

The 7 Deadly Sins—and How to Deal with Them

Discussion 4 :: Dealing with Gluttony

Resource: ‘The Seven Deadly Sins’ by Graham Tomlin, Chapter 5, Gluttony.

Timing: 40-50 minutes, leading into ministry/response time.

The Point: The main idea of each section—feel free to add other Scriptures, stories, etc to support the ideas.

An Illustration: Living examples from your own lives. Suggestions are offered, but feel free to use your own.

The Application: Ideas for how to live out and apply the principles being discussed.

Recap last week’s discussion :: Dealing with Anger

The Point: Our culture often teaches us that unrestrained or expressed anger is a more acceptable—if not necessary—alternative to withholding our feelings or finding a peaceful resolution. God offers us an additional perspective to consider:

- Is our anger righteous...or revenge? (Psalm 139:21-23)
- We should strive for peace at all costs (Romans 12:18).
- We need to let God be God (Psalm 46:10).

The Application: Ask a couple of people to share their experiences while attempting to cultivate peace and forgiveness in their lives. (refer to the action steps that were suggested last week)

Ice-breaker—break up into groups of two or three and discuss the following:

What was something that you collected as a child? What was your fascination with the item(s)?

Introduction to this week’s discussion :: Dealing with Gluttony

Graham Tomlin defines gluttony as “an inordinate obsession with food, drink or plain consumption.” While many associate gluttony with simply “over-eating”, it usually points to a deeper issue. Individuals that are overly preoccupied with food, drink or other forms of consumption are usually dealing with deeper emotional issues; many are attempting to resolve these issues through their eating habits.

Our culture often fails to see the deeper connection between body, mind and soul. For example, people struggling with eating issues are generally advised to simply “eat more” or “eat less.” Underlying needs, insecurities or hurts are not addressed; and well-intentioned advice can actually result in simply creating another preoccupation.

God offers us a more balanced approach to dealing with gluttony. Tonight’s discussion will focus on the proper importance that we should place on food and drink and what it means to meet our deepest needs through God and community.

1. How does God view food? (Ecclesiastes 2:24-25)

The Point: God created food for our enjoyment and nourishment. It was never meant to be used to fill a space that only a relationship with God and others can fill. Gluttony can make us believe or behave as if food or drink is our only means to satisfaction. So, the desire for food:

- Is part of God’s creation—and is good (Genesis 1:31).
- Is part of God’s provision (Nehemiah 9:19-21).
- Is not to rule our lives (Romans 14:17).
- It is God who is our ultimate nourishment (John 6:32).

An Illustration: Describe a time when you attempted to fulfil a need in your life through something other than God; contrast this with a time when you sought to fulfil your needs through God alone. How did you feel, and what were the results?

The Application: Take some time to consider what makes you feel satisfied or fulfilled. Is it food, drink...or something else? Next time you reach for one of these things, take five minutes to consider *why* these things make you feel content. How does this fall in line with what God says should satisfy your needs?

2. Why and how do we fast? (Ecclesiastes 3:1 and 5b)

The Point: We have established that food is “good” and was created by God for our enjoyment and our nourishment. But God tells us that there are reasons to abstain or fast from food or drink. Gluttony can make us believe or behave as if abstaining from food or drink is a form of depriving ourselves of an important basic need.

- It is a form of worship (Acts 13:2 + 14:23).
- It is between you and God (Matthew 6:17-18).
- It may cause another to stumble (Romans 14:20).

An Illustration: Share a time where you intentionally abstained from food or drink as a means to connect with God or for the benefit of yourself or others. Describe the circumstances and the results.

The Application: Set aside a day committed to fasting and praying. Note any words, phrases or images that God gives you on this day. Ask him what he might want you to hear, mediate or act on. (*note: only do this if you are bodily able. Some are not advised to fast due to health reasons. Pregnant women, those on certain medications, or others in doubt should consult with a GP.*)

3. God wants us to feast. (Numbers 10:10)

The Point: Many associate the Christian faith with abstinence, when in fact our God calls us to feast. Doing so draws us closer to him and to one another. Gluttony makes us believe or behave as if the consumption of food or drink is only about our satisfaction.

- God calls us to celebrate (Numbers 29:12).
- God calls us to remember (Luke 22:19; see various OT texts re: Sabbath, Jubilee, First Fruits, Atonement, etc).
- Feasts are meant to be festive (2 Chronicles 30:21).

An Illustration: Tell about a meal that you shared with others that you particularly enjoyed—describe the occasion, atmosphere, food, conversation, etc. What is it about this meal that stands out in your mind?

The Application: Plan a meal for friends or loved ones. Choose the occasion—can be anything really—and intentionally plan the food, drink, music and presentation, etc. At some point, take time to remember God and to celebrate his faithfulness. Take pictures and send copies to those that attend.

Ideas for ministry/response time during the pastorate evening:

- Break up into groups of three or four. Ask everyone to pray: “Lord, I confess that I have been trying to fill a need of mine through _____, and not through you.” Pray for one another; that each would find satisfaction in God.
- Ask if there is anyone who would like to receive prayer from the group regarding the over-consumption (or preoccupation with) food, drink or something else. Pray that strongholds may be broken, that healing will happen and that needs will be met through God. (*note: this may be painful or shameful topic for some. Invite and encourage—rather than coax—people into being prayed for. Let them know that they can share as little or as much as they feel led. This is not a time for “calling out” or “confronting” people; rather a time for individuals to feel safe to ask for prayer and support.*)

Ideas for response during the week :: cultivating temperance (moderation) (be prepared to share some of your experiences next week)

- Choose one of suggestions from the "The Application" portion of this week's talk and commit to doing it in the next two weeks. Be prepared to share your experiences and the results the next time the pastorate meets.
- The next time you meet with friends at the pub resist the temptation to consume more than one alcoholic drink for the duration of the gathering. Note how you feel or how others react.