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SESSION 4 | Eating and Drinking

I. INTRODUCTION

“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age,” (Titus 2:11–12).

Self-control is governing your mind, will, and emotions in obedience to God’s word by the power of the Spirit.

A. Defining Self-Control

“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, *training us* to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self- controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.” (Titus 2:11–14)

“What is self-control? It is a governance or prudent control of one’s desires, cravings, impulses, emotions, and passions. It is saying no when we should say no. It is moderation in legitimate desires and activities and absolute restraint in areas that are clearly sinful.” Jerry Bridges, *Respectable Sins*, 110.

“Self-control is governing your mind, will, and emotions in obedience to God’s word by the power of the Spirit.” Steve Whitacre

“Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.” (Proverbs 4:23).

“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.” (Philippians 4:8).

B. Seeing Eating and Drinking through the Lens of Scripture

1. Eating and Drinking: A Dominant Image

“With 700 references to the act of eating (not counting references to the words: drinking and food) we can say with confidence that eating is a master image of the Bible. No biblical image combines the literal and the figurative, the physical and spiritual, more inextricably than does the imagery of eating. The references to eating serve as a reminder of the physical identity of people in the world, but they are equally a reminder of the spiritual realities of biblical faith. Both literally and figuratively, eating communicates the paradigm of a providential creator and a dependent humanity. It also demonstrates the news of God’s most gracious acts.[1]

2. Eating and Drinking: A Gift to Enjoy and Abstain

“And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.””
(Genesis 2:16–17).

Adam received not only an invitation to enjoy the hospitality of God’s Garden, but he also received an invitation to trust God with the one tree from which he should abstain.

3. Eating and Drinking: Indicators of Our Worship (who we trust and desire)

In Genesis 1 and 2, feasting upon God’s abundant provision brought Adam delight in the goodness of God, his beauty, creativity, generosity, and care. And it was through refraining and fleeing from the one tree that Adam’s allegiance to God was preserved.

Prior to the fall, all of Adam’s and Eve’s yes’s and no’s were expressions of worship. Their desires were revealed in their obedience. Their obedience revealed minds, wills, and affections under the authority of God. Sadly, as we read on in Genesis, Adam and Eve disobey God and throw off God’s gift of food to do so. They eat what is forbidden.

Illustrations of food-desires gone astray:

- **Gluttony:**

- **Drunkennes:**

“For the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, and slumber will clothe them with rags.” (Prv 23.21)

- **Despising Food:**

“For my anorexic friend, food became a way of exercising control. In a scary world full of many things she couldn’t control, she could at least control what went in her mouth. But, as she herself put it, this practice quickly escalated and become out of control. Anorexia is for some a way to exercise self-sovereignty instead of trusting the sovereignty of God.”¹

- **Using Food for My Image**

“Our concern for self-image is actually an attempt to be godlike. We want to be worshiped...Today we still take the fruit—or deny ourselves the cake—to become godlike, people with bodies others will worship and serve. As the model Kate Moss famously said: ‘Nothing tastes as good as skinny feels.’ The tragic irony is that Adam and Eve were already like God, having been made in his image. But we attempt to remake ourselves into a form that others will worship.”²

What is underneath these concerning expressions of the misuse of food and drink?

“We often use food as an escape instead of finding refuge in God. We self-medicate with food. We become priests bringing offerings of chocolate to ourselves. We find comfort in sugar, salt, and fat instead of the living God. The result is ill health and weight gain. Some people then try to manage this through dieting, bulimia, or anorexia. Life without God is an empty life, and we cannot fill that emptiness with food. We miss the opportunity to turn to God. We want to live by bread alone.”³

“Many people are owned by their desires and reckless indulgence...Of the Seven Deadly Sins, three—avarice, gluttony, and lust—are devoted to excesses. In fact, sin itself can be summarized as “I WANT” and “I WANT MORE.” Sin is a reckless consumer.”⁴

¹ Timothy Chester in *A Meal with Jesus* (Wheaton, Ill; Crossway Books) 2011. 104.

² Timothy Chester in *A Meal with Jesus* (Wheaton, Ill; Crossway Books) 2011. 104-105.

³ Timothy Chester in *A Meal with Jesus* (Wheaton, Ill; Crossway Books) 2011. 105.

⁴ Ed Welch, *Self-Control: The Battle Against “One More”*. *The Journal of Biblical Counseling*, Vol. 19, #2. Winter 2001. Pg. 24

II. PROTECTING THE GOODNESS OF GOD IN OUR EATING AND DRINKING

A. Provision from God

“You cause the grass to grow for the livestock and plants for man to cultivate, that he may bring forth food from the earth and wine to gladden the heart of man, oil to make his face shine and bread to strengthen man’s heart.” (Ps. 104.14-15)

“If we ponder to what end God created food, we shall find that he meant not only to provide for necessity but also for delight and good cheer.” John Calvin

“Behold what I have seen to be good and fitting is to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of his life that God has given him for this is his lot.” (Ecc. 5.18-20)

B. God’s Gift of Fellowship

“When Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu went up on the mountain, they saw the God of Israel. There was under his feet as it were a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness. And he did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel; they beheld God, and ate and drank.”

One author has noted that, “In Luke’s Gospel Jesus is either going to a meal, at a meal, or coming from a meal.” [2]

We find the church in Acts enjoying fellowship with one another, in one another’s homes, eating together. Luke tells us they were “breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people.” (Acts 2.46)

C. The Grace of God

The Savior actually did come to eat with tax collectors and sinners. His invite list is made up solely of the undeserving. He wouldn’t have it any other way.

The dining room for Jesus was a daily metaphor for grace. Come and dine with Jesus. Come and receive what you don’t deserve, what you didn’t earn.

“Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst...” (John 6.35)

- The Lord’s Supper
- The Supper to Come

“Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.”

III. LOVING GOD AND PROTECTING OURSELVES AND OTHERS THROUGH SELF-CONTROL

A. Reasons to use self-control

1. Gain a conviction about eating and drinking

- Study God’s Word
- Memorize Titus 2.11-14 or Proverbs 25.28

“Like a city whose walls are broken down is a man who lacks self-control.”

- Recognize your need for the Holy Spirit’s power

“Men may talk of self-control, as if the reins were in his own hand. But he who has been born of the Spirit, and taught ‘to know the plague of his own heart,’ is made to feel that effective self-control is divine grace and not his own native power. . . Have not repeated defeats taught us the need of calling in better strength than our own?” – Charles Bridges, *Proverbs*, 483-484

2. Evaluate your patterns of eating and drinking

- Determine what faithfulness and obedience is for you.
- In what ways are you prone to indulge in your eating and drinking?
- In what ways or times have you cultivated self-control in recent months?
- Am I considerate of others? Do I love to share, be hospitable, avoid tempting those weak in faith?

3. Identify your most common temptation with your eating and drinking
 - Indulging or brief binges? Gluttony?
 - Idolatry of image and unhealthy restraint from food
 - Identify your thought patterns (uncontested desires of fear, control, escape)

4. Make a specific change
 - What plan better reflects faithfulness?
 - Take a proactive step--starting today, re-starting on Friday!!
 - In the meantime, enjoy the gift of food and friendship over Thanksgiving!
 - Try fasting (a type of food, a meal, an entire day). Try it regularly.