



December 2001

Matthew 6:33:

Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

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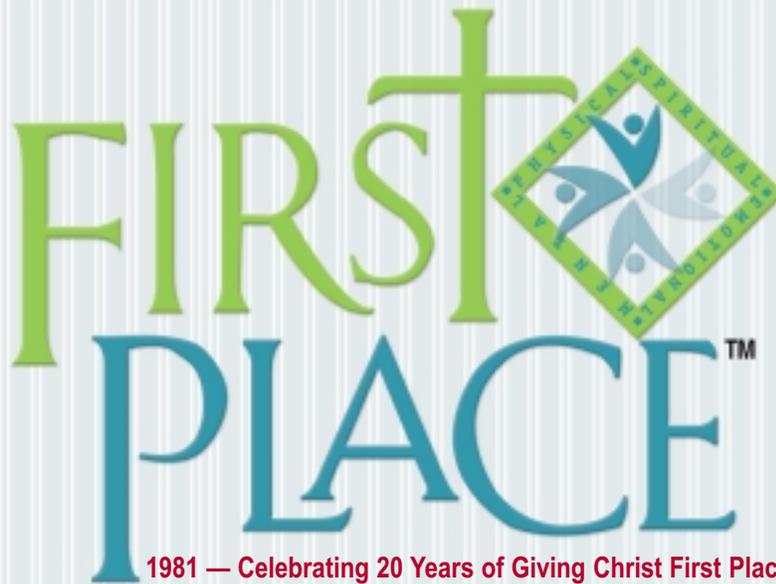
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1981 — Celebrating 20 Years of Giving Christ First Place — 2001

Dear Friends,

All of the staff of First Place want to wish all of you, our First Place friends, a blessed Christmas. As we reflect on the past year, there are so many answers to prayer that flood our minds. The program launched in August after several years of writing revisions. To see the beautiful new products and to know that God chose the perfect publisher in Gospel Light was almost more than our hearts could bear. We are praising God that the program exceeded the sales predictions of our publisher for August through October, the first three months of sales.



We look forward to a glorious new year with great anticipation. We will slowly get back to doing all the things you have grown to love about First Place.

In 2002, we are planning a conference in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. The dates for this Conference are September 20-21. We will also have a Fitness Week in Round Top, Texas, October 10-17.

We have two First Place books coming out this year. Our First Place Devotional Book is looking great. Many of you have worked really hard writing devotionals and we know God is going to bless our efforts when the book debuts. Another book, *Lord Make This Mountain A Plain*, by Beverly Henson, is also in the works and will make a tremendous impact when it comes out this Fall. A new cookbook is in the planning stages and it should prove to be a wonderful new addition. We have two new Bible studies completed and another is in the process of being written, so the future of First Place is bright.

February 2, 2002 is a date to put on your calendar. I will be speaking byway of satellite to a huge women's conference called, "A New Year, A New You." This is the first ever women's conference hosted by CCN (Church Communication Network). CCN has over 700 churches that subscribe to their events by satellite. You can sign up for this event on a one-time basis even if your church doesn't subscribe to CCN.

To participate in this four-hour event, call 1-800-321-6781 ext. 275. The time is 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Pacific time so you could plan a great Saturday with the women in your area. The other speakers will be Carol Kent, Cheri Fuller, Valerie Bell & Ed Silviso.

Thank you so much for your love, prayers and patience during the transition time. We love all of you more than you can imagine. We at First Place look forward to sharing 2002 with each of you in our First Place family.

Carole Lewis

First Place National Director
clewis@firstplace.org

During the Holiday Season. . .

Stay Focused on the Commitments



Kay Smith
Associate Director
kays@bigcountry.net

Christmas is in the air! As a matter of fact, the sounds and sights of Christmas have been around for several weeks, but we are now in the actual countdown!

I would like to suggest a couple of ways that might help each of us get through the holidays without gaining weight

or losing the momentum of establishing that permanent healthy lifestyle. The key is to stay focused on the commitments. We often become stressed just thinking about the holiday challenges of decorating, shopping for just that perfect present and cooking and wrapping holiday goodies. When we find that we are short on time, the first thing we often give up is our quiet time. I have found that success in handling holiday stress depends on my time in God's Word. If your class is not doing a Bible Study during the holidays, spend some time in Luke reading the Christmas story. A favorite scripture passage that brings me instant peace when my world is in a holiday spin is Isaiah 9:6-7.

