

When Desire Becomes Compulsion . . .

Television commercials can be quite entertaining—and at the same time reflect a truth that we wish were not true. One long-running commercial series featured a brand of potato chips with the tag line, “Bet you can’t eat just one.” These commercials showed people in different situations tasting one chip, then somehow being prevented from having another. Oh, the agony! They would fidget, sweat, leap tall obstacles, and tackle grocers just to get to the chips. And oh, the ecstasy when they invariably managed to finish off the whole bag!

The commercials reflect one aspect of real life, touching a characteristic we all share: when we find something we especially like, we want more! But when this normal desire becomes a compulsive drive—when the drive to eat becomes your slave master, it’s not funny anymore.

*“Whatever overcomes a person,
to that he is enslaved.”
(2 Peter 2:19)*

Q: “What is compulsive eating?”

- Compulsive eating is a seemingly irresistible impulse to eat.¹
- Compulsive eating is uncontrolled eating that is based on satisfying emotional hunger rather than physical hunger.
- This repeated act is an addiction that can result in physical disorders.

*“A man without self-control is like a city
broken into and left without walls.”
(Proverbs 25:28)*

Q: “Is compulsive eating a sin?”

Yes, compulsive eating indicates a lack of submission to God.

*“Their end is destruction, their god is
their belly, and they glory in their shame,
with minds set on earthly things.”
(Philippians 3:19)*

Q: “Is there a difference between compulsive eating and other addictions, such as smoking or drinking?”

No, the Bible places them in the same category.

*“Be not among drunkards or among
gluttonous eaters of meat, for the drunkard
and the glutton will come to poverty,
and slumber will clothe them with rags.”
(Proverbs 23:20–21)*

The Compulsive Eater Checklist²

- Do you spend a lot of time thinking about food?
- Do you eat when you are sad, angry, or depressed?
- Do you eat when you are bored or under stress?
- Do you ever feel ashamed of how much you eat?
- Do you ever feel embarrassed about your personal appearance?
- Do you ever eat secretly to avoid someone's knowing what you eat?
- Do you lose weight on diets, then gain the weight (and more) back again?
- Do you feel you have to eat everything on your plate or you're being wasteful?
- Do you think that you could control your weight if you really wanted to?
- Do you resent it when family or friends express concern over your weight?

*"Whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved."
(2 Peter 2:19)*

Success Is Just a Choice Away

*"Choose life, that you . . . may live, loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days."
(Deuteronomy 30:19–20)*

I Choose . . .

- . . . to give control of my life to the Lord Jesus Christ
- . . . to change my eating through the power of Christ within me
- . . . to live to please God, not to please my appetite
- . . . to make wise choices when tempted to eat unwisely
- . . . to make right choices when tempted to eat excessively
- . . . to glorify God and reflect Him through my body
- . . . to focus not on food but on faithfulness to the Lord in my life
- . . . to let God be my God—not to let food be my God

Although I've failed in the past, with God's help I don't have to fail in the future!

Do's and Don't's of Dieting

- **Don't** say, "I am dieting."
Do . . . Say, "I'm learning to eat healthful foods."
- **Don't** eat fast!
Do . . . Chew slowly.
- **Don't** reward yourself with food.
Do . . . Enjoy the rewards and blessings of the Lord.
- **Don't** keep your new plan a secret.
Do . . . Share with a friend or support group.
- **Don't** shop for groceries on impulse or when you are hungry.
Do . . . Shop with a prepared list.
- **Don't** fail to set goals.
Do . . . Set a target weight and realistic, short-term, incremental goals.
- **Don't** start a new eating plan during a crisis, illness, holiday, or high stress situations.
Do . . . Consult a doctor before beginning any new eating plan.

- **Don't** adopt a plan just because it worked for someone else.
Do . . . Adopt a personalized plan that will work for your individual lifestyle.

*"The prudent sees danger and hides himself,
but the simple go on and suffer for it."
(Proverbs 22:3)*

Think Thin!

Think of yourself as the person God created you to be. (2 Peter 1:3–4)

Have the correct motive for losing weight. (2 Corinthians 5:9)

Identify the real reasons you overeat. (Psalm 139:23)

Nail down a personal commitment to obey God. (Deuteronomy 30:17–18)

Know how to listen to the Lord. (Psalm 32:8)

Turn your focus to things you should eat. (Romans 14:20)

Have an exercise plan that will increase your metabolism. Vary the plan. (Proverbs 15:32)

Initiate a daily journal. (Proverbs 21:29)

Nurture your relationship with God. (Philippians 1:6)

Related Topics . . .

- Anorexia & Bulimia:
Control That Is Out of Control
- Depression:
Walking from Darkness into the Dawn
- Habits:
Success in Self-Control
- Perfectionism:
The Push to Perform
- Self-Worth:
Discerning Your God-Given Value
- Temptation:
Promise of Pleasure—Lured by a Lie

HOPE FOR THE HEART's *Biblical Counseling Library Quick Reference* provides immediate, concise, biblical truths for today's problems.

For more comprehensive help, refer to our *Biblical Counseling Keys . . .*

Overeating:
Freedom from Food Fixation.

If you would like more information, call 1-800-488-HOPE (4673) or visit www.hopefortheheart.org.

For prayer encouragement and biblical counsel call 1-866-570-HOPE (4673).

1. *New Oxford Dictionary of English* (electronic ed.) (Oxford University Press, 1998), s.v. "compulsive eating."

2. For this section see Bill Perkins, *Fatal Attractions: Overcoming Our Secret Addictions* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1991), 48–49.



*Together . . . Changing Minds.
Changing Hearts. Changing Lives.*

P.O. Box 7, Dallas, TX 75221

Scripture taken from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version*.
Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of
Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.