



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



August 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,

The other day as I was talking to my granddaughter, Cara, and her husband, Michael, I had to laugh as Michael told me about a conversation he and Cara had with a friend. Michael and Cara had been married all of six months when this conversation transpired.

The friend's girlfriend had gone on a cruise with her parents, and he was telling Cara and Michael how much he missed her and how he longed to be married. Michael told him that he and his girlfriend probably see each other more than Michael and Cara do because now that they are married, all they do is work, work, work. Michael told his friend, "When you get into the real world, you'll know what I mean."

Working in First Place, I used to always be in a state of anticipation. I was anticipating the time when things would settle down after an event or an especially busy time. This anticipation kept me from enjoying the moment at hand because I was always looking ahead to another time. After a number of years of doing this, I realized that this kind of thinking was futile and unfruitful.

This month as we look at the word anticipation, let's think about some of life's events that we have eagerly anticipated, only to find out later that the "real world" overshadows all our anticipations. So many women have told me that they believed after they lost all their weight, they wouldn't have a problem in the world. But they were disappointed to find that reaching their weight goal wasn't the panacea for all of life's problems after all.

You see, God is interested in the total person and because of this, we will never reach a point in our lives where everything is perfect. We may reach our weight goal but God is still interested in our emotional, spiritual and mental health. The older I get, the more I have discovered that anticipation of things or events in the future is usually better than the actual thing or event.

One of our First Place memory verses speaks to this quite well. It

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Carole Lewis
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Carole Lewis

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says, "Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things." Colossians 3: 1-2. True contentment comes when what I anticipate most is how God wants to work in and through me. We might be disillusioned when things turn out differently than we thought they would, but we will never be disappointed with anything God wants to accomplish in our life.

Another of our First Place memory verses, Titus 2:13,14, says it all regarding our anticipation. "While we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good."

I am learning that anticipating what Christ will do today, what He will do tomorrow and what He will do every day in my life until He comes to take me home, brings joy unspeakable and never disappoints.

Carole Lewis

Coming Events

First Place Workshops August 13, 2005

9:00 AM - 12:00 Noon
Church of Christ Conference Rm
Figtree, NSW, AUSTRALIA
Bookings Essential; see First Place website for information.

September 9-10, 2005

Christian Life Centre
Toronto Ontario CANADA
Contact: Gospel Light Canada
Phone: (800) 366-4486
Email: gospellight@rgm.ca
Guest Speaker: Carole Lewis

September 10, 2005

First Place Picnic/Canoe Day
10:00 AM
Audley at Royal National Park
Sutherland Shire, AUSTRALIA
Phone number: 0242718800

September 23-24, 2005

First Place Mini Retreat
Faith Community Bible Church
Bremerton, WA
Contact: Jeannie Wall
Phone: (360) 782-2284
Email: jean.wall@comcast.net

October 22, 2005

Spring Creek Church
Pewaukee, WI
Contact: Jenn Krogh
Phone: (920) 388-3531
Email: wifirstplace@hotmail.com
Guest Speaker: Nancy Taylor

Area Leaders' Meeting

August 20, 2005

9:00 AM - 12:00 Noon
Torrance First Baptist Church
Torrance, CA
Email: mark@firstplace.org
Cost: \$5.00
Please RSVP

November 5, 2005

9:00 AM - 11:30 AM
Church of Christ -
Conference Room
Figtree, NSW, AUSTRALIA
Check website for additional information.

First Place Rally

August 20, 2005

6:00 PM
Colonial Hills Church; Southhaven, MS
Contact: Roger & Darlene Batts
Phone: (662) 280-9986 or Email: battsbunch@aol.com
Guest Speaker: Beverly Henson

F.O.C.U.S. Week 2005

October 6-13, 2005

Round Top, Texas
Contact: Lisa Lewis,
llewis@firstplace.org

Conferences

September 16-17, 2005

"Dare to Dream"
New Hope Baptist Church
1401 Loveland-Madeira Road
Loveland, Ohio 45140
Contact Janet Kirkhart by phone at (513) 677-5377
or by email at janetfirstplace@fuse.net





Talkin' With Kay

Dear First Place Friends,

I believe each of us begin a meal with a certain amount of anticipation that when we finish the meal, we will feel satisfied. I recently read information about studies being conducted that has produced data suggesting three elements of food; low calorie density, high fiber and lean protein, can enhance satiety.

