



October 2002

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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The *First Place E-Newsletter* is published monthly by First Place. Address all correspondence to First Place, 7401 Katy Freeway, Houston, TX 77024-2199.

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Newsletter Sheila Robbins

Dear Friends,

II Corinthians 1:3 *"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God."*

What a whirlwind year this has been. As I was having my quiet time this morning, I was thanking Jesus for showing Himself to me these last five years as he promised to do in John 14:21, which says, *"Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father and I too will love him and show myself to him."* I confessed to Jesus that the more He shows Himself to me, the more I realize how little I know about loving Him. I again asked Him to continue the work needed to make me into the godly woman he can use.

This morning I turned to the scripture in II Corinthians 1:3 and had one of those "ah ha" moments when I realized how much Jesus has shown me His true love, compassion and comfort these last five years. I thought about all the Bible characters that had been afflicted and how God had shown them His great love in the very midst of their trial. It's really not about whether I love Him enough. God says that when I obey Him, I show my love to Him. I don't have to feel anything. I obey and He loves me and promises to show Himself to me.

I had a little gift from God yesterday that I believe was just to show me that He is watching over my family and me every step of the way. Nancy Taylor, who works with us in First Place, and her husband, William, who is Minister of Missions, went to New York City with a group from our church to minister on the streets of Manhattan during the week of September 11. They have been witnessing and doing acts of service for the people of New York. The group went to Brooklyn Tabernacle on Tuesday evening for a prayer meeting and Nancy called me Wednesday morning to see if I was OK.

She said that the prayer service was truly awesome and that the people at Brooklyn Tabernacle had prayed for all of them, for our church and for our city of Houston. After the service, Nancy kept noticing a man wanting to approach her. All of the Houston group saw him and said that he would start to walk up to Nancy and then turn around and walk away. After a few attempts, he finally approached Nancy and said, "God told me to tell you to pray for Carole. I know you must think I'm crazy but I am just being obedient to what God told me to do." Nancy shared with him about me and then called early Wednesday



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Carole's Letter

(Continued from previous page)

morning to be sure everything was OK with my family and me. I told her that this had been a banner week in every sense of the word. God has showed Himself to me every morning during my quiet time and I have been overwhelmed with His love for my family and me. I truly believe that the man's message to Nancy was just a kiss on the cheek to me from God. I believe it was God's way of showing me that He is the One that prompts believers to pray and to be obedient.

Our First Place family's prayers for us these last five years are the reason we are walking upright and sane today. Each of you has had a vital part in ministering to us God's love, compassion and comfort during these trying times. God loves to hear and answer His children's prayers. We will be eternally grateful for your prayers during this entire time. Please continue to pray for us when the Holy Spirit brings us to mind. Many challenges lie ahead but our God will make the trip with us every step of the way.

October is an anniversary month for my husband, Johnny, and me. Five years ago in October of 1997, Johnny was diagnosed with stage 4 prostate cancer that had metastasized to his bones. The prognosis was not good and needless to say, we were devastated. Johnny is still with us today and even though the disease is still there, God is too! He has truly been the God of all comfort every step of this journey.

November will be another anniversary month. My Mom, Frances, came to live with us three years ago in November. When she came, she was in a wheelchair crippled with arthritis. By January 2002, her mind was

rapidly failing even though her health remains good. We were able to keep her in our home until June 6th of this year when God made it perfectly clear that His plan was for her to be placed in a wonderful personal care home near us. The lady who owns the home is a precious Christian who has even taken Mom to church with her. God has truly been the God of all comfort every step of this journey.

November 22nd will be the one-year anniversary of our 39-year-old daughter, Shari's, home going. Shari was struck and killed Thanksgiving night by an 18 year-old girl who made the choice to drive drunk. Shari left a precious husband, Jeff, and three daughters, Cara, Christen and Amanda. God has truly been the God of all comfort every step of this journey.

Your question when reading this article might be, "How could a loving God allow affliction in the lives of His children?" I believe I have the answer to this question. God permits affliction for us to learn lessons that cannot be learned any other way. Read in your Bible the stories of Joseph, Job and Paul. Sickness and evil are a very real part of the fallen world we live in, but God is greater than all the sin, sickness and evil of our present time.

My prayer for you today is that you will call out to our God of all comfort for your every need. He will answer and help in your time of affliction.

