



## Part 3: Gluttony | Pastor Joe Wittwer | May 3, 2009

### A. Fellowship Time (10-15 minutes)

1. Chitchat. Perhaps offer coffee, tea, or a cold drink with some snacks.
2. Pray (or invite someone to pray) to open the discussion.

### B. Review Time (Read the summary below to the group: 5-10 minutes)

Many people today probably wonder what makes gluttony such a “big sin.” But when the list of sins was first written, gluttony was at the top. The list was aimed at monks who lived on rations, sometimes barely surviving, so it's not hard to imagine how tempting food would be! Anything that pulls us away from obedience to God is a great sin. Even Jesus was tempted with food: When Jesus was in the desert fasting for 40 days, what was the first temptation that the devil trolled by Him? “Turn these stones into bread.” You're hungry; prove that you are the Son of God by doing a miracle to satisfy your hunger. Satan tempted Jesus with food. Gluttony eventually moved down on the list of “The Big 7,” but it still deserves its spot on the list.

#### 1. **Gluttony: excess in eating or drinking.**

The Bible clearly says that God created our material world, and He is the one who gives us food and drink to enjoy—He satisfies us with good things. As long as we are partaking in our meals with thanks in our hearts to the One Who gave them, we are absolutely allowed to enjoy them (**I Timothy 4:3-4**), as these scriptures attest: **Ecclesiastes 2:24** *A man can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in his work. This too, I see, is from the hand of God.* **Psalms 104:14-15** *He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for man to cultivate—bringing forth food from the earth: <sup>15</sup> wine that gladdens the heart of man, oil to make his face shine, and bread that sustains his heart.* **Psalms 104:27-28** *These all look to you to give them their food at the proper time. <sup>28</sup> When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things.*

The problem is when we cross the line into excess. Drunkenness and eating to the point of overindulgence lead our hearts away from God: **Proverbs 23:20-21** *Do not join those who drink too much wine or gorge themselves on meat, <sup>21</sup> for drunkards and gluttons become poor, and drowsiness clothes them in rags.* **Romans 13:14** *Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.*

**Gluttony is a sin because of what it does to you.** First, it is a sin against your body. As Christians, we believe our bodies were created by God and are the temple of God. Gluttony dishonors Him by abusing your body, which leads to all sorts of health complications: **1 Corinthians 6:19-20** *Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; <sup>20</sup> you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.*

Second, gluttony is a sin against your soul. Gluttony pulls us away from obedience. When Jesus was tempted to satisfy his hunger illegitimately, He said: **Matthew 4:4** *“It is written, ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”* We need food, but even more we need God and His Word to feed our spirit. Of those who get this out of balance, Paul says: **Philippians 3:19** *Their destiny is their destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things.* Eating is a blessing, but our stomach is a lousy God! By the way, alcohol falls into the same category. You'll never find what you're looking for in a bottle or a burger. You'll only be satisfied with Jesus: **Psalms 34:8** *Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him.*

Finally, gluttony is a sin because of what it does to others. When we overindulge, we are using resources we don't need and that could go to others in need. (Read **Luke 16:19-31**.) So how do we overcome this temptation of gluttony?

## 2. Restraint (self-control): to control one's impulses and desires.

We overcome gluttony by developing the virtue of self-control. **Titus 2:12** [*The grace of God*] teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age. **Galatians 5:22-23** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup>gentleness **and self-control**. Against such things there is no law. Self-control is the ability to say no. But it is one thing to know what to do and another to be able to do it. Self-control is a virtue that the Holy Spirit produces in us. We cooperate by receiving the Spirit and practicing spiritual disciplines that make room for Him to work in our lives. So what are some of the classic spiritual disciplines that open us to the Spirit?

**a. Fasting** – The Bible reveals fasting as a way to seek God. It's most often associated with prayer and repentance. You can use the extra time that you would have been at meals to pray and seek God. And you can humble yourself before God and express your sorrow and repentance as you seek His mercy. And true fasting not only abstains from food, but also seeks to share it with those who have none. [Read **Isaiah 58:6-9** together.]

**b. Community** - The best way to overcome gluttony of any kind is in a group. One thing we have learned about overcoming addictions is that very few people can do it alone. **Galatians 6:2** Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

**c. Exercise** - **1 Timothy 4:7-8** Train yourself to be godly. <sup>8</sup> For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come. When you're healthy, you feel better physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. Exercise releases endorphins that elevate your mood, which can make you feel closer to God!

### C. Life Group Questions (select, revise, and add as desired: 20-40 minutes)

1. One of the solutions for Greed from last week was giving to others; how have you put that principle into action in the last few days?
2. Gluttony is a sin against your own body. Do you think it's a relevant sin today? Rephrase **Romans 13:14** in ways that directly reflect how you're tempted by gluttony, whether with food or drink: "*Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.*"
3. Gluttony is a sin against your soul. Our only "master" is to be Christ, yet we let other things master us. Read **1 Corinthians 6:12-13**. Recalling the temptations you discussed in #1, how do you keep them from becoming idols that displace Christ in your life?
4. Gluttony is a sin because what it does to others. Pastor Joe mentioned that \$350 billion dollars are spent in America on diet foods, yet others are living on less than a \$1 a week. How did that comparison strike you? Have you sponsored a child through World Vision, Compassion, or another organization? If so, briefly share your experience.
5. What are your Fasting and Exercise practices—or what practices would you like to start—and how can our group help support you in those disciplines?

### D. Personal Application (1-3 Minutes)

- If you aren't already doing so, sponsor a child through World Vision or Compassion!
- Be intentional about the spiritual practices of Fasting, Exercise, and Community this week. If you're just beginning any of these, start small and work up!
- If you or someone you know needs support in overcoming an addiction, check out the support groups available at the Info Center or online at [lifecenter.net](http://lifecenter.net).

### E. Prayer Time (As a whole group or subgroups of 3-4: 10-15 Minutes)

- Thank God for all the good things he gives us, including food and drink.
- Pray for the poor: Ask the Lord to open our eyes to them and how He wants us to help. Ask Him about sponsoring a child or two, or if you already do, take a moment to pray for them.
- Pray for honesty, wisdom and next steps in regard to your own personal addictions. Is there something you should give up to help yourself, your relationship with God, and others?
- Ask God to help you practice the spiritual disciplines of Fasting, Exercise and Community.