



November 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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Newsletter Sheila Robbins

Dear Friends,

The First Place Fitness Week (October 10-17) was the best ever. We had 37 participants from 12 states and the group lost a total of 103 lbs during our week together. Carol Moore, one of our First Place Networking Leaders for the state of Mississippi, did a fabulous job of capturing the week in pictures. Go to the Mississippi First Place website at <http://msfirstplace.com/> to view pictures of the week. Start saving your money right now to join us next year. The 2003 dates are October 9-16.

At Fitness Week I presented the Triple Dare challenge for the final time before I begin writing my new book scheduled for release next summer. I first shared the challenge with my own First Place group and shared it again with our National Conference participants in Hattiesburg, Mississippi.

You are probably wondering, "What in the world is the Triple Dare challenge?" Well, I was having my quiet time on September 9th, and my mind was spinning with ideas and stories for my new book, Beginning Again. In the October E-Newsletter I shared about that morning's quiet time and how God reminded me of John 14:21, "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." The thing I didn't share was that the Holy Spirit quietly and sweetly impressed my heart that same morning that "It is time." God impressed my heart that I was to become vulnerable about my own struggles with losing weight and that I was to actually lose weight while I write the new book.

The next Saturday my Granddaughter, Cara, and her roommate, Katy, were being pulled behind our boat on an inflatable device called the "Triple Dare." This device is 96 inches long, with a rope that attaches to the back of the boat. The Triple Dare is designed for three riders, but Cara and Katy were on the outside slots, leaving the center slot vacant. I was riding in the boat watching the two girls having such a wonderful time and my heart was tendered watching them, knowing that each of them had lost their Mom last year.

Before I knew it, I heard myself asking my husband, Johnny, "Do you think I could ride that thing?" Johnny said, "I don't think you should!" I assured him that if it was hurting me in any way that I would let go.

Well, I rode the thing and could barely walk for the next three days! God used that ride to give me the plan to lose the weight. The Triple Dare is for the next 16 weeks to:

➡ Believe God ➡ Trust God ➡ Obey God

We will be doing the First Place Live-It and exercising for 16 weeks to witness together God's power in the life of His children when we believe, trust and obey Him.

As I write these words, I am beginning week seven on my Triple Dare and I get more excited by the day. Please pray for me in the weeks ahead as I begin writing.

Carole Lewis

First Place National Director
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Carole Lewis
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Whole Grains and Flaxseed

Dear First Place Friends,

Whole grains can equal whole "gains" in our health! We all know the importance of getting proper amounts of fiber. Health officials are suggesting at least 25 to 35 grams a day. I just read about a study that pointed out yet another great benefit of eating whole grain. Switching from refined to whole grains can lower high insulin level, lowering the risk of heart disease and diabetes.

Researchers fed overweight people with high insulin levels a diet with six to ten servings daily of food made from whole grains. All the volunteers' insulin levels were lowered during a six-week study. Researchers aren't sure yet if it's the extra fiber, magnesium, or assorted phytochemicals in the whole grains that made the difference.

Whole-grain breads, cereals, muffins, rice, pasta, cookies and pizza dough were used in this study. The volunteers actually preferred the whole-grain products.

Another great way to increase fiber and receive other health benefits is flaxseed. In fact, flax is fast becoming the oat bran of this century. Flaxseeds are chock full of health-promoting omega-3-fatty acids, phytoestrogens, fiber and protein. The tiny, shiny brown seeds with a mild nutty flavor are rich in alpha-linolenic acid, an omega-3 fatty acid that helps reduce blood clotting, primes immune function and helps prevent abnormal heart rhythms. The seeds are also rich in lignans, phytoestrogens that may hinder hormone-related cancers such as breast and prostate. The fiber in flax is mostly insoluble, which helps relieve constipation, but its also partly soluble, which helps lower cholesterol and steady blood sugar.

