



All is Calm, All is Bright

By Vicki Heath

You may not know it, but your home has a light over it. The Bible says that we, as followers of Christ, are the light of the world. We should be shining as bright as a city on a hill. The world needs our light. This Christmas there will be people coming to your house seeking love, food and good news. At Christmas our homes are the place where the nativity comes to life. I think back to the first nativity found in the gospels of Luke and Matthew. How Mary and Joseph handled that first Christmas amazes me. There are

lessons to be learned from the first *O Holy Night*.

LESSON ONE - Expect Company.

As the angel choir withdrew into heaven, the shepherders talked it over. "Let's get over to Bethlehem as fast as we can and see for ourselves what God has revealed to us." They left, running, and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. (Luke 2:15-6 *The Message*) The shepherders showed up pretty much unannounced. I can imagine Mary did not have much time to prepare something good to eat or to even change into her special holiday outfit. I doubt the shepherders spent the night, as our family does on Christmas Eve, but that was still quite a "herd" just dropping by. I can even imagine she had to say, "Excuse me, fellows!" "I have to nurse the babe." Even still, *Silent Night, Holy Night*.

Right now I am trying to figure out where everyone will sleep this Christmas. I can move Mack and Mark to the little room with the twin beds and Megan and Philip can have Mack's room, but what about the baby? Joy and Michael can go to Mark's room, but then he has to go to work. That's okay! Then the grand boys can be on the "out-bed," (That's what they call the pull-out sofa.) and Ryley can have the small room. See where I am going with this? If I allow it, this could become a stressful situation. I know it can be inconvenient and a bit crowded with all the company, but look what we have to celebrate! Jesus is the one who makes all of this possible. He is the one who has blessed us with this large and crazy family.

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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All is Calm, All is Bright - *Continued*

LESSON TWO - Expect things to be a bit messy.

While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. (Luke 2:6-7)

There were animals in the house/barn with Mary and Joe. I expect Joseph had a bit of shoveling to do and I'm not talking snow. Jesus was the focus of the visit. It helps me to remember that company, either expected or unexpected, is a good thing at Christmas, and I should not be stressed about my house. I am still finding Nerf bullets all over my house from last Christmas. Celebrations have a tendency to become quite messy. There will be toys and bullets, wrapping paper, boxes, dirty dishes in the sink and so much more. I have already made up my mind to be grateful for the opportunity for us to be together, and I will not focus on the state of the house. There will be plenty of time for that. It will be 2015 and I will be missing the chaos.

I expect Mary did not have time or energy to straighten and dust the barn before the company. It did not matter.

LESSON THREE - Make sure the presents mean something.

When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. (Matthew 2:10-11) In my research on this subject, I found: "The magi came bearing gifts." These were not gifts selected at random. Since the early days of Christianity, biblical scholars and theologians have offered varying interpretations of the meaning and significance of the gold, frankincense and myrrh that the magi presented to Jesus, according to the Gospel of Matthew 2:11. These valuable items were standard gifts to honor a king or deity in the ancient world: gold as a precious metal, frankincense as perfume or incense, and myrrh as anointing oil. In addition to the honor and status implied by the value of the gifts of the magi, scholars think that these three were chosen for their special spiritual symbolism about Jesus himself: gold representing his kingship, frankincense a symbol of his priestly role, and myrrh a prefiguring of his death and embalming (an interpretation made popular in the well-known Christmas carol *We Three Kings*.¹) I do think the gifts had special meaning and so should our gifts. I shop for Christmas presents all year. In the spring a year ago, I found a beautiful oil painting of First Missionary Baptist Church where my daughter, Megan, was married. I bought the painting and gave it to her and Philip last Christmas, because it had meaning. I was going to give her a purse, but this was way better. I love the Christmas bundles we are offering this month. Look for them in this newsletter and www.firstplace4health.com. These are great gifts, with meaning and purpose, to help you and yours have a Merry Christmas and a healthy New Year!

I will never forget the Christmas I ended up babysitting the small child of some non-believing friends. It was not the most convenient time. I was bringing out the Christmas decorations and I unpacked the nativity. We sat on the floor and she opened the box and brought out all of the characters. I explained this one is a wise man, this one a shepherd; these two are Joseph and Mary. She holds up the little baby and says, "And who is this one?" She did not know! What a Christmas blessing I received as I told her about baby Jesus and how much He loves her. I am planning on lighting up my house this year with more than electric lights.

Let your light shine bright this Christmas.



