

Why Childhood Diabetes Is On The Rise

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Key Scripture

Proverbs 23:20-21 (ESV) Be not among drunkards or among gluttons, for the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, and slumber will clothe them with rags.

Sermon in One Sentence

While the rising tide of childhood diabetes presents complex challenges, a foundational disregard for biblical principles of stewardship over our bodies and wise living contributes significantly to this modern health crisis, calling us back to God's design for flourishing.

Introduction

Imagine a pediatrician today looking at a child, not just with the usual sniffles or scrapes, but with a diagnosis that, a generation ago, was almost unheard of in the young: type 2 diabetes. The statistics are chillingly clear. According to the CDC, the incidence of type 2 diabetes among children and adolescents has skyrocketed, with a 95% increase over the past two decades. This isn't just about statistics; it's about our children, our future, and the profound implications for their health, quality of life, and longevity. What has changed so dramatically in our culture and lifestyle to bring about such a devastating epidemic among our youth?

While medical science continues to unravel the multifactorial causes, as followers of Christ, we must also turn to God's timeless wisdom. The Bible, though written long before blood glucose meters and insulin pumps, provides profound principles for healthy living, stewardship, and discerning choices that bear directly on our physical well-being. It calls us to examine not just what we eat, but how we live, why we consume, and what we truly prioritize in a world increasingly characterized by indulgence and immediate gratification.

Tonight, we will explore how ancient biblical wisdom speaks powerfully to this contemporary crisis, revealing that a foundational departure from God's design for flourishing, particularly regarding self-control and stewardship, has contributed to the alarming rise of childhood diabetes. Our guide will be Proverbs, a book rich in practical wisdom for daily living, reminding us that physical health is often intertwined with spiritual discipline.

Historical & Biblical Context

The book of Proverbs is a collection of divinely inspired wisdom literature, primarily attributed to King Solomon, written to instruct God's people in the art of living wisely and righteously in a fallen world. It's not a book of laws, but principles for success and flourishing, meant to guide individuals in practical choices concerning speech, finance, relationships, and even physical habits. Solomon, renowned for his wisdom (1

Kings 4:29-34), composed these proverbs for his son and for all who would listen, grounding life's various circumstances in the fear of the Lord.

The specific verses in Proverbs 23:20-21 are a stark warning against companions who indulge in excessive eating and drinking. The context is a call to discernment regarding friendships and habits, emphasizing that certain behaviors lead to ruin and destitution. While the immediate consequences depicted are poverty and destitution, the underlying principle is a broader caution against lack of self-control and stewardship over one's resources, including one's body. For us today, these ancient warnings resonate profoundly, speaking to the dangers of unchecked appetite and the long-term impact of seemingly innocuous daily choices. God cares about our health, not just our spiritual state, recognizing the interconnectedness of body and soul.

Main Point I — The Peril of Unchecked Appetite

Scripture: Proverbs 23:20 (ESV) Be not among drunkards or among gluttons, for the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty...

The proverb's warning against being "among...gluttons" speaks powerfully to the societal pressures and personal temptations that fuel unchecked appetite. Gluttony isn't merely eating a lot; it's an immoderate, excessive desire for food, often to the point of waste or physical harm. In today's culture, we are constantly bombarded with messages that encourage consumption, convenience, and cheap, highly processed foods, creating an environment where gluttonous habits can develop subtly from childhood. The sheer availability of sugary drinks, fast food, and highly palatable, calorie-dense snacks, often marketed aggressively to children, normalizes overconsumption and makes moderation a constant uphill battle.

This verse reveals that such unchecked appetite has dire consequences, here specifically "poverty," which can be understood broadly as a state of ruin or deprivation. While the immediate biblical context likely referred to financial ruin due to excessive spending on food and drink, in a contemporary medical sense, "poverty" can also signify the physical impoverishment of a body ravaged by disease. The continuous overconsumption of calories, particularly from processed sugars and unhealthy fats, strains the body's metabolic systems, leading to insulin resistance—the hallmark of type 2 diabetes. Thus, the ancient warning against gluttony finds a terrifying modern medical parallel in the silent physical "poverty" inflicted by a diet of excess on a child's developing body, leading to a lifetime of chronic illness.

Main Point II — The Erosion of Self-Control

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 9:27 (ESV) But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

Paul's declaration in 1 Corinthians 9:27 regarding disciplining his body speaks directly to the virtue of self-control, a foundational biblical principle often undermined in modern living, contributing to the rise of childhood diabetes. This "keeping under control" (■ποπι■ζω - literally "to strike under the eye," to give a black eye, metaphorically to subject, bring into subjection) signifies a rigorous, intentional mastery over one's physical desires and drives. It's an active battle, not a passive yielding. For children today, the development of self-control is often challenged by a world designed for instant gratification, where discomfort is avoided, and desires are immediately met, especially concerning food and entertainment. The

relentless presence of screens, accessible snacks, and a lack of required physical activity erode the very muscles of self-discipline.