Carole Lewis

First Place National Director
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COMING EVENTS

FIRST PLACE WORKSHOP

October 5, 2002
Community Church of Columbus
Columbus, Indiana
Contact: Emily Coleman at
(812) 376-9478 or
emily@columbuscommunity.org

FIRST PLACE FITNESS WEEK

October 10-17, 2002
Round Top Retreat
Round Top, Texas
For more information,
go to www.firstplace.org

FIRST PLACE WORKSHOP

October 26, 2002
Saxe Gotha Presbyterian Church
Lexington, South Carolina
Contact: Melissa Pia
sadiebeagl@aol.com
(803)808-3945



Talkin' With Kay

Pregnancy and Nursing Moms

Dear First Place Friends,

Happy autumn to each of you! This is a beautiful time of the year, even in Texas where we do not have an extended season of "changing of the leaves." It is also an exciting time for First Place. So many groups begin after Labor Day and I hear daily from new leaders saying, "This is the first time I have taught. Do you really think I can do this? Please take time to say a prayer for all the First Place leaders and co-leaders. God has called them to a very special ministry.

Another question I am asked several times a week is, "What adjustments do I need to make for a member in my class who has just found out she is pregnant?"

First Place views pregnancy and nursing as a medical condition. We ask each member with any type of medical condition to take their Member's Guide to their physician or dietician. We want personalized professional advice on what calorie level is right for them and if the exchanges need to be adjusted in any way. Most physicians recommend around 2,000 calories during pregnancy and for nursing moms, but many have specific instructions.

I had a member a few years ago that showed her doctor the "Live-It" section and he was elated. Late in the pregnancy he took the member's hand and led her into the filled waiting room of expectant moms and announced, "If all my moms would eat the way this mom is eating, we would have such healthy babies!"

This mom was slightly embarrassed, but very proud. When her baby was born, the doctor taped a sign to the bassinet in the hospital nursery, "First Place Baby." Of

Kay Smith
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course, everyone at the window wanted to know, "Why is this baby first place?" She and her family were able to share with many people about her journey in First Place. Gospel Light sells a great workbook entitled, "*Nutrition for God's Temple*," by Dr. Couey. The workbook has a chapter on Pregnancy and Nursing Moms.

We are so proud that First Place can welcome pregnant women and nursing moms. First Place is probably a great benefit with any type of medical challenges. Their physicians have sent many members to First Place to support the person's efforts of eating healthy and getting proper exercise. We have seen that the balance in First Place can be a very positive element when dealing with medical conditions.

First Place advises members with any type of medical condition, such as Diabetes, Hypertension, Heart Disease, Cancer, etc. to take the food plan to your physician. First Place will certainly honor any suggestions. Any changes to the food plan, even for those members who may suffer from a lactose intolerance condition, are welcomed and need to come from a professional. When a member cannot eat from any one of the food groups, we don't want to justify calories. We want to always make sure the nutrients are being replaced and the plan is still balanced. A First Place member may make changes themselves, but they are taking full responsibility for keeping their personal food plan balanced.

Blessings!

Kay Smith



Leadership Training

Lessons Learned on Mission

I just returned from a wonderful week in New York City as part of a mission team. Our team worked with a new church called The Journey, which started the week after the tragic events of September 11, 2001. We helped promote the church by handing out literature, passing out remembrance ribbons on September 11, and inviting those in their target area to a dog party. Yes, I did say, dog party! I will tell you more later; keep reading. Reflecting on the week spent in New York, I am reminded of two very special moments. In each of these moments God taught me something about Him and about leadership.

God, the Creator, reminded me that an effective leader is a creative leader. One of the tasks the pastors of the church asked us to do was to hand out dog party invitations to those people we saw walking dogs. Your first thought might be, "How is this going to reach people?" As the pastors began to observe the people God had called them to minister to, they realized that there were no children. Their target group consists of young professionals between the ages of 18-35 years. Usually, when a church is started, the first group they try to minister to is children. Ministering to children through Bible clubs or Vacation Bible Schools enables the church to eventually minister to the parents. In the absence of children, the church planters noticed that most people in the target area owned dogs; and in order to reach the people they had to target the dogs. Hence, the dog party! They had dog games, contests, free pictures, and prizes. Over fifty dogs came to the party and of course they brought their owners! These church leaders are creatively reaching out to the people God called them to reach. As a leader, we need to be observant of those we are trying to minister, to and discover what it is that interests them. Instead of seeing no children as an obstacle, the church planters saw it as an opportunity for creative ministry. As leaders, we must turn our challenges into chances for creative leadership.

