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I was introduced to First Place 4 Health in 1993 by my mother-in-law, who had great concern for the welfare of her grandchildren. I was overweight and overwrought! God used that first Bible study to start me on my journey to health, wellness, and a life of balance.

Our desire at First Place 4 Health is for you to begin that same journey. We want you to experience the freedom that comes from an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ and witness His love for you through reading your Bible and through prayer. To this end, we have designed each day’s study (which will take about 15 to 20 minutes to complete) to help you discover the deep truths of the Bible. Also included is a weekly Bible memory verse to help you hide God’s Word in your heart. As you start focusing on these truths, God will begin a great work in you.

At the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, when He was teaching from the book of Isaiah, He said to the people, “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Luke 4:18-19). Jesus came to set us free—whether that is from the chains of compulsivity, addiction, gluttony, overeating, undereating or just plain unbelief. It is our prayer that He will bring freedom to your heart so you may experience abundant life.

God bless you as you begin this journey toward a life of liberty.

*Vicki Heath*, First Place 4 Health National Director
First Place 4 Health is a Christ-centered health program that emphasizes balance in the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual areas of life. The First Place 4 Health program is meant to be a daily process. As we learn to keep Christ first in our lives, we will find that He is the One who satisfies our hunger and our every need.

This Bible study is designed to be used in conjunction with the First Place 4 Health program but can be beneficial for anyone interested in obtaining a balanced lifestyle. The Bible study has been created in a five-day format, with the last two days reserved for reflection on the material studied. Keep in mind that the ultimate goal of studying the Bible is not only for knowledge but also for application and a changed life. Don’t feel anxious if you can’t seem to find the correct answer. Many times, the Word will speak differently to different people, depending on where they are in their walk with God and the season of life they are experiencing. Be prepared to discuss with your fellow First Place 4 Health members what you learned that week through your study.

There are some additional components included with this study that will be helpful as you pursue the goal of giving Christ first place in every area of your life:

- **Group Prayer Request Form:** This form is at the end of each week’s study. You can use this to record any special requests that might be given in class.

- **Leader Discussion Guide:** This discussion guide is provided to help the First Place 4 Health leader guide a group through this Bible study. It includes ideas for facilitating a First Place 4 Health class discussion for each week of the Bible study.

- **Two Weeks of Menu Plans with Recipes:** There are 14 days of meals, and all are interchangeable. Each day totals 1,400 to 1,500 calories and includes snacks. Instructions are given for those who need more calories. An accompanying grocery list includes items needed for each week of meals.
• **First Place 4 Health Member Survey**: Fill this out and bring it to your first meeting. This information will help your leader know your interests and talents.

• **Personal Weight and Measurement Record**: Use this form to keep a record of your weight loss. Record any loss or gain on the chart after the weigh-in at each week’s meeting.

• **Weekly Prayer Partner Forms**: Fill out this form before class and place it into a basket during the class meeting. After class, you will draw out a prayer request form, and this will be your prayer partner for the week. Try to call or email the person sometime before the next class meeting to encourage that person.

• **Live It Trackers**: Your Live It Tracker is to be completed at home and turned in to your leader at your weekly First Place 4 Health meeting. The Tracker is designed to help you practice mindfulness and stay accountable with regard to your eating and exercise habits. Step-by-step instructions for how to use the Live It Tracker are provided in the Member’s Guide.

• **Let’s Count Our Miles!**: A worthy goal we encourage is for you to complete 100 miles of exercise during your 12 weeks in First Place 4 Health. There are many activities listed on pages 255-256 that count toward your goal of 100 miles. When you complete a mile of activity, mark off the box listed on the Hundred Mile Club chart located on the inside of the back cover.

• **Scripture Memory Cards**: These cards have been designed so you can use them while exercising. It is suggested that you punch a hole in the upper left corner and place the cards on a ring. You may want to take the cards in the car or to work so you can practice each week’s Scripture memory verse throughout the day.

