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the most complete Christ-centered healthy-living program

October 2008



Dear Friends,

Last month, I issued the challenge to “Give God A Year.” No sooner had I finished the article than I heard the still, small voice of the Holy Spirit whisper in my ear, “Will you give me a year and see what I can do in your life?” I had to pray about that for a day before I accepted the challenge to actually do what I had asked others to do. What a novel

concept! Well, God and I started out with a bang. Within a couple of days, the Lord began putting a book together in my mind and within the next two weeks, I had written the first six chapters. As I stayed close to the Lord’s side, He was empowering me to obey His will for my life. I even lost five pounds in the process.

The early morning hours of Saturday, September 13, changed the course of our lives forever. Hurricane Ike roared in and destroyed our home and just about every possession in it. I wonder if you have had a storm in your life that destroyed most of the things you hold dear. If so, let me share a few things I have learned in the two weeks following my own storm.

The Value of Community

Family and friends have rallied around us and been our constant help during this time. Your own First Place 4 Health family can become this kind of support for you when you go through the storms of life. Cultivate these people whom God has placed in your life. Get to know them and you will find friends who truly “stick closer than a brother.”

The outpourings of prayers and love from people we love have sustained us. Our friends, Nick and Euphanel Goad, asked us to come to their retreat center when we evacuated before the storm and we are still here two weeks later. Nick came by yesterday and told Johnny they want us to stay until we are ready to leave.

Money can never buy friends like these. Possessions can never provide this kind of support. In the long run, people are the only thing we really have in this life. What we invest in people and what they invest in us in the name of Christ is eternal.

Focus on what is left, not what is lost.

What really matters in this life is still here. I am still healthy with a reasonably sound mind. My husband, Johnny, is still beside me and our kids are rallying around us to do whatever they can to help. We live in America where “stuff” abounds. With hard work and a good attitude, anyone in our great land can rise from the ashes of destruction to wholeness again.

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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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Where are you today? Are you still stuck in an event that happened years ago, unable to move forward? I pray that today, you will see what you have left and grab hold of it before you waste another day. We are blessed beyond words.

As Christians, we all have the Lord Jesus, Who loves us and gave Himself for us. We have the Holy Spirit, Who lives inside of us to help us in our time of need. These two are there and will never be taken from us, even during the big storms of life. Our God reigns and knows where we are right now. This storm did not take Him by surprise. He knew before the foundation of the world where you and I would be today

Do you believe He is able to turn your storm into a blessing that will bless others for years to come? That's what the storms of life are intended to do; they come for our ultimate good and for God's glory. Romans 8:28 is true, *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*

Focus on the pearls that wash up.

We have been down to the house three times and each time I am amazed at what we have found. Before we left, I put all my concordances, reference books, Bibles and devotional books on a high shelf in a closet for safekeeping. During the storm, the shelf broke and only one book survived. It was My Utmost For His Highest that I have read most every day since 1990. What a pearl! This book is like a record of my life, as I have birthdays and important events recorded on almost every page. God was so gracious to give me this pearl among all the mud and muck.

On the second trip, I found a few favorite clothes that had not been destroyed. The third trip, I found a Waterford vase that I bought on a trip to Ireland with my Mom in 1979. The vase was partially buried in the mud, but I dug it out and brought it back to the Retreat. After I washed it, I noticed that it had a few nicks in the glass and was no longer perfect. As I looked at that glistening, flawed piece of crystal, I decided to call those places "Ike Nicks" and I will give that vase a prominent place in our new home. The vase will be a constant reminder of what my life looks like to God---full of nicks, but shining bright for Him. You see, we are not victims of the storms of life unless we choose to be. We are survivors, just like that vase.

Do the next right thing.

In the aftermath of this storm, I am amazed that I have not eaten out of control one single time. Those of us who are compulsive eaters usually resort to food when we are going through a storm. Because I had given God the next year, overeating was not an option for me. The most amazing part is that I have not even wanted to overeat or resort to those comfort foods of the past.

God knew where I was going to be today and He wooed me two weeks in advance of the storm so we could walk through this one together. God knows where you are too, and He wants to walk with you to the other side. Won't you take His hand and begin walking? I love you and God loves you and together we can all walk in victory.

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize?

Run in such a way as to get the prize.

