



4^{first place} health

discover a new way to healthy living

the most complete Christ-centered
healthy-living program

December 2008



Dear Friends,

If you have been keeping up with our Hurricane Ike saga the last couple of months, then you know that our home and most of our possessions were destroyed in the storm. This has been quite a journey and I can't wait to be on the other side.

One of the nicest surprises happened when we were going through the rubble one Saturday after the storm. I kept all my Christmas decorations in a hidden closet in our middle bedroom. I guess the closet served as a locked safe for the previous owners, but it was a perfect place to have the Christmas tree and all the decorations in one spot. I especially liked the fact that we didn't have to go up into the attic each year to get them down and then put them back after Christmas.

Since we had four feet of water in the entire house, I was sure that all the decorations were ruined. The box with the tree in it stood at least four feet high and it was the only thing in the closet that was gone. All the boxes with the nautical ornaments that I had so lovingly collected the past 10 years were in perfect condition. Wasn't it sweet of the Lord to spare those items that had tremendous sentimental value?

I have heard from many of you that you are really praying about making the decision to give God the next year. January would be a great time to start if you haven't already begun. The key is to give God your best, one day at a time, for 365 days and see what He is able to do in you and through you. I am in my 10th week and I have messed up plenty but all in all, it has been one of the greatest journeys with God I have ever taken. I believe the best part of this particular journey is that I have no strength at all so I am totally relying on God's strength for each day.

Please continue praying for Johnny and me as we seek God's perfect will for our lives. There are so many decisions and all the recovery process is moving really slow. I've heard that it is good to wait a full year after any of life's traumas before making a major decision. God and I will be doing just that as He has the next year of my life to "...work in me to will and to act according to his good purpose."

Philippians 2:13

Matthew 6:33:

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

Dear Friends

Carole Lewis ~ Page 1

Leadership – Receiving the Gifts of Christmas

Vicki Heath ~ Page 3

Let's Talk Flexibility

Jeannie Blocher ~ Page 4

Nutrition Notes – Giving Different Gifts

Erin DuBroc ~ Page 5

Success Story ~ Page 6

Devotional ~ Page 7

Recipes ~ Page 8

First Place

(800) 727-5223
(713) 688-6788

To Place an Order:
(800) 446-7735

www.firstplace.org

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



Continued from page 1 ~

Sometimes in the winds of change we find our true direction

I've heard it said, "Sometimes in the winds of change we find our true direction." We are praying you have a blessed Christmas and that 2009 is the year of breakthroughs for you. You may be going through a lot of changes right now, as we are, but this is when God can do His best work if.....we submit our will to Him.

The apostle Paul said it best in 2 Corinthians 12: 9-10,

But He said to me, My grace is sufficient for you for my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Much love to you,

Carole Lewis

First Place 4 Health National Director

Holiday Tips

People who are most successful at preventing holiday food blowouts use a variety of strategies. Here are a few that work for them:

Be discriminating. Don't eat everything willy-nilly -- go for foods that are specific to the holidays and worth the indulgence. For example, say yes to a dish that you can only get one time a year, or one that nobody but your grandmother makes and is really special.

Scope out the scene. Give the buffet a once-over before digging in. Set your sights on a few things that you'd really, really like to have.

Watch your portions. A big amount isn't going to taste better than a small amount. In fact, eating too much and not feeling good afterward defeats the purpose.

Stay active. Keeping up physical activity is important as well and not just because it burns calories. When you're exercising, you're making time for yourself. Exercise keeps your energy level up. When you're tired, you're less able to resist temptation.



Leadership

Receiving the Gifts of Christmas



Vicki Heath

vicki.heath@firstplace4health.com

Does just the thought of Christmas wear you out? Are you already living in fear and dread of the following:

- ★ A brutal Christmas schedule
- ★ An overwhelming amount of food everywhere!
- ★ Financial pressures

If those thoughts are the first ones that come to mind when you think about the fast approaching Christmas season, then you are definitely in need of an early Christmas gift. There are some things we can do as leaders to enjoy the days of Christmas. These things are described as wonderful gifts that you can give yourself if you just take the time. Christmas can certainly be a busy time of year, and as leaders, we can be so caught up in the hustle and bustle that we miss out on the greatest gifts if we don't pay attention.

The Gift of Solitude and Silence

Christmas is such a heart warming time and it's a great time for meditation and reflection. Instead of thinking and reflecting on the blessing of the season, our minds are busy checking off our lists and gearing up for the "next thing." As leaders, many of you are defined by how hard you work; you lead lives that are so full and challenging that it requires all of the energy, focus and management that you can muster. In the midst of all this prioritizing and time management there is a voice inside of me silently screaming, "This year, I will enjoy Christmas!" How do we find the Christ of Christmas in the midst of all of the activity? The answer is simple, really. Set aside time for solitude and silence. Now, I know what you are thinking. Many of you are Type A personalities and cannot imagine life without agendas, day planners, prayer lists and study plans. And for us "achievers" to set aside a day during one of the busiest times of the year seems so unproductive.

