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ENGAGING YOUR APPETITES



“Detach yourself from the goods of this world. Love and practice poverty of spirit: be content with what is sufficient for leading a simple and temperate life. Otherwise, you’ll never be an apostle.”

– St. Josemaría Escrivá, *The Way*

DAY 1

Date _____

The Problem of Uncontrolled Appetites

An appetite is a natural desire to satisfy a need. When our appetites are not controlled, they lead to things like greed; lust; overindulgence in food, drink, or things—often in an attempt to find wholeness, identity, and purpose.

Pray before you begin. Ask the Lord to help you understand why created things have such a pull on us.

1. Looking at our country and at your neighbors, what evidence of excess have you observed?
2. In your experience, how do material possessions and temporal gratification correspond to happiness?
3. Discover what the Bible has to say about the problem of uncontrolled appetites. Read the following verses aloud. Read each one again slowly. Repeat it in your mind and think about what it says. After each verse, write down the words, phrases, or concepts that stand out most to you.
 - a. Luke 12:15
 - b. Genesis 3:6
 - c. Exodus 20:17
 - d. Proverbs 23:2-5
 - e. Ezekiel 16:49

4. Circle the word or phrase you wrote down in Question 2 that speaks most to you. Why did you choose it?

You will use this space for notes during group discussions.

“What’s wrong with indulging?”

5. In your life, where do you struggle with your appetites?

“Man commits idolatry whenever he honors and reveres a creature in place of God, whether this be gods or demons (for example, satanism), power, pleasure, race, ancestors, the state, money, etc. Jesus says, ‘You cannot serve God and mammon.’”

– *Catechism* 2113⁴

Optional Further Reading

a. Micah 2:1-2

b. Genesis 13:2, 5-6

c. Matthew 6:24

DAY 2

Date _____

God's Answer to Uncontrolled Appetites

Pray before you begin. Ask God to reveal to you how your appetites can be brought under the Lordship of Jesus.

1. What part does the will play when dealing with an overindulgent lifestyle?
2. How would you define true wealth?



“Those who hold goods for use and consumption should use them with moderation, reserving the better part for guests, for the sick and the poor.”

– *Catechism 2405*⁵



“How does God help us with our appetites?”

3. Discover what the Bible has to say about God's answer to uncontrolled appetites. Read the following verses aloud. Read each one again slowly. Repeat it in your mind, and think about what it says. After each verse, write down the words, phrases, or concepts that stand out most to you.

a. Matthew 4:2-4

b. 2 Timothy 1:6-7

c. Romans 13:9

d. Acts 20:35

e. Acts 2:44-46

Optional Further Reading

a. 1 Corinthians 9:24-25

b. Luke 12:16-23

DAY 3

Date _____

Engaging Your Appetites

Pray before you begin. Ask the Lord to help you gain control in the areas of your life where you struggle with your appetites.

1. According to the Bible, what can help us engage our appetites constructively? Prayerfully read these verses and meditate on them. Record your insights.
 - a. 1 John 2:15-17
 - b. Hebrews 13:5
 - c. Proverbs 25:16
 - d. Matthew 6:19-21
 - e. 2 Timothy 2:22
2. Read the story of The Rich Young Man in Matthew 19:16-22. If the Rich Young Man had been able to do what Jesus suggested instead of holding onto his possessions, how do you think his life might have changed?

3. What might you be losing by holding onto more than you need?

“What practical steps can lead to contentment?”

“Temperance is the moral virtue that moderates the attraction of pleasures and provides balance in the use of created goods.”

– Catechism 1809

Optional Further Reading

- a. Romans 12:2
- b. Galatians 5:16
- c. Psalms 24:1
- d. 1 Timothy 6:17-19



DAY 4

Date _____

Praying Scripture for a Change

Pray before you begin. Ask the Lord to help you face any areas of uncontrolled appetites in your life and take a step toward change.

1. Look back through your journal for the week and select the Scripture passage that meant the most to you. Look it up in your Bible and decide whether to read it alone or in the context of the surrounding passage. For example, if you select Luke 12:16-23 (which was an optional reading on Day 2), you may want to begin with verse 13. You can use as little as one word or phrase or as much as a paragraph.

