

April 30, 2016 Florida Hospital Seventh-day Adventist Church  
Matthew 25:35a "We Can Do Better: You Fed Me" by Andy  
McDonald

Today two series of sermons collide and conclude together! This month is Child Abuse Prevention Month. We were at our church retreat the first Saturday of this month so here we kicked off this emphasis here on April 9. We talked about this serious and sensitive subject and how we want to be part of being redemptive. And after church we went out and planted hundreds of pinwheels out in front of our church to testify to the community our desire to assist in the prevention of child abuse.

The next week we were reminded of the separation of sheep and goats that Jesus talked about, and how he said, I was a stranger and you took me in. And we highlighted the Cross family and their journey into Foster Care and adoption.

Last week Greg did an incredible job of calling us to action to not just be hearers of the word but doers. He challenged us to join the High School group's "Do Something Sabbath" on the first Saturday of each month. And 35 of you sent him an email saying you want in. And I have no doubt others will want to join. How cool would it be if whole Adult Classes here at our church built their curriculum around a cycle that left the first week of the month open to stop just talking and go do something that morning! That we would go be salt and light in the community especially for those who suffer abuse, marginalization, the oppressed in our community.

Today we are landing this month-long series related to Child Abuse Prevention.

The other series ending today is one we have been doing for the past 7 months, today being the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> month as we've taken another look another view at the 8 principles that make up the Creation Health

acronym Choice—Rest—Environment—Activity—Interpersonal Relationships—Outlook –and today Nutrition.

Now you've heard we are going to push together abuse prevention and nutrition and you may be wondering how? So before we jump in to scripture, nutrition, and child abuse let's pray.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit you care about your creatures, you care about humans that you created in your image. You want the best for your children. As we continue in this service of worship may you reveal yourself and may we leave here in just a little while determined to offer our lives in worship to you. Amen.

Jamie Oliver, the young British chef, opened his TedTalk with these words: "Sadly, in the next 18 minutes when I do our chat, four Americans that are alive will be dead through the food that they eat."

Ten years ago the CDC our national Center for Disease Control and Prevention would have predicted 13 dead through the food they eat in those 18 minutes while the New England Journal of Medicine would have forecasted only 9.

Americans are eating themselves to death, and guess what most of us hearing this message are Americans!! And sadly we are being very effective missionaries to the American way and exporting our diet to the world and so now larger and larger numbers of copycats of the western diet are globally eating themselves to death.

Oliver explains in his talk that we obsess about the risk of crime and homicide and in actuality it is a tiny fraction of the risk from what we are consuming. Obesity is already shortening the average lifespan by a greater rate than accidents, homicides, and suicides combined.

What does this have to do with Child Abuse Prevention? The food we are consuming and allowing or even encouraging our children to eat is literally shortening their lives.

For the first time in two centuries of American history, the current generation of children in America will likely have a shorter life expectancies than their parents.

Some say they will live 5 years less, others, like Oliver say things like, “Your child will live a life ten years younger than you because of the landscape of food that we’ve built around them.

Listen, God, our God cares about the quality of human life. Our denomination, the Seventh-day Adventist movement has a long history of believing that and taking it seriously, but over the last three decades, I’m afraid we too have allowed the world to squeeze us into its mold.

How many of us, and you don’t need to raise your hands, but how many of us we taught to clean our plate? Don’t waste food? You want to be part of the clean plate club. I think we might do well to not so carefully clean the plate. Especially today when the size of serving of fries has grown from a hand full to a plate stacked high. Serving size and the voice in our heads saying clean your plate are not consistent with good nutrition.

Note: You can go to this link and watch the map change and see data <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uH0tWM4H0h8>

In 1985 there were a number of states for which there was no data and those states are in white, but the light blue states had less than 10% of the population who were obese. The darker blue states had 10-14% obesity.

By 1991 they had to add darker blue for states where 15-19% of the population were obese.

1997 they add Yellow for states with 20-24% Obesity

2001 Tan color is used for those with 25-29% Obesity

2005 Red is added for those with greater than 30%

When this series of maps ended in 2010 there were 12 states with greater than 30% obesity.

