



TRANSFORM YOUR LIFE WITH THE BIBLE'S WAY TO WEIGHT LOSS



March 2005

Matthew 6:33:
But seek first his kingdom
and his righteousness, and
all these things will be given
to you as well.

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National Director
..... Carole Lewis

Associate Director
..... Kay Smith

Leadership Training
Director ... Nancy Taylor

Newsletter Sheila Robbins

Dear Friends,

Recently, I was the keynote speaker for a women's retreat in Kerrville, Texas. I decided it might be easier to drive than fly, so my assistant, Pat, agreed to go with me.



Carole Lewis
National Director
Carole@firstplace.org

On Friday, we had a wonderful drive to Kerrville and met a long time, mutual friend for lunch. The weekend was wonderful in every way and after I finished speaking on Sunday morning, Pat and I started the drive back to Houston.

As we left Kerrville, heading back to I-10, I said to Pat, "Let's be sure we take I-10 east, knowing that once we entered I-10 east, it was a straight drive into Houston. We saw the sign that said I-10 east and entered the freeway. As we drove along, Pat said, "Why don't we spend some time praying? God has given us such a wonderful weekend." I agreed and Pat began to pray. After she stopped, I began praying (with my eyes open) and we had a glorious time of prayer together. I thanked God for the giant stone boulders we were seeing along our route and for the beauty all around.

After we finished praying, the first thing inside the car that caught my attention was my gas gauge, which was waaaay past empty. My husband, Johnny, calls this stage of empty (instead of just the lighted gas pump appearing on the dash) "when the little man is carrying the gas can." As I was inwardly and outwardly panicking about our gas emergency, I looked around and said to Pat, "Where in the world are we?" San Antonio is 66 miles from Kerrville, and my odometer, which I set on zero when we left Kerrville, registered 90 miles!

I knew we had been praying awhile, but I also knew that I would have seen the buildings of San Antonio had we driven by the city. Now that we were thoroughly confused about our location, we saw a sign, "Next exit, Sonora!" To our horror, we realized that we had just driven 90 miles in the wrong direction!

After having lunch in the little town of Sonora, we started the 1½ hour drive back to Kerrville to then begin again the drive to Houston. Pat and

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Carole Lewis

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I turned a five-hour trip into eight just by taking a wrong turn on I-10!

Of course, this story was all I could think about when we started talking about our March Madness theme for this month's E-Newsletter, and I do believe though that this story has applications for each of us on our First Place journey. Let's look at a few of those applications.

1 We can be on the right road, but be going the wrong direction. Giving Christ first place in everything is definitely the road that will take us where we want to go. Why is it then, that so much of the time we refuse to give Christ first place in the foods we eat? When we do this, we are still on the right road but going in the wrong direction. If we joined First Place to lose weight, it is imperative that we change our eating "direction" if we desire to lose weight.

2 It takes more gas to go in the wrong direction. This statement looks like a "no-brainer," but I promise I am going somewhere with it. First Place is a program designed to bring balance into every area of our lives; spiritual, emotional, mental & physical. When we are half-heartedly doing our First Place commitments, it drains us in not one, but all four areas. Conversely, when we try to do all nine of the commitments, even halfway, we find that God honors our commitment and we experience success. Success breeds

success and before we know it, our tank is full and we are excited about our future.

3 True madness would be defined by not turning around. Detours are sometimes just part of living. They are not fun, but neither are they fatal. Pat and I saw a sign that said, "Del Rio, 90 miles." Madness would have been to say, "Well, since we already went the wrong direction, let's just drive on to Mexico!" Turning around and starting over is the key to getting to our destination. A lifetime of poor eating and exercise habits will not change magically, or overnight. But given time, and getting back on track whenever we start heading in the wrong direction, will bring the success we desire.

Today, let's all have a good laugh about the "madness" we all sometimes find ourselves in, and then turn around and head for home. Home is anywhere our Jesus is Lord.

Hebrews 11:8 *"By Faith, Abraham when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going."*

Sometimes, what looks like madness to us is God's way of getting us to the place He always intended for us to go.

**Blessings to you,
Carole Lewis**

Carole@firstplace.org





Talkin' With Kay

Dear First Place Friends,

Kay Smith

Associate Director
kays@bigcountry.net

“Madness” is a term that comes to mind when I try to sort through the often conflicting information in the area of nutrition. Through the years, I have learned to avoid sensational headlines and lean heavily on the information we receive from credible institutions, such as the American Dietetic Association.

