



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH

SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

Seven Deadly Sins

Part 4: Gluttony: When Too Much of a Good Thing
Becomes a Sin

Tim Badal | August 28, 2016 | Proverbs 23:1-8



Today we'll be in Proverbs 23 as we continue in our series, "Seven Deadly Sins." Over the last three weeks we have come face to face with two indispensable truths. First, every one of us is a sinner. Second, while we as Christians want to fight against sin, while the Bible commands us to run away from sin and while we would say sin is evil and will only do us harm and not good, we still find ourselves overwhelmingly attracted to the very things we are commanded to stay away from. As a result, our lives are filled with struggle, guilt and shame instead of the abundant life God has called us to in Christ Jesus.

So as we look at these seven sins, we need to recognize that while we may be defeated, while we may find ourselves broken over our sin, God did not intend for us to live this way. If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, if you have given your life to Him and have a relationship with Him, then you don't have to live in defeat.

This series of messages should not bring you down, but rather remind and encourage you that because of Christ's death, burial and resurrection and through His modeling of holiness as He lived a perfect life on earth, we should not live in defeat or even be distressed. Jesus was victorious over all our sins and struggles, over all the things we find ourselves doing even when we really don't want to do them.

We come today to what I would call an insidious foe—a foe that is subtle and silent to the one who gives it a foothold. Today we speak on a subject that will make many of us nervous. Many of us will look around and prejudge others, because it's the kind of sin that makes it easy to assign blame.

Our subject today is "Gluttony: When Too Much of a Good Thing Becomes Sin." Our text is Proverbs 23:1–8. I want you to listen carefully to what I say, because you'll be able to take parts of my message, pull them out of context and use them in a variety of ways. I implore you to keep what I say in the context in which I'm saying it, and to not move too quickly to the person next to you—or even maybe to yourself. We must keep a balance between freedom, love and grace and the commands of Scripture. And we must do this soberly.

So I'll give you all this thought, knowing that you're smart people to whom God has given brains to work through these things in a way that will glorify and honor God. Proverbs 23:1–8 is our text. I will read it and then ask for God's blessing on our time today.

When you sit down to eat with a ruler,
observe carefully what is before you,
² and put a knife to your throat
if you are given to [gluttony].
³ Do not desire his delicacies,
for they are deceptive food.
⁴ Do not toil to acquire wealth;
be discerning enough to desist.

- ⁵ When your eyes light on it, it is gone,
for suddenly it sprouts wings,
flying like an eagle toward heaven.
- ⁶ Do not eat the bread of a man who is stingy;
do not desire his delicacies,
- ⁷ for he is like one who is inwardly calculating.
"Eat and drink!" he says to you,
but his heart is not with you.
- ⁸ You will vomit up the morsels that you have eaten,
and waste your pleasant words.

With a footprint bigger than our entire building here at the Sugar Grove campus, the Bacchanal Buffet at Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas boasts the largest and most expansive buffet in the world. At a mere \$50 per person, you can enjoy breakfast, lunch or dinner and have every one of your food desires met. Listen to this. Offering more than 500 different entrées at breakfast, another 500 at lunch, and another 500 at dinner, you can experience every nationality of food, and you can experience every taste of food from the mundane and the normal to the highly exotic. You will never walk away disappointed. Some of you want to take off and head there right now

If you have a craving for something, you will find it. With the most talented of chefs on staff, you will enjoy the finest delicacies known to man. And you don't have to simply taste these things—you can have all you want. One of the signs at the buffet says, "You never have to leave." What an amazing place. When asked, "Why would Caesar's Palace need such an expansive and extravagant dining experience?", the food and wine manager there put it this way: "We live in a world where and a time when people want what they want when they want it, how they want it and at their disposal on demand. We are here to serve those desires and send them home satisfied." They understand who we are. They understand our need to be filled, and they said, "Bring your desires. Bring your wants and we will fill them. We will satisfy you in all ways, shapes and forms."