I have learned that instead of choosing to skip exercise because I am too busy, I can accomplish much more if I exercise! Thirty minutes to an hour of exercise provides several hours of renewed energy. It is also a

tremendous help in the emotional area to handle the many stresses of the holiday.

I think we can even increase our efforts to encourage others. Isn't that what the gift of giving is all about? I remember a Christmas season many years ago when I had been in First Place a little over a year. I worked in the office of a Christian preschool. I was the recipient of many great gifts from these precious children. One very special gift came from a three-year-old boy. As he and his mom followed me down the hall one day, he whispered to her . "Have you noticed Miss Kay is not as wide as she used to be?" This mother borrowed a recipe book and baked delicious sugar-free, low-fat treats as my Christmas gift. What an encouragement to me that he noticed and she cared!

Think about ways to encourage that also affirms healthy eating. A great idea is to buy the tiny decorated loaf pans available at Christmas and bake Banana Nut Bread, Pumpkin Bread or any of the First Place muffin recipes. Wrap them in Christmas plastic wrap; tie a ribbon and you have a great gift. Buy the small canning jars and fill with the Spiced Tea recipe. Decorate with a Christmas label and a ribbon, and your encouragement will be remembered each time a cup of tea is enjoyed. The tea recipe and other holiday recipes are posted on the First Place web site at www.firstplace.org. There are great recipes in our two recipe books, *First Place Favorites* and *First Place Recipe Book* available at Gospel Light (1-800-4-Gospel). They make great gifts for First Place members, or anyone with health issues, such as Diabetes. If baking is not for you, inexpensive baskets filled with fruit make great gifts!

My prayer for each of you, and for myself this holiday season is that we will take time to care for ourselves. I know this will be the best gift we can give our families. I pray my life exhibits "peace and joy" rather than "anger and stress" during the holiday season. I believe our First Place commitments can help each of us achieve that goal.

May God Bless Each of You This Holiday Season!

Prayer Request

Prayer is requested for Carole Lewis (First Place national director) and her family.

Carole's daughter, Shari Symank, died from injuries sustained from a tragic automobile accident on November 22.

Shari is survived by her husband, Jeff, along with their three daughters Cara, 19; Christen, 15; and Amanda, 13.

If you would like to send cards to Carole and the Symank family, the address is:

First Place
7401 Katy Freeway
Houston, Texas 77024-2199

Give the Gift of Life



Nancy Taylor
Leadership Training Director
ntaylor@firstplace.org

Last evening I had the wonderful privilege of observing a graduation ceremony. Now it was not your typical graduation ceremony. It was a Christian Women's Job Corp graduation. The Christian Women's Job Corp is a program that trains women in computer skills, life skills, nutrition, and Bible study.

It is like First Place with a twist! Each of the ladies had participated in a 10-week program with the goal of developing and growing emotionally, mentally, physically and spiritually. I sat in my pew mesmerized, listening to each lady give a testimony of how their lives were without hope, depressed, helpless, and then how God had miraculously guided them into the program. Each of their lives had been dramatically changed. They each gave thanks first to the Lord and then to all the volunteers who had mentored them, taught them and prayed for them. It was a blessing to behold! It was not only a blessing, but also a reminder of the

influence we can have when we pour our lives into others.

Philippians 2: 5-7 says, *"Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men."* Christ literally gave His life for all of mankind, emptying himself, so that others' lives would be eternally changed. This graduation experience has reminded me of the life-changing effect First Place has on those who participate in this program. However, lives will only be changed to the extent that leaders are willing and available to pour their lives into those the Lord leads to their class.

This Christmas, my prayer for all First Place leaders is that they will be willing to give of themselves to impact the lives of their members. May each leader willingly step out of their comfortable lives and be available to pour their lives into their members, who need to be loved in word, truth and deed. (1 John 3:18) Merry Christmas and remember to give the gift of life—yours.

❖ 20Years

FIRST PLACE LEADERSHIP TIP

SCRIPTURE MEMORY ACTIVITIES

To encourage member to memorize the scriptures and to help them review the verses that they know, plan some fun games or activities during the wellness spotlight time of your class. Here are some activities I have tried with my group:

Scripture Memory Scramble

Materials:

- Memory verses printed out and cut into words or phrases. (*Make a copy of each verse for each team.)
- Zip lock bag
- Table or flat surface for each team
- Timer
- Prizes (sugar-free gum or mints, bookmarks with verse, etc)

Activity:

1. Divide class into teams (2 or more, depending on number of members)
- *2. Give each team the same verse, which has been cut into words or phrases and sealed in a zip lock bag.