Flaxseed oil and supplements are not the way to go. To reap all of flax's nutrition benefits, choose ground flaxseed. Store ground flaxseed in a cool, dry place in an

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Associate Director
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airtight, opaque container and it has a shelf life of four months. To keep longer, refrigerate or freeze it and it will keep indefinitely. Most health food stores and many supermarkets carry ground flaxseed (look in the bulk or organic section).

There are plenty of ways to work ground flaxseed into your meal plan. Add gradually over time to allow your body to adjust to the increased fiber, and drink plenty of fluids. Add ground flaxseed to casseroles, burgers, meatloaf, yogurts, salads and cereal. Mix in dough and batters for pancakes, waffles, muffins, and other baked items. Foods may brown more quickly with flax. You can replace some of the fat in a recipe by adding ground flax seed. ($\frac{3}{4}$ cup ground flaxseed for $\frac{1}{4}$ cup oil)

Four teaspoons of ground flaxseed will equal one fat on the exchange plan. Please, turn to page 61 in your Member's Manual (Live-It section) and add ground flaxseed under Nuts and Seeds. While you are on that page, check to see if you have made the correction for the proper amounts of peanuts and pecans. The correct amount is 20 small or 10 whole peanuts. The correct amount for pecans is 4 halves or 2 whole large pecans.

Happy Thanksgiving to each of you!
Kay Smith

Leadership Training

Don't Go It Alone!

As a child, I was told that I could accomplish anything I set my mind to and that I didn't need to rely on anyone in the process. As a result, I have become rather independent as an adult. This can be a good thing, but when taken to extreme, it can become a weakness, especially in the life of a leader. In my leadership journey I have learned to rely on others and to delegate responsibilities to others. As I have delegated and brought others alongside to lead with me, I have learned the value of a team. As I meet new leaders, I also encourage them by saying, "Don't Go it Alone!" If we try to be Ms. or Mr. Leader -Know-It-All, we will find that we are burned out and that no one is following! I am not quite sure who said the following, but I know it is a statement that I have proven true many times over: "People support what they help create." So, don't go it alone, instead, bring others along with you in your leadership journey.

John Maxwell, a well-known leadership expert, recently wrote an article on this very subject, published in the September issue of Leadership Wired. In the article he shares how he once believed that the leader should always rise above their people, but now knows that the only way to insure people will follow him is to rise with the people he leads. He suggests that a leader must take people on the journey and not try to go it alone. He believes his first thoughts of going it alone lead to some negative results. Read over the following results and see if you see yourself. If you do, then it is never too late to ask someone to join you on your leadership journey!

1 Experience loneliness. You find yourself all alone because you have failed to bring others with you in your leadership. If you are lonely, that means no one is following!

2 Never ask for help. Do you feel like you have to be the answer lady or answer man? Do you think you are the only one who could do that task right? Asking for help doesn't make you weaker, but stronger! Using others gifts, strengths, and talents will only make those you lead stronger and thus make your leadership that much easier!

3 Very "position-conscious." John Maxwell says he was always making sure that he had his title and position and, of course, the rights that go along with that position. Take a look around. Leaders come from all types of



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backgrounds and varied professions. Those who are focused on others, rather than their own rights, tend to have more influence. Those focused on their own rights and position are more apt to miss out on many mentoring and influencing opportunities.

4 Competitive. Maxwell says, "Leaders encourage people and make them feel like winners." If you are always trying to out-do everyone you'll end up making others feel like losers.

As First Place leaders, let's work together to invite as many people as we can, to join us in the leadership journey. When we bring others with us, we will always have a listening ear, help when we need it, opportunities to influence others and surrounded by winners!

Don't go it alone!
Nancy Taylor

Leadership Tip

Commitment Record Motivation

To motivate your members to turn in their completed CR each week, have a weekly drawing. Go to a dollar store and store up on some inexpensive prizes. Kitchen gadgets are always a hit! Collect the CRs each week, place in a basket and draw one. The person whose CR is chosen receives the prize. I have noticed that the basket gets fuller each week when people do not want to be left out of the drawing!

Bev's Footnotes

If the Shoe Fits . . . But Which Shoe Will Do?

Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, I have given unto you . . .