• **Healthy Boundaries CD**: This inspirational CD will help you to develop healthy emotional boundaries in your life. Cindy Shirle, M.Ed., LPC, will lead you through the steps to making changes that will establish healthy boundaries in your spiritual life, in your emotions, and in your thoughts.
At your first group meeting for this session of First Place 4 Health, you will meet your fellow members, get an overview of your materials and find out what you can expect at weekly meetings. The majority of your class time will be spent learning about the four-sided person concept, the Live It Food Plan, and how change begins from the inside out. You will also have a chance to ask any questions about how to get the most out of First Place 4 Health. If possible, complete the Member Survey on page 199 before your first group meeting. The information that you give will help your leader tailor the next 12 weeks to the needs of the whole group.

Each weekly meeting begins with a weigh-in for members. This will allow you to track your progress over the 12-week session. Your Week One weigh-in/measurement will establish a baseline of comparison so that you can set healthy goals for this session. If you are apprehensive about weighing in every week, talk with your group leader about your concerns. He or she will have some options for you to consider that will make the weigh-in activity encouraging rather than stressful.

The day after your first meeting, begin Week Two of this Bible study. In this session, you will examine how to restore the broken boundaries in your life so you can keep out the enemy and gain true freedom in Christ. As you open yourself to the truth of Scripture and share your hopes and struggles with the members of your group during the next 12 weeks, you’ll find yourself becoming the healthy child of God you are designed to be!
A “boundary” is something that indicates or fixes a limit. Boundaries divide the back yards of our homes, show us where to drive on the road, and define in what city, county, state and country we live. Boundaries indicate what belongs to each member of a society, and in this way they help people live at peace with one another. Problems occur when boundaries are disregarded, or when people perceive others have crossed into their territory without permission, or when the boundary lines are unclear.

This latter reason—unclear boundaries—was the cause of one of the strangest “wars” to ever take place on American soil. In 1846, the Oregon Treaty divided the land in the Pacific Northwest between the U.S. and Britain. The maps of the time were a bit fuzzy on geography, so both nations ended up claiming sovereignty over a small bit of land called the San Juan Islands. With no clear defining lines in place, the British moved in and set up homes on one side of the islands, and the Americans set up homes on the other. Inevitably, conflict broke out.

The triggering event occurred in 1859, when an American farmer shot a pig belonging to a British man that he said was rooting on “his” land. The British man disagreed, claiming the lack of established boundaries, and demanded payment. The farmer refused, prompting the British to threaten to arrest him, which in turn compelled the Americans to call
in the military. By the end of the great “Northwestern Boundary Dispute,” as it is also called, an American force of 461 soldiers stared down five British warships carrying 2,140 men. Cooler heads ultimately prevailed, and the only recorded casualty of the battle was the pig. Yet the two sides had come close to all-out war—and all because of a disputed boundary.

This cautionary tale shows just how important boundaries are. They give us limits in which to operate and alert us when others are intruding on our space. This is true not only in the physical world but also in the spiritual realm. The enemy of our souls loves to “cross the line” and tempt us to do wrong. He loves to give us false boundaries to break down our defenses and infiltrate our hearts. If we don’t have clear boundaries set up and walls of protection in place, we may find ourselves in the same position as the people in this week’s study.

**GOD-GIVEN BOUNDARIES**

*Lord, thank You for the promises You have given to me. Help me define the boundaries in my life so I can serve You and bring You glory. Amen.*

The Israelites understood the consequences of not having proper boundaries. When their history began, they were living as slaves in Egypt. Through the miraculous power of God, the Israelites escaped their oppressors, crossed the Red Sea, and—after a 40-year diversion in the wilderness—ended up on the doorstep of a land God had promised to them.

Read Joshua 1:1-9. What promise did God make to His people?

How did God define the boundaries of what Joshua would possess?
God promised the Israelites success, but there was a caveat. What did the Lord say the people must do to prosper?

For seven years the Israelites were unbeatable. They conquered seven kings and won twenty battles. But after the death of Joshua, their progress stalled. Read Judges 2:10-15. What began to happen to the boundaries the Israelites had established to keep themselves from the influence of false gods?

What happened to the people as a result?

God has also promised you victory, success, and blessings. But what happens when you fail to establish boundaries and kick out the enemy?

In what ways do you need to assess the damage the enemy has done because you have not set up these spiritual boundaries in your life?

