



Dear Ones,

December is the month of the year when we celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and when we also give gifts to those we love. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we, in addition to giving gifts, would give of ourselves during this Christmas season?

One Kind Deed is Worth Many Kind Thoughts

When our children were small, I had a Calligraphy picture that read, "One kind deed is worth many kind thoughts." Just this last week, I was the recipient of the truth of that saying when my trainer, Donna Roberts, did something incredibly kind. When I worked out with Donna on Tuesday, she asked me what I had to eat on Monday. When I told her that I had eaten lunch, but had eaten yogurt and granola for breakfast and dinner, she gave me one of those looks. I told her that as soon as I finished the book I was writing, I would get back on track with my eating.

That night I received a text from Donna asking if I was working out the next morning. I wrote back that I would be spending the day writing at home. Donna replied that she had something for me and would bring it over the next day. The next day before Noon, Donna came over bringing six servings of the most delicious Italian casserole, along with a large container of chicken soup. The casserole had been divided into 350 calorie portions and all I had to do was heat and eat.

Donna is one busy lady with a husband and three growing children. She works at the church all day and then goes home and cooks for me! What a gift! If she had called and asked if she could cook for me, I would have surely protested and asked her not to do it. But she cooked and delivered all these meals and I have eaten on them the entire week.

How many times have we all said, "Just let me know if I can do anything for you?" We know when we say it that they are not going to ask us to do anything. Remember, "One kind deed is worth many kind thoughts." I will never forget what Donna did to make my life just a little bit easier. Is there something you can do to make someone's Christmas season a little bit brighter?

There are so many opportunities every day to give our lives away. Jesus said that whatever we do in His Name we are doing for Him. Belinda is a woman at my

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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.

Dear Ones

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church who is giving her life away at the women's prison. She teaches the Bible to these women and is always sharing their prayer requests with our Sunday School class. God has given Belinda a deep love for these women and they know it, because it is Christ's love Belinda is bringing to them each week. Belinda does much more than teach these women the Word of God. When they are released from prison, she gathers up clothes for them and brings them to church.

The Lord Jesus taught us much about giving our lives away. In Mark 9:35, Jesus said, "If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all." Not many of us see the lowly act of serving as giving our lives away, but Jesus does if we do it for Him. My daughter Lisa has the gift of service and she can't do enough for people. She is always available to cook, clean or help someone move. When she cooks for her family, she makes extra servings for Johnny and me. When Jeff's wife, Kathryn, had breast cancer last year, Lisa was the one who took meals to them. Lisa goes shopping with our granddaughter Cara and helps her cook because Shari is not there to do it. Most people with the gift of service don't want recognition and never tells anyone about what they do.

Even though I don't have the gift of service, God expects me to serve others. I do serve others, but I'm not gifted like Lisa. I am best able to serve others by using the gift of encouragement that God has given me. When I encourage someone with a verse of Scripture, pray with them or just give them a hug, I am giving my life away for Christ.

Those who have the gift of evangelism give their lives away by leading others to faith in Christ. My friend Jaye Martin has the gift of evangelism and she leads people to Christ on airplanes and in restaurants on a regular basis.

Even though I don't have the same gift, I am called to share my faith with others. For several years, I have been praying that God would use me to lead people to Christ, and this fall God gave me the awesome privilege of leading two ladies to Christ. This didn't happen because I made a cold call on the airplane or in a restaurant; God literally dropped these two ladies in my lap. I would have been disobedient had I not followed through by telling these ladies how to know Christ personally.

In 1978, Pat's son Tim, who was 15 years old at the time, was in the hospital with a broken neck from playing football. A dear friend from our church came to the hospital with her guitar and sang songs so sweetly and softly that blessed not only Tim, but all of us who were in his room. Other people visiting came and stood at the door to listen. Mary Ann was giving her life away by bringing God's love and peace to them through her gift of music. God wants to use any talent or gifts we have for His glory. After all, we were given the ability by God and He wants us to use whatever He has given us.