But here's the problem: The sin of gluttony is not found simply in the excess of Las Vegas casinos. It can be found all over the place. In fact, our team found a picture of one of our own. Not only does he play a satanic instrument called the drums, but he's also given to great gluttony. Pray for this man. Are you all right, John? Yeah, we could just close with prayer now. [Thank you for your good sense of humor with that, John.]

No, the sin of gluttony is all over the place. . Gluttony is the American way, isn't it? We just can't get enough good things. In fact, I received this email while I was preparing this sermon: "Tim, show it to the Olive Garden. We've got the never-ending pasta bowl for \$9.99." [By the way, as a caterer, I don't know how they make any money. If I go in there, I'm going to eat more than ten pounds...er, I mean...I will eat more than ten dollars of pasta. That's a Freudian slip if there ever was one!]

Here's the thing. We love this kind of stuff. Who wouldn't want to eat great pasta with great sauces? It tastes so good going down. It's such an enjoyable experience. Yet we live in a world where we can't get enough of a good thing. To show moderation or to show some self-control is an affront to our senses, to our American way.

But that's exactly what God is telling us when it comes to gluttony. Many of you have heard me warn you against the sinful indulgences we have. Rarely do we talk about the sin of indulgence. Those are two different things. The Scriptures tell us, "*Put a knife to your throat if you are given to gluttony*" (Proverbs 23:2). Yet how many Christians today would even consider gluttony a sin?

Gluttony is one of those ambiguous seven deadly sins that we need to talk about. It's the sin that started it all for humanity. By looking carefully at the story of Adam and Eve, we will learn that the issue of sin wasn't a sin of violence in the Garden. It wasn't a sin involving sexual immorality. It wasn't the sin of a lying tongue. The sin of Adam and Eve was that although they had been given all they needed to live and prosper and enjoy life, enough just wasn't enough. Did you know that the sin of gluttony is what threw us into sin as humanity?

You see, God said, "You have everything you need, anything you could ever want." But with a gluttonous heart they said, "We want the one thing we can't have. We don't think You've given us enough to enjoy." So like adulterers, they turned away from all God had given them and pursued a mistress of "something more." Because of that, they were thrown into sin along with the rest of humanity throughout history.

Here's the problem. We—like our parents in the Garden—have sought to go our own ways. Instead of enjoying the things God has given us, we say, "Lord, I know You said I could have this, but I want more of it. I want something different than what You've given." And our gluttonous hearts keep us from the abundant life God wants us to have. But the Bible helps us find freedom. It speaks to our gluttonous hearts and desires, telling us how we can take the good things God has given us without creating gods out of His gifts. This requires us to do a couple things.

1. Putting gluttony in its proper place.

If I were to ask you what gluttony is, I would get a myriad of definitions. If I were to ask you what gluttony looks like, I think the illustrations would abound. We have many different ideas about what gluttony is and what it looks like. When is that line crossed between eating to live and living to eat? Where is that line? We need to be careful about that.

This involves knowing the full meaning of gluttony.

Even though the lines may be blurred, the Bible speaks very clearly about the subject of gluttony. What is the full meaning of gluttony? The Latin word for glutton literally means "to gulp down." When the Bible speaks of a glutton, however, it never addresses what they've done or any other specific description. Similar to the way it uses the word "sluggard" for a lazy person, Scripture just gives the general title of "glutton" and then says, "Don't be one." But it doesn't give a lot of sub-points or exact descriptions of what that person looks like.

Here is a simple definition to remember: gluttony is unrestrained overconsumption. Like the drinker who himself is filled with drink and becomes drunk, the glutton is one who fills himself or herself to capacity or beyond. Notice the word "unrestrained" in that definition. At the heart of a glutton is the lack of self-control—the ability or desire to stop one's self. It is the sin of lax consumption in the manner of all things.

This involves identifying the different masks it wears.

But what things in particular? Let's notice a few places where gluttony is found—the masks it wears.

We need to beware of gluttony in our eating.