Jesus, help me not to be influenced by the ways of this world but to always keep my focus on You so I can be a godly influence to others. Amen.
Lord, staying within the boundaries You establish always requires a choice. Help me to choose this day to follow Your words and believe them in my heart. Amen.

Toward the end of Joshua’s life, he told the Israelites, “Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve” (Joshua 24:15). The Israelites unfortunately chose the gods of their neighbors, until everyone was doing “as they saw fit” (Judges 17:6). As a result, the nation suffered a series of foreign invasions. This went on until God eventually raised up David to be king of the land, and he led the people back to God. Under David and his son Solomon, the boundaries of Israel stretched to their greatest extent. But the “Golden Era” of Israel wouldn’t last for long.

Read 1 Kings 11:1-13. In what way did Solomon slowly cross the boundary of God’s law?

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What happened to Solomon’s devotion to God because of this?

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What consequences did God say the nation would suffer? Why did God put off this punishment during Solomon’s lifetime?

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The people soon split the boundary of their land in two, with Israel in the north and Judah in the south. While godly kings arose in both kingdoms, overall the kings were disobedient to God, corrupt, and ineffective. The
kingdom of Moab successfully revolted from Judah (see 2 Kings 3), and Ammon seceded from Israel. Within a century of Solomon’s death, the kingdoms had been reduced to tiny states. Read 2 Kings 17:1-18. What ultimately happened to the kingdom of Israel? Why did this occur?

The Assyrian Captivity took place in 722 BC. The people of Israel were scattered throughout the Assyrian Empire, never to again be reunited. The southern kingdom suffered a similar fate in 586 BC, when the Babylonians captured Judah. It appeared as if they, too, would be scattered throughout the empire, but then God intervened. Read 2 Chronicles 36:20-23. What happened to prevent the extinction of the people of Judah?

What did Cyrus allow the people to do? Why does the Bible say he chose that course?

The Israelites repeatedly crossed the boundaries of God’s law and were forced to suffer the consequences by being exiled from their land. Yet what does the fact God preserved them as a people say about His mercy?

God, thank You for Your grace, Your mercy, and for forgiving me when I allow the enemy to compromise my boundaries. Strengthen me today with Your power. Amen.
ASSESSING THE DAMAGE

Jesus, open my eyes today so I can see any area in which I have given the enemy a foothold. Restore today any of my defenses that have been broken. Amen.

So it was God used the Babylonians to mete out His judgment on the Israelites in Judah. The people who had refused to define the spiritual boundaries between themselves and their neighbors now found themselves without the physical boundaries of their own nation. But God also used the Persians to bring His people back together as a people.

In 536 BC, the Jews began returning home and laying the foundations for the temple the Babylonians had destroyed. But the building efforts were sporadic, and the Jews did not have permission to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Furthermore, they were constantly harassed by the people who had moved in and taken possession of the land during their exile. It is at this point God raised up a man named Nehemiah to aid His people.

Nehemiah held a high rank in the royal court and wielded influence with the king. Beginning in 445 BC, he worked tirelessly to rebuild the broken walls around Jerusalem. By preserving Nehemiah’s story, God has given us a process we can use when our personal boundaries need to be restored and we need to keep out intruders that hinder our growth.

Read Nehemiah 1:1-4. By this time, the Jews had been returning to Judea in waves, and there were now approximately 50,000 former exiles in the land. What news did Nehemiah receive about the status of these Jews?

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How did Nehemiah react to what he had been told? What do you think would have happened if he had denied or discounted the facts he heard?

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Nehemiah’s response reveals the depth to which he understood the seriousness of the situation. Some 30 years before, the Jewish people had nearly been eradicated during the reign of King Xerxes (see Esther 3), and now it appeared their enemies would finish the job. How should we similarly react when we realize boundaries in our lives have been damaged?

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How does Satan, our enemy, seek to “steal and kill and destroy” what God has built in our lives? What tactics does he use to accomplish this?

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The first step in any recovery program is to recognize you have a problem. While this may seem obvious, the enemy will try to convince you that even though your boundaries have been breached, you still have everything under control. How have you witnessed this in your efforts to lead a healthy life in the First Place 4 Health program?

