

What Christians Need to Know about Eating Disorders

Millions of women look into their mirrors every day and hate what they see. They compare themselves to the air-brushed models in the magazines or the painstakingly thin celebrities and then they start dieting.

Dieting is often the first step to an eating disorder, which today afflicts roughly 10 million females and 1 million males in our country. More people die from anorexia each year than any other mental illness.

Eating disorders are an insidious type of identity theft. Identity theft is a crime in which an impostor steals key pieces of identifying information then uses that info for their own gain. Women who struggle with eating disorders have had their divine identities stolen. The irony is that many of these women are incredibly physically beautiful, according to current societal standards; and yet they feel deficient, grossly inadequate on many levels. This inadequacy is due to the lie that resides beneath our cultural over-emphasis on physical beauty: "The only thing that is truly important or valuable about your identity is your appearance."

When women or men succumb to this lie, they have lost a sense of their true self. They have forfeited key pieces of their "identifying information" to "an impostor." They forfeit the truth about their bodies, identity, and role in the world—the truth that "I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalms 139:14); "I am special, holy, and chosen; I am royalty with a divine calling of which I am worthy" (1 Peter 2:9; Ephesians 4:1); "I am a child of the most high God" (Psalms 82:6).

In Luke 13, we are told of a crippled woman who was bent over "whom Satan bound for 18 years." The Pharisees greatly devalued this woman as she did not fit their cultural ideal and they criticized Jesus for healing her on the Sabbath. Jesus very quickly corrected them and spoke to her true identity when He said, "Should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham be healed."

While the cultural ideals may have been different, the characters are the same. Jesus can heal us and restores us to our true identity as sons and daughters. The "impostor" who tried to steal this woman's identity 2,000 years ago is the same one who deceives men and women today. Similarly, the Father who instills self-worth and restores her to an upright position is also the same.

If you, or someone you love, has an eating disorder, please get help to reclaim the holy identity the enemy has stolen. We must always remember who we are, who our father is and what He has said about our divine identity and destinies. Recovery is possible.



Timberline Knolls is a residential treatment center for females, ages 12 and older, nestled in a wooded area in a southwestern suburb of Chicago. Christian counseling with Meier Clinics staff is available to those residents who request it. For more information about our facility and program, call 877-257-9611 or visit www.timberlineknolls.com.