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Andrew M. Davis

Sermon Notes

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Overcoming Spiritual Intimidation, Part 4

Colossians 2:8-23

What an incredibly amazing world we live in... how majestic are its beauties and its pleasures:

- The pleasures of sight: I have seen the rolling grasslands of South Dakota, where the winds breath causes the tall grass to sway like the undulating of the ocean; I have seen the deep purple and orange hues of a sunset over the Grand Canyon, and seen the Colorado River snaking its way like a silver thread far below; I have seen the gentle smile of one of my children when they were just babies, when they recognized me and their face lit up with joy; I have seen an electrical storm in which the lightning flashes across the immense sky of Montana
- The pleasures of sound: I have heard the deep sound of a wind blowing at night in Tuckerman's Ravine on Mount Washington, almost a three-dimensional sound; I have heard Handel's Messiah played by incredibly skilled musicians; I have heard the laughter of children playing in a park; the powerful roar of a lion in a game reserve near Nairobi, Kenya; the satisfying crack of the bat when a home run is hit; the sweet sounds of a skillfully played piano or trumpet
- The pleasures of taste: the sweetness of honey, the savory sauces of a skillfully prepared roast, the tartness of a Macintosh apple I have hand-picked from an orchard, the succulence of a T-bone steak and the richness of a double-chocolate cake
- The pleasures of smell: from the fragrance of wild flowers after a spring shower to the aroma of a forest in the fall; from the scent of a baby after a warm bath to the enticing smells of a Thanksgiving feast wafting from the kitchen; from the smell of leather to that of exquisite perfume
- The pleasures of touch: the cool sensations of a bolt of silk cloth I bought for Christi in China; the rough feeling of tree bark, and the sensations of a perfectly sanded piece of wood; the softness of a kitten's fur and the scratchy experience of a man's face when he needs a shave

We live in a physical world... a world that proclaims the greatness of its Creator

According to the Apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 4:1, it is the doctrine of demons to deny the goodness of these physical sensations... to treat the physical body with its five senses as if it were intrinsically evil

In his classic allegory of the Christian battle for salvation, *The Holy War*, John Bunyan likens our souls to a walled city (which he calls Mansoul); at this city has five gates:

Eargate, Eyegate, Mouthgate, Nosegate, and Feelgate

Satan has marshaled his wicked attack on our souls through these five gates: tempting us to lust and to sin by sensual temptations

But the answer to the Holy War is NOT to brick over the five gates of the city! But rather to set faithful guards over each one, and to be sure that nothing enters that is not from God; because the opposite error abounds in our age... lack of all-self-control

Proverbs 25:28 Like a city whose walls are broken down is a man who lacks self-control.

Therefore, in our Holy War, we are constantly tempted to go to one extreme or the other: toward asceticism on one hand or gluttony on the other

Martin Luther: Constant struggle of sinful human to find balance, likened us to a drunken peasant trying to ride home on a donkey; leaning too much left, he falls off into the mud; then, leaning too much right, he falls off again

Two extremes:

On September 15 of this year, a 30-year-old man in Guangzhou, China, died in a cyber cafe after a three-day gaming binge... he'd been playing online computer games for over eighty hours non-stop. He found something he loved and he couldn't control it anymore... he was in bondage and it killed him

On the opposite extreme,

In 1999, a 40 year-old Australian named Verity Linn died from starvation, having followed a bizarre "SPIRITUAL cleansing" philosophy which advocates extreme fasting. The philosophy was crafted by a New Age guru named Jasmuheen, a 42 year-old former Australian businesswoman named Ellen Greve. Jasmuheen claimed to have 5,000 devotees to her "breatharian" program.

Extreme indulgence on one side, extreme self-denial on the other

Ecclesiastes 7:16-18 Do not be overrighteous, neither be overwise-- why destroy yourself? ¹⁷ Do not be overwicked, and do not be a fool-- why die before your time? ¹⁸ It is good to grasp the one and not let go of the other. The man who fears God will avoid all extremes.