First, of course, gluttony has to do with our eating. While the Bible is clear that gluttony can be found at the dinner table, it's a much larger issue. Still, let's deal with the issue at hand: our eating. Part of the problem with gluttony is that it's frequently mistaken for the issue of obesity. Not all those who are overweight are gluttons, and not all gluttons are overweight. The Catholic theologian Thomas Aquinas put it this way: "Gluttony denotes not any desire of eating or drinking or the amount, but the inordinate desire for or focus on food, leaving the order of reason wherein the good of moral virtue consists."

We as Americans have a problem with food—and I am the least of those who should be speaking about this. I need to preach this truth—and I've had to preach this truth—not only as a partaker of food, but as one who makes food. I'm always around food. I make a good portion of my living through food preparation.

Yet we need to recognize that in the on-demand food world we live in, food can be a problem. We live as kings and queens. We eat when we're happy. We eat when we're sad. We eat when we're hungry. We eat when we're full. But I want you to notice that while overeating could be a sign of gluttony, many scholars say that's only part of the story.

William Willimon, in his book *Sinning Like a Christian*, puts it this way: "Gluttony plagues all manner of people. It plagues the person who carefully weighs the cards in their diet, who relentlessly scans the fat content of the portions or who drives all manner of miles to buy exclusively organic food. It plagues that individual as much as it plagues the beer-gutted, t-shirt-wearing, wing-eating lug."

Why? Because gluttony is an overestimation of the place food holds in our lives. Aquinas, when telling the Catholic church how not to fall into gluttony, said that gluttony could be found in eating too much. It could be found in eating too little. It could be found in eating too daintily. It could be found in eating too sumptuously.

Wherever you come from regarding food, you can find yourself to be a glutton yet all the while be eating sparingly. We are a people who are either eating way too much or—in light of the 53-billion-dollar diet industry—eating way too little. We are altogether too concerned about the place of food in our lives. That's why the danger of gluttony has nothing to do with simply flabby waistlines.

Rather, gluttony is a disease that leads to flabby souls. Too often we separate the physical from the spiritual. What we need to recognize is that the habits of our bodies regarding what we eat can have profound effects on our spiritual souls.

One writer put it this way: "Physical appetites are an analogy of our ability to control ourselves. If we are unable to control our eating habits, then we are probably unable to control all other habits. If we are unable to control what goes in or what we keep from our mouths, so we will be with our minds regarding lust, covetousness and anger. Nor will we be able to keep our mouths from gossip or strife."

In my own life, I must confess that I've seen gluttony become an idol. While I would hold that I would not have some worshipful relationship with food, I must again confess that food is always around me. Every day I go to work, it's there. Everywhere I go in a catering event, food is there. My issue with food—and hopefully one you might be able to understand—is that food is all around.

I was watching a sitcom this past week, and I want you to know that more than 75% of the commercials shown in a 30-minute timeframe had to do with food. We love food. So we drive by the Roadway and what do we see? Food in our gas stations. Food in our grocery stores. Food in fast food places. We have all kind of places that offer food on demand. The problem is we eat without ever thinking about why we're doing it.

But before you think gluttony is only for the stout, let me be clear. Gluttony is all around. Chris Donato wrote this in a Ligonier article on gluttony: "Two mistakes accompany most discussions on gluttony. The first is that it only pertains to those with a less than shapely waistline; the second is that it always involves food. In reality, it can apply to toys, television, entertainment, sex or relationships. It is about an excess of anything." So we've got the eating down, and some of us need to look at our eating habits, and some of us need to recognize that what we put in our mouths is a spiritual issue. But I would not be a truthful pastor if I did not tell you there are other areas of gluttony. The second one we'll consider is entertainment.

We need to beware of gluttony in our entertainment.

. . . With the on-demand entertainment, we have created a new word that connects our understanding of our entertainment to our food consumption. We have Netflix now—and what do we do when we sit down, and for hours upon end watch a certain program? We call it "binge watching." That word binge comes from the idea of binge eating. Because of our on-demand technology, we can sit for hours consuming all manner of entertainment.