3. The object of the activity is to be the first team to put the words together so that the verse is in correct/word perfect order with the reference.
4. You may want to set a certain time limit and then use a timer.

Scripture Memory Charades

Materials:

Index Cards with one memory verse printed on each card.

Activity:

1. Divide class into two teams.
2. Give index card to one volunteer from the first team.
3. Leader and volunteer are the only ones who see the card.
4. The volunteer must act out words or ideas from the verse with no sounds or words, so that her/his team can guess the scripture verse and reference.
5. Give the team 2minutes to guess. If they fail to guess the scripture, then the other team gets one chance to guess.
6. Repeat steps 2-5 with the second team, using a different verse.
7. The team who guess the most verses wins!

Hints & Pinches

Great Holiday Recipes



Scott Wilson is a certified executive chef with the American Culinary Federation. If you have any questions regarding food preparation, you may write him at 7075 Red Fox Lane, Cumming, GA 30040.

Scott Wilson
 First Place, Food Consultant
firstplacechef@hotmail.com

It is my wish that you will have a wonderful and blessed Christmas season. Be sure to take time for yourself during these hectic weeks so here are a few recipes that will let you enjoy the festivities along with all of your friends while staying on the First Place "Live-it" program.

Spinach Artichoke Dip

Serves 12

9-ounce package	Frozen no-salt-added artichoke hearts, thawed, drained
4 ounces	Low-fat cream cheese, room temperature
10-ounce package	Frozen creamed spinach, thawed
1/2 cup	Plain nonfat yogurt
1/4 cup	Thinly sliced green onions (green part only)
1 teaspoon	Salt-free Italian herb seasoning
1/8 teaspoon	Salt

Dry artichokes on paper towels. Chop into small pieces. In medium bowl, whisk together remaining ingredients, blending well. Stir in artichokes. Cover and refrigerate for at least 1 hour to allow flavors to blend. Stir before serving. Serve with toasted pita chips or sliced raw vegetables.

Exchanges for 1/4 cup dip: 1/2 vegetable, 1/2 fat

Fresh Asparagus with Toasted Nuts

Serves 4

1 to 1-1/4 pounds	Fresh asparagus	2 tablespoons	Diced pimento
1 cup	Water	1 tablespoon	Toasted pine nuts
2 tablespoons	Fresh lime juice		or walnuts

Rinse asparagus and snap off tough ends. In a large skillet, bring water to a boil and add asparagus. Cover and steam asparagus until bright green, 2 to 3 minutes. Remove from heat, drain and arrange on a platter. Sprinkle with lime juice. Garnish with pimento and pine nuts. Serve warm or chilled.

Exchanges per serving: 1 vegetable

Fresh Cranberry and Wild Rice Stuffing

Serves 4

1/2 cup	Wild rice, uncooked	1/2 cup	Celery, chopped
1 cup	Water	1 cup	Fresh cranberries
1/4 cup	Raisins, dark or golden	1 tablespoon	Orange rind-grated
5	Scallions, chopped	1/2 teaspoon	Dried thyme
1 tablespoon	Canola oil		

Put the wild rice in a saucepan. Add the water and raisins and cook over medium heat for 1 hour, or until the rice is tender. Drain. Sauté the onions and celery in the oil until tender. Add the cranberries, orange rind, thyme and rice.

Exchanges per serving: 2 breads

TEX-MEX CHILI CHEESECAKE

Serves 12

Good cocktail party appetizer

2 (8-oz) packages	Light cream cheese, softened and
2	Eggs or
1/2 cup	Egg substitute
1 (4 oz.) can	Chopped green chilies
1	Jalapeno pepper, seeded and diced
1/2 cup (4 oz.)	Low fat shredded Monterey Jack cheese plus
1/2 cup (4 oz.)	Low fat shredded Colby cheese <i>or</i>
1 cup	Low-fat Mexican blend cheese
1 teaspoon	Chili powder
1/2 teaspoon	Ground cumin
1/2 teaspoon	Garlic powder
1/2 c.	Reduced fat sour cream

Preheat oven to 325-degrees. In a mixer, combine cream cheese and eggs or egg substitute and beat for 1 minute. Add remaining ingredients (except sour cream) and beat for 2 minutes. Spoon into a 9-inch nonstick pan coated with vegetable cooking spray. Bake for 30 minutes at 325 degrees. (Do not overbake!) Remove from oven and let cool for 5 minutes on cooling rack. Spread top with sour cream. Run a knife around the inside of the pan and flip onto platter. Serve chilled or at room temperature with baked chips.

