I am overweight. I lost 50 pounds, and I am still 50 pounds overweight. The terrible thing is, I am starting to gain the weight again, and I'm terrified. I exercise, but it seems I would need to do three or four hours a day to keep the weight off.

I have a friend who had surgery, and I'm wondering if that may be the answer.

We sense how painful this is for you, and pray that you will be spared additional pain. Some folk feel they have all the answers, and that the solution is simply to adhere to this or that program. The fact is, almost all of us know what to do—it is actually doing it that's the problem.

Nearly all weight loss regimes work in the short-term. The problem, such as yours, is sticking with them. We have written of the benefits of those programs that involve group support. Clearly, group support helps—be it CHIP (Coronary Health Improvement Project), Weight Watchers, or others—but the real difficulty is that there has to be a permanent lifestyle change. This takes a total commitment, not to weight loss but to a different lifestyle.

Vegetarians are usually lighter in weight than omnivores, but not always. One can become very overweight on really good food! Just because the bread is 100 percent whole grain doesn't mean it has fewer calories; it may actually have more! Brown rice is a healthful food, but a plate stacked high will make anyone gain weight. Fruits are relatively low in calories, but a couple of pounds of grapes are really packed in calories. Nuts are heart-healthful and their fats seem to be protective, but any fat has nine calories for every gram.

Despite our belief that temperance in eating is the key to weight control, we know many find it difficult to be temperate. Temperance is a fruit of the Spirit, so we need to seek help from the Lord. Ellen White wrote: "Many professed health reformers are nothing less than gluttons" (Counsels on Health, p. 160), but on the next page she also cautions against extremists who try to get others to conform to their false standards.

We would encourage you to examine your eating with an open mind that tells you if you are overweight, you eat too much. Consider the size of your portions, how often you eat between meals, your use of sugared drinks, and the rate at which you "gobble your grub." Eating slowly allows the body time to signal "enough."

But we haven't answered your question, have we? Perhaps we don't really know the answer.
“Bariatric surgery is the only health-care intervention that facilitates significant and sustained weight loss,” reads the opening sentence of David R. Flum’s commentary in the September 26, 2007, issue of The Journal of the American Medical Association.

In fact, we read in a Johns Hopkins publication that gastric bypass surgery gave a 25-percent long-term (10 years) weight reduction, and gastric banding provides a 14-percent weight reduction over 10 years. One should note, however, that complications attend this kind of surgery.

Having the intervention is almost like admitting defeat, yet the heart attack and cancer rates in those undergoing surgery were also reduced — especially compared to the control group who were of similar weight.

This surgery is not for the mildly chunky, like so many of us. It is for the morbidly obese who have tried and failed all else.

This may sound like we’re defining bariatric surgery as the resort of the “failures,” but we don’t want to leave that impression. We know only too well that 95 percent of people who lose weight regain it within two years. So if you and your doctors feel that bariatric surgery is your best option, don’t let others who can be pious in their success or genetic makeup make you feel bad. We are all individuals struggling with a variety of disorders—and Jesus loves us all. Let’s love ourselves a little, too.

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While this column is provided as a service to our readers, Drs. Landless and Handysides unfortunately cannot enter into personal and private communication with our readers. We recommend that you consult with your personal physician on all matters of your health.