While in New York, we had the honor of attending a prayer service at the Brooklyn Tabernacle. We were told that the doors of the church would open at 5:00 p.m. for the 7:00 p.m. service. We arrived a few minutes prior to five o'clock and stood in the line, that snaked down the sidewalk, of those waiting for the doors to be unlocked. It was the first



Nancy Taylor

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time I had ever seen a waiting line for a prayer service! The people did not wait for the pastor to begin the service; they began to pray once they found their seat in the auditorium. By the time the official start time arrived, the church was packed and people were praying and singing praises to God. I felt as though I had seen a little glimpse of heaven. If that were not enough, something even more spectacular occurred. As the prayer meeting was drawing to a close, we entered into a time of prayer for those needing a special touch from God. I began thinking of First Place and our staff. As I was praying, someone tapped me on the shoulder. I looked up to find a man standing over me who seemed a little uncomfortable with what he was about to say. He said that the Lord had directed him to me specifically to ask me to pray for someone named Carole. Later, someone in my group told me she had watched this man as he would come near to me and then go back to his seat several times before finally deciding to talk to me. He told me that he did not want me to think he was strange or weird, but that he was just being obedient to what God told him to do. I was so amazed! I told him about Carole Lewis and that I had just been thinking of her. I, too, was obedient as I began to pray for Carole. I have never had anything like this happen to me before and was a little overwhelmed. God was showing me His power and His presence all at once. The Lord taught me through this incident that an effective leader steps out in obedience even at the risk of looking foolish or strange. You will never know the adventure or the blessing that waits unless you take a step in faith and do what ever God tells you to do.

I pray that you will ask the Lord to give you an obedient heart and a creative mind as you lead your precious First Place class. I know that God will answer that prayer and will show Himself faithful. Hebrews 10:23

Nancy Taylor



Bev's Footnotes

Ready? No! Set? No! Go anyway!

". . .and as they went, they were healed."

Luke 17:14

Beverly Henson

Certified Personal Trainer
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After speaking at a conference, a woman approached me and began talking about her weight problem. I spoke with her about beginning a walking program and she asked me this question, "When will I FEEL like walking?"

I immediately opened my Bible to Luke 17:11-14, and began to tell her about the ten lepers who came to Jesus. In verse 13, they lifted their voices and called unto Him, "*Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.*" I knew this young woman could relate to the cry of the lepers because she told me she cried to the Lord every day to help her get her weight under control. In Verse 14, Jesus told them to go and show themselves to the priest. In the Old Testament there is a long list of tasks a leper must do to be proclaimed "healed or cleansed." One of the things on this list was to show themselves to the priest. There were many other things a leper had to do, but by calling out to the Master, they were able to bypass all of the tasks and go straight to the priest. The verse goes on to read, "*...as they went, they were healed.*"

When they started walking away, they were still lepers, but as they began walking and were obedient to what the Lord Jesus had told them to do, they were healed. I told this woman her situation was very much like the lepers. She cried out to the Lord as many of us have cried out. When you begin walking and following the nutritional guidelines you have been given, you are still overweight, but as you keep going and are obedient to work out and follow the guidelines, you will notice the healing process beginning.

Her next question was, "How do I get started?" Let's get started walking with Jesus. He is an excellent walking partner and a top notch Personal Trainer. Here are some of the things He has taught me as we (Jesus and I) have walked 8,545 miles together.

✓ **Where to walk:** Find a place to walk that is comfortable and safe. You may like a treadmill. I like being out in God's creation. If you have a cell phone, carry it with you. Always have some form of identification with you. Make sure someone knows your walking route.

✓ **What to wear:** You will need good, comfortable shoes. (I will go into detail about shoes next month.) If it is warm weather, please don't wear a sweat suit. You want your walking experience to be pleasant, so dress in something that is comfortable and will make your body feel good. If you are overweight, do not carry or wear extra weights. It is difficult enough to walk when you are overweight without carrying extra weight. When you get to maintenance or close to goal, then we'll talk about carrying weights. For now, be comfortable as you walk.

✓ **What Time is best:** Anytime! Set yourself a time that will be your regular walking time. We want this to become a lifestyle. Exercise is not an option. It is like brushing your teeth; you have to do it every day.

Make a plan every day. Some examples:

I will walk ____ miles today.

I will walk ____ minutes.

I will walk ____ in ____ minutes.

When you start walking, don't talk yourself out of the plan you made. Make a commitment to a time or distance and make yourself stick to it.

✓ **How long should I walk:** That is for you to determine. You may not be able to walk a mile. You may only be able to walk from one light pole to the next. If that is all you can do, give it all you have between those light poles. After you are comfortable and able to walk those poles, go to the next pole.