Write the verse and its reference here:

2. Using the steps of *lectio divina* on page 11 or on your bookmark, meditate on the Scripture you chose until it turns into prayer, and then simply rest in the Lord, trusting that he will help you to take action and make a change in your life.

Read (*Lectio*)

**“What did you
glean from your
lectio divina?”**

Meditate (*Meditatio*)

During the Fasting

Small-Group Discussion

Order and begin your group discussion with the following questions. Encourage members to share their insights and experiences.

1. How did you feel during the fasting period? Did you experience any physical or emotional challenges? How did you overcome them?

2. What were some of the insights or revelations you gained during the fasting period? How did these insights or revelations impact your daily life?

3. How did you feel about the fasting period? Did you experience any physical or emotional challenges? How did you overcome them?

4. What were some of the insights or revelations you gained during the fasting period? How did these insights or revelations impact your daily life?

5. How did you feel about the fasting period? Did you experience any physical or emotional challenges? How did you overcome them?

6. What were some of the insights or revelations you gained during the fasting period? How did these insights or revelations impact your daily life?

7. How did you feel about the fasting period? Did you experience any physical or emotional challenges? How did you overcome them?

8. What were some of the insights or revelations you gained during the fasting period? How did these insights or revelations impact your daily life?

Continued on next page ...

Pray (Oratio)**Praying Scripture into a Struggle**

One technique for praying Scripture into your heart is to read the verse or verses of Scripture that speak to your struggle and then to pray the words of the verse or verses into your heart.

Take the verse or verses of Scripture that speak to your struggle and read them aloud. Then, read them again, this time to read them in or in the presence of the Lord. As you read, pray the words of the verse or verses into your heart.

Contemplate (Contemplatio)

Contemplation is the practice of looking at something and seeing it as it is.

It is the practice of looking at something and seeing it as it is.

Resolve to Act (Operatio)

Doing the work of God in your life is the final step in the process of engaging the struggles of your heart. It is the work of God in your life that will bring about the change you desire. It is the work of God in your life that will bring about the change you desire.

Pray the verse.

Pray the verse.

Pray the verse.

Pray the verse.

Pray the verse.

Pray the verse.

Pray the verse.

Pray the verse.

Pray the verse.

Pray the verse.

MEETING DAY

Date _____

Taking the First Step

Small-Group Discussion

Before you begin, your group facilitator will ask, "Did you 'take the step' this week?" Only "yes" or "no" answers are necessary, but you are welcome to share your experience.

This is the time to share the insights you received this past week and hear from the other members in the group. You will begin with a brief group exercise of lectio divina.

1. Meditate prayerfully as a group on 1 John 2:15-17. (Choose three people to look up the passage and read it aloud as described on page 10.) Take no more than five or ten minutes on this exercise.
2. Answer the following questions as a group, sharing insights gleaned from the verses you meditated on this week. (Turn back in your journal to recall what you discovered each day, and use the space provided in the margin to add new insights from the group discussion.)
 - What's wrong with indulging? (Day 1)
 - How does God help us with our appetites? (Day 2)
 - What practical steps can lead to contentment? (Day 3)
 - What did you glean from your *lectio divina*? (Day 4)
3. If there is time, continue the discussion around any of these questions:
 - Is there a type of freedom associated with a lack of material goods? Explain your answer.
 - How might generosity of heart help moderate our appetites?
 - Why is it so hard to maintain self-control?

Session Two Outline

DVD Presentation: "Engaging Your Appetites"

This video session will prepare you to take the first step in engaging your appetites constructively. Add your notes to the talk outline below:

I. Introduction

II. The Garden of Eden: A Place of Moderation

- A. All things were good; not all beneficial
- B. Adam and Eve lived with eternity in their hearts (Ecclesiastes 3:11), but in a temporal world
- C. The problem of over-indulgence
- D. The choice—God's will or our will?