The Bible alone teaches the proper balance in the use of physical pleasures... of food, drink, clothing, entertainment

That balance is extremely difficult to achieve, since our hearts are DESIRE FACTORIES and easily given to immoderate attachments

John Piper, *Future Grace*: **“The human heart produces desires as fire produces heat. As surely as the sparks fly upward, the heart pumps out desire after desire for a happier future... the state of the heart is shown by the things that satisfy its desires.”**

The Holy Spirit alone, applying the texts of the Bible, can help us navigate this physical world

I. Complete in Christ

- A. Review: The Supremacy of Christ
- B. Christ is Complete, We Are Complete in Him
- C. Christ Head Over Every Power and Authority
- D. Gospel Truths Flow from This: How Full Are We in Christ?
 - 1. We are FULLY CIRCUMCISED (Spiritually)
 - 2. We are FULLY ALIVE
 - 3. We are FULLY FORGIVEN
 - 4. We are FULLY FREE from the Law
 - 5. We are FULLY TRIUMPHANT over Satan

II. Satan’s Intimidating Voice: “You Are Incomplete!”

- 1. Satan’s goal is to make us feel inadequate in Christ
- 2. Then we will need to ADD something to Christ
 - a. Add philosophy... human wisdom and insights
 - b. Add legalism... human religious works
 - c. Add mysticism... human religious experiences
 - d. Add asceticism... human religious self-denial
- 3. Add them all... and you LOSE Christ, lose assurance, lose joy, lose power

III. The Intimidation of Philosophy

Colossians 2:8 See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.

IV. The Intimidation of Legalism

Colossians 2:16-17 Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. ¹⁷ These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

C.J. Mahaney: “Legalism is seeking to achieve forgiveness from God and acceptance by God through obedience to God.” [*The Cross-Centered Life*, p. 25]

V. The Intimidation of Mysticism

[ESV] *Colossians 2:18-19 Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, ¹⁹ and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.*

A. The Threat to the Colossian Church

1. “Higher knowledge”... mystery religions; for the enlightened special believer; keys of knowledge help you ascend higher and higher in spirituality
2. Emanations (angels) would help you make the journey... like New Age meditation, with angelic spirit guides expanding your mind and lifting you into a new spiritual realm
3. “Worship of angels”... really they are worshipping these emanations, these spirit beings, of whom Christ was one, so they taught

B. Definition of Mysticism

Webster’s Dictionary: “The experience of mystical union or direct communion with ultimate reality” or “Direct knowledge of God, of spiritual truth, of ultimate reality attainable through immediate intuition, insight, illumination in a way different from ordinary sense perception or rational process.”

The BAD mysticism is any spiritual experience NOT given by the Holy Spirit, NOT consistent with the Scriptures, NOT focused on Christ

1. Sam Storms, “Enjoying God Ministries” has done a great deal of study on this... definition:

Good Mysticism: Mysticism is an approach to Christianity that focuses on preparation for, consciousness of, and reaction to what can be described as ***the immediate or direct presence of God***. Emphasis is placed on the subjective or "felt" experience of being in an intimate relationship with God, what some mystics refer to as "spiritual ecstasy". The earthly goal of this relationship is personal ethical and spiritual transformation, the heavenly culmination of which is *the beatific vision*

C. Mysticism's Great Danger

1. Worship of angels is directly contrary to Scripture
2. Seeking of spiritual experiences apart from God's revelation in Scripture opens us up to demonic influences
3. Not every supernatural experience is from God... Satan is a supernatural being who masquerades as an angel of light
4. It can lead to false doctrines... both Islam and Mormonism come from revelations given by angels
5. Claiming spiritual experiences can set us up for spiritual pride and a minimizing of the sufficiency of Scripture

D. BUT the Danger of Deadness

Psalm 63:1-5 O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water. ² I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. ³ Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you.