Barbara Rolls, a professor of nutritional sciences at Pennsylvania State University, has studied hunger and obesity for more than 20 years. Professor Rolls explains that a key is to find foods that are water-rich. Water adds volume, but no calories. Fruits are naturally in this category because they are 90 percent water, and the water is bound to them. Non-starchy vegetables would also fall into the water-rich category.

We might think that just drinking water with a meal would give the same benefit, but it doesn't. When the water is bound to food it stays in the stomach longer than simply drinking water.

One 12 month study divided women into two groups. The first group was told to reduce fat and was given smaller portions of food than the second group. The second group ate more fruits, vegetables and broth-based soups, along with less fat. The second group actually ate a much larger quantity of food, but lost more weight.



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Another study of 200 men and women, experimented with adding soup to similar food plans, and the group eating soup twice a day with meals lost 50% more weight than the group who ate similar amounts of food, but no soup.

Fiber also plays a role in satiety. Rolls suggest that doubling the national average of 15 grams of fiber a day to 30 grams helps reduce hunger. She admits researchers are not completely sure why high fiber foods help you feel full, but it may slow the passage of food through the digestive system. Fiber also may stimulate the satiety hormones that tell the brain to stop eating.

Research seems to indicate that our food choices may play a huge role between anticipating satiety after a meal and actually attaining satiety.

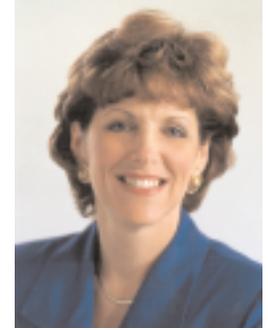
May God bless each of you!
Kay Smith





Leadership Training

Anticipation



Nancy Taylor
Leadership Training Director
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“**D**efense wins championships,” is a statement I have heard many basketball and football coaches drill into the minds of their players. A winning team must not only be able to score points, but also be able to keep their opponent from scoring more points than themselves. One of the keys to being a good defensive player is the ability to anticipate the opposing team’s actions. To be a good defensive basketball player, one must anticipate when the opposing team will pass the ball. A player must keep their eyes focused on the ball and on the player, so that they can steal the ball just as it is being passed across the court.

After many years of attending my daughter’s basketball games I tend to relate just about any leadership quality back to the basketball court. So it is with this month’s theme of anticipation. An effective leader must be able to anticipate member’s needs, attitudes, and actions. Planning and preparing to lead a First Place class is crucial for a successful session. But planning and preparing without anticipation may cause some of those plans to fail. Anticipation will provide a leader with solid defense leading to a championship First Place session! Let’s look at some of the things to anticipate when leading a First Place class:

✓ **Member’s Needs:** When preparing to lead, consider who you are leading. Who is in your class? Does your class consist of all ladies, men, singles, senior citizens, young moms or middle-aged married couples? Each of these groups of people has different needs that are specific to their gender, age, occupation, and home life. Do your members all cook or do they eat out regularly? Do they have more

than 100 pounds to lose, only 10 pounds to lose, or weight to gain? Don’t be caught off guard. Ask yourself these questions as you anticipate ministering to their specific need, so that you will be ready to give advice or direction when faced with that need.

