

PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE

MADE TO CRAVE

SATISFYING YOUR DEEPEST DESIRE
WITH GOD, NOT FOOD

SIX SESSIONS



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From Deprivation to Empowerment

Welcome!

Welcome to Session 1 of *Made to Crave*. You're about to embark on a spiritual adventure with great physical benefits! If this is your first time together as a group, take a moment to introduce yourselves to each other before watching the video. Then let's get started!

Video: *From Deprivation to Empowerment* (20 MINUTES)

As you watch the video, use the outline below to follow along or to take notes on anything that stands out to you.

Notes

God made you wonderful. (Psalm 139)

Indulge: To take unrestrained pleasure in something.

“Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which [wage] war against your soul.” (1 Peter 2:11)

Made to Crave is not about helping you to find your *how-to*; it's about helping you find your *want-to*.

- How-to = diet programs
- Want-to = the spiritual and mental motivation to make lasting changes

Story of the rich young man. (Matthew 19:16–26)

- “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.” (Mark 8:34)
- Food isn't bad, but it's a problem when it sabotages you mentally, physically, and spiritually.
- I had to be really honest. The thing I thought about, ran to, took comfort in, found refuge in, turned to and depended on, was food way more than it was Jesus.

This is a spiritual journey that will reap wonderful physical benefits.

If we can look at healthy options and make the healthy choices — and not feel deprived but instead feel empowered — everything will change. It will change us mentally, spiritually, and physically.

Made to Crave will help you learn how to feel empowered rather than deprived.

We were made to crave, desire, want greatly, one thing: God, not food.

Group Discussion: *From Deprivation to Empowerment* (5 MINUTES)

If your group meets for two hours, allow 10 MINUTES for this discussion.

Take a few minutes to talk about what you just watched.

1. What part of the teaching had the most impact on you?
2. What, if anything, did you hear that you didn't expect to hear?

Group Discussion: *The Vicious Cycle* (10 MINUTES)

If your group meets for two hours, include this discussion as part of your meeting.

1. Lysa describes the vicious cycle she experienced of stepping on the scale every morning, vowing to make healthier choices, giving in to the temptation of unhealthy foods, feeling like a failure, and then starting all over again. How would you describe your experiences of the vicious cycle?

cont.

2. Do you ever feel that your struggles with food are unfair? Why or why not?

Individual Activity: *Assessing My Soul* (5 MINUTES)

Complete this activity on your own.

1. Briefly review the list of statements below and place a checkmark next to those you feel are true for you.

- ☐ I think about food way too much.
- ☐ My food choices are often high in fat or sugar.
- ☐ I feel embarrassed about my weight or appearance.
- ☐ The thought of changing how I eat makes me feel sad.
- ☐ I'm reluctant to bring this issue to God.
- ☐ I have gained and lost weight several times.
- ☐ I feel defeated and discouraged about issues related to weight or food.
- ☐ I don't have as much physical energy as I wish I did.
- ☐ When I need comfort, I turn to food before I turn to God.
- ☐ I say negative things to myself ("You're so fat," "You're ugly," "You're not capable of getting your act together when it comes to food.")
- ☐ I'm not sure this is an issue God cares about.
- ☐ I feel guilty or embarrassed about what I eat or the size of my portions.
- ☐ I have health concerns that are weight related.
- ☐ I eat foods typically considered unhealthy fast food several times a week.
- ☐ I eat for emotional reasons—for comfort, out of boredom, to relieve stress.
- ☐ I sometimes feel like food is more powerful than I am.
- ☐ I think I will always struggle with this issue.
- ☐ I sometimes eat in secret or hide food.
- ☐ I avoid physical exertion.
- ☐ When it comes to food and weight, I feel like I am trapped in a vicious cycle with no way out.

2. Based on your responses from the checklist, circle the number below that best describes the degree to which you feel issues with food may be waging war on your soul.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Issues with food are not waging war on my soul. I am doing this study to gain healthy spiritual insights.				Issues with food are a threat to my soul.			Issues with food are waging war on my soul.		

Group Discussion: *Assessing My Soul* (8 MINUTES)

If your group meets for two hours, allow 15 MINUTES for this discussion.

