



## Disciplined Eating

by Elyse Fitzpatrick

How can we be self-controlled in our eating? Does that mean that we should eat only a certain number of calories, avoid sugar, eliminate foods with fat, or perhaps a combination of all three?

The easiest thing in the world for me to do would be to tell you exactly what you should eat. But that's a rather simplistic approach that doesn't take into consideration a variety of factors. Besides, chances are you have been on diets like that before, and you and I both know how they usually end. I'm not saying that it is wrong to follow a preplanned diet, as long as it is not a fad diet. *But even if you are following a preplanned diet perfectly, that doesn't mean that your eating is pleasing to the Lord.*

I can lust over a cup of nonfat frozen yogurt in exactly the same way that I can over a chocolate shake. I can also become enamored with my appearance and worry that I might gain weight, which wouldn't please God. No, there are other criteria for you and me to consider as we develop our personal plan for disciplined eating.

I have listed 12 questions you can ask yourself in order to determine whether your eating is sinful or not. To help you remember these points, I've developed the acrostic "**D-I-S-C-I-P-L-I-N-E-D Eating.**"

As you consider the following, some of the answers will be obvious. Others will take some time and careful thought. Stop now and prayerfully ask God to help you as you think about how to make your eating habits more pleasing to Him.

1. **Doubt:** Do I doubt (for whatever reason) that I can eat this food without sinning?
2. **Idolatry:** Does eating this particular food demonstrate a heart either of independence—"I can do whatever I want"—or a heart longing for pleasure—"I know that I don't need this for my sustenance, but I love the feeling of the sweet coldness"?
3. **Stumble:** If I eat this, will it cause a weaker Christian to stumble?
4. **Coveting:** Am I eating this just because I saw someone else with it and I'm coveting it?
5. **Inroad:** If I eat this, will it create an inroad for sin?
6. **Praise:** Can I eat this food with thanks and gratitude? Is my heart overflowing with songs of praise to God?
7. **Life:** Would eating this food harm my health in any way?

8. **Illustrate:** Am I modeling good eating habits for others and encouraging them to be self-disciplined, or do I encourage others to self-indulge?
9. **No:** Am I able to say no to this even if I know that I can eat it without sin?
10. **Emotions:** Does the desire to eat this flow out of a heart of anger, fear, frustration, or depression?
11. **Distract:** Will preparing or eating this food distract me from something better that God has for me to do?
12. **Enslaved:** Does it bring me under any kind of bondage?

All of this, of course, can be summed up by one question: In my eating and drinking, am I glorifying God? (1 Corinthians 10:31).