A long-term hot topic of discussion in the area of nutrition is the topic of sugar vs. artificial sweeteners. I answer several questions each week about how to count sugar on the CR. First Place members are allowed to choose the amount of sugar they consume. We do not exchange sugar in First Place, it is just considered extra calories. Therefore, if you eat cake, candy, pie, ice cream, etc., you do not count any food exchange; these choices are considered extra calories. It is a good idea to list the food choices on the CR, so the number of extra calories can be considered if you do not attain the weight loss you desire.

We have many members who choose a small amount of sugar, consume all the healthy food choices suggested, and attain their desired weight each week. We have other members who feel that eating even small amounts of sugar causes them to fight extreme hunger and a craving for more sugar. They have found that eating as little added sugar as possible is the best way to attain their weekly goals. You are the best judge of how much sugar is the best choice for you.

In the past, I have shared with you information from the USDA stating that through research, artificial sweeteners are safe to consume. I would like to share a “question and answer” clip from the Harvard Medical School stating that the American Dietetic Association agrees with that fact:

Q I've been trying to cut calories by cutting sugar out of my diet. But to satisfy my sweet tooth,

I've been leaning on artificial sweeteners instead. Is it true they are bad for my health?

A A teaspoon of sugar contains only 16 calories, but over the course of a day, the sugar calories that we add to our cereal coffee, and tea-plus the amount contained in many prepared foods- can pile up. Thus, it may make sense to turn to artificial sweeteners to keep calories under control, without giving up some of our favorite foods.

Artificial sweeteners add sweetness, without adding calories, in two ways. First, they are so sweet that you need only a tiny bit to achieve the equivalent taste. You consume a fraction of a calorie to get the sweetness of many more calories worth of sugar. Second, the body doesn't fully absorb the few calories they contain.

The American Dietetic Association recently published a comprehensive report on sugar and artificial sweeteners are safe when used in moderate amounts. The ADA also suggests that artificial sweeteners can improve the quality of an individual's diet, if adding them to fruits, vegetables, and whole grains encourages the consumption of healthful foods.

There are alternatives. You can train yourself to appreciate the unsweetened flavors. Try going without a sweetener in your coffee or cereal. While artificial sweeteners seem fine in moderation, don't lean on them too heavily.

I think you can see that this answer fits perfectly with the advice given in First Place. The choice is yours, but again, the key in whatever your choice might be is moderation.

May God Bless You,

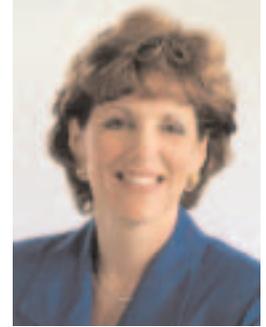
Kay Smith





Leadership Training

Madness Matters!



Nancy Taylor
Leadership Training Director
ntaylor@firstplace.org

Have you ever gone a little overboard on something and before you realized it, you were in too deep? Recently, my daughter learned a valuable lesson when she and her basketball teammates went a little overboard with a youthful prank. They had just celebrated “senior night” at their last home basketball game, and afterward decided they needed to do something fun together. They devised a plan to “wrap” a house, and the more they planned the worse it became. They stepped over the line from fun prank to cruel joke. After carrying out what they thought was just a fun prank, they went to their homes and slept, not even dreaming of the consequences they would awaken to the next morning.

Saturday morning, my daughter and I awoke early, as I had a First Place event to attend and she had community service hours she needed to fulfill at our mission training center. Shortly after leaving the event I was attending, I received a disturbing call from my husband. He had received a call informing him of our daughter’s activity the night before. The person, whom they chose to play the prank on, did not think it was very funny, and in fact, threatened to file charges against them. The school was notified of their behavior, which led to 48-hours of emotional distress on the part of the girls and their parents.

As we called our daughter in that Saturday morning to discuss her previous night’s activity, she was clueless about her guilt. She had assumed that this person would respond the way she had in the past and just laugh at the incident. Once we explained to her the ramifications of making one poor choice, reality set in. She began to weep when she realized that one night of poor judgment might affect her entire life and have a ripple effect onto many

other lives. She began immediately to do all the things we told her she needed to do. She called to apologize to the person, who was the victim of their prank, made an appointment to see the school superintendent, and of course, prayed. We saw our teenage daughter mature before our very eyes.