Football is going to begin pretty soon and during the first couple weeks of football season, the average fan will spend seven hours on a Sunday watching football. Seven hours! That doesn't include Saturday college football. That doesn't include Monday night football, and Tuesday and Wednesday night football, and Thursday night football.

For our ladies who watch Downton Abbey, and the three guys who would admit to watching it themselves, to get through the last season meant you spent 33 hours watching television. In fact, an average day of TV watching now eclipses five hours for the average American. Five hours! Here's what I always hear when I say that. "Well, I don't watch five hours." Someone is! Nielsen is the source of this statistic. They make phone calls and they know. Advertisers know you're watching, because they wouldn't spend millions of dollars on commercials if nobody was watching. So someone's watching.

These numbers go up very quickly the older you get. So if you think, "Aw, those dumb teenagers are bringing this thing down," you're wrong. Teenagers are the smallest age segment using this kind of technology. The largest group is my generation. People from 40 to 55 make up the largest group of TV and entertainment watchers. We are consuming 11 hours each day of entertainment.

There is no point for us to read the Scripture that says, "Be still, and know that I am God" (Proverbs 46:10), because we have radio, television, our phones, our tablets, our internet. We have no need to be alone, no need to be quiet, because we are gluttons regarding our entertainment.

It's not just TV. Some of you spend hours on Facebook and Twitter, playing countless hours on video games—whether on your phone or through a console. Games like Angry Birds, Bejeweled, Words with Friends, Clash of Clans. I could go on and on. We're gluttons—unrestrained overconsumption.

One author put it this way: "We turn to screen time instead of turning to prayer. We pause to check Facebook instead of pausing to meditate on Scripture. We seek out a piece of fried bread instead of seeking the Bread of Life. We fill our lives with comfort food, comfort games, must-see TV and must-engage social media, in order to fill our time and our lives apart from God and His holy Word." Entertainment can bring us to gluttony.

We need to beware of gluttony in our extravagant living.

Another form of gluttony is having the best of everything and to never go without. In America, there is a constant pursuit of and craving for the next best thing. The moment the Apple iPhone is announced, people will say of their old phone, "This is a piece of junk." Why? Because now there's something that replaces it.

We do this with cars. We do this with homes. We do this with television sets. We have to have the next best thing. And businesses love it. The message they advertise is that you and I are something less because we have last year's model. So we've got to catch up. With our greedy and covetous hearts, we look at our neighbors and see how happy they are because they've got this thing in their house or this thing in their garage. And we say, "What about me? I can't be happy with last year's model. I'm somehow lacking as a result." We have an insatiable appetite as Americans for more. It's no wonder we find the average American family to be more than \$20,000 in debt. It just doesn't add up. Here's the problem: As a people, we live like kings instead of like the King of Kings. And God is concerned about it.

We need to beware of gluttony in our expending of resources.

One final area of gluttony that we can often miss is the expending of our resources. Gluttony is found in unrestrained overconsumption. One church father asked this question: while all of the other seven deadly sins hurt others and have reason therefore to be called sins, gluttony seemingly hurts no one except the glutton himself because of his or her decision.

But what he failed to understand is that gluttony does in fact hurt others. When we gobble up resources to take care of our lavish living as a people, others are living without. Many times the amount of food and other resources that American families waste on an average day could take care of the needs of another whole family. But we don't care. It's all about us. We think we'll always have it, so we leave our water running. We leave the refrigerator door open. We throw away food. We get rid of clothing that we seemingly don't need anymore, because we can go buy new stuff.

I was convicted this last week reading the postmortem of our last Uganda trip. Kate Duff shared what went on in Uganda, and I was broken-hearted. She said that one of the great things she and Linda Malette gave to the children was not a new Playstation, not a new Xbox. They were able to hand out one pair of underwear to each child. Let that sink in. Girls were happy that they got feminine products to be able to take care of their needs. Kids were happy when they got a toothbrush and toothpaste. Brothers and sisters, there is a pox on the American culture, where we consume, consume, consume, all while leaving people in other parts of the world lacking in basic necessities.