1 Corinthians 9:24

Much love to you,

Carole Lewis

First Place National Director



Leadership

We Burn Bright, We Don't Burn Out!



Vicki Heath

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Part of our new wellness philosophy for First Place 4 Health is “Give us a year.” As a leader, this may seem a bit overwhelming. Does that mean I must commit to lead FP4H classes for an entire year? That will be a question that you will need to ask the Lord. As for me, He and I have already settled that issue. In fact, I am in for the long haul. As long as He keeps me here, I will lead. As long as I have a message, I will speak. He may have another plan for me, but right now I am doing what He has asked and gifted me to do.

But a year? I know what you are thinking so do not despair! He will provide all that you need to lead each and every class, even for a year. He is continually looking for leaders. You may want to memorize this verse in 2 Chron. 16:9a, *For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.* He will be there to support you. I want to share some tips with you as you lead so that you can continue to burn bright for the Lord and not burn out. Burn out is a common phenomenon among Christian leadership. Statistics show that 20 percent of the people in the local church carry 80% of the load. We must be careful how we live and how we lead if we are to be strong and fit for a years' worth of leadership. Here are some thoughtful suggestions:

Pay attention to your physical and mental health. Our effectiveness as Leaders is built on how we behave and the influence we can have on those we lead. We can increase our chances of acting godly if we increase our chances of feeling godly by practicing self care and self leadership in our wellness commitments. “Nothing so conclusively proves a man’s ability to lead others as what he does day to day to lead himself.”
Thomas J. Watson

Learn to Lead in the ZONE. If someone walked up to you and asked, “What does it mean to play in the zone?” How would you respond?

Does a professional athlete come to mind? I remember a basketball game where my son, Michael, was playing in the zone. He was unstoppable! He made every shot he took, even one from his knees! You don’t have to be an athlete to understand what it means to lead in the zone. It means you are unstoppable. It means that you are operating totally in your strengths and not in your weaknesses. You can’t miss. You will feel the pleasure and power of God as you lead. The 1924 Olympic runner Eric Liddell said, “God made me fast. When I run, I feel God’s pleasure. To win is to glorify Him.” Discover your spiritual gifts and operate in your strengths and around your weaknesses and you will be unstoppable.

Lead your way. Run the race He marked out for you. That means that some of you need to learn to appreciate your uniqueness. We are all so different, gifted in many different ways. The danger comes when we start to compare ourselves to other leaders. When I compare myself to someone that I think is not as good as me, I feel prideful. When I compare myself to someone I consider better than me, I feel shame. Neither is the way God wants me to feel about myself. We are not designed to be the same, but we are designed to fit together like a puzzle, like members of a body working together to perform a given task. Do you know that there are some things that no one but YOU can do for your First Place 4 Health team, for your church, for your world, for your God? Learn to appreciate your uniqueness and stop comparing yourself to others.

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Balanced Living - Physical



What is “Pilates” anyway?

Jeannie Blocher
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One of the popular new trends in the exercise world is “Pilates.” The Pilates method of body conditioning is a unique system of stretching and strengthening exercises developed over 90 years ago by Joseph Pilates. It strengthens and tones muscles, improves posture, provides flexibility and balance and creates a more streamlined shape. In Pilates you treat the body as an integrated whole and each exercise is designed for many muscles groups to work together to perform it.

Pilates developed his exercise system in Germany in the early 1900’s. Plagued by ill health as a child, he used these exercises to strengthen his frail body. He called his method the “art of contrology” as it required great mental focus to control all of the major muscles groups.

Pilates set up his first studio in New York City after immigration to the United States, and this method of fitness training has been a special focus for dancers and performers ever since. Most recently, it has entered the world of everyday exercise, and now you can perform Pilates exercises to strengthen and stretch your body, too.

One of the most popular adaptations of the Pilates methods has been Stott Pilates. Body & Soul has closely followed the principles and adaptations of the Pilates exercises as developed by Moira Stott. The Stott Pilates method involves the following five biomechanical principles: breathing, pelvic placement, rib cage placement, scapular stabilization, and head & cervical spine placement. By learning these principles and practicing them over time, you will develop an awareness of how your muscles work together to build strength and flexibility. Having this body awareness ensures focus on precision and control to realize the full benefits of the Pilates exercises. Mastering the techniques will also help you to avoid injury.