E. Balance Found in Christ

1. We have been given fullness in Christ
2. In Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge
3. We don't need any angels to tell us more spiritual things... Christ is the creator and king of the angels, and none of them are the Son of God
4. The quest for mystical enlightenment apart from Scripture begins in falsehood (as though Christ is insufficient) and frequently ends in heresy (in which the mystic arrogantly disdains church leaders who have not experienced what they have experienced)

VI. The Intimidation of Asceticism

Colossians 2:20-23 Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: ²¹ "Do not

handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!'"? ²² These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. ²³ Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

A. Colossian Heresy: The Evil of the Body Addressed by Asceticism

1. "Basic principles of this world" = "stoichea" related to the atomic elements, things in a line (like the alphabet); hence the beginning "ABCs" of philosophy or wisdom
2. Paul is saying that Christians should have grown past these basic things with its rules and regulations
3. Most probably, Paul felt these BASIC PRINCIPLES included Jewish ceremonial regulations as well as pagan philosophy
4. SUBMIT = "dogmatidzo" from which we get "dogmatic"... the Colossian Christians were allowing themselves to be dogmatized by rules and regulations not coming from Christ
5. AS THOUGH YOU STILL BELONG: "why as though you still belonged to [the world] do you submit to its rules"... in a sense Christians are no longer part of this world system... we have graduated to a higher level, a higher life
 - a. That graduation means we will think of the human body and physical life in this physical universe in GROWN-UP TERMS now, as God would, as Christ did... we neither hate the body nor do we live for the bodily drives
 - b. We now see the body properly... the present body is a gift of God, though corrupted by sin and headed for death
 - c. BUT we will spend eternity in a resurrection body, in a perfect and PHYSICAL universe
 - d. Therefore, we don't need to follow the rules of asceticism NOR do we fall into the bondage of gluttony... we are called to live a supernatural life while waiting for the resurrection
6. The Colossian heretics were teaching freedom from bodily drives by asceticism: DO NOT HANDLE; DO NOT TASTE; DO NOT TOUCH
7. Paul says these rules as destined to perish with use: they are part of the passing world system, not part of the resurrected life in Christ... they are based on human wisdom, not God's wisdom

8. They seem wise, they seem holy, they seem righteous... but they lack ANY POWER in slaying sin; sensual lust can rage every bit as much in a man fasting in the desert as in a man lounging in a brothel

B. Definition of Asceticism

1. Asceticism is the harsh treatment of the body for spiritual purposes, specifically in the denial of good gifts of God (like food, clothing, shelter) in the assumption that such self-denial will make us more pleasing to God
2. Intrinsic to the Colossian heresy was the idea that the body was evil and that material things themselves were evil... therefore, to avoid feeding the body anything (food, clothing, sleep, comfort of any kind) was somehow well pleasing to God
3. See the statements

Vs. 21 "Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!"

Vs. 23 Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body

- a. These display the Colossian hatred for physical life
- b. The desire for spiritual ascendancy through physical pain and suffering

C. Asceticism's Long History

1. Almost every false religion in the world has had its ascetics...
2. Hinduism is full of "holy men" who fast for weeks on end, who sit motionless and deny all pleasures to the physical body... Buddhism seeks enlightenment the same way
3. Even Christianity has had its share
 - a. Certainly Moses fasted forty days, as did Jesus Christ
 - b. Elijah lived in the desert and ate tiny amounts of food brought him by ravens
 - c. John the Baptist dressed in camel's hair, and ate locusts and wild honey
 - d. In this same pattern, Christian monks began the life of the spiritual athlete
 - i) After the Roman persecutions ended, these monks sought another way to subdue the flesh... the way of the ascetic, the desert-dwelling

hermit, fasting for weeks, wearing a hair shirt to afflict the flesh, suffering heat in the day and cold at night

ii) ALL OF IT SELF-IMPOSED

iii) Athanasius wrote of Anthony, the founder of Western monasticism, who never changed his shirt or washed his feet

iv) Simeon Stylites

Simeon Stylites was born in 390 AD at Cilicia, in today's Syria. He was a devout person and taught that the only way one could achieve true happiness was to deny the body and concentrate on prayer.