A few hours of madness one Friday night made a huge impact on the lives of five young girls, their families and their teachers. Madness does matter! My husband and I prayed that our daughter would see God in this moment of madness and learn some valuable lessons. On Monday, the day of reckoning after the weekend of madness, the girls met with the superintendent to confess and beg for mercy. At the time of the meeting, some parents were praying for the girls, teachers and all involved. That afternoon, my daughter called and said, “It was awesome mom, they are not going to suspend us or make us miss a game.” I told her to gather her teammates together and thank God, because it was He who had delivered them. This has brought them closer together and caused them to appreciate the privileges they had come to take for granted.

I know that I am not writing to teenage leaders who are apt to plan such a prank. However, I do know that we all can go overboard at times, and feel like we have gone so far that there is no way out. I often receive emails and calls from leaders who feel that they cannot lead any longer, because they have gained weight

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Nancy Taylor

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back or haven't kept the commitments. My advice to them, and to all leaders who are in too deep after a time of madness, is to find God in the midst of the madness. Confess to God your disobedience, do what he asks you to do, and beg for His mercy. Go to your members and confess that you have not been walking the talk and that you want to once again do what God called you to do. When confronted with her sin, my daughter realized she was no longer in control and that she needed help. She became teachable in the moment of conviction. That is what we must be if we want to continue to be useable leaders. God is a loving merciful God, who is faithful to forgive when we call on Him.

He will also use our madness for His glory. He takes our mistakes and can use them as a venue of ministry to others. When we mess up as a leader, we have a choice. We can mess up and give up or we can mess up and grow up. Madness matters! Use your failures as opportunities of growth, turning what the enemy meant for evil into character building moments used by God for good.

1 Corinthians 15:58

“Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.”

Lead On! Nancy Taylor

Leadership Tip

Each month we will spotlight leadership tips and ideas from leaders all across the country. Send your ideas to ntaylor@firstplace.org and she will publish them in this spot each month.

I just received my first leader newsletter. I am so excited to see what other leaders try, and what works for them, etc. I saw where a lady wears a suit to class, following your lead. I have a pair of jeans that I used to wear. I kept them for a sign of where I don't ever want to go again. I take them with me to class sometimes. I put them on in the hall before class one evening (they actually fit over my new size clothes-praise God!) and went in like that. All my ladies looked at me like I was nuts. I was able to pull them right off without unbuttoning them. It was an object lesson for them. They enjoyed it! I encourage my group during the second meeting to start a journal for their measurements. I measure myself at the beginning of each session and not during the session. It is exciting to see the inches falling off each 13-week session, even when sometimes the scale doesn't seem to go

quite as far as I would have liked. Since last March, I have lost 25 total body inches. Thanks be to God!

A new idea for our group this session is a pre-study meal together. Our church has a Wednesday night meal before Bible study and prayer group time. Anyone that would like to can eat. But, the meal is definitely not always on the Live-It. Some of my ladies feel obligated to eat, since their husbands or families are eating. So, we enlisted a husband of one of our ladies to fix us a low-fat, low-calorie meal each week. He does an awesome job. We weigh in, and then each member is free to fix their plate and eat before the meeting. This is great. We get to eat together as a group each week and have a little more time to socialize.

Thank you for all you do for us!

Michele Handy
Skelly Drive Baptist Church
Tulsa, OK





Bev's Footnotes

March Madness/ Eliminating the Choices

Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision...
Joel 3:14

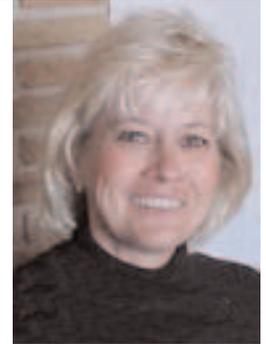
Wasn't life easier when the only choices were Chocolate, Vanilla, and Strawberry?

Then along came Baskin Robbins, Ben and Jerry's and suddenly, there were too many choices with too many different names.

As I walked into the bookstore, right in front was a table full of exercise books and fitness programs by this trainer and that celebrity, a table full of decisions as to which is the very best program. I get tons of email wanting to know...will the Bob Green plan work for me, or should I try Pilates, or Leslie Sansone? Should I walk, or will I lose weight faster if I run? Is walking on a treadmill as good as walking on a track? Which program is the best? Decisions, decisions...what is the best choice? It is almost enough to drive you insane.