Without the discipline to choose nutritious foods over sugary treats, or active play over sedentary entertainment, children are increasingly left to the whims of their appetites and the pervasive influence of an unhealthy environment. This isn't solely a child's fault; it's a reflection of the habits modeled and permitted by adults, and the systems perpetuated by society. Just as Paul understood the necessity of physical discipline for spiritual effectiveness, we must recognize that training children in self-control—in eating habits, activity levels, and screen time—is critical for their physical health. The ability to delay gratification, to say "no" to unhealthy temptations, and to embrace healthy routines is a spiritual discipline with profound physical benefits, stemming diabetes where unchecked appetites once reigned.

Main Point III — The Call to Stewardship of God's Temple

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (ESV) Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

The powerful declaration in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 that "your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit" elevates our physical bodies from mere biological vessels to sacred dwelling places for God himself. This profound truth transforms our understanding of health from a secular pursuit of well-being into an act of worship and responsible stewardship. If our bodies belong to God, bought with the precious blood of Christ, then we are not owners but caretakers, called to honor Him with every aspect of our lives, including our physical health. The rise of childhood diabetes, therefore, is not merely a medical crisis; it's a stark indicator of a collective failure in stewardship, reflecting a societal disregard for the intrinsic value and sacredness of the human body.

This principle calls parents and communities to a higher standard of care for children's bodies. It means providing nourishing foods, encouraging regular physical activity, and teaching healthy habits as an act of glorifying God. Neglecting these responsibilities, whether through passive allowance of unhealthy lifestyles or active provision of detrimental diets, is a failure to honor the "temple." This is not about moralizing food choices, but recognizing that wise, loving care for our physical selves, and our children's selves, is an integral part of our Christian discipleship. The consequences of poor stewardship, like childhood diabetes, remind us that God's design for our well-being is holistic, connecting our physical actions to our spiritual reverence.

Illustration

Consider the story of a well-maintained garden. A master gardener designs the landscape, planting diverse, healthy plants and fruit trees, understanding the soil, light, and water needs. He diligently weeds, prunes, and nourishes each plant, ensuring it thrives and bears fruit. But imagine if this gardener, instead of tending, allowed weeds to overtake the good plants, poured sugary water instead of pure water, and neglected to remove pests. Soon, the vibrant garden would become sickly, barren, and overrun with disease. Similarly, our children's bodies are like these precious gardens. When we, as parents and a society, consistently "feed"

them with unhealthy processed foods, neglect physical activity, and fail to plant seeds of self-control and wise discernment, we are cultivating an environment ripe for chronic disease. Just as the garden reflects the gardener's care, a child's health often reflects the stewardship exercised over their developing "temple." The alarming rise in childhood diabetes shouts that many of our societal "gardens" are in desperate need of intentional, God-honoring cultivation.

Practical Application

- 1. Prioritize Real Food:** Commit this week to significantly reducing processed foods, sugary drinks, and excessive snacks in your household. Focus on increasing whole, unprocessed foods like fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, and whole grains, making them the primary nutritional choices for your children.
- 2. Cultivate Active Play:** Intentionally schedule and encourage at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity daily for your children (and yourselves). This could be outdoor play, sports, family walks, or even active chores, moving away from sedentary screen time.
- 3. Teach Self-Control at the Table:** Engage your children in conversations about healthy eating, portion sizes, and the meaning of "enough." Model self-control by not overeating and by making wise food choices, explaining the "why" behind these decisions as an act of honoring God with your bodies.
- 4. Research Nutritional Literacy:** Take time this week to educate yourself and your family on the basic principles of nutrition. Understand food labels, identify hidden sugars, and learn how different foods impact energy and health, empowering your family to make informed choices.
- 5. Pray for Wisdom and Discipline:** Regularly pray for God's wisdom in making healthy choices for your family and for the discipline to implement them. Acknowledge that truly caring for our bodies, especially our children's, requires divine help and resolve.

Discussion Questions

1. In what ways has our modern culture made nourishing children's bodies more challenging than in previous generations?
2. How does the concept of "gluttony" from Proverbs 23 apply to our contemporary consumption habits, even for children?
3. What practical steps can parents take to instill self-control and healthy habits in their children regarding food and activity?
4. How does understanding our bodies as "temples of the Holy Spirit" change our perspective on health choices for ourselves and our families?

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, we come before you with humble hearts, acknowledging the sacred trust you have placed upon us as stewards of our bodies and our children's lives. Forgive us where we have neglected this holy calling, yielding to convenience and cultural currents rather than your timeless wisdom. Grant us wisdom, O

Lord, to discern healthy paths, and give us the self-control and discipline to walk in them, for your glory and the flourishing of our families. May our lives, and the lives of our children, be living testimonies to your good design. Amen.

Benediction

Now may the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.