Giving our lives away is simply walking in obedience and living the Christian life in front of everyone we meet. My friend Margaret is a prayer warrior and she prays for me, my ministry and Johnny every day. She has a copy of my calendar and wants me to let her know when I need special prayer. She also has a number of Scriptures that she prays for me.

When you pray for your lost friends and family members, you are giving your life away. When you pray for a neighbor who is sick, you are giving your life away. Praying for our nation and its leaders is giving our life away. When we pray, we are asking God to come in and do what we have no power to do.

Our world would be better if each of us would begin practicing giving the best gift ever—ourselves.

Praying you have a blessed Christmas,

Carole Lewis

What are some other ways we can give our lives away?

- ♥ Do you have the gift of teaching? Volunteer to teach a Bible study at your church, or volunteer to teach at a nursing home or prison.
- ♥ Can you play a musical instrument or sing? Take your guitar to a children's hospital and sing to the children who are sick and in need of what you have to give. You will not only bless the children, but their families as well.

On the First Day of Christmas My True Love Gave to Me...

Vicki Heath

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This time of year I am always fascinated by the gift recommendations out there to help us find the perfect present for those on our shopping list. Every year, hundreds of people wait with great anticipation to see what Oprah has on her “favorite things” Christmas List. If that does not help, you can go to YouTube and watch a video showing the top ten best presents to give this season. You can actually *Google* “what to give the person who has everything” and 286,000 results come up. Recommendations are everything from white chocolate polar bears to recycled glass tree globes. By far the most telling gift recommendations of all time are two that I saw in the *Air Mall* magazine while flying up to Sandy Cove, MD last week. The first one is called *Bob’s Affirmation Box*. Every time the lid is opened, a happy voice pipes up “Looking good, Bob,” or “Way to go, Bob.” You can keep your keepsakes in it and receive a daily dose of encouragement for only \$24.95!

The second gift that grabbed my attention is a customized door mat. You can have your picture, your family’s picture or even your cat’s picture imprinted on the doormat with the message, “It’s about TIME you got home.” Are you getting it? Are you seeing what I am seeing? We live in a world of lonely, depleted, too busy people. It is a sad day when in order to hear a positive word, I have to buy the words in a box. It’s a sad day when a family is neglected in such a way that their hope is placed in a door mat to do the trick of encouraging more time at home.

Two Very Special Gifts

Therefore, I am recommending two very special gifts for you to give this season. Each gift is very expensive because it will cost you some time and effort, but is needed more than another new-fangled gadget out there.

The First Gift. The first gift is to give authentic words of encouragement daily to those around you. People are desperate for love and acceptance. I would love to

meet the person who thought up the idea for *Bob’s Box*. It was either someone who knows the power of the spoken word or someone who is a dry and thirsty soul. Take time this Christmas and write a special thank you note Christmas card to each of those in your FP4H class. It might be the only encouraging words they receive this season.

The Second Gift. My second gift recommendation is the gift of your presence. I am intentionally making myself available, especially to those in my FP4H class, this Christmas season. I know for some, Christmas is not a happy time and can be full of stress and sadness. I have put each of my class members in my phone so when they call, I can see their precious name pop up. I am committing to be there for my class members over the holidays. I know the days will be busy and full, but at least I can connect by phone with each of them. We are coming together to weigh and pray and I intend to be fully present; not distracted by the next thing on my Christmas list. I also plan to take time away from my work routine and actually spend that time with my family. That means I will not open my computer when they are in the room. I am asking God to provide time for me to accomplish my work responsibilities and not compromise my family time. He is a family man and I know He will do that for you too.

A wonderful thing about these two gifts is they have the supernatural capacity to reproduce! As a result of those you bless with your words and with your time, these gifts will be passed on to others! They really are the gifts that keep on giving! I call it divine re-gifting!

I hope each of you have a wonderful Christmas – full of Grace and Peace.