So check out a local Pilates class and start slowly to learn the techniques and build strength. If you are looking for a Body & Soul class that includes Pilates, go to www.bodyandsoul.org and “find a class” called Strength & Flexibility or Cardio/Strength which also incorporates some Pilates exercises. In a few months First Place 4 Health will have a new Strength & Flexibility DVD for you to purchase, choreographed by Body & Soul, which will include Pilates, along with other strength training exercises.

Upcoming Events

For more information about these events, visit www.firstplace4health.com

Change Your Life Event

November 15, 2008
Community of Christ Lutheran Church
Toledo, OH
Speaker: Carole Lewis & Vicki Heath

Change Your Life Event

February 21, 2009
Raleigh-Durham, NC Area
First Christian Church – Kernersville, NC
Speaker: Vicki Heath

Change Your Life Event

January 10, 2009
Brandon, MS
Crossgates Baptist Church
Speaker: Vicki Heath & Carole Lewis

Change Your Life Event

January 31, 2009
Shreveport, LA
Speakers: Carole Lewis & Dr. Dick Couey

Area Leaders Meeting

February 28, 2009
King's Baptist Church
Vero Beach, FL



Balanced Living - Emotional

Why don't we do what we know to do? – Part 2

Series by Bill Heston

Bill Heston

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This is the second in a series that explores the many reasons why we do not have as much success in the Christian life as we think we should.

Part Two of discipline is – Physical

Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize. I Corinthians 9: 26-27

1. Run with purpose – Never forget the reason for the restrictions and activities needed to accomplish the goal. The reason will give the motivation.
2. Make our bodies a slave – Instead of our urges controlling us, we control them and for a greater good.
3. Not be disqualified- Taking care of ourselves is important to us, to God and our influence on others. It is not about looks, but about a balanced life. More than just our eating, it is our living.
4. The prize – We are living an obedient life. From that perspective we will be better balanced to face life's many hard blows.

Live It

The Live It theme of First Place 4 Health promotes healthy lifestyle. It is not built on what you cannot do; it is built on what you can do.

1. The basic food plan of First Place 4 Health has been consistent since it's conception. It is not a fad that the next best seller promotes; it is based on nationally recognized eating principles that has changed little over the years and is constantly being researched by the best nutrition and health specialist. The information is good – but doing it is better.
2. The exercise component is vital to good success. It is not unreasonable. It calls for each person to begin where they are and keep moving to where they need to go. One step at a time if necessary. But always pushing forward.

Why Don't We?

Can you believe some people just love to live healthy lives? Don't you wish you were drawn to eating only healthy foods and loved long early morning runs? I don't! They are work for me. So if our bodies are made to run better on the right foods and consistent exercise, why don't we do it?

1. I don't know what to do – Most of us know more of what we should do than we do, but there certainly is more that we can learn. First Place 4 Health is a wonderful setting for encouraging us to do what we know to do, but doing it with purpose and discipline. There are many tips for success, lessons from others experiences and new information about healthy/tasty cooking, ways to eat out/eat smart and helpful exercise suggestions.

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Continued from page 5 – Bill Heston

2. I can't be consistent – Until something is a priority, consistency is not going to happen. Most of our lives are busy and we only get done what makes it to the top of our “to do” list. The accountability of First Place 4 Health encourages us to build consistency in ways we have not done on our own. The weekly weigh in and the review of the Live It eating plan for the week are ways to keep us thinking during the week about: eating that donut or sleeping just 20 minutes more instead doing of the early morning walk. Once we build these in our lives we may not love it, but we will miss them when we stop doing them.
3. I tried that but... –If the main reason for doing the right thing is for quick results, then maybe we need to spend more time on part one of this series –the “Spiritual.” Doing the good thing over a period of time will bring results – our bodies have no choice but to respond. But patience in the process will bring quicker results to our attitude and spiritual well being just by being obedient to that which is right. It builds strength of character and confidence.
4. I get out of my pattern and then... – We are creatures of habit and when our healthy patterns are broken, it is often very difficult to get back at it. Maybe we need to experience some grace. If we allow guilt and an “I give up” attitude to discourage us, then it is even harder. We are on a journey to wholeness and when we get off of the track, we may lose time, but we do not have to lose our way. Start where we left off or if we really got sidetracked, start back slowly, but with reasonable goals to resuming the previous pace. Delaying due to self-defeating attitudes will only make us fall back further.