1. How do you respond to the idea that issues with food or weight can wage war on your soul (1 Peter 2:11)?
2. What insights or surprises did you discover in your self-assessment?
3. If you feel comfortable doing so, share the statement from the Individual Activity checklist that best describes your thoughts or feelings right now. Explain the reasons for your choice.

Group Discussion: *How's Your Want-To?* (15 MINUTES)

If your group meets for two hours, include this discussion as part of your meeting.

1. In order to eat healthier, we need a how-to (a plan for what to eat), but we also need a want-to—the spiritual and mental motivation to make lasting changes. In previous efforts at weight loss and healthy eating, what ideas, experiences, or relationships

fueled your want-to? In other words, what increased your motivation to make healthy choices?

2. How would you describe your want-to right now? Is your spiritual and mental motivation low, moderate, or high? Describe the reasons for your response.

Group Discussion: *The Story of the Rich Young Man* (13 MINUTES)

If your group meets for two hours, allow 30 MINUTES for this discussion.

1. Read Matthew 19:16–26 and Mark 8:34 aloud. In what ways do you relate the rich young man's struggles with his possessions to your struggles with food?
2. The rich young man is unwilling to deny himself; he doesn't want to feel deprived of his possessions. Lysa had similar feelings about food. She once told God, "You can mess with my pride, You can mess with my anger, You can mess with my disrespectful attitude, but don't mess with my food." How do you respond to the idea of allowing God to "mess with" your food?

3. Jesus asks us to give up being controlled by anything in life that we crave more than we crave Him, which may feel impossible to do. But He also says, “With God, all things are possible.” When it comes to your issues with food and healthy eating, what is the one “impossible” thing you want God to make possible for you?

Group Discussion: *Empowerment* (7 MINUTES)

If your group meets for two hours, allow 15 MINUTES for this discussion.

If we can learn to feel *empowered* rather than *deprived* when we make a healthy choice, everything will change.

1. Imagine you are attending a party with a large buffet. In the process of making healthy choices, you say no to some foods. What kinds of things might you say to yourself that would make you feel deprived because of your choice? For example, “Why am I the only one not eating dessert?”
2. What kinds of things might you say to yourself that would make you feel empowered because of your choice? For example, “I overcame temptation and made a healthy choice!”
3. How hopeful do you feel that you can make this mental switch—from feeling deprived to feeling empowered when you make a healthy choice?

Individual Activity: *What I Want to Remember* (2 MINUTES)

Complete this activity on your own.

1. Briefly review the outline and any notes you took.
2. In the space below, write down the most significant thing you gained in this session — from the teaching, activities, or discussions.

What I want to remember from this session . . .

Closing Prayer

Close your time together with prayer.

Maximize the Impact

Maximize the impact of this curriculum with six days of personal study between sessions, alternating every other day between reading a chapter of the *Made to Crave* book and then completing a Bible study on the theme of that chapter (see next page). Setting aside just twenty to thirty minutes a day for personal study will enable you to complete the book and Bible studies by the end of the six-session group experience.



Between-Sessions Personal Bible Study

● DAY 1: Read and Reflect

Read the introduction and chapter 1 of *Made to Crave*. If you want to dig a little deeper, use a notepad or journal to work through the personal reflection questions at the end of the chapter. Use the space below to note any insights or questions you want to bring to the next group session.

● DAY 2: What's Really Going on Here?

We tend to think of a craving as a weakness, something that compels us to eat something that probably isn't the healthiest choice. But what if our ability to desire—to crave—is something that could draw us closer to God? Would it change the way you think about craving?

I believe God made us to crave. Now before you think this is some sort of cruel joke by God, let me assure you that the object of our craving was never supposed to be food or other things people find themselves consumed by, such as sex or money or chasing after significance. . . . Yes, we were made to crave—long for, want greatly, desire eagerly and beg for—God. Only God. But Satan wants to do everything possible to replace our craving for God with something else.

Made to Crave, pages 20–21

1. When it comes to food cravings, we tend to go for something sweet or salty, crunchy or soft, cool or warm.
 - How would you describe the kinds of foods you typically eat to satisfy a craving?