Joshua 1:3

Let's take a walk! It is now time to go in and possess your Promised Land. Good health and a sense of well-being is part of your inheritance and your claim to the abundant life through the blood of Jesus Christ. Our Father deeply cares about every part of your life, right down to the very soles of your feet. Walking in YOUR Promised Land requires the correct equipment to aid in making your possession a positive experience, which is why we are going to talk about the difference in workout shoes in this month's newsletter.

In the 8,707 miles the soles of my feet have touched while walking the last four and one-half years, I have become somewhat of an authority on footwear that works for the user. Shortly after I became a Personal Trainer, I became aware that most people don't have a clue what shoes to buy for their workout. When a heavy woman in one of our First Place classes began to complain about how painful it was for her as she walked, I knew that she really shouldn't be having as much pain as she insisted she was experiencing for the amount of walking she was doing. The Holy Spirit prompted me to ask her what type of shoes she was wearing as she walked to which she replied, "Birkenstock Sandals," because she had heard how good they were for your feet. They are good to make a fashion statement, but not for walking. I told her of a cross training shoe I really liked. She bought it and her walks became a more pleasant experience for her.

Good shoes are a vital part to success in your workout program. You get what you pay for. Shoes will wear out and break down if worn regularly, so they need to be replaced every 500 miles or every 6 months, whichever comes first. Take care of your shoes. I wear my walking shoes only when I walk and not to work or play, which makes them special and my walk special.

Let's look at the different types and styles of shoes available to meet your needs. First of all, when you enter the athletic department of a shoe store, you will notice there are signs at the top of each rack noting the category of each pair of shoes. These signs are there for a reason. Many times we buy our shoes according to whether they look good with our new wind suit or jogging suit. We buy according to a popular brand or fashionable color, or if some famous athlete has endorsed the shoe. Not all shoes are made for your foot

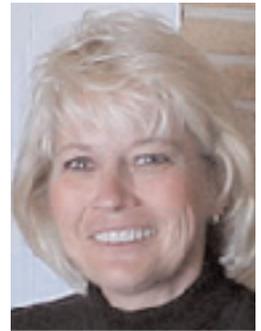
and you have to find the shoe that works for you. For example, I love the way the Adidas shoe looks but my foot doesn't like the way it feels and I am going for comfort and performance, not looks.

Running shoes—Always ask the clerk what kind of shoe it is. This is important! A running shoe will shift the weight more toward the ball of the foot to get the runner up on their toes for speed and optimal muscle performance. When I weighed almost 300 pounds, I did not need, nor did I want my weight to be on the balls of my foot. The weight distribution will bring pain to the feet and the legs of a heavy person. Running shoes will keep you on your toes. If you aren't a runner, look for another shoe. Be sure you ask if the shoe you are buying is a running shoe. It is important to ask many questions about the shoes you are about to purchase to go in and possess your land!

Cross trainers—I like cross trainers. I especially like the New Balance 608 Cross Trainer. This is a good shoe for heavy people. The weight distribution is good. It keeps the foot in a good position for all activities. TIP: Try both shoes on, tie them and walk around the store for about 5 minutes before you buy any shoe. I'll put in a plug here for a brand I really like to use in my workout, SKECHERS. This company has gone to great lengths to abandon the original image of way out footwear and cater to the real athlete. They are great shoes, inexpensive, and good support for the foot. The only drawback with this shoe is that they run down or break down a little quicker, but other than that Skecher makes a great shoe. They also look great and come in a variety of colors.

Walking shoes—All walking shoes are different and good for walking as they keep the weight distributed more toward the heel. Try them out before buying them. Go for a walking shoe that gives an equal weight distribution, such as Rockport or Easy Spirit.

(Continued on next page)



Beverly Henson
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Bev's Footnotes

(Continued on previous page)

Trail shoes— These are good, but most trail shoes are running shoes and will put your weight toward the toes. This is also a good shoe for rainy days, as it will keep sliding down to a minimum. Looks can be deceiving, so try them on and go for feelings!

