

PROVERBS: THE WAY OF WISDOM

GLUTTONY & SELF-CONTROL

... for the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, and slumber will clothe them in rags... — Proverbs 23:21

Read: Proverbs 23

Food has been with us since the beginning of time. Ironically, the first command of God to Adam and Eve was related to their diet and desire. “And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die’” (Gen. 2:16-17). As the familiar story goes, we know that the tree and the fruit was about more than food. It possessed a doorway into the man and woman’s deepest craving for pleasure, beauty, and wisdom. It wasn’t that God was stingy or withholding. Every tree but one belonged to them. Instead, the issue was with satisfying deep cravings on our own terms outside of God’s design and provision.

Often people think of gluttony in terms of excess and overeating. But that is too simple of an understanding. That narrow view would dismiss and neglect the times when God commands his people to occasional feasting. What’s more is that merely thinking in terms of excess would bypass the fact that often we are looking to food and drink like Adam and Eve, as something to appease a deeper desire for comfort, peace, or control. Finally, there is a third kind of gluttony is that sneaky and mostly in disguise. It’s when we obsess over particular diets and counting calories in an idolatry of our body image. It’s the opposite end of excess, but the same theme... food has become a god and we’ve sacrificed our bodies to it.

A proper definition of gluttony is worship of food and drink through excessive indulgence, and obsessive avoidance. The book of Proverbs talks about this sin as one that often holds hands with other vices, lust and envy. Gluttony never sits alone. Together with lust and envy, gluttony invites us to imagine all that we could have and experience—if we just put God on the shelf for a moment. The answer isn’t to be a grumpy and repressed people that don’t ever have any fun. Instead, the call of Scripture is to cultivate wisdom in the fear of the Lord, and submit to the work of the Holy Spirit toward the fruit of self-control. This is the way of true freedom and joy. More of the presence of God is what you’re really looking for, not another snack or drink.

Discussion/Reflection

1. **Almost no one in our culture thinks of themselves as a glutton or guilty of gluttony. We tend to think it’s our right to “treat ourselves” or indulge as we please.** Are there any areas of your life where you think this way without hesitation?
2. **Read Galatians 5:16-26.** What do you see in these verses related to the freedom of the fruit of the Spirit? Why do you think Paul is sure to highlight “against such things there is no law” at the end of verse 23?
3. Is there any area of your life where you tend to lack control, and need the help of the Holy Spirit to develop godly wisdom and restraint?