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Introduction

Have you ever wondered what your life might have been like if Adam and Eve hadn’t eaten the forbidden fruit? Think about it. If they hadn’t disobeyed God and gotten us kicked out of the Garden, perhaps we’d have been able to live there with them.

In paradise, everything would have been easier—even weight control.

If we had lived in Eden, we would have eaten only when we were hungry and we would have eaten less. Therefore, we would have automatically reached our ideal weight without trying.

Instead of food being the center of our universe, God would have been the center. We wouldn’t even have thought about food until we felt hungry. That’s right—we would have eaten primarily for sustenance and in response to our God-given internal hunger signals, not to escape boredom or to fill our emotional or spiritual voids.

And we would have eaten any food that was readily available without regard to whether it was good or bad for us. We wouldn’t have had consciences about such things.

If, on occasion, we ate rich, high-calorie foods, like honey, nuts, fatty meats, or dairy products, we would have done so without guilt. We wouldn’t have worried about being too fat and we wouldn’t have felt the need to pay penance for our fatness by being on a perpetual reducing diet.

Regarding exercise, we would have expended energy the natural way—by walking and working and looking after the garden. It wouldn’t have been a chore to exercise and we wouldn’t have done it to make up for overeating. We would have exercised simply as a means to an end—and also because it felt good. It would have been a way to worship God with our bodies.

Wouldn’t it be great if we could go back to that pure, uncorrupted way of thinking—or should I say not thinking—about weight control? What if we could just listen to our bodies’ internal cues, eat only when we’re truly hungry, eat less, and enjoy any food God provided without guilt? And what if we could once again think of exercise as being fun, like we did when we were kids? Or, at least, think of it as a worship act?

We could be free from bondage to what we should or shouldn’t eat, free from concerns about body image, and we’d be overflowing with the joy and peace of God. And, we’d be thinner and healthier, without trying.
Eden Was How It Could Have Been, But This Is How It Is

Many of us disregard or never realized that God gave us hunger pangs for a reason—so that we would experience them. Instead, we eat incredibly large portions of food and we eat so frequently that we rarely feel hungry. We eat ahead of our hunger rather than behind it.

Usually, we eat for reasons that are external to our stomach, such as emotional, intellectual, or sinful reasons (the sight of food, the smell of food, depression, anxiety, stress, boredom, and greed). Or, we eat according to the clock. We say, “It’s time to eat,” without even stopping to consider what our internal signals might say.

If we checked with our internal signals before eating, most of the time they’d say, “What? You don’t need food yet.”

In addition to having forgotten to use our hunger pangs, we also have another barrier to losing weight: when God put us in the Garden of Eden, fattening food was harder to come by.

In the garden, if you wanted fattening food, like honey, you’d have had to steal it from bees (which have stingers), so you probably would have thought twice about eating it. To get nuts, you would have had to collect them and crack open the shells with rocks (which might crush your fingers). To get eggs, you would have had to climb a tree and pull them out of nests.

If you had any sense, you probably would have said, “Uhh…never mind about those eggs up in that nest, I think I’ll just eat this green pepper and these berries that are right in front of me.”

Even if you decided to go for the less healthy foods, you probably would have listened to the inner wisdom God gave you and eaten only a small portion—just enough to quiet the hunger pangs so you could get back to thinking about God.

In contrast, now, it’s easy and relatively inexpensive to get fattening food served in huge portions. You can have a large four-meat, extra-cheese pizza delivered to your home in thirty minutes or less. You can pick up an enormous fast-food cheese-burger combo meal in three minutes at the drive-through. Or, you can microwave-reheat a grande burrito in 30 seconds at the convenience store.

Ironically, if you want to prepare a healthy home-made meal like a stir-fry, or even meatloaf, mashed potatoes, and vegetables, it might take you a couple hours.

And consider how we are tempted by the food-advertising. It’s everywhere—on billboards, in magazines, on television and radio commercials, in pictures on the sides of delivery trucks, on internet ads, and in coupon mailers that come to our homes. We’re constantly bombarded with reminders to eat, usually when we’re not actually hungry.
To top it all off, we have become exceedingly lazy. In the beginning, we had no choice but to exercise. However, now, we have labor-saving devices like automobiles, elevators, and washing machines that, on one hand help us, but on the other hand hurt us. They allow us to expend less energy and gain excess weight.

Should it be a surprise that we become more overweight and miserable with each passing year? We’re doing everything opposite to the way God intended.

Can You Relate?

If you have a weight problem, do you eat in such a way that you rarely feel hunger? Perhaps you eat because of the time on the clock, completely disconnected from your internal compass—your God-given hunger pangs. Or, you eat in response to the sight, smell, or taste of food when you’re not hungry.