Exchanges for 1/4 cup: 1 meat, 1 fat

Optional: Top with salsa, chopped green onions, refried black beans, or guacamole. NOTE: These toppings need to be added to exchanges.

Pumpkin Cake

Serves 24

	Non-stick cooking spray
1 (18.25-oz)	Low-fat yellow cake mix
1/4 cup	Reduced fat margarine, melted
1	Egg, slightly beaten
1 (30-oz) can	Pumpkin pie mix (the kind with spices already added to pumpkin)
2	Eggs, beaten
2/3 cup	Evaporated skim milk
2 Tablespoons	Sugar
1 teaspoon	Cinnamon

Preheat oven to 350-degrees. Coat a 9 x 13-inch cake pan with cooking spray. Set aside 1 cup of yellow cake mix. Mix margarine and one egg and add to remaining cake mix. Press slightly dry mixture into bottom of pan to form a crust. Combine pumpkin pie mix, two remaining eggs, and evaporated skim milk. Pour over prepared bottom crust. Mix the 1/8 cup reserved cake mix, sugar and cinnamon and sprinkle over pumpkin filling. Bake 45 to 55 minutes, or until filling is set.

Exchanges: 1-1/2 bread, 1 vegetable

Marinated Cucumbers

Serves 4

1/2 cup	Italian dressing (low-calorie)
1/8 teaspoon	Pepper
1 medium	Cucumber, peeled and thinly sliced
1 tablespoon	Diced pimentos
1/4 cup	Radishes, thinly sliced
2 tablespoons	Fresh parsley, chopped

Combine Italian dressing and pepper in a medium bowl; stir well. Add cucumber, onion, radishes, and parsley. Toss gently to coat. Cover and marinate in refrigerator for at least 4 hours.

Exchanges: FREE



A NEW YEAR A New You

Seeking God's Best for Your Life

Attention all First Place members!
Jump-Start the New Year for the Women in Your Church & Community!

*Invite all women for this life-changing, four-hour event presented by
Gospel Light, NavPress, Church Communication Network (CCN),
in cooperation with **Today's Christian Woman:***

LIVE VIA SATELLITE TO CHURCHES ACROSS AMERICA
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2002

Women will be challenged to:

- Set godly priorities
- Make positive life changes
- Go deeper with God
- Resolve to keep God first in 2002



Carole Lewis, national director of First Place—Learn how to balance your life and strengthen both body and soul through a biblical approach to weight management.



Carol Kent, founder and president of "Speak Up With Confidence" seminars—Her message will explore your longings for fulfillment and victory in key areas of your life.



Ed Silvoso, author of *Women: God's Secret Weapon*—This biblical message will share God's heart for women and encourage every woman to take full advantage of everything God intended her to be!



Cheri Fuller, author of *When Mothers Pray*, and others—This message will present prayer as the key that unlocks the storehouses of God's power, and as your first resource in times of anxiety.



Valerie Bell, author of *A Well-Tended Soul*—Strengthen your spirit and cultivate your inner beauty through this inspirational message.

To find out how you can bring this unique event to your church and community, call CCN at
800-321-6781, ext. 275

Ultimate Strength



To those who have not might,
He increases strength.

Isaiah 40:28

Shery Boyles
Fitness Instructor, NSCA CPT
SheryAB@aol.com

Greetings and Happy Holidays! As you busily move through these wondrous hours and days, I encourage you to be observant of those you encounter who may not be experiencing the same holiday wonder you're experiencing. Often, the holiday season is a stressful, lonely time for many. You may be the one to brighten someone's day...the cause for one to believe that God does exist and that He does care. This year in particular, it may seem to some as if the world has truly moved beyond help; as if God has turned his back and does not remember His promise to never leave us nor forsake us. One only needs to close one's eyes and listen to the coo of the baby, see the flailing arms that held the world; envision God dressed in rags lying on a bed of straw, completely dependent; recall His choice...the extreme measures He took to demonstrate His understanding of humanity and His commitment to each and every one of us.

