

## SE7EN Gluttony

Question of the Day:

What is the longest you have gone with eating?

Pics of logos.

That's a good way to start the message that we are looking at today, which is the sin of gluttony. We are on the series of the Se7en Deadly Sins. And we are talking about how God wants to replace the sin, the seven deadly sins in our life, and exchange those for the seven positive virtues. And today we are going to talk about how we can replace the sin of gluttony, with the positive virtue of self control. I want to go, immediately, if we can to your message notes, and I want to show you a verse from Galatians 5:42, about self control. If you will, look inside your program, and get your message notes.

Now, I will be honest with you, the Bible doesn't have a lot to say about the sin of gluttony. But the Bible does have a lot to say about the virtue of self control. And so, I want to show you a list of what is commonly called the Fruit of the Spirit in

### **Galatians 5:22-23**

**“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”**

Would you underline those words “self control”? The Bible says that the Fruit of the Spirit, that God wants to have in our lives is self control. And the sin that keeps self control from being in charge is the sin of gluttony.

Gluttony is an inordinate desire to consume more than that which one requires. So you might want to circle the two words—consume more. Gluttony is about over consumption and not just about excessive consumption. Four pound hamburger was excessive consumption, but, gluttony was one too many bites. But gluttony is more than just food. The classic definition of gluttony is hardly related to food at all. It's about over consumption of anything that can be dangerous in our lives. We are going to look at a list of what some of those things can be. What we are praying is that God will exchange of sin of gluttony, and we've all committed it, in fact, we have all committed all seven of these sins.

Interestingly, Pope Gregory the Great, who collected the list that we call the Seven Deadly Sins back in the fourth century, he felt gluttony was the worst of all sins. And here's what he wrote. He said—unless we first tame the enemy dwelling within us, namely our gluttonous appetite, we have not even stood up to engage in spiritual combat. He says we have to tame ourselves before we are able to deal with all of these other issues in our lives. Let's talk about how we do that. There are four ways, that I have outlined in your notes, from the Bible regarding how to overcome the sin of gluttony. Here's the first one:

### **Find & Admit my areas of gluttony**

All of us have this desire to consume more than we require. Overindulgence of food can obviously have major consequences, but under indulgence of food can as well.

Restrictive dieting, or excessive exercising, or even the improper use of laxatives and diuretics are indicators of eating disorders, that we deal with in modern society, can be traced back to the sin of gluttony. Bulimia and anorexia have touched all our lives and

may be the bigger issue in our family and church lives. I have listed what I would call the Big 8 areas where we all fall into gluttony. The first one, obviously, is food. When you over consume that can lead to things like obesity, heart disease high cholesterol, high blood pressure, diabetes, and even impotence. I just got some of your attention.

Over consumption of food is an issue. Shopping can be an area of gluttony as well. We all need things, we all need to consume things, and we all need a certain amount of clothes, but I think you would agree that you can go too far which leads to materialism, which leads to debt. While there is no such thing as a proper amount of pornography, too much focus on sex drives the industry of pornography. There is such a thing as a proper amount of shopping, or a proper amount of food but not a proper amount of pornography. The abuse of the environment can be traced back to the sin of gluttony? Drinking is another area. Somebody may ask—how do I know if I have a problem in the drinking area? It's really simple—are you getting drunk? Being drunk means you lose control and gluttony ultimately is about control. It is possible to associate the rise in obesity to the drop in smoking – we just exchanged one gluttons activity with another.

You need some entertainment and relaxation in your life, but you can sleep too much, or you can be too idle. You can entertain yourselves to death. You are staying up to three, four o'clock in the morning, watching television or playing video games or just being on the internet and doing just idle kinds of things, knowing that you have a big presentation the next morning, that's actually the sin of gluttony. And then I just put the other box there for the other ones that I did not cover.