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Read Jeremiah 30:15-17. These verses are part of a prophecy God was making to His people about restoring them to their homeland. What promise does God make about restoring us when we fall short of His standards?

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Recognizing our crumbled walls is important to our success because the forces of evil will continue to sabotage our plans until we have rebuilt
our defenses. The good news is that through God’s power, we *can* control what comes into and out of our personal boundaries.

*Jesus, You are the way and the truth and the life (see John 14:6). Thank You for giving me strength to see the truth of my situation and rebuild any broken walls.*

**UNDER ENEMY CONTROL**

*Lord, thank You for the authority You give me to cast out the enemy. Deliver me from any attack against my heart today and be the Lord of my life. Amen.*

We will return to Nehemiah and find what steps he took to begin the process of restoring the boundaries around Jerusalem. But for today, we will turn to a story in the New Testament to see how Jesus restored a man who had lost all control to the enemy. While we don’t know exactly what happened in this man’s life to lead him to such a desperate state, we do know that spiritual boundaries had been crossed, walls of protection had been compromised, and the enemy had taken up residence in the man himself.

Read Luke 8:26-31. How was this man living when Jesus found him?

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What did the man cry out? Who was speaking through him?

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Notice Jesus immediately assessed the situation and diagnosed the problem. How did He begin to take back ground conquered by the enemy?

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What does the man’s response in verse 30 tell you about the extent to which the boundaries in his life had been broken down?

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What does this story tell you about the extent of Jesus’ authority in our lives? Why is no one “too far gone” to be rescued and restored by Christ?

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The first step in restoring boundaries is to recognize when they have been breached. In what area of your life have you let down your boundaries?

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Jesus, there are times when I am weak and I allow my boundaries to fail. Please speak Your authority into my life today, restore me, and strengthen my self-control.

CHRIST’S AUTHORITY

Jesus, You have given us the authority to repel the enemy’s attack and take back territory lost to him. Let me be a beacon of light for You today in a dark world.

We looked at the story of a pig that almost started a war in the introduction to this week’s session. In today’s study, a pig (well, actually, a group of pigs) also plays a role. For when Jesus healed the demon-possessed man who was living in the tombs, the demons within him begged Jesus to send them . . . into a herd of pigs. And just as in our opening story of the great Northwestern Boundary Dispute, the owners of the pigs were none too pleased with what had transpired in their region.
Read Luke 8:32-39. Jesus had just redefined the boundaries in the man’s life, and the demons had to get out of the territory they had once occupied. What do the demons do to show that Christ is in control? Why do you think Jesus gave them permission to do what they asked?

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What happened to the pigs? What happened to the demons who were inside the man?

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What two factors influenced the people’s fear and their request that Jesus leave the area?

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What does the townspeople’s response tell us about the enemy’s influence in our world? Why weren’t they overjoyed to see the demon-possessed man cured?

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When Jesus met Simon Peter and his brother Andrew, He asked them to “follow me.” At once the men left their nets and became Jesus’ disciples. Why doesn’t Jesus do the same with the former demon-possessed man?
What does this story tell you about the importance of setting clear spiritual boundaries? How would you relate that principle to your efforts to lead a healthy lifestyle?

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In 1 Peter 5:8 we read “the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.” Satan, though defeated at the cross, still roams the earth looking for boundaries to cross and territory to gain. How will you rely on the authority of Jesus today to keep out the enemy, resist his lies, and flee temptation?

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Jesus, thank You for the victories you give me each day. Help me to not only watch for the enemy’s schemes and attacks but to also stay on the offensive. Amen.

REFLECTION AND APPLICATION

Sovereign Lord, from the beginning You have established boundaries that give Your creation purpose and definition. Today I pray that you will help me to honor what You have created and called good. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

In the first few verses of Genesis, we read that the earth was originally formless, empty and covered with darkness (see 1:2). Then the Spirit of God hovered over the waters and established boundaries. These boundaries gave God’s emerging creation form and definition: light and darkness, land and sea, earth and sky—each with its own purpose in God’s newly formed world. As creation progressed, all living creatures were created—also defined by God-given boundaries and purpose.
Boundaries were part of God’s created order and therefore part of His plan and purpose for our lives.