It's because we over-consume. We don't think about it. We've always had it—and we always will, right? God says of the church, something must be different. We are indirectly starving the rest of our planet. The question is, in light of our own gluttonous tendencies, how much do you and I really need? How much do we need?

Here's where you need to think soberly. You don't need to point fingers and say, "Well, let's talk about this person or that person." Let's just begin with ourselves and ask the question, "How can I reduce my gluttonous footprint so that I can be a blessing or a benefit to others?" We must put gluttony in its proper place. It's overconsumption with regard to eating, but it's also unrestrained overconsumption in all manner of things, and it does hurt others.

2. Recognizing that gluttony is poisonous.

Gluttony hurts the individual. You may ask, "How is it hurting me?" It may not be hard to forget about the children of Uganda as we're living lavishly here in America. But I need to remind us of what gluttony can do to us as individuals. You see, gluttony is actually poisonous. When gluttony takes root in our hearts, it divorces us from the life God wanted us to have. It demands over and above what is natural, and as a result it spins us out of balance.

Paul says in Philippians 3:19 that *"their end is destruction."* Whose end is destruction? Those *"whose god is their belly."* See, we worship falsely. We worship the god of consumption. We worship the god of overindulgence. We worship the god of our belly. And let me assure you that I'm preaching this to myself far before preaching it to you.

We make our bellies our gods. Instead of focusing on God, we focus on our indulgences and appetites. We allow our souls to be turned into mush instead of muscle. Let me share a few ways we allow this sin to be poisonous in our lives.

Gluttony is poisonous because we lose sight of the future.

If you have a gluttonous heart, you are living in the here and now. And you ask, “What’s wrong with that? What’s wrong with enjoying the moment? What’s wrong with seizing the day? *Carpe diem*—isn’t that a motto we should live by?”

Well, the Bible says that is the motto of the unbeliever. In 1 Corinthians 15:32 Paul says, “If there is no resurrection—if Jesus Christ isn’t Who He said He was and didn’t do what He said He did—then we’re like everyone else.” We’re like all unbelievers, and our motto should be “eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.” Live for today. Don’t worry about tomorrow, because you may be dead. So grab every morsel off that little apple of life so you don’t miss out on anything.

But listen. Not only are we told not to just live for today and to plan wisely for tomorrow, we as Christians also have eternity to think about. We have the judgment of Christ coming that will judge what we did while we were in the body here on earth. This will determine our rewards in heaven.

So when you are dying for that meal, when you are dying for that new gadget, when you are dying for all sorts of things and you have to have it now, you forfeit the future for the joys of today. It’s idolatry, and it’s sin.

Gluttony is poisonous because we sacrifice the greater for the lesser.

There’s no greater example of gluttony in Scripture than that of Esau. In Genesis 25 we read the amazing story of absolutely stupid gluttony. Here’s what we’re told, beginning in verse 29: *“Once when Jacob was cooking stew, Esau came in from the field, and he was exhausted. And Esau said to Jacob, ‘Let me eat some of that red stew, for I am exhausted!’ Jacob said, ‘Sell me your birthright now.’”*

Let’s stop there. The birthright is an inheritance. We know that Jacob and Esau’s father Isaac had a massive inheritance—not only of temporal things, but a massive inheritance of God’s favor. Esau was entitled to the birthright. He had God’s blessing and favor, which he would experience the joy of for the rest of his life. But he comes home, and he’s hungry and exhausted. *“Jacob said, ‘Sell me your birthright now.’ Esau said, ‘I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?’”*

Here’s what I want you to know: Esau was not going to die. Yeah, he was probably famished—but he wasn’t going to die. Nowhere does the text tell us that Esau hadn’t eaten for multiple days. He may even have had breakfast that morning. But you know how you feel when it’s 5:00 and you’ve missed lunch. You’re “starving” and you’ll do anything just to get some food in your mouth.

