

REASON TOGETHER CHURCH

REASON TOGETHER STUDY

IS SUGAR SINFUL?

PROVERBS 25:16 KJV



SERMON & PASTOR'S COMMENTARY

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Aloha.

Welcome to Reason Together Church.

Whether this is your first time with us or you have been part of this family for a long time, I am grateful that God has brought you here today.

This is a place where sincere questions are welcome.

You do not have to pretend that you already understand everything.

You do not have to be afraid of asking a difficult question.

Our invitation is simple.

Bring your questions.

Open your Bible.

Let us Reason Together the Word of God.

We also want to recognize any honored guests who may be with us today.

Thank you for sharing this time with our church family.

No one is going to single you out or ask you to stand.

We simply want you to know that you are welcome here.

After the service, please join us in the Reason Together Cafe for a cup of coffee and conversation.

The coffee is free, and so are the refills on the conversation.

Our Keiki Kids Center is also available for families who need it.

If this is your first visit, we have a very simple guest card.

We ask only for your first name and an email address so we can thank you for coming and let you know what is happening here.

Let us pray.

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for every good gift You place within our lives.

Thank You for food, fellowship, celebration and the ordinary pleasures that remind us of Your kindness.

Teach us to enjoy Your gifts without allowing any gift to take Your place.

Give us wisdom to distinguish between what You have forbidden and what You have permitted.

Help us distinguish between sin and foolishness, between Christian liberty and careless indulgence, and between personal conviction and commandments that You have given to everyone.

Search our hearts today.

Show us whether any appetite, habit or pleasure has begun to exercise power that belongs only to You.

Protect us from judging other people by their appearance, their plate or their personal convictions.

Protect us also from using grace as an excuse to remain under the control of something that is harming us or those we love.

Give us the fruit of Your Spirit.

Give us gratitude without greed, enjoyment without idolatry and self-control without pride.

Above all, lead us to Jesus Christ, the only Savior who can forgive our sins and become the rightful Lord of every part of our lives.

In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.

Our first Scripture reading comes from Proverbs 24:13.

The Bible says,

“My son, eat thou honey, because it is good; and the honeycomb, which is sweet to thy taste.”

Now listen to Proverbs 25:16.

“Hast thou found honey? eat so much as is sufficient for thee, lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it.”

And First Corinthians 6:12 says,

“All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.”

Before we begin today's study, let me say a brief word about giving.

Reason Together Church does not pass an offering plate.

If you are our guest, we do not expect you to give anything.

We are honored that you are here, and we want this time to be our gift to you.

If you are a member of another church, we encourage you to continue supporting your home church.

If Reason Together Church is your church home and the Lord leads you to give, there is a giving box available in the back.

The Bible teaches that giving should never be manipulated, pressured or performed reluctantly. God loves a cheerful giver.

Giving is one of the places where our relationship with material things becomes visible.

But money is not the only good gift that can begin making demands upon us.

Sometimes the thing making the demand is sitting in a cup.

Sometimes it is wrapped in plastic.

Sometimes it is waiting in the refrigerator.

And sometimes it comes with free refills.

Our question today sounds almost too simple for an entire sermon.

Is sugar sinful?

At first, the answer seems obvious.

Sugar is not mentioned in the Ten Commandments.

No prophet stood before Israel and cried, “Thus saith the Lord, put down the doughnut.”

No apostle wrote a letter instructing the church at Corinth to replace its desserts with vegetables.

So why would we even ask the question?

Because the question about sugar exposes a much larger question about the standard Christians sometimes use.

Someone says,

“Alcohol harms the body, and therefore drinking alcohol is sinful.”

Let me be very clear at the beginning.

The Bible explicitly condemns drunkenness.

Alcohol and soda are not morally identical.

Drinking one sugary beverage is not morally equivalent to becoming intoxicated.

This sermon is not an indirect defense of drunkenness.

Our purpose is to examine the reasoning behind the claim.

If everything capable of harming the body is automatically sinful, then consistency requires us to ask several more questions.

Can too much sugar harm the body?

Can too much salt harm the body?

Can too much caffeine affect the body?

Can overeating harm the body?

Can refusing to sleep harm the body?

Can physical inactivity harm the body?

Can uncontrolled stress harm the body?

Can spending too much time sitting in a chair harm the body?

If the possibility of bodily harm is enough to make every use sinful, then the list of sins becomes much longer than anything actually written in the Bible.

Perhaps the soda is not the real question.

Perhaps the real question is this.

Is everything unhealthy automatically sinful?

When does something permitted become sinful?

Does “your body is the temple” require every Christian to achieve perfect health?

May I turn my personal health conviction into a commandment for you?

And how can I tell when something I enjoy has begun controlling me?

A nutrition label can tell us how much sugar is in a drink.

It can tell us how many calories are in a serving.

It can tell us something about the ingredients.

But a nutrition label cannot tell us whether the person holding the drink is acting in faith.

It cannot tell us whether the amount represents excess.

It cannot tell us whether the person is violating conscience.

It cannot tell us whether an appetite has become a master.

It cannot tell us whether someone else is being harmed.

And it cannot tell us whether the person is walking humbly with God.

Godliness cannot be measured from a nutrition label.

The Bible does not mention Coca-Cola.

But it does mention the most recognizable sweetness of the ancient world.

It mentions honey.

Proverbs 24:13 says,

“My son, eat thou honey, because it is good.”

Notice what the Bible does not say.

It does not say that honey is a necessary evil.

It does not say that sweetness should be tolerated only by spiritually immature people.

It does not say that the person who refuses honey is automatically holier than the person who enjoys it.

It says that honey is good.

The Promised Land was described as a land flowing with milk and honey.

Jonathan tasted honey during a time of physical exhaustion, and First Samuel 14:27 says that his eyes were enlightened.

The Psalms compare the judgments of God to honey and the honeycomb.

Psalm 119:103 says,

“How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!”

Honey represented provision, abundance, refreshment and pleasure.

God is not embarrassed that something tastes good.

The Creator who designed nourishment also designed flavor.

He could have made every necessary food taste like damp cardboard.

Instead, He filled His creation with an astonishing variety of tastes, colors, textures and aromas.

Food is not merely fuel.

It can become part of fellowship, celebration, hospitality and thanksgiving.

Scripture calls honey good.

Then, only one chapter later, Proverbs 25:16 says,

“Hast thou found honey? eat so much as is sufficient for thee, lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it.”

That is unusually direct Biblical language.

God says honey is good.

Then God says too much honey will make you sick.

There is no contradiction.

The gift remains good.

The appetite requires a boundary.

Good does not mean unlimited.

Permitted does not always mean beneficial.

Enjoyment does not require excess.

And unhealthy does not automatically mean sinful.

We should acknowledge that ancient honey is not nutritionally identical to modern refined sugar.

Proverbs is not presenting a lesson in modern chemistry.

We do not need to pretend that a jar of honey and a bottle of soda are the same substance.

The Biblical point is moral rather than chemical.

Something can be good and still be misused.

Something can be permitted and still require restraint.

God did not say, "Honey is evil."

He said, "Eat so much as is sufficient."

One of the hardest words for any appetite to accept is the word "enough."

Our culture is built upon convincing us that enough has not yet arrived.

The cup can be larger.

The portion can be larger.

The house can be larger.

The screen can be larger.

The collection can be larger.

