

Sessions – Eating

<http://www.myfishbites.com/sessions-eating.php>

PURPOSE

To look at eating in the Bible. This may be useful for people in healthy living etc. Used sensitively it can also be used when looking at eating disorders. Be aware that eating disorders are increasingly common and take more specialist knowledge than anything below..

This isn't a session to simply help overcome eating disorders but a session about eating generally.

NOTE

Much of the info here is applicable to all people in terms of eating, holiness, materialism, excessive lifestyles... many issues are raised – not just physical eating.

PROFESSIONAL RESOURCES

For more info on eating disorders, contact a school nurse who will have come across eating disorders in junior and high schools. For more detailed info contact the National Centre For Eating Disorders – 0845 838 2040. This does have a website but at the time of writing (April 2019) the page is not secure. There are charities working in this area as well, for example – www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk

Alternatively, there are a number of other agencies and charities to help you if you search under 'eating disorders'. There is a lot of support out there but sometimes it can be hard to ask for help. But there is no stigma about having problems with eating so if you need support, always ask someone who can help.

Nothing on this is meant to make anyone feel bad or guilty, so please know that before using this.

LET'S GET GOING

Many people believe they are fat, some do not like their body image. This is about looking at what the Bible says and taking a health checkup on your eating habits to see what we can all do to eat right, God style..

ACTIVITY TO DO

Get a bunch of magazines, papers etc. and get people to cut out people they would like to look like or not look like and why.

QUESTION

Anyone seen the film 'Alive' (a true story), where the men in a plane crash had to eat dead members of their team to survive? What do people think? What would you do? One of the survivors and his story has brought great hope to people struggling with life's battles.

PART 1 - Greedy Eating

The Bible condemns greed, including the eating type of greed! In the Corinthian church some of the rich believers were arriving early at the 'Communion' and taking more than their fair share of food and drink. In 1 Corinthians 11.20–22 we see that the believers weren't celebrating Communion together with some people not getting enough to eat with some having too much to drink. This was wrong on a spiritual level (verse 20, 22) but also wrong on a social and moral level (verse 22)

In 1 Corinthians 5.1, Paul warns the believers not to eat with those who claim to be believers but who sin by '.. being greedy.. getting drunk..' In 1 Corinthians 6.10 he warns that people who do wrong won't inherit God's Kingdom – these people include those who are greedy or get drunk.. so we see there are spiritual consequences to greed. This greed isn't just about eating but in every way – such as materialism etc.

Ephesians 5.5 continues this warning of spiritual consequences to greed.. greed can exclude a person from the Kingdom of Heaven.. more than this, 'Anyone who is greedy is serving a false God.' Let's not forget that our God is a righteously just God. In Isaiah 42.8 God says, 'I am the Lord. That is my name. I will not give my glory to another. I will not let idols take the praise that should be mine.'

We can also see from other Bible verses that greed is wrong. Proverbs 23.20–21 says, 'Don't drink too much wine or eat too much food. Those who drink and eat too much become poor.' Not just a warning not to eat too much, also a warning on possible consequences, poverty!

PART 2 - Healthy Eating

It is OK to enjoy food and going to feasts. Jesus himself enjoyed eating and social events – Matthew 9.10, Matthew 15.32, John 2.1–11, Luke 24.41–42. Enjoying food is cool, and we need it to survive.

Therefore eating is OK, it's the greed and excess that is wrong. We still enslave Africa by keeping food prices artificially controlled to save jobs in the West. We still eat far more than we need.

God has called us to a radical lifestyle. This life involves healthy eating. As we'll see in the next part, our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit and we have a duty to keep our bodies in as good a working order as we can. This means watching our diet and having a balanced diet. Healthy eating involves not eating too much or too little.

Since the flood, as we read in Genesis 9.3–4, we can also eat meat by order of God. 'Everything that moves, everything that is alive, is yours for food. Earlier I gave you the green plants, but now I give you everything for food.' (This is qualified in verse 4 by saying don't eat meat that still has blood in it.)

PART 3 - Seeing ourselves as God sees us

Our bodies are the Temple of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God in us. Our foundation should be Jesus not worldly things. In Genesis 2.7 we read that God gave man his life by breathing the breath (or Spirit) of life into him. We are the creation of the breath or Spirit of God and now we are under the control of the Spirit who helps us look after our bodies – if we are in tune with the Holy Spirit, the all-powerful representative of the God-head on earth. Remember that from 2 Corinthians 4.16 we learn that our inner-self is being renewed daily, this should manifest itself physically in our outer appearance too!