✓ **Member’s Attitudes:** People not only come in many shapes and sizes, but they also come with many different attitudes as they walk through the door of your First Place classroom. Check out their body language, facial expressions and the words they choose. Be ready to give an encouraging word to those who are discouraged and a soft answer to those who may be overly stressed from the day. James 1:19 instructs us how to anticipate such people, “My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.” Recently, I discovered that I had not anticipated a member’s attitude after overlooking her request when I prayed aloud to close our class time. Later that day I received a call from one of my members informing me that I had hurt this member’s feelings by voicing everyone’s request and not hers. It was a totally innocent oversight as I had forgotten to wear my reading glasses to class, which hindered me from seeing the prayer list clearly. I immediately called her and then sent her a note of apology and let

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Nancy Taylor

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her know that I had made a mistake and would most definitely be praying for her. If I had anticipated her response, I might have asked others in the class to voice prayers for each of the requests, and then I would have closed in prayer. This would have assured that all were prayed for and that no one felt left out. Of course, we cannot anticipate every attitude, but we can be slow to speak and quick to listen as we do respond to the attitudes we find ourselves faced with in our classes.

✓ **Member's Actions:** To be a champion leader, one must anticipate the member's actions. It is always best to anticipate that they will follow through with their commitments, always expecting the best. It is similar to the self-fulfilled prophecy theory that we become what we believe we are. If a child is told he can't read, then he probably will have a difficult time

learning to read. The opposite is also true; tell a child he can accomplish anything and they will become a confident risk taker. At the same time, be realistic and anticipate that many of your members will have good weeks and bad weeks. They may gain weight three weeks in a row, not exercise or hand in a CR. This is when you must plan challenges, prizes, games, and competitions in order to motivate those who are wavering in their commitments. The best defense for member's actions is to expect the best, but anticipate the worst, armed with "plan B's."

I pray you will not be singing the lyrics of an old folk song "Anticipation is getting me down," but that you would look to God who never disappoints. He will give you all the defensive weapons you need, so that you will become a champion leader!

Romans 5:5: And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

Lead On! Nancy Taylor





Bev's Footnotes

Ease on Down the Road



Beverly Henson

Certified Personal Trainer
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The Webster's Online Dictionary definition of anticipation reads like this,

An-tic-i-pa-tion. Function: noun 1 (a): a prior action that takes into account or forestalls a later action (b): the act of looking forward; especially: pleasurable expectation

"The act of looking forward" and looking ahead down the road to things to come. Are you looking forward to a new and healthier you? Are you taking action that will lead to new health, taking Anticipation Avenue that will get you there?

I love the 80's song, "Ease on Down the Road." One of the lines in the song is,

*Come on, ease on down, ease on down the road
Don't you carry nothing that might be a load.*

Come on, ease on down, ease on down, down the road.

What I want to tell you is to not get so uptight and into bondage about your diet and exercise. Ease on down the road to good health. Find joy in your workout. Take it easy. Don't go at it so hard it becomes a chore. If you ease on down the road, you will come to the point that you look forward to each workout with anticipation. As you ease into it, you can look forward to the following:

- ✓ You will begin to not use your weight to measure your self-worth. Your self-worth is the sum of everything that makes you special and unique - not just your thigh and waist measurements! Add up your assets, talents, how you treat others, how you treat yourself, contributions you make to your family, friends and community. Now you have self-worth.
- ✓ Begin to count your blessings. You have a lot of things to be thankful for--a home, a loving family, friends you enjoy, a job, or a great day. A mind that counts blessings has no room for

self-pity. So you don't wear a size 2? Neither did Eleanor Roosevelt!

- ✓ You will stop playing negative tapes in your mind. Eject them and insert new tapes! You may have to make a conscious effort. When the critical tape starts playing, picture yourself hitting the "stop" button and insert a new positive tape.
- ✓ You will begin to stop using "all or nothing" thinking. No one is a total failure. Most things you do right. Just because you sometimes make a mistake or take a wrong path does not make you a total failure. It makes you human.
- ✓ A new understanding that if you "mess up," you don't start from zero. If you mess up, you don't go back to the beginning; you just ease on down the road from where you are now. Your mess up is just a speed bump, not a detour back to your beginning.
As you ease on down your road, anticipate success and don't dread the process.

