

**Theme: The Seven Deadly Sins**  
**“Gluttony”**

Sermon preached by Jeff Huber

August 24-25, 2013 at First United Methodist Church, Durango

**Luke 12:22-23, John 6:32-35**

*22 Then, turning to his disciples, Jesus said, “That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food to eat or enough clothes to wear. 23 For life is more than food, and your body more than clothing.*

*32 Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, Moses didn’t give you bread from heaven. My Father did. And now he offers you the true bread from heaven. 33 The true bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”*

*34 “Sir,” they said, “give us that bread every day.”*

*35 Jesus replied, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.*

**VIDEO      Gluttony – Sermon Starter**

**SLIDE      Gluttony**

How do you struggle with gluttony? The seven deadly sins are focused upon in the church because these are sins that we all struggle with, either in thought or in action. We each have wrestled with these places of brokenness and our lives and our hearts and sometimes they can seem to overwhelm us. How we wrestle with gluttony will be our focus in today's message. We are going to look at what gluttony is in today's world and how we wrestle with it in our lives. We also will look at how we seek gluttony talked about the Scriptures and why it is seen as deadly. Finally, we will look at how we can begin to break free from the hold that gluttony might have on our lives.

As we begin I want to invite you to take out of your bulletin your Message Notes and your Meditation Moments. My prayer each week will be that there will be at least one thing that you will want to remember from the message and there is a place for you to write that down and take any other notes that you'd like to take. I pray each week that the Holy Spirit would speak to each person who gathers for worship in this place and when you feel a nudge I encourage you to jot down what it is you feel like God might be speaking to you.

Continued on the backside of the front page you will find our Meditation

Moments which give you a chance to read further in the Scriptures about what it is we are going to be talking about each week. I encourage you to take some time each morning or evening to read a bit of Scripture and to reflect upon what it might mean for you and spend some time in prayer either individually or with your family or in a small group. If you are watching at home or online you can simply pull out a piece of paper and pen or pencil to take notes and you can download this resource off our website after you are done.

Let's remember as we began what these seven deadly sins are. You will see the list up on the video screen and these are in order of what were considered the least deadly to the most deadly according to the monks of the fourth century who first developed this list.

These sins were named as deadly because they can sneak up on us. We recognize that each one of these sins starts off as a good thing. Sexual intimacy is a gift from God but when it is abused they can become lust. Food is a blessing of the earth that is meant to nourish our bodies but when we consume too much of it we can experience gluttony. You can see this is true for each one of these sins.

Zack Esgar preached last week on the topic of sloth and he did a great job and in watching his sermon I learned a few things that I didn't know about the seven deadly sins. One of them is that each of these seven deadly sins is represented in the children's cartoon that my daughter has watched for many years, "SpongeBob, Square Pants." Isn't that hysterical? That is the epitome of a sin sneaking up on you, when it is in a children's cartoon right before your very eyes and you can't even see it. I was trying to figure out each of the characters and here is what I came up with.

**SLIDE      Sloth – Patrick (pictures of each with sin underneath)**

Sloth is the sin of laziness, or unwillingness to act. Obviously this is Patrick. He lays under a rock all the time and doesn't really do anything. In fact in the episode "Big Pink Loser" he got an award for doing nothing the longest.

**SLIDE      Wrath – Squidward**

Wrath involves feelings of hatred and anger. Squidward hates his life, usually hates SpongeBob, and is pretty much angry most of the time.

**SLIDE      Greed – Mr. Krabs**

Obviously Mr. Krabs is greedy and desires money. How could Greed not be Krabs? He actually sang about the power of greed in "Selling Out".

**SLIDE          Envy – Plankton**

Plankton is envious of Mr. Krabs because The Krusty Krab is a success while The Chum Bucket is a failure. His envy drives him to try to steal the Krabby Patty secret formula.

**SLIDE          Pride – Sandy**

Sandy takes a lot of pride in who she is and where she comes from. She takes pride in the fact that she is from Texas and likes to let everyone know it. She also takes pride in the fact that she is a mammal and a land creature, like in the episode "Pressure" where she tried to prove land critters were better than sea critters.