Hiking shoes and boots— Timberlands, Technica, Rockport, Montrails, Merrills are excellent walking shoes. I highly recommend them. The hiking shoes are designed to carry 50 to 85 pounds of extra weight in backpacks etc., so for a heavy person this would be a great choice. Hikers offer excellent support and most are treated with Gore Tex that will keep your feet dry. Hiking shoes are my personal favorite in which to do my workout. They will last much longer before they run down and you will get much more foot time for your money.

Socks—Socks are very important. You want socks that don't wrinkle in your shoes and that your shoes can't eat. I hate it when that happens. Thorlos are excellent socks and

my sock of choice. They are treated with DuPont Cool Max and will keep your feet from sweating so much and burning. DeFeet socks are very good socks for summer. I really don't think I can recommend them for winter since they are a little thin.

Treat your feet kindly and put good shoes on them. Cheap shoes don't last and they will not be kind to your feet. A good shoe will give you an optimal workout, get the most out of your body, and get a better calorie burn. Take care of your shoes and take care of your feet.

If the shoe fits, wear it...but which one? I can't tell you that. Sum up your needs and go by how the shoe feels on your foot. Get good shoes for your workout and you will feel like you have had victory for your feet. The soles of your feet will be happy feet as you go in and possess your land.

**"The Thrill of victory and the agony of de Feet."
Beverly Henson**

A Prayer of Thanksgiving

Precious Heavenly Father,

Thank you for the mountaintop experiences, they prepare me for the valleys that are ahead.

Thank you for the valleys, they make me appreciate the mountaintop all the more.

Thank you for the trials, they draw me close to your Word.

Thank you for your Word, it equips me for the trials that will surely come.

Thank you for my shortcomings, they keep me humble and magnify your Glory.

Thank you for your correction, like a ship's rudder, it keeps me on the right course.

Thank you for your tender mercy, it makes the discipline bearable.

Thank you for your unfailing love, it's an unbroken circle encompassing me at all times.

Thank you for the perfect gift-your Son, He took my sins upon Himself that I might live.

All praise to You!

*Signed,
Your humble servant*

Author Unknown

Hints & Pinches

No Worry Thanksgiving!

Before the big day, experiment with recipes to familiarize yourself with preparation. Get everything out on the counter ready to go.

Example: homemade cranberry sauce tastes better after "curing" in the refrigerator for a few days.

- ❖ **Prepare as much as possible in advance.** For instance, pre-measure seasonings, and store them in labeled bags or containers; clean, pre-cut and store vegetables in plastic bags in the refrigerator.
- ❖ **Let your family set the table.** Children will gobble up the chance to make place cards, fold napkins, and dress up your holiday table. This will also keep them out of the kitchen while you attend to the food.
- ❖ **Serve buffet-style.** With pretty serving bowls and silver utensils, guests can help themselves to seconds whenever they want while you remember your portion sizes.
- ❖ **Let the turkey rest before slicing.** To avoid a last-minute crunch and assure tender turkey, let the bird rest out of the oven, covered, for about 20 minutes before slicing.
- ❖ **Use your microwave oven.** Take advantage of the appliance to quickly reheat food before serving when all the burners on the stovetop are occupied.
- ❖ **Using a thermometer.** Thermometers are essential for food safety. When choosing an oven meat thermometer, look for an easy-to-read dial with a stainless-steel face and shatterproof lens. Check the thermometer for accuracy by submerging at least two inches of the stem in boiling water. It should read 212 degrees (or the boiling temperature of water at your altitude). An instant-read thermometer, also known as a rapid-response thermometer, is designed to measure a wide range of temperatures, typically from 0 degrees to 220 degrees. It does not stay in food during cooking. When it's inserted in the food, the temperature should register in about 15 seconds.

Finally, remember that this is Thanksgiving. Take time to thank God for what He has done in your life this past year and for what He is going to do for you in the coming year. Bon Appetit!

Jeremiah 29:11

Scott Wilson

Scott Wilson
First Place Food Consultant
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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.