If you are able to walk a mile or more at a time, you need to walk 15- to 20-minute miles for optimal fat burn. When I began walking, I walked a 25 to 30 minute mile on a good day. That is slower than the book says, but it sure beats sitting at home in the Lazy boy recliner. There are excellent books on starting a walking program, and I will be glad to counsel you and adjust your workouts if you will e-mail me.

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Bev's Footnotes

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READY! SET! GO!

1. Walk with purpose. When I was almost 300 pounds, I noticed that I waddled side to side when I walked. I had to make myself put one foot in front of the other. By doing this you will tighten the muscles on the front and back of the leg. As a waddler, the muscles on the sides and insides of my legs were tight. Make yourself place one foot in front of the other. Stretch out your steps. Think about it as you go. Keep your hands up as much as possible for two reasons. One is that my fingers tend to swell, get tight, and are very uncomfortable. By keeping them up as you walk, it will keep the fluid from running down into them. The other reason is that by keeping them up, you will tend to swing more side-to-side as you walk and this will work your waist. I didn't have a waist when I started walking. Swing those arms; you'll get a waist as you go. Walk with purpose and strut! Put a little pep in your steps! Get a little hop in your get along! Good Health and Fitness is your inheritance!
2. When I started walking, I didn't just have a double chin, I had a triple chin and had started working on one on the back of my neck. When I walked, it jiggled. I knew I needed to work on it so I began doing neck stretches as I walked. Photos 2-4 shows you how I did it. I stretched my chin upward for about 6 walking steps. I would relax and do it again when I thought about it. This will make your neck sore, but it does work! I still do these neck stretches when I walk and I have no signs of double chin skin.

Jesus, your walking partner, is waiting on you to come forth. Have you been looking for extra energy in your life? Have you asked God, "When are things going to change?" Have you been sold a bill of goods from the enemy that you are going to live the rest of your life just like you are today? Cry unto the Lord Jesus, "Have mercy on me."

You will find in the First Place materials all the information you need to get started. You just have to get up, put one foot in front of the other and take a few steps in the right direction. Luke 17:14 says, "...as they went, they were healed."

The ball is in your court. How bad do you want it? Do you want it bad enough to meet Jesus on the track and put one foot in front of the other?

Ready, Set, GO anyway!

Beverly Henson

Leadership Tip

To creatively inspire our members this session, we planned a "Half Time Celebration." We decided to celebrate at the midpoint of our 13-week session. We chose a football theme, which coincided with the time of year and the term half time. We decorated our room in a football party theme and gave Halfway to Goal awards to those who had reached the halfway point in their weight loss goal for the session. Everyone brought a First Place dish and we enjoyed a lunch together as we celebrated what God had done and re-committed to pressing on to the goal before us. This will give new life to those who are struggling and feeling like they have already failed with the session half over. It also will give added motivation to those who have been faithful to be faithful till the end. Enjoy!

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Hints & Pinches

Making Kid-Friendly Recipes

Trying to get your kids to eat healthy along with you can be a daunting task. Parenting is complicated enough. Dinner shouldn't have to be!

My daughter loves macaroni and cheese and one day I had made a great tasting homemade mac and cheese casserole for dinner to go along with a nice salad. My reality is a home with a middle school aged daughter who rolls her eyes at anything that doesn't come out of a blue box and is dusted with bright orange powder—her version of macaroni and cheese.

Hard as it is to accept emotionally, rationally I know my daughter won't starve herself. I know she will eat when she is hungry. I know she will try things when she feels like it. I know I ultimately will lose the food war, even if I win the just-try-one-bite-of-this battle.

Like much of family life, this is a story about compromise. It is about preparing a dinner I want to eat, without my daughter accusing me of cruel and inhuman punishment. It's about finding meals that can be adjusted to suit more sophisticated palates while still pleasing those with less discerning tastes. It's about not making two dinners, one for adults and one for children. It's about preparing foods that we both like, yet giving their undeveloped taste buds options to grow.

One system to a harmonious dinner hour is to prepare a base meal that is appetizing for us both. After giving my daughter her portion, I then layer additional flavors to give it adult appeal. Sometimes, all that is needed is to add fresh herbs, spices or a flavorful sauce. Adding sautéed hot Italian sausage and fresh basil to spaghetti and meatballs gives it a level that most kids just aren't ready for.

Even as a chef, on occasion, I use convenience foods as a speed scratch method and then add fresh ingredients to make the dish my own. Because of all the additives that are found in convenience foods, it is not a good idea to use them all the time. Sometimes, it's as easy as cutting up crunchy oven-fried chicken to resemble nuggets, while the adults enjoy a full-size breast with a spicy peanut sauce. The adult additions take only a few extra minutes, while the kids' food cools to an eatable temperature.