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. Beverly joined First Place in July 1997 and has lost 160 pounds. First Place has given Beverly a powerful testimony. She is the First Place Director and the Director of Wellness Ministries at Northcrest Baptist Church in Meridian, MS.. She is also an area Networking Leader for First Place in Mississippi. Beverly has a genuine love of proclaiming the word of God to His people.





Hints & Pinches

The Guilty Pleasure of Anticipation



Scott Wilson

First Place Food Consultant
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It's said to be one of the 7 deadly sins -- gluttony -- or the gorging of food. And it can easily be said that more than 65% of Americans are sinners when it comes to scoffing down greasy, salty, fatty, sugary foods.

Why do we have this problem? The readily availability of inexpensive and abundant food choices in our culture overwhelms foreign visitors when they visit here in the states. On the other hand, on a previous trip to Europe (where obesity is not as prevalent) it was nice to see the recommended portion sizes being served in restaurants--very unlike American restaurants that serve a weeks worth of protein and a days worth of carbs on one plate!

How do we break free of this chokehold?

Σ Prepare your food in advance

Put some energy into planning and preparing of the meal to make it appealing. You will enjoy it more if there is anticipation. I find that the more you anticipate a meal, the more you'll enjoy it and the slower you'll eat it. Just make sure to put small portions on your plate. You'll realize that there is actually more pleasure in the anticipation than in the eating of the food itself.

Σ Do not confuse natural hunger for cravings

A growling stomach is not necessarily hunger. Eating to relieve grumbling and gastric irritation will leave you feeling sluggish and lethargic. Wait until you are hungry. You won't die of starvation. During hunger, the sinuses clear, the stomach becomes ready and the sense of smell becomes acute. Best of all, taste is enhanced.

Eating when you're hungry provides more

satisfaction, a burst of energy, and a feeling of well-being if you eat healthy food. Wait until your body needs nutrition; eat raw foods and chew your food well. If you eat this way, you will not have the desire to keep eating, but will be satisfied with smaller portions (hmm, there's that word again). And that is the way it should be.

Some websites dealing with advance meal prep:
<http://sheknows.com/about/look/1726.htm> article
<http://organizedhome.com/bookreview-0761517731.html> lists several books dealing with meal prep
<http://www.angelfire.com/cantina/homemaking/oa.mc.html> article

Information compiled from Men's Health Magazine.

Scott Wilson





CHICKEN MARBELLA

Serves 4

Olive oil cooking spray
8 ounces boneless, skinless chicken breasts
cut into 4 pieces
8 ounces boneless, skinless chicken thighs
cut into 4 pieces
1 tablespoon olive oil
4 ounces fresh mushrooms, quartered
1 small onion, thinly sliced
4 dried apricot halves
4 dried pitted prunes, halved
1/2 teaspoon Italian seasoning
1/2 teaspoon chopped garlic
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
Juice of 1 orange
Juice of 1 lemon
1 14.5 ounce can petite diced tomatoes

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Lightly coat a large baking pan with cooking spray. Rinse chicken pieces; remove and discard any visible fat. Pat chicken pieces dry with paper towels. Arrange chicken in the prepared pan and drizzle with the olive oil. Top with the mushrooms, onions, apricot halves, and prunes. Sprinkle with Italian seasoning, garlic, salt and pepper. Pour the orange and lemon juice, along with the tomatoes, over the chicken. Cover the pan tightly with aluminum foil and bake for 45 minutes, uncovering the pan during the last 5 minutes of baking time.

Serving size: 2 pieces of chicken with approx. 1/2 cup sauce.

EX: 3 meats, 1 vegetable, 1/2 fruit, 1/2 fat

May be made ahead of time and refrigerated for up to 5 days, or cool then freeze. Upon thawing, bake at 325 degrees for 20 minutes or until hot.