**SLIDE          Gluttony – Gary**

I actually think this one is pretty funny. Did you ever notice the running gag in Spongebob where they say "don't forget to feed Gary" or Sponge says "I gotta go feed Gary". Gary even ran away that time when SpongeBob forgot to feed him. Gluttony usually refers to the overindulgence of food so I'm guessing this one fits him pretty well.

**SLIDE          Lust – SpongeBob**

There is only one character and one sin left and I know what you're thinking. It does seem a little weird and curious at first but I have given it a lot of thought. Lust in one definition is "excessive love of others". I think this one works best for Spongebob. He shows his love of others with his over eagerness to do good and help people. If anything is true about SpongeBob it's that he loves everyone around him, even if they don't exactly love him back.

And lust is the LEAST deadly of the sins according to the list...so there you go! Let's do remember that it IS a cartoon!

**SLIDE          The Seven Deadly Sins**

What I really appreciate about the fact that these seven deadly sins are characterized in a popular cartoon is it recognizes that we all struggle with the things. I have been trying to be honest with you in this series and Zack was refreshingly honest last week about how he struggled with these sins. Remember that sin is brokenness between us and God and us and other people and even within ourselves. The truth is that all of us struggle with all of these things at one time or another in our lives.

Just this past week I struggled with gluttony. I went back to the San

Francisco Bay Area two weeks ago to visit my mother and we visited Pier 39 which is down by fisherman's wharf. They have a Marina's Candy Store which is based out of Santa Cruz and inside the store they have these vast tubs of salt water taffy. I love salt water taffy and we can't get it here very easily because of the climate and so I bought several bags and this box thinking it would bring a back and share it with all of you as a gift.

This is all I have left, this small bag and a few pieces in the box. Sorry! I did share with the staff at our staff meeting on Wednesday and I noticed that several people took several pieces and not just one because you can't eat just one salt water taffy when it's really good and fresh and chewy. There is something inside of each of us that worries there won't be enough and so we take more than we need and I can tell you right now that I've eaten much more salt water taffy than I have needed over the past week and a half!

I struggle with gluttony and there are really two forms of it that we want to recognize today. The first form of gluttony is the ordinary average garden-variety version where we struggle with it and is not good for us to over consume, but it's not necessarily deadly. The second form of gluttony is where we over consume to appoint that it does have deadly consequences for our body and our soul. The reality is that gluttony to move from that first formed the second form rather easily and quickly and quietly which is how it sneaks up on us and becomes deadly.

In the end, gluttony can become idolatry where we worship the food or the alcohol or the tobacco or whatever it is we are consuming and it comes between us and God. It breaks our relationship with God and with other people and wounds our soul. It turns us into something that we were not intended to be and there is this brokenness that we call sin which happens because of gluttony.

I would say that every single one of us in this room at some point or another struggle with that first form of gluttony and in some ways this is our national sin as a country. Most other countries in the world recognize that Americans struggle with gluttony and we provide an economic engine for consumption in the world. The national statistic is that 68% of us are overweight in America and Johns Hopkins University in a recent study estimated that by the year 2015 the number will rise to 75% or more if we continue on our current trend. We have several national campaign aimed at childhood obesity because it is becoming the number one cause of illness among children, leading to a number of childhood diseases on the rise.

This trend seems to have begun in 1985 according to the Center for disease control. If you go on their website, which I did this week to do some research, you will find these maps of the United States recording the obesity rate in different states up until the year 2010. White means there was no data but you see that most states are in the light blue or medium blue shades in 1985 which indicates a low number of people who are obese, 0-15%. Let's see what happens as we move from 1985 to 2010.

**SLIDE        CDC Obesity Trends 1985- 2010**

**(This is a Powerpoint show you can drop directly into Media Shout. Slide operators—please click through them so you can see the progression of the shaded areas.)**

In 1991 the category of over 15% shows up as dark blue on the map.

In 1997, the category of more than 20% shows up in beige. You will notice that Colorado stays pretty consistent over this period of time.

In 2001 the category of over 25% shows up as orange. Now we finally begin to catch up here in Colorado.

In 2005 we get the category of over 30% showing up in bright orange.

Colorado stays in the blue until 2010 when we turn to beige, and do you know where we are in 2013? Yes, we are an orange state now.

This last slide shows us that progression all on one slide and we have not stopped yet. I just read an article this last week that obesity is now the number one cause of disease among adults in the United States.

