

The Temple Defiled:

The Damaging Effects of Ultra-Processed Foods

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This paper identifies ultra-processed foods as a significant threat to wellness in America, resulting in the dysfunction of a person's physical body, mental state, and spiritual self. Throughout history, people have considered health in either physical or spiritual terms. Ancient Egyptian and early Christendom focused on the spiritual side of health, while the Greco-Roman, Renaissance, and Modern eras focused on the physical side of wellness. The Bible introduces a balanced way of thinking about health that includes both the physical and spiritual sides. This way is made evident by the Old Testament food laws and New Testament body-temple imagery. Christians are called to care for their bodies, minds, and souls, but modern ultra-processed foods hinder this calling. These foods lead to detrimental health concerns such as increases in cancer and obesity, depression and suicide, cognitive decline, and lack of spirituality, all things that negatively affect life. These foods impact obesity and cancer by causing insulin resistance, overeating, and extra-glucose stored as fat or in already full cells. Ultra-processed foods cause imbalances in brain chemicals and lead to problems focusing and regulating emotions and thoughts. A balanced healthy lifestyle, including eating real, whole foods, creates better life outcomes and lower disease rates, helping Christians better care for their bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit. People should avoid ultra-processed foods, especially added sugar, refined grain, and processed oils, because of their health effects and eat whole foods instead.