The next version can be newer.

The next experience can be more exciting.

We are surrounded by voices that make contentment sound like failure.

But Proverbs says there is such a thing as sufficient.

There is a place where gratitude says,

"That was good."

And wisdom says,

"That was enough."

Proverbs 25:27 says,

“It is not good to eat much honey.”

Notice the wording.

It does not say that honey is unclean.

It does not say that everyone must completely abstain.

It does not say that eating honey determines whether someone is right with God.

It says that much honey is not good.

This requires us to distinguish several categories that Christians often collapse into one.

The first category is sin.

Sin involves disobedience to God, violation of His command or failure to fulfill what He requires.

The second category is wisdom.

Something may be permitted, but it may not be beneficial in a particular circumstance.

The third category is consequence.

A decision may produce pain, illness, expense or regret without every individual occurrence being an act of rebellion against God.

The fourth category is personal conviction.

One Christian may abstain while another participates with thanksgiving.

The fifth category is enslavement.

Something lawful can begin exercising power over the person who uses it.

The sixth category is love.

My freedom can become sinful when I exercise it selfishly, harm someone entrusted to me or disregard another person's spiritual good.

These categories overlap, but they are not identical.

Staying awake late one night is not automatically sinful.

Habitually refusing needed rest while neglecting responsibilities may become sinful.

Eating dessert is not automatically gluttony.

Continually surrendering every decision to appetite may reveal a lack of self-control.

Avoiding a certain food may be wise for one person.

Declaring that every Christian must follow the same diet becomes a man-made religious rule.

A warning from wisdom should not be ignored.

But neither should it be rewritten as a commandment God never gave.

The Bible does not give us a chart showing the exact number of grams at which sweetness becomes sin.

Instead, Scripture shows us what happens when appetite moves out of its proper place.

Consider Eve in the Garden of Eden.

Genesis 3:6 says,

“And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat.”

The problem was not that Eve chose an unhealthy fruit.

The problem was not that fruit was inherently evil.

God had given Adam and Eve many trees from which they could freely eat.

But God had expressly forbidden this one.

The same physical action that was lawful with other trees became sinful with this tree because God had spoken.

An appetite never has permission to overrule the Word of God.

Then consider Esau.

Genesis 25 tells us that Esau returned from the field and was faint.

Jacob had prepared food.

Esau wanted the meal.

His hunger was real.

The food was lawful.

There was nothing morally corrupt about lentils or bread.

But Esau agreed to exchange his birthright for one meal.

Hebrews 12:16 later describes Esau as a profane person,

“who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.”

His appetite did not merely ask to be fed.

It persuaded him to treat something sacred as though it were worthless.

That is what an uncontrolled appetite can do.

It can make something important tomorrow appear less valuable than something satisfying now.

People have traded marriages for moments.

They have traded financial stability for purchases.

They have traded trust for secrecy.

They have traded responsibilities for comfort.

They have traded future health for an appetite that always promises this will be the last time.

The lawful food was not Esau's sin.

The spiritual danger was allowing immediate satisfaction to outweigh something far more valuable.

Then consider Israel in the wilderness.

Numbers 11 says that the people began craving the food they remembered from Egypt.

They spoke of fish, cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic.

That sounds almost like a grocery list.

None of those foods was inherently sinful.

Meat was not sinful.

God would give Israel meat.

But Psalm 78:18 explains what was happening in their hearts.

“And they tempted God in their heart by asking meat for their lust.”

The problem was not merely their menu.

Their craving had become an expression of ingratitude.

They despised the provision God was giving them.

They remembered the food of Egypt while forgetting the bondage of Egypt.

They remembered the menu but forgot the taskmasters.

They remembered the flavor but forgot the chains.

An appetite can rewrite our memory.

It can cause us to romanticize what God delivered us from.

It can tell us that life was better when we were in bondage because at least the bondage fed a familiar craving.

We can desire a lawful thing through an ungrateful and rebellious heart.

Now compare Eve, Esau and Israel with Jesus.

Matthew 4 says that Jesus fasted forty days and forty nights.

The Bible says,

“He was afterward an hungred.”

His hunger was genuine.

Bread was good.

Jesus possessed the power to make bread.

The tempter said,

“If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.”

Jesus answered,

“It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”

Jesus did not deny that the body needs bread.

He declared that bread must remain beneath obedience to God.

Self-control is not the absence of appetite.

Jesus was hungry.

Self-control is appetite submitted to God.

Eve allowed appetite to overrule God’s command.

Esau allowed appetite to devalue something sacred.

Israel allowed appetite to express ingratitude.

Jesus placed appetite beneath obedience.

That is the Biblical pattern.

The object is not always the problem.

Sometimes the problem is the place that desire has been given in the heart.

This brings us to First Corinthians 6:12.

Paul writes,

“All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient.”

Many scholars understand “all things are lawful” as a slogan used by the Corinthians that Paul was answering.

Whether Paul is quoting their slogan or stating liberty before qualifying it, he certainly is not teaching that every imaginable action is morally permissible.

Paul immediately places two tests around their claim of freedom.

The first test is benefit.

“All things are not expedient.”

In other words, not everything permitted is helpful.

Not everything available builds something worthwhile.

Not everything I have the right to do is wise for me to do today.

The second test is mastery.

Paul says,

“I will not be brought under the power of any.”

That is where the question changes.

We began by asking,

“May I have it?”

Paul teaches us also to ask,

“Does it have me?”

Can I voluntarily put it down?

Do I repeatedly promise to stop and then immediately return?

Do I conceal how much time, money or attention I give it?

Does being denied it control my attitude?

Does the desire repeatedly override sound judgment?

Does it interfere with my responsibilities?

Do I defend it more passionately than I defend my obedience to God?

Something does not have to be evil before it can become a master.

Food can become a master.

Alcohol can become a master.

Caffeine can become a master.

Shopping can become a master.

Entertainment can become a master.

Technology can become a master.

Exercise can become a master.

Work can become a master.

Approval can become a master.

Comfort can become a master.

The object may change, but the lordship question remains.

The Christian has one Lord.

His name is Jesus Christ.

Therefore, Paul does not merely ask whether a behavior is listed among the forbidden.

He asks whether it is acquiring authority over someone who belongs to Christ.

This also requires us to ask what we expect a pleasure to provide.

Food can legitimately provide nourishment.

It can provide pleasure.

It can become part of fellowship.

It can help us celebrate.

It can even provide a measure of temporary comfort.

There is nothing automatically sinful about eating something familiar after a difficult day.

There is nothing automatically sinful about celebrating with cake.

There is nothing automatically sinful about enjoying coffee while talking with a friend.

But no created pleasure can heal everything we ask it to hide.

Sometimes we should ask ourselves,

Am I hungry, or am I lonely?

Am I enjoying something, or avoiding something?

Am I celebrating, or hiding?

Am I receiving comfort, or refusing to confront pain?

Am I trying to quiet conviction?

Am I continually rewarding myself because I feel unseen or unappreciated?

Those questions are not limited to food.

Some people eat to avoid pain.

Some people shop to avoid pain.

Some people work to avoid pain.

Some people scroll through a screen to avoid pain.

Some people keep themselves constantly busy because silence might force them to face what is happening within them.

A gift becomes an idol when we continually ask it to provide what only the Giver can supply.

Philippians 3:19 speaks of people,

“Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.”