Last year 2015, they added another color for those over 35% Hears the sad reality: the three states with the worst obesity problem, Mississippi, Arkansas, and West Virginia are also our three poorest states in the country and Mississippi and Arkansas are two of the three states with the least food security.

We ask ourselves how can this be. How can poverty and huge food insecurity states also be the same states with the worst obesity problem?

I want to go back to a great term Jamie Oliver used. He talked about “the landscape of food that we’ve built” around our kids and ourselves.

34.9 % of adults are obese and when you combine overweight and Obese together 2 out of three of us are there.68.6% of us.

But here’s the abuse that is risked 1/3 of the children in our country are overweight or obese.

They didn’t decide to put on too many pounds.

They don’t or shouldn’t be making decisions about what’s on their menu.

They aren’t mature enough to sort through the mass and unending advertising directed at them about food that isn’t even food.

We must protect our children and we must model the way.

We are anxious and willing to seek the harshest treatment and sentencing for anyone who might abuse a child physically, sexually, emotionally.

Just this week I heard a news report of someone trying to lure a child with the promise of candy and another citizen saw what was happening and drove up and the candy offerer took off. And just the thought of such a thing sickens us. We want a millstone tied around that guy's neck and have him dumped in the ocean.

But where is our responsibility to protect and defend our children when it comes to corporate advertising luring our children to junk that will shorten their lives?

What responsibility do we have to educate parents, and caregivers, and school kitchens to train up a child in their food options and food choices?

What is our culpability in allowing, encouraging, and profiting from creating a food landscape that puts our children at greater risk than accidents, homicide, and suicide combined?

This problem is not just the problem of the person who is obese it is our collective problem. And it is huge and it is overwhelming and it is complex and we can so easily, and maybe unconsciously, or innocently, be contributors to the challenge. And it is so big what can we do?

First lets remember the food connection in our human predicament of sin.

God made a perfect garden. Everything nice and perfect beyond anything we've ever seen in the most perfect of gardens. All the plants producing food, all the trees making fruit and nuts. And all this perfection of natural beauty and exquisite taste just for the pleasure of humanity.

There was just one, one forbidden fruit. A gazillion great options. The perfection of perfect fruit. I can't wait for peach season, its almost here because there's really nothing much better than a perfect peach. Juicy and firm but not too hard. Sweet and flavorful. I can't even begin to imagine all the amazing fruit in that garden of Eden.

But even the best isn't enough for our consumerist pursuit. We hunger for more. We, like Eve, want it our way.

Today, maybe I'm stretching it a bit, but today Satan still is saying "this is good, just wait until you taste this, you need this, this is what you are looking for, this counterfeit food is actually better than the real thing."

How do we honor God with our bodies? How do we focus on food in a healthy way? How do we move to prevent the abuse of children with food? Too much and the wrong kinds on one end and insufficient on the other?

Jesus says to the sheep, I was hungry and you fed me. Would just anything do for Jesus? And remember that the only reason we can feed the hungry is that God has provided for all our needs. He gives us our food in due season.

How do we honor God and make good food choices for optimum nutrition?

First it is incredibly important that we start with ourselves. What is our relationship with food? Nutrition is important but as a friend said, we don't eat nutrition we eat food.

Our job is not to primarily be food police. Probably just like with almost every aspect of the Christian walk it is to model the way.

Let's recognize that God set up a whole society of Judaism around food and meals of celebration.

God designed us to enjoy food and look forward to eating. In one of the Creation Health materials it points out that we weren't created like cows to graze all day, or like a python to eat once a week or so. We were created to cycle from hunger to eating to satisfaction and eventually to hunger again.

It was the coming together and sharing a meal that pulled the family together, and marked times of celebration.

When we humans in early history, would bring an offering to God it was a gift of food.

Even teaching the Israelites who had been enslaved for 400 years, the cycle of Sabbath rest, it was taught with food, by the Manna that would fall daily to feed Israel. Only that day's portion could be gathered and used that day anything kept over would be full of maggots the next day. Except on Friday, a double portion was gathered and the kept over part didn't spoil on the Sabbath.