Vicki Heath.....vicki.heath@fp4h.com

¹ <http://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/biblehistorydaily>



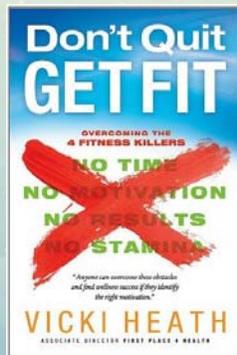
Holiday Tips for Fitting in Fitness

- ♥ Plan holiday activities around things other than food.
- ♥ Go on an ice-skating party followed by hot spiced apple cider.
- ♥ Bundle up and go on a walking sightseeing trip to view the colorful decorations and lights in your neighborhood. Go on a walking window-shopping expedition at your favorite mall.
- ♥ Take a trip to the woods to chop down your own tree.
- ♥ Have a tree-trimming party where everyone brings their favorite healthy treat.
- ♥ Have a caroling party and go from house to house (or floor to floor) and sing.

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Success Story ~ Barb Harrison



I joined First Place 4 Health in the inaugural class of September 2012, at the invitation of our leader, Kathy Fox. I wasn't particularly looking for a weight-loss program, even though I was seriously overweight. Kathy handed me the information as I walked into church that Sunday morning; I took a look at it during the service, pulled out my checkbook and filled out the information. Kathy was a little surprised when I handed it back to her right after the service. She commented that I had made up my mind quickly, and I said "Why not?" "I've got nothing to lose by trying it out!"

I weighed 221 lbs. at weigh-in a few weeks later; my initial goal was to be under 200 lbs. By December, when we closed out the first session, I was a little over 200. I was determined to stick to my quiet time, exercising and eating right during the Christmas holidays, even

though we were not meeting or weighing in. I bought a Beth Moore Bible study on strongholds and kept tracking and exercising. When we came back in January, I had lost 8 lbs. over the holidays. Praise God! I knew then that this program works, and I had everything I needed inside of me through the power of the Holy Spirit to be in control of my eating. I have come to realize that my body truly is the temple of God, and I can't be fit for service in the kingdom if I am not physically fit. I am now, for the first time in my adult life, at the proper weight (165 lbs.) for my height. More important than the outward change is the inward change that has occurred through spending time with my Savior every day. He is my portion and my all!

I have come to realize that my body truly is the temple of God, and I can't be fit for service in the kingdom if I am not physically fit.

I love sharing my testimony about how this program has brought me closer to the Lord; how He healed me of a lot of hurts and emotional baggage that I carried around, in addition to the 56 lbs. I shed. I want everyone to know of the freedom that is in Christ when we put Him first!



A Work in Progress – Part II ~ Pastor Steve Reynolds

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us. Hebrews 12:1

You have to start thinking of yourself as a work in progress. This means that your work will never truly be complete. This is the first thing you have to wrap your head around when trying to figure out how to produce change in your life: you are to be engaged in a process of *constant change*. I love how Paul describes this in Colossians 3:8-10:

But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him.

This is an incredible passage of Scripture in which Paul describes how you must put off the old and put on the new. If you want to maximize your health and your life, you need to be in a constant state of change by putting off your old bad habits and putting on new good ones. Think of those old habits as weights that are slowing you down and keeping you from running toward the goal.

In my previous article we discussed the first two points about change: namely that change is supernatural, meaning that when you are in Christ—when your life is centered on Him—a supernatural change begins to take place in you from the inside, not the outside. And our second point, that *change is mental*, emphasizes that you have to do some things that will exercise your mind: read the Bible every day, get in a good church, read something on health and wellness every day, and reject negativity. Now we will cover Points #3 and #4

Point #3: Change Is Helpful

Change is flat-out helpful. We are creatures of habit, but we have to recognize that change *is* helpful. In Galatians 6:7-9, Paul says this:

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.

This important passage of Scripture contains what I believe to be the most important and powerful law in the entire world. It is a law that none of us can escape and one that every one of us must embrace, because whether we acknowledge it or not, we are going to live it. It is called the law of *sowing and reaping*. This is an agricultural term used in farming, and it means that whatever you sow, you will reap. If you want to live a healthy life, you have to sow healthy habits. The Bible is clear that if you sow to your flesh, you will reap corruption. That is what I did in my life—I ate what I wanted to eat, never exercised, and sowed to my flesh. And what did it do? It corrupted my body with high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes. But when I began to sow to the Spirit, I started to reap new life. Today I am free of all those diseases!

It's simple: *The decisions you make will determine your destiny*. For the most part, you are where you are today because of the decisions you have made or the decisions that others have made for you. You are where you are because of the choices you made in the past. So, here is the deal: If you want to change your life and change what you are reaping, begin to sow the correct things into your life. Don't forget the promise found in Galatians 6:9:

Let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.