**The disciplines of First Place 4 Health are not arbitrary –
they are a purposeful plan for building healthy lives
one day at a time, but with eternal results.**

Dr. Bill Heston

Dr Bill Heston is Associate Pastor at First Presbyterian Church of Houston and is Licensed in Marriage and Family Therapy.

Continued from page 3 – Vicki Heath

Keep a close watch on your spiritual temperature.

Be aware of your own level of commitment on a daily basis. It's very important that we don't become cold. Proverbs 4:23 says, *Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.* Maintaining that daily walk with the Lord is absolutely imperative. Jesus never experienced burn out during his ministry here on earth because he was in constant fellowship with his Father. That time with his Father is what fueled his fire of obedience. God knows what is going on in your life and God sees everything in my life, and He is always with me. First Corinthians 9:27 says, *...I beat my body and make it my slave, so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.* This is a verse that makes me tremble with fear! That I would preach to others, then I myself would be disqualified because I do not practice what I teach? I need to take my temperature daily.

I know there are times in the coming year that you will feel burdened down with the weight of leadership, but I would encourage you to seek our Good Shepherd. Sheep were not designed to be beasts of burden. Ask Him and he will help you lighten the load – all year!

Vicki Heath



Nutrition Notes

Practical Examples with the New Food Plan

Erin DuBroc

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In my class this past week, I had my members participate in a group brainstorming session. I brought in some foods from home (including the labels) to use as examples for teaching how to put the new way of thinking our FP4H food plan encourages into practice. I literally just pulled a few things I already had in my pantry and freezer, and one by one we went through how to assess the quality of the product, the quantity or serving size, and what to “count” it as on our Live It Trackers. The questions I asked them to first answer in order to help them determine how to count the items were, (1) what category does this food most likely fall under (grains, fruits, vegetables...), (2) what are the first five ingredients, and (3) what does the label tell me about what counts as an ounce, cup or teaspoon? Here are some examples I shared in class and the explanations of how we determined how to document them on the Tracker.

- 1. A zip-lock bag of chopped apple.** I didn't tell my class the number of apples I chopped and put in the bag, rather I asked them to estimate and tell me how many cups of fruit this amount of apple would provide? The group did a great job and was able to wager that the bag contained 1 cup. They were correct. I had chopped up 1 small to medium apple and it measured exactly 1 cup. This was a good exercise for them to begin memorizing what “1 cup” of fruit looks like. I also reminded them that the Member's Guide gives a good variety of examples of fruits that count as 1 cup or a half-cup on page 127.
- 2. One snack-pack of apple sauce.** Just by looking at this product and envisioning where it would come up to on the lines of a measuring cup, the ladies successfully estimated that the applesauce provided one-half cup of fruit. Again, this was training them to memorize portion sizes.
- 3. Orville Redenbacher's® 100 Calorie Mini-Bag of Kettle Corn.** Part of the exercise was determining how many cups, ounces and/or teaspoons 1 serving of each food would count. On the label of this product, 1 bag of popcorn provided 6.5 cups of popped popcorn. Once your members read through the grains section in the Member's Guide, they will see that 3 cups of popped popcorn counts as 1 ounce of grains. Therefore, 1 bag of this particular brand would provide about 2 ounces of grains ($6.5 / 3 = 2.1$). Please just round to the nearest ounce – don't worry with fractions!
- 4. Pecans.** Since we want people to learn to include foods rich in healthy oils instead of be fearful of them, I brought in a bag of pecans. The label says that 1 serving equals $\frac{1}{4}$ cup or 28 grams. Some members remembered that nuts count both towards the Meat & Beans group AND the Healthy Oils, but some did not. This would be a great example to drive that point home. In the Meat & Beans section of the Member's Guide it is listed that $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce of nuts is equivalent to 1 ounce of meat. In the Healthy Oils section, we have a variety of nuts listed as 1 ounce providing 3 teaspoons of oil ($\frac{1}{2}$ an ounce would provide 1.5 teaspoons of healthy oil). But all the label has given us is the serving size in terms of cups and grams – how do we figure out the ounces? Here's a helpful hint: 28 grams is equal to 1 solid ounce. That conversion will help you a lot! So, according to this label, 1 serving is 1 ounce of nuts. But just because the bag tells you that, doesn't mean you have to eat 1 ounce at a time! So, if you have $\frac{1}{2}$ an ounce this would provide you 1 ounce of meat and 1.5 teaspoons of healthy oil. If you had 1 ounce of nuts, that would provide 2 ounces of meat and 3 teaspoons of oil.
- 5. Classico® Traditional Sweet Basil Spaghetti Sauce.** Many of us on staff enjoy this brand of sauce because there isn't much other than tomatoes and seasonings included. There is a lot less sugar in this sauce than many others on the market. The main ingredients are tomato puree, diced tomatoes, and onions. Thus, this sauce would essentially be like tomato juice – but thicker. Therefore, all you need to count this sauce as is a vegetable. With only 1.5 grams of fat and olive oil listed towards the end of the ingredients (signifying that it's one of the minor ingredients), don't worry about counting it. A half-cup serving would count as a half-cup of vegetables. Yes, it really is that easy.

