
the essence of fasting & prayer is self-denial.**

Richard Foster reminds us that the discipline of fasting and prayer **"reveals the things that control us. Pride, anger,**

**bitterness, jealousy, fear – if they are within us, they will surface during fasting ...**

If the result of self-indulgence is **bondage**,

fasting & prayer leads to **freedom**

***to pursue a prayerful rhythm,***

***to do what's God-honouring,***

***to align our life with His purposes,***

***and to advance kingdom values and goals.***

Here we are not talking about putting a religious or spiritual spin on dieting; fasting is not the same as starting a Jenny Craig Meal Plan or doing a SlimFast diet.

While there are some similarities, such as controlling what we eat or not eat, choosing alternatives to eating, the motivation and goals are radically different:

"...we fast to become healthy Christians who are able to love God and others ... Dieting tends to put the focus on us (and our appearance). While Christians might be appropriately concerned about fat, calories, weight, and appearance, we should be driven chiefly to develop attitudes of contentment, gratitude, trust, and patience."  
(Dennis Okholm)

**Conclusion:**

The root of gluttony is a lack of self-control, and our self-discipline is tested every time we see food or anything that provides immediate gratifications and sensual or material pleasure.

S. Michael Houdmann perceptively writes, “Physical appetites are an analogy of our ability to control ourselves. If we are unable to control our eating habits, we are probably also unable to control other habits, such as those of the mind (lust, covetousness, anger) and unable to keep our mouths from gossip or strife. We are not to let our appetites control us, but we are to have control over our appetites.”<sup>6</sup>

Let us be reminded by the words of Paul:

Rom. 12:1-2 “Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don’t become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You’ll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its

level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.”

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<sup>6</sup> S. Michael Houdmann, “Is gluttony a sin? What does the Bible say about overeating?” <http://www.gotquestions.org/gluttony-sin.html>