

The 7 deadly Sins : Gluttony

Fully Alive

Sentence:Galatians 5:1

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

Old Testament

Proverbs 23: 19 -21

Listen, my son, and be wise,

and set your heart on the right path:

²⁰Do not join those who drink too much wine

or gorge themselves on meat,

²¹for drunkards and gluttons become poor,

and drowsiness clothes them in rags.

New Testament

Galatians 5:13 - 25

¹³You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh^[a]; rather, serve one another humbly in love. ¹⁴For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”^[b] ¹⁵If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

¹⁶So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever^[c] you want. ¹⁸But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

¹⁹The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. ²⁴Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

Gospel

Matthew 6:25-34

New International Version

Do Not Worry

²⁵“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? ²⁶Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? ²⁷Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life^[a]?

²⁸“And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labour or spin. ²⁹Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these. ³⁰If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you

of little faith? ³¹ So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³² For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.



Der Völler by [Georg Emanuel Opiz](#)

A few weeks ago Josh sent me a message inviting me to participate in this sermon series. I happily agreed. Then he sent me the topic: Gluttony! Really Josh?!!! I decided to be brave and agreed to tackle the subject. Some of my reasoning was that I was grateful that at least he hadn't asked me to speak on the next topic of Lust!

Let's see, can we recall the actual 7 deadly sins?

They are:

pride, envy, wrath, gluttony, lust, sloth, and greed.

This list draws on various biblical passages and was developed within the early Christian theological tradition. Two of the sins on this list are often used interchangeably, but in actual fact they are quite different. They are Greed (which Josh preached on a few weeks ago), and Gluttony.

Simply put, **Greed** is the desire to **hoard** material possessions and money while **Gluttony** is the immediate, wasteful **consumption** of those resources. The word is derived from the Latin *gluttire* meaning *to gulp down*.

When it manifests, Gluttony is not a very attractive vice. Tell the story of the hot air balloon expedition and the group that overindulged at the champagne breakfast and how unattractive their behaviour was. They became loud and obnoxious and demonstrated a lack of self-control and consideration for the other participants and the organising staff.

Elizabeth Oldfield in her book *Fully Alive: Tending to the soul*, says of gluttony:

If envy is the most socially shameful of sins, then gluttony has to come in second.

One of the great privileges of being alive is that we can enjoy the company of others over a lovely meal or gather to celebrate a milestone with the people we care about. Nothing bad about this.

A couple of weeks ago Jeremy reminded us of Jesus' parable where the Father killed the fatted calf when his prodigal son came home and threw a giant party to celebrate his boy's return.

In some sense every Sunday we gather as the body of Christ to celebrate our faith together.

This too is a kind of party.

As Jeremy pointed out, the Bible is full of parties and celebrations and Jesus himself attended many of them. So, celebrations and feasts are not necessarily examples of gluttony.

Furthermore, gluttony is more nuanced than mere over-eating or drinking. It conceivably also includes overindulgence in drugs, shopping, social media, doom scrolling, computer games, exercise, work, sport, gambling, television.... you name it.

When we excessively perform an activity or consume a substance to numb a pain or to satisfy a deeper need, we've placed ourselves under the umbrella of gluttony.

Elizabeth Oldfield says of Gluttony that it is primarily overindulgence in an attempt to self-medicate,

to numb our emotional pain and to actively disconnect from ourselves and our feelings. Gluttony is an attempt to escape the difficult experiences of our lives through consumption of that which gives us pleasure in the short term.

Psychologists tell us that gluttony stems primarily from maladaptive coping mechanisms, underlying emotional distress, cognitive distortions, and specific personality traits.

As a teenager I was madly deeply in love with ballet. I understood that to look good on stage I needed to have a sylphlike, figure, so I began to *restrict* my eating.

Hardly sounds like gluttony right?

However, I started to obsess around not eating and became worryingly thin.

This behaviour I believe was less about being thin and more about dealing with the pain of my parent's vitriolic divorce, a situation that was out of my control.

My gluttony was around indulging my fantasy that restricting my eating, would distract me from the pain of my parent's separation. I was self-medicating.

While this self-medication might work in the short term, it is bound to disappoint in the long term, because it is not only harmful, it disconnects us from ourselves and because it makes us functionally absent, from the people who love us.

In this sense, Gluttony is related to, on the same spectrum as **addiction**. When we indulge an addiction, it

disconnects us from those whom we love and dare I say it, from experiencing the love of God.

The sin of gluttony is that we surrender to the substance or behaviour to which we are addicted, and allow it to have control over us.

The results of this addictive behaviour are always the same. We are left feeling disappointed, damaged and unfulfilled.

Like all sin, gluttony is self-destructive , fractures connection with others and takes us down a false path in the hope that we will resolve deep seated needs and fears by overindulging or over consuming.

The Bible warns against gluttony across both testaments. not only because it makes us self-centred and is self-destructive, but also because it makes us inwardly focused and the addictive behaviour becomes idolatrous.

