



Waist Not, Want Not: *Overcoming Overeating*

May I ask you a personal question—right off the bat? How many attempts at dieting have you made over your lifetime? If you are like most women I know, I'm guessing your answer lies somewhere between 5 and 25. Maybe some of your dieting attempts were successful—for a time. But then, over the next year or two, you slowly regained what you lost in the first place. Worse yet, maybe you gained back every pound and then some!

The worst part of dieting, even worse than the restrictions of the diet itself, is the eventual failure...and the intense sense of guilt you feel when you have “broken your diet”...and the discouragement of not having the necessary will power to ever succeed. Now before you get too down on yourself, I believe that unknowingly, you may have begun each of your past diets at a great disadvantage. Allow me to explain.

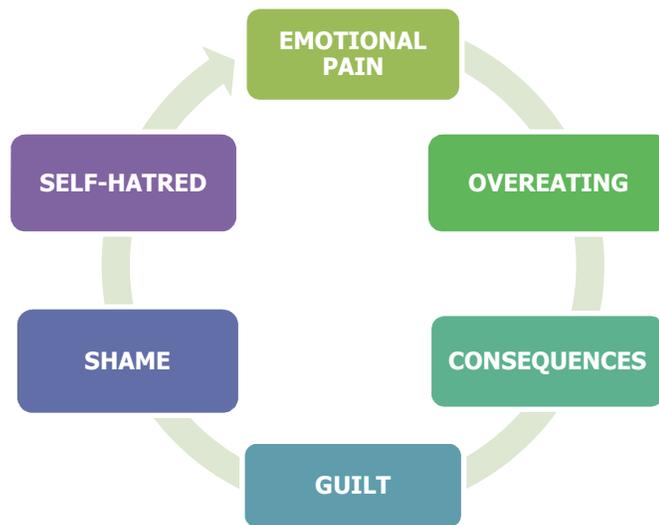
It's Not What You Eat, It's What Eats You!

While I agree with a number of the weight-loss plans and programs available today, I strongly believe that weight loss is not simply about food balance, portion control, and exercise. It must begin with an assessment of the *person* who is attempting to lose weight—not merely the food they will eat or not eat.

Most overeating is a symptom of what lies deep within your heart, mind, and soul. Therefore, in order for weight loss to be successful and sustainable, you need to begin by evaluating your emotional, mental and spiritual status, in addition to your physical baseline. Any attempt to follow a diet without first healing your heart (emotions), mind (thought life), and soul (spirit) will be doomed to fail, simply because you are trying to build physical health upon a faulty foundation. The Bible speaks to this very principle when in Luke 6:48 we are told to “dig down deep and lay our foundation on rock” where our lives will be unshakable.

Stuffing Down Your Emotions With Food

Experts in the psychology and medical fields agree that most overeating is emotionally based. There is a definite cyclical nature to overusing food which begins with *emotional pain*.



As you can see from the cycle illustration, the next stop on this Not-So-Merry Go Round is the misuse of food—*overeating*. The consequences of overeating (weight gain, loss of self-esteem, the accumulation of health issues, etc.) lead the overeater directly into the emotion of *guilt*. Guilt is a valid emotion at this point because you rightly recognize that you have harmed yourself by your actions. However, if guilt is not properly managed (through acceptance of wrong doing and repentance) Satan will use it to march you straight into the next phase of the cycle: *shame*. Unbridled shame leads almost immediately into *self-hatred*, which starts the cycle all over again by adding to your emotional pain.

In my book I identify two “exit ramps” which you can take to end this cycle of overeating. The first exit plan requires you to identify and address your emotional pain sources. The second escape route calls for proper handling of the “guilty as charged” feeling that follows your overeating. While both escape plans are important, today I want to give you some directions that will help you to take advantage of that first exit.

Purging Your Pain

Emotional pain, both from your past and from your present, needs to be identified, acknowledged and cleansed—*before* you try to lose weight. There are two parts to this healing. First you must deal with the *feelings* you have as a result of painful life experiences, and then you must deal with the faulty *thinking* which has grown out of those same incidents. While we are each unique creations, we tend to lean toward one of two personality types: extrovert and introvert. Extroverts, who love talking, can best work through the feeling part of their pain through counseling—either professional or ministry-based. Introverts, on the other

hand, do best to process and purge their feelings through journaling. Though I must say there is benefit to both methods regardless of your personality type.

When it comes to addressing your thought life, you must first become a diligent member of the “thought-police”. You’ll need to patrol the thoughts that wander around in your psyche. Then you must be willing to judge, arrest, and detain any thoughts that do not align themselves with God’s word. Finally, you have to be prepared to replace those destructive thoughts with Truth. For some of you this may be the first time you’ve even considered the idea of being able to managing your own thoughts. Yet scripture confirms that “*We [can] demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we [can] take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.*” 2 Corinthians 10:5.

Filling Your Heart Instead of Your Stomach

Once you have purged your pain through the healing of your emotions and the retraining of your thought life, you must actively seek to fill those places up with life giving substance. Make sure that you provide yourself with nutritious friendships, food, and fun. When your heart is full, then food will return to its rightful place—as fuel for your body, and as a blessing from the Lord to be enjoyed, but not abused.

In addition, bathe yourself in the Truth of Scripture. Have a stash of go-to verses written out on index cards which speak directly to your newly defeated “problem areas”—just in case they decide to stop in for a visit. As you begin to understand and address the underlying causes of your overeating, you’ll no longer find yourself using food as a time-killer, mood-elevator, or painkiller. You’ll be able to live a life that enables you to make healthy food decisions—not reactions. Then you’ll be freed to achieve steady, lasting weight-loss results using any reputable diet.