The key word in dining today is portion control (another topic to discuss later.) Children need some fat in their diet, and an occasional meal with cream should not be a problem



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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.

as long as you continue to monitor their nutritional intake throughout the week.

As with all meals, provide nutritious sides from which your children can choose. We always have a bowl of my daughter's favorites, steamed broccoli or baby carrots, on the table, along with some ranch-style dressing for dipping.

Scott Wilson

Kid-Friendly Recipes

All recipes are from **Eating Healthy, Eating Right**, by Chef Scott Wilson, C.E.C. and Dr. Jody Wilkinson, M.D., a First Place publication now available from Gospel Light.

Reduced-Fat Alfredo Sauce

*Kids love noodles with sauce.
Here is a reduced-fat version of an Alfredo sauce.*

Serves 4

3/4 cup evaporated nonfat milk	1/2 teaspoon garlic salt
1/4 cup half-and-half	1/4 cup fat-free sour cream
1 tablespoon butter, cut into 3 small pieces	2 tablespoons fresh snipped chives
1/2 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese	Freshly ground black pepper to taste

In medium saucepan, combine milk, half-and-half and butter. Cook over medium heat until butter melts and mixture is hot. Gradually stir in Parmesan cheese and garlic; stir until cheese is melted. Remove from heat; add sour cream, chives and pepper to taste.

Exchanges for 2/3 cup sauce: 1/2 meat, 1/2 milk, 1 fat

Suggestions: Serve 2/3 cup sauce with 1/2 cup of pasta for the kids with some small green peas, and for the adults add cooked chicken breast, sautéed shrimp, and/or sautéed vegetables.

Kid-Friendly Recipes

(Continued from previous page)

Crock-Pot Chicken Stew

Serves 4

2 cups water	1/8 teaspoon garlic powder
1 pound boneless skinless chicken breasts, cut into chunks	1 bay leaf
1 16-ounce can navy beans, drained	1/2 teaspoon crushed dry leaf basil
1 16-ounce can low-sodium stewed tomatoes	1/4 teaspoon crushed dry leaf oregano
1/2 cup thinly-sliced carrots	1/4 teaspoon paprika
1/2 cup chopped onion	1 teaspoon low-sodium instant chicken bouillon

Combine all of the ingredients in Crock-Pot; cook on low heat 8-10 hours. Discard bay leaf before serving. Serve each with a 2-inch square of cornbread or make cornbread sticks.

Exchanges: 3 meats, 2 breads, 2 vegetables, 1 fat

Suggestions: Basil and oregano are considered kid-friendly herbs, but may be omitted if too overpowering. Bring a small amount of the broth to a boil with the herbs and add to the stew after the child's portions are ladled out.

All-Purpose Breading Mix

Makes 1 Cup

1 cup packaged cornflake crumbs	1 teaspoon instant chicken bouillon
1/4 teaspoon granulated garlic	
1 teaspoon paprika	1/8 teaspoon black pepper
1/4 teaspoon onion powder	1/2 teaspoon poultry seasoning

Combine all ingredients and mix well. Store in airtight container, mixing well before using. Makes about 1 cup. Plan on using 2 tablespoons for each 4-ounce filet of chicken or fish.

Exchanges for 2 tablespoons: 1/2 bread

Oven-Fried Chicken

Serves 4

4 4-ounce boneless, skinless, chicken breasts
1/2 cup all-purpose breading mix
Buttered-flavored cooking spray

Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Place breading in shallow pan; spray each breast with cooking spray and coat each side with breading mixture. Arrange in a 9x9-inch dish coated with cooking spray. Bake 15-20 minutes. For kid-friendly version, cut each breast into 6-7 nuggets.

Exchanges: 4 meats, 1/2 bread

First Place Success Stories

I'm a pastor's wife who didn't always have a regular quiet time. Exercise was sporadic and I tended to overeat. I had just had my second baby (I also had a two-year old) and was tired of being 30 pounds overweight. I contacted a friend at church who also wanted to lose weight and we started First Place at our church.

I have lost the weight and look and feel much better. I exercise regularly and eat healthier and am trying to teach those habits to my family.

Bible study on a daily basis is the most important thing. I need it to survive as an at-home mom with two kids two and under. It's a struggle some weeks to memorize scripture but I know it's good for my mind and spirit to have that discipline. The Bible study and fellowship with others has been essential to my emotional growth in dealing with a toddler and infant while trying to lose weight. I have grown a lot spiritually through the discipline of Bible study, prayer and scripture memory.