In addition to physical boundaries, humans were given limitations in the form of God’s righteous laws and decrees. Although these boundaries were not visible like the riverbanks, tree bark and skin, they nonetheless protected God’s people by providing a way for them to stay in relationship with Him and keep out the enemy. Our internal boundaries protect us in the same way. They define who we are, what we stand for, and to whom we belong. Just as a stream without banks becomes a puddle, those without boundaries lose their purpose and focus. God’s boundaries define us as His children and put us in right relationship with Him.

This week we looked at the importance of setting clear boundaries. Take a moment to remember a time when your life spun out of control because you could not say no to someone’s requests, or you didn’t speak up for yourself when you should have, or you allowed yourself to compromise your goals. Spend some time reflecting on the purpose of boundaries in your life, and then prayerfully determine to restore any broken walls and burned gates so you can live a victorious life that gives glory to God and manifests His presence in every aspect of your being.

Father, please send Your Holy Spirit to hover over me and bring light to my darkness. Restore any boundaries in my life that have fallen into disrepair. Amen.

REFLECTION AND APPLICATION

Lord, help me to hide Your Word in my heart so I will not fall victim to the subtle tactics of the enemy and compromise my boundaries.

When the Great Wall of China was built, Chinese leaders thought it was impregnable. It was fortified and well guarded. It seemed impossible that an enemy force could go over, under, around or through its expansive boundaries. The Chinese people felt safe from attack. However, the enemy easily breached the impressive barrier. Those who wanted to infiltrate China did not wage an open battle, nor did they try to scale the wall
or attack the soldiers standing guard. None of that was necessary. All they had to do was bribe a gatekeeper.

God has given us a great wall of faith. It is our barrier, our boundary, and our shield of protection. As long as we humble ourselves and acknowledge God as our defender, He keeps us safe by the strength of His power. This is why Satan doesn’t attack us head on. Instead, like the enemy who wanted to invade China, he seeks to infiltrate our hearts in small and seemingly harmless ways. His first tactic may be to convince us there will be no help from God. After that, he may bribe us with the world’s alternatives—things that only bring temporary relief. Once he has established a toehold, he will work to create a stronghold.

Satan will seize every opportunity to try and take back the new life we have been given in Christ. Yet the reality is that he is a defeated enemy and has no authority over those who belong to Christ. This is why Jesus could say to His followers, “I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you” (Luke 10:19). Nothing can keep us from enjoying a relationship with our Father in heaven—except our refusal to bring those negative voices captive to the Word of God.

When we remain faithful to read and memorize Scripture, we learn to discern when the enemy is waging even the subtlest attack against our defenses. When we hide God’s Word in our hearts, the enemy can’t bribe the gatekeeper and gain entrance into our hearts. So today, take a few moments to reflect on what you have learned this week from God’s Word. Then, if you have not already done so, make a commitment to learn the Scripture Memory verse by heart. Close by praying the following words recorded by David.

*Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting (Psalm 139:23-24).*
Group Prayer Requests

Today’s Date: ____________________________

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Results

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First Place 4 Health menu plans

Each menu plan is based on approximately 1,400 to 1,500 calories per day. All recipe and menu exchanges were determined using the MasterCook software, a program that accesses a database containing more than 6,000 food items prepared using the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) publications and information from food manufacturers. As with any nutritional program, MasterCook calculates the nutritional values of the recipes based on ingredients. Nutrition may vary due to how the food is prepared, where the food comes from, soil content, season, ripeness, processing and method of preparation. For these reasons, please use the recipes and menu plans as approximate guides. Consult a physician and/or a registered dietitian before starting a weight-loss program.

