

# **STEADFAST TEENS** **Study Guide**

Based on the movie *Steadfast*

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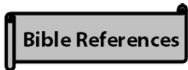
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# **Eating Disorders**

## EATING DISORDERS



1 Samuel 16:7; 1 Peter 3:3–4; Isaiah 53:2, 40:29; Proverbs 31:30; Psalm 139:13–14; Romans 12:1; Ephesians 5:29–30; Song of Solomon 4:7; Matthew 6:25; 2 Corinthians 10:5; Jeremiah 31:3

**Memory Verse:** People judge others by what they look like, but I judge people by what is in their hearts (1 Samuel 16:7 CEV).



**Opening Prayer:** Lord, guide me to delight in Your Word and Your promises, Amen!



**Watch EATING DISORDERS–LESSON Video Clip**



**SETTING THE PACE – Your Thoughts and Experiences/  
Discussion Group**

1. Have you ever felt pressured to look a certain way? How did you deal with it?
2. The media hypes thinness. How do you think this feeds into eating disorders?
3. Name some famous actresses who are overweight.
4. Name some famous actresses who are thin.
5. Which list was easier to come up with?
6. Name some eating disorders.
7. What are some signs of an eating disorder?
8. Why do you think some people develop eating disorders?
9. Have you ever known someone with an eating disorder?
10. If so, what happened with this person?
11. Have you ever skipped meals trying to lose weight?
12. Is it true that people with eating disorders are always underweight?

13. How can sports play a part in eating disorders?
14. What are some problems that eating disorders can cause?
15. Can eating disorders cause death?



## **RUNNING THE RACE – Study**

What do Mary-Kate Olsen, Lady Gaga, Oprah Winfrey, Dennis Quaid, Demi Lovato, Elton John, Paula Abdul, Snooki Polizzi, Kelly Clarkson, and Amanda Bynes all have in common? They each have suffered from an eating disorder. Singer Karen Carpenter, actresses Margaux Hemmingway and Karla Alvaraz, gymnast Christy Henrich, and ballet dancer Heidi Guenther are just a few who have died from the disease.

They're not alone. Approximately twenty-four million Americans battle eating disorders, and these disorders have the highest mortality rate of any mental health disease in American (National Eating Disorders Association). While 50 to 60 percent of teenage American girls believe they're overweight, only 15-20 percent of them actually are overweight.<sup>1</sup> What extremes do some go to in an effort to get what they think is the perfect body?

The two most common eating disorders are anorexia and bulimia. People suffering with anorexia don't see themselves as they really are. They believe they are fat even if they are severely underweight. They basically starve themselves by severely restricting their calorie intake, taking diet pills and laxatives, and exercising excessively. Food is their enemy, and sadly, 5-10 percent of anorexics die within 10 years, 18-20 percent within 20 year, and only 30-40 percent ever fully recover (National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders).

Bulimia, on the other hand, involves bingeing and purging. People will overeat and then attempt to remove the food from their bodies through throwing up, laxatives, excessive exercise or other methods. Bulimics often have an average body weight but obsess about being thinner. Bulimia is harder to detect because the person will often look normal, but it's just as dangerous. Slow heart rate, damage to organs, stomach problems, tooth decay and dehydration are just a few of the problems associated with these eating disorders.<sup>2</sup>

So why are teens ruining their bodies in an effort to look good? Some have perfectionist problems, low self-esteem, or serious problems

at home or in their personal lives that they don't know how to handle. If they can't control what's going on around them, they feel they can at least control what happens to their bodies.

Also, some believe lies that are spoken over them. When opening up about her struggles with an eating disorder, "Girls" actress Zosia Mamet said, "I was told I was fat for the first time when I was eight. I'm not fat; I've never been fat. But ever since then, there has been a monster in my brain that tells me I am. At times it has forced me to starve myself, to run extra miles, to abuse my body."<sup>3</sup>

Another reason is that our society places excessive value on looks, and the media hypes what they determine is beautiful. Zosia also commented on our culture's fixation with being skinny: "Society says, 'Hey, how about controlling the way you look? Skinny is beautiful.' Your obsession feels justified. It's no secret that we live in a country with a warped view of beauty."<sup>3</sup> While the media promotes unrealistic standards, it's taking a destructive toll on people mentally and physically.