We read that Jacob was cooking some stew. It doesn’t even say it was good. It just says it was red—probably overcooked. *“Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew.”* It probably didn’t even have meat in it. Just beans. Vegetables. *“And he ate and drank and rose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.”*

Gluttony can be found in all manner of things—things we have to have right now. We’re even willing to give up something so important that we lose the greater for the lesser. Listen, teenagers. Your boyfriend or girlfriend is telling you, “Let’s go a little farther.” And for a night of passion, you give up something so dear and so important that it can never be restored.

Many of us purchase things and then find ourselves in huge debt as a result. A purchase in the moment may take us a lifetime to pay off. A decision in the moment of a gluttonous heart may take years to get over—or maybe we’ll never get over the regret and shame and sorrow we feel.

When we live gluttonous lives, we make the decision that the lesser is more important than the greater. As a result of that, we are broken-hearted. How many of us—instead of showing self-control—have done something we’ve regretted? Gluttony is at the heart of those decisions.

Gluttony is poisonous because we become selfish and neglect the needs of others.

Scripture tells us that as followers of Jesus Christ, we are to do two things: love our God with all our soul, mind and strength, and to love our neighbors as ourselves (Matthew 22:36–40). Gluttony fights those two pursuits. Gluttony says, “God, You’re not good enough, but another plate of food is. God, You’re not good enough, but a brand new car is. God, You’re not good enough, but that new gadget is.” And gluttony says to others, “Instead of helping you, I’ll help myself. Instead of giving to you—even though God calls us to be generous—I’ll keep it for myself.” Gluttony is the great opponent of the Great Commandment and the Great Commission, because it’s all about us and not about others.

Take a look at your bank account over the last month. How much of your money was consumed by you? Let me ask, how much happier are you today than you were a month ago? You spent, you spent, you bought, you bought—for what? What did it gain you?

You're no happier than you were then—you're just more in debt. You've just wasted more money. And at the end of all of this, it will all burn.

We're just a few short months away from Christmas. We are going to pour out ungodly amounts of money on our kids and families. I haven't seen a single one of my kids' Christmas presents since January. That's bad spending of money. But we do it every year—why? Because we're the most important thing. Because we can't say no, why would we tell our children they have to say no?

Gluttony is poisonous because we serve our hungers instead of God.

We become selfish and neglect the needs of others. There are people in need and we need to help them. We serve our hungers instead of serving God. Every day there is a battle going on in our lives. Every day a battle is waged between two masters: God and self. Who's going to win? When our gluttony is out of control, we choose ourselves instead of choosing God. When God says, "Enough is enough," we say, "No, give me another helping. Give me a little more. With just a little more, I'll be happy. With just a little more, I'll be at peace. With just a little more, I'll be filled with joy."

God demands that we obey Him. He doesn't suggest it. He commands it. The question is: are we serving ourselves or serving God? If gluttony is part of our lives, then we are the master and God is something else.

Gluttony is poisonous because we sabotage our wellbeing.

Gluttony in the way of pursuing food will at some point—maybe not now, but at some point—impact your wellbeing. It will raise your cholesterol. It will raise your blood pressure. It will bring all kinds of issues and struggles at some point along the way. We sabotage our wellbeing because we expend resources with no thought of why.

I want you to be aware that the Bible talks a lot about feasts and celebrations. In fact, there were mandatory feasts in the Jewish calendar, where the finest of food was enjoyed, where banquets would go on for days. In those times, consumption was viewed as a good thing. Jesus' first miracle was to make more wine at a wedding that had already gone through all the kegs. So God is not saying we should restrain ourselves to the point of never having times of celebration. I think quite frankly that there is something good about us gathering together on the last Thursday in November and celebrating around the table, enjoying ourselves, feasting and being thankful for the good things God has given. If you walk away with anything today, please don't think your pastor is saying not to enjoy food. That would make me a hypocrite. If you come over to my house, you'll see that we enjoy food. We enjoy the good things God has given us. We enjoy what gathering around a table of food can do for conversation and increased intimacy between people who need to get to know one another.