So which one is the best? This morning, I was walking with a lady who was telling me that Oprah attributes her ability to maintain her weight to Pilates. She asked me about Pilates and said she had a Pilates tape at her house, but had never used it because she didn't like working out alone at her house. I told her Pilates was very good, but the very best fitness program for any one is a fitness program they will actually do. This lady enjoys walking, so I told her the very best program for her is walking. Walking is something she will actually do without effort and enjoy it.

Several years ago, there was a lady in my group who tried to do every thing I was doing in my workout. She walked when I walked. She bought a bike. She even tried to roller blade. One day she just stopped all exercising and began to put her weight back on. After talking with her, she told me she hated the exercise she was doing and what she



Beverly Henson
Certified Personal Trainer
Bevh1952@comcast.net

really liked was a Richard Simmons tape. I asked her why she was doing exercise she didn't like and she replied, "Well, you lost all your weight doing all of those things. I thought I would do the same, but I hate it." I told her the program that works for you is the one you will do. Don't look to Oprah, Bob Green, Leslie Sansone, or Bev Henson for the right program for you. Look in your heart and find one you will do and that, my friend, is the right exercise program for you.

If you are doing a workout you enjoy, you will do it for a lifetime. You won't be able to imagine life without it. One the other hand, if you are exercising only to lose weight, you will stop when you lose your weight.

Pray and ask the Lord to search your innermost being and show you the exercise program just right for you. If you seek the Lord, you won't be throwing your money away on countless numbers of programs you will never use.

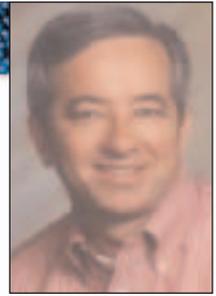
Decisions, decisions? Get the Lord in on your decision making process. He can save you time, money, and from the madness of having too many choices on the table.

Press On! Bev Henson

Acts 17:28
"In Him we live and move and have our being."

Beverly Henson is a conference and rally speaker for the First Place ministry. She is also a Bible teacher and certified personal trainer.





Mad About You!



We had our own form of March Madness around our house – it was about that time that the weather invited our children to enjoy outside activities. We had a basketball goal next to the drive and the annoying sound of “thump, thump, dong” echoing off of brick walls repeated over and over for hours. When evening came, we finally gave our neighbors some relief by calling in the restless athletes. It was a great stress relief for our teens, but it didn’t do much for the adults. As they put this home practice into action on local teams, we made many road trips and sat in every conceivable gymnasium imaginable – air-conditioned and not; bleachers, stadium seats and no seats at all; homemade concessions and vending machines. But we were not there for the facilities; we were there for our children.

March Madness is less about quality basketball or even those who play the game – it is a way to get the fans back into the game. It is all about building a fan base.

Maybe “Believers” could follow the example of basketball and find ways to build a base of encouragers, people who would ‘cheer’ on each other. Sometimes we become complacent, petty and just too familiar with each other to become a vital part of each other’s success.

“...let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another...”

Hebrew 10:24-25 [NAS]

- 👉 **CONSIDER** – a call to purposefully evaluate the ‘need’ and the ‘how to’
- 👉 **STIMULATE** – active involvement with others in order to produce action
- 👉 **ONE ANOTHER** – a mutual relationship where both are spurred forward
- 👉 **LOVE** – a growing affection that desires the best
- 👉 **GOOD DEEDS** – evidence of a life of love in action

Dr. Bill Heston
University Chaplain,
Howard Payne University
Brownwood, Texas
Bheston@hputx.edu

- 👉 **TOGETHER** – not a ‘me’ or a ‘you’ but an ‘us’
- 👉 **ENCOURAGE** – affirmation that builds up Godly strength

The markers of a true sport’s team fan base may be:

- 👉 Wearing the team colors or logos
- 👉 Always present, even in bad times
- 👉 Knowledge of the players
- 👉 Pride in the history
- 👉 ‘Whatever it takes’ attitude

The markers of encouraging ‘Believers’ may be:

- 👉 Wearing the “mark of the Christian” – Love
- 👉 Faithful to each other even in times of struggle
- 👉 Intimate knowledge of one another
- 👉 Understanding the foundations for faith
- 👉 Commitment to the greater cause of Christ

We need people of faith to be radical in their support of one another. There are many discouraging things that we all encounter.

Our First Place groups, our churches, families and friends need to be gatherings of intentionally encouraging people!

This is not the shallow and sometimes annoyingly silly, flattering fluff that often is passed for being positive.

It is the ability to be honest with ourselves and others in light of the “Light” and still be people of hope, grace and affection.