We should not reduce that serious description of enemies of the cross to a joke about people who eat too much.

The warning is larger.

Human desire can become an object of allegiance.

The belly can begin issuing commands.

The appetite can begin expecting obedience.

Something designed to serve life can become the thing for which a person lives.

At this point, someone may say,

“Pastor, this is simple. The Bible says that your body is the temple. Therefore, anything unhealthy is a sin.”

That verse deserves to be read.

But it also deserves to be read in context.

First Corinthians 6:18 says,

“Flee fornication.”

Verse 19 continues,

“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?”

Verse 20 says,

“For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.”

Paul’s immediate subject is sexual immorality.

He is not writing a diet plan.

He is not establishing a Christian exercise requirement.

He is not telling the Corinthian church how many grams of sugar may be consumed.

Sexual sin joins what belongs to Christ with immorality.

That is the immediate meaning of the temple warning.

We should not quote the verse as though Paul said,

“Anything medically unhealthy placed into the body defiles the temple.”

If that were the rule, we would need a perfect and unchanging definition of health before we could determine whether someone had sinned.

How much sleep is enough?

How much exercise is required?

How much risk is permitted?

Which medical recommendation becomes a commandment?

Science can give useful information about risk.

Physicians can give important counsel.

Wisdom should listen carefully.

But changing health recommendations are not new verses of Scripture.

Correcting the misuse of the temple passage does not mean the body is unimportant.

The passage teaches that the Christian’s body belongs to the Lord.

The body participates in obedience.

The Holy Spirit indwells the believer.

Christ purchased the whole person.

And First Corinthians 6:14 says,

“And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power.”

The Christian body is not a disposable container carrying the important soul.

God created the body.

Christ purchased the body.

The Spirit indwells the believer.

God will raise the body.

Therefore, bodily stewardship matters.

But the temple passage does not give us permission to invent dietary commandments that God did not give.

There is also a danger on the opposite side.

Health itself can become a religion.

Colossians 2:20 through 23 warns about regulations such as,

“Touch not; taste not; handle not.”

Paul says those practices can have,

“a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body.”

They can look disciplined.

They can look humble.

They can look spiritual.

But Paul says they are,

“not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.”

External rules cannot change a proud heart.

A person can deny himself sugar and feed himself pride.

A person can carefully control every ingredient and freely indulge judgment.

A person can build an identity around being healthier, cleaner or more disciplined than everyone else.

The appetite for approval may remain even when the appetite for dessert is under control.

First Timothy 4 warns about false teachers who would command people to abstain from foods God created to be received with thanksgiving.

Verses 4 and 5 say,

“For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.”

That does not mean every quantity is wise.

It means God’s created gifts should not be treated as though matter itself were spiritually contaminating.

First Corinthians 8:8 says,

“But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse.”

Paul was addressing food connected with idols.

But the verse clearly rejects the idea that eating or abstaining can establish spiritual superiority.

Diet cannot justify a sinner.

Fitness cannot cleanse a conscience.

Discipline cannot replace holiness.

Health cannot become our savior because even the healthiest person will eventually die unless Christ returns first.

The body is valuable.

Health is a gift.

Wisdom matters.

But health is not holiness.

A person can have impressive physical discipline and an unrepentant heart.

Another person can struggle with illness, disability or weight while walking faithfully with God.

We must never assume that a body tells us the whole story of a soul.

Body size does not reveal how much someone eats.

It does not reveal medical conditions.

It does not reveal medication effects.

It does not reveal disability, genetics, financial limitations or food availability.

A thin person may be mastered by appetite.

An overweight person may be exercising remarkable self-control.

This sermon is an invitation to examine ourselves.

It is not authorization to inspect the plate, body or grocery cart of someone else.

Jesus Himself demonstrated the danger of judging holiness by outward eating patterns.

Matthew 11 says that John the Baptist came neither eating nor drinking in the ordinary manner, and people said that he had a devil.

Then Jesus came eating and drinking, and people said,

“Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber.”

John practiced unusual restraint, and they condemned him.

Jesus participated in ordinary meals and feasts, and they condemned Him.

People determined to judge will condemn the person who abstains and the person who enjoys.

The Bible permits fasting.

The Bible also celebrates feasting.

Scripture contains covenant meals, wedding feasts, hospitality, celebration and the promise of the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Jesus ate with people so often that His enemies used it against Him.

Food is more than fuel.

It can become a language of welcome.

It can bring a family around the same table.

It can turn strangers into friends.

It can provide one more reason for us to thank God together.

Fasting does not declare food evil.

Fasting voluntarily surrenders a lawful good for a spiritual purpose.

It reminds the body that appetite is not lord.

It can reveal how quickly deprivation begins controlling our attitude.

It can uncover where we normally run for comfort.

It directs our attention toward the God whose Word is more necessary than bread.

Christian maturity is not the inability to enjoy a feast.

It is the ability to feast with gratitude and fast without self-righteousness.

Romans 14 helps us understand what to do when sincere Christians reach different conclusions about food and other disputable matters.

Verse 3 says,

“Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.”

The person who eats must not despise the person who abstains.

The person who abstains must not judge the person who eats.

One person may need to refuse something completely.

Another may receive it with thanksgiving.

One person’s medical circumstances may require strict discipline.

Another person’s circumstances may be entirely different.

One person may have a history that makes participation dangerous.

Another may have no such history.

Romans 14 does not teach that truth is relative.

It teaches that not every disputed practice has been settled by a universal Biblical prohibition.

Verse 4 asks,

“Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant?”

Each Christian remains accountable to the Lord.

Romans 14:23 also says,

“Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.”

Conscience is not infallible.

It must be educated by Scripture.

A conscience can be overly restrictive.

A conscience can also become damaged and insensitive.

But we must not casually train ourselves to violate what we presently believe God requires.

If you cannot receive something with a clear conscience before God, then do not use another Christian’s liberty as permission to violate your conscience.

At the same time, do not turn your conscience into the Holy Spirit for everyone else.

First Corinthians 10 adds the requirement of love.

Paul writes,

“All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.”

Then he says,

“Let no man seek his own, but every man another’s wealth.”

In that verse, “wealth” means another person’s well-being or good.

Christian liberty asks more than,

“Do I have the right?”

It also asks,

“What does love require?”

First Corinthians 10:31 says,

“Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”

That verse means more than saying grace before a meal.

In its context, glorifying God includes allowing love to govern liberty.

Sometimes we glorify God by gratefully receiving.

Sometimes we glorify God by willingly abstaining.

Sometimes we are free to do something but choose not to because another person’s good matters more than proving our freedom.

Liberty that cannot voluntarily surrender itself has begun looking like another form of bondage.

The Bible also shows that excess can become sinful because of what it does to other people.

Amos 6 describes people resting upon expensive beds, eating the best animals and enjoying music and wine.

The central indictment is not merely that they possessed comforts.

Verse 6 says they were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.

Their indulgence had made them indifferent.

In Luke 16, the rich man fared sumptuously every day while Lazarus lay at his gate full of sores.

The food upon the rich man's table was not the only issue.

The suffering at his gate did not interrupt his feast.

In First Corinthians 11, some believers ate abundantly while others remained hungry during a gathering meant to express the unity of Christ's body.

Appetite had overwhelmed love.

That means I must ask more than,

"What is this doing to my body?"