I am not espousing a legalistic or pietistic approach that requires not partaking of anything. But we need to recognize that we can sabotage our wellbeing by having too much of a good thing. This is not to create a list of do's and don'ts. We understand that God has given good things for us to enjoy—but they must be put in their proper place.

I was counseling a couple who will be getting married soon and I told them about the importance of intimacy in their relationship, but that intimacy wasn't the most important thing. Here's how I explained it: At some point, you're going to come back from your honeymoon. Have you ever heard anyone say, "We're still on our honeymoon"? When did you get married? "Last June. We're still on our honeymoon. Maybe sometime we'll get to real life." No. There's a time for a honeymoon and then there's a time to get to work. There's a time to live life. We have moments when we get away and rekindle that romance and fire, but then we go back to the daily necessities of life, because there's a proper place for everything. We can sabotage our wellbeing when we take a good gift from God and make it more than He intended.

3. Understanding our gluttony involves some pondering.

One thing we do with a subject like gluttony is to start looking at it as someone else's problem, someone else's tendency toward sin. There's a fabled story of an interaction between two of the greatest preachers since the first century: D.L. Moody and Charles Spurgeon. D.L. Moody was the rock-star pastor from Chicago who was revolutionizing the church in America. Charles Spurgeon, the "Prince of Preachers," was in London, where they couldn't find a building big enough to accommodate all the people who wanted to hear him preach at the Metropolitan Tabernacle.

During one of his visits to Great Britain, Moody said, "Before I go, I want to see the great Mr. Spurgeon and meet the Prince of Preachers. Where does he live?" He was told where he lived in London. Moody approached the door and knocked, and Spurgeon

opened the door. Would you believe it? Spurgeon was smoking the biggest, fattest, most robust cigar Moody had ever seen. Aghast, Moody said, "Oh, my Lord. The great Charles Spurgeon is given to the use of tobacco!" To which Spurgeon took his cigar out of his mouth, took the butt of the cigar and pushed it into Moody's stomach and said, "The great D.L. Moody is given to the sin of gluttony."

We are quick to point out when others sin. We are quick to say, "I'm sure glad Mr. or Mrs. Overweight So-and-So heard this sermon today, because I've thought for a long time they should hear that." Some of you are thinking right now, "It must be really hard for Tim from Five B's Catering to preach a sermon like this." Let me tell you—it's no harder than any other sermon, because here's what your pastor says: I don't fall to some sins; I fall to all. So before you go and judge one another, ponder for yourself. Here's why. There's one person in the entire Bible who is called a glutton. Did you know that? He was called it twice. Do you know what his name was? Jesus.

Now, I don't know if that proves that Jesus was an overweight guy. I don't know. I will tell you this. The guy was way too focused in on food. He loved food. In every one of His stories there was a great banquet. Food was being prepared. The most important moment of Jesus' ministry took place around food—we call it the Last Supper. Then there was the feeding of the 5,000 and the feeding of the 4,000. It's all about food. Even His parables had food at the center of them.

The Scriptures tell us that there is a compare-and-contrast going on in Jesus' ministry. John the Baptist was all about fasting. Jesus was about eating and drinking. In Matthew 11:19, the Pharisees accuse Jesus of being a drunkard and a glutton. The only time anybody is accused of gluttony—listen—the people who did the judging were wrong. I would remind you that before we start pointing fingers at those who we think are gluttons, we need to be careful. In the only example we have of somebody doing that in Scripture, they were pointing to the perfect Lamb of God—and they were wrong. And we probably are as well.

We're learning today that gluttony is not so much about the mouth—but about the heart. Isn't that true of all sins? It isn't what goes into a person that defiles them, Jesus said, but it's what comes out from the heart. It's not an intake issue as much as it is an output issue. The heart is deceitfully sick, who can understand it (Jeremiah 17:9)?