Actress Diane Keaton had to have all of her teeth recapped after bulimia destroyed them. Actress Thandie Newton said, "I've still got the scars on my knuckles from where I put my fingers down my throat." Singer and actress Paula Abdul confided, "It is one of the toughest things to talk about, bar none, and it is one of the hardest disorders to deal with because it's not black or white. Eating disorders really have nothing to do with food, it's about feelings." And Diana Princess of Wales shared that same viewpoint in an interview about her struggles:

I had bulimia for a number of years. And that's like a secret disease. You inflict it upon yourself because your self-esteem is at a low ebb, and you don't think you're worthy or valuable. You fill your stomach up four or five times a day—some do it more—and it gives you a feeling of comfort. It's like having a pair of arms around you, but it's temporarily, temporary. Then you're disgusted at the bloatedness of your stomach, and then you bring it all up again. And it's a repetitive pattern, which is very destructive to yourself. (1995 BBC Interview)

Maybe you are struggling to see yourself as the beautiful person you really are. Maybe it's hard for you to imagine that you are God's cherished creation and you even question why He didn't give you a thinner frame, smoother hair, bigger eyes, or a smaller nose. However, before you focus

too much on what you feel your shortcomings are, consider Nick Vujicic.

Nick was born without limbs. He has no arms and no legs. There is no medical reason for his condition. That's just the way he is. Obviously he's had to overcome quite a bit in his life. Yet he remains positive and has become a true inspiration to others. He fishes, plays soccer and golf, and has a beautiful wife and son. He is president of Attitude is Altitude, has a DVD called No Arms, No Legs, No Worries, and has written several inspirational books. Although he struggled during his childhood years, at 15 he gave his life to Christ and started focusing on what he has instead of what he doesn't have. His advice is: "Dream big, my friend and never give up. We all make mistakes, but none of us are mistakes."<sup>4</sup>

No matter what we feel our flaws are when it comes to looks, since God created each of us in His image, He is the judge of beauty and He says, "People judge others by what they look like, but I judge people by what is in their hearts" (1 Samuel 16:7 CEV). Again He tells us: "Don't be concerned about the outward beauty that depends on jewelry, or beautiful clothes, or hair arrangement. Be beautiful inside, in your hearts, with the lasting charm of a gentle and quiet spirit that is so precious to God" (1 Peter 3:3-4 TLB). Clearly God cares about our hearts and our inner beauty. If God really cared about outer appearances Jesus would have been good-looking, but He wasn't. It says in Isaiah 53:2 that "He wasn't some handsome king. Nothing about the way he looked made him attractive to us" (CEV).

That really doesn't stop us from wanting to look good, and we should always try our best at everything we do, particularly when it comes to our health. But we are not to go to extremes and make our weight or other features our god. Happiness is not found in our outward appearance, but in our relationship with Christ. "Charm can be deceiving, and beauty fades away, but a woman who honors the Lord deserves to be praised" (Proverbs 31:30 CEV). We are to turn to God for affirmation of our worth, and be willing to accept the things we can't change, knowing that we are God's workmanship.

While you may not like what you see in the mirror right now, declare to the Lord as David did: "You are the one who put me together inside my mother's body, and I praise you because of the wonderful way you created me" (Psalm 139:13-14 CEV). As you praise your Creator, you will begin to see what God means when He assures you in Song of Solomon 4:7 that "[y]ou are altogether beautiful, my love; there is no flaw in you" (ESV).

It is essential to break the bondage of eating disorders not only for health purposes, but also because the Bible says we are “to offer [our] bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God” (Romans 12:1 NIV), and that “no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and take care of their body, just as Christ does the church—for we are members of his body” (Ephesians 5:29-30 NIV). To treat our bodies any differently goes against biblical principles. If you think you or a friend might be struggling in this area, here are some warning signs:

1. Excessive concern about weight and body shape
2. Unexpected weight loss
3. Disappearing to the bathroom after meals
4. Secretive eating or discovery that food is missing
5. Loss of menstrual cycles
6. Evidence of laxative abuse
7. Food group avoidance
8. Skipping meals
9. Avoiding eating in front of others.<sup>5</sup>

Eating disorders are very serious and can be life-threatening, so it's important to seek help. Intervention is crucial, as people with the disorder can't or won't see beyond themselves. When “Girls” star Zosia’s father put her into treatment, she shared: “It was the first time I realized this wasn’t all about me. I didn’t care if I died, but my family did. That’s the thing about these kinds of disorders: They’re consuming; they make you egocentric; they’re all you can see.”<sup>3</sup>

To begin to help yourself or someone else, first pray to the Lord for strength and a clear mind. Then:

1. Tell someone you trust who will support and encourage you.
2. Write down what you eat each day to help you see the reality of your eating habits. A nutritionist can help you create a healthy eating plan.
3. Journal your feelings. See a Christian counselor or psychiatrist to discover what the triggers may be.
4. Visit a doctor to see if there are any other medical reasons for your problems, along with treating any symptoms caused by the disorder.