Most of his life was spent in fasting, and practicing other forms of self-denial. After spending years in several monasteries, he began a regimen of self-discipline so harsh it almost killed him. Eating but once a week, giving much of his food to the poor. On occasions he bound his body with cord so tightly that it cut his skin and flesh. And after his wounds healed, the abbot of the monastery ordered him to leave.

He began to live as a hermit, first in a cave, then later on top of a mountain. There he chained himself to a rock, until he "learned" that all he needed was a firm will, and he would be able to live without the restraints of life. Word of his religious devotion spread and he began to draw a crowd. In 423, to get away from them, he erected a twelve-foot-high pillar, atop which he lived for the next four years. The rest of his life he spent living on progressively higher pillars, rarely sleeping, wearing only the skins of wild animals.

His final pillar was over sixty feet high. Friends used to bring him tiny amounts of food which he would haul up to the top of his pillar in a bucket

v) Even Martin Luther, before his conversion, fell into this trap... sleeping on the stone floor with no blanket or covering all night through the German winter in his cloister cell in the Augustinian monastery... he almost ruined his health

vi) So also George Whitefield, before his conversion, fasted so long and denied himself warm clothes against the English winter that one of his hands turned black; he stayed out all night during a storm, allowing the wind to lash his exposed body; his fasting was so extreme that, by the end, he could barely creep upstairs

All of this comes from the belief that extreme asceticism will subdue the flesh and make the person more acceptable to God; the root cause is the idea that the physical body is somehow evil

e. Even worse, the forbidding of marriage by clergy made marriage itself seem dirty and sinful

Colossians 2:21 "Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!"?

1 Corinthians 7:1 Now concerning the things about which you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman.

i) Roman Catholic church enforced celibacy on all their priests

[Council of Elvira \(300-306\)](#)

(Canon 33): It is decided that marriage be altogether prohibited to bishops, priests, and deacons, or to all clerics placed in the ministry, and that they keep away from their wives and not beget children; whoever does this, shall be deprived of the honor of the clerical office.

[Council of Carthage \(390\)](#)

(Canon 3): It is fitting that the holy bishops and priests of God ... observe perfect continence, so that they may obtain in all simplicity what they are asking from God;... It pleases us all that bishop, priest and deacon, guardians of purity, abstain from conjugal intercourse with their wives, so that those who serve at the altar may keep a perfect chastity

ii) Fundamental to this doctrine was a tinge of the Colossian heresy's distaste for the human body

iii) The Roman Catholic church tended to denigrate basic Christian marriage, and to assign married laypeople a lower level of piety compared to celibate men and women who became priests, monks, nuns, etc.... while not forbidding marriage, they seemed to frown on it

St. Jerome: (347-420) Catholic scholar, translated Bible into Latin, the "Vulgate" WAS the Bible for the Western church until the Reformation; ascetic, spent seven years living in a cave with minimal clothing and food, fasting, praying, studying the Scriptures; some of the harshest views of marriage come from him: Meditating on Paul's statements in 1 Corinthians 7, Jerome wrote:

Let us turn back to the chief point of the evidence: "It is good," he says, "for a man not to touch a woman." If it is good not to touch a woman, it is bad to touch one: for there is no opposite to goodness but badness. But if it be bad and the evil is pardoned, the reason for the concession is to prevent worse evil.

"The truth is that, in view of the purity of the body of Christ, all sexual intercourse is unclean"

'[H]e who loves his wife too ardently is an adulterer'

f. Martin Luther was able to cut through all this foolishness by renouncing his vow of celibacy and marrying an ex-nun, Katie von Bora, whom he'd helped escape the convent in a barrel:

Luther says he married for three reasons: to spite the pope and the devil, to please his father by continuing the family name, and to seal his witness and confirm his teaching before his martyrdom (he fully expected to be burned at the stake within a year).

He delighted in his marriage, and enjoyed the annoyance his freedom must have caused the Pope!!

