

What if you win big... really big? (25:16)

Have you found honey? Eat *only* what you need, lest you have it in excess and vomit it.

THE TEXT (NASB)

Have you found honey? Eat *only* what you need, lest you have it in excess and vomit it.

Hast thou found honey? Eat so much as is sufficient for thee, lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it. KJV - Proverbs 25:16

INTRODUCTION



Splurge! Enjoy! Why delay?

A big win is both exciting and dangerous—exciting, because sudden treasure promises vast new opportunities, and dangerous, because the instant power comes without discipline or wisdom.



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COMMENTARY



Whenever we get a big windfall, that's when we desperately need to limit consumption, lest our splurging makes us sick.

In the past, sugar was unknown, and **honey** was a rare luxury. Finding an oozing honeycomb was a real treat. Sometimes in life we get lucky. Imagine stumbling on a priceless gem or winning the lottery. Why not indulge, especially when it's unexpected and free? If we're at a party with acres of hors d'oeuvres, or attending a potluck with mountains of dishes, are we tempted to pig out? Alas, self-indulgence is easy, but unprogrammed self-control is almost impossible. Yet, the need for real restraint may come suddenly and unexpectedly.

OK to Enjoy

This proverb does not forbid eating honey, like some stoic philosopher, as if all pleasures are wrong. It means, "Enjoy, but don't overdo it and hurt yourself by over-indulgence." We must be careful. We can have too much of a good thing. The stomach gives only momentary pleasure, and it's certainly no path to happiness. Human beings are not just our appetites, and excessive consumption brings trouble, regret, and waste. It causes more harm than good.

Eat or Store?



Honey is sweet, delicious, and healthy (when moderately consumed), but rare to find. In a land "flowing with milk and honey," over-consumption is easy. But honey doesn't spoil. It can be kept for many years without refrigeration. People don't have bulging cheeks like hamsters. We can't eat and save food at the same time! As the saying goes, "You can't have your cake and eat it, too." So, let's consider the text broadly.



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Just before Vomiting—How much is “Excess”

In discussing this text with our 19-year-old son, he thought it told us gorge ourselves, but just short of **vomiting**. No surprise: Young men inhale food. But no! That’s not the message. Eat to meet your real need. Each of us has a range of tolerance, like a margin between “enough” and “too much.” This text advises us not to push toleration to the limit. When the text says vomit, it refers to any **excess** consumption causing discomfort, lethargy, or indigestion. Excess consumption is really a form of gluttony, leading to self-induced poverty.

Optimum not Maximum Consumption

We need to consume the optimum amount. That’s not natural; it’s learned. In the economically-privileged and developed world, this usually means taking less instead of more, erring on the side of too little rather than too much. Our consumer society encourages gorging to the point that our consumables interfere with our living. It’s not a question of how much should I overeat before I vomit, it’s how much is enough?

From Rags to Riches

Winning the lottery is often the first thing people think of when they think about “winning big.” It’s exciting and tempting to splurge it because there is a lot of it. However, giving into this temptation is a big mistake and many lottery winners can attest to the “curse” of winning a lot of money. Spending their riches quickly often leaves them with less than they started out with, and can be harmful in many aspects of life. A break-down in a marriage, tumultuous family relationships, and unwanted media attention are just a few ways a big win can prove to be harmful excess.

Here is an excerpt from the National Post: “Big win ‘lottery curse’ begets another riches-to-rags tale,” by Joseph Brean (August 10, 2016).

Money also changes people’s outlook on those close to them, according to H. Roy Kaplan, a sociologist at the University of South Florida, who has surveyed hundreds of winners. He found that people who are already introverted tend to become more anxious and suspicious after they win.

He found Americans tended to move house immediately to areas of established privilege, whereas Canadians tended to renovate. Nearly 80 per cent of winners from both countries quit their jobs, often to their regret, and many who kept working were alienated from co-workers, as if they no longer needed or deserved to be working.

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Edward Ugel, author of *Money for Nothing: One Man's Journey Through The Dark Side of Lottery Millions*, has said that, of the thousands of winners he interviewed, a few were happy, "but you would be blown away to see how many winners wish they'd never won."

[You can read the full article here.](#)

The story of Jack Whittaker is one of the best examples of a lottery winner turned loser.

