ESSAY · JULY 7, 2016

A justifiable sin?

Written by Bill Perkins

There's nothing wrong with eating bread when you're hungry. And after fasting for forty days it wouldn't have been wrong for Jesus to turn stones into bread and eat them—unless in doing so he acted independent of his Father. That's what Satan wanted Jesus to do: exercise his power apart from faith in the Father. It's also what he wants us to do with our valid need for food, clothing, shelter, sex, love, and companionship.

Prove It

Satan launched the first temptation when he said to Jesus, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread" (Luke 4:3, NIV). The question implied Jesus might *not* be the Son of God. It prodded him to prove his identity by performing a simple miracle—one that would establish his identity and prevent him from starving.

A Legitimate Need, Met Illegitimately

It's easy to justify meeting a legitimate need illegitimately. We've all done it. A few years ago, a man approached me at a men's conference. After explaining that his wife had been seriously ill for ages he said, "We haven't been intimate in years. Since my wife can't meet my needs, I figured it would be okay to view porn on the internet."

I expressed sympathy for his wife and concern for his situation and then asked, "Do you think God would approve of what you're doing?"

"I'm not sure," he said. "That's why I asked you."

I reminded him of what Jesus said: "Anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:28, NIV).

"But I'm not looking at flesh-and-blood women," he said. "They're just pictures."

"But they're pictures of real women," I said. "If we have a valid need that's not being met by God, does that mean we should disregard his command and meet it ourselves?"

It's easy to see how a man in his situation could justify such behavior.

A Love Affair With Food

After my book, *Fatal Attractions . . . Overcoming Your Secret Addictions* was published, I got a heartbreaking letter from a young woman whose love affair with food had destroyed her sense of self-respect. Though she wasn't overweight—in fact, she had little body fat and worked as a model—she said she used sweets to fill her need for love.

“Unlike men, food is always there,” she said. “It demands nothing in return. It never puts me down. It gives me peace for a while.”

A Door for the Enemy

Certainly, the need for love, affection, food and sex are appropriate. But meeting them outside of God’s will is sinful. And when we knowingly sin we open the door for the enemy to build a stronghold in our soul. Once built, such fortresses become a place where we serve another god.

That’s why when tempted to commit a “justifiable” sin, we should follow the example of Jesus and wait for God to meet our need. Even if it takes a while.