So what are the areas where you face the sin of gluttony? So why don't you turn right now to your neighbor and just go ahead and tell them your top three. Okay? No, no. I'm not asking you to do that. But in your mind, just put a mental check box by the one that you deal with. If you want to put a literal check box, that's fine too, but so your neighbor doesn't see, in your mind put that. Because I want you to identify a particular area so that we can focus the rest of this message and then go to work on it.

In fact, one of the first steps in going to work on our sin of gluttony is to admit it. Look at **Psalms 32:5**

**Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"— and you forgave the guilt of my sin."**

Now, a few weeks ago I defined "confess" for you, confess means to agree with. So you agree with God, God, I have a problem in this area. I have an issue in this area. But for today, circle on the word "confess". And then just below it, circle the word "forgave" and then draw a line between the two. Because when you confess, what it does, that brings God's forgiveness into your life. God doesn't want you to deal with the guilt of your sin. In fact, if you try to hide your sin and try to be ashamed of it, and feel guilty about it, that is actually going to hinder God's work in your life. You have to bring it out into the open. And so when you confess it, it starts the process toward forgiveness. And that allows God to begin to replace your sin of gluttony with the positive virtue of self control. That actually takes us to our next "A" and that is how God does this in our life and some practical steps to make that happen.

**Ask for God's wisdom before I consume**

**Psalms 119:133**

**Direct my footsteps according to your word; let no sin rule over me.**

We should pray before we consume. So if your gluttonous issue is food, you pray before you eat. If it's smoking, you pray before you smoke. If it's drinking, you pray before you drink, or right before you shop or whatever. Let me ask you, do you think that if you prayed before you did these things that it would make a big difference in your life? If you want to eradicate pornography from your life, just pray before you engage in pornography. God, should I watch this pornography? I am sure God is going to give you some guidance on that. In fact, the Bible says that God orders our life when we pray. Know understand this. Gluttony is a disorder desire. It's when desire goes in the wrong direction. So what prayer does, it brings order to our desires. In fact, Jesus understood this and Jesus gave us an example of how this relates to food. Because Jesus always prayed before He consumed.

In fact, I would argue that food is very powerful. Let me illustrate that. On your way in today, you received this powerful little packet of M&M's. Now, these M&M's, for some of you, have had a power over you ever since you received those. And I've been watching you, and I've observed with people in our church, there is one of three reactions that occur when you receive a pack of M&M's like this. The first reaction is the—simple tear it open eating immediately, forget about it reaction. And some of you did this. You came in today. You got the packet. Said—cool, La Habra Christian Church is giving me a little gift. You popped it open, you ate them, you wadded it up and you put it in your pocket and it's done. You actually have forgotten about these M&M's.

I would actually propose that this may be the healthiest reaction of all. Maybe you sort of reasoned with yourself. Maybe I will walk all day. Maybe I will put a little extra time at the gym a little bit later. But you sort of consumed it and didn't think anything about it and moved on. But some of you had an anti-reaction to this. We tried to give you the packet of M&M's and you didn't want to take it. You held your hand out and said—get thee behind me, Satan. And you have been like ticked all day like there is no little breakdown of how many calories and fat and carbohydrates, and you have been looking at that, and you are saying there is no way that I am going to allow this into my body. C. S. Lewis, tells a story of an old lady who was over consumed with under consumption. And so she was constantly being nitpicky and extremely particularly about what she would and would not allow into her body. He made the point that that was actually an abuse, seeing that food is a gift from God.