Jesus shared the Passover with his disciples and instituted the Lord's Supper, a meal of reminding and remembering and celebrating.

So first just start with yourself. Engage with food. Celebrate with food. Worship with food. Fellowship over food.

Second engage others in thinking about and enjoying food together.

Maybe Michael Pollan is familiar with Ecclesiastes his words remind me some of Solomon's.

Pollan writes, "Is there any practice less selfish, any labor less alienated, any time less wasted, than preparing something delicious and nourishing for the people you love?"

Solomon put it this way: "So I recommend having fun, because there is nothing better for people to do in this world than to eat, drink, and enjoy life."

In the last month, how many of you have been invited over to eat something that someone made for you? Vicki and I were reminded of that simple pleasure a few weeks ago Harry and Debbie Armstrong invited us and some others to their home to share a meal they prepared for us to enjoy.

If you have kids at home just decide to share meals.  $\frac{1}{4}$  of meals to day are eaten in the car,  $\frac{1}{4}$  at a fast food restaurant,  $\frac{1}{4}$  in front of the TV.

There's great research that says that if you will gather around the table and have a meal together it will make your kids smarter with greater vocabulary, and they will do better in school, and have less likelihood of eating disorders or obesity, if you just cook a meal and sit down and eat it together, like 4 times a week.

Third, where you have the opportunity create better choices that can be enjoyed and be educational for others.

The food problem is ours. Our tastebuds have been trained toward fat and sugar and so the sweet roll, when it's available, may easily trump even a sweet piece of fruit. So parents, adults, teachers, make wise choices of what you put in front of kids. Reminds me of asking the kid do you want peas or carrots, you give choice but you're happy with either selection. But if you say do you want peas, carrots or a donut, donuts will win the day. But if there are no donuts or cupcakes (not that we can never have those) but if the choice on the tray in our children's class are slices of apples or grapes, the choice for donuts isn't even an option.

Fourth, learn to cook. If you already cook learn some new recipes. Here's the reality less and less people cook. Even with all the cooking shows recently still it isn't happening especially in poorer families. It's insane. It's cheaper to cook but you have to learn. It isn't taught in most schools. And in West Virginia Jamie Oliver discovered 3 generations that haven't cooked. So much of our culture and society



around the world has been about cooking and passing on family traditions, but it is ending.

And while you're cooking invite a kid to cook with you. Invite a younger person to join you in the kitchen and learn the fun of good food.

Fifth get back to food as part of God's gift of pleasure to you. Don't just eat to assuage hunger pains. Maybe don't eat for several meals, fast, and then carefully and slowly, thoughtfully with prayers of thanksgiving enjoy the gift of God's blessing of food.

If you're like me and you've had a little too much nutrition and are bit overweight, just start by eating more food that hasn't been tampered with by humans. It is hard to gain weight if we eat natural food as it comes from the earth.

Maybe donate or get involved with some local feed the hungry ministry, or donate to some global concern, or better yet do both.

This issue is huge and complex and overwhelming. We need good nutrition for ourselves and for kids. But how to protect from corporate food abuse? It is complex. How to bring food to the hungry isn't as easy as we might imagine. Learning to enjoy good and avoid empty calories is an education.

God's plan is that we enjoy food and eating.

I believe He designed every meal to be a sacred moment. To break bread together is a means to loving one another.

Jesus recognized the symbolism in food, and eating. He said I am the bread of life. Take and eat. He is the living water that refreshes. In ancient times the Psalmist wrote, Oh taste and see that the Lord is good. Let every bite every sip of every meal remind us of his goodness.



What is your most delicious food memory? What are you doing to create good food memories?

What is your first choice of comfort food?

How can food accessibility (inadequate or inappropriate) be abuse?

Why do you think people worry about accidents and homicide but not so much about food choices that might be terminal?

What if anything is our spiritual responsibility regarding obesity?

How would you go about reducing obesity in our community?

How can we enjoy God's intention for the joy of food without overdoing it?

Who could you share a meal with this week and talk food?

What is one positive change you can do regarding food this week?

How can you make a difference for the next generation with regard to nutrition and smart thinking regarding food?



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