

ENOUGH IS BETTER THAN TOO MUCH!

Today's Text: Prov. 25: 16; 30: 7-9

Extracts:

- 1. Have you found honey? *Eat only as much as you need, lest you be filled with it and vomit* [Prov. 25: 16]**
- 2. Two things I request of You (deprive me not before I die): remove falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches-*feed me with the food allotted to me; lest I be full and deny You, and say, "Who is the Lord?" Or lest I be poor and steal, and profane the name of my God* [Prov. 30: 7-9]**

About the only thing that most of us do not watch these days is height! We watch our weights. We watch the heart. We watch blood pressure. Any food or drink that may raise cholesterol levels is out of our diets and tables. Snack food favourite spots like MacDonaldd have had to respond to customer demands or else they could easily be out of business.

As a result of such developments, diet foods and diet drinks are in vogue. Some people have gone further to take just pure table water in place of soft or non-alcoholic drinks, with the assumption that the closer to nature, the better. Recently, however, there was a story that drew my attention. A California State University student reportedly died of "water intoxication" during hazing of a fraternity. Hazing is a practice where new students or recruits are subjected to strenuous or humiliating exercises as a condition for admission into a fraternity or club, etc. An autopsy showed that excess water in the young man's body triggered his death. It caused sodium levels in the blood to drop, forcing the water to be absorbed into the blood, leading to fluid build up in the brain.¹

Today's lesson talks about the harmful effects of excess honey and excess food, as we have seen in the case of excess water. What drives us to move away from the normal or tolerable or 'enough' level to the excess or 'too much' level? How often have God's blessings turned into snares? How can we draw the balance for our own physical and spiritual health? These are some of the issues that we shall address in today's lesson.

¹ Police: Student died from 'water intoxication,'
www.cnn.com/2005/US/02/04/fraternity.death.ap/index.html

1. Even honey carries a warning label!

Honey is regarded as one of the best foods to eat. For example, John the Baptist lived on “wild honey” while he stayed in the wilderness before his ministry began [Matt. 3: 4]. Honey does not need to be refrigerated because it does not go bad and it has no expiry date.

Honey is twice as sweet as sugar, which means that you only need to use half as much in a given recipe.² Honey is superior to sugar by virtue of how the body absorbs each of them. In the case of sugar, the sucrose is absorbed via osmosis, that is, it enters the blood stream directly when it is being digested. As a result, the large amounts of sugar pouring into the blood stream can lead to over-reaction of insulin production by the pancreas. That results in rapid insulin production and other complications, with their unhealthy effects on the body.³ In the case of honey, the body absorbs the sugars by a process known as “active transport.” In other words, chemical transport agents, which may not always be available, carry the sugars through membranes and into the bloodstream. Consequently, the sugars in honey move through the blood stream at a much slower rate and, thus, are less likely to impact adversely on insulin production.⁴

But is honey as clean a natural food as we view it? Hardly! Honeybees make honey from nectar, which is almost 80% water with some complex sugars.⁵ The bees make honey for their own use. However, in order to take it away from them, man has to use means, mainly chemicals to subdue or neutralize the ferocious insects. Such chemicals can directly or indirectly enter the ‘pure honey’ that we cherish so much! Moreover, how are we so sure that all the bees that bring in the pollens from which honey is made are themselves healthy and are not contaminating the end product?⁶ Therefore, honey also carries a warning label!

In today’s lesson, the word of God says, “Have you found honey? *Eat only as much as you need*; lest you be filled with it and vomit” [Prov. 25: 16]. We are being warned that even harmless things can become harmful if we use or do them to *excess*. What then constitutes ‘enough’ and what is ‘excess’ or ‘too much’?

2. Enough equals desire minus greed!

In several places in the Bible, we can obtain a good definition of ‘enough.’ For example, when God rained down *manna* from heaven to feed the children of Israel in the wilderness, He specifically commanded, “Let every man gather it *according to each one’s need*” [Ex. 16: 16]. Since needs are never equal, we

² Dr. James Carpenter, University of Hawaii at Hilo, ‘Honey and Diabetics,’ www.kohala.net/bees/diabetics.html

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ ‘How do Bees Make Honey?’ *Lansing State Journal*, July 30, 1997; www.pa.msu.edu/~sciencet/ask_st/073097.html.