Be Still

"Be still and know that I am God." Those first two words are not an easy concept. Solitude and silence is challenging and countercultural on so many levels. It challenges us culturally, because we are not supposed to spend time doing nothing. It challenges our relationships, because it will require us to pull away from those around us for a time. It challenges us spiritually, because in the silence we will come face to face with the inner voice of God. Most of us are afraid of the silence, because we are afraid of what we might find there. That's why we lead such noisy lives. God has something for us in the silence, and this Christmas I plan on making the journey there to receive a precious gift from Him.

In her book *Invitation to Solitude and Silence*, Ruth Haley Barton suggests these three things:

- ★ Set aside a sacred space – that is a space set aside for God and God alone.
- ★ Set aside a sacred time – a time to give Him our undivided attention.
- ★ Set aside a sacred place in our soul – a place that is private.

We will have to be intentional about setting time aside for solitude and silence. There will be many things in the days ahead just waiting to eat up our time. Knowing that this holiday season I have these silent dates with God waiting for me changes everything. I am not dreading the season. Instead, I am looking forward to the Christmas presents He has for me.

A cup of cider, a snowy day, a time set aside just to be with Him and I know what He is going to tell me; He going to tell me that He loves me and I am going to tell Him that I love Him back.

Christmas Blessings,

Vicki Heath



Balanced Living - Physical

Let's Talk Flexibility



Jeannie Blocher
jeannie@bodyandsoul.org

We all know that it's a good thing to have a mindset of "being flexible" in this day and age. Plans change --- weather changes our plans; we change our minds. Most of all, we need to be *flexible* and go with the flow to avoid conflict, stress and general aggravation. But have you considered this— physical flexibility is every bit as important as emotional and mental flexibility!

One component of fitness that we often neglect is flexibility training! It may be because the benefits and results of stretching are more difficult to measure than with other types of exercise. However, stop and think about your life and your body and I bet you will agree that we all need to stretch, because this is really a case of use it or lose it. If we don't stretch on a regular basis, we will lose range of motion in every part of our body, and that will begin to gradually inhibit what we can do. It also leaves us vulnerable to injury and we certainly want to avoid that!

The new First Place 4 Health Fitness DVD includes both strength and flexibility exercises and it shows various levels, so it is perfect for beginners as well as fitness buffs. It's a great place to start to improve your flexibility. Make a commitment to get serious about becoming more flexible physically and mentally. You will be glad you did!

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: Vicki Heath & Erin DuBroc

Change Your Life Event

February 21, 2009+
Greensboro, NC Area
First Christian Church – Kernersville, NC
Speaker: Vicki Heath & Carole Lewis

Change Your Life Event

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

Area Leader's Meeting

January 10, 2009
Faith Community Church
Fillmore, CA

Change Your Life Event

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

Area Leaders Meeting

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

FP4H Trip to the Holy Land

March 16-28, 2009
Host: Carole Lewis
Bible Leader: Rob Heath



Nutrition Notes

Giving Different Gifts

Erin DuBroc

erin.dubroc@firstplace4health.com



'Tis the season for giving gifts, and this month I'd like to ask if you'd consider giving yourself and those around you some different gifts this year. When it comes to holiday cuisine and traditional treats, we are tempted to throw common sense and creativity out the window. It's much easier (and seemingly more sacred) to cook the way we've always cooked, or the way our family has always cooked, and prepare certain foods exactly the same way so as to not upset a certain aunt or son who loves that specific food and looks forward to it all year long. I'm all for maintaining traditions, but not needless ones!

Truly, the sweet potato casserole can be made with less brown sugar and it will still taste divine. The same goes for the green bean casserole, cranberry sauce, turkey and gravy and desserts – a few modifications can make a big difference nutritionally without making a dent in palatability! However, I think many of us tend to focus on what we're cutting out instead of what we're adding. We mourn the loss of butter, but forget this translates into fewer added pounds come January! We cringe at the thought of our kids whining when Christmas is not a food free-for-all, but fail to consider how we're laying the groundwork for healthier holidays and healthier kids! Here are some new and improved gifts you can consider giving this Christmas.