As I've thought about the holiday season and physical activity, I've come up with a few suggestions for encouraging others while adding extra steps to your day. Try them. The goodness and cheer you spread may make the extra steps seem unnoticeable!

1. During the daytime hours while out shopping, park as far as you can safely park from your destination. This allows opportunity not only for extra steps, but for passing greater numbers of shoppers who may be encouraged by your smile and a cheery "Merry Christmas." (Yes, I did say "passing"...walk briskly!)
2. If it's a really big shopping day, make frequent bag deliveries to the car. The back and forth trips will add steps in a hurry and think of all the people you will greet!
3. Remember that carrying things while you walk takes more effort than just walking--offer to carry someone else's bags!
4. Instead of only mailing Christmas cards to family and friends far away, hand deliver one to each of your neighbors' mailboxes while you are out for a morning or early afternoon walk.
5. Always take the stairs instead of the escalator. Taking the escalator allows you to see only the backs of others. By taking the stairs, you will have the opportunity to look into the eyes of those on the down escalator and offer a heartfelt smile.
6. If you live in a snowy area, shoveling snow from the neighbor's drive is incredible exercise. Please make sure you are up to it before beginning!

You may think of additional ways to bless others and increase your activity level all at the same time. If you think of it, then do it!

"Father, as we move through this season, cause us to pay attention and to see others as you see them. Cause us to listen and hear what you hear in their words... or in their silence. Demonstrate in us your patience, tolerance, and compassion for humanity. For those who have no might, demonstrate your strength."

Merry Christmas and blessings for the new year! 

Mission Moments

Mind Over Matter

"You were on my mind!" If someone says that to you, is your curiosity piqued? How about if someone says, "I did this with you in mind"? Do you feel special?

Luke 10:27 reminds us, "*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind.*" The dictionary says your mind is your "reason, understanding, memory, and mental processes."

Think about what has been absorbing your mental processes lately. What has the result been? How has your attitude been shaped? What actions have been spawned?

If we love God with our entire mind, then God shapes the way we process all information. We respond with His attitude and carry out His actions.

How can you love God with your whole mind tomorrow? Walk through your day with Him.

- * Start your day with prayer, then pray throughout the day. Don't just repeat words. Think carefully about what you're saying and to whom you are saying it.
- * Think through situations that hit you throughout the day to determine what would Jesus have you do. Then do it out of love for Him, and absolutely no other motive.
- * Pay attention to what enters your mind through television, radio, books, and magazines. Develop a biblical world view by learning to bring the Lord's viewpoint into anything new. You may be surprised how this changes your attitudes and even the things you focus on as you listen to the news.

See how often you can tell God, "I did this with You in mind."

Jane Lippy gives more ideas for finding that sought-after quiet time in this month's *Missions Mosaic*. To read the rest of this article and more inspiring features, call 1-800-968-7301.



Joanne Parker
Editor, *Missions Mosaic*
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First Place Mailbag

How did God bring First Place into my life? In 1998, I spent some time with my college roommate at a baby shower in Greenville, South Carolina. When I saw her, I couldn't believe my eyes. She was half the person she was the last time I saw her. She shared with me that she and her husband had gone through First Place. I walked away from her wanting First Place because I was overweight and depressed, but I had never heard of it nor had I heard of any classes around here. Months later, I ran into another friend at the fair in Kings Mountain, North Carolina. She had lost weight and the program was First Place. She told me of a group at her church. My heart jumped with joy. I just couldn't believe it. This friend said she would get the information to me a few days prior to orientation. Do you know that the day she dropped the information off, I heard her ring my doorbell, but I was too depressed to even answer the door. Thankfully, she was persistent and left the materials in my car I never leave my car unlocked, except on this day. All I can say is that God was calling me and was not going to allow me not to get into this First Place class. And I praise Him for his longsuffering with me!

Before I went through First Place, there was no balance to my life. I was overweight, physically unfit, lazy, smoked cigarettes and never exercised. I would rather sit on the couch for eight hours with chips—I was lazy and self-seeking. I certainly did not view my body as the temple—the actual dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. Emotionally, I was a basket case. My emotions ran me and my day was determined by whatever emotion I was experiencing at that time. I struggled with depression for a length of time and I sought approval from man and not God. Spiritually, I was void and empty. I used Jesus as a waiter—when I needed the next thing, I called for Him. At age 26, I found that my life was nothing as I had dreamed it to be. At this time in my life I worked in Charlotte and commuted from Kings Mountain. I am a CPA in the tax division of a large firm. This meant many hours at the office and on the road. My job and my career were my gods. My career afforded me no time for much else. Are you getting the picture of why God led me to First Place?