Upon winning \$314 million in a 2002 lottery, a happy business owner (Mr. Jack Whittaker) expressed noble desire. He wanted to start a charitable foundation, put laid-off workers back on the job, and do nice things for his family. Already wealthy, he told reporter the big win wouldn't change him. A few years later, a follow-up article described a different outcome. Since winning the biggest of all lotteries, the man had run into legal problems, lost his personal reputation, and gambled away all of his money.¹

Look up the Key Word "Lottery" to read more about this topic.

Enjoy it NOW

The lure to immediate gratification and excess consumption is amplified when one or more of the following conditions prevail:

- The unexpected abundance comes during a time of scarcity.
- The consumer has no clear long-term goals, or if he has goals they lack strong conviction, making the consumer vulnerable to any sort of passion.
- Easy credit with low interest rates—they make debt very alluring.

The Savings Alternative



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When stored in clean and dry containers honey keeps well even without refrigeration. Honey found in the Egyptian pyramids in the 19th century was still edible. The point is this: If you find honey, get a windfall, strike it rich, win the big one, hit the jackpot, find gold, or some other surplus, don't go on a wild spending spree. This means you must re-channel the surplus to another positive goal, even if it's delayed. It means setting some pre-determined limits. The text advises you not to over-consume. It does not tell you to ignore the extra honey. You can and likely should collect all the honey you found. Just don't eat too much too quickly. Proverbs 21:20 praises those who show self-control and *store* excess rather than *consume* excess.

Need or Greed

The expression “*only take what you need*” is easier said than done. Usually *need* soon becomes *greed*—especially when something is found rather than earned. People usually don't find deposits of honey as if they were just lying around, but every now and then they come across a big sum of money (e.g. lottery winnings). Free, non-taxable money is a big win indeed, and it easily awakens the grizzly giant, greed. Greed is like a black hole—never resolved or satisfied. Need, on the other hand, is finite with a specific end-point.

Where does the power come from to stop when we have such a strong magnetic pull to consume immediately? It's even worse when we do the wrong thing, all the while knowing it is wrong. It is an external power. It is not in-born, at least not from the first birth. Read on to find out about a second birth.



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OUR CREATOR, REDEEMER, AND FRIEND

Jesus warned us about all types of greed (Luke 12:15) and one type of greed is self-indulgence. Greed does not stimulate business, greed poisons it. Greed is not life giving, but life taking.

In contrast to greed Jesus promised to reward wise consumption. “Who then is the faithful and sensible steward, whom his master will put in charge of his servants, to give them *their rations at the proper time?*” (Emphasis added, Luke 12:42). Their “rations” speaks of (1) proper quantity and “the proper time” speaks of (2) good timing. Jesus is expecting controlled consumption. Imagine CONTROLLED CONSUMPTION. A miracle!

It takes supernatural power. It's a new life not a new leaf, (John 3:3-17). This new life or new birth comes from above, from the spirit of God. Self-control is perhaps the greatest benefit of the Spirit filled life, (Galatians 5:22-23).

APPLICATION

- Memorize the text in your favourite Bible translation and think about it often.
- Have fun but don't overdo it and hurt yourself in the process. Enjoy a *freebie* but don't get *greedy*.
- Make a plan to handle windfall profits or any anticipated large cash inflows such as an inheritance. Financial planning usually includes a budget.
- Discover the secret to self-control at [The World's Secret Desire](#)—an excellent article by Ed Welch, author of “Addictions – Banquet in the Grave.” Here's an excerpt:
Every generation discovers that life without boundaries is quickly followed by slavery to our passions, and slavery is followed by misery. If you want to peddle the perfect elixir, offer one that gives self-control. We all want it and need it.

Which of these steps, if any, does Jesus want you to take now? Ask Him.



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KEY WORDS

self-control, self-indulgence, gluttony, lottery, abundance, scarcity, credit, greed, inheritance, planning, less assets (quantity), consumption, waste, budget, bf spending

ILLUSTRATION

Who is Quick Buck Betty?



Quick Buck Betty wants to make money fast, and is always looking for “hot tips.” Researching and understanding investments takes too long; she just cares about the returns—especially the short-term returns.

It doesn't matter how the money is earned—in fact she'd rather not know at all! Betty is just eager to “make it” or, even better, have someone else make it for her. She has little time for Steady Eddy and Diligent Daniel—their methods take too long.

Betty views the stock and bond markets like the lottery and casino. She doesn't invest; she gambles. She likes to “play” the markets. Day trading is one of her passions.



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FOOTNOTES

1. *Our Daily Bread*, Mark DeHaan, November 15, 2014. RBC Ministries

