

To eat – or not to eat

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I remember a time in my mother's life when she was constantly trying new diets. She'd scan magazines for the latest one and rush to test its effectiveness. I well recall her "egg only" and "potato only" diets. Each time she tried a new one, she would say to me, "I wonder if this will do it?" But, each time, the anticipated results failed to appear. Then, she decided to eat less of everything. Period.

Finally she was down to one slice of bread and a little water each day. After a few weeks, she did begin to shed weight. She was thrilled. But a few more weeks of near starvation made her ask, "Am I going to have to keep this up for the rest of my life?" It was not an appealing prospect. At this point, she decided to try a completely different approach – a spiritual one.

My family had been learning about spiritual solutions from reading *Science and Health*. Its prayer-based approach to health had already healed us of several chronic ailments – migraine headaches, a painful neck, and a throat condition. So each day, my mother studied the Bible and *Science and Health* for ideas about food, diet, and body, and used these ideas to pray for herself. As a result, she stopped her extreme dieting practices. She traded in her starvation diet for effective spiritual insights into the meaning and importance of balance and proportion.

One of the ideas my mother learned was that the way we think affects the body. She read these statements in *Science and Health*: "A material body only expresses a material and mortal mind. A mortal man possesses this body, and he makes it harmonious or discordant according to the images of thought impressed upon it. You embrace your body in your thought, and you should delineate upon it thoughts of health, not of sickness" (p. 208). From this insight, she saw that the body is primarily governed by the concepts we hold about it. So, thinking that food has the power to increase a person's size will have that effect – not because the food knows anything about the body or the body about food, but because of people's beliefs about food having the power to do so. That was quite a breakthrough for Mother.

But just knowing that thoughts governed the body wasn't really enough to help her. She was still scared of food and what she believed it could do. The fear had to go. So she prayed with the realization that divine Love was looking after her. This Love was all-powerful and sustained her life and health. She could trust God to care for her. The thought that food could harm her had no power over her. It couldn't affect her well-being. She had the ability to stop being afraid of food. Praying by affirming these facts gave my mother an unshakable confidence that she could maintain balance in what she ate and in what she thought about the food she was eating.

The result? I saw my mother's feelings about food change. The trendy diets disappeared – for good. She wasn't even interested in reading about them. I was pleased when she told me one day that she no longer feared what food could do to her. I could see she was happy and satisfied. Her issue with food had become a non-issue. The preoccupation was over.

You know, anyone can do what my mother did. Drop dietetic theories in favor of a spiritual approach to concerns about body and weight, pray to diminish the fear of eating or not eating, and thereby gain balance and normal control over the body.