There are enough people that we encounter who are mad AT everyone – why not do something new – be mad ABOUT everyone.

It is the ability to see what God sees in the life of everyone he created and choosing to be a part of His releasing that great potential.

Bill Heston

Dr. William Heston was minister of pastoral care at Houston’s First Baptist Church; clinical member of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy, and a marriage therapist licensed by the state of TX. He has also led seminars at First Place Conferences.”





Hints & Pinches

Menus for March Madness!

Tailgate Parties or other Sporting Events?

It is now a few months after the Super Bowl tail-gating time, but it is time for March Madness! What are you taking to the party?

It's families. It's fans. It's a community social. It's pre-game, halftime, post-game and more. It's the total game day experience!

First Place members are always looking for just the right snack items or dinner items to take to sporting event parties. Below you will find a few recipes that will let you enjoy not only the social togetherness of the event, but the food as well.



Scott Wilson
First Place Food Consultant
firstplacechef@hotmail.com

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.

FORGOTTEN COOKIES

Makes about 3 dozen

- 1/2 cup chopped walnuts
- 2 egg whites
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/2 cup Splenda® Sugar Blend for Baking
- 1/2 cup semi-sweet chocolate morsels

Preheat oven to 200°F. Bake walnuts in a shallow pan, stirring occasionally, 5 minutes or until toasted. Set aside.

Beat egg whites and vanilla at high speed with an electric mixer until foamy. Add Splenda® Sugar Blend, 1 tablespoon at a time, beating until stiff peaks form; stir in walnuts and chocolate morsels.

Spoon rounded teaspoons of mixture on baking sheets lined with parchment paper.

Bake 2 hours. Cool slightly on cookie sheet. Remove to wire racks to cool completely. Makes about 3 dozen.

Exchanges: 3 cookies; 1 bread, 1 fat

CHEESY BAKED POTATO SKINS

Serves 8 - 3 Potato Wedges

- 3 medium russet potatoes
- Olive oil cooking spray
- 5 turkey bacon slices
- 1 1/4 cups grated 2% sharp cheddar cheese
- 1 1/4 cups grated 2% Monterey Jack cheese
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley
- 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 3/4 cup chopped green onions
- reduced fat sour cream for garnish

Preheat oven to 425°F. Scrub potatoes; pat dry. Rub skins with oil. Place potatoes on baking sheet. Bake until potatoes are tender, about 1 hour. Cool. Maintain oven temperature.

Cut each potato lengthwise into quarters. Scoop out centers, (freeze potato for another use) leaving 1/2-inch-thick layer of cooked potato on skins. Coat baking sheet with cooking spray. Place skins, skin side down, on sheet, spacing 1 inch apart. Sprinkle with salt and pepper.

Cook turkey bacon in heavy large skillet over medium heat until brown and crisp. Drain. Chop bacon. Transfer to medium bowl. Add cheeses, parsley and cayenne; stir to blend. Sprinkle cheese mixture atop skins. Bake until skins are crisp and cheese mixture melts, about 25 minutes. Transfer skins to platter. Sprinkle with green onions; top with dollops of sour cream and serve. Serves 8 with 3 potato wedges each.

Exchanges: 1 meat, 1/2 bread

SMOKED FISH SPREAD

Serves 12

- 8 ounces Smoked Fish, skin and bones removed
- 1/2 cup reduced fat mayonnaise
- 1/4 cup minced onion
- 1 large lemon, juiced
- 1 tablespoon fresh chopped parsley
- 1 tablespoon Dijon Mustard
- dash Tabasco Sauce
- Salt & Pepper to taste
- Assorted reduced fat Crackers

Peel off skin and de-bone fish, crumble into a mixing bowl. Add all ingredients and mix well, taste and adjust seasonings, serve crackers. Makes about 1 pound of dip. Serves 12.

Exchanges: for dip only 1/2 meat, 1/2 fat





CROCK-POT ROAST

Serves 8

- 1 envelope (0.7 oz.) Italian dressing mix
- 2 1/2 pounds chuck roast, trimmed
- 2 large onions, each cut into eight wedges
- 2 cloves garlic, peeled
- 1 14.5 ounce can diced tomatoes
- 2 red bell peppers, cut into 1 1/2-inch pieces
- 1/2 cup beef broth
- 2 medium zucchini, cut into 1/4-inch thick slices
- 2-1/2 tablespoons cornstarch dissolved in 2 T. water
- salt and pepper, to taste

Press dressing mix evenly onto all surfaces of pot roast. Place onions and garlic in 4 1/2 to 5 1/2-quart slow cooker; top with pot roast. Add bell peppers and broth. Cover and cook on HIGH 5 hours or on LOW 8 hours. Add zucchini. Continue cooking, covered, 30 minutes or until pot roast is fork-tender. Remove pot roast and vegetables. Strain cooking liquid; skim fat. Combine 2 cups cooking liquid and cornstarch mixture in medium saucepan. Bring to a boil, stirring constantly; cook and stir 1 minute or until thickened. Carve pot roast into slices; season with salt and pepper, as desired. Divide evenly and serve with vegetables and gravy. Makes 8 servings.