Vicki Heath



Balanced Living - Physical

The Gift of Fitness



Jeannie Blocher
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Have you ever thought of “fitness” as a gift? Most of us haven’t. We generally take it for granted that we can sit and stand, walk and run, and move around as we please. But if we stop and really think about it, we realize that God has given us the gift of mobility and if we are serious about taking care of our physical bodies, we are doing our part to maintain the gift of fitness and health that God has given us. This is why regular exercise is so important. It really is true that if we don’t “use it,” we will “lose it” in the area of strength and flexibility, as well as cardio fitness. We must take care of the gift that is given to us by God.

Think of it this way. If you were given a shiny red bike or a cool sports car for Christmas, you would take care of it, keep it clean, protect it from the elements and maintain it. Well, our bodies are our means of mobility just like that bike or sports car. We need to care for them, keep them clean with good foods, and keep them running strong with regular exercise to maintain our health. When it comes down to it, it is much more important to take care of our bodies than of any earthly possession we have. Our bodies are truly a great gift from God.

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own: you were bought at a price. Therefore glorify God with your body.
1 Corinthians 6:19-20

God has even come to dwell in us; the Holy Spirit lives inside the gift of the body he has given each of us. Your body is such a special place that you can even glorify Him with it. As you make progress to lose weight and get fit through First Place 4 Health, you can share your story when others ask how you did it and give glory to God. You can guide them to a First Place 4 Health Bible study so they, too, can experience hope and progress. You could even give them the “Gift of Fitness” for Christmas by giving them the “Gift of First Place 4 Health,” paying for them to attend a new session starting in January.

Think about it. You can give the “Gift of Fitness” to yourself and to others. You do it when you invite them to walk with you. You do it when you join a fitness class such as Body & Soul, and you do it by reaching out and encouraging them to join you in First Place 4 health

Wishing you a heart of thankfulness for all the gifts that God has given you.

Jeannie Blocher

President, Body and Soul Ministries
www.bodyandsoul.org



*Merry Christmas from Your Friends
at First Place 4 Health!*



*Back Row: Lisa Cramer, Bob Matthews, Lisa Lewis
Front Row: Pat Lewis, Carole Lewis, Vicki Heath*



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Westlink Christian Church
Wichita, KS

Digging Deeper Women's Weekend (Vicki Heath Speaking Engagement)

February 3-4, 2012
Sandy Cove Retreat
North East, MD

Pattern of Life Women's Conference (Carole Lewis Speaking Engagement)

February 24-25, 2012
Highland Lakes Camp & Conference Center
Spicewood, TX

Minnesota Area Leaders Meeting

February 25, 2012
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Better Together

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HIM Conference (Carole Lewis Speaking Engagement)

March 22-24, 2012
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Better Together

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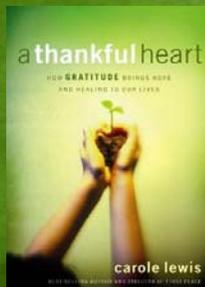
September 22, 2012
Cross Winds Church
Oronoco, MN (Rochester Area)

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Holiday Temptations, Oh No!

Steve Reynolds
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But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. James 1:14

Can you believe it? The holiday season is back! Where did the time go? It seems like yesterday we celebrated the New Year! This is the time of year when many people have a problem with weight control because of the holiday temptations. So it's necessary to stay focused on your goals. Now, more than ever, you need to know the importance of dedicating your body parts to God in order to be successful in maintaining your quest for healthy living.

Dedicate Your Hands

You might ask, "What do my hands have to do with losing weight?" The Bible says, *Cleanse your hands you sinners.* (Jas.4:8) Think about what you do with your hands. Let's dedicate our hands to God to do His work. Hands are an active part of our healthy lifestyle. You need to dedicate your hands to God and say, "God, I'm going to honor you with my hands. I'm going to please you with my hands." Use them to grab a bottle of water. Use them to detoxify your kitchen. Move your hands to select healthy foods and prepare healthy meals. Don't use them to pick up unhealthy food.