- What is it about this kind of food that you enjoy so much? For example, is it the creaminess of ice cream melting on your tongue? Licking spicy seasoning off your fingers? The feeling of abundance represented by a whole bag or box of something?
- How do you feel before, during, and after eating your craving food?
Before eating, I feel ...

While I'm eating, I feel ...

After eating, I feel ...

2. The Bible describes three specific tactics Satan uses to misdirect our desires and lure us away from loving God:

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the *cravings* of sinful man, the *lust of his eyes* and the *boasting* of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. (1 John 2:15–16, emphasis added)

Using the following list, think back over the last twenty-four hours or the last few days to see if you recognize how you may have been tempted in similar ways.

- **Craving:** *meeting physical desires outside the will of God.* In what ways were you tempted by unhealthy desires for things such as food, alcohol, drugs, or sex?

- **Lust of the eyes:** *meeting material desires outside the will of God.* In what ways were you tempted by excessive desires for material things — clothing, financial portfolio, appliances, vacation plans, cosmetics, home décor, electronics, etc.?

- **Boasting:** *meeting needs for significance outside the will of God.* In what ways were you tempted by desires to prop up your significance — perhaps by name dropping, exaggerating, feigning humility or other virtues, doing something just because you knew it would be observed by others, etc.?

In what ways was your ability to love God and love others (including yourself) impacted by your response to these temptations?

3. Read Genesis 3:6 and Matthew 4:1 – 11 to see how Satan used these same three tactics with Eve and with Jesus. Note each temptation on the chart below.

TEMPTATION TACTIC	EVE	JESUS
Craving		
Lust of the eyes		
Boasting		

[Eve] focused only on the object of her obsession. . . . Eve craved what she focused on. We consume what we think about. And what we think about can consume us if we're not careful.

Made to Crave, page 23

4. In one sense, we could say that Eve and Jesus had similar responses to their temptations — they both kept a laser-like focus on their desires. The difference between them was what they wanted most of all — what they craved. Eve's cravings displaced God and made Him secondary to her other desires; what mattered most to her was everything the forbidden fruit represented. Jesus' cravings asserted God's supremacy over every other desire, even a legitimate desire for food; what mattered most to Him was the will of God. Do you see why what we crave matters so much?

- Refer back to your responses to question 2. For each temptation you wrote down, how would you describe the craving — what you wanted most of all — behind the temptation?
- How do you feel about this principle — that what we crave matters — when it comes to our food choices?

5. Jesus defeated every temptation — every lie from the enemy — by quoting the truth of God's Word. Truth is powerful. The more saturated we are with truth, the more powerful we'll be in resisting our temptations, whatever form they take. As you begin this healthy eating journey, here is a strengthening truth you can soak in every day:

But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" . . . For when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Corinthians 12:9–10)

Your weakness with food does not disqualify you from winning this battle. In fact, it may be your best qualification. You'll have to rely on God completely, and that makes you the perfect candidate for grace.

In the space provided, write a brief prayer that expresses your heart to God as you begin this *Made to Crave* journey. Tell Him your fears and

questions, your hopes and desires, your weaknesses and needs. Ask for His grace, all sufficient for you.

When I listen to my cravings, I can begin to determine the need I am trying to meet by giving in to the craving. That helps me answer the question, “What is it I need to give to God?” —MARIETTA T.

● **DAY 3: Read and Reflect**

Read chapter 2 of *Made to Crave*. If you want to dig a little deeper, use a notepad or journal to work through the personal reflection questions at the end of the chapter. Use the space below to note any insights or questions you want to bring to the next group session.

● **DAY 4: Replacing My Cravings**

When we rely on something, we trust it and depend on it; we have confidence that it won't let us down. If we struggle with food, at some point we have to wrestle with a very raw question: *Is it possible we love and rely on food more than we love and rely on God?*

I had to get honest enough to admit it: I relied on food more than I relied on God. I craved food more than I craved God. Food was my comfort. Food was my reward. Food was my joy. Food was what I turned to in times of stress, sadness, and even in times of happiness.