I nursed my baby throughout this First Place experience and not only did I lose weight, but I am sure my baby got more nutritious breast milk from my healthy diet. I would recommend it to any nursing or pregnant woman, as long as she adds in the additional 1300-1500 calories needed for the baby.

Amy Blake
First Baptist Church of Meadville
Meadville, Missouri

At right: July 29, 2002, 136 pounds
Below: Nov. 27, 2001, 165.5 pounds



Testimonies, photographs and letters are all welcomed for consideration. Address all correspondence to:
First Place | 7401 Katy Freeway | Houston, TX 77024 or
e-mail to: srobbins@houston.rr.com.

First Place Success Stories

Life flies by at an incredible pace with small children, so I am just getting to this, but I wanted to send you a brief testimony of my success with the First Place program. I am the lady from your first session in Anchorage last weekend who has been doing the program without a group, but is planning to start a group next fall.

I began to be weight-conscious at the age of fourteen. My mom was very overweight, and often tried different diets. Sometimes, I did them with her, convinced that I, too, was overweight. Significant to this part of the story is that when I was in my late 30's, God told me to get out my old photo albums. While looking at a photo of myself at 16, He asked me to objectively evaluate if the girl in the picture (me) was overweight. In all honesty I had to say, "No." I was greatly surprised at what lies the devil can get us to believe!

Later, in my 20's I discovered that God could help me to choose what to eat and what to not eat. I learned a lot from Him, but I came short of letting Him be totally in charge. I learned to love exercise, to watch my diet, and I learned how to keep my weight in a certain range. That all worked fine while I was single.

At 40 I married and I began to gain weight. So did my husband. I told myself a lie. It was OK to gain a little weight after 40, because even the physicians think that's all right. Before having kids, I gained 10 pounds. Once I started having kids, though, it became really hard to pay attention to all of their needs and my needs as well. I began letting things slide. I exercised less. I ate more packaged foods. I ate more junk food and allowed myself more sweets. When my husband had to work out of town for three straight summers, I gained weight as I struggled to do everything by myself. I eventually weighed 36.5 pounds more than I weighed when I got married.

Not only that, but time alone with the Lord became more and more scarce. Throughout those years I prayed, crying out to God that I needed His help. He let me get to the point where I was more than desperate for it before He nudged me over to a First Place display one day last fall. I bought the starter book and took a long time to read it. Life was still whizzing by so fast and with so much to do that I felt overwhelmed. The eating part of the plan sounded hard enough, but the time commitment sounded IMPOSSIBLE.

I prayed even harder, and slowly the Lord convinced me that not only could I do it, but that since I could not seem to find an already established group to join, I should start and lead one.



I began the program at the end of January. I knew I was receiving the Lord's help as I tried to incorporate all the commitments of the plan into my daily life. The first week I lost 7 pounds, and from then on, I lost 1/2 to 2 pounds per week. However, what I gained was even more significant. I had always felt that everyone else's needs came first, and that I could meet my own needs when everyone else was cared for. This plan gave me permission to care for me. I joined a fitness club on a three-day-per-week program. Those three days of each week, I work out on their machines. On the other days, I bike, swim, use a stair stepper, or walk for exercise. I now only take one day off to not exercise.

I have profited most from the Scripture memory. Soaking in God's word is a great way to renew my mind. I begin to think God's way. The Bible studies have helped me look at aspects of my life and eating from a different perspective. They have really been helpful. I have been accountable to two friends who have been great. They are eagerly waiting the day I start the group and they can join, too. I now call people to encourage them and also use the Prayer Journal. I love to read God's word, so it has not been hard to continue my practice of daily Bible reading. Drinking eight glasses of water a day was already one of my disciplines. I have been pretty good about keeping a commitment record, missing only a few days here and there. I really didn't think I'd like eating the way the plan instructs, but I discovered new ways to make it workable for me.

I have also learned so much from the Wellness Worksheets, the handbook and the other resources you provide. I have really grown and learned a lot in these last few months. I have now lost 32.5 pounds, four pounds to my goal! I'm a very happy camper!

Thank you, Jesus! I'm in a new chapter of abundant life with Jesus, and I love it.

I'm 51, married at the age of 40, and we adopted two girls from China. When I was 44, we adopted Stephanie, who was 5 months old at the time. In 1999, we adopted Sarah, who was 19 months old at the time. Now they are 6 1/2 and almost 5. Before kids, I was a Christian schoolteacher, and before that, a naturalist who taught kids about the out-of-doors.