Dedicate Your Feet

The Bible says the feet that are dedicated to God are beautiful. *How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!* (Rom. 10:15) You need to dedicate your feet to God and say, "God I want to be a witness for you, wherever my feet take me. Whether I go to church, to my job, to the grocery store or anywhere else, I want to be a witness for you. I'm not going to allow these feet to take me to places that would displease you. Instead, I will use my feet to exercise and not walk into areas of temptation."

Dedicate Your Ears

Have you wondered how your ears affect your diet? Just think about all the information about food that comes to us through our ears. We are bombarded with talk about food, not only from the media but also from any small group of people standing around chatting. Much of the time the conversation is about food. We must resist the temptation about food that comes to us through our ears. Eve fell into sin when she heard what the serpent said about the forbidden fruit and was encouraged to eat it. She listened, she heard, she disobeyed. Let's not listen to the temptation that comes through our ears. Use them to listen to praise music while you exercise. Use them to listen to good advice from others. Use them to listen to God's voice. Use them to listen to information that will bring better health. Don't listen to words like "just a little won't hurt you."

With the holidays upon us, your healthy lifestyle will be tempted. Don't do it, don't allow your body parts (hands, feet or ears) to lead you into temptation. Remember, your body was made by God and for God.

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 three tons of weight.

Gift of Self

Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble.

1 Peter 3:8

One of the hardest lessons I have learned in my Christian walk is the difference between compassion and pity. Pity feels sorry for; compassion suffers with. Pity is about feeling superior; compassion acknowledges a common humanity that leaves me vulnerable to the same pain. Pity is being like the Pharisee who looked down at the tax collector and thanked God that, as one who religiously kept the law, he was exempt from the sins common to man. Compassion recognizes that we are all sinners before God. Compassion is humble enough to say, “Lord, have mercy on me a sinner,” knowing that it is God’s grace and not anything we have done that saves us.

What I have found is that when I can be compassionate and humble, I am much more effective than when I pity others and put myself in a position of superiority. Compassion requires that I love, that I enter into the other’s pain. Pity allows me to judge from a distance. Pity sends a check; compassion joins in the suffering. God didn’t observe my plight from afar. When Jesus took on human flesh and entered into the human experience, He became our role model for living on Earth. We are to do the same for our brothers and sisters. Giving of self is hard work, but that’s what you and I are called to do.

PRAYER

O Lord, it is by Your grace that I am saved. Help me to extend the love of Christ, who entered into the process, to my brothers and sisters in Christ today.

Journal: Think about a time when you confused pity with compassion, and talk to God about what you need to do differently in the future.

—Elizabeth Crews

Taken from Healthy Holiday Living. To order, visit our website, www.firstplace4health.com or call 800.727.523, x1002.



GIVING IT AWAY IDEAS

- ♥ Send Christmas notes to at least six people who blessed you this past year. For example: Thank your First Place leader or a member who has encouraged you. Be specific about how they helped you.
- ♥ Call someone who may be having a sad holiday and let them know you are thinking of them. For example: a friend who had a death in the family during the year or someone who is ill.
- ♥ Invite someone to be a part of your holiday celebration who would have little family activity otherwise. For example: Take that person to a church party or to look at Christmas lights.
- ♥ Make a spiritual event part of your Christmas tradition. For example: Read the Christmas story in Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 2:1-20 and Matthew 2:1-12; attend a candlelight service or a church pageant.
- ♥ Tell stories of family Christmases past. Find visual reminders such as old decorations, cards, photos or gifts of past Christmases that you have experienced. Share stories that older relatives have told about their Christmases. Heirloom stories tie families to their heritage and encourage them to make memories for the future.
- ♥ Mail New Year's greetings to as many friends and family as possible. The time after Christmas is often a period when you can have more time to be reflective and the notes are not lost in all the Christmas mail.
- ♥ SLOW DOWN, take a deep breath and plan a successful and meaningful holiday.
- ♥ DROP the unimportant, even if others want to pressure you.
- ♥ ADD the important, even if no one but you finds meaning in it.
- ♥ ENJOY people more than things and the gift of the Son of God more than anything else!