Perhaps you only feel hunger when you’re dieting, and then, when you go off the diet, you stop feeling hungry because you eat according to external cues. So you regain all the weight you lost on the diet—and more—which leads to more depression and more stress-eating.

Maybe you’re so stressed and over-extended in your schedule that you have no choice but to eat fast-food several nights a week. Or, maybe you’re so distracted by your commitments that you don’t even pay attention to what or how much or when you eat. You swear you eat like a bird but you continue to gain weight.

What about exercise? Do you think of it as a painful chore? Or do you enjoy moving around, like you did when you were a kid?

If I just described you, don’t worry. As you continue to read The Eden Diet, you’ll go through a re newing of the mind, just like Paul talked about in Romans 12:1,2. Just like a dog shakes off water, you’ll shake off the fattening lies about weight-control that the world has brainwashed you with. Then, you’ll replace those lies with God’s amazingly simple truth for how to lose weight: following the hunger pang system He gave you in the beginning.

Doesn’t it make more sense to cooperate with God’s system than to fight against it?
We Must Change Our Ways Before It’s Too Late

We are getting fatter with each passing year, and it’s killing us. According to the 2004 report from the National Center for Health Statistics, we are, on average, 25 pounds heavier than we were in 1960. And between 1976-1980 and 1999-2002, the prevalence of obesity (defined as body mass index of greater or equal to 30kg/m2) increased from 15% to 31% of the US population.1

I assume you know that obesity is dangerous to your health, but I wonder if you know the full extent of it. Obesity causes high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, obstructive sleep apnea, gallstones, and cancer, including breast, endometrial, prostate, and colon cancers. In fact, it will probably kill you one day if you don’t change your ways, as it contributes to over 400,000 deaths in the USA annually.

Even if obesity doesn’t directly kill you, it will probably still ruin your life if you don’t do something about it. Carrying around excess weight causes premature wear and tear on the joints, which in turn causes severe pain and disability.

And it limits you from engaging in the activities you enjoy. If you can’t fit into the airplane seat or the movie theater seat, or if you can’t walk because of knee or back pain, you take fewer vacations and engage in fewer social events. Then, you become socially isolated and even more miserable and depressed.

We must do what it takes to improve our eating and exercise habits, not only for our own sake, but for the sake of future generations. Over the next several decades, the life-expectancy for the average American child is expected to be shortened by five years because of the obesity epidemic, according to a report published in The New England Journal of Medicine.2

Did you get that? I said your children and grandchildren might die five years earlier because of their eating habits. Now, are you ready to set a better example for them? I hope you are.

What Do I Know About Weight Control?

I’m a medical doctor. Specifically, I’m a Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation doctor with subspecialty-board-certification in Pain Management. That means I help people achieve optimal physical functioning after illness or injury. Part of my job is to help my patients lose weight in order to take pressure off of their painful joints.
I received my medical degree from the State University of New York at Buffalo, completed an internship in internal medicine at Baylor University Medical Center in Dallas, and completed a residency in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas.

In addition to those credentials, I also have specialized knowledge about weight control. As an undergraduate at Cornell University, I minored in nutrition, completed a thesis on the control of body weight, and participated in obesity research under the guidance of a world-leading researcher on obesity.

In medical school, I was awarded two research fellowships. One was the American Gastroenterologic Association Medical Student Research Fellowship to study digestive diseases, and the other was the prestigious National Institute of Health Medical Student Research Training Fellowship. That allowed me the great privilege to study at The Center for Human Nutrition in Dallas, Texas, for two full years, under the mentorship of several world-leaders in the areas of fat-metabolism and nutrition.

I have yet another kind of weight control education that perfectly qualifies me to write this book. In a way, it’s the only part of my education I wish I didn’t have: I grew up morbidly obese. I know from first-hand experience what it’s like to suffer with—and then overcome—a serious weight problem.

As far back as I can remember I weighed double what the other kids weighed. By the time I was 17 years old I was 5’1,” weighed 207 pounds, and wore a tight size 20 jeans. My thighs were as big around as my waist is today.

By the time I was a junior in high school, I decided I’d had enough. I was tired of being made fun of and I was tired of feeling self-conscious and miserable all the time. So, I lost weight: seventy-five pounds, to be exact.

As you might expect, the weight loss completely transformed my body. However, it did little to change the underlying thoughts and attitudes about food that led to my obesity in the first place. I still had to undergo a sort of mental transformation. Otherwise, I was going to gain that weight right back.

Eventually, God showed me that the secret to weight control was as simple as looking inward—to the programming He’d given me: hunger pangs. He helped me identify my hunger pangs and use them as a compass to guide my eating.

