



# EATING DISORDERS: Bulimia Nervosa

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Eating disorders are serious illnesses, not lifestyle choices. Eating disorders include extreme emotions, attitudes, and behaviours surrounding weight and food issues, which can have life-threatening consequences for both females and males.

There are two major eating disorders: anorexia, in which people purposefully under eat, and bulimia, in which people binge on food and then purge. Of the two, bulimia is very difficult to detect because bulimics generally hide their behaviour, going to great lengths to maintain the appearance of normal eating around other people.

## *What is Bulimia Nervosa?*

Bulimia Nervosa is an eating disorder which affects ten times more women than men. It was first acknowledged as an eating disorder in 1979. Bulimia is an obsession with food and weight characterized by repeated overeating binges followed by self-induced vomiting, taking enemas, abusing laxatives or medication, fasting, or excessive exercise. If left untreated, bulimia can lead to serious and even life-threatening problems, such as depression, anxiety disorders, heart damage, kidney damage, injury to all parts of the digestive system, and severe dental damage.

Research have revealed many factors which attributes to eating disorders; however, the cardinal reasons most people give for their eating disorder are low self-esteem, childhood conflicts, and cultural pressures (the unrealistic images of women in the media). There are a significant number of both women and men who are engaging in this self-destructive behaviour. Research further reveals that eating disorders may be genetic or hereditary.

## *A Success Story*

I recently met with a young lady in her early thirties, who has conquered this illness after suffering with it for 20 years. As a child she witnessed her mother's struggle with bulimia, who began her bingeing and purging at a very young age. Her grandmother also suffered with an eating disorder. She was overweight at the tender age of 5, and was teased by the other kids and began loathing and hating herself, which left an emptiness deep within as she grew into her teenage years. The self-induced vomiting began at age 12. She tried it once and then it gradually became a habit. Purging relieved the extreme emotions she experienced, which accompanies this illness – afterwards she would feel good about herself. She believes her

behaviour was learnt by observing her mother, who was over 300lbs. and felt trapped in her overweight body. Her mother over ate to cope with the constant arguments with her father, and to comfort her mother she would eat with her. She feared that she would end up mirroring her mother's life.

The bingeing was measured by her emotional state - if she was angry then she would eat to the capacity of that anger and purged the emotion. She discovered several secrets to her purging, namely, the timing in how long it took to digest different types of food. It came to a point where she could no longer purge and began gaining weight. The uncontrollable craving for food increased and to satisfy those cravings she visited the grocery store frequently, filling the grocery cart with enough food to feed a household of 5, which would be gone in 3-4 days. She then began to starve herself and quickly lost 80lbs. She experienced several health issues: lose of hair, yellow skin, teeth erosion, severe abdomen pain, acid burns on the knuckles of the index finger from the self-induced vomiting; her knuckles were black and tender. As the years passed with this illness consuming her, she realized her behaviour was "evil". With two unsuccessful suicide attempts, a young daughter to care for, she then turned to God for His help – she did not want her daughter to mirror her life the way she mirrored her mother's life. It had to stop and it would stop with her, with the aid of her Lord and Saviour Jesus.

### *God's Point of View*

God tells us in His Word, "Don't you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body" 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (NLT). God further tells us, "For we are not our own masters when we live or when we die. While we live, we live to please the Lord. And when we die, we go to be with the Lord. So in life and in death, we belong to the Lord" Romans 14:7-8 (NLT). Therefore, if our bodies belong to the Lord, then He is the master of them and the way we treat them either honors or dishonors Him. Eating disorders do not fall in line with His Word. When we do not see ourselves the way God sees us, we begin to measure and compare ourselves with one another, and act without understanding and behave unwisely 2 Corinthians 10:12 (AMP). If we do not know *who* we are in Christ and unable to recognize that He perfectly formed us in our mother's womb, whereby approving us as His chosen instrument before we were born Jeremiah 1:5 (AMP), then when we look at our natural faces in the mirror we will only see faults and ugliness. But when we see ourselves in His Word and accept His love for us, then when we look at ourselves in the mirror we see Him, flawlessness, beauty, liberty, destiny - walking in this revelation cannot bind us in any unrealistic images of ourselves James 1:23-25 (NLT). Jesus said to the woman, who had an infirmity for 18 years, "Woman, you are free!" Luke 13:12 (MSG). This is His declaration to **us** - to be free from all infirmity, all types of bondages. We are able to untangle and overcome any psychological problems. Jesus esteems us and we are important to His dream for mankind. Jesus met that woman and her world was changed, and He will change you and your world too. You are loosed from your infirmity; you are forgiven, released, liberated, justified and restored. You are free from negative and guilty thoughts, from self-condemnation, anxiety, depression – that is Jesus' words to us! This is the transformation which takes place when our life is touched by Jesus.

## *Treatment*

Family therapy has proved to be a successful method of overcoming eating disorders, with the help of a nutritionist and professionals. As you begin a healthy relationship with food, it is important to understand that the body must be trained to properly eat again (as it is with a young child going from milk to baby food, to solids).

Jesus Christ has the power to free you from eating disorders; however, it will often take biblical and nutritional counseling to help with the process. As you function in the light of the revelation of your divine health, through the life of God which lives in you, and with prayer, whether genetic or hereditary, this illness can be eradicated from your blood line.