Thanksgiving Recipes

Creamy Turkey Gravy

Serves 12

1-1/2 cup chicken broth (low sodium) or defatted turkey drippings	1 teaspoon melted reduced calorie butter
1/4 cup evaporated skim milk	1/2 teaspoon pepper, or to taste
3 tablespoons all-purpose flour	1 hard cooked egg, chopped fine

Heat broth in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Put next 4 ingredients in a small bowl and whisk until smooth, or put in a jar with a tight-fitting lid and shake until smooth. Gradually stir into chicken broth. Cook over medium heat for 3 to 5 minutes, or until thickened, stirring constantly. Add the chopped egg. Makes about 2 cups.

Exchanges for 2 tablespoons: FREE

Crock-Pot Dressing

Serves 12

1/2 cup reduced calorie butter	1 teaspoon poultry seasoning
2 cups chopped onion	2 eggs, well beaten
2 cups chopped celery	1 teaspoon sage
2 8-ounce cans sliced mushrooms	1/2 teaspoon pepper
12 cups bread cubes, day old	1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
1/2 cup thinly sliced green onions	3 1/2 cups chicken or turkey broth (defatted)

Melt butter in a skillet and sauté onion, celery, and mushrooms. Pour over bread cubes in a very large mixing bowl. Add green onions and all seasonings and toss well. Pour in enough broth to moisten. Add eggs and mix well. Pack lightly into slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 6-8 hours.

Exchanges for 1 cup: 1-1/2 breads,
1/2 vegetable, 1 fat

Thanksgiving Recipes

(Continued from previous page)

Green Beans & Pickled Red Onions

Serves 12

2 tablespoons olive oil	3 pounds fresh green beans,
2 large red onions, thinly	trimmed
sliced	juice of one lemon
1 teaspoon leaf oregano	salt & pepper to taste
1/4 cup balsamic vinaigrette	

Heat a large size skillet over medium heat; add olive oil, sliced onion, and oregano. Cook onion, stirring occasionally, until soft and translucent; add the balsamic vinaigrette. (Either keep warm and set aside or make ahead and refrigerate; heat onions before adding to green beans.) Cook green beans in a large kettle of boiling salted water. Do not cover, and cook for approximately 7 minutes or until beans are brightly colored, but still a little crisp. Drain, squeeze lemon juice over beans and toss. Add salt and pepper to taste and toss with pickled onions. Serve hot.

Exchanges: 2 vegetables, 1 fat

Roast Turkey with Herbs

Serves 15-20

(Allow 3-4 days for turkey to thaw in the refrigerator, do not thaw on the kitchen counter)

1/4 cup minced onion	1/4 cup chicken broth
1/2 teaspoon dried leaf	10 to 12 pound turkey
thyme	(completely thawed if
1/2 teaspoon dried rubbed	frozen)
sage	2 cups chicken or turkey
3 tablespoons grated lemon	broth
rind	

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Combine first 5 ingredients (onion through broth). Remove giblets from cavity and discard; rinse turkey and pat dry. Lift skin away from turkey over breast and spread mixture between skin and turkey. Use any remaining herb mixture in turkey cavity. Place turkey on rack sprayed with cooking spray; put rack in roasting pan and pour broth around turkey. Roast turkey 30 minutes. Reduce oven temperature to 350 degrees; continue roasting until meat thermometer inserted into thickest part of thigh registers 175 degrees, about 2 hours. (Baste every 30 minutes, if desired.) Transfer turkey to platter; tent with foil and let stand 30 minutes to let the juices set. Do not cut turkey for 30 minutes. Serve yourself about a 4-ounce portion.

Exchanges: 4 meats

First Place Mailbag

Recipe submitted by: *Peggy Sims*
Kosciusko, Mississippi

Apple/Raisin Crunch

Serves 4

4 Red Delicious Apples	1/2 cup of Splenda
1/4 cup raisins	1 Tablespoon Ground Cinnamon
"I Can't Believe it's Not Butter Spray"	1/4 cup of Smart Start breakfast cereal

Spray 13 X 9 pan with Pam cooking spray. Lay cored, sliced apples in bottom of pan and spread raisins on top of apples. Spray apples and raisins with Butter Spray. Sprinkle with Splenda and ground cinnamon. Sprinkle Smart Start cereal over all and bake 30 minutes in a 350-degree oven.

