



# WEEK 5

GLUTTONY // TEMPERANCE

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### PHILIPPIANS 3:18-21

*For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.*

### JONATHAN EDWARDS, THE SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS OF THE GOSPEL REPRESENTED BY A FEAST

*There is no such thing as excess in our taking of...spiritual food. There is no such virtue as temperance in spiritual feasting.*

Food is wonderful – and powerful. Given by God, it is essential to life. It sustains us. We crave it, consume it, and are comforted by it. And that's why, in excess or restriction, it can easily control us. Interestingly, food restriction was the first "do not" command of God (in the garden, Gen. 2:17).

Food can literally become our god, leading us away from the God who provides it. Obsession with food squanders what God has given us to bring Him glory – our bodies! Gluttony, derived from a Greek word meaning "a person who habitually eats excessively," stemming from the root word "to eat," has traditionally been defined as "excessive or unrestrained consumption of food or drink, often to the detriment of one's health or well-being." This divides our loyalty and dishonours God. The Hebrew word "glutton" brings even deeper meaning: "to shake out," "to squander;" and hence one who is a prodigal, who wastes his means by indulgence. "Glutton" is translated in various places as "wasters of their own body" or "riotous men." Gluttony has also been defined as "food worship". We are to worship God with our bodies, not food to the detriment of our bodies. Excessive indulgence in anything is rebellion to God. Gluttony, which also leads to other addictive vices such as alcoholism and laziness, make us enemies of God (Phil. 3), enemies with people (Luke 16:19-21 ff.), and an enemy of self (1 Sam. 2:13-17).

We need food. We also need God! That's the point. Food (and other forms of excess) reveal where our true dependence and loyalty lies. It can lead us away from God or nearer to God. Gluttony looks to the physical to satisfy some deeper craving, whether for comfort, purpose, or control. That's why food is inextricably tied to worship. All Old Testament sacrifices involved food. What do we crave more: food and excess, earthly pleasure, or God and His pleasure? Are you a "slave to your stomach" or a "slave to Christ?" Physical appetite is meant to whet our appetite for God. Jesus declared Himself as *"the bread of life...living bread which came down from heaven,"* and commanded us to eat of Him (John 6). We are to offer our bodies to Him in worship. We are to put God and others first at the Lord's Table (communion). We are to eat together with glad and sincere hearts (Acts 2), exercising moderation and temperance/self-control (1 Cor. 11; Gal. 5), given to generosity and sharing (2 Sam. 9:1-13), not hoarding. Temperance = Freedom. Gluttony = Bondage. Contentment is found in plenty or in want (Phil. 2:11-12). We are to eat, with thanksgiving, to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31).

#### REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How can you turn to God for comfort instead of turning to food, or other physical things, for comfort?
- How can you implement a plan that includes food that will enhance, not deter, your health?
- Ask God to point out an area of your life where you lack self-control. Who could you ask to help you bring this area under God's control?

## **WEEKLY FAST**

**Fast from Excess (anything that you are given to consume, food or otherwise, in excess).**

Suggestions:

- Eat half of what normally would per sitting. Or fast from a meal (or two) per day.
- Consider fasting from snacking between meals or in the evening.
- Give up (or moderate) food or drink.
- Fast from whatever immoderate activity (gaming, exercise, leisure, shopping, effort & attention related to your appearance, etc.) that you find addictive or tends to control you.
- Fast from your “food vice” (fast food, junk food, comfort food, eating out).

**Practice the Kingdom Virtue of Temperance by Forging Patterns of Self-Control in key areas of your life this week, and feast on God’s Word and Prayer.**

- Reprioritize your appetites and put God first, forgoing food/excess food in order to feast on Christ (John 4:34, 6:53-56)

## **ADDITIONAL READING**

Deuteronomy 21:18-21; Psalm 34:8-10; 63:1-8; Proverbs 21:23; 23:20-21; 28:7; Matthew 4:1-4; Galatians 5:16-26; James 5:1-6 (cf. 1 Timothy 5:6); 1 Peter 2:1-3