

## Study Guide

**Monday, July 25- Read Proverbs 23:1-2.** Gluttony is essentially eating and drinking in excess. The word usually has a connotation of wastefulness and greed. We are all familiar with the idea that it is not good to be too overweight. Excess fat is bad for the health, and it can indicate some wrong emphasis on food. It is important for us to note, however, that the subject of gluttony is not just about comparing weight charts. Gluttony goes deeper than that. It is not just a sin of the body – it is a sin of the heart. A slender fit person can have a heart attitude of gluttony just the same as an obese person can. This proverb provides us with a vivid picture of the seriousness of gluttony. Imagine that a wealthy, influential leader has invited you for a meal. If you have habits of excess, you will make trouble for yourself. When you see the food, your thoughts will focus on it. You will be oblivious to anything but eating and drinking. If you are walking into deception, you will never know. If you are missing an amazing opportunity, it will pass by. This proverb points out that giving into gluttony is like cutting your own throat. In what areas do you tend to be guilty of excess? What small step can you take to gain some control?

**Tuesday, July 26- Read Proverbs 23:19-21.** Avoiding gluttony is part of wisdom and simple common sense. Gluttony is a faulty focus on food. When the focus turns to food, we are going to lose in other ways. The most obvious loss is our health because gluttony abuses our bodies. When we eat and drink in excess, it dulls our senses and we become lethargic. Our bodies can't handle the poor food management. If the body is overwhelmed, the excess food is simply wasted, and we derive no nutritional benefit from it. Extra food is stored as excess fat, which brings in a whole new set of problems. But can also be slender, weight-conscious gluttons. We may exercise and limit our portions so we don't put on the pounds, but our gluttony replaces good food with poor food. We starve our bodies of the nutrients they need, while dumping in an excess of junk food. Either way, we need to see that gluttony is not just another lifestyle choice – it is actually destructive. How do you manage your diet? Are you keeping a sensible balance, or are you eating and drinking whatever you happen to crave?

**Wednesday, July 27 – Read Titus 2:1-7.** Paul wrote this letter to his friend Titus, who was working with the church on the island of Crete. The Cretan culture had some problems. One of their own prophets said, "Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons," and Paul and Titus both realized that this was often true. In fact, people in our culture also have these same problems, which result from a basic lack of self-control. Paul wanted Titus to emphasize this problem in his teachings. Older men, younger men, older women, younger women – there is no age or gender that is immune. Today, the word "self-control" is almost bad language to some of us. We are taught that people need to be "free," that we should never suppress emotions, and that we deserve what we want. "Go ahead" we hear, "eat all the chocolate you want! Indulge yourself. Let your emotions hang out." "Be yourself" has come to mean, "Don't control yourself." We confuse self-control with stifled self-expression. It is true that we need to be able to express ourselves, and that it is okay to eat and do things we enjoy, but we have to ask the question: "Who or what is controlling my life?" Are you in control of your emotions and desires, or do they control you? Take some time to pray and ask for God's help to identify and focus on those areas where your desires are controlling you.

**Thursday, July 28 – Read Titus 2:11-12.** The task of taking control of ourselves can look hopeless. We look at the mess we have made of our lives, and we don't even know where to start. We try to discipline ourselves, but in a few days we are back to our old ways. Why is this? What can we do? The truth is we are not strong enough to take charge of our own lives. We try and try, and then we get tired and slip up again. We don't even always know when we should say "No." We need help, and God has given us the help we need. We don't have to try and earn it. God is ready to teach us when to say "No" to damaging things and help us to say "Yes" to the right things. What is your motivation for being self-controlled? How can God's grace help you and teach you?

**Friday, July 29 – Read Psalm 17:15.** We all go around looking for satisfaction in life. We want to be happy, we want to be successful, and we want to feel fulfilled. But there is only one place we will find that satisfaction. No material things are big enough. Even the best personal relationships cannot fill in all the gaps. Only when we find our satisfaction in God will we be free to experience joy. When we feel secure in who God is and who we are to Him, we will have firm ground to stand on. From this firm ground we can enjoy life, find beauty and pleasure in good things, love and be loved by other people....without the desperate clutching we feel when we depend on these things for happiness and security. **Read Psalm 103:1-5 and 107:9.** According to these verses, what "good things" does God long to give you? Focus on seeking out these good things