

Do We Eat to Live or Live to Eat?

Eze 16:49 — Do we relate this to America or to us, the Israel of God?

Nothing seems easier than putting on weight or harder than getting it off. The ceremony of eating is deeply rooted in our past. The family dining table is the early training ground for life-long eating habits that lead to being overweight.

As we mature, grow older, we need less food than we needed in our earlier years. After 25 our calorie need drops by about 1% per year. Most of us keep on eating as much as we always did. Extra weight begins to creep up in women in their 30s and men in their 40s and shortens their life.

We need to live as in the days past when men had to eat to live, or practice self-control in the face of chronic abundance of good foods. We don't have to starve while losing weight, but a deliberate effort must be made to cut down on food intake, and to control the evil desire to overeat (Phil 3:18). The lust of the flesh — our god, the stomach — our appetites make us enemies of the very cross that produced our salvation.

The sin of overeating until we feel “good and full” increases our capacity to eat, and therefore increases our appetite. Exercising self-control by eating less decreases our capacity to eat and therefore decreases our appetite. If we stop short of being fully satisfied at meals, the desire for more food that we still feel we need (want) usually passes within a half hour after we quit eating. It takes about a month to re-train the appetite so that we are satisfied with less food.

There is a difference between appetite and what we call hunger. Hunger is a primitive instinct that signals the body's need for food. It is the main factor controlling food intake for body growth and nutrition. A newborn child experiences hunger, not appetite. Appetite, on the other hand, is based on memories of past eating pleasure stored in your brain and autonomic nervous system, and determines our food likes and dislikes. We want certain foods rather than just food, like ice cream and sweets.

The notion of appetite is particularly important for those who have a tendency to over-eat. It is when the person has almost satisfied his hunger, but still could eat more, that the taste of food becomes paramount and he will over-eat a tempting dish. Taking second helpings and eating desserts after our hunger is satisfied is what should be avoided. Giving in to this type of appetite leads to being overweight. Control your appetite and you control your weight (Pr 23:1-3).

The fruit of the Spirit comes from communion with the Spirit. Rom 8:6 — The effect of sin is lack of peace. The fruit of fellowship with the Spirit is peace and self-control also. So if you see a fat disciple you know right away he is a pretender (1 Jn 1:6). If you see a fat “believer” eating a cream cheese pie, ice cream, double carob cake, etc., you know that he is in darkness while claiming to be in fellowship with our Master (Gal 5:22-24). A fat person’s path to fatness is the way of death. He does not have fellowship, for self-control is the fruit of fellowship with the Spirit.

Woe to the Shepherds

Heb 13:17 — Shepherds or leaders who allow those whom they shepherd (watch over their souls) to become overweight are the greatest offenders, who walk in darkness and will be beaten with many lashes (Lk 12:47; Jms 5:19-20; 1:21).