I should also ask,

"What is this doing to my responsibility toward other people?"

Is my indulgence consuming money needed for essential obligations?

Are people who depend upon me repeatedly bearing preventable consequences?

Does satisfying my preference require someone else to serve my demands?

Am I wasting what could have helped someone in need?

Has my pursuit of comfort made me indifferent to suffering at my gate?

Gluttony is not merely a question of quantity.

It can involve selfishness, waste and lovelessness.

Knowledge also affects responsibility.

There is a difference between occasionally making an unhealthy choice and knowingly aggravating a serious condition while others depend upon us.

There is a difference between general advice and a clear danger that has been repeatedly explained.

Even then, we must be careful before pronouncing judgment.

Medical recommendations may conflict.

Treatments may have side effects.

Healthy options may cost more than a family can afford.

Disability, mental health, access and quality of life may all matter.

Failure to follow every recommendation is not automatically rebellion against God.

But honesty requires us to ask whether we are practicing reasonable stewardship or simply protecting an appetite from every uncomfortable question.

Now let us return to the comparison with which we began.

Is alcohol sinful merely because it can damage the body?

The Bible's treatment of alcohol is more precise than that.

Scripture explicitly condemns drunkenness.

Drunkenness compromises sobriety and judgment.

It can bring a person under alcohol's power.

It can produce reckless behavior and harm other people.

The Biblical case against drunkenness does not depend only upon a modern health report.

Therefore, soda is not morally equivalent to drunkenness.

Sugar and alcohol are not identical substances.

But the comparison exposes the weakness of saying that every choice carrying physical risk is automatically sinful.

Scripture gives us a more careful framework.

Has God forbidden it?

Is it beneficial?

Does it master me?

Am I violating conscience?

Am I neglecting responsibility?

Am I harming someone else?

Can I do it with thanksgiving and to the glory of God?

So let us finally answer the question on the cover.

Is sugar sinful?

No.

Sugar is not inherently sinful.

Honey is not sinful.

Dessert is not sinful.

Coffee is not sinful.

Enjoyment is not sinful.

Celebration is not sinful.

But saying that something is not inherently sinful does not mean our relationship with it can never become sinful.

The sin is not printed on the nutrition label.

It may be found in disobedience.

It may be found in mastery.

It may be found in excess.

It may be found in ingratitude.

It may be found in violated conscience.

It may be found in irresponsibility.

It may be found in indifference to another person's need.

It may even be found in the pride of someone who abstains and then judges everyone who does not.

Before we close, I want to give you seven questions for honest examination.

Do not use these questions to examine the person sitting near you.

Ask the Holy Spirit to examine you.

First, what is it?

Has God expressly forbidden this, or have I confused a personal conviction with a Biblical command?

Second, how much?

Has reasonable enjoyment become excess?

Can I recognize sufficient, or must I always have more?

Third, why?

What am I asking this pleasure to provide?

Am I receiving a gift, or am I asking the gift to replace the Giver?

Fourth, who rules?

Can I voluntarily put it down?

The question is not merely, “May I have it?”

The question is also, “Does it have me?”

Fifth, what am I sacrificing?

Is immediate satisfaction costing something more valuable?

Am I making Esau’s exchange in a different form?

Sixth, who is affected?

Is my choice harming, neglecting or burdening another person?

Has my liberty stopped behaving like love?

Seventh, who receives glory?

Can I receive this with thanksgiving beneath the lordship of Jesus Christ?

Can I enjoy it without worshiping it?

Can I surrender it without resenting God?

Those questions reach far beyond sugar.

They reach every appetite, habit, possession and pleasure capable of becoming a master.

And if we answer honestly, every one of us must admit that some desire has moved out of its proper place.

We have all wanted a created gift more than we wanted the Creator.

We have all allowed immediate satisfaction to compete with obedience.

We have all failed to exercise perfect self-control.

We have all sinned.

No diet can solve that problem.

No exercise plan can cleanse a conscience.

No act of abstinence can erase guilt.

No amount of self-discipline can make a sinner righteous before God.

We need more than a stricter rule.

We need a Savior.

Jesus Christ experienced genuine hunger and remained perfectly obedient.

He refused to turn stones into bread at the direction of the tempter.

He lived every moment beneath the will of His Father.

He never permitted appetite, comfort, approval or fear to become His lord.

Then Jesus gave His body upon the cross for our sins.

He shed His blood to pay the price we could never pay.

He was buried.

On the third day, He rose bodily from the grave.

He offers forgiveness and eternal life to everyone who repents and believes.

The solution to every ruling appetite is not merely a stricter rule.

It begins with a new Lord.

The most important question is not whether sugar has ever controlled you.

The most important question is whether Jesus Christ is your Lord.

Perhaps you have attended church for years.

Perhaps today is your first time.

Perhaps you have tried to become a better person through discipline, religion or good intentions.

But you have never personally trusted Jesus Christ as Savior.

The Bible says that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

The wages of sin is death.

But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

You cannot purchase that gift.

You cannot earn it.

You receive it through repentance and faith.

If you understand that you are a sinner, believe that Jesus died for your sins and rose again, and are ready to trust Him as Savior and Lord, you can call upon Him today.

The prayer itself cannot save you.

Jesus saves.

But prayer can express the faith and repentance of your heart.

If this is your desire, pray with me.

Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner.

I have disobeyed You in my actions, my desires and my heart.

I cannot save myself.

I believe that You died upon the cross for my sins.

I believe that You were buried and rose again on the third day.

Please forgive me.

I turn from my sin and place my trust in You.

Come into my life.

Be my Savior and my Lord.

Teach me to follow You.

Thank You for Your grace, Your forgiveness and the gift of eternal life.

In Jesus' name I pray.

Amen.

If you prayed that prayer from your heart, please speak with me after the service.

I would be honored to pray with you, answer your questions and help you begin walking with Christ.

For those who already know Christ, do not leave today with a list of foods you are now afraid to eat.

Leave with a better question.

What in my life has begun asking for power that belongs only to Jesus?

Enjoy God's gifts without worshiping them.

Practice restraint without becoming proud.

Do not confuse health with holiness.

Do not use liberty to excuse enslavement.

Do not turn a personal conviction into a commandment for everyone else.

If an appetite has gained control, do not hide in shame.

Bring it into the light.

Pray honestly.

Ask for help.

Make practical changes.

Allow trusted believers to walk with you.

Self-control is fruit of the Spirit.

It is not produced merely by clenching our teeth and trying harder.
 God's grace teaches us to live beneath the loving lordship of Christ.
 If another person's struggle differs from yours, extend grace.
 You do not know the entire story written upon someone else's body.
 You do not know every battle represented by someone else's plate.
 Encourage one another without becoming inspectors of one another.
 Receive every good gift with thanksgiving.
 Know when enough is enough.
 Refuse to be mastered by anything other than Jesus Christ.
 Sugar is not sinful.
 Honey is not sinful.
 Enjoyment is not sinful.
 But every appetite must eventually answer the same question.
 Is it serving me as I serve Christ?
 Or has it begun demanding that I serve it?
 Bring your questions.
 Open your Bible.
 Let us Reason Together the Word of God.
 Thank you for being with us today.
 Aloha Nui Loa.