⁶ ‘Chemicals in Honey,’ www.kohala.net/bees/chemicals.html

would expect that each person would collect according to the size of his or her belly. A giant would need more than a child. A family of seven would need more than a single person household. As a result, “he who gathered much had *nothing left over*, and he who gathered little *had no lack*. *Every man had gathered according to each one’s need*” [v. 18].

A need is something that we cannot do *without*. Air, water and food are basic necessities for our survival. Happily, God has abundantly and freely supplied each of us the air we breathe. Otherwise, a few greedy business people would have cornered its supply, leaving the rest of us to die for lack of oxygen! In many other aspects of life, God has guaranteed us that He would meet our needs. He knows our needs even before we ask Him [Matt. 6: 8]. He supplies rain and sunshine to both good and evil people *because* they need them [Matt. 5: 45]. So, once it touches on our needs, God will be reluctant to give us more than we need. He will give us just *enough*.

However, there were some greedy people among the children of Israel who gathered more than they needed. Contrary to God’s instruction, such people gathered beyond their need and stored it. By the next morning, it “bred worms and stank” [v. 20]! God hates waste [Jn 6: 12]. Later, they complained about the taste of *manna* and, instead craved for Egyptian delicacies, saying, “we remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; *but now our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes*” [Num. 11: 4-6]. To show them that they did not *need* meat, God supplied their wish in the form of quail. They ate the meat and suffered a plague that killed several thousands of the people [vv. 31-33]. So, anytime we ask for too much, we put ourselves in danger! We are asking for something *beyond* our need.

3. Where then is the boundary between ‘enough’ and ‘too much’?

God will *supply our need according to His riches* in glory by Christ Jesus [Phil. 4: 19]. At the same time, *if we delight ourselves in the Lord, He will grant us our hearts’ desires* [Ps. 37: 4]. Where then is the boundary between need (or enough) and desires (or want or too much)? Let us illustrate both with Solomon’s riches.

When Solomon ascended the throne of his father, David, he specifically asked God for wisdom so as to be able to rule over his people, Israel. The request pleased God who told Solomon [1 Kgs 3: 10-14]:

Because you have asked this thing, and have not asked riches for yourself, nor have asked the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern justice, behold, I have given you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has not been anyone like you before you, nor shall any like you arise after you. And I have also given you what you have not asked for: both riches and honour, so that there shall

*not be anyone like you among the kings all your days. So **if you walk in My ways, to keep My commandments**, as your father David walked, **then I will lengthen your days**.*

Given the circumstances in which he ascended the throne, Solomon *needed* all the wisdom and understanding he could get. Appropriately, that was what he asked from God, which was granted. We know from Scriptures that “through wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches” [Prov. 24: 3-4]. Therefore, it should not surprise you that God added riches and honour to the list of Solomon’s needs. Even though Solomon had not specifically asked for such, they could have been his desires as king. Having delighted himself in God, the Lord granted him the desires of his heart! Therefore, in that case, the desires were *complimentary* to his needs. They were more and the same thing and had nothing to do with greed.

But how did Solomon use these blessings? That was where greed or human failures came in. *Contrary to God’s commandment that Solomon walk in His ways*, the king married foreign wives who lured him into idolatry. Solomon had 700 wives and 300 concubines [1 Kgs 11: 1-4]. He was rich. He was famous. Therefore, he could afford it! Let us appreciate what happened to Solomon.

Those of you who are married to one spouse will agree that you do not make love to him or her *every night*. For one reason or the other, even a few times a week is more than an average record! Now, here was Solomon with one thousand wives and concubines. There are 365 days in a normal year. In order to meet his conjugal obligations to all his spouses, he would have to sleep with about three women *per night*! You will agree with me that that is not possible because he would not have the energy or the sperm to spare! Therefore, many of his wives would have to go without him, thus promoting adultery in the palace. Was that the blessing of “riches and honour” that God had granted him? Did he need all those wives? He had gone beyond ‘enough.’ He operated in the zone of “too much” and paid dearly for it. In frustration, he wrote, “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity” [Eccl. 1: 2].

