

HELP!

I'M A SLAVE TO FOOD



LIFELINE
mini-decks

Shannon Kay McCoy

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INTRODUCTION

I wonder why you have picked up this mini-book. Perhaps it is because the use of the word “slave” in connection with eating habits resonates with you. On the other hand, maybe you have loved ones, friends or coworkers who are battling this issue and you want to help them.

When we hear the word “slave,” we think of someone who is helpless under the power of a dominating force or influence. If you are a slave to food, your time and thoughts are devoted to eating it. It seems to have an irresistible power over you, and you give in to it repeatedly. You have lost all hope of ever escaping on your own. You find yourself in a vicious cycle of dieting and overeating. But, if you look around, you know that you are not alone. You can't go through the grocery store checkout line or watch a TV program without being bombarded by the latest diet plan that will revolutionize your life. It seems as though

everyone is looking for a solution to stop overeating. Perhaps you have come to the point where you have tried everything and nothing has worked. You find yourself locked behind the prison wall of overeating.

Your food issues are not just about what you are eating, but why you are eating beyond what your body needs. Do you eat merely to satisfy your hunger and nutritional needs? Or do you eat because “it’s time” to eat? Do you eat because you are stressed, bored, depressed, anxious, or trying to numb other negative emotions? Or do you eat because you’re happy and celebrating an event? Are you using food to meet what you perceive to be your spiritual or emotional needs?

I have written this mini-book for two reasons. First, my interest in this topic is very personal. There have been times in my life when I was a slave to food. You could say that food was my drug of choice. It consumed my life. I tried to use food as a balm for unwanted emotions or as a distraction from undesired responsibilities. Food brought me a false sense of pleasure and satisfaction—but I ended up feeling only confused and betrayed. Today, by God’s empowering grace, I am walking victoriously in the truth spoken by Jesus, that “life is more than food” (Luke 12:23) and “man shall not live on bread alone,

but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4). I realized that food was not a magic pill to make all my problems go away. I turned to Jesus for real. I surrendered my sinful motives to him. Then, and only then, was I able to experience John 8:32: “and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”

Second, I'm concerned about the effectiveness of the Christian church. Excessive overeating, which is called “gluttony” in the Bible, can no longer be considered a subtle, respectable, and silent sin. It is hindering the spiritual growth and effectiveness of many Christians. In the Bible, excessive eating and drinking are often associated with each other. Proverbs 23:21 and Deuteronomy 21:20 put overeating in the same category as drunkenness. Elyse Fitzpatrick says, “Think about it as the difference between having a glass of wine with dinner and getting drunk. Gluttony is similar to getting drunk on food.”¹ If alcoholics were attending your church, would you not have the compassion to reach out to them and help them? The same thing goes for church members who are in bondage to overeating.

1 Elyse Fitzpatrick, *Love to Eat, Hate to Eat* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1999), 108.

This little book isn't the latest diet plan for losing weight. It is a compass to point you in the direction of getting to the heart of your overeating and to lead you to the only way of escape, which is through Jesus Christ. Only Jesus can truly bring you out of slavery and into true freedom.

In order for this book to help you, you must be a true believer in Jesus Christ. If you are unsure of your standing with God, I urge you to take this moment to be certain that Jesus is the Savior and Lord of your life. Let's look at what the Bible tells us about ourselves:

We Are Born Sinners and Separated from God

The book of Genesis tells us the origin of man. As God's creation, Adam and Eve were perfect—without sin—until they disobeyed God and ate the forbidden fruit (Genesis 3:6). Their disobedience has caused everyone to be born into sin, to live in a fallen world, and ultimately to face the deserved punishment of death and hell.

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because

all sinned ...

(Romans 5:12)

But God, in his great wisdom, already had a plan in place to reverse the curse of sin.

God Has a Plan to Reconcile Sinners to Himself

Since God hates sin, we can't have fellowship with him. The only way to restore our relationship with God is to have the penalty of our sin, which is death, paid in full. Jesus is the only one qualified to pay the penalty of death because of his sinless life. Therefore, God sent Jesus to die on the cross, taking God's punishment for us so that we could be set free from all sin. God showed that the sin-debt had been paid by raising Jesus from the dead and seating him at his right hand in heaven.