COMMENTARY ORIENTATION

The title asks whether sugar is sinful. That question is memorable because sugar is ordinary, visible and debated. It also exposes how quickly Christians can move from a legitimate concern about bodily harm to a universal declaration of moral guilt. If an unhealthy effect is enough by itself to make a choice sinful, then the same reasoning must be applied to sleep deprivation, inactivity, stress, caffeine, overeating, risky work and many other choices that affect the body.

This Commentary therefore uses sugar as a doorway rather than a destination. The larger inquiry is how Scripture evaluates a lawful pleasure when it becomes excessive, unwise, controlling, loveless or contrary to conscience. The Bible supplies more than one moral category. It distinguishes what God expressly forbids from what wisdom cautions against. It recognizes consequences, conscience, mastery and responsibility toward a neighbor. Collapsing those categories may sound decisive, but it produces both legalism and carelessness.

The discussion must also be pastorally careful. A congregation includes people with diabetes, eating disorders, medication effects, endocrine conditions, trauma, poverty, disability and unequal access to food or care. Body size cannot reveal the whole story. The pulpit should call every hearer to honest self-examination without authorizing public inspection of another person's body, plate or private history.

CENTRAL COMMENTARY CLAIM | Sugar is not intrinsically sinful. A good gift may nevertheless become the occasion of sin when desire rejects God's command, refuses wise sufficiency, acquires mastery, violates conscience, neglects a neighbor or displaces the glory of God.

The evidence labels used here are deliberate. Biblical certainty identifies what Scripture directly teaches. Strong Biblical inference identifies a conclusion that follows from several texts without appearing as a single command. Pastoral judgment applies those truths to an individual circumstance. Medical evidence describes bodily risks and treatment questions. It must not be preached as if a public-health recommendation were a new verse of Scripture.

BEGIN WITH THE GOODNESS OF THE GIFT

PROVERBS 24:13 KJV | My son, eat thou honey, because it is good; and the honeycomb, which is sweet to thy taste.

Permission comes before warning

Proverbs does not treat sweetness as morally contaminated. The father tells his son to eat honey because it is good. The sweetness of the honeycomb belongs to the reason it may be enjoyed. This matters

because some approaches to appetite begin by assuming that pleasure is suspicious and that holiness increases as enjoyment disappears. The verse refuses that assumption.

Creation theology points in the same direction. God gives food. First Timothy 4 warns against teachers who forbid foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving. Christian gratitude does not turn every quantity into wisdom, but it establishes the moral category of the gift. Food may be received rather than feared. Pleasure may be enjoyed without apology when it remains within God's order.

A gift is not the same as a god

Calling honey good does not make honey ultimate. A created pleasure can be received gratefully only when the Creator remains above the gift. The heart becomes disordered when it asks food to provide an identity, refuge, reward or peace that it refuses to seek from God. The problem is no longer sweetness on the tongue. It is the spiritual office assigned to the sweetness.

The Christian response is neither fear of matter nor worship of matter. Scripture rejects both. Ascetic legalism treats created things as though abstaining from them could manufacture holiness. Idolatry treats created things as though possessing or consuming them could supply life. Thanksgiving keeps the gift in its proper place because gratitude looks through the gift to the Giver.

THE BIBLE PLACES A LIMIT BESIDE THE GIFT

PROVERBS 25:16 KJV | Hast thou found honey? eat so much as is sufficient for thee, lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it.

Sufficiency is a wisdom word

The person who finds honey is allowed to eat. The command is not throw it away, condemn the person who likes it or create a community in which nobody may touch it. The instruction is to eat what is sufficient. Wisdom joins permission and limit in the same sentence. That balance is more demanding than a simple prohibition because it requires discernment, honesty and self-government.

Sufficiency is not presented as one numerical serving for every person. Bodily conditions, age, work, medication, economic circumstances and patterns of vulnerability differ. Wisdom operates within reality. It asks what is fitting and beneficial for this person in these circumstances while remaining governed by the principles God has revealed.

Much honey is the problem

Proverbs 25:27 says that it is not good to eat much honey. The text does not reverse Proverbs 24:13. Honey remains good while much honey becomes unwise. Scripture is capable of making a distinction that modern debate often loses: a substance may be good in category while an amount, pattern or relationship to it becomes harmful.

This pattern prevents the study from becoming a sermon against sugar. It also prevents permission from becoming indifference. The person who quotes the goodness of honey to defend repeated excess has read only half the wisdom. The person who quotes the warning against much honey to condemn all sweetness has also read only half. Biblical maturity listens to both texts.

WHEN DOES SOMETHING UNHEALTHY BECOME SINFUL?

Harm matters, but harm is not the whole definition

Human choices involve tradeoffs, limited knowledge and risk. Driving a car, working a demanding job, caring for a sick family member and staying awake with a distressed child may all affect the body. A harmful result does not by itself identify the precise moral failure. Sometimes the issue is sin. Sometimes it is imprudence, ignorance, limitation, sacrifice or an unavoidable consequence in a fallen world.

Scripture never teaches that bodily consequences are irrelevant. Galatians 6 warns that a person reaps what he sows. Proverbs repeatedly joins foolish patterns with painful results. Yet consequence is evidence to be interpreted, not a complete moral verdict. A bad outcome does not automatically prove a specific sin, just as the absence of an immediate outcome does not prove wisdom.

A reusable six-category framework

The sermon distinguishes six questions. First, has God forbidden the act or the governing heart posture? Second, is the choice wise and beneficial? Third, what consequences are likely or already present? Fourth, can the believer act in faith and with a clear conscience? Fifth, has the thing acquired mastery? Sixth, does the choice love and protect other people?

These questions overlap, but they are not interchangeable. A choice may be lawful yet foolish. It may be physically tolerable yet controlling. It may be harmless for one person yet damaging to the conscience of another. It may remain private in consumption while becoming public in cost, neglect or example. The framework slows down the rush to a label and produces a more searching examination.

WORKING DISTINCTION | Not every unhealthy choice is automatically a sin, but no Christian should use liberty to ignore wisdom, bondage, conscience or love.

APPETITE IN THE BIBLICAL STORY

Eve: desire within disobedience

Genesis 3 describes the forbidden tree as good for food, pleasant to the eyes and desired to make one wise. Appetite participates in the temptation, but hunger itself is not the sin. The decisive issue is that the woman takes what God prohibited while accepting the serpent's account of goodness and consequence over God's Word.

This first food narrative teaches that the moral question often concerns trust before it concerns ingredients. The fruit was not sinful because it contained a forbidden nutrient. It was forbidden because God had spoken. Desire became disordered when it moved outside His command and sought wisdom through an act of distrust.

Esau and Israel: the urgent appetite

Esau allows immediate hunger to price a lasting inheritance. The meal is ordinary. The exchange reveals the heart. A present sensation becomes so authoritative that what is enduring appears expendable. Scripture later calls him profane because he sold his birthright for one morsel of meat. The event warns against letting urgency define value.

Israel's craving in the wilderness becomes more than dissatisfaction with a menu. The people despise God's provision, romanticize slavery and weep for what Egypt supplied. Appetite exposes ingratitude and unbelief. The lesson is not that a preference for variety is inherently sinful. It is that bodily desire can become the language through which the heart rejects God's presence and care.

Jesus: genuine hunger without sin

After forty days of fasting, Jesus is genuinely hungry. The tempter addresses a real bodily need. Christ does not respond as though hunger were evil. He refuses to satisfy it by distrusting the Father, misusing divine power or accepting Satan's terms. Appetite becomes the setting of obedience rather than the ruler of obedience.

