

“How to Stop Super-Sizing”

Matthew 4:1-11

Series: Break the Chain Week 4. Breaking the Chain of Gluttony

The Rev. Dr. Douglas C. Hoglund

The Woodside Church

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Wilson was hungry. At least, that’s what his owner Tim Norris concluded. It’s not surprising...for a dog. “Chocolate Labradors are incredibly greedy dogs,” Tim admits, “And Wilson is no different. They will eat anything they think is food.” And that’s exactly what Wilson the dog did when he was let off his leash near the Royal Ashdown Forest Golf Club. He found something that probably looked like a dog biscuit. It was a golf ball. Yet when they got Wilson to the Vet for an X-ray they discovered it wasn’t a golf ball. It was seven golf balls.

Karen Belcher, the head veterinary nurse, said, "He must have liked them if he ate seven." Belcher explained that one more ball could have ruptured Wilson's stomach and killed the dog. "Seven balls was probably the limit for him," she said. He has a long way to go before he takes on the all-time champion – Zeus the Doberman who ate 26 golf balls. After his golfballectomy, Wilson is making a good recovery – although he’s still not up to par.¹

In this series *Break the Chains: Freedom from the Seven Deadly Sins* we come to a sin that plagues us as much as Wilson and his canine colleagues: Gluttony. Typically, Gluttony is usually defined as excessive eating and drinking. It’s not just eating to live, it’s living to eat beyond what is healthy or nutritious.

Take for example The Heart Attack Grill in Las Vegas. They pride themselves in serving “flatliner fries” cooked in pure lard, butterfat shakes, no-filter cigarettes and a menu which includes the double bypass burger, the triple bypass burger and, topping out at 10,000 calories, the quadruple bypass burger. Guinness Book of World Records crowned it the most caloric sandwich on earth. Recently a woman, eating a mere double bypass burger lathered in cheese and bacon collapsed and was taken to the hospital where, thankfully she is recovering. Though he wishes the customer a swift and full recovery, owner Jon Basso is not apologetic. "We attract thrill seekers and risk takers - people who don't really take good care of their health."

That’s a lot of us. In 2004 Morgan Spurlock subjected his body to a test – he would eat every meal – breakfast, lunch and dinner – at McDonald’s for 30 days. His experiment became the documentary *Super-Size Me*. Spurlock ate 5,000 kcal per day which was twice the intake recommended for a healthy balanced diet of a man his size. As a result, he gained 24 lbs., a 13% body mass increase, increased his cholesterol to 230 mg/dL, and experienced mood swings, heart problems and fat accumulation in his liver. It took Spurlock fourteen months to lose the weight. His point was to demonstrate the addictive and harmful effects of the fast food industry and the American diet.

¹ Dog Lucky to be Alive After Eating Seven Golf Balls, East Grinstead Courier (12-12-13).

Whether you agree with Spurlock or not, obesity is an epidemic in this country. A website called “The Campaign to End Obesity” reported that

2/3 of adults and nearly 1/3 of children struggle with being overweight and obese.

If obesity rates stay consistent, by 2030, 51% of the population will be obese.

20 years ago, no state had an obesity rate above 15%. Today there are 41 states with obesity rates over 25%, according to the Trust for American's Health.

Since 1980, the rate of obesity in children and adolescents has almost tripled.²

If we expand the definition of Gluttony beyond overeating we find this deadly sin lurking wherever there is excessive indulgence. Chain smoking, binge watching, stuff hoarding, overworking - the list is endless. Anything done to excess is gluttonous. This is a hard chain to break especially since we need food to live. So how do you know when you've crossed the line? We catch a glimpse of the Devil's strategy to make us go too far when we watch how he tempted Jesus. Here are three forces that drive gluttony.

Craving. This is what Jesus faced first after His baptism.

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.” (Matthew 4:1-3)

The most common form of gluttony is our appetite for food. This is an old trick of the devil's. Remember how he tempted Adam and Eve with fruit?

In his book *Salt Sugar Fat*, Michael Moss reveals how America's largest food producers such as General Foods, Kraft, PepsiCo, and Cadbury--hire "crave consultants" to help them determine our "bliss points," which "optimize" our cravings. For example, Frito-Lay operates a research complex near Dallas employing nearly 500 chemists, psychologists, and technicians. They spend up to \$30 million a year to make us crave their products. One food scientist calls Cheetos "one of the most marvelously constructed foods on the planet, in terms of pure pleasure." It melts so quickly, your brain thinks there are no calories in it so you can just keep eating forever.

Interestingly, a Frito-Lay executive admitted to Moss that he avoids most processed foods—like Cheetos. Moss concluded, "Like other former food company executives I met, this Frito-Lay executive avoids the very foods he once worked so hard to perfect."³ Corporations are working overtime to make you crave what they are selling. Yet cravings are never satisfied. This is why Jesus tells the devil,

² http://www.obesitycampaign.org/obesity_facts.asp.

³ Michael Moss, "The Extraordinary Science of Addictive Junk Food," *The New York Times* (2-20-13); Nina Strohlic, "How Fast Food Hooks Us," *The Daily Beast* (2-25-13)

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" (Matthew 4:4; Deuteronomy 8:3)

Jesus knows your body needs food. Yet cravings come from the spirit and they are only satisfied when you feed on God's Word, when you follow what God says.

Comfort. Next the devil takes Jesus to Jerusalem.

Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: "'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'" (Matthew 4:5-6).

This second temptation is designed to make Jesus question God's love and comfort for Him. Will His Father protect and save Him? Will the Father prove His love for the Son in front of all the worshipers in the Temple? Will the Father comfort His Son?