Exchanges: 4 meats, 1 vegetable, 1/2 fat

GRILLED TOMATO SALAD

Serves 6

- 3/4 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- 2 cloves of garlic minced
- 3 dashes of Worcestershire sauce
- 1/2 cup chopped fresh basil
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 6 large vine ripened tomatoes - quartered
- 1/2 loaf of toasted French bread torn in 6 pieces

Prepare the grill. Whisk in a medium bowl - oil, lemon juice, garlic and Worcestershire sauce, add basil and let set. Combine salt and pepper with the quartered tomatoes. When grill is hot sear the tomatoes, turning frequently until brown on all sides. Toss seared tomatoes in the basil mixture. Season with salt and pepper. Divide salad among 5 salad plates. Serve with the crusty bread for dipping. Serves 6.

Exchanges: 1/2 bread, 1 vegetable, 1/2 fat

Coming Events

First Place Area Leaders Meetings

Leader's Retreat April 22-24, 2005

"The Tops" Conference Center
Stanwell Tops, NSW AUSTRALIA

Pre-registration is essential. Space is limited, so book your spot by March 15th. Weekend includes: Accommodations, all First Place meals, leadership training, fun and fellowship.

Contact: Barbara Lukies

Email: firstplaceaustralia@yahoo.com

Registration form:

www.outlookministry.net/Networking/Australia_Retreat.htm

For more information:

www.geocities.com/firstplaceaustralia/retreat.html

First Place Workshops

March 19, 2005

8:30 AM - 12:00 Noon

Faith Community Bible Church | Bremerton, WA.

Contact: Jean Wall, Phone: (360)782-2284 or

email: jean.wall@comcast.net

April 30, 2005

9:30 AM - 3:00 PM

Oakdale Emory United Methodist Church

Olney, MD

Cost will be \$10.00 per person. Bring your own bag lunch.

Directions to church on website: www.oemmc.org

Contact: Kathy Geehreg

Phone: (301)253-6437

Email: kegeehreg@aol.com

First Place Leadership Summit

Thrive in 2005 July 28-30, 2005

Houston's First Baptist Church
Houston, Texas

Visit http://www.firstplace.org/leadership_summit.html for more information.

Contact: Nancy Taylor at ntaylor@firstplace.org or

Lisa Lewis at llewis@firstplace.org.

First Place Conference

April 1-2, 2005

Franklin Avenue Baptist Church

2515 Franklin Avenue | New Orleans, LA 70117

For additional information/questions, contact: Pauline Hines, 504-246-4793, email - phines@uno.edu or Fannie Criddle, 504-283-7276 or leave a message at 504-947-2408, x408.

September 16-17, 2005

"Dare to Dream"

New Hope Baptist Church

1401 Loveland-Madeira Road | Loveland, Ohio 45140

Registration form and more information coming soon!

Contact Janet Kirkhart by phone at (513)677-5377 or by email at janetfirstplace@fuse.net

First Place F.O.C.U.S. Week

Focusing on Christ's Unlimited Strength

October 6-13, 2005

Round Top Retreat | Round Top, Texas

Mark your calendars. More information to come later.





First Place Success Story

May of 2003 found me sitting in a doctor's office for an annual exam with a host of health problems. I had come to this visit with my written list of complaints in dire hope of finding some "fixes" for them:

- ✓ I couldn't breathe when I lay down at night.
- ✓ My female system was out of balance.
- ✓ I had a constant headache; medications would not even phase it.
- ✓ I had no ambition for work, my husband, my children or anything else.
- ✓ I was lonely and floundering...flying by the seat of my pants just to get through a day.