Made to Crave, page 29

1. For each of the items listed below, use the space provided to rate the degree to which you rely on food to give you what you need. Use the following scale:

3 = Food is almost always the first thing I rely on.

2 = Food is frequently what I rely on.

1 = Food is occasionally what I rely on.

0 = Food is rarely what I rely on.

_____ When I need *comfort*

_____ When I feel *sadness*

_____ When I want a *reward*

_____ When I feel *happiness*

_____ When I feel *joy*

_____ When I experience *boredom*

_____ When I experience *stress*

Pick one of the items you rated as a 3 or a 2 and circle it. Keep it in mind as you respond to the following questions.

- What behaviors do you typically engage in when turning to food for that reason? For example, if you rely on food for comfort, do you secretly get takeout from a fast food restaurant and eat it in your car, sit down in front of the television with a bag of chips, curl up in your favorite chair with a pan of warm brownies and a fork?
- How do you imagine your behaviors might change if you were able to turn to God at such times? What, specifically, would you do and not do instead?
- What feelings arise when you consider the prospect of *not* relying on food at such times?

I determined to make God, rather than food, my focus. Each time I craved something I knew wasn't part of my plan I used that craving as a prompt to pray. I craved a lot. So, I found myself praying a lot.

Made to Crave, pages 29–30

2. When we use our cravings as a prompt for prayer, the desires for unhealthy foods that once derailed us become stepping-stones that set us on a new path, straight to God. Here is an example of using a craving as a prompt for prayer:

God, it's 10:00 a.m. and I'm craving again. I want those snack crackers that are literally screaming my name. But instead of reaching for those crackers, I'm praying. I'll be honest, I don't want to pray. I want those crackers. But, instead, I'm going to have a handful of almonds and brick by brick . . . prayer by prayer . . . lay a path for victory.

Recall a recent craving that derailed you (or refer to your responses to question 1 above). Using this experience as a prompt, write a brief prayer that redirects your craving to God.

3. The psalms are sometimes referred to as the prayer book of the Bible. They not only teach us how to communicate with God, but they also help us to express emotions and experiences that are sometimes hard to put into words. Psalm 5 is the prayer of a man who desperately needs God's help. He is pursued by enemies who lie about and plot against him — much like our enemy, Satan, lies to us and tries to use our cravings against us. Instead of relying on his own wisdom to devise a counterattack, the psalmist pleads his case with God:

Give ear to my words, O LORD, consider my sighing. Listen to my cry for help, my King and my God, for to you I pray. In the morning, O LORD, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation. (Psalm 5:1–3)

- The psalmist asks God to attend to his sighing, a pain so deep he can't even put it into words. In your struggles with food, do you experience pain no words can describe? How does it impact you to know that God can hear even the things for which you have no words?

- The psalmist makes a case for God to act on his behalf. In effect, he says, “Here are all the reasons You had better show up and help me!” If you were to plead your case to God, what are the top two or three reasons you would give to make a case for God to help you with your cravings?
- The psalmist waits in expectation for God to act. This is not a halfhearted or passive kind of waiting. To wait in expectation requires active attention. It means starting each day on a God hunt in which we are alert and on the lookout for every sign of God’s activity on our behalf.

When you reflect on your past efforts at healthy eating, would you say you expected God to help you or did you feel more or less on your own? As you begin this *Made to Crave* journey, how do you feel about the idea of relying fully on God and expecting Him to help you every day?

Food is my comfort, my friend, and my joy. . . . Food has become a sort of mini-god in my life. I must change—not my weight or my size, but my heart. —MARY S.

The psalmist closes his prayer with a beautiful affirmation of how God protects those who take refuge in Him. He says, “You surround them with your shield of love” (Psalm 5:12 NLT). And do you

know what the Bible commentaries say about what kind of shield this is? It’s a full-body shield—the kind that covers head to toe.* Whatever fears and hurts you carry about your struggles with food, know that you are surrounded this day, and every day, with a shield of God’s love that no enemy can penetrate. God has you covered, head to toe.

**The International Bible Commentary*, rev. ed., F. F. Bruce, gen. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 561.