**SLIDE        Gluttony**

Let's be clear that gluttony and obesity are not the same thing. Gluttony and being overweight are not necessarily the same thing. If you are a glutton there is a likelihood that you might find yourself overweight over time, especially if you're gluttony is in the area of food. In the area of food, if I consume more calories than I burn than I have to pack it somewhere unless I am fortunate enough to have a metabolism that burns all of those calories.

By the way, Zack was supposed to preach this sermon on gluttony but as you can tell he is one of those people who can eat and eat and eat and never gain any weight. He thought it might be hypocritical of him to preach the sermon on gluttony and so he asked me to do it. Imagine how that makes me feel, but hey that's another sermon!

Really interesting paradoxes in our culture is that as we become more obese as a society we continually put in front of ourselves models, both men and women, who are skinny to the point of being unhealthy. This means we end up valuing something that is completely unrealistic for most of us, even before we were caught up in the consuming passion. I want us all to remember, especially the women in the room, how the artists of the Renaissance depicted women. Never in the history of humanity have we ever pictured beauty as a size 0 or a size one or two until the last 20 years. Don't get me wrong, women are beautiful no matter what size they are, but our current depiction of women and beauty is a bit distorted in terms of realistic expectations for 99% of us.

Michael Angelo depicts the ideal man and woman in the Garden of Eden on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in this way. Take a look at this depiction of God creating Eve.

#### **SLIDE          God creates Eve**

That she look like a size 2? This was the ideal picture of beauty in the time of Michelangelo. If most of today's supermodels showed up on the doorstep of Michelangelo back in his time he would've thought they were emaciated or starving to death.

My point is that we need to be careful about not getting caught up in unrealistic images of what our bodies size or weight should be. Even that chart that you see in your doctor's office which describe ideal body weight were based on actuary tables by MetLife insurance in the 1950s. I can't figure out how I could ever become the size we should be based on my body type and my genetic makeup.

#### **SLIDE          What is gluttony?**

So what is gluttony? Gluttony comes from the Latin word **gluttire** which means to "gulp down." The literal definition is the over-indulgence and over-consumption of anything to the point of waste. In the early church gluttony was considered a sin because of the excessive desire for food, and its withholding from the needy. Gluttony can be interpreted as selfishness; essentially placing concern with one's own interests above the well-being or interests of others.

Medieval church leaders like Thomas Aquinas took a more expansive view of gluttony, arguing that it could also include an obsessive anticipation of meals, and the constant eating of delicacies and excessively costly foods. He also talked about eating too eagerly, eating too daintily and eating wildly.

Gluttony is consuming more than you need, more than it takes to satisfy you and more than your fair share. Gluttony is consuming to the point that it hurts you and takes away from others. Gluttony actually diminishes pleasure because of its overconsumption.

This means that gluttony is not just about what we eat anything that we consume in excess which could be alcohol or tobacco. Gluttony is also not just the physical act of consuming but being obsessed with that thing that you want to consume so you're constantly thinking about it.

Some of us struggle because we can't stop thinking about eating. We can't stop thinking about that next drink and when we're going to get it. Our consuming passion is thinking about that next thing we are going to consume. This is what gluttony looks like.

Let's be clear that we are meant to enjoy eating. God gave us taste buds and pleasure centers in our brain that are stimulated when we eat good food. But pleasure is not about consuming more and more. If you eat too much then the pleasure actually begin to diminish and you no longer enjoy eating. There comes this point where the pleasure not only diminishes the pain begins to happen.

I love salt water taffy which is why I bought a lot of it when I was in California. I especially like the kind that taste like fruit, but after you have five or six pieces they begin to not taste as good. After you have 10 or more they begin to not feel as good. This is what happens when we become gluttonous. We moved beyond the pleasure that God has designed in the food we eat and move towards discomfort and even pain when we consume too much.

When I was a kid we never got soda in our house. The only time we get to drink anything like Coca-Cola was when I went to my grandparents and they had Tab which was the diet Coca-Cola of the day. It came in one of these which is an 8 ounce bottle. Before long there were 12 ounce cans and then we moved to a 20 ounce bottle and the new norm is a 24 ounce bottle.

We only went to McDonald's on \$.19 hamburger day and you got an order of french fries and there was no option of small, medium or large. It was just a bag like this one. Today we have supersized and it's the best value. The best value in terms of a drink at McDonald's is a dollar because every drink is a dollar now. The largest drink you could get was 22 ounces but the best value today is 54 ounces.