After Luther, most of Protestantism had a proper view of marriage... as a gift from God

- g. BUT Some supposedly Christian groups did forbid marriage... the Shakers were a non-Christian cult posing in Christian guise
 - i) Based on the mystical revelations of Ann Lee, the daughter of an English blacksmith... in her visions came to realize that sex was the main cause of all the sin in the world; she came to believe she was the Second Coming of Christ
 - ii) Denied the resurrection of the body
 - iii) Basically forbade marriage because she taught that even marital relations were sinful

Summary: Christianity has frequently had to fight against ascetic movements that have denied the basic goodness of the body and the physical gifts of the world

D. Asceticism's Great Danger

1. Founded in a false understanding of the material world as intrinsically evil, it fails to receive the good gifts God intends to give us
2. Furthermore, it misunderstands salvation and the finished work of Christ on the cross... it actually insults grace and Christ's blood thinking that our discipline and physical pain is of greater value than Christ's blood in achieving forgiveness
3. It produces PRIDE... Paul mentions "humility" twice which NIV has as "false humility"

Colossians 2:18 Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions.

Colossians 2:23 Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility

4. It also calls the good gifts of God bad

1 Timothy 4:1-5 The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. ² Such teachings

come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron. ³ *They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth.* ⁴ *For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving,* ⁵ *because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer.*

1 Timothy 6:17 God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.

- a. Food is a good gift of God, and it is to be received with thanksgiving
- b. Marriage is a good gift of God, and it is to be received with thanksgiving
- c. Sensual pleasure (whether beautiful sights of spectacular fall foliage, or beautiful sounds of music, or the soft sensations of silk, or the wonderful fragrance of freshly baked bread, or the sweet taste of honey) is a creation of God and all of those things are to be received with thanksgiving
- d. PLEASURE ITSELF is a gift of God, and it is to be received with thanksgiving

Psalm 16:11 You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand

- 5. Along with all of that, ASCETICISM DOESN'T WORK...
 - a. "Self-imposed worship" is man-made worship
 - b. It is NOT pleasing to God
 - c. AND it does NOT produce true godliness

Vs. 23 they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

- 6. Ascetics STILL lust, still covet, still get angry, still yearn for fleshly things... and their religion has made them PROUD because it's all of human origin

E. Let's Be Honest: Asceticism Isn't a Major Threat, But Gluttony Is

- 1. I don't know many ascetics at all... most of us struggle with materialism and gluttony and pleasure-seeking
- 2. We live in an age and a culture in America that specializes in identifying things that people enjoy and distilling them to the point where we can glut ourselves on them morning, noon, and night
- 3. Music: before recorded music, you had to go to a concert or dance or somewhere that live musicians were playing to hear music; then Edison invented the phonograph, recording sound waves on wax cylinders... the first

sounds ever recorded were the lyrics of a song “Mary had a little lamb”; soon flat discs replaced the cylinders, and the record craze hit; radio stations came in after Marconi, and you could hear music day and night, but you couldn’t choose it; also radios were huge—you had to sit in the living room to listen; then the transistor radio came in and you could carry the little radio everywhere; but still , you couldn’t choose the music; then the Walkman came in and you could carry around tapes; now we have iPods, and websites like Napster and you can listen to your favorite songs 600 times in a row wherever you want

4. Sports: out of control!! ESPN, ESPN2, ESPNU, ESPN Classic, etc. Watch ballgames for the rest of your life
5. Food: Americans struggle with gluttony... many Americans don’t know when to push away from the table
6. All of this points to the need for self-control in lawful pleasures

Proverbs 25:16 If you find honey, eat just enough-- too much of it, and you will vomit.

1 Corinthians 6:12 "Everything is permissible for me"-- but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible for me"-- but I will not be mastered by anything.