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Point #4: Change Is Possible

Finally, you have to understand that change is possible. The enemy will tempt you to believe that you cannot change. This is a lie and you must reject this thought. In Romans 8:31, Paul says, *What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?* Nothing is too hard for Him. You just have to trust that with God, change is possible. In action movies, we all love it when the good guys win. The cool thing is that God is a conqueror, and through His help, you can be a conqueror as well. You can fight the battle of overcoming all those bad habits and excuses so you can be victorious. All things are possible with God, so stop making excuses and start taking action today!

It's time to change your life! Remember, change is produced when we know that *change is supernatural, change is mental, change is helpful and change is possible.*



Steve Reynolds is the Lead Pastor of Capital Baptist Church in Annandale, VA. He is the author of the books: *Bod4God* and *Get Off the Couch*. And he is also the creator of the *Losing to Live* Weight Loss Competition. Steve has lost over 120 pounds and has led his church to lose over 9 tons of weight.

Steve Reynolds.....sreynolds@bod4god.com

Holiday Tips for Staying on Track

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.



Upcoming Events

Fun & Fitness 4 Life

January 9-11, 2015

Sandy Cove

Northeast, MD

Contact: helen.baratta@fp4h.com

Florida Area Training Meeting

January 10, 2015

Thomasville Road Baptist Church

Tallahassee, FL

Contact: kathyfox64@gmail.com

Louisiana Area Training Meeting

January 17, 2015

First Baptist Church - Jennings

Jennings, LA

Contact: cpeavy@centurytel.net

Faith, Fun & Fitness

January 31, 2015

William Jessup University

Rocklin, CA

Contact: helen.baratta@fp4h.com

Mississippi Area Training Meeting

February 7, 2015

Chester Baptist Church

Ackerman, MS

Contact: glenna@netdoor.com

Revive!

March 14, 2015

Cherry Hills Baptist Church

Springfield, IL

Contact: becky_bergner@yahoo.com

Minnesota Area Training Meeting

April 11, 2015

Cottage Grove, MN

Contact: arla.frigstad.fp4h@gmail.com

Wisconsin Area Training Meeting

April 11, 2015

Immanuel Lutheran Church

Waupun, WI

Contact: helen.baratta@fp4h.com

Texas Area Training Meeting

April 11, 2015

Calvary Baptist Church

Nacogdoches, TX

Contact: mandn4him@wildblue.net

New York Area Training Meeting

April 18, 2015

Faith Baptist Church

Rexford, NY

Contact: helen.baratta@fp4h.com

Florida Area Training Meeting

April 18, 2015

Candlewood Community Church

Land O' Lakes, FL

Contact: glennaW@netdoor.com

Mississippi Area Training Meeting

August 15, 2015

Rankin County Baptist Assoc.

Pearl, MS

Contact: glenna@netdoor.com

Wellness Week @ Round Top

October 8-15, 2015

Round Top Retreat

Round Top, Texas

Contact: helen.baratta@fp4h.com

For more information about any of these events, please visit www.FirstPlace4Health.com and click on events.



Devotional – Honoring the Family Name

You will be with child and will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. (Luke 1:31)

When our son, John, was born, I wanted to name him John Talton Lewis, Jr., after his daddy. His daddy had always gone by “Johnny,” so we decided to call our little boy John. When John grew up and married Lisa, their first child was a boy, and they named him John Talton Lewis, III, and called him Tal to differentiate between Johnny and John.

Have you ever thought about the fact that God the Father chose the name for His only Son, Jesus? The angel was only a messenger delivering the news from God to Mary. Names are as important today as they were at the time Jesus was born. I knew a little boy named Dan McGrew who spent his childhood struggling to overcome the negative connotation of his name.

As believers, we have been adopted into the family of God because of the sacrifice Jesus made when He died on the cross at Calvary. There never will be a name quite as special as the name Jesus.

The Christmas season is a time when the world’s eyes and ears are open to the name of Jesus. Christmas carols play in the shopping malls, and cards, wrapping paper and gifts point to the “reason for the season.” This year, let’s think of ways we can bring honor to our “family name” of Jesus. Here are a few things we could do:

- ♥ Bring joy to someone in a nursing home by giving him or her the gift of time.
- ♥ Take your kids to deliver gifts to a family who needs them.
- ♥ Invite a lost friend or someone who is lonely to go with you to a Christmas celebration at church.
- ♥ Invite a single friend or someone who would spend Christmas alone to spend Christmas with your family.
- ♥ Encourage your family to each give an amount to world missions that is greater than they spend on any single gift for each other.
- ♥ Show Christ’s love to every cashier you encounter this season.
- ♥ Write a note to someone who has impacted your Christian growth.