For those who need more calories, add the following to the 1,400-calorie plan:

- 1,800 calories: 2 ounce equivalent of meat, 3 ounce equivalent of bread, 1/2 cup vegetable serving, 1 tsp. fat
- 2,000 calories: 2 ounce equivalent of meat, 4 ounce equivalent of bread, 1/2 cup vegetable serving, 3 tsp. fat
- 2,200 calories: 2 ounce equivalent of meat, 5 ounce equivalent of bread, 1/2 cup vegetable serving, 1/2 cup fruit serving, 5 tsp. fat
- 2,400 calories: 2 ounce equivalent of meat, 6 ounce equivalent of bread, 1 cup vegetable serving, 1/2 cup fruit serving, 6 tsp. fat
First Week Grocery List

Produce
- arugula
- asparagus
- bananas
- basil, fresh
- blueberries, fresh
- broccoli
- carrots
- cauliflower
- celery
- cilantro, fresh
- corn
- cranberries, dried
- cucumber
- garlic cloves
- ginger, fresh
- green apple
- green onions
- lime
- mango, fresh
- mint leaves, fresh
- mushrooms
- onions
- parsley, fresh
- pasta, angel hair
- pineapple, fresh
- rosemary, fresh
- sage, fresh
- scallions
- spinach, baby
- strawberries, fresh
- thyme, fresh
- tomato, sun-dried
- tomatoes

- brown sugar
- cocoa powder
- cooking spray
- flour, all-purpose
- olive oil
- vanilla extract
- vegetable oil

Spices
- black pepper
- chili powder
- cumin
- oregano, dried
- paprika
- parsley, dried
- red pepper, crushed
- sage, dried
- salt

Nuts/Seeds
- hazelnuts

Condiments, Spreads and Sauces
- balsamic vinegar
- barbecue sauce
- basil pesto
- chile paste
- deli pesto
- Dijon mustard
- honey
- mayonnaise, light
- peanut butter
- salsa
- soy sauce, low-sodium

Baking/Cooking Products
- baking powder
- baking soda

Breads, Cereals and Pasta
- bread, whole-grain
- challah bread
Cheerios™
couscous
egg noodles
panko (Japanese breadcrumbs)
penne pasta
pita, whole-wheat
quinoa
sourdough bread
tortilla, whole-wheat

Canned/Frozen Foods
beef broth, lower-sodium
black beans
black olives
chicken broth, less-sodium
chicken stock, unsalted
chickpeas
frozen fruit
mandarin oranges
potato wedges
vegetable broth
waffle, whole-grain

Dairy Products
butter
cheddar cheese, low-fat
Greek yogurt, plain
milk, nonfat
milk, skim
Muenster, low-sodium
Parmesan cheese
sour cream, fat-free

Juices
lime juice

Meat and Poultry
bacon slices
beef shoulder tender roasts
chicken breast halves, skinless, boneless
chicken drumsticks
eggs
flank steak
honey ham, lower-sodium
pancetta
First Week Meals and Recipes

DAY 1

**Breakfast**

*Breakfast Burrito*

2 egg whites, scrambled  2 tbsp. low-fat shredded cheddar cheese  
¼ cup black beans  
2 tbsp. salsa  1 small whole-wheat tortilla  

Layer first four ingredients in tortilla and wrap. *Make ahead tip:* Make several and wrap in foil and freeze for a quick grab, heat and go breakfast. Serves 1.  

*Nutritional Information:* 360 calories; 4g fat; 38g protein; 53g carbohydrate; 8g fiber; 3mg cholesterol; 683mg sodium  

**Lunch**

*Spicy Veggie Soup with Couscous*

¼ cup vegetable broth  ¼ cup cauliflower (chopped in small florets)  
½ tbsp. olive oil  
¼ cup couscous, uncooked  optional: 1 oil-packed sun-dried tomato, chopped  
¼ cup broccoli (chopped in florets)  

In a medium saucepan, combine vegetable broth, a pinch of crushed red pepper flakes, and olive oil. When it reaches a boil, stir in couscous, broccoli, and cauliflower. Cook until tender. Serve topped with 1 oil-packed sun-dried tomato, if desired. Serves 1.  

*Nutritional Information:* 274 calories; 10g fat; 8g protein; 39g carbohydrate; 5g fiber; 2mg cholesterol; 900mg sodium  

**Dinner**

*Hazelnut Chicken*

cooking spray  1 large egg  
2 tsp. Dijon mustard  ½ cup panko (Japanese breadcrumbs)