Although I had never seen this doctor before, all it took was for him to ask how I was for me to break down. He was so patient, as I spilled all these complaints to him through tears. I asked for any help he could offer. What he offered was not really what I wanted to hear...that probably some of these things were caused from other issues. He would help me with the physical ones, which should help with the others. He put me on a birth control regimen as hormone therapy and asked me to come back in 4 months. Although he never mentioned my weight as an issue, I was at 209 lbs. I had been as high as 216 about 6 months before, had lost 15 lbs and was regaining.

In that same month, I ran across First Place materials at Family Christian Bookstore in Eau Claire. It was intriguing...I went through all the materials to see what it was all about. Then, I neatly repacked it and put it back on the shelf. I did this about every two weeks at the bookstore...spread the materials all over the floor, went through each piece, repacked it and put it back. Periodically, I would visit the First Place website and look at what they had to offer, while I wrestled with whether I would purchase the materials or not. I was familiar with the live-it plan, as I had used diabetic exchanges on another program 20+ years previous. When I mentioned it to my husband, he asked, "If you know what to do, why do you need to spend more money to do it?"

Not only was I experiencing health problems at this time, but my marriage had gone way down hill...further than ever before. My husband and I were just pretty much co-existing, just trying to get through each day, one at a time. In June 2003, I decided it would be a good time to visit with my family that lives in Florida over the July 4th holiday. In my mind, I told myself that if my husband really loved me, he would go with the kids and me as a family. To my horror, he declined going. The kids and I took the trip and through phone calls home, I was convinced that when we returned, our marriage would be completely over, with no chance for reconciliation.

I came home to a very cold home. There was virtually not even any conversation shared. In August, since finances were an issue, I borrowed the money and bought the First Place

Members Kit (in anger and selfishness) just to do something for myself. I began reading the materials and getting accustomed to all the commitments. On the FP website, I found that the closest group meetings were being held 60 miles from my home and they met on Tuesday nights at 7 pm. I work Tuesdays from 7am to 7 pm all year EXCEPT for September and October. I was able to meet with this group for those two months.

It never ceases to amaze me at how God's timing is always perfect. The only two months that I could meet with this group were the two months following the purchase of the First Place materials

I began my First Place journey in September of 2004. This group really did not focus much on the food plan, but really got into the Bible Study. I truly believe that this was God's design to help me understand how much He really cared for me. I learned so much about myself, some of which I would have rather not learned, and healing began.

By the end of September, I had lost about 10 lbs. Already, in one month, my marriage was improving, my energy level was returning, and my desire to move forward was strong. My return trip to the doctor was much different than my first. After 4 months on medication, it was

decided that I did not need that therapy any longer and the doctor offered me anti-depressants "just in case." I asked him if diet and exercise could make such an improvement possible long-term and he answered yes, if done wisely. I took the anti-depressants home and put them in my drawer "just in case." My husband had gone with me to this appointment, and for the first time in what seemed like ages, we had meaningful conversations, shared tears of sadness and joy, and I really became aware that God was working on restoring our marriage.

By the end of October, I had lost about 12 lbs. and people were beginning to notice and ask questions. One lady, in particular, pushed me to start a group at our church. I had already felt a nudging spirit to start a group, but as always, I wanted "all the facts." The group that I had met with put me in touch with Jenn Krogh, who is the Wisconsin State Leader, and she was holding a leadership meeting in Fond du



Fran Sherry

(Continued on next page)





lac, WI. Although it was a 4-hour trip, I committed to go. A friend and I left home at 6 am to make it to Fond du lac by 10:00 a.m for the meeting. However, we hit road construction and were detoured a full hour out of the way. We arrived late (just about lunchtime), but were welcomed into the meeting with love, and ushered to the only 2 seats left, in the front row. To be honest, being late embarrassed me. But everyone there was so great in receiving us that it put those feelings of embarrassment to rest quickly.

I had gone to this meeting to get the nuts and bolts about leading a group, and many of my hesitations were put to rest. But I continued to resist “heading up” this group; I came up with many excuses:

- ✓ Why, I had never worked with adults before. I had always been in the youth programs.
- ✓ There probably wouldn't be many people interested in this.
- ✓ I'm no expert at this “nutrition stuff”.
- ✓ I didn't have the money to buy a leaders kit.
- ✓ How would I ever get a “good enough” scale?