Give your Family a Gift

I've been pleasantly surprised for years when I've brought my dishes to family gatherings (always made with less fat, sugar, and sodium) to see that my family loves them and even appreciates when I supply the recipe for them to try at home. As a dietitian, it is difficult to escape the label of "food policewoman." It just comes with the territory, I guess. This is why, however, I specifically aim each holiday to bring healthy *and* delicious food so I can prove them wrong! Consider preparing some healthier versions of your favorites and see if your family even notices - I seriously doubt they will. Make festive copies of the recipes for them to take home and enjoy. Even if you have a family member or two who don't appreciate your efforts, take heart in knowing that you're giving them the gift of health, so to speak, by preparing healthy foods. Also, try coming up with some family friendly activities that don't involve food or at least are not centered on food.

Give your Friends and Neighbors a Gift

In my childhood neighborhood, all the neighbors on our street (some more ambitious than others) usually give gifts of food, such as Christmas cookies, fried turkeys (honestly!), peanut butter balls, quiche, etc. My mom traditionally makes her famous banana bread which she has continued to modify over the years to be healthier (less butter, less sugar, whole wheat flour instead of white, etc.). It is a delicious staple in our family and everyone on the street loves it. Little do they know it's a healthier alternative to what you'd find at the grocery store bakery. If your neighborhood is like mine and loves to give food, consider putting together something healthy and delicious and giving it as gifts for your neighbors. Homemade salsa, our FP4H quiche, whole grain and cranberry cookies, and fresh cranberry sauce (Cooking Light has an excellent recipe) are just some ideas.

Give yourself a Gift

Although it is not a common tradition to give ourselves gifts, I'd like you to make it one from now on. It's not selfish or vain and it doesn't involve any shopping. Take care of yourself this Christmas. Eat well, laugh a lot, and enjoy the company more than the food. Remind yourself that New Year's will be here before you know it, and that it sure would be nice to have to write "lose holiday weight" on your list of resolutions. Buy yourself a nice pair of pants or skirt before the holidays really set in, and keep it out in your bedroom as a reminder that you'd really like to fit into it come January 1. Free yourself from the burden of feeling like you have to succumb to the old, tired traditions of Christmases past and embrace a healthier holiday season as part of your new and bondage-free lifestyle! Not only will it benefit you, it will benefit your entire family!



Success Story



Topping the scales at 211 pounds, I started the First Place 4 Health program in September 2007, with the idea of only wanting to lose weight. I was very athletic in high school and played both basketball and softball all four years. College, marriage, and two kids later I had gained 50 pounds.

I weighed 216 when I got pregnant with my first child in 2001. While I was pregnant, I was diagnosed with Gestational Diabetes and was put on a very strict diet, but was not required to be on insulin. A few months after she was born, I became very sick. My vision became blurry and I was thirsty all the time. I went to the doctor and found out my blood sugar was 450. They put me on a diet to see if I could control it without insulin. My blood sugar floated around 250 for a few months; I lost around 30 pounds and became very pale and sickly looking. I went to the emergency room and found out my body had gone into Ketoacidosis, which is a serious condition that can lead to diabetic coma or even death. I had lost the weight because my body was breaking down my fat for energy. I spent a few nights in ICU and was immediately put on insulin.

For the first few months, my diabetes was not controlled. I was blessed to get an insulin pump which helps regulate my sugar by allowing my body to receive insulin throughout the day. I kept my diabetes controlled for a while after being put on the insulin pump, but went back to my old eating habits and gained about 20 lbs. back.

I got pregnant with my second child in 2004, and was again put on a low-sugar diet. I thought I was eating healthy, but looking back, I really wasn't. I remembered the doctors telling me that controlling my sugars in the first trimester was very important due to birth defects. I cried all night thinking something was going to be wrong with my baby. Praise God, I had a very healthy boy in June 2005, and he had no signs of a diabetic mother except being a little big.

After having my son, I tried to lose the weight again, but nothing worked. My husband and I both knew we were at unhealthy weights but couldn't seem to get motivated. We were then introduced to First Place 4 Health. When I first started FP4H, my A1C was 7.8. An A1C test measures your average blood sugar levels over a three-month period by taking a sample of hemoglobin A1C molecules -- a specific component of your red blood cells. It's should be under 7.0. After being in FP4H for 5 months, I had my A1C checked again and it was 6.8. It had dropped a whole point and I was moved from being an uncontrolled diabetic to a controlled diabetic.



I'm happier, healthier and closer to Christ. He has done so much for me and blessed me beyond what I could have asked for myself. My blood sugar continues to be good and I have lost over 30 pounds so far. He is my light and my salvation and I could not have done any of it without him. He will always be first place in my heart.

