

# Your four hungers

Imagine, for a moment, that you have four stomachs.

No, not your external belly, but the internal digestive organ.

Now, imagine that each stomach was designed to take in and process a different type of food: perhaps you have a fast-food stomach, an Asian-food stomach, an Italian stomach (my biggest one!), and a Tex-Mex stomach (a close second).

Each stomach has its own hunger signals that relate only to that type of food: so you could fill up three of your guts on Micky D's, fried rice, and pasta; but still feel an empty growl from the stomach that's waiting for salsa.

When this imaginary digestive system is working correctly, you would only crave the type of food that satisfies the empty stomach. But what if the signals between your stomachs and your brain got messed up? What if your Italian stomach was the empty one, but it was sending messengers to your brain saying, "Send tacos!" So even though you eat more and more Mexican food, you remain hungry and unsatisfied.

This silly scenario is not that far off from reality.

You **are** a four-part person: heart, soul, mind, body. Scripture confirms this when it says, "You are to love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." Mark 12:30

side note.....

*A note for those who are skeptical about the Bible, or don't consider it a source of life wisdom:* My purpose in this book is **not** to convert you to my faith. If you would rather consider these chapters literary inspiration, please feel free to do. I think you'll still find plenty of helpful science – nutritional, biological, and psychological – that will benefit your own journey to weight loss and better health.

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That verse is probably familiar -- but have you ever thought about the fact that each of these parts has its own hunger?

- Your **heart** hungers to be known and loved, and to love in return.
- Your **soul** hungers to be filled with truth and peace and to be awed by something bigger than you.
- Your **mind** has a hunger to be challenged by learning, discovery, creativity, and problem solving.
- And your physical **body** hungers and thirsts for food and water.

All of these hungers in their natural, unwarped form are good and healthy, and in fact, *were designed by God.*

Does that surprise you? Have you bought into the idea that all hunger and cravings -- except for Bible study and prayer, of course -- are evil? This is a false premise!

Before the fall, God said that it was not good for man to be alone: thus our craving for love.

He created us to have relationship with Him: thus our craving for peace and awe.

He gave us tasks that require our thought and creativity, giving Adam the job of naming all the animals: thus our craving for intellectual and creative challenges. (Also, being creators is one aspect of our being made in the image of The Creator.)

He created food and our bodies to need food and like it: thus our craving for food.

Unfortunately, you'll find this idea that all cravings are bad running through both secular and Christian culture.

In the western world today, there's a sub-culture that elevates being super-skinny and/or super-fit, and holds this up as the way to happiness and success. So every hunger pang is a bad thing: an enemy to be conquered. (You've probably heard or seen the phrase: "Nothing tastes as good as skinny feels!" Seriously?! Have you tasted perfectly ripe organic strawberries topped with real whipped cream?!)

And the idea that skinny equals happy? Think about that. Does being skinny guarantee that all your relationships will be without stress? That you'll never experience grief or

anger or disappointment? I was a skinny girl for many years: I can testify that the answer to all of those is NO!

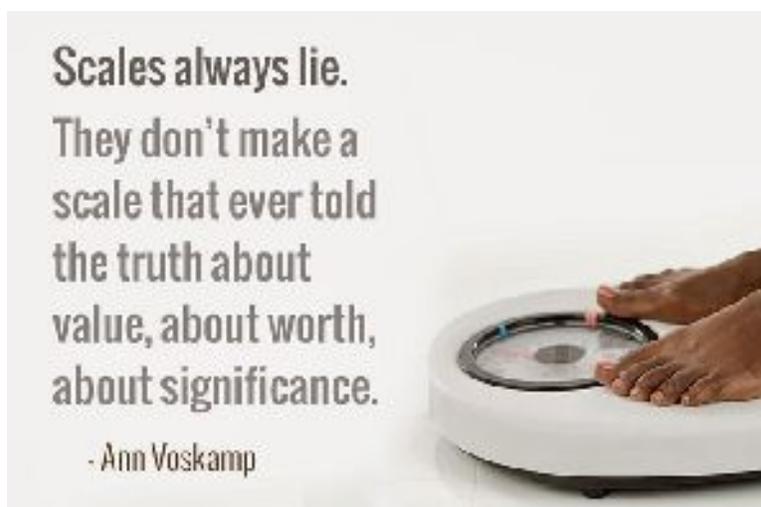
And how many examples has pop culture and media given us? Skinny celebrities aren't immune from heartache.

In the church, we have a slightly different angle on it. Our church culture has a tendency to confuse temptation with sin. So if we feel a genuine hunger pang due to our body being in need of nourishment, we might mentally jump ahead to thinking, "I'm gonna pig out. That's bad. I've got to ignore my hunger, or least beat myself up for it."

On the other extreme, a **dis**regard for taking adequate care of the body may grow out of a misunderstanding of scripture. For instance, verses like 1 Samuel 16:7, where God says, "For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart." And Philippians 3 which says, "we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body...." Misunderstanding these verses could lead to an "anything goes" mentality.

In fact, I fell into this type of thinking for a while – which made it easy to justify being careless with my diet and exercise. My thinking went: "This body's temporary, right? God only cares about my heart. And besides, I'm going to get a new body in heaven, so it doesn't matter all that much if I let this one go."

But that passage in 1 Samuel isn't saying we should ignore taking care of our body; only that it's a mistake to look at a person's outside and think that you can accurately judge their inside, their character and worth. And that is absolutely true.



Our American culture promotes this extreme, too. There are those who say “Every size is fine; obey your cravings; eat all you want.” But this can be taken to an unhealthy extreme where we really do put our health in danger.