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Continued from page 7 – Erin DuBroc

- 6. Amy's® Cheese Enchilada (made with organic beans, corn and tomatoes).** I brought this example to show how to approach prepared meals and combined foods. By looking at the picture on the box or simply looking at the entrée when it's prepared, you can see that there is about $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of corn, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of black beans mixed with some tomatoes, and 1 tortilla filled with melted cheese. How I estimated the corn and black beans was simply by envisioning what marker each would reach if I put them in a measuring cup. I actually did this later on and determined my estimations were accurate. I did the same thing with the tortilla wrapped as an enchilada. It was easily a small tortilla roughly 6 inches in diameter – exactly what the Member's Guide describes as a 1 ounce tortilla. The cheese was a little more difficult – in some ways I just had to guess. I guess I could have dismantled my meal completely and weighed the melted cheese to see how many ounces it was, but honestly – I had better things to do, like eat my lunch! I estimated it was 1.5 ounces of cheese which is equivalent to 1 cup of milk. With the entire meal only providing 350 calories I knew the quantity was well within my range for lunch. And though it was a microwave meal and contained some sodium, the overall quality of the food was good. The first five ingredients were black beans, corn, cheddar cheese, tomato puree, and water. Especially since I don't eat these every day, I wasn't worried about the sodium or the fat contained in the cheddar cheese. For me, this is an "occasional" item, so as long as I choose to eat lower-sodium options the rest of the day and things less cheesy, I do just fine. However, safflower oil was listed in the ingredients list (though lower on the list indicating there wasn't much), but since the total fat count for this item was 15 grams (7 grams saturated, 8 grams unsaturated) I decided to count 1 teaspoon of healthy oil. The 7 grams of saturated fat came from the cheese. The remaining had to have come from some oil used for cooking. I had to guess here, but using the clues that the oil was listed low in the ingredients list, along with the number of grams of fat from unsaturated sources, 1.5 teaspoons seems very accurate to me. Also, 5 grams of fat = 1 tsp. oil. That's another helpful hint! I counted this meal as 1 ounce of grain, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of vegetables (or you could count $\frac{1}{4}$ cup vegetable for the corn and 1 ounce meat for the beans), 1 cup of milk and 1.5 tps of healthy oil.
- 7. Kashi® GO LEAN Crunch® Cereal.** Cereals can be a bit tricky as the denser the cereal is (think Grapenuts®) the less it takes to count as an ounce. In other words, 1 cup of cereal does not always count as 1 ounce – you have to consider the type of cereal and most importantly, read the label! The label on this cereal listed 1 serving as 1 cup or 53 grams or 1.9 ounces. Therefore, according to Kashi – what they consider to be one serving will provide 2 ounces from the grains group. If you only wanted to have 1 ounce of grains at breakfast, you would need then to eat only $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of this particular cereal.

Try to practice with some examples out of your kitchen this week. Remember, our main goals are that we consume quality foods in appropriate quantities most of the time. Quantity can be assessed by cups, ounces, and teaspoons, but it can also be assessed by noting the calories. If an item has quality ingredients and provides you a number of calories that does not exceed what is appropriate for you at a meal or snack (whichever applies), know that you've made a great choice! If you can break it down into the groups and note those on your Tracker, then great. If right now all you can handle is choosing quality foods and eating an appropriate amount, then just jot down the item and the calories it provided. Allow yourself to be flexible, and don't lose sight of the big picture: quality foods, appropriate quantities, most of the time, for life.