God countered all of those excuses by sending adults my way that encouraged me. I presented the materials to the



Fran Sherry, 48 pounds lighter

church leadership, and though our group is self-supporting, they gave permission for the group to meet in our youth center and I committed to get started. The one lady that had pushed so hard to get started backed out and I had to be dependent on God. I received a coupon at the Family Christian Bookstore and was able to purchase the leader's kit at 25% off. And the scale? What a story. I called our small town hospital to see if they had any old scales that were not being used that could be purchased at a reasonable price. The maintenance director told me that they had just thrown all their old balance scales into the dumpster about two months ago when they went to all digital. My heart sank, but I began looking for other

options and purchased a digital bathroom scale to use. Then, during the week of Christmas, the maintenance director called me back to let me know that while searching for something, he had run across a scale in the basement and asked if I was still interested. I was so excited, but worried about the price. When I asked him about cost, he told me that if it was being used for a weight/health program, they would just DONATE IT! WOW! This was a \$450.00 plus scale. Expecting it to be an old, old gray/green scale, I was amazed to find it to be a brand new one, bright white, with absolutely no scratches. God takes care of every detail...He provided us with the best.

In anticipation of starting the first session of our First Place group, I prayed that God would provide just 2 or 3 people that I could help and that would also keep me accountable. The first session was started in January 2004, with 13 members. I think God was helping me to see just how really big He is (or I needed more accountability than just 2 or 3 people could give me). There have been major changes in people's lives in all four areas, physical, spiritual, mental and physical. Our second session had 18 people, our third had 20 people and this current session has 21 people.

I started my own First Place journey in September of 2003. Since that time, I have gone from 209.5 lbs to today's (Nov. 2004) 161 lbs., a loss of 48 lbs. I have gone from a size 20 to a very comfortable size 12. Our group has flourished and grown from 1 (me) to 21.

God has been gracious and these numbers are very impressive. But what I really want to share is the 48 lbs of anger, anxiety, frustration, guilt, and many other things that I have lost over this last year, and the many things I've learned.

- ✓ That my heart is deceitful and desperately wicked, so much so that I cannot understand it (Jeremiah 17:9). My temptations and evil desires are sparked from within (selfishness). If I leave my heart “unchecked”, it will lead me down the wrong path every time.
- ✓ That my body is a temple of a most high God (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Nothing belongs to me in this world; it is a gift from God. He dwells in me and I am therefore filled with power and might. When He lived in the ark, Uzza was killed for just touching it. What kind of power is that?
- ✓ That nothing I have done or will do is ever hidden from God (Psalm 69:5). He knows all there is to know, from before I was ever created.
- ✓ That nothing I will face in life is new. Someone else has been tempted and tried in the same way and that God will never leave me without strength to get through it or a way out (1 Corinthians 10:13).

These are just a few things I have learned. I no longer have to carry around the burdens of anger, anxiety, frustration, guilt, or anything else that bogged me down. But what got my attention the most was at that First Place conference in November 2003, when Jenn Krogh shared a video presentation on Passion. She did not know the impact this video had on my

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life until our conference in October 2004, when she asked me to share my story. I really can't remember all there was to that video, but there was one remark that really took me by the collar and got my attention:

"We lose our passion when we allow things that are precious to become familiar."

That statement played over and over in my mind. That is exactly what I had done.

- ✓ I had allowed my relationship with and salvation through Christ to become all too familiar. It had become very easy to waltz in and out of church and never even be moved by God's Word.
- ✓ I had taken my marriage for granted. It was all too easy to gripe and complain and dismiss the love and support that God had provided me in my husband. In our circumstances, there is no doubt that God brought us together.
- ✓ I had neglected my children. I could only see it as one more demand, when they really just wanted my attention and guidance.

I have learned to take God's Word for what it really is, which is Truth. I have learned that even though I have been in church all my life I had not worked on my relationship with God, because I had not spent time in his Word. I have learned the power of praying God's Truth, that it has power to remove strongholds.

My favorite verse is Psalm 51:12, "*Restore unto me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit to sustain me.*" I learned to pray this verse in the circumstances listed above, and God has been more than faithful to fulfill his Word:

- ✓ **Restore** to me the joy of your salvation...and grant me a willing spirit to sustain me.
- ✓ **Restore** to me the joy of my marriage...and grant me a willing spirit to sustain me.
- ✓ **Restore** to me the joy of my children...and grant me a willing spirit to sustain me.

God has restored my relationship with Himself, with my husband and with my children. I am filled with joy and peace like I have never experienced before in my lifetime. When I face trials and troubles, I can do it now without being overwhelmed, because I know without a doubt that He is there for me with all his strength, might and power to help me along.

In Christ's love and strength,

**Fran Sherry
Whitehall, WI**

"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

Matthew 6:33