Exchanges per serving: 1 fruit, 1/4 bread

I just wanted to express my thanks to all of you for such a wonderful, heart changing program! I have lost nearly 50 pounds and am continuing to carry on towards the goal of permanent weight loss. I am doing this because I am "seeking first His kingdom and all things will be added unto you"! I am really excited each day to read and study this devotional. I will keep in touch as I move closer to the heart of God for my life!

I sincerely thank you!

Janet Anderson
Catskill, New York

Carole,

I must tell you how much I am enjoying Today is the First Day. I am learning so much about myself. GOD and I are having the greatest conversations. We just don't seem to have enough time. It's like being out with a friend for your lunch hour and it is a sweet time of pleasure together. But it is, after all, just your lunch hour and ends before you are ready to say, "Talk to you later." Thank you so much for compiling this and giving me a "lunch hour" that I wish was longer and longer.

Barbara Clark
San Angelo, Texas

Barbara,

Thank you for your wonderful description of the book. This is exactly the way I feel since I know so many of the contributors.

Love,

Carole Lewis
clewis@firstplace.org

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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 Mailbag

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I just wanted to take a moment to tell you all "thank you" from the bottom of my heart for the First Place National Conference in Mississippi. Deanna Whetstone, Suzy Pineda and I drove 12 hours from Indiana and came back so rejuvenated, excited and full of the Lord! I just can't thank you enough for the inspiring testimonies, information, fellowship, and encouragement. Even two weeks after the trip, we are still talking about it!

To let you know how God is working on our First Place ministry in Indy, let me fill you in:

- We have 5 different First Place Bible studies going on now which meet three different days, one in the morning and the other four on three different nights. We started the program on September 12th, 2001 and have passed the one-year mark. We're still going strong! We have people not only from our church but also from about six other churches in the area. Some of these people want to take the program back to their church and start it up. This is exciting to me because it spreads the ministry within the city rather than confining it to our church.
- At your encouragement, Carole, I approached our preacher, Steve White, with the suggestion to let us start a Sunday school focusing on discipleship. He agreed and is supportive to allow us to do this. We have about 1,500 people at our church and approximately 1,000 attend Sunday school. This will be a challenge for us to do because of all the other classes that meet and there tends to be quite a bit of transience in the classes. The really neat thing is that Steve has encouraged the formation of a Prayer Ministry Team to lead our church into becoming a House of Prayer. He wants to take us from occasional prayer to a church that has prayer as its central foundation. This is so exciting to me, personally, because First Place has shown me the importance of being in prayer with My Lord and Savior not only each day, but also all day.
- Bev Henson and Carol Moore are stopping by our church in January to share testimony and help us put on a First Place Rally while they are in town for a convention.
- We want to do a "Jesus Walk" to emulate the 120-mile walk Jesus took. This would be used as encouragement to get out and exercise and spend time with the Lord in praise and prayer.
- We are going to contribute to our food pantry by having everyone bring food equivalent to the weight they have lost.

Thank you all for letting the Lord lead you to build this ministry. You have truly touched the hearts and made a

difference to a group of people in Indiana, physically, emotionally, mentally and most importantly, spiritually. God bless you all for the efforts you put into glorifying Him through this ministry!!!!

Clinging to the Cross,

Jill
Indianapolis, Indiana

I never used to watch television in the mornings, which is why it was so unlike me to reach over in the dark, find the remote and click it on to our local morning news program. I rolled over and closed my eyes to get in just a few more minutes sleep when I heard the host announce her guest, Beverly Henson. Well, that got my attention because I knew Beverly. I had been raised in her family's daycare! Now, I was propped up, and so I watched and listened as she talked about First Place. . .and blah, blah, blah...something about weight loss. Now, I was really listening. Beverly looked great! She gave Carol Moore's name as a contact for those who were interested in joining the upcoming session.