There's nothing wrong with comfort foods: hot chocolate, tomato soup, one of your Mom's famous recipes. Yet sometimes we use food or some other substance to comfort ourselves and to quiet strong emotions like depression, discouragement or distress. Like all addictions, this only covers over the pain. Instead of facing the problem, we hide from it and create bigger problems. Jesus knew His Father loved Him.

Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" (Matthew 4:7 Deut. 6:16)

He was already filled with His Father's love. That was all the comfort He needed.

Control. In the final temptation, the devil lays it all on the table.

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." (Matthew 4:8-9)

The devil knows this is why Jesus came: to save the world. Satan offers him control of all nations. What a rush! What power! The third driving force behind gluttony is control. When life seems out of control, the one thing I can control is what I put in my mouth or not put in my mouth. That's why gluttony lies behind overeating and anorexia. They are both attempts to keep control when life seems chaotic. But it is a false control as empty and deceptive as Satan's offer. The devil doesn't own the world. It's not his to give. And binging and purging, drugging or cutting, using and abusing do not give us control. They only lead to chaos. This is why Jesus unmask's Satan's lie. Control is a false god. Whatever you use to get control, has control of you. It's idolatry.

Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'" (Matthew 4:10; Deut. 6:13)

So how do stop super-sizing and break the chain of gluttony? First, **Put Down the gods**. Paul said to the Philippians,

Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. (Philippians 3:19)

The road to recovery begins by identifying the idols and throwing them away. Is there any substance or habit in your life that you use for cravings, comfort or control? Those are the gods you need to drop so you can worship the Lord alone. Gluttony, like all the seven deadly sins, is ultimately a spiritual, not a physical problem. Our out-of-control passions are keeping us prisoners.

Reginald III ruled in the fourteenth century in what today is Belgium. Grossly overweight, he earned the Latin nickname, Crassus meaning “fat.” When Reginald’s younger brother, Edward successfully revolted against him, he did not kill him. Instead, Edward placed him in a special room in Nijenbeek castle. Reginald, he promised, could win back his title and property as soon as he could leave the room. There were no locks and the doors and windows were near normal size. The only barrier was Reginald’s body. He could not fit through the door. Reginald could gain his freedom by simply losing some weight. But Edward knew his older brother’s weaknesses. Every day he sent a buffet of delicious foods. Instead of slimming down, Reginald grew larger. Courtiers accused Duke Edward of cruelty. “My brother is not a prisoner,” Edward protested, “He may leave when he so wills.” Reginald stayed in the room ten years until his brother Edward died in battle. By then his health was so ruined he died within a year...a prisoner of his own appetite.⁴ When it comes to overindulgence, I am the only one keeping myself prisoner. The door is wide open.

Next, **Plug into God’s Power**. Paul writes, “By His power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also” (1 Corinthians 6:14). Will power rarely works against any form of indulgence. Even if you are able to stop one behavior, it will resurface somewhere else. We need to stop fighting it and surrender to God’s will. Draw on God’s power in the moment when temptation strikes. If He has the power to bring a body back to life, he can certainly raise you from the deadly clutches of addiction.

Third, **Stop Trashing Your Temple**. TV chef Anthony Bourdain recently advised: "Your body is not a temple, it's an amusement park. Enjoy the ride." Maybe that’s why America is so overweight – we’ve been eating too much amusement park food like cotton candy, funnel cakes and deep-fried oreos. A recurring theme in this series is:

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?” (I Corinthians 6:19).

Imagine this church sanctuary filled with garbage. Nobody would want to come near this place and there would be no room for worship. In the New Testament, it never says God dwells in earthly buildings. Your body is the temple where God’s Spirit wants to live. But

⁴ Thomas Costain, [The Three Edwards](#).

if your body is filled with filth, there's little room left for the Lord. Instead of feeding on spiritual junk food, Paul commands us to flee! Don't accommodate it. Avoid it! Don't hang around it. Hit the road! Don't taste it. Trash it! Or soon, the trash will be in you.

Finally, **Honor Your Owner**. Paul concludes, "You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body" (I Corinthians 6:19-20). He, in fact, is the owner of your life. It is only on loan to you. If someone loans me their car, do I drive it recklessly, put the wrong stuff in the gas tank and return it all dented and damaged or do I follow their instructions, observe the rules of the road and return it clean and shining? The goal of life is not to please yourself, but to live your life in a way that will give joy to the true Owner.

If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, then you no longer own your body. Jesus bought your body and spirit. He paid the highest price for your whole life. He purchased you and set you free from sin with His blood. Your body and spirit are now under new management. He lets you continue to use it, but now according to His directions. It's cruel for you to take His beloved possession and abuse it or destroy it. He's the One who made your body. He's the One who bought back your body. He's the One who knows the best and healthiest way to use it.

Dr. Nick Yphantides used to tell his patients, "Do as I say, not as I do." That's because he weighed 470 pounds. But then God spoke to him about being a better steward of his body. In his own words:

God used cancer to bring me to my knees. Here I had been healed of cancer and yet I was eating myself to death and committing suicide at the dining room table and going through drive-thrus. I was overwhelmed with the conviction that my personal health was a God-given gift with which I had to honor him in the way that I cared for that gift.

That's when Dr. Nick went on a spiritual, physical, and emotional journey to seek God's best for his body. He lost 270 pounds in 1 ½ years. In addition to founding a ministry focused on health, Dr. Nick has written the book *My Big Fat Greek Diet*.

My desire is for you to be encouraged and motivated in your own personal health and fitness. This adventure has been such an overwhelming gift from God.

If you break the chain of gluttony, with God's help, you'll feel super . . . not super-sized.