● DAY 5: Read and Reflect

Read chapter 3 of *Made to Crave*. If you want to dig a little deeper, use a notepad or journal to work through the personal reflection questions at the end of each chapter. Use the space below to note any insights or questions you want to bring to the next group session.

● DAY 6: Getting a Plan

One of the first steps in developing long-term healthy eating habits is choosing a realistic food plan that works for you. Maybe the word “ugh” just crossed your mind. If so, that’s okay. The truth is, this is hard stuff. Doing the work to find the right food plan can be challenging, but it’s essential — and worth it.

I knew I needed a plan. . . . I had lost weight before but I couldn’t keep it off for any extended time. My changes were always temporary, therefore my results were also temporary. . . . I left the nutritionist’s office that day with a plan. Under her supervision and with a weekly weigh-in to hold me accountable, I felt empowered for the first time in a long while.

Made to Crave, pages 36, 38

1. Which of the following movie titles best describes your response when you hear the words “food plan”?

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Psycho</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>High Noon</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>A Time to Kill</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Leap of Faith</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Do the Right Thing</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Independence Day</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Mission Impossible</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Les Misérables</i> | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Life Is Beautiful</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Saving Grace</i> | |

Every movie has a beginning, middle, and end. If your past experiences with following a food plan were made into a movie, how would you describe the beginning, middle, and end of your story? (See next page.)

- **Beginning**

Example: *I feel hopeful as I walk through the grocery store with a cart full of fresh vegetables and other healthy foods.*

- **Middle**

Example: *I'm at a birthday party and there's nothing here that's okay for me to eat. I feel discouraged and left out. I'm tired of saying no to myself and having to plan all my meals. I want cake—the corner piece with all the extra frosting.*

- **End**

Example: *I've failed—again. I swear off diets and food plans forever. Roll credits.*

2. How would you respond if a nutritionist were to ask you the following questions:

- What is your biggest fear about choosing or following a food plan?

- How can I help you with that fear?

My problem isn't so much having a plan as sticking to the plan. I hate feeling restricted!—JANED.

- What words or phrases would you use to describe the kind of plan you think might be realistic for you over the long term?

3. The book of Proverbs is a wisdom book. It focuses on practical guidance to help God's people make good decisions — and it provides key insights about having a God-honoring plan. As you read through the following verses, underline any words or phrases that stand out to you.

The plans of the godly are just. (12:5a NLT)

Refuse good advice and watch your plans fail; take good counsel and watch them succeed. (15:22 MSG)

Plans succeed through good counsel; don't go to war without wise advice. (20:18 NLT)

Good planning and hard work lead to prosperity, but hasty shortcuts lead to poverty. (21:5 NLT)

Commit your actions to the LORD, and your plans will succeed. (16:3 NLT)

- In what ways do these verses challenge you?
- In what ways do these verses encourage you?
- What one piece of wisdom stands out to you as something you might rely on in choosing a healthy eating plan?

This journey will require you to make some tough sacrifices, but I've come to look at this process as embracing healthy choices rather than denying myself. There are lessons to be learned and perspectives to be gained in the season of embracing healthy choices. These will not just be physical lessons. The mental and spiritual lessons gained in this time will be the very thing that will equip you for the long haul.

Made to Crave, page 39

4. How do you feel about embarking on this journey to healthier eating?

Circle the number below that best describes your response.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Discouraged			Mixed				Empowered		
I feel like it's all about denying myself.			I know I will have to deny myself, but I also feel hopeful that I can make healthier choices.				I feel like it's all about embracing healthy choices.		

- What does the number you circled tell you about your current perspectives on weight loss and healthy eating?
- How do you hope this healthy eating journey might impact your current perspectives?

As you near the end of week one on this healthy eating adventure, perhaps you're feeling a little bit psycho, miserable, or like it's high noon at the junk food corral. Or maybe you have a sense that this could be your saving grace — you're ready to do the right thing, take a leap of faith, and make decisions that lead to your healthy eating independence day. Wherever you find yourself this day, know that God meets you there. He loves your willingness to explore this tender area of your life and He wants to help you take every step that leads you closer to freedom, closer to empowerment and, most of all, closer to Him.