Jesus therefore gives the study both correction and hope. Strong desire is not identical with sin. A believer may experience hunger, craving, anxiety or bodily pressure without being condemned merely for the sensation. The moral question concerns what the person believes, loves and does in response. Christ obeyed where appetite-driven humanity repeatedly fails.

GLUTTONY IS REAL, BUT CASUAL DIAGNOSIS IS DANGEROUS

The Biblical warnings are broader than calories

Deuteronomy 21 presents a stubborn and rebellious son within a severe covenant and family setting. He is described as a glutton and a drunkard, but the passage is not a measurement chart for identifying strangers. Proverbs 23 warns against companionship with winebibbers and riotous eaters because habitual excess brings poverty, drowsiness and ruin.

Gluttony in these texts belongs to a larger pattern of uncontrolled consumption, waste, stubbornness and social company. Philippians 3 describes enemies of the cross whose god is their belly, but the phrase addresses an entire orientation of life. It must not be reduced to one visible body type or one photographed meal.

Jesus was falsely called a glutton

Critics accused Jesus of being a gluttonous man and a winebibber because He came eating and drinking and received sinners. The accusation was false. That fact should make Christians cautious about moral judgments based upon association, celebration or appearance. A label can sound Biblical while being slanderous in its application.

The church may preach the sin of gluttony without pretending to possess knowledge it does not have. Truthful pastoral care asks about patterns, secrecy, control, neglect, motives and consequences within relationship. Public ridicule, jokes about body size and confident diagnosis from across a room do not display discernment. They display presumption.

LAWFUL, BUT NOT ALWAYS EXPEDIENT

1 CORINTHIANS 6:12 KJV | All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.

Benefit is a separate test

Paul does not permit the word lawful to end the conversation. A thing may belong to a permitted category while failing to help faithfulness, health, relationships, vocation or service in an actual circumstance. Expedient concerns what contributes, profits or helps. Christian liberty is therefore morally serious even where no universal prohibition exists.

The question is not merely, Can I consume this? It is also, What is this choice doing in my life? The same amount may have different consequences for different people. Wisdom does not require believers to pretend those differences are unreal. It requires each person to face them honestly before God.

Mastery is a decisive boundary

Paul's second test concerns power. He will not be brought under the power of any lawful thing. A habit may become a master when the person cannot say no without panic, irritability, secrecy, bargaining or repeated broken promises. Quantity can reveal mastery, but the relationship of dependence may be more important than a single measurement.

Calling something lawful does not make bondage freedom. Grace is not permission to remain ruled. At the same time, the presence of a struggle should not be treated as proof that grace is absent. Christians grow through confession, practical boundaries, accountability, changed routines and sometimes clinical care. The goal is not impressive willpower. It is faithful freedom under Christ.

COMFORT, REFUGE AND IDOLATRY

What are we asking the gift to provide?

Food often carries more than nutrition. It may be connected to memory, hospitality, celebration, relief and family. None of those associations is automatically sinful. The pastoral concern appears when a person cannot face sadness, loneliness, anger or stress without demanding a particular comfort and refusing truthful engagement with God or other people.

The same examination applies beyond food. Screens, shopping, exercise, work and entertainment may become refuges. The object changes while the heart's demand remains similar. A narrow sermon against sugar can miss the person who has mastered eating while being mastered by praise, productivity or control.

Identity can hide on both sides of the diet

Indulgence may say, I deserve this and ordinary boundaries do not apply. Restriction may say, My rules prove that I am disciplined, pure or superior. Both positions can use food to construct identity. One boasts in permission. The other boasts in control. Neither boast belongs at the foot of the cross.

Christian identity is received in Christ. The believer is not justified by a menu, condemned by a dessert or made righteous by a diet. This does not make habits unimportant. It gives habit change its proper location. Discipline becomes grateful discipleship rather than a system for earning worth.

YOUR BODY IS THE TEMPLE IN CONTEXT

The immediate subject is sexual immorality

First Corinthians 6:18 says, Flee fornication. Verses 19 and 20 continue that argument. The believer's body is a member of Christ, is indwelt by the Holy Ghost, was bought with a price and must glorify God. Using verse 19 as a stand-alone slogan against any disliked food choice ignores the immediate subject Paul is addressing.

Context does not weaken the verse. It protects its actual force. Paul is not offering a vague health motto. He is declaring that bodily union matters because believers belong to Christ. Sexual immorality is incompatible with that union. Responsible application begins by saying what the passage says before extending its principles elsewhere.

The wider doctrine of bodily stewardship remains

The correction of a misused proof text does not make the body spiritually disposable. Earlier in the chapter Paul says that the body is for the Lord and the Lord for the body. He points to bodily resurrection. Romans 12 calls believers to present their bodies as a living sacrifice. First Corinthians 9 commends purposeful discipline for Gospel service.

Bodily stewardship rests upon redemption, belonging and future resurrection rather than cultural standards of appearance. That foundation reaches more deeply than a slogan. It calls Christians to care about sleep, food, movement, sexuality, substance use and medical responsibility while refusing to confuse visible fitness with holiness.

CONTEXTUAL CONCLUSION | The body-temple text is stronger when it is used in context, not weaker. It forbids sexual immorality directly and supports wider bodily stewardship through Christ's ownership, the Spirit's indwelling and the hope of resurrection.

SELF-CONTROL IS FRUIT, NOT SELF-SALVATION

Temperance belongs to the work of the Spirit

Galatians 5 includes temperance within the singular fruit of the Spirit. The Christian does not manufacture this fruit as proof that grace is unnecessary. The Spirit produces a new manner of life in those who belong to Christ. Self-control is therefore active and dependent at the same time.

Second Peter commands believers to add temperance within a maturing faith. First Corinthians 9 uses athletic discipline to describe purposeful self-government. These passages do not oppose effort. They oppose effort detached from grace, truth and the end for which discipline is given. Restraint serves faithful worship and service rather than aesthetic superiority.

Practical boundaries can be spiritual acts

A person who is losing freedom may need to remove provision, change a routine, decline a setting, seek accountability or practice temporary abstinence. Those acts are not legalistic merely because they are concrete. Legalism makes a human rule the basis of righteousness or imposes it upon everyone as God's command.

A wise boundary may be personal, serious and temporary or permanent. Another believer may not need the same boundary. Romans 14 protects both the abstaining conscience and the liberty of the person who can receive a gift with thanksgiving. The church must make room for conviction without turning private necessity into universal law.

LIBERTY, CONSCIENCE AND LOVE

Romans 14 protects faith and welcome

Romans 14 addresses believers who differ over food and days. Each seeks to honor the Lord, yet contempt and judgment threaten fellowship. Paul tells the church to receive the person whom God has received. He also says that a person who cannot act in faith should abstain because whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

Conscience is therefore real, but it is not a private amendment to the Bible. A believer should not violate conscience in the moment. The conscience should also continue to be formed by Scripture. A sensitive conscience is not mocked, and an uninformed conscience is not frozen forever. Christian community allows patient growth.

Love may voluntarily limit a right

First Corinthians 8 warns that knowledge without love can wound a weaker brother. First Corinthians 10 says that not all lawful things edify and that no one should seek only his own welfare. Mature liberty asks what builds, protects and helps another person see Christ clearly.