When He is first place, all the season's events hold the potential for JOY.



Success Story



Beverly Cody

There I was—50+ pounds overweight again. At least, this time it was only 50, not 80 or 90. A couple started First Place 4 Health at our church and I signed up. This time was a bit different because my husband, Charles, could come.

It was great the first two weeks. I couldn't wait to weigh in. That was my good/ bad meter. Then when the new wore off and I had to be weighed at the beginning of class, I cringed every time. When they began to talk about calories and food choices, it gave me a sick feeling. All I heard were things I did in the past that didn't work

Charles and I never wrote down our food or learned the memory verse. The only thing we managed to do was the Bible study, which I now realize is what we needed. The Bible study was the common denominator that brought us closer together. This lasted a few weeks, when our leaders had an unexpected move and class was cut short. The leader left "me" the material to lead the remainder of the session.

Life went on for a while without FP4H. I was now over forty and needed to get busy. So I mentioned to our associate pastor I might want to start another class. Charles agreed to be my co- leader, even if it meant he was only there for moral support. A couple of months went by and I didn't hear a word. Just as I was

beginning to think I would get out of this obligation, he called.

God knew before I knew that I belonged there. He knew if I was not leading the class, I would find a way out. God did the same with Charles. I told him up front I would not do this without him, and he loved me enough to come to every class. The best part of this journey with God and this class is that I now have a closer relationship with my husband of twenty five years.

It's interesting how when you are in the "process", you miss the small accomplishments and goals. I had begun the habits of the program, and it didn't bother me to track my food or to plan exercise anymore. I looked forward to it. How quickly a year passes. I had soon dropped the fifty pounds. This past year, I participated in two 5k runs and loved it. I'm now looking forward to running a 10K.

Before starting FP4H, I didn't know how to maintain. Did you know there is a whole article on "maintaining" in the material? I never saw that section before. I was always on my way up or on my way down. I told my friend I was little apprehensive with the thought of maintaining. She quickly reminded me I was already doing it. God had brought me there, and it was so easy. I can say now, "I'm a maintainer!" Yes, there are days that I get off track, but it takes a lot less time to get back on track. Praise God!

I have watched our church friends, close friends, and even our daughter, Kelly, lose weight. In this past year, they have shed approximately 250 pounds. Even Charles, after some reluctance, has lost more than 30 pounds and is still working on his goal of 45. I have seen him go from a *church goer* to a *God doer*.





Recipes

1,400-CALORIE CHRISTMAS DAY MENU

BREAKFAST

- 1 ½ slices *Raisin French Toast*
- 1 tbsp. sugar-free syrup
- 1 c. grapefruit sections
- 1 c. nonfat milk

CHRISTMAS MEAL

- 3 ozs. *Cinnamon-Apple Pork Tenderloin*
- ¾ c. *Orange-Glazed Sweet Potatoes*
- 1 c. green beans
- 2 c. mixed greens salad with 1 tbsp. light dressing
- 1/8 slice *Blue Ribbon Frozen Snickers Pie*

LUNCH OR DINNER

- 1 c. *Hearty Vegetable Soup*
- 2 c. large green salad with tomatoes, cucumbers, etc.
- 1 oz. turkey, cubed and placed on top of salad
- 1 tbsp. salad dressing (your choice = 1/2 fat)
- 3 crackers
- 1 c. yogurt with fresh fruit

Blue Ribbon Frozen Snickers Pie

Serves 8

- 3 graham cracker squares
- 12 ozs. frozen vanilla yogurt or ice cream
- 1 c. Lite Cool Whip (or *Homemade Whipped Topping*)
- 3 tbsp. chunky peanut butter
- 1 1 oz. (4 serving size) box chocolate pudding, dry

Crush graham crackers into fine crumbs and place in an 8x8-inch baking dish. Mix all other ingredients together. Pour into dish, being careful not to disturb crumbs. Freeze until firm. Remove from freezer 10 minutes before serving. Cut into 8 equal portions.