This is simply indicative of a deep held belief that we come to cling to which

is that more is better, and our life is really about having more. More is better and our life purpose is more. If you can have a car with 200 hp isn't it better to have one with 400 hp? If you have a 2000 ft.<sup>2</sup> house isn't it better to have a 4500 ft.<sup>2</sup> house? More is better and what I live for is more, and that will lead me to gluttony if I'm honest.

We find that the Scriptures have a lot to say about the lack of self-control or the lack of understanding about what life is really about and that is not about the abundance of our possessions. The Bible talks about how much we consume and how it is we are to share. And the Bible talks about sin and food. Let's remember a few of those places together.

The story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden is where it begins. Do you remember what God says to them? God says, "It's an all-you-can-eat buffet. You can have all you want of anything you want in this place. There is just one thing that is off-limits, but everything else you can eat."

Do you remember the sin that launched all the rest of them? It was eating and the desire for something more than what they could have. It was made to look like the most magnificent thing of all but it didn't lead to life. That's our archetypal story which paints a picture for us of our struggle with sin, and for many of us are struggle with consuming more than we need of things that are good for us to begin with. The story is about much more than that but it's about eating as much as anything else. For the sake of a bite of a piece of fruit, Adam and Eve gave up Paradise.

What are you willing to give up to consume and to have just a bit more? What are you willing to give up so you can have what is not even good for you?

We're going to learn this fall about Jacob but he was born a twin with his brother Esau. Esau is older and he has the birthright and he lives to eat. Jacob is a cunning man and Jacob realizes that his brother would sell his own birthright for a bowl of stew. Jacob is an excellent cook and so while Esau is out in the fields working, Jacob prepares the tastiest do. Esau walks in and says to his brother, "Give me a bowl of that stuff. I have to have that it smells great!"

Jacob says, "Sure brother, but for your birthright. I'll even give you the recipe to this great meal for your birthright. I will make it for you every month for year for your birthright."

What is Esau say? "I have to have it." He sells his birthright and spends the rest of his life regretting his decision. He gave up his birthright because he



couldn't stop his appetite and there is a metaphor in there for each one of us.

The Israelites are wandering in the desert for 40 years and God provides. What does God feed them? Every day God give them just enough manna in the wilderness for that day. There comes a point where the Israelites, the Moses and say, "We are sick to death of manna. We don't want any more manna. Backing Egypt we had cucumbers and leaks and melons. We want to go back to Egypt because the food is better, even though we live in slavery."

Can you imagine their willingness to return to slavery so they could have cucumbers and leaks and melons? Many of us become enslaved to our appetites and desires to consume.

For each of these groups, in the process of struggling with their desires for little bit more or the thing they were supposed to have—when gluttony took over in their lives—they put their desires on the altar of their hearts. They bowed down to the things that they most wanted and desired. When that happened the venial sin of gluttony turned into the deadly sin of gluttony. This became idolatry because it became the thing they lived for. They lived to eat and not love God or love their neighbor. They lived to have just a little bit more and not to surrender themselves to the work of the kingdom of God. They became slaves to their desires.

I'm guessing that most of us struggle at some point or another, I know I do, with the venial sin of gluttony but the more we consume the closer we get to the deadly sin of gluttony.

#### **SLIDE        How do we break free of gluttony?**

I want to mention four things that I think we can do that I share with you in the past in terms of dealing with our consumption and our need to consume. You know these things and so I'm really going to be just reminding you of them. These are commonsense things to help us remember as we struggle with our own brokenness that can lead to gluttony.

#### **SLIDE        Split the meal**

If you are struggling with the sin of gluttony, when you go out to eat, split the meal. Most of the meals that we get are really enough for two meals anyway. Even if you're out with someone and they want a different meal when you're having, cut the meal in half when you get it and take out of it home for a meal later. I can say with all honesty that when I eat my entire meal at most restaurants I feel bloated and tired afterwards. What's interesting is that God

designed our bodies the energized after we eat yet most often that is not how we feel is it? Just try it and see what happens, especially if you struggle with gluttony.