TOMATO BASIL SALSA

Serves 8

1 14.5 ounce can petite diced tomatoes with olive oil & garlic
1/4 cup chopped fresh basil
2 tablespoons chopped red onion
2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
1 teaspoon olive oil
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/8 teaspoon black pepper

Combine all ingredients in a small bowl. Refrigerate until ready to serve. Makes about 2 cups.

Serving size: 1/4 cup

EX: 1/2 vegetable

Great served over grilled fish or chicken. Refrigerate for up to one week.

TEX-MEX CHICKEN CASSEROLE

Serves 6

1 tablespoon olive oil
3/4 cup Spanish onion
1/2 cup diced green bell pepper
1/4 cup canned diced chilies (optional)
2 cups cooked brown rice
1 1/2 cups Mexican-blend cheese, low-fat
1 1/2 cups chopped cooked chicken
12 ounces evaporated skim milk (12 fl. oz.)
2 large eggs, beaten
1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
1/4 cup finely chopped cilantro

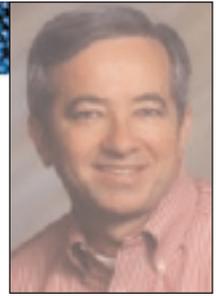
In a small sauce pan heat oil and sauté bell pepper, onion, and chilies for 1-2 minutes. In a medium-size bowl, combine milk, eggs, and cumin. Add sautéed vegetables, rice, cheese, and chicken. Stir to combine. Pour mixture into a prepared 9x13 casserole dish and bake at 350 degrees for 18-20 minutes. Garnish with cilantro.

Serving size: Approx. 1 cup

EX: 3 meats, 1 bread, 1/2 vegetable, 1/2 milk, 1/2 fat

Refrigerate cooked for up to 5 days. If freezing, don't pre-bake. Remove from freezer and let thaw in the refrigerator, and then follow baking instructions.





Expect the Unexpected



My wife accuses me of not “anticipating” when I am driving. As a matter of fact, she has decided that it is a male trait. By this, she means that men drive too aggressively and do not allow for the unexpected. We race toward a green light assuming it will still be green and then slam on the brakes when it is red. We zip through crowded freeways as though the opening ahead will be ours for the taking when we jerk into the slot. These are, of course, the observations of an overly cautious female and not an accurate observation of masculine “drive and conquer” tactics.

BUT – it they were accurate, they could serve as an illustration of life.

That illustration is that there is a time and a way for anticipation to be part of our life.

After the crucifixion of Jesus, he was buried and his cave-like tomb was sealed with a large stone that was rolled in front of the opening. His followers were in grief, shock and fear. Many of them were in hiding. Several of the women disciples came early on the third day to give the body of Jesus a proper burial. They had the ointments, linens and other things necessary to do this service.

“Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb and they asked each other, ‘Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?’ Mark 16:2-3

The women made plans based on what they thought the situation was going to be. They were wrong – they had expected too little!

As we look forward to the fall season, we may have expectations of what is to come. For those impacted by school calendars and events, there may be the idea that it will be very much like past semesters. For others, it may be just another

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change of seasons. There may be plans based on what is “thought” to lie ahead, but have we left room for something bigger?

Anticipation

1. Prepare for what we think might be ahead.

Σ Learn from our past mistakes. [Avoid situations that encourage failure; don’t put us in settings where temptations are greater than our resolve. Work the plan and the plan will work.]

Σ Include what worked in the past [stay disciplined in the areas of our life that have benefited us--like daily spiritual reflections, taking care of ourselves physically, surrounding ourselves with encouragers, and giving ourselves away in meaningful ways.]

2. Don’t miss today.

Σ There are opportunities in the present and not just in the future. Look for opportunities to succeed, even in little things; measure success in personal goals and in relationships by the step and not by the mile.