This does not mean that the most restrictive opinion must control every Christian forever. Paul seeks the good and salvation of others rather than the triumph of a preference. Love listens to the actual person and setting. It may abstain in one circumstance, teach patiently in another and refuse manipulation in a third.

THANKSGIVING, FEASTING AND FASTING

The Bible rejects ascetic legalism

First Timothy 4 associates the forbidding of foods with false teaching when God created those foods to be received with thanksgiving. Colossians 2 warns against touch not and taste not systems that display self-made religion while lacking power against fleshly indulgence. Strictness can appear holy without transforming desire.

Thanksgiving is not magic language that sanctifies obvious bondage. A person cannot pronounce grace over a pattern of deception and make it faithful. Genuine thanksgiving acknowledges the Giver, receives the gift within truth and remains willing to obey Him. Gratitude and surrender belong together.

Feasting and fasting give a combined witness

Biblical feasts confess that God's gifts are good. Celebration, covenant remembrance, generosity and joy belong within faithful life. Jesus attended meals and was falsely condemned for doing so. The kingdom itself is pictured as a banquet. Holiness is not the elimination of celebration.

Fasting confesses that God's gifts are not God. Voluntary abstinence directs hunger toward prayer, dependence, grief and longing. The believer learns that appetite may be felt without being obeyed automatically. Feasting and fasting together protect the church from both indulgence and joyless asceticism.

THE SOCIAL DIMENSION OF INDULGENCE

A meal can be morally wrong because of the neighbor

Amos 6 condemns comfortable people who indulge in luxury while they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph. Luke 16 presents a rich man who fares sumptuously while Lazarus lies at his gate. The moral problem is not isolated to ingredients. Abundance has been insulated from suffering.

First Corinthians 11 brings the issue into the church. Some eat and drink abundantly at the Lord's Supper while others are hungry and humiliated. A meal that should proclaim one body becomes an occasion of division and judgment. Personal consumption cannot be separated completely from the common table.

Stewardship includes generosity

Health discussions can become intensely individual: my calories, my goals, my discipline and my appearance. Scripture widens stewardship to include what a person shares, wastes, withholds and notices. James says that words of blessing without care for bodily need are dead.

A person might achieve impressive dietary restraint while remaining indifferent to a hungry neighbor. Another might enjoy a generous feast that honors God and includes the overlooked. The moral quality of eating cannot be measured only by the contents of one plate. Love belongs in the examination.

ALCOHOL AND SUGAR ARE NOT MORAL EQUIVALENTS

Drunkenness receives explicit condemnation

Ephesians 5 expressly forbids drunkenness. Intoxication impairs judgment and self-control and can create immediate danger for other people. Scripture also depicts wine in permitted and celebratory settings, which is why many Christians adopt abstinence as a wise conviction without claiming that every instance of drinking is identical with drunkenness.

Sugar is not expressly prohibited as an ingredient, and sweetness is positively described. High intake generally creates concern through cumulative health effects, habitual excess and appetite rather than intoxication. One soda is not morally equivalent to drunkenness. The comparison is useful only when the differences remain visible.

The shared framework still matters

Alcohol, sugar, caffeine and other lawful or disputed pleasures can all be examined through benefit, mastery, conscience, witness, love and the glory of God. Similar questions do not make the objects identical. They show that Christian moral reasoning is broader than a list of substances.

Consistency requires Christians to test their own preferred habits as honestly as the habits they criticize in others. A person who condemns one permitted pleasure because it may harm the body should be prepared

to explain how that reasoning applies to sleep, food, stress and inactivity. The result should be humility and careful distinctions rather than a longer list of condemnations.

WHAT HEALTH EVIDENCE CAN AND CANNOT SAY

Repeated high intake carries real risk

Public-health guidance consistently recommends limiting added or free sugars. The World Health Organization advises keeping free sugars below ten percent of total energy intake and conditionally suggests a lower level for additional benefit. The 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend limiting added sugars to less than ten percent of calories for people age two and older.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports associations between frequent sugar-sweetened beverage consumption and weight gain, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, nonalcoholic liver disease, dental disease and gout. These findings support prudence. They do not permit a preacher to diagnose an individual, infer motives from appearance or convert a population recommendation into a universal command of God.

Medical evidence is important and limited

A health recommendation answers a different question from an exegetical conclusion. It estimates risk across populations using available evidence. It may be revised as evidence develops. Scripture governs the church's definition of sin. Medical knowledge helps believers understand likely consequences and make wise decisions within their actual conditions.

The distinction is not a contest between faith and medicine. Truth belongs to God. Christians should receive responsible medical counsel while remembering the limits of general guidance. Individual decisions belong with qualified clinicians who know the person, medications, history and condition.

IS SUGAR ADDICTIVE?

The research requires careful language

Animal studies have reported bingeing, withdrawal-like behavior, craving and sensitization under particular intermittent access schedules. Those findings are important, but translating them directly into a distinct human substance addiction is disputed. Reviews of the human evidence have concluded that the category is more complicated and may overlap with broader patterns of eating behavior.

The church does not need to settle a clinical classification before speaking about mastery. First Corinthians 6 asks whether a thing has acquired power. That question can be asked without diagnosing every craving as addiction or pretending that a serious compulsive pattern can always be defeated by willpower alone.

Responsibility and compassion belong together

Clinical language should be used by qualified people in appropriate settings. Biblical language should also be used responsibly. Mastery names a spiritual and practical concern, but it should not become a weapon for shame. Secrecy, repeated failure and loss of control are reasons for truth, care and support rather than public humiliation.

Compulsion does not erase every form of responsibility, and responsibility does not eliminate the need for help. Pastoral discipleship, accountability, environmental changes and clinical treatment may work together. Grace tells the truth about bondage while refusing to define a struggling person by the bondage.

BODY SIZE CANNOT REVEAL THE HEART

Visible appearance is incomplete evidence

A larger body can coexist with faithful habits, discipline, illness, medication effects, endocrine conditions, disability, pregnancy, aging or recovery. A thinner body can coexist with pride, fear, disease, destructive restriction or hidden excess. Appearance cannot establish behavior, motive, history or spiritual condition.

This is not a denial that habits affect bodies. It is a refusal to claim omniscience. Scripture calls the church to truthful judgment, which includes recognizing what is not known. The person who has been shamed by appearance should hear clearly that the pulpit does not authorize body inspection.

Eating disorders require particular care

Casual commands to fast, restrict or count may be dangerous for a person with an eating disorder or suspected disorder. Pastoral care should encourage qualified treatment and avoid making recovery sound like spiritual compromise. A sermon illustration cannot replace individualized medical guidance.

Children also should not be recruited into adult guilt about calories or appearance. They can be taught gratitude, wisdom, generosity and care for the body without being taught that worth rises and falls with size. The church should make the common table safer for confession, fellowship and healing.

PASTORAL SAFEGUARD | You cannot measure holiness with a bathroom scale. Examine your own appetite honestly and approach another person with humility, relationship and truth.

SEVEN QUESTIONS FOR HONEST EXAMINATION

- Has God forbidden this, or am I creating a prohibition from fear, preference or cultural habit?
- Is this beneficial in my actual health, responsibilities, relationships and season of life?
- Can I receive it with genuine thanksgiving rather than secrecy, entitlement or defiance?