For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit.

(1 Peter 3:18)

God Offers Us a Free Gift

Because of Jesus' death and resurrection, God offers us forgiveness of our sins. The gift is that we can have our sins forgiven and be at peace with God through Jesus Christ.

*Therefore, having been justified by faith,
we have peace with God through our Lord
Jesus Christ.*

(Romans 5:1)

You Must Receive this Gift by Faith

This free gift is yours

*if you confess with your mouth Jesus as
Lord, and believe in your heart that God
raised Him from the dead ...; for with
the heart a person believes, resulting in
righteousness, and with the mouth he
confesses, resulting in salvation.*

(Romans 10:9-10)

If you agree with God that you are a sinner, and if you want to be reconciled to him, cry out to him for

mercy. Believe what Jesus did for you on the cross and that he rose again on your behalf, and ask God to forgive your sins and to put you in a right standing with him. If you do this, you will be saved from the penalty and power of sin.

1

Is Food Your Master?

Victoria described her relationship with food as a love affair. It began early in her life. As a child, she realized that the only thing she could control in her life was eating. Food was her friend, her secret pal and her lover. She would plan special times to be with her favorite foods. At first, it was fun and exciting; it gave her great pleasure. She didn't know that one day she would weigh 290 pounds. Victoria felt estranged from God. She couldn't even pray that he would help her. She didn't even want to know how much money she threw away on this false dream of fulfillment. She tried every diet under the sun, believing each time that she'd achieve lasting victory. Sadly, Victoria discovered that victory never lasted beyond three weeks. She found some physical success with a few diet plans, but eventually she'd quit and gain even more weight. She thought her weight was the problem. All she needed was to find the plan that

worked for her, and then she would be happy.

Victoria had asked God so many times to just fix her and make her stop eating so much that she felt that God wasn't listening or didn't care. Every time she looked at herself in the mirror or had to attend a formal event or a class reunion, she would beg, plead, and bargain with God to take away the excess weight. She was angry with God. She just wanted him to get her out of her "fat suit." She blamed God, her parents, her husband, her kids, her boss, and even food itself. Though she treated food as her lover, it became her betrayer. She felt enslaved by it. It seemed as though it called her and tempted her to the point that she'd give in every time. She was out of control and thought about food most of the day, every day. While she was finishing one meal, she was already thinking about the next. She felt that she was a slave to food.

The Slave–Master Relationship

Like Victoria, you may describe yourself as a slave to food. A slave is a person held in servitude or bondage, with a resulting loss of freedom. A slave is completely subservient to a master. The master has ownership, authority, power, and control over the

life of a slave.

Is food really your master? If so, food has ownership of you. It has exclusive rights over your life. It is your authority. It influences or commands your thoughts and behavior. It has supreme power over you. It forces you to obey its commands. You are forever at its disposal. It has taken away your freedom of choice. Food is heartless and puts insurmountable pressure on you, even to the point of death.

As a slave, you recognize your desperate condition. Naturally, you want to be free from food's tyranny. You try to find ways to escape from your difficult situation. You try many ways of escape, but to no avail. You begin to hate food for its abuse of you.

What is the answer to your problem? We must start with the truth. Food cannot be your master because it is a substance created by God to provide nutritional support for the body in order to produce energy, stimulate growth, and maintain life. In actuality, you are trying to be the master over food. You love the taste and the chemical effect it has on your body. However, you have taken what God intended for good and perverted it, turning it into something it is not. Your desire is to have food fulfill a need in you that only God can fill. Weight-gain and other health-related ailments shine the spotlight on

your excessive eating habits; therefore, you hate food because it exposes you. Nevertheless, you also love it, because it gives you pleasure. Perhaps it is this love-hate relationship with food that caused you to pick up this book in the first place.

The Bible presents overeating as sin, so we must now examine why it does so.