**SLIDE        Never buy on impulse**

Once again this is not rocket science. You can also add to this not to eat on impulse. After you eat your first helping of food, before you go back for seconds, ask yourself if you really need that. Wait 15 min. and see what happens. You will find that your stomach begins to settle down and you will realize that you are full. When you are shopping at a store or in the mall and you see something that's not the list are not what you went into the store for, wait an hour before you buy it. They will even hold it for you at layaway. How often do you think you will go back and buy that thing if you try that? The reality is that once you have time to think about it you realize that you don't really need it. If something costs more than \$100, way a day and if something costs more than \$1000 week two weeks and see if you really need it. Most of those things end up in storage in your garage or at the thrift store anyway.

**SLIDE        Ask the right questions:**

**SLIDE        Do really need this?**

**SLIDE        Will I feel better after consuming it?**

**SLIDE        What are the consequences of consuming this?**

Will I have to put on credit be paying for it for months? Will it cause a fight my marriage? Will it keep me from being able to give one I want to give?

**SLIDE        Recognize what we are really hungry for.**

The final thing I want us to remember as we close is to remember what is our hearts really need. Remember that when Jesus was tempted the very first temptation he experienced while in the desert for 40 days came from the devil. Jesus was fasting that entire time when the devil comes to them and says, "Hey dude, aren't you hungry? I know about this fasting thing but I think it's highly overrated Jesus, don't you? You have to be hungry about now. Come on, you have the power. You can make anything you want to so take the stones and turn them into bread. Each and break your fast."

Do you remember what Jesus says?

**SLIDE        *"We don't live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God."***

Your life does not consist in the abundance of your possessions. Your life is

more than food and drink and clothing. There is something more than just what you consume. Jesus would say these words to his disciples in Luke 12:22.

**SLIDE      *22 Then, turning to his disciples, Jesus said, "That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food to eat or enough clothes to wear. 23 For life is more than food, and your body more than clothing.***

In John 6 we read these words.

**SLIDE      *32 Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, Moses didn't give you bread from heaven. My Father did. And now he offers you the true bread from heaven. 33 The true bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."***  
***34 "Sir," they said, "give us that bread every day."***  
***35 Jesus replied, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."***

My stepfather was a great guy who taught me how to play football and how to fish. He taught me how to live in the wilderness and hike and camp and was a wonderful man. His problem was he liked to drink. He would drink one beer and then a second and usually a third or fourth while we watched the 49ers play. Pretty soon, beer wasn't enough and so he drank vodka. First it was a glass and then it was out of the bottle and often it was bottles which were hidden around the house.

When he drank he changed. I was 12 the first time I experienced one of his alcohol induced rages. Sometimes he would drink so much he would just pass out which was easier than when he went out the front door because you got scared about whether he was going to get into a car or not. He would sometimes yell at the neighbors and none more than one occasion relieved himself on the front lawn. These are things he would never do when he was sober.

What was the thirsty for? What was this about? He went through two families and to set kids. He finally drank himself into a coma and died alone. He had so much potential but on the altar of his life was placed a six-pack and a bottle.

In 1995 BBC did an interview with Princess Di where she talked about her struggle with bulimia. She said:

*I had bulimia for a number of years and it's like a secret disease. You inflict*

*upon yourself because your self-esteem is at a low ebb and you don't think you are worthy or valuable the way you are. You fill your stomach up four or five times a day and sometimes more and he gives you a feeling of comfort or moment. It would feel like arms were holding me for that moment. Then I would feel disgusted and ashamed and sick. I would make myself sick and then do it again. In the end it was always a temporary comfort. It was a repetitive pattern which only destroyed.*

What was she looking for? Was it really food? Or was it that she was really hungry for someone who would love her for who she really was? Maybe she just wanted someone to accept her and hold her and not let her go.

Prof. Mary Louise Bringle at Brevard College wrote about her struggle with gluttony. For her the struggle with gluttony had to do with the fear that she had in life that there was not going to be another chance. She had this moment right now to take what she could and she better seize it. She would taste something delicious and think that she would never have a chance to have that thing again. She lived her life with the fear that she could never have that thing again. She said, "I did not trust God. I did trust in my life that things were going to be okay. I had to eat drink and be merry because I didn't know if tomorrow would come."

If I am honest I get the feeling like that sometimes. When I do I remember the Israelites who were told by God in the wilderness to take just enough bread for that one day. But they didn't trust and so they began to board the manna and put it in storage jars. When they opened up the storage jars the next day they would be filled with maggots.