But then there is the third reaction which is—you have been obsessed with wanting to eat these M&M's. In fact, you were so obsessed with wanting to eat these M&M's that you actually came into the service, put your stuff down, went out to the restrooms, came back in again and got another pack of M&M's on your way in. And now you are thinking—is my neighbor going to eat their M&M's, and it's really been weighing on you. I want to be clear about something. This reaction is not in any way related to the waistline. There is no connection between a glutton and being over weight. Now, gluttony can lead to obesity, but there is not necessarily a connection. In fact, some of the most gluttonous people in our society have the smallest waistline. For example, there is a lady named Sonya Thomas who holds the record for eating over five pounds of beef in less than 10 minutes. I don't know how she did this, but she holds the record for eating the hamburgers and she only weighs 98 pounds. Chicken-Fried Steak - 6 11-ounce chicken fried steaks with country gravy/ Lone Star Cafe - 12 minutes/ Nov. 2, 2003 - Cookie Jarvis - - Chili - 1 1/2 gallon Stagg Chili - 10 minutes - Richard LeFevre - - Chili

Cheese Fries - 8 lbs, 2 oz Wienerschnitzel Chili Cheese Fries at the Queen Mary - 10 minutes/February 11, 2006

Sonya Thomas In fact, many of the people who are in competitive eating, they are very slim. There is really no connection. But here's why I tell you all this. Food is not a neutral thing. In some way or another, food is bound up with your emotional and spiritual health. We often fall into the sin of gluttony because there is something about ourselves that we don't like. We often over eat because we are lonely, because we are depressed. We often over shop because of issues of self esteem, the inability to deal with our emotions like anger. You see, the point is, gluttony covers up another hurt. Until you are aware of what gluttony is hiding in your life, you are never going to deal with the root issue. And God wants to deal with the root issue. Remember the **Big Idea for this series is that God wants you to finish well.**

He wants to deal with the spiritual issue, the heart issue. You see, gluttony is ultimately a spiritual issue and therefore, it requires a spiritual solution. One of the steps toward that solution is to pray before you eat. And when you pray, that brings discernment into your life.

**Proverbs 28:7.**

**“Whoever keeps the law is a discerning son. But the companion of a glutton disgraces his father.”**

Now in this Proverb, the comparison is between the glutton and the discerning person, so if you want to move from the state of being gluttonous to the state of being discerning, pray and ask for God's wisdom before you consume.

**Set the boundaries of my enough zone.**

Setting boundaries is very key to overcoming the sin of gluttony. This is where you say—I am only going to spend this much when I go shopping. I am only going to eat half of what I receive in a restaurant. Defining these boundaries. And these are very important. Proverbs 23:20-21 talks to us about what happens when we go beyond the proper boundaries, the healthy boundaries.

**Proverbs 23:20-21**

**Do not join those who drink too much wine or gorge themselves on meat, for drunkards and gluttons become poor, and drowsiness clothes them in rags.**

Now the Bible never says there is anything wrong with having one drink, but it says it is very wrong to have too many. So you want to build an “enough zone” where you say—I'm not going to consume too much. I am only going to have one glass of wine at a time instead of ordering a whole bottle up front. If not, it might lead you to being drunk. “Or feast with gluttons.” I mean how many of you have ever said—I wish I hadn't taken that last bite. It's that last bite that puts you over the edge. So we have to define what is enough for us. “For they are on their way to poverty.” That's true. “And too much sleep (idle activity) clothes them in rags.” In other words, they will be poor as well, because they won't be able to keep a job.

You see, you want to define your enough zone. Here's what an enough zone is. **My enough zone is my predetermined limits to control consumption.** Practically, this may be only one portion of food before I go back for seconds. It may mean that I wait 10 minutes after I have the first portion before I go back, because I want to see if I'm full. It may mean that I set a limit on the number of drinks that I have before I have drink. I set a limit on the amount of money I am going to spend, or I decide not to use my credit card

and only pay cash, or whatever it might be. But it's a practical checkpoint that you put in your life so that you ask yourself—what is enough for me? And you define that on the front end.

There is nothing wrong with having a few M&M's. As long as you say—I'm going to limit myself to this one pack. I have to do this because there are serious consequences when I over consume. Once you really begin to think about gluttony, you realize this is ultimately a spiritual problem, so therefore, it requires a spiritual solution.