7. The Holy Spirit works self-control in us as a Fruit of the Spirit

F. Asceticism vs. Gluttony: Balance Found in Christ

1. Asceticism:

- a. Christ’s sufferings on our behalf removes forever any need for asceticism
- b. Our sufferings do not pay for sin, they do not slay the flesh, they do not please God in any way
- c. Humble repentance and faith in Christ is SUFFICIENT FOREVER for the salvation of the soul
- d. The good gifts of God are meant to be enjoyed with thankfulness, as 1 Timothy 4 teaches us

2. Gluttony:

- a. On the other hand, the hunger for pleasure is meant to be satisfied ultimately in Christ
- b. Christ teaches us self-control... and to focus on Him

VII. Application

A. Praise God for your Fullness in Christ!!

Colossians 2:9-10 For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, ¹⁰ and you have been given fullness in Christ

- Fully Circumcised Spiritually
- Fully Alive
- Fully Forgiven
- Fully Free from the Law
- Fully Triumphant over Satan

BUT IS THIS TRUE OF YOU, dear friend? Are you saved through faith in Christ? Have you been given fullness in Him? O Come to Christ!! Look to the cross!!

B. Pray for the Church... for protection against each of the dangers Paul warns against here

C. Be on guard against all four dangers

1. Philosophy
2. Legalism
3. Mysticism
4. Asceticism

D. Meant for Pleasure... but it is the Pleasure of God Alone that ultimately satisfies

1. Celebrate your life in the physical body! Rejoice in the pleasures of the five senses that God has made
2. Know that you are going to a physical New Heaven and New Earth where you will have physical resurrection bodies, where you will eat physical food, and drink physical drink and walk on physical earth and see physical light radiating from Christ Himself... we will not spend eternity as some out-of-body wraiths floating on clouds as though we were clouds ourselves
3. Jesus proved His physical resurrection by eating broiled fish and having Thomas touch his wounds:

Luke 24:39 Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have."

YET...

E. Learn Self-control in Lawful Pleasures

1. Remember the lesson of honey

Proverbs 24:13 Eat honey, my son, for it is good; honey from the comb is sweet to your taste.

Proverbs 25:16 If you find honey, eat just enough-- too much of it, and you will vomit.

2. Remember Paul's warning

1 Corinthians 6:12 "Everything is permissible for me"-- but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible for me"-- but I will not be mastered by anything.

3. Learn the absolute necessity of SELF-CONTROL over bodily pleasures

1 Corinthians 9:27 No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

So many verses speak of the need for self-control, and that need has only increased in our Western, materialistic, self-indulgent, gluttonous age

- Self-control is listed as a fruit of the Spirit
- Self-control is mentioned by Peter as something we **MUST** add to our faith
- Self-control is required in order to be an elder or a deacon
- Self-control is essential to avoiding the trap of idolatry... of some lawful physical gift of God becoming the center of your life

4. Assess your life

- a. Is there any area out of control... any lawful pleasure that has taken on addictive levels?
- b. Is it food? Are you self-controlled in your eating habits?
- c. Is it entertainment? Have you gotten sucked into the media lifestyle of movies, cable TV, DVDs etc.
- d. Is it sports? Do you live for the next game, the next season?
- e. Is it a hobby?

f. Have you been sucked away from pure devotion to Christ by worldly, material things?

F. Practice Fasting without Embracing Asceticism

1. Fasting is a voluntary abstinence from a lawful pleasure for spiritual purposes
2. Fasting is our way of saying “This much, O God, I want you! I want you even more than the gifts and physical pleasures you give!”

John Piper, *Hunger for God*: “There is an appetite for God. And it can be awakened.... Turn from the dulling effects of food and the dangers of idolatry, and say with a simple fast, ‘This much, O God, I want YOU!!’”

“Our appetites dictate the direction of our lives—whether it be the cravings of our stomachs, the passionate desire for possessions or power, or the longings of our spirits for God. But for the Christian, the hunger for anything besides God can be an archenemy, while our hunger for God—and Him alone—is the only thing that will bring victory.”

DO YOU HUNGER FOR GOD? Or just the physical pleasures He so richly gives?

If you find that you have become enslaved to some lawful pleasure, come back to the fullness you have in Christ

Christ alone is able to satisfy your deepest longings... to meet your every need

Periodic fasting from lawful pleasures such as food, marital relations, sleep, entertainment, music, sweets, etc. is very helpful in clearing your mind and reminding you that these good gifts of God are not your life, Christ is!!

But when you fast, do not make a big show of it:

Matthew 6:16-18 "When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. ¹⁷ But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.