Σ Live a life of gratitude. God will use our every circumstance to advance His Kingdom if we will let him use us in every situation. “In all things give thanks...” I Thess. 5:18

3. Expect the unexpected.

Σ Our best-made plans cannot anticipate every situation. Our plans are maps to a destination and not the destination. We need to be flexible when things go wrong or when better options come our way. God’s ways are not our ways – Isaiah 55:8. If we get too bound by our plans, we may miss out

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Winning Words for First Place Losers

Anticipating God's Faithfulness



"And we know that in all things God works for the good for those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose."

Romans 2:28

When we think of God's faithfulness, we tend to think in terms of miracles that produce immediate healing and restoration. However, Scripture presents us with another view of God: the God of process who is orchestrating all of our circumstances together to accomplish His miraculous purpose in our lives. Now, certainly God can, and at times does, perform spectacular miracles in the lives of His people. Yet as dramatic as immediate-result miracles may be, God's usual *modus operandi* is to bring wholeness and transformation through a process of carefully planned and purposefully executed events that work in exact precision to produce the desired results. And when we really begin to think about how God orchestrates all these things together for our good, it causes us to stop and question, "What is the greater miracle, an instant event or a process that occurs over time and involves many elements working together in absolute harmony?"

In Carole Lewis' upcoming book, *A Thankful Heart*, Carole suggests a journaling exercise that teaches us to anticipate God's faithfulness by creating space for the God of process to do His miraculous work in our lives.

✦ Begin anticipating God's faithfulness by listing across the top of a page in your prayer journal or notebook a situation with which you are presently struggling. There will be room for more entries later, so only list one problem on this page. As you write this trial across the top of the page, commit the problem to God in prayer. Begin by asking God to hear your prayer. Express your confidence in His power and might, and admit you are His humble servant facing a problem you can't solve on your own. Acknowledge how much you need His help.

Elizabeth Crews

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Elizabeth Crews is a licensed addictions counselor & educator, a Bible teacher and a First Place Networking leader in San Diego, CA. To subscribe to *Winning Words for First Place Losers*—a free daily e-mail devotional written by Elizabeth—write to firstplaceloseers@cox.net and ask to be added to the First Place devotional subscriber's list.

Affirm that you are confident He is actively at work to use this situation for His glory and your good (which are always synonymous)!

✦ After summarizing the problem, write the date on the page below the problem. Next to the date, begin to write some of the things for which you can be thankful, even though you are still in the middle of the muck! Even in the most difficult times, we can be thankful God is with us and that He will never leave us to face our problems alone. We can thank Him that He had already envisioned the solution before we were even aware there was a problem! We can thank Him that He promises to bring hope and healing as we trust Him to work all things together for good, even (and maybe especially) those things we do not understand at the present moment.

ÿ Leave several blank pages in your journal, pages you will use to faithfully record God's faithfulness in the days and weeks that follow. Then repeat the process by writing another of your struggles across the top of another journal page. Continue repeating this exercise until there is a page for each troublesome area in your life. Be sure to leave enough blank pages between each struggle so that you can record future happenings relevant to this particular problem. You might even want to purchase some index tabs, so you can easily find a specific listing when you return to make new entries in the journal.

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Elizabeth Crews

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✦ Be sure to revisit your journal at least once a week. Diligently record how God is working to bring each problem to a victorious outcome. Remember as you do so, to date each day's entry and to be thankful for the lessons you are learning during the delayed gratification process. Over time, you will begin to clearly see God's footprints as He walks in the open space. He always does immeasurably more than you could ever ask for or imagine. We have the privilege of recording miracles in the making as we watch Him do His work! God's perfect will always happens in His perfect way and in His perfect time.

✦ Remember, God will accomplish His purpose in your life. When you leave space for Him to work and anticipate His faithfulness, you are showing your faith and trust in His unfailing word. As new struggles arise, add more pages to anticipate God's faithfulness. As God begins to orchestrate seemingly random events together for your good, be sure to give Him thanks and praise. Each victory brings new reasons for thankfulness. You may even discover there is a common thread running through all the struggles you have listed in your journal. Events that are part of the solution of one problem are solutions to other struggles too. Not only is God a wise Manager, He is also an efficiency expert!