God never intended for us to ignore or abuse our physical bodies. He created them to house our souls and to be the vehicle through which we praise Him, learn more about Him, and go out into the world being His hands and feet!

But how can we do all that if our bodies are limited by the ill effects of neglect? Or if our minds are so consumed with negative self-talk that we have no room to think about our blessings, or how we might bless others?

Your body needs food to survive. Hunger is a built-in mechanism to keep you alive and functional – thriving, even!

Your hungers -- all four of them, including body -- were created by God, and are part of His original, flawless design. Not something you need to feel guilty for.

Deuteronomy 8:3 says, "He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna... to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord."

Yes, God is talking about our spiritual need for Him and His word here, but don't ignore the fact that He's using our physical hunger to teach the lesson -- and is not condemning the fact that we hunger, but says that *He causes it!*

I've noticed that, throughout the Bible, there's a continuing refrain of God being one who meets needs not just sparingly, but abundantly, generously, lavishly. The words "satisfy" and "fill" crop up again and again. For example, the passage that inspired this book's title says,

"Some [people] wandered in desert wastelands....

They were hungry and thirsty and their lives ebbed away...

Give thanks to the Lord for His unfailing love...

For **He satisfies the thirsty** and **fills the hungry with good things.**"

(Psalm 107: 4, 5, 8 & 9)

God has created us with innate hungers, and designed into His world ways for those hungers to be lavishly satisfied with things that are good for us!

“God is a god of abundance, not a god of scarcity. Jesus reveals to us God's abundance when he offers so much bread to the people that there are twelve large baskets with leftover scraps (John 6:5-15), and when he makes his disciples catch so many fish that their boat nearly sinks (Luke 5:1-7). God doesn't give us just enough. God gives us more than enough: more bread and fish than we can eat, more love than we dared to ask for.

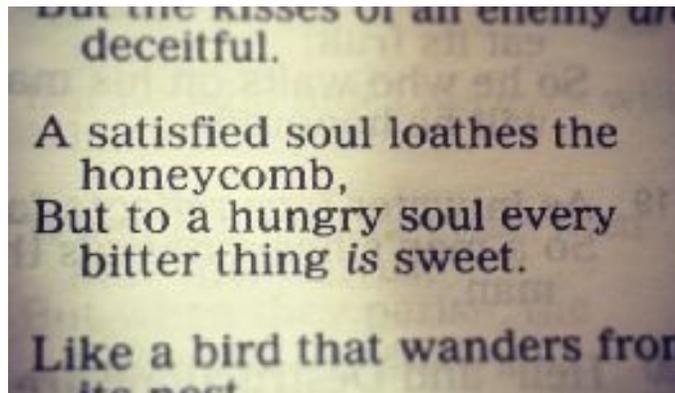
“God is a generous giver, but we can only see and enjoy God's generosity when we love God with all of our hearts, minds, and strength.”

- Henri Nouwen, *Bread for the Journey*, May 5

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*God created us with hungers, and designed into His world ways for those hungers to be fully satisfied with things that are good for us!*  
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Sometimes, though, our wires get crossed.

We try to feed the emotional stomach with physical food: we eat because we're lonely, or tired, or anxious, or bored. We gulp down food or drink in an attempt to dull our anger, resentment, or pain.



I know this firsthand. At various points in my life, I've eaten primarily because I was lonely and homesick, or because my kids were squabbling for the thirteenth time that *hour*, or in an attempt to swallow my anger at my husband. Or because my parents were dying and there was nothing I could do about it.

(I love that the Germans have a word to describe the weight you gain when you're mourning: "kummerspeck." The literal translation? "Grief bacon!")

And sometimes even our genuine physical hunger isn't because we haven't eaten enough **food**, but because we haven't eaten enough **nutrients**. Or we've eaten the type of food that perpetuates hunger, rather than satisfying it. Stay tuned; we'll talk about this more. (Here's a sneak peek: maybe you need to eat more *fat!*)

I hope and pray this book will help you:

- begin to identify what's keeping you stuck, and count the cost of staying there;
- learn how to untangle these messages, to tease out which are the heart/soul/mind issues and which are the physical issues;
- help you discover tools to deal with each;
- and learn to lovingly care for yourself by **feeding your real hungers** with the **good things** you really need.

## Healing your heart, mind, soul, and body

The rest of this book will address these four hungers, these four aspects of your being. Sometimes we'll focus on the heart, mind, and soul – they're so closely connected, you can hardly touch one without affecting the others. Sometimes we'll look more intently at the body and physical health – and those are certainly connected to the other three as well!

The following section of the book – **Journey to freedom** – uses the story of the Israelites leaving Egypt and traveling to the Promised Land as an inspiration and

metaphor for our own journey to freedom and health. It will address a number of topics that most everyone can relate to, and questions everyone asks:

- Why do I keep eating like this, when I know better?
- How are my emotions connected to the way I eat?
- What really is the healthiest diet?

Looking into the Israelites' journey will help us better understand our own hearts, God's heart, and give us hope.\*

The last section in the book – **Resources** – provides more info to drill down deeper on certain topics. It starts with a questionnaire to help you map out what areas you might need to focus on first. It also contains books and blogs you may find helpful, and more detailed information about what constitutes a healthy diet.

The Resources section also addresses topics that may only be of interest to some people, such as food addictions, sleep problems, emotional eating, depression and anxiety.

Beyond the questionnaire, the last section doesn't need to be read in a linear way. And you don't need to tackle all the lessons at once. I hope you'll use it as a syllabus for your self-paced course: a resource you can revisit again and again, at various points in your journey toward freedom and health.

So that's a glimpse into what's ahead. Before we dive into the Israelites' story, though, I'd like to talk about a word picture that illustrates *how* we change.