To good health,

Erin DuBroc, MPH, RD, LD



Dedication: Honoring God with Your Body Conclusion

Steve Reynolds
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*Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.
Philippians 2:5*

Last month I wrote that change is difficult to accomplish without discipline. I had to come to a place of disciplining my body parts. I had to realize and I want you to do the same, that our emotions, our mind and our heart are also parts of the body. We must learn to control our emotions, which influence our thoughts. Once the thoughts enter our minds, the effects which are expressed through our actions reveal the condition of our heart.

Discipline your emotion

An area I feel important to discipline, especially if you're overweight, is emotion. The main emotion of concern is bitterness. Our bodies were not designed to house bitterness, yet most of us do and it causes the greatest amount of damage. Bitterness is like a poison and will destroy your body. Hebrews 12:15 says, "Looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled." Some of you are eating and exercising right, but may still die young because you harbor bitterness. Medical science corroborates that biblical truth suggesting bitterness contributes to many diseases. You must learn a lifestyle of forgiveness. Forgiveness is not an option, but a command. Read Ephesians 4:32

Discipline your mind

The next area of the body that needs to be disciplined is your mind. The Bible says, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil.2:5). Our goal should be to always have the mind of Christ, to ask, "What would Jesus do?" The standard for our thought lives is Philippians 4:8: "Whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy- meditate on these things."

Discipline your heart

Lastly, discipline your heart. Romans 10:9 says "If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." Dedication to God begins by being a follower of Christ. To form that relationship you have to admit you're a sinner who needs a Savior. We all have broken God's law, the Ten Commandments. We all need to be saved. Are you saved? If not would you like to receive Christ as your personal Lord and Savior? If yes, then tell God in prayer. Take the step toward dedication to God.

You ask what does this have to do with Bod4God? Philippians 4:13 says "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Well, for Christ to strengthen you, His Spirit must abide in you. That only happens when you ask Him into your life as your Savior.

If you want to change your lifestyle, you must change your life. Begin by accepting Christ as your Savior. Lean on His strength to lead you to success.

Steve Reynolds

Steve Reynolds is the Senior Pastor of Capital Baptist Church in Annandale, VA. He is also the author of the book *Bod4God* and the creator of the *Losing to Live* Weight Loss Competition. Steve has lost over 100 pounds and has led his church to lose over 2 tons of weight.



Devotional

Wear Your Joy

The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy.

PSALM 126:3

“You say you’re a Christian? Please let your face know!” I laughed when I read this on a church sign while driving home from the grocery store. Although meant to be humorous, the saying packs a powerful message for us. Does our joy in the Lord, show on our faces? When unbelievers are around us, do they want what we have? Can they see our joy? Do we have thankful and grateful attitudes, or do we whine and complain about everything?

I used to be a chronic complainer. I often found myself joining in when my friends and family complained about everything from the weather to the high cost of prices at the grocery store. I realized that studying God’s Word that ungratefulness has no part in a Christian’s life. It’s hard to be joyful while complaining about things. Likewise, I am learning that it’s hard to complain while praising the Lord and being joyful!

We have so much to be thankful and joyful about! Regardless of our circumstances, the fact that we are saved by grace alone should be enough to fill us with joy. Add to that all of God’s great promises and His blessings and provision for us. He has done great things for us and we should be filled with joy, simple because we belong to Him!

PRAYER

Father, You have blessed me with so many wonderful things. Help me speak words of praise and thanksgiving and not complaint. Give me a grateful attitude and joyful spirit in all circumstances. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Journal: Write a prayer, praising God for the blessings He has given you.

Joni Shaffer
Mercersburg, Pennsylvania

Taken from *Living Well*, First Place 4 Health devotional book. To order, call 1-800-4GOSPEL.