God said, "Didn't I tell you to trust me just for today?"

Do you remember what Jesus told us to pray in the Lord's prayer that we pray every week?

**SLIDE        "Give us this day our DAILY bread."**

We don't pray for tomorrow's bread but we pray for today. We learned a few years ago that the actual wording in this prayer is, "Give us just enough for today. Not more than I need but just enough for today."

We all need to know that there is one who is going to walk with us each and every day and there will always be enough because God has promised he will always be with us.

When you are buying and buying and consuming and consuming, what are you really hungry for? What are you looking for? Are you looking for status or

affirmation?

Do you feel an emptiness inside? That emptiness is not going to be filled by anything you consume. It is filled by the one who said these words.

**SLIDE**      ***“I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”***

What's on the altar of your life? What is it that you can hardly resist? What is it that you focus on and dream about?

What I would suggest to you is that you and I will never really no satisfaction until we have eaten of the bread of life, symbolized in the communion bread that we will break next week together and worship. He is the bread of life and when he sits on the altar in your life, what you begin to find is that you were no longer full and bloated. You find your heart satisfied.

I wrestle in my life with the fact that I know this but I have to remember it each day. That's part of what we do when we say our mealtime grace, "Lord help me remember you are the bread of life. Be the bread of life for me. Help me be satisfied and you."

That's exactly what Myron discovered when he committed his life to Jesus Christ. You heard Myron talk about his struggle with food and alcohol as we opened this sermon and you should know that in his 60s he gave his life to Jesus Christ and began to be filled and satisfied for the first time ever. He no longer has food issues and he no longer drinks alcohol. He serves God and his church and many other ministries. He will tell you that these years have been the best of his life because he finally feels satisfied.

That's my hope and prayer for you and for me. I want to invite you if you're willing to pray this prayer of confession on the video screen. Each week we have been being honest with God through prayer at the end of the sermon that is our way of saying I struggle with the things. I would like to invite you now to take some quite time to bring to God whatever you need to bring. Then, if you are willing, join me with the prayer of confession on the video screens.

**SLIDE**      **(Blank for silent prayer)**

If you're willing would you join me in this prayer?

**SLIDE**

***Oh God, we confess that we sometimes consume so much that we are miserable. We think we will be satisfied but instead we find ourselves longing for more. We take more than our fair share because we think it will fill that hole in our hearts. Help us to remember that our life is more than food and our body is more than clothing. Help us to know in our hearts that you are the bread of life and if we will receive that gift of life from you we will never be hungry again. Satisfy our thirst for you are our living water. Amen.***

*In the words of the Apostle Paul remember that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Thanks be to God for this glorious gift, because through God all things are possible and you are forgiven. **In the name of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven and set free. Amen.***

# *“Gluttony”*

Theme: The Seven Deadly Sins

Scripture: *Luke 12:22-23, John 6:32-35*

Things I’d like to remember from today’s sermon:

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Meditation Moments for Monday, August 26 – Read **Matthew 23:25-28** – Jesus defied many of the legalistic rules and rituals the religious leaders demanded in his day. He also, however, opposed their efforts to look pious while privately living self-indulgent lives. People would whitewash tombs as a warning, because touching a grave could cause ritual defilement. But whitewash or no, there was still a corpse inside.

- Greed may lead us to simply buy and hoard stuff, even if it sits unused. Gluttony and self-indulgence, on the other hand, are about consuming. How can gluttony tug at people (like religious leaders) who might fear being caught in sins like lust or wrath? What inner and social forces make gluttony “respectable”?
- If gluttony was, in some ways, a relatively “respectable” sin, why did Jesus use such strong language? What made the self-indulgence of the religious leaders hypocritical? In what ways can an addiction to consumption (of food or other pleasures) be like a dead body at the center of a person’s life?

Tuesday, August 27– Read **Proverbs 23:19-21** – Biblical wisdom saw gluttony, in all of its forms, as sapping our life’s energy. Gluttony is not about weight or body shape. It’s about trying to satisfy our appetite for anything (food, power, fun, even beauty or thinness!) in ways that put that desire at the center of life. In gluttony, we end up serving a false god.