Next, He revealed why I gained the weight to begin with. I had unconscious programming, automatic habits, and a sin-nature that compelled me to eat for all the wrong reasons. Finally, He gave me practical tools that allowed me to resist the urge to eat when I wasn’t hungry, even when faced with the greatest of temptations.

Through the following pages, I discuss the practical weight loss insights and tools that God gave me. That way, you can apply them effectively in your own life, and achieve the slimmer, healthier body God intended for you to have in the beginning.
How This Book Is Laid Out

The Eden Diet is organized into three main sections. In part one, “A New Paradigm for Weight Loss,” I help you spot the lies you’ve been fed regarding food and eating. You can’t see how the truth fits together until the false ideas have been removed. I challenge the notion that you have to restrict normal food from your diet when you’re trying to lose weight. I show you how the diet mentality actually makes you fat. And I show that eating fattening treats in small amounts and with intention can actually help you lose weight.

In part two, “The Eden Diet—How to Get Skinny Eating Normal Food,” I explain God’s plan for eating and how following it will naturally lead you to your ideal weight. I show you how to attune to your hunger pangs and how to feed them the way God intended, with a proper attitude and with a proper amount of food.

I show you how to eat (or not eat) as an act of worship.

In part three, “How to Beat Temptation,” I reveal how to overcome the temptations that cause you to eat in the wrong ways. I help you identify when emotions, sin, bad habits, and erroneous beliefs trigger you to eat for the wrong reasons. I also provide strategies to beat those temptations.

Finally, in the workbook, which you will find in the appendix, I provide even more tools that help you put the Eden Diet into action.

And God Said It Was Good

Now, our journey together begins.

Let me describe to you the joy that you’re about to experience. If you read this book and adopt the Eden Diet for yourself, you will be freed from bondage. You’re going to feel like a thousand-pound-monkey was lifted off of your back. You’re going to be happier. You’re going to be slimmer. And you’re going to be healthier.

You’re going to think about food like Adam and Eve did in the beginning: not often, and only when you’re hungry. You’re going to walk around less focused on food and more focused on God, to the point that you actually forget to eat until your hunger pangs remind you.
Imagine. When you’re hungry, you’ll be able to eat even fattening, luxurious food, and you’ll enjoy it a hundred times more—so much that you won’t even want to eat the full serving. Half the food will bring you ten times the joy.

Not only will you be slimmer and more physically attractive, your joy will magnify your beauty. Everybody around you will want what you have.

Just think—you’ll be a walking advertisement for the healing power of God.
Chapter 3
There is No Bad Food

Begin the exercise in this chapter with the following prayer:

“Dear Lord, show me what it means to eat to your glory, as Paul alluded to in 1 Corinthians 10:31. Help me to receive food as a special gift from You, and to eat it in a way that is pleasing to You. Free me from guilt when I indulge in rich, delicious food, and increase my satisfaction so that I don’t even want to overeat. Help me to view my self-discipline as being an offering to You, and help me to become less focused on food and more focused on You. Amen.”

In the space below, record your insights and questions from your reading of chapter three in The Eden Diet:

______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________

Chapter Summary

In the New Covenant, God gave us all foods to enjoy in moderation. That’s why Jesus said in Matthew 6:25 that we shouldn’t worry about what we eat. He also said (in reference to food offered to idols), “What goes into a man’s mouth does not make him ‘unclean,’ but what comes out of his mouth, that is what makes him ‘unclean’” (Matthew 15:11). What we eat is just not that important to God.

Yet, we spend so much time worrying about what we should or shouldn’t eat. We spend so much time on it, in fact, that it can become a bad thing—an obsession—a distraction from Him.

My aim in this section is to help you relax your control over the type of food you eat so you can accept any food as a gift from God. I’d like to help you eat even the fattening foods you are afraid of over-eating. That way, you can better escape bondage from them and refocus on Him.

However, in all fairness, it would not be a good idea for you to over-do it on the junk food. Paul said, “Everything is permissible for me”—but not everything is beneficial” (1 Corinthians 6:12). Even though you’re not forbidden by the New Covenant to eat ice cream for dinner, it may not be a good idea for you to do that on a regular basis, lest you might get sick.
The trick will be finding the right balance, and I’ll help you do that. The exception is, if you are ill, you must ignore what I say and eat the kind of diet your doctor advises.

Words of Wisdom

• “The only time to eat diet food is while you’re waiting for the steak to cook.”
  ~Julia Child

• “Red meat is not bad for you. Now, blue-green meat, that’s bad for you!”
  ~Tommy Smothers

• “The biggest seller is cookbooks and the second is diet books - how not to eat what you’ve just learned how to cook.” ~Andy Rooney

(Truncated—workbook continues with chapter three exercises…..)