III. When Good Becomes Bad

- A. Genesis 3—the Fall of Adam and Eve
 - 1. "Forbidden fruit"—tastes and looks good, makes wise
 - 2. Eve indulges in something good instead of following God's will
- B. Fall results in weakened will, clouded reason, concupiscence
- C. To aim for the great (not merely good):
 - 1. Moderate your appetites, make good choices
 - 2. Love God's will over the world (1 John 2:15-17; Genesis 3:6)
 - a. Lust of the flesh = "good for food"
 - b. Lust of the eyes = "a delight to the eyes"
 - c. Pride of life = "make one wise"
 - 3. Instant vs. delayed gratification (Walter Mischel marshmallow experiment)
 - 4. Recognize we are eternal beings; things will never satisfy

- a. St. Augustine: "Our hearts are restless until they rest in thee"
- b. Deception of the enemy—this world satisfies
- c. 2 Corinthians 11:3—don't stray from simplicity of devotion to Christ
- d. Colossians 3:2—set your minds on things above
- e. John 6:27—work for food that endures for eternal life
- f. Expectations disproportionate to possessions (Samuel Johnson)
- g. Earthly pleasures point beyond this world (C.S. Lewis)⁶

IV. Consequences of Runaway Appetites

- A. Dysfunctional relationship with God, others, and creation
- B. Possessions define and divide us
 - 1. Example: Jeff's library
 - 2. Genesis 13:6 (Lot and Abraham); Genesis 36:7 (Jacob and Esau)
- C. The warning of Solomon

V. The Cost of Over-Indulging Our Appetites

- A. Matthew 19:22—the Rich Young Man lost the joy of following Christ
- B. Genesis 3—Adam and Eve lost walking with God
- C. James 4:1-2—hurt relationships with others
- D. Matthew 6:24—we cannot serve God and mammon
- E. Sam's story

VI. The Solution

- A. Realize you are defined by your relationship with God
- B. Go from possessors to "wise stewards" (Matthew 24:47)

- C. Hold things loosely (Luke 12:15-23)
- D. Recognize what true wealth is (1 Corinthians 3:10-15)
- E. Keys to combat unruly appetites:
 - 1. Prayer
 - 2. Confession
 - 3. Don't just resist; be obedient to Christ
 - 4. Commit to a life of moderation
- F. Three forms of piety (Matthew 6) counter the central issues:
 - 1. Almsgiving—counters the lust of the eyes
 - a. Exercise stewardship; divest of treasures of this world
 - b. Job 31:1—make a covenant with your eyes
 - c. Psalms 119:37 take custody of your eyes
 - 2. Prayer—counters the pride of life
 - 3. Fasting—counters the lust of the flesh
 - a. Deuteronomy 8:3—man does not live by bread alone
 - b. Catechism No. 1808 on fortitude
 - c. 1 Corinthians 9:27—"I buffet my body"
 - d. St. Thomas, Gregory the Great, on gluttony
 - e. Ezekiel 16:49—gluttony contributed to downfall of Satan

VII. Conclusion

- A. Colossians 3:1-2—"set your minds on things above"
- B. Philippians 4:13—"I can do all things [through Christ] who strengthens me"

Quiet Time in the Lord's Presence

This is an opportunity for you to sit and pray silently in Christ's presence, allowing him to speak to your heart about how you can moderate your appetites in new ways. Respond by committing to a specific step you will take to bring about a needed change in your life.

Remember, mental acknowledgment that change is needed is not change. Action—responding in word and deed—is essential for lasting change.

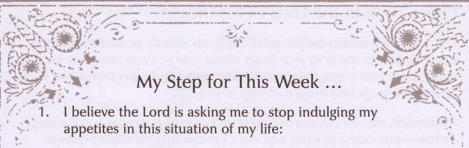
Dear Lord,

You have already given me the greatest gift of all in your sacrifice for my sin. I owe you a debt of gratitude that I cannot repay, but I will show you my appreciation through my gratefulness for your generous provisions that have sustained me until this day. Teach me to be content with what I have and to be generous with what is really yours in the first place.

Amen.

Walking Together

Remember to pray for the other members of your group during the coming week, knowing that they will be praying for you, too.



My Step for This Week ...

1. I believe the Lord is asking me to stop indulging my appetites in this situation of my life:

2. Specifically, I am going to do the following this week:

3. I will take the necessary first step on

(day and time)