5. Focus on the positive things about yourself.
6. Surround yourself with uplifting people and keep active.
7. For severe cases, hospitalization may be required.

Singer Geri Halliwell (Ginger Spice from Spice Girls) struggled with bulimia and she gave this advice:

I realized I couldn't control this monster anymore. I needed to find help. I can honestly tell you from personal experience, that worrying about an eating disorder can get you down. There's nothing to be ashamed about. You'll be amazed at the difference it'll make to your whole life if you tell someone you trust. There are lots of people who want to help and you really CAN'T fight this one on your own. It might be a hard decision to make, to tell people and seek help but, trust me it's nowhere as hard as trying to deal with it on your own.

Praise God that we never do have to deal with anything alone. God's Word says, "He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak" (Isaiah 40:29 NIV). Jesus tells us, "Do not worry about your life. Do not worry about what you are going to eat and drink. Do not worry about what you are going to wear. Is not life more important than food? Is not the body more important than clothes?" (Matthew 6:25 NLV)

The Lord points out that life is more important than food and it's interesting to note that food was involved in the very first sin that caused our death. God told Adam and Eve not to eat fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil or they would surely die, but they ate it anyway. Eve wanted to be like God, and girls today are still struggling with food and self-image. Satan distracted her with lies and he continues to do the same to us—both girls and guys. We must stop believing these lies of the enemy, and "demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5 NIV).

Start now by realizing that perfection is not found in the mirror, but it is only found in Christ. See yourself as God sees you, and choose to believe who God says you are!



**Watch TESTIMONY–EATING DISORDERS Video Clip**

**PREPARING FOR THE FINISH LINE – Invitation**

If you are tired of believing the lies of the enemy and want to find rest in the love of the Lord, please repeat this prayer:

*Jesus, I'm tired of trying to be perfect because I never will be in the flesh. I thank You that I simply have to believe that You are the risen King and that You have forgiven my sins. Thank You for loving me as I am. In Jesus' holy name I pray, Amen!*

**WORSHIP – Listen to the Song *YOU LOOKS GOOD ON YOU*****ENDURANCE – Closing Prayer**

Heavenly Father, please help us to love who we are. Open our eyes to see ourselves as You see us—as a beautiful creation made in Your image. Make us beautiful from the inside out and keep us from trying to measure up to the media's standard of perfection so we can boldly proclaim that “the LORD will perfect that which concerns [us]; Your mercy, O Lord, endures forever; Do not forsake the works of Your hands.”<sup>6</sup> Thank You that You have loved [us] with an everlasting love and have drawn us with loving-kindness.<sup>7</sup> We love You and praise You, in Jesus' name, Amen!

## TIPS AND RESOURCES - EATING DISORDERS

**Memory Verse:** People judge others by what they look like, but I judge people by what is in their hearts (1 Samuel 16:7 CEV).

### Tips for dealing with eating disorders:

1. Pray to the Lord for help.
2. Tell someone you trust who will support and encourage you.
3. Write down what you eat each day. A nutritionist can help you create a healthy eating plan.
4. Journal your feelings. See a Christian counselor or psychiatrist to discover any triggers.
5. Visit a doctor to see if there are any other medical reasons for your problems, along with getting treatment for any symptoms caused by the disorder.
6. Focus on the positive things about yourself.
7. Surround yourself with uplifting people—keep active.

### Help Lines:

1-800-931-2237	National Eating Disorders Association
1-877-332-7333	Real Help for Teens Hotline
1-615-831-6987	Mercy Ministries
1-800-RUNAWAY	National Runaway Switchboard 24/7 Confidential

### Links:

[www.nationaleatingdisorders.com](http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.com)

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/eating-disorders/index.shtml>

<http://christiananswers.net/q-eden/eatingdisorders.html>

<http://www.olivebranchoutreach.com/resources.htm>

[www.1800runaway.org](http://www.1800runaway.org) Allows youth to leave messages for parents and parents to leave messages for their children.

## **Sword of the Spirit:**



He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak (Isaiah 40:29 NIV).

You are altogether beautiful, my love; there is no flaw in you (Song of Solomon 4:7 ESV).

You are the one who put me together inside my mother's body, and I praise you because of the wonderful way you created me (Psalm 139:13-14 CEV).

Charm can be deceiving, and beauty fades away, but a woman who honors the Lord deserves to be praised (Proverbs 31:30 CEV).