In 1 Corinthians 6 the context is Paul talking about using our bodies for God's glory. We are allowed to do all things but not all things are good for us. In the context of turning from sexual sin, he writes in verse 13, 'the body is.. for the Lord and the Lord is for the body..'

So we see that we should not sin against our bodies – in many ways. Greed, not eating enough, sexual sin, excessive drinking.. all these are ways we can sin against the body and grieve the Spirit. There may be complex reasons why we find this hard but God sees our hearts. When it's right, God can also deliver people from bad stuff. Not that everyone needs delivering!!

You know what, in Genesis 1.31 we read that God looked at everything he had made and he was very pleased. When God made you, he was very pleased, can you believe that cos it's true!! But wait there's more..

In Ephesians 1.4 we find out that before the world began, Jesus chose the people who belong to him! You have been created by God, chosen to Jesus and filled with the Holy Spirit. You've been put on the earth at this time in your place to live as God intended. You have meaning and purpose. You are also part of God's family. You have God as your heavenly father. Your father on earth may have been terrible or never there. No matter, you have the Lord as your father, Jesus as your brother! (Hebrews 2.11)

Not only that! In John 10.3, Jesus teaches that he calls his people – you, me, by name! Revelation 2.17 talks about Jesus writing a new name on a white stone for people who stay faithful to Jesus. So you have a heavenly name as a child of God. So don't agonize about how you look – God made you! Made in heaven is stamped across you!

PART 4 - Ethical Eating

In 1 Corinthians 8, Paul talks about the subject of food offered to idols. In this Paul states that eating doesn't bring us closer to God, nor does not eating make us better in God's sight.

However, he does say that if we cause others offence or cause them to sin by eating (or not eating) something we should not eat it. Paul himself writes in verse 13 that is the food he eats causes others to fall into sin he would give up eating meat.

It works the other way too. When a vegetarian friend of mine was on mission in Romania, he was regularly offered meat by Romanian Christians generously offering more than they could afford. In this situation he happily ate the meat offered.

On a practical level - take action

We can eat and drink Fair Trade products and similar – coffee, tea, bananas, chocolate. We can also deal with organizations like TearFund who give farmers and others a fair price for all kinds of goods. Make this kind of thing a priority!

We should support local farmers and what they produce. This way we give our farmers a fair price for things like milk, food and other produce. If we don't do this, we will potentially lose milk being made in the UK. This isn't scare tactics, it's very real. Support local farmers and food markets / farm shops. They may be more expensive than a local shop but if it's direct from a farm then you can guarantee quality and you will support sustainable local farming.

Another idea is simply not being greedy – maybe denying yourself something like chocolate as a sacrifice and maybe saving up the money over a period of time and sending it to projects working to alleviate famine.

You can also eat foods with little or no packaging to help the environment. Buy locally grown produce like fruit to drive down transport costs and pollution and maybe even help save jobs and rainforests. Some superstores and grocery stores now offer 'mishaped' vegetables. Get them! Eat vegetables and fruits that are 'in season' and therefore don't require huge transport costs. On the other hand, don't stop eating things that will put poor farmers in other countries out of business.

We should also re-use packaging and bags. We should think carefully about what we buy others – buying cheap trinkets and gifts may seem nice (and it is!) but just consider the impact you are having on the world. For example we should cut out drinking from plastic bottles, even though they can be recycled. The plastic in our world kills animals in farms, it kills fish and mammals in the sea and very importantly it means that the plastic gets into the human food chain, running a very real chance of us eating and digesting toxic chemicals in things like some plastics. So think carefully and buy a re-useable plastic bottle (like Nalgene) and use that instead of buying and recycling plastic bottles.

I'm not an environmentalist but we have a duty to look after this planet (Genesis 2.15) and we've abstained. As Christians it is time to change that and step up to the responsibility that God has given us. I once heard someone say, 'we don't need to look after the planet, God's going to destroy it all anyway' but this argument is irresponsible. God has told us to look after 'the garden' (the earth) and if God has made everything, then God's people should act in a Godly way and look after the world around us and care for it. This honours God.