Kiley Stevens



Devotional

Stop Indulging, Start Thinking

*Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.
The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.*

M A T T H E W 2 6 : 4 1

In *Stop It*, I talk about the word “trajectory.” Picture the curve an object makes as it leaves one location and heads toward another. That’s a trajectory. Our lives have trajectory. The decisions we make today will affect our future. Every choice we make yields a result. When we choose to engage in harmful behaviors, we set in motion events that will produce outcomes somewhere else. What trajectory are you on right now?

Giving in to your impulses creates one set of results. Focusing on the consequences enables you to make better choices that lead to positive results. Your job is to stop indulging and start considering – thinking of where every choice will lead.

One wonderful thing about our Lord is that He is able to change the trajectory we are on. No matter what decisions we have made in the past, we are not doomed to destruction in the future. God promises that He will complete the good work He began in us when we committed our lives to Him.

This is why it is so important that we watch and pray. Our spirits may want to do what’s right but our bodies hardly ever want the same thing. To change our trajectory, it is imperative that we learn how to take charge of our stubborn bodies. The apostle Paul says that we must, “make our bodies our slave, so that when we have preached to others, we will not be disqualified for the prize.” 1 Corinthians 9:27.

P R A Y E R

Dear Lord, My greatest desire is for you to change the trajectory of my life. Help me learn what it means to watch and pray. My spirit is willing but my body is weak.

Journal: Write about where you are in your own personal trajectory right now. Give God permission to make changes where necessary.

Carole Lewis, First Place National Director
Houston, TX

Carole wrote this devotional in February of 2006 and it can be found in the First Place 4 Health Devotional, *Living Well*. To order, call 1-800-4GOSPEL.

~ Recipes ~

Ham & Broccoli Quiche

Serves 8

1 prepared piecrust, unbaked
1 box frozen chopped broccoli
1 cup sliced mushroom (optional)
1/2 cup chopped onion
1/2 cup chopped celery
2 tablespoons butter
3 eggs, slightly beaten
2 cups grated mozzarella cheese
1 can Cream of Mushroom soup
1 cup chopped cooked ham (or bacon)

Cook broccoli as directed on package and drain. Sauté mushrooms, onion and celery in butter until tender. Combine all ingredients and pour into pie shell. Bake at 350 degrees for about 1 hour or until light brown on top. Let sit 15 minutes before cutting or serving. Serves 8.

Nutritional Information: 279 Calories; 20g Fat; 13g Protein; 12g Carbohydrate; trace Dietary Fiber; 123mg Cholesterol; 634mg Sodium.

Maple Glazed Sweet Potatoes

Serves 8

2 lbs. sweet potatoes, peeled, cut into 1-inch slices
1 cup frozen Granny Smith apple juice concentrate, thawed
2 tsp. cornstarch
7 packets Equal sweetener
1 tsp. margarine
1 tsp. maple extract
1 tsp. vanilla extract

Boil sweet potato slices until desired tenderness. Set aside and keep warm. Heat apple juice concentrate, cornstarch and Equal to boiling in small saucepan; boil, stirring constantly, until thickened. Remove from heat; stir in margarine, maple extract and vanilla extract. Pour glaze over potatoes in serving bowl and toss gently. Serve immediately.

Nutritional Information: 176 Calories; 1g Fat (4.3% calories from fat); 2g Protein; 41g Carbohydrate; 3g Dietary Fiber; 0mg Cholesterol; 25mg Sodium.

Brunch Casserole

Serves 8

4 slices whole-wheat bread, crusts removed
2 oz. ground low-fat turkey sausage
1/2 cup chopped mushrooms
1 tsp. chopped onion
3 eggs, beaten
1 cup nonfat milk
1/4 tsp. salt
1/8 tsp. black pepper
1/8 tsp. granulated garlic
2 oz. low-fat cheddar cheese, shredded

Line bottom of 9 x 9 casserole dish with bread. Sauté sausage in nonstick skillet until cooked through. Remove sausage and sauté mushrooms and onions until tender. Crumble sausage and combine with mushrooms and onion; sprinkle mixture on top of bread. Combine eggs, milk, salt, pepper and garlic, mix well and pour over sausage. Sprinkle with cheese, cover and refrigerate overnight. Set out for 15 minutes prior to baking. Bake at 350o F for 40 to 45 minutes. Serves 4.

Nutritional Information: 199 calories; 7g fat (33% calories from fat); 3g saturated fat; 2g monounsaturated fat; 1 g polyunsaturated fat; 16g protein; 17g carbohydrate; 2g dietary fiber; 175mg cholesterol; 537mg sodium.

You can find lots more delicious holiday recipes in the new First Place 4 Health *Light and Healthy Holidays* devotional study. To order, call 1-800-727-5223, x405 or go to www.firstplace4health.com.