So what do we do? Every one of us should ask ourselves— and ponder—these three questions.

What captures my heart?

What fires me up? What keeps me dreaming? If you are dreaming about your visit to Golden Corral right now, you've got a problem. If all you can think about is getting romantic with your wife right now—forgetting everything else—you've got a problem. Is it wrong to think that way? No. But God has said, "Put that in its proper context." If you're dreaming about all kinds of purchases you're going to make, things you can't live without, and if that's driving you—you've got a problem.

What consumes my hours?

Take a look at how you spend your time. What are you investing your time in? I think it is a gluttonous congregation if we can't find people to serve our young people in student ministry and in children's ministry. You have received no less than five notices that classes are not going to begin in the coming weeks because we don't have people to serve in them. But you watched your TV, you went shopping, you did all your eating—you did everything, but you forgot about the needs of the most innocent among us: the children. We're more worried about ourselves, our schedules and how we consume our hours than we are about teaching young people about Jesus Christ. God help us.

What controls my happiness?

What puts a smile on your face? Where do you go to drown your sorrows? What makes you feel better? You see, if it's anything other than God, it's an idol.

We've got to ponder these questions—but not for someone else. Tim has to ponder these things for Tim. I need to be reminded by the Spirit, and I also need to be open to others holding me accountable in these areas. I need to ask them, "Would you speak to me in this regard, because I know I can have blind spots in my life." But it begins by pondering these questions.

4. Destroying gluttony through the right practices.

Finally, and I'll close with this, destroying gluttony is done through right practices. Use these passages for more study on your own.

This involves acknowledging our appetites.

Your hunger for food isn't bad. Your desire for sex isn't bad. Your desire to buy things isn't bad. Your desire to have things isn't bad. Your desire to be entertained isn't bad.

Just last week I took my wife to a concert and we were entertained. We had a great time. We spent money and we enjoyed ourselves. Is God frowning upon the Badal family—"How dare they do that?" No.

First Timothy 6:17 tells us that, though we are rich, we should not put our hopes or dreams or desires on our riches—but on God Who gives. So when God gives us an appetite, it's all right. Thank You, Lord, for this thing, this desire, this want. If it's in line with Scripture, I'm going to enjoy it.

James 1:17 states, *"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above."* He's given to us for our good, for our enjoyment. So God wants you to have appetites. He created you with appetites. Find the right balance with them.

This involves striving for self-control.

Proverbs 25:28 says, *"A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls."* Good luck defending yourself. First Corinthians 10:13 tells us that self-control is a good thing. First Corinthians 9:27 tells us we need to discipline our bodies, even to the point of beating our bodies into submission. It is good and right for us as parents to teach our children that we don't always need to say "yes" to be happy.

But when was the last time we had a desire for something and the ability to get it—and we stopped ourselves? When have we said, "It would probably be better that I don't pursue this thing, but instead show self-control and restraint because discipline is a good thing"?

This involves becoming a glutton for the things of God.

If you really want to over-indulge or over-consume, direct those desires toward the things of God. John Piper's ministry is well known for promoting the idea that we should be Christian hedonists. We should redirect all the desires we have in this life toward God and our enjoyment of Him. God doesn't say, "Don't do that." In Isaiah 55:1–2, God says, "Come and eat. Come and drink. Come have your fill." He's inviting you to be a glutton for Him. He says, "Pursue Me. Take in all you can." Psalm 34:8 says, *"Taste and see that the Lord is good!"* Go to the Bible buffet instead of the food buffet. Purchase and buy all you can of God, instead of all the things in this world.

You see, gluttony is an insidious disease that we've said is okay. But it's not—because it steals our joy, it robs us of our relationship with Christ and it keeps us pursuing little things instead of the greater things God has given. Take time in these moments to ask yourself, "Is gluttony a problem?" and seek the Lord for His help.

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All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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