In the Old Testament, Gluttony is one of the sins named in God's judgment upon the wicked city of Sodom, whose inhabitants were "proud, sated with food, complacent in prosperity." Significantly Ezekiel adds that "they did not give any help to the poor and needy" (Ezekiel 16:49). This points to one of the main problems God has with gluttony, it blinds us to the needs of others as we indulge our own wants and desires.

In the New Testament, Paul warns the people of Philippi to live Christ-like lives and not to be like those whose " god is their stomach." For he says: "Their minds are occupied

with earthly things” and “their end is destruction” (Philippians 3:18–19).

So while we indulge in gluttony in order to avoid uncomfortable feelings, Gluttony is also born out of a hunger for **more**. More love, more meaning, more depth, more wholeness and more transcendence. Again it’s a false path, because it does not lead to any of these things, least of all transcendence.

*Listen, my son, be wise,
and set your heart on the right path:*

By transcendence I mean a spiritual hunger for God, the desire to connect with something that is larger than oneself, and more inspiring.

When we try to satisfy this need for there to be more to life, through fleeting, physical consumption we are on a false path. We are trying to fit the wrong piece of the puzzle into Jigsaw of our lives.



Blaise Pascal the 17th-century mathematician and philosopher first used the metaphor of a God shaped hole in the human heart to describe the innate human longing for infinite meaning. He suggested that the heart has a void that material possessions, and worldly pursuits can never satisfy. Pascal wrote about an "infinite abyss" in

every human heart that can only be filled by an infinite and immutable God.

Humanity's search for purpose ultimately points back to a relationship with the Creator, it is a thirst for God.

Attempting to assuage this spiritual thirst with earthly comforts or achievements, leaves a person feeling restless and unfulfilled.

We will find our true meaning and comfort only in God and in God's promises for life in all its abundance.

This truth was brought home to me on my recent trip to South Africa.

Tell the Story of Lily and her name

²⁵ “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes?

In essence Jesus' little parable about the lilies exhorts us to have faith that God will provide for our needs, to trust in God's provision.



In order to re-orient our lives away from the blind alley that Gluttony offers towards the path of Abundant life that Jesus offers, we must make two adjustments.

Firstly, we must take a step of faith and trust God, thereby growing a deeper relationship with him.

In our relationship with God, we will discover
More meaning
More joy
More hope
More love in our lives.

Our faith teaches us that our thirst for more of these things is a spiritual one and the good news of the Gospel is that this thirst is quenched by the presence of the Holy Spirit of God in our lives.

The second adjustment is to avail ourselves of the spiritual fruit that grows in us because of God's presence in our lives.

The classic theological antidote to gluttony is the virtue of moderation and self-restraint.

To cultivate the virtue of self-restraint we must first allow ourselves to experience our pain. Here an experienced therapist is particularly helpful.

We must feel our feelings rather than run from them.

Then we must find the courage to look at what pains us firmly in the eye, acknowledge the feelings they evoke .

Again an experienced therapist is often needed to help us do this.

and then say "I will not be overcome by you."

Easily said but not easily done,
that is unless we have divine assistance.

This is something that the AA 7 steps recovery programme in particular acknowledges.

As Christian believers we understand that the Holy Spirit of God resides within us.

In Galatians 5:22-23, Paul lists the fruit of the Spirit residing within us.

He states: *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, **self-control**.”* The last proof for the believer that the Holy Spirit resides within us, is a strengthening of our self-control.

It is only by exercising self-control that we will overcome the destructive hold that our addictions have on us. When we exercise self-control, not in our own strength, but in the strength of the Holy Spirit, we have a mighty weapon at our disposal.

So today, if there is anything that is threatening to enslave you in addictive behaviour, may you turn to Jesus and place your eyes firmly on him. May you embrace the life giving relationship he offers you. May you ask His Holy Spirit to take up residence within you that you might find the self-control, to resist what is destructive .

In this way may you find the path to living the life of Abundance he promises you, and anyone else who takes a step of faith and invites him into their lives.

For Reflection:

- I'm reminded here of the 1999 hit song *The God-shaped Hole* by the Christian rock band **Plumb**. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KUOXfzV_VHs

The Lyrics of this song say it all. Let's pause and listen to them as we ponder the prospect of being fully alive.

*Every point of view has another angle
And every angle has its merit
But it all comes down to faith
That's the way I see it
You can say that love is not divine and
You can say that life is not eternal "All we have is now"
But I don't believe it
Chorus: There's a God-shaped hole in all of us
And the restless soul is searching
There's a God-shaped hole in all of us
And it's a void only He can fill
Does the world seem grey with empty longing
Wearing every shade of cynical
And do you ever feel that There is something missing? Chorus
That's my point of view...
There's a God-shaped hole in all of us
And the restless soul is searching
There's a God-shaped hole in all of us
And it's a void (repeat 2x) Only he can fill
Only he can fill
That's my point of view
That's my point of view, yeah –*