~ Recipes ~

Hearty Vegetable Chili

Serves 6

1 tablespoon olive oil
1 onion, chopped
1 carrot, thinly sliced
1 green pepper, chopped
8 ounces mushrooms, sliced
1 small zucchini, sliced
4 large cloves garlic, minced
1 28-ounce can tomatoes with juice, chopped
2 cups tomato sauce
1 4-ounce can green chili peppers, diced
4 cups cooked kidney, pinto, or black beans
3 tablespoons chili powder
1 tablespoon diced oregano
2 teaspoons ground cumin
2 teaspoons paprika
Red-pepper flakes (optional)
Chopped fresh cilantro (optional)
Nonfat sour cream or yogurt (optional)

Warm the oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add the onion, carrots, green peppers, mushrooms, zucchini, and garlic. Sauté for 20 minutes. Add the tomatoes with juice, tomato sauce, chili peppers, beans, chili powder, oregano, cumin, paprika and red pepper flakes. Simmer for at least 30 minutes; stir often to prevent burning. Add the cilantro to taste. Simmer briefly. Serve garnished with the sour cream or yogurt.

Nutritional Information: 264 Calories; 4g Fat (13.5% calories from fat); 15g Protein; 47g Carbohydrate; 13g Dietary Fiber; 0mg Cholesterol; 649mg Sodium.

Spaghetti Squash Gratin

Serves: 8

1 (2-pound) spaghetti squash
1 teaspoon olive oil
2 garlic cloves, minced
1 teaspoon kosher salt, divided
1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, divided
1/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper
2 28-ounce cans whole tomatoes, drained and chopped
3 oregano sprigs
3 thyme sprigs
1/2 cup (2 ounces) grated fresh Parmesan cheese
2 teaspoons chopped fresh oregano
1 teaspoon chopped fresh thyme
1 15-ounce carton fat-free ricotta cheese

Preheat oven to 400°. Pierce squash with a fork. Place squash on a baking sheet; bake at 400° for 1 hour or until tender. Cool. Cut squash in half lengthwise; discard seeds. Scrape inside of squash with a fork to remove spaghetti-like strands to measure 4 cups. Heat olive oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add garlic; cook 2 minutes, stirring frequently. Add 1/2 teaspoon salt, 1/4 teaspoon black pepper, crushed red pepper, tomatoes, oregano, and thyme sprigs; bring to a boil. Reduce heat, and simmer for 20 minutes or until thickened, stirring occasionally. Discard oregano and thyme sprigs. Combine remaining 1/2 teaspoon salt, remaining 1/4 teaspoon black pepper, Parmesan, and remaining ingredients. Spoon 1/2 cup squash into each of 8 (8-ounce) ramekins. Spoon tomato sauce evenly over squash; divide ricotta mixture evenly among ramekins, spreading to cover. Can also spread in 8x8 baking pan. Bake at 400° for 50 minutes or until lightly browned.

Nutritional Information: Calories: 117 (21% from fat) Fat: 2.7g (sat 1.1g, mono 0.9g, poly 0.4g) Protein: 7.8g Carbohydrate: 15.1g Fiber: 1.1g Cholesterol: 13mg Iron: 1.5mg Sodium: 531mg Calcium: 200mg

Baked Apple Rings

Serves 4

4 Golden Delicious apples, peeled and cored
3/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
1 tablespoon granulated sugar
1/3 cup apple cider
2 large egg whites, lightly beaten

Cooking spray
1/4 teaspoon salt
Dash of freshly grated nutmeg
1/4 cup fat-free caramel sundae syrup, divided
Powdered sugar (optional)

Preheat oven to 400°. Slice apples crosswise into 1/2-inch slices. Set aside 8 largest slices; reserve remaining apple for another use. Lightly spoon flour into dry measuring cups; level with a knife. Combine flour, granulated sugar, salt, and nutmeg in a medium bowl. Stir in cider and egg whites (batter will be thick). Heat a large nonstick skillet coated with cooking spray over medium-high heat. Dip 4 apple slices in batter; place in pan. Cook 2 minutes on each side or until lightly browned. Arrange apple slices on a baking sheet coated with cooking spray; lightly coat apple slices with cooking spray. Repeat procedure with remaining apple slices. Bake apple slices at 400° for 10 minutes or until edges are crisp. Drizzle each of 4 plates with 1 tablespoon caramel sauce; top with 2 apple slices. Sprinkle with powdered sugar, if desired. Serve immediately.

Nutritional Information: Calories: 205 (2% from fat) Fat: 0.5g (sat 0.1g, mono 0.0g, poly 0.2g) Protein: 3.7g Carbohydrate: 46.2g Fiber: 2.4g Cholesterol: 0.0mg Iron: 1.1mg Sodium: 151mg Calcium: 20mg



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