Today I invite you to begin a prayer journal that anticipates God's faithfulness. As you learn to anticipate God's faithfulness rather than give in to

doubt and fear, you will find that the most difficult challenges often produce the most incredible blessings! Each victory gives you strength and courage for the next trial. We grow in grace and knowledge by anticipating God's faithfulness and leaving space for Him to do His minute-by-minute miracles in our lives.

When you can't trace God's hand, you can trust God's heart.

---Charles Haddon Spurgeon

Elizabeth Crews

Bill Heston

(Continued from page 9)

on Gods best for us and opportunities to learn from or bless others.

And the story does not end with the women holding a funeral basket at a sealed tomb:

But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. 'Don't be alarmed,' he said. 'You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified.

He is risen! He is not here.'
Anticipate with care and diligence...
But expect the unexpected!

Bill Heston

Dr Bill Heston is the Director of Senior Adults and Planned Giving at the First Presbyterian Church of Houston.





First Place Testimony

Last fall sometime, I had reached my maximum weight ever of 424 pounds. That is a lot of weight, even at 6 ft. 3 in. I could not even walk without becoming short of air. You would think a registered nurse would know better than to get in that kind of shape, but I'm here to tell you that it's not what you know, it's Who you know.

I believe God brought Martha Norsworthy and the First Place program to Grace Baptist Church to save my life. I don't think I would have lived much longer in the shape I was in at the time, and still gaining weight. I don't know why God chose me, but oh, how grateful I am.

The weight loss has been tremendous. As of last Sunday, I weigh 279 pounds, a 145 pound weight loss over two sessions in the program. Isn't God good? I have become active in our Wellness Center, going almost every day to exercise and work out. I never would have believed this possible for me. I couldn't go there when I first started exercising last fall. I began by walking in my neighborhood. I started with short walks and gradually got the confidence to go to the wellness Center. Now, I'm addicted to exercise. Thank you, God!

The weight loss and the exercise are wonderful, but they aren't everything God has done in my life. I read my bible daily and really enjoy the Bible studies that come with the First Place program. I can feel God working on me and in my life almost every minute I live.

I have gone through a lot of sizes in my clothes in the last six to eight months. I love for someone to comment about my weight loss, because it gives me the opportunity to say the name of Jesus, to tell about His love and give Him the glory He so richly deserves for His work in my life. Thank you, God, for this service You have given me.

The commitments of First Place are not grievous. Writing down what I eat helps me to know if I'm eating what I should--enough, but not too much. Drinking water is so important. I now love to drink a glass of water every chance I get.

Prayer time with God helps me start each day off right and get in a right relationship with my Maker. He loves us and wants to spend time with us. I don't know why or how He could love such as me, but I know He does. I love to be able to encourage someone to keep their commitments to First Place. E-mailing is my favorite method.



I'm not perfect. I stumble and fall on this program. Sometimes I go on a huge binge and overeat so much I hurt. But unlike other programs, God helps me to get back on course. In the past, when I would binge, I just wouldn't go back on the diet. I would think, "Well, I've blown it; I might as well just give up." But First Place is different. We believe you can have anything you want if you control the portion size. .

I work nights at the local hospital. Cereal with skim milk and some type of fruit is one of my meals every day. I buy frozen fruit, divide it into portion sizes and keep it frozen in individual baggies to add to my cereal. Peaches, strawberries, blueberries, and blackberries are all available in large bags in the frozen food section.

For work, I buy microwavable soup and eat it with crackers. I eat several servings of fruit daily. I often eat carrots and/or celery as snacks at work. Occasionally, I rely on Revival Soy bars for part of my protein or meat servings.

I hope this is encouraging to someone. I pray I will continue in obedience to God and stay the course. Pray for me.

Don Steffey
Murray, Kentucky