- When is indulging in too much food, or anything else, a coping behavior, a symptom of a deeper inner pain or problem? Under what conditions can the urge to consume too much become a problem in itself, rather than a symptom? How effectively can trust in God help us in either of these situations?
- We’ve seen the trend in the last decade for American restaurants, from fast-food drive throughs to fine-dining establishments, to “supersize” portions. Does this tactic appeal to you as a customer? Why or why not? In what ways does it relate to the subject of “gluttony”?

Wednesday, August 28– Read **Colossians 2:16-23** – Facing any of the deadly sins, our first thought often is, “Let’s make strict rules, for ourselves and others.” We tend to think the key to too much indulgence might be a strict diet —“don’t touch, don’t taste, don’t handle.” Paul tells the Christians in Colossae that just abiding by outward rules leaves the root problem untouched.

- Regulations, Paul says, seem wise, but in themselves they do not change our inner desires.

Have you ever tried to put yourself on a strict program (for any purpose) when you had not inwardly “bought in” to what you were doing? What were the results? Why does inward change generally precede lasting outward change?

- The “rule-makers” Paul described were pressuring or judging the Colossians for not following their rules. Do you mainly view others with concern and insight, or with criticism and judgment? In what ways do our efforts to control one another cast light on our tendency to want to stand in God’s place?

Thursday, August 29 – Read Titus 2:11-14 – Paul says the point of self-control is not to take good things out of life, but to free us to live effectively and joyfully for God. Self-control serves the same purpose as the brakes or steering on a car. They aren’t to eliminate the car’s power and speed. Instead, they direct the car, making the power and speed useful and effective.

- Do you more often equate the words “self-control” with joy and freedom, or with a sense of deprivation and sadness? What patterns or models have shaped your response to the words (and the idea) of self-control? How can God help you to value more fully the positive impact of self-control on your life?
- Jesus gave himself to “redeem” us from all wickedness (v. 14). The Greek version of the Old Testament used the Greek word for “redeem” to describe God freeing Israel from slavery in Egypt. In what ways are you finding greater freedom in your life? Are you feeling the Spirit’s nudge in any area where you are still in “slavery”?

Friday, August 30– Read Matthew 6:25-34 – Jesus invited us to trust that God really cares for us. In God’s hands, he said, we are safe for all eternity, no matter what challenges this life brings. He saw, as we often do not, that our obsession with food and clothing is usually rooted in fear. We consume more and more (and more) now, because we fear that sometime we may not have enough.

- Which of the good things in your life do you believe you have because of God’s care and generosity? Which of them do you believe you have because of your hard work, initiative, drive or careful planning? Do you see God as having any part in your ability to work hard, show initiative or do careful planning?
- Jesus says that those who do not know God worry constantly about day-to-day things like food and clothing. In what ways have you sensed that your commitment to Jesus has reduced the “worry quotient” in your life? What additional burdens of worry would you like to ask Jesus to help you lay aside?

Saturday August 31 Personal Application: “If we say that we have not sinned, we are fooling ourselves, and the truth isn’t in our hearts. But if we confess our sins to God, he can always be trusted to forgive us and take our sins away.” (1 John 1:8, 9, *Contemporary English Version*) Confess to God any areas where gluttony has controlled you, and ask the Holy Spirit to grow self-control in your life. Need help? Check out <http://www.fumcdurango.org/ministries/adult-ministry-durango-co/celebrate-recovery-durango-co-lorado>

Family Activity: Read Psalm 139:14. Discuss how our bodies are one of God’s wonderful creations. Share ways we care for our bodies. Talk about ways we can improve how we care for our bodies by eating healthier foods and a healthful amount of them. Review the five food groups and healthy



amounts of each at <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/food-groups/> Create a family food pyramid. Using magazines and grocery ads, cut out pictures of foods from each of the food groups. Glue the pictures onto poster board in the shape of a pyramid, keeping the foods from each food group together. Pay attention to the portion sizes in each food group. Display your pyramid. Thank God for food and ask for help in eating healthfully.

*Prayer: Dear Lord Jesus, thank you for opening my eyes this week to examine honestly my tendency toward self-indulgence. Instead of self, Lord, I desire to be consumed by my love for You. Thank you for promising to set me free from anything that is not You and is not from You. Help me always to seek first Your kingdom and Your righteousness. Amen.*