Yours in Christ,

Nancy Winniford
Anchorage, Alaska



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First Place Mailbag

We finished our first session at Towering Oaks Church in Berryville, Arkansas. We had 12 members and lost 127.5 pounds. It was exciting for me to lead these women and one man through their first session. Everyone greatly enjoyed the Bible study. We look forward to our next session starting next week. We have several new members, too. Thanks so much!

Linda Franco
Towering Oaks Church
Berryville, Arkansas

It never ceases to amaze me how and when God answers our prayers. Some answers just seem to tickle you, not meaning any disrespect to Him.

I was going into a Christian bookstore to purchase my First Place materials for my upcoming classes. There, standing by the materials and filling her basket, was a lady in her 60's. I walked up to her and said, "Wow! You're going to do First Place, what a good choice." She looked at me and said, "Well, I want to and I have been praying to God to help me find a way. But, I don't know any place that is doing it." I asked her where she lived and she said in Candler, North Carolina, which is about one hour drive to Hendersonville.

I told the lady about our classes and where we were located, not thinking she could make that trip at night. She wanted a map and we exchanged names and phone numbers. I tried calling Carolyn all week, and never got an answer. I was about to give up and decided to call the night before orientation. Carolyn answered and I reminded her of orientation and hoped she would make it. She did!

Matthew 21:22, "If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer." Isn't God amazing. Carolyn prayed and God used me to answer her prayer. Her heart had desires for His knowledge and He knew it.

Jan Jarrett
First Baptist Church
Hendersonville, North Carolina

Nancy,

Iwould like to share our recent First Place Celebration. We had a "Luau" theme and our group mascot is a FROG, because FROG is an acronym meaning, "Fully Rely on God." We had a carved Watermelon with frogs, Hawaiian music, and Luau themed food. It was great fun.



The picture of the lady and gentleman, *Orth & Audrey Radar* Orth and Audrey Rader is the couple that brought the First Place program to the attention of our church and the rest is history. We celebrated our first anniversary on September 17. The group is larger in number than the little group we started with, but much smaller in body size!

We have expanded to two classes this year. We will be offering the evening group and have added a daytime group. First Place is really catching on in our area.

Kathy Geehreg
First Place Leader
Oakdale Emory United Methodist Church
Olney, Maryland

I just wanted to pass on an answered prayer! I lead a First Place group at our church and we are just about finished with our first session. I wanted to attend a leader's meeting to learn more about First Place since I had no prior training or had never taught a class before. All the training classes seemed far away and not possible for me to attend. So, one of the ladies in our First Place class started praying for something to work out for me to go to the First Place Conference in Mississippi. My husband didn't mind if I went to the conference, but he did not want me to have to travel alone.

A week ago, shortly after I posted our group on the First Place website, I received an e-mail from a woman in a nearby church who wanted to start a First Place group. She wanted to attend the conference and asked if I knew of anyone who was interested in going. We had never met, but I knew that my prayers had been answered when I received the first e-mail from her. We are both so excited about attending the First Place Conference. Praise the Lord for His answer to prayer! He is so faithful!

Karey Lookadoo
Hot Springs Baptist Church
Hot Springs, Arkansas

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First Place Mailbag

(Continued on previous page)

We are starting our third session and are having tremendous success. God is changing our bodies and our hearts and we are so blessed by what He is doing in our lives. We have already lost a total of 489 pounds in the first two sessions and the momentum is continually building around our church because of what is happening in our group. We are starting two new groups this month because of the response we are getting just within our own church. However, we are actually going to open our groups up to the community now. One lady has already reached her goal and lost 40 pounds. We have several that have lost from 37 to 52 pounds.

We are excited and encouraged with all that is happening in our lives. We also have an aerobics instructor that works with us every Wednesday night before class for 30 to 45 minutes. This definitely isn't your run of the mill weight loss group or program here at our church.

Carolyn Ellison
Calvary Church of the Nazarene
Cordova, Tennessee

Dear Beverly,

I have read your story over and over, trying to convince myself that I can exercise, too. I am at the 308-pound mark and look toward having my First Place Orientation this Monday. I have tried every diet in the book and until I saw the announcement on our church web site, I didn't know what I was going to do next. I know I can't stay at this weight because it's slowly killing me, but I didn't know what I was going to do to get it off. I have this dreaded fear of exercise and even more so after spending a summer with an orthopedic boot on my foot. No one has said it out loud, but I KNOW that my weight contributed to the injury. Anyway, I'm rambling on. You gave me inspiration this evening and I don't need to pray for God to get me thin again. I need to pray for the change of heart, and the rest will fall into place. Thank you for your inspiration.