Matthew 6:33 says, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added unto you." This scripture is the theme for First Place. Seek God first and He will add to or subtract from you. Jesus as the center of my life is what I desperately needed. I was saved when I was a teenager, but it wasn't until age 26 that I accepted Him as Lord of my life and I began a personal, daily relationship with Jesus Christ. What a difference He makes in my life! First Place was the vehicle that the Holy Spirit used to woo me and draw me into real relationship with Him. My life has never been the same. Through that first session of First Place, I met my God that I had never known. I experienced Him as My Deliverer, My Healer, My Friend, My Comforter, My Prince of Peace, and My Abba Father.

Through this program, I have lost 25-30 pounds, maintained the loss, and now exercise is a regular part of my life. God delivered

me from my smoking habit. I now walk in victory over my emotions so that they no longer determine my days nor my attitudes all the time. God brought balance to my life and taught me that my identity and my worth were in Him, not in my career or what others thought of me. He taught me to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness. I experienced His faithfulness, even when I wasn't faithful. You are probably saying how did God do all that in a twelve-week session. I tell you that I am a continual work-in-progress and that my personal relationship with Christ transformed my life and He is still conforming me to His image. I experienced Philippians 4:13 and truly put into practice that "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me!" You see in that twelve-week session, Christ taught me of Himself and how to give Him first place in my life. He taught me how to surrender my life to Him. The other changes, such as the weight loss, were simply experiencing who He is—and He is the Great I Am.

Please don't hear, "Wow, Ashley sure was messed up." But do hear, "God has done a mighty work in Ashley's life and He turned her ashes into beauty." Isaiah 61:3 says that Christ came to "bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair." And so you see, God took the ashes of my life and turned them into beauty and gave me gladness for my mourning and replaced my despair with praise.

My first session in First Place was in the fall of 1998. Since then I have been leading a First Place group and all but one time, I've led the Bible study entitled, "Giving Christ First Place." I kept wondering why God never let me out of this very first bible study. Those of you who have studied Jacob will know that Jacob first met God at Bethel (Genesis 28). Later in his life, God told Jacob to return to Bethel (Genesis 35), because that was the first place God revealed Himself to Jacob. First Place is my Bethel and so God continues to have me return there. Psalm 34:8 says, Taste of the Lord and see that He is good. Through First Place, the Lord allowed me to taste of Him and I testify to you today that He is good!

First Place may not be the way that the Holy Spirit woos and draws you, but do know that Christ wants you to have a real relationship with Him.

Ashley Jones

Gastonia, North Carolina

I thank God for leading me to the First Place Program. My name is Vivian, and I am a repeater in the program. The first session I lost weight, but this time I've been more focused on memorizing the scripture, and I'm committed to the Bible study. I've definitely had a life-changing experience in my life since I started eight weeks ago. It amazes even me to see the transformation God has miraculously made in my life.

Just recently I lost my job, and through using the materials in my kit, it's been amazing to see how God has sustained me. When I got my First Place Member Kit, I thought that all those other things in it were just filler, like the tissue paper you could use to help fill a gift bag. But God convinced me that every piece of material in that kit was designed especially for me. The CD, tapes and Bible study have been a real blessing in my life. Every item in my kit has blessed me, particularly now that I am going through a very difficult time in my life.

I would love to say that there is one special verse out of the 10 (Giving Christ First Place) verses we have this session that I confess more than the others. But every verse somehow helps me though the challenges that have been set before me. Praise the Lord for his good, perfect and indescribable gifts.

Vivian Ogunleye

Houston, Texas



Coming Events

January 12, 2002:
FIRST PLACE WORKSHOP

Holiday Inn
85 & Augusta Road
Greenville, South Carolina

Hosted by Brookwood Community Church
Contact: Kathy Runion
(864) 877-3114
kappyrun@aol.com

September 20-21, 2002:
FIRST PLACE CONFERENCE

Hattiesburg, Mississippi
DETAILS TO COME LATER!

October 10-17, 2002:
FIRST PLACE FITNESS WEEK

Roundtop Retreat, Roundtop, Texas
DETAILS TO COME LATER!

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Leadership Training Director Nancy Taylor

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