I didn't want to take on more responsibility than I could handle, so I tossed it around in my head for a few days. On the day of orientation, I waited until lunchtime before I finally got the courage to call Carol and asked if it was too late. Well, I went that night with the attitude that I can "just see" and if I don't like it, no harm done. I can tell you with a joyful heart that I have completed two sessions of the First Place Bible study and I just got back from my first First Place National Conference in Hattiesburg, Mississippi!

I've been a Christian for many, many years, but just recently have I begun a TRUE relationship with Jesus through my First Place Bible studies! My life is in His hands now and my cup runneth over! No, my problems didn't magically disappear and Sports Illustrated has NOT called me for their cover. But, I have gained an army of Christian friends and supporters and I can feel the strength their network provides. At conference, Bev strutted her stuff for the glory of God and I am so blessed to know her again after all these years! God has used her dynamic energy and Carol's gentleness in perfect combination to draw me closer to Him, which is where I need and want to be. I want my success in First Place to be my witness to those around me. Praise the Lord for the good things He has done—and will continue to do—in my life! Amen!

Dana Marshall
Meridian, Mississippi

Testimonies, photographs, recipes 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

God took me from Wyoming to Oklahoma in order to take me to Texas. In February 2000, I went with my sister to Oklahoma to train on the specialized equipment for her new women's fitness center. While at the training, I came across some First Place brochures. I picked up one of the brochures, brought it home, and left it laying on my coffee table.

Overweight, with high cholesterol, high triglycerides and emotionally drained, I had no energy to play with my five grandchildren. Even though I was exercising regularly at my sister's new center, I wasn't losing weight. My doctor told me I should have thought about losing weight before this stage of my life, because it would be very hard to do now. At this point I poured my heart out to God, seeking His help.

One late summer afternoon I sat beside my coffee table crying. I looked down and saw the First Place brochure and made a decision to call them for information about the Fitness Week at Round Top, Texas. Knowing nothing about the First Place program or anyone in it, I flew off to Round Top in October. Two of the First Place leaders, Carol Moore and Bev Henson from Mississippi, befriended and came alongside of me. Being there alone, I could have felt overwhelmed. But those two ladies will never know the extent of what they did for me at that time of my life. God often takes us out of our comfort zones to help us grow in our walk with Him.

Coming off of a sugar high, I didn't feel real great that week. The day after we had our blood

drawn, a nurse called me aside. She told me the blood test showed that if my lifestyle didn't change, my life wouldn't be a long one. My poor physical condition was adversely effecting my emotional, mental, and spiritual state. When one or more parts of our lives are out of sync, nothing seems right. The last day at chapel Carole Lewis asked each of us how we could pray for one another when we went home. I asked them to pray for discipline to follow this program. God honored their prayers.

I didn't have a group to come back to, but I wasn't alone. I already had a relationship with Christ, He became the center of my life to sustain, encourage, and help me become healthy. This truly is a Christ-centered program. Philippians 4:13 says, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

Now that I'm healthier, He's working on my spiritual life. Christ has been calling me into women's ministry and I've been avoiding Him saying I'm not gifted in that area. He reminded me that He carried me through losing 30 pounds and He would give what is needed where I'm lacking if I'm just obedient.

It's exciting that my daughter will be going to Round Top this October 2002 and I'll be baby-sitting her 21-month-old son. Our God is an Awesome God!

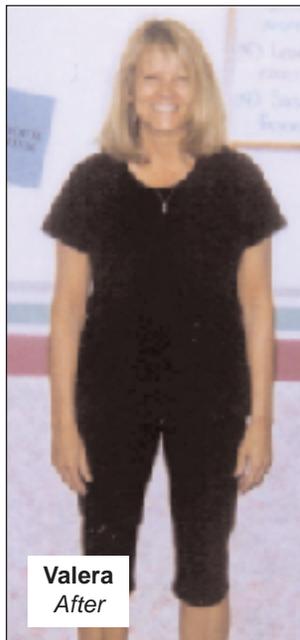
Valera Swenson
Wyoming

I have had a "wait" problem my whole life—I couldn't wait 'till the next time I could eat something. Anything would do and usually the-more-the-better. I would eat too much at meals then turn around and eat too much for snacks between the meals. But if you asked me, I would tell you that I was on a diet. And as far as diets go, I had tried them all.