Marilyn Bron-Gilmore
Winston Salem, North Carolina

"Each person has a gift from God and if you don't take a moment to get to know each person, you are denying yourself an opportunity to receive a gift from God."

~~Author Unknown

Hello Beverly,

I wanted to tell you how moved I was by your article in the First Place newsletter. I too, have asked the Lord to "help me get thin or make me thin." For the last month I have been listening to a new music CD in my car. I always ask the Lord to take control of the music and a certain song always seems to play first-one that is about having a clean heart. Yesterday, I kind of chuckled when it again played first, but after reading your article today, I see what the Lord is saying to me. I need a change of heart and He is the only one that can do that. Praise God!

I am excited about what the Lord is doing in my life. I am currently 80 pounds to my goal weight, and I have started to put exercise into my daily routine. I have not been consistent, but now I know the source of my struggles. Thank you for your article, it has blessed me and opened my eyes to what the Lord is trying to do in my life.

God Bless You,

Bobette Tolmer
Faith Fellowship Foursquare Church
San Leandro, California

Beverly,

I want to thank you so much for your article in this month's e-newsletter. I should say that I am a fellow Mississippian (from Jackson) and have lived in the DC area for 5 years. I am where you were 4 years ago, hating to exercise, and a couch potato, knowing that this is not what God had planned for me. I have been praying the same "broken record" prayer for years, "Lord please make me thin again."

After I read your article I started crying because you hit the nail on the head; we need to ask for a heart change. That is what I'm going to do. For the first time in a long time, I really feel the inner drive to move my body more. I know that my body is a temple of the Holy Spirit and it is up to me to keep it in top condition for use by God.

Thank you again for your article. It was very timely and God really used your words to speak to my soul.

God Bless!

Paula Lewis
Washington, DC

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First Place Mailbag

(Continued on previous page)

Dear Carole,

I am a new participant and am looking forward to the memory of 52 scripture verses by the end of my year. One suggestion for people who are hard of hearing—the music accompaniment on the memory cassettes and CD's drown out the words of the scripture—much to my disappointment.

Rayma Griffith

Hi Rayma,

Thanks so much for your suggestion. There is such a fine line in producing a CD that is useful in more than one area. The CD's are for use in Scripture memory, exercise & for praise and worship. If the music were too soft, then two of the uses would be eliminated.

What I try to do is listen to the first part over and over until I know the verse. This is the first part of each song that gives the Scripture reference, says the verse and then finishes with the Scripture reference again. I have a little hearing problem, too, so this seals the verse into my mind. I just hit the number I am memorizing over and over again as I break the verse into sections to memorize.

Next, after I have pretty well committed the verse to memory, I begin listening to the song. Already knowing the words then helps me remember the tune as I listen to the words in the song. I have been amazed at how the Lord wakes me in the night with the music going over and over in my mind. I then can say the verse back to the Lord and go right back to sleep.

The combination of words and music are dynamite. Don't let your hearing problem deter you from using both of these tools in your Scripture memory. God will bless your socks off.

Much love to you,

Carole Lewis
First Place National Director
clewis@firstplace.org

Beverly,

I just wanted you to know that our God is so good, but I think you know that already. After much prayer, my King has opened doors so I will be able to attend the First Place Conference in Mississippi. The trip from Seattle, Washington to Hattiesburg, Mississippi was going to cost over \$1,000, making it financially impossible for me to take.

Without telling me, the First Place group took up a collection for my trip during our Victory Dinner. A gift given by my step-dad and our group collection totaled \$500 towards my trip.

Next, I got a call from a Kelly McNeff, a First place leader in Portland, Oregon. She decided to go to the conference and we will be sharing part of the expenses—motel and car.

Today, I added all the expenses for the trip to Hattiesburg. The air, car, hotel and the conference come to a total of \$515.00. I was blown away, and just praising God all day! I am so excited, and God is so GOOD! I look forward to meeting you.

Our First Place group has been doing our exercise, three fast walks and two slow walks. These seem to be going really well. For a girl who has never been athletic and was told that I would be doomed to bad knees and operations, I feel like this is a miracle. Who knows, I might get to be a sporty old woman, also. I played your CD for the class at the Victory Dinner this last week and they loved it. From the entire First Place group, thank you for sharing your testimony. See you at the Conference.

Love to you through Christ,

Susan Williams
Port Orchard, Washington

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