- Can I abstain without panic, bargaining, irritability or repeated broken promises?
- Am I asking this pleasure to provide comfort, identity or refuge that belongs to God?
- Does my choice honor conscience and protect the people affected by my example, cost or neglect?
- Can I do this for the glory of God, and what truthful next step would obedience require?

These questions are not a private courtroom in which a frightened person must invent guilt. They are instruments of examination under Scripture and grace. One answer may expose explicit sin. Another may reveal a wisdom problem, a medical need, a wounded conscience or a habit that requires help. The goal is truth that leads toward Christ.

A manageable next step is often better than a dramatic vow. The person may remove one provision, tell one trusted believer, schedule one medical appointment, practice one period of abstinence or make one act of generosity. Concrete obedience matters, but it is fruit rather than payment for grace.

PASTORAL COMMENTARY

For the person who is enjoying a lawful gift

Receive the gift with thanksgiving. Do not accept shame merely because another believer has chosen a different boundary. At the same time, keep permission open to examination. Liberty remains healthy when you can thank God, stop freely, bear the consequences honestly and love the people around you.

Do not use another person's struggle as proof of your maturity. The fact that you can consume something without obvious difficulty does not make the other person's abstinence foolish. Christian fellowship leaves room for different faithful responses under the same Lord.

For the person who knows the habit is ruling

Do not rename bondage as freedom. Bring the pattern into light. Confess what is sinful, describe what is difficult and ask for specific help. If medical or psychological care is appropriate, receiving it is not a failure of faith. God often cares for people through truthful community and skilled treatment.

A relapse does not prove that Christ has abandoned you, and a disciplined week does not save you. Return to truth. Repair harm where needed. Reestablish the boundary. The Spirit's work includes perseverance, and the Gospel gives a better identity than either success or failure can provide.

For the person tempted to judge

Begin with your own appetites. The demanding object may be in a cup, wrapper, shopping cart, browser, schedule or mirror. Jesus warned against attending to a mote while ignoring a beam. Consistency is not achieved by condemning everything. It is achieved by submitting every area of life to the same Word.

If concern for another person is real, pursue relationship rather than commentary from a distance. Ask questions. Listen to history. Know the limits of your knowledge. Speak truth without humiliation and remember that correction is given for restoration, not superiority.

THE GOSPEL IS NOT A DIET PLAN

Christ deals with the deeper problem

Human beings do not need salvation merely because they have made imperfect health choices. They need reconciliation with God because they have sinned. Disordered appetite can be one expression of that rebellion, but the Gospel reaches pride, unbelief, idolatry, lovelessness and every other form of guilt.

Jesus Christ is the sinless Son of God. He obeyed the Father, died for sins, was buried and rose again. He does not offer a technique for earning acceptance through restraint. He offers forgiveness and new life to the person who repents and believes.

Grace produces a new kind of freedom

The believer was bought with a price and belongs to Christ. That ownership is liberation from the need to be ruled by appetite, appearance or the approval of diet inspectors. The Spirit produces self-control as part of a life directed toward love, joy, peace and faithfulness.

Repentance may change what a person buys, eats, drinks or keeps in the house. Those changes matter. They follow salvation and discipleship rather than purchase them. The final invitation of this study is therefore not to trust a better menu. It is to trust the crucified and risen Savior.

THEOLOGICAL CONCLUSIONS

- Sugar is not sinful as a substance or category of food.
- Scripture can call sweetness good while warning against consuming too much.
- Not every unhealthy choice is automatically an act of sin.
- Consequences matter, but consequence alone does not settle moral guilt.
- A lawful pleasure becomes sinful when it participates in disobedience, idolatry, mastery, faithless conscience, loveless harm or refusal of God's glory.
- First Corinthians 6:19 directly addresses sexual immorality while supporting wider bodily stewardship through its theology of belonging and resurrection.
- Christian liberty is governed by benefit, freedom, thanksgiving, conscience, love and the glory of God.
- Feasting and fasting together confess that gifts are good and gifts are not God.
- Body size cannot establish gluttony, discipline, health or spiritual maturity.
- The Gospel offers forgiveness for disordered desire and the Spirit who produces self-control.

FINAL DOCTRINAL SUMMARY | God created bodily appetite and gives food to be received with thanksgiving. Sin is not located in sweetness itself, but a good gift may become the occasion of sin when desire rejects God's command, refuses wise sufficiency, rules the person, becomes a substitute refuge, violates conscience or disregards a neighbor. Christians must not confuse nutrition with justification, yet grace never requires us to call bondage freedom. Because believers were bought with a price, they may enjoy God's gifts, practice restraint and glorify God in their bodies through the life of the Holy Spirit.

INTERPRETIVE CAUTIONS

- Do not turn a public-health percentage into a universal Biblical command.
- Do not make Proverbs praise honey while ignoring its warning against much honey.
- Do not make Proverbs warn against excess while ignoring its declaration that honey is good.
- Do not define sin by physical harm alone or treat physical consequences as irrelevant.
- Do not use 1 Corinthians 6:19 without acknowledging the immediate context of sexual immorality.
- Do not infer gluttony, laziness or spiritual failure from body size.
- Do not equate one soda with drunkenness or erase alcohol's distinctive danger of intoxication.
- Do not diagnose clinical addiction from the pulpit or promise that willpower alone will solve compulsion.
- Do not make a personal boundary the law of Christ for every believer.
- Do not preach discipline without grace, Christ and Spirit-produced self-control.

COMMENTARY SUMMARY

- Proverbs 24:13 calls honey good and permits its sweetness to be enjoyed.
- Proverbs 25:16 and 25:27 place sufficiency and limits beside the goodness of the gift.
- The moral evaluation of appetite requires distinctions among explicit sin, wisdom, consequence, conscience, mastery and love.
- Eve, Esau and Israel show desire participating in distrust, urgency and ingratitude. Jesus shows genuine hunger without sin.
- Gluttony is a real Biblical category, but Scripture does not authorize diagnosis from appearance.
- First Corinthians 6:12 tests both benefit and mastery within lawful things.
- The body-temple passage directly concerns sexual immorality and grounds bodily holiness in Christ's ownership and resurrection.
- Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8-10 protect conscience, welcome and neighbor-love without creating permanent rule by the most restrictive opinion.
- Feasting affirms the goodness of gifts. Fasting practices freedom from automatic appetite.
- Amos 6, Luke 16 and 1 Corinthians 11 show that indulgence can become sinful through neglect and humiliation of others.

- Health evidence supports prudent limits but cannot create a new canon or reveal an individual heart.
- Alcohol and sugar share moral questions without becoming moral equivalents.
- The Gospel, not dietary achievement, supplies forgiveness, identity and the power for transformed life.

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A FINAL WORD

The Bible does not ask us to fear sweetness or pretend that created pleasure is evil. It teaches us to receive good gifts with thanksgiving and to stop when wisdom says enough. It asks whether our liberty is beneficial, whether our appetite remains free and whether our enjoyment makes room for the neighbor God has placed near us.

Sugar is a small object, but it can reveal a large question: who rules? Jesus Christ does not merely replace one food rule with another. He forgives sinners, breaks false righteousness and gives the Holy Spirit. In Him, Christians may feast without worshipping the feast, fast without despising the gift and practice self-control without trying to save themselves.

END OF BIBLICAL COMMENTARY