I was what I now call a Monday morning dieter. I would go to bed Sunday night saying to myself, "OK, starting tomorrow morning, I'm going on a diet." Then, getting mad at myself I would say, "This time I'm going to lose weight! This time it's going to be different. This time I can do it if I just try hard enough." It would work. I would lose weight, but as soon as my will power ran out (usually about a week) the weight would be back plus a few extra pounds.

With my health suffering, there was not much doubt that I needed to lose weight. Finally, one day I had enough, I was through trying. I was through failing. I came to the conclusion that I could not do it-I could not lose the weight. I gave up trying and

(Continued on next page)



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

(Continued from previous page)

just as with many other problems I had dealt with in the past, when I gave up, the LORD stepped in and took over.

After giving up, the very next morning I heard about a program held at my church. My wife had mentioned the First Place program to me but this was the time I really thought it was for me. I heard the LORD saying that this was it. This was the answer I had been so desperately searching for my whole life. The next Sunday I began my new life. My life where the LORD allows me to conquer my old cravings, create new habits, and control my eating binges. Thirty-five pounds ago I endured life; now, I enjoy every day. I am closer to the LORD than ever, I have more energy, I live life to the fullest, I can enjoy my kids more, and the list goes on and on. To sum up my experience of First Place, I would say that by myself I would never have done it, but WITH MY LORD AND SAVIOR ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE.

Keith Yawn
Hattiesburg, Mississippi



Keith
Before



Keith—After

On June 4, 2001, God answered a prayer I had been praying about for two years to lose weight. The minute I heard that some friends were going to do a Bible study to lose weight, I could hear the Holy Spirit prompting, "I've answered your prayer. I'll be with you." Weight loss was not something I had ever done before or ever really wanted to attempt, but I knew I had to do God's will for my life.

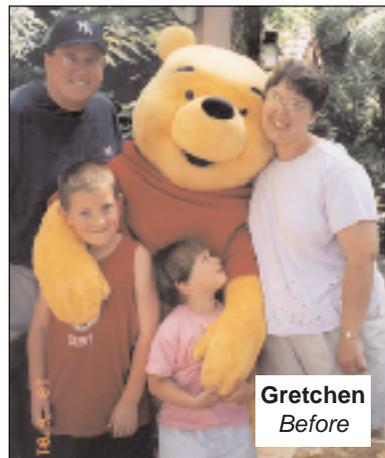
After the first meeting, I wasn't sure about giving up all the food I needed to (like Pepsi and chocolate), but I stayed focused on God that first week and He rewarded me by losing four pounds! That was all it took, I was then motivated to allow First Place to renew me inside and out. I began not only eating right and getting into the word daily, but even exercising four to five times a week, including jogging! That was quite a big change in my life.

First Place is such a blessing because the Bible study took the focus off my weight and how I looked to what was truly important, my relationship with Christ and what He wanted for me. It continues to help me realize that no matter what I look like on the outside, I need Christ to truly be a beautiful person.

The third session I was in First Place, I began to lead the group. The only thing that I wanted to do less than exercise was lead a group! I'm not one who enjoys to be up in front of people. God really convicted me that leading this Bible study was right where he wanted me, and that my testimony and His guidance was all that I needed to lead a First Place group.

First Place has brought balance to my life spiritually, physically, mentally and emotionally. I do my Bible study every day just before I exercise. I pray every morning as I walk/jog 3 miles. I have learned to eat a well-balanced diet and to give my failures to God. I am truly blessed to have learned to put "first things first" in my life and I now know that "I can do anything through Him who gives me strength."

Gretchen Brown
*First Baptist Church of Forest Grove
Forest Grove, Oregon*



Gretchen
Before



Gretchen
After

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