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You Are What You Eat

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Most of us at some point in our lives have probably heard the saying “you are what you eat”... and to some extent physically it is true, if you eat foods high in fats your body will become fat. If you eat a lot of lean protein, your body will become leaner.

Granted this is an overly simplified example above as there is much more to it than what was just outlined, but I think we can all agree that the above statements are true albeit lacking detail.

Now here's something you may not have heard before, and something that Jesus taught over 2000 years ago and something that is recorded in the Bible: Spiritually, you are what you eat!

What exactly does that mean? Well, just as with physical health, we must watch what we consume and feed our bodies to aid in fitness, so too with our spirit we must watch what we consume and feed it to aid in spiritual health and well-being. Now I know that some of you are wondering what I am talking about when I say “feed our spirit”, so fear not, I will explain it.

We feed our spirits in several different ways: By what we see, by what we hear, and by what we think about and speak about. These all complement each other so if you have all of them working together then the result is cumulative. More on that in a bit... For now let's break these down further.

How we feed our spirit

The first way that we feed our spirit is by what we see. Now there has been a great amount of debate in the media industry about whether television, movies and games actually affect the behavior of the one watching and playing them. While some may disagree, the simple truth is that if such things really have no effect then advertisers would not spend billions of dollars on advertisements, product placements in movies or other such things. They spend large sums of money because they know that it can affect the viewer, even if the viewer is unaware that they are being affected.

In another spiritual health article entitled [Darkness and Light](#), I outline an experience I had with a video game which had a strong spiritual impact on me.

Just as with what we see, what we hear or listen to, is another way that we feed our spirit. Everything ranging from speech to music can and will affect our spirit either for good or

evil. There are some really interesting movies out there that I simply cannot stomach because of every other word is a foul one. Perhaps that seems old-fashioned and I will gladly accept that label, but consider the power that the spoken word can have. If you have ever encountered a person who always speaks negatively around you then you understand how always listening to negative words can quickly kill your good mood and bring you right down with them (that's why I usually don't watch the news broadcasts anymore, all negative).

Music, is much the same as the spoken word, it is simply spoken to melody and rhyme. Music carries a message just as speech does; and in some ways it is even more powerful. It has been an interesting experience of mine to observe children and music, and how even if a child doesn't understand the words of a song, they only have to hear it for a very short time to be able to sing it flawlessly without even thinking. So if a song has lyrics which are less than what is spiritually healthy, even if a child doesn't understand them they are already singing them and repeating them over and over, and that is very dangerous. That is however, a true testament to the power of what we hear.

Another way we feed our spirit is by what we think and speak about. These two are more closely related to each other, because speaking first requires thought (even if some of us don't like to admit that).

Our thoughts can have a profound impact on our spiritual and even physical health. I have actually witnessed people think themselves into sickness and depression even when they were once perfectly healthy and happy. By slowly but surely subjecting themselves to the wrong kinds of visual and audio stimuli, they began to take on the mentality of a depressed and defeated person, and have since remained that way and refuse to change.

And as they were filled more and more with that spiritual poison, it began to spew out of their mouths in their speech to try and infect others. People who never used to cuss, now cuss quite often and use other hateful speech, and it all started with something seemingly harmless that they fed their spirit.

Now I know that this all may seem deep, but it's really fairly simple and obvious, we have just forgotten these simple truths in our modern entertainment driven culture, but these truths do not change with time and they are still just as relevant today as they were thousands of years ago. Now that we are aware of them what can we do? Here are some tips for feeding your spirit the right things and how to avoid falling into the trap I mentioned above.

Putting your spirit on a healthy diet

Just as with a physical diet, spiritually we must begin to watch what we eat. Many people today (especially Christians) tend to think that they are so spiritually strong and tough that they can watch this evil thing or listen to that evil thing and it will not affect them at all. Allow me to burst that bubble, that is ego and it is a very dangerous mindset to be in.

Pride always comes before a fall and people with the mindset of “I’m too tough to be brought down by that” are already falling, they just can’t feel it yet.

Now to be able to put your spirit on a healthy diet, you must make value judgments on the “foods” before you consume them, just as we do with the foods we feed our physical bodies. Here are some common sense tips for doing just that:

- **Watch what you watch:** Even if a movie or T.V. show is the new great thing, and is very compelling, if you start to notice things that you know are less than spiritually healthy, turn it off! We are far too desensitized to language, violence and sexual innuendos in today’s culture.

Beyond that, I challenge you, take a step back and observe yourself. Some shows will actually make you depressed as you watch them, if a show is all negative, it isn’t healthy for you, just as it isn’t healthy to always hang around a negative person. It may sound silly but it is true, try it.

- **Start listening to what you listen to:** You will be surprised at the lyrics in some of today’s most popular songs. When I witness an eight-year-old girl in the mall happily skipping along and singing extremely sexually engaging lyrics without a care in the world and all of the adults thinking that it is cute, we know there is an obvious problem.

Start to listen to what you (and your children) are listening to. Remember that you are not immune either.

- **Think about what’s on your mind:** Sometimes so many things are running through our brains that we don’t take time to really examine them. Chances are that many of those thoughts come from external stimuli these days. That’s not to say that we are all simpletons, it’s just a fact of our over-stimulated culture. We are literally saturated with external messages and stimuli, and so we must be even more alert and guard our minds against the wrong kinds of thoughts.

Whenever you feel depressed, down or angry, take a step back and ask yourself “what am I thinking about right now?” and then change it to something positive. Think about all that God has blessed you with...

- Do you have your health? That’s a blessing.
- Do you have enough money to make it another month? That’s a blessing.
- Do you have food to eat? That’s a blessing.
- Do you have a loving companion and/or family? That’s a blessing
- And if you are at a loss for anything to think of, your life is also a blessing.

- **Speak positively:** Closely related to your thoughts, your words (and actions in general) are the end result of what is in your heart [ref. Luke 6:45].

Make an effort to always speak positively about life. Sure bad things happen sometimes, and we must address those things, but what I am saying is focus on the positive things, otherwise you are doomed to live a depressing life.

The teeter-totter effect

For those of you unfamiliar with the term, a *teeter-totter* (also called a seesaw, among various other names) is a children's playground toy in which it tilts from one side to the other continuously.

Now remember in the beginning of this article I mentioned how if all of the above ways of feeding our spirit are working together then the effect is cumulative? Well if they are not all working together, then you end up with what I have named the "teeter-totter effect".

This may be a person who is very diligent about feeding their spirit the right thing in some areas but lacking in the others, it could be all-but-one area, and the teeter-totter effect would still result.

This is because the two sides, simply good and evil, will always war with one another, so here we have a person feeding their spirit good things one moment and bad the next; the two can not co-exist, so war is the result, and there-in lies the teeter-totter, the tilting back and forth. This persons' spirit will never be at peace this way, and their life will be out of balance until this is resolved.

It is important for all of these areas to be working together feeding your spirit good things and avoiding the bad things so that you can experience the maximum spiritual health benefits.

Conclusion

I know that this article is longer and a bit heavier than normal, but the topic is so very crucial for spiritual health and life balance that it simply can not be ignored or watered-down. At its core, the principles in this article are fairly simple and common-sense driven and I have no doubt that everyone has the ability to spiritually watch what they eat, to help become the person that God has designed them to be.

May you all continue to Rise to the Challenge!

James