Raisin French Toast

Serves 1

- ¼ c. egg substitute
- ¼ tsp. vanilla flavoring
- 1 tsp. nonfat milk
- 1 ½ slices cinnamon-raisin bread
- Nonstick cooking spray

In a shallow bowl, combine egg substitute, vanilla and milk; add slices of bread, turning until egg mixture is absorbed. Spray a small nonstick skillet or griddle with nonstick cooking spray; preheat. Cook bread over medium heat 3 to 5 minutes, turning once, until golden brown on both sides.

Cinnamon-Apple Pork Tenderloin

Serves 4

- 1 lb. pork tenderloin
- 2 apples, peeled, cored and sliced
- 2 tsp. cornstarch
- 1 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 2 tbsp. raisins

Preheat oven to 400° F. Place the tenderloin in roasting pan or casserole dish with a lid. In medium bowl, combine apples, cornstarch, cinnamon and raisins; stir. Spoon apple mixture around tenderloin. Cover and bake 40 minutes; remove lid and spoon mixture over top of tenderloin. Bake uncovered 15 to 20 minutes longer, or until tenderloin is browned and cooked through.

Homemade Whipped Topping

Put 1 cup light cream in mixing bowl and whip until fluffy. Add 1 tbs. sugar and ½ tsp. vanilla. Continue whipping until forms peaks. Serve.

1400-Calorie Christmas Recipes *Continued*

Hearty Vegetable Soup

Serves 10

1 bag frozen mixed vegetables
2 cans beef broth
1 can vegetable broth
1 can chicken broth
1 15-oz. can chopped tomatoes
4 medium potatoes, cut into bite-size pieces
½ lb. carrots, sliced
¼ head cabbage, sliced
1 medium onion, chopped
Basil and bay leaf to taste

Combine ingredients in a large pot. Simmer until vegetables are tender.

Orange-Glazed Sweet Potatoes

Serves 4

3 c. sweet potatoes (about 2 1/2 lbs.), peeled and thinly sliced
1 small lemon, thinly sliced
2 tsp. reduced-fat margarine
2 2/3 tbsp. orange juice
1 tsp. grated orange rind
3 ½ tbsp. firmly packed brown sugar
Nonstick cooking spray

Preheat oven to 400° F. Arrange potatoes and lemon slices in 13x9-inch baking dish coated with cooking spray; set aside. Melt margarine in small bowl. Add orange juice, orange rind and brown sugar to melted margarine; mix well to blend. Drizzle mixture over potatoes; cover dish with foil. Bake 35 minutes; uncover, stir and bake 30 minutes more.

Party Dips

Spinach-Pimiento Dip

Serves 25

2 c. plain low-fat yogurt
¾ c. low-fat sour cream
5 ozs. chopped-frozen spinach, thawed
¼ c. green onions, minced
1 2-oz. jar pimiento, chopped
1 tbsp. Creole mustard
½ tsp. Cavender's All-Purpose Green Seasoning (any all-purpose seasoning)
½ tsp. garlic powder
White pepper to taste
1 head of cabbage
Fresh vegetables for dipping

In a medium bowl, whisk together yogurt and sour cream until smooth. Squeeze spinach to remove moisture. Stir spinach and remaining ingredients into the yogurt mixture. Chill for 1 to 2 hours before serving. Serve in a hollowed-out cabbage head with fresh vegetables arranged around the dip on a platter.

Spinach-Artichoke Dip

Serves 12

1 9-oz. package frozen, no-salt-added artichoke hearts, thawed and drained
4 ozs. low-fat cream cheese, room temperature
1 10-oz. package frozen creamed spinach, thawed
½ c. plain nonfat yogurt
¼ c. thinly sliced green onions, green part only
1 tsp. salt-free Italian herb seasoning
1/8 tsp. salt

Thoroughly dry artichokes and chop into small pieces. In medium bowl, whisk together remaining ingredients, blending well. Stir in artichokes. Cover and refrigerate for at least 1 hour to allow flavors to blend. Stir before serving. Serve with toasted pita chips or sliced raw vegetables.