**Galatians 5:22**

**“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”**

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**Take the fasting challenge.**

Fasting is the spiritual solution for the spiritual problem of gluttony. And so I want us to talk about fasting for just a moment. And then I want to challenge you and invite you to be part of a Lenten challenge that we are doing between now and Easter. There are different ways that you can fast, but there is a particular kind of fast that Christians, throughout the centuries have engaged in during the period of Ash Wednesday to Easter Sunday. Don't get caught up on the exact dates, Ash Wednesday was the 17<sup>th</sup> this year, but, there is something to be said about setting aside a period of time in the Christian's life where we say we are going to fast. And a 40 day period is a good period of time. So whatever your area of gluttony is, whether it is over eating, under eating, over shopping or over indulgence, or whatever, fasting is a way for you to hand control of that area over to God.

In return, you get the Fruit of the Spirit that we started with. Ultimately, the solution to gluttony is not dieting. It's fasting. So Jesus said from time to time we should set aside areas of our life where we fast.

**Matthew 6:16-18**

**“When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth; they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”**

He said, “And when you fast” when, not if. In other words, Jesus understood that fasting was the regular part of the Christian's lifestyle. So when is one of the best times to do it? “And when you fast, don't make it obvious as hypocrites do, who try to look pale and disheveled so people will admire them for their fasting. I assure you, this is the only reward they will ever get.” So if you take this fasting challenge don't get t-shirts that say “I'm fasting”. That's not the way to go about it. It's supposed to be a little more private than that.

So Jesus goes on to say that when you fast, “comb your hair and wash your face. Then no one will suspect that you are fasting, except your Father who knows what you do in secret, and your Father who knows all secrets (underline this last phrase) will reward you.”

Testimony of Victor & Lupe

Thank you Victor & Lupe for that encouragement. Just think about what it would look like if every person in our church participated in this fast, how much closer would we be

to God, say at Easter Sunday than we are right now. It could be a really powerful time of spiritual growth. So let's go back to our list from earlier. Whether it was food, shopping, pornography, issues of the environment, drinking, smoking, entertainment or idle activities there is something from which you can fast. If you want to share with I would love to pray for you

I am going to be doing this. In fact, find your Connection Card from earlier. You will see that Next Step number two says to—accept the Lenten challenge by giving up something during the period of Lent. So if you want to participate in this fast with us, will you just mark that second Next Step. I am still praying about what I should give up, but, I know that I can check that box and say that I am going to give up something. In your notes, in your program, there is also another sheet that tells you more about fasting. This brightly colored sheet.

Ultimately, your deepest needs are not going to be met through food, material wealth, sex, alcohol, entertainment or even abstinence from any of these things, but, only through a relationship with God. Attempting to meet spiritual needs with physical things is kind of like taking penicillin for a broken heart. Penicillin is a great drug, but it is never going to solve that broken heart.

Maybe today your issue is you need to start a relationship with God. In fact, you know right now you don't have this connection with God. But you are ready to make that today. The way that you can make that is by saying—yes to God's Son, Jesus Christ. To allow Jesus to be your Savior, to be your leader and to be your Lord. I am going to give you an opportunity to say yes to Jesus Christ. Or if you are already on this journey, I am going to give you an opportunity to pray with me and we will go deeper than we ever have before. Let's bow our heads and let's pray together.

Heavenly Father, I want to pray for every person in our church who is already on this journey with me. They are people that we describe as Christians and we call ourselves that. So God, I pray that as we take this challenge over these next several weeks, to fast and to pray and to give up something that has a strong hold in our life, that You will replace gluttony in our life Godly self control. You have promised to reward us, and I can't wait to see how You are going to do that over these next few weeks.

Also Lord, for those deciding for the first time to follow you I hear them as they pray: Dear Jesus, I want You to be my leader. I want You to be my Lord. In this period between now and Lent I want You to continue to show me what it is to live for You and follow You every day of my life. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.