Clearly, we see that “*enough*” is not defined by what we have but who we have. Speaking on the subject of need, Paul wrote [Phil. 4: 11-13]:

*I have learned **in whatever state I am, to be content**; for I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. **I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me**.*

Paul is assuring us that if we have Christ [and the God-head of which He is a member], whatever we have is always enough, even when it is not so in the eyes of the world. However, if our values are world-centred, we can *never* have enough and we shall keep looking. We may keep pursuing the Joneses even when we do not know them! We shall keep pursuing a moving target. In the end, we may wind

up with strains, bruises and stresses. Worry becomes our regular companion and fear torments us. It is a losing battle. Solomon should know and he has warned us “all the labour of man is for his mouth, and yet the soul is not satisfied” [Eccl. 6: 7].

A good illustration of this principle can be found in David’s defeat of Goliath [1 Sam. 17: 1-51]. The army of Israel thought that they needed a heavily armed soldier of Goliath’s stature to defeat him. Since they could not get one like that, “they were dismayed and greatly afraid” [v. 11]. When little David (who was not yet qualified to enter the army but had the anointing of God on him) came forward to fight the giant, king Saul put his own armour on David. It turned out to be too big for David who could not even lift the king’s sword! So, he took them off and instead took five smooth stones and a sling [vv. 31-40]. To the world, the young man was heading for suicide but to David, he was adequately armed! That is reflected in his war message to the Philistine giant, Goliath: “You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. *But I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day, the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you, and take your head from you*” [vv. 45-46]. With mere pebbles and a sling, David slew the giant [vv. 48-51]. They were enough because his power came from God. That was why he was bold enough to write in the book of Psalms, “The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not *want*” [Ps. 23: 1].

4. Conclusion: Jesus is the cure for your care!

The forgoing analysis requires us to be self-disciplined and God-fearing if we are to be able to achieve balance. Yes, material blessings are from God. After all, Abraham, Job and Barnabas [Acts 4: 32-37] were very wealthy people but it did not hurt their relationship with God. Our problem is not that we have wants or that our needs are not being adequately met. Our problem is that we are greedy! Since we are greedy, we worry about the future instead of focusing on today. For example, while still in the wilderness and living on *manna*, God instructed the children of Israel that on arrival in the Promised Land, they would need to leave the land fallow every seventh year. He anticipated their concerns thus: “And if you say, ‘What shall we eat in the seventh year since we shall not sow nor gather in our produce?’ Then I will command My blessing on you in the sixth year, and it will bring forth produce enough for three years” [Lev. 25: 20-21]. God knew their need even before the time came and had made adequate provisions for it.

We are greedy because we allow the world to set standards of success and achievement for us, instead of looking up to Jesus, the cure for our care. He has assured us, “be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” [Jn 16: 33]. Are you labouring or heavy laden? Come to Him because He will give you rest for His yoke is easy and His burden is light [Matt. 11: 28, 30]. However, there is one important condition. You must first seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness. *Then*, you will be entitled to His blessing promises.

Finally, God *never* runs out of supply. The children of Israel did not run out of *manna* for 40 years until they had eaten corn in the Promised Land [**Josh. 5: 12**]. The widow in debt did not run out of oil to sell until she had run out of vessels [**2 Kgs 4: 1-7**]. Elijah travelled up mount Horeb for forty days and nights on the strength of the food brought him by an angel [**1 Kgs 19: 8**].

Only those who know the day they will die are in a hurry to meet certain *unattainable* deadlines in their lives. Otherwise, you only have today. That is why Jesus has said, “do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble” [**Matt. 6: 34**].

Stop worrying and start praising and thanking God for what you have. It may not be much but it is enough because God is enough. What can be better than that?