The crass commercialism of Christmas can be used as a time for those of us in the family of God to make a real difference in our world. Will we do it?

Prayer: *Dear Lord, I pray that this Christmas season will find me showing Your love to everyone I meet. Show me ways to impact my world by bringing honor to Your precious name. Thank You for adopting me into Your family. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

Journal: What specific things do you plan to do this Christmas season to bring honor to the name of Jesus?

*This devotional taken from *Healthy Holiday Living*. On sale now in the *First Place 4 Health* online store.



Holiday Dips, Sides and Breakfast

Layered Bean Dip

6 (8-inch) flour tortillas
Cooking spray
1/2 teaspoon paprika
2 teaspoons fresh lime juice
1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
1 (16-ounce) can organic refried beans
1 cup organic bottled salsa
2/3 cup frozen whole-kernel corn, thawed
1/4 cup chopped green onions
2 tablespoons chopped black olives
3/4 cup (3 ounces) shredded 4-cheese Mexican blend cheese
3/4 cup (6 ounces) light sour cream
2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro

Preheat oven to 350°. Cut each tortilla into 8 wedges, and arrange wedges in single layers on 2 baking sheets. Lightly spray wedges with cooking spray; sprinkle with paprika. Bake at 350° for 15 minutes or until lightly browned and crisp. Cool. Combine juice, cumin, and beans in a medium bowl, stirring until well combined. Spread mixture evenly into an 11 x 7-inch baking dish coated with cooking spray. Spread salsa evenly over beans. Combine corn, onions, and olives; spoon corn mixture evenly over salsa. Sprinkle cheese over corn mixture. Bake at 350° for 20 minutes or until bubbly. Let stand 10 minutes. Top with sour cream; sprinkle with cilantro. Serve with tortilla chips.

Nutritional Information: 162 Calories, 5.6g Fat, 6.8g Protein, 23.2 Carbohydrate, 2.8g Fiber, 13mg Cholesterol, 1.3mg Iron, 331mg Sodium

Spicy Crab Dip

Cooking spray
2 tablespoons minced shallots
1 teaspoon minced garlic
1 pound lump crabmeat, shell pieces removed, divided
1/4 cup water
1 tablespoon hot pepper sauce (such as Tabasco)
2 teaspoons salt-free Cajun seasoning
1/2 cup canola mayonnaise
1/3 cup 1/3-less-fat cream cheese, softened
1/4 cup minced red bell pepper
2 tablespoons lemon juice
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
3 tablespoons panko
3 tablespoons minced fresh chives

Preheat oven to 450°. Heat a small saucepan over medium heat. Coat pan with cooking spray. Add shallots and garlic to pan; cook for 2 minutes, stirring frequently. Place 1 cup crab in a food processor. Add the shallot mixture, 1/4 cup water, pepper sauce, and Cajun seasoning to crab; process until smooth. Spoon mixture into a large bowl, and stir in remaining crab, mayonnaise, and the next 5 ingredients (through black pepper). Transfer the mixture to a 1-quart glass or ceramic casserole dish coated lightly with cooking spray. Combine panko and chives in a small bowl; sprinkle over crab mixture. Coat panko mixture with cooking spray. Bake at 450° for 30 minutes or until browned and bubbly. Let stand 5 minutes.

Nutritional Information: 95 Calories, 5.3g Fat, 8.4g Protein, 2g Carbohydrate, .1g Fiber, 43mg Cholesterol, .4mg Iron, 253mg Sodium



Hash Brown Casserole with Bacon and Cheese

- | | |
|--|--|
| 6 bacon slices | ½ cup fat-free sour cream |
| 1 cup chopped onion | ½ tsp. salt |
| 2 garlic cloves, minced | ¼ tsp. freshly ground black pepper |
| 1 (32 oz.) package frozen Southern-style hash brown potatoes | 1 (10.75 oz.) can 30% reduced sodium, 98% fat free condensed cream of mushroom soup, undiluted |
| 1 cup (4 oz.) shredded four cheese blend, divided | nonstick cooking spray |
| ½ cup chopped green onions | |

Cook bacon in a large nonstick skillet over medium heat until crisp. Remove bacon from pan and crumble. Discard drippings from pan. Add 1 cup onion and garlic to the pan and cook for 5 minutes or until tender, stirring frequently. Stir in the potatoes, and then cover and cook for 15 minutes, stirring occasionally. Combine the crumbled bacon, ¼ cup cheese, green onions, sour cream, salt, pepper and soup in a large bowl. Add the potato mixture and toss gently to combine. Spoon mixture into an 11" x 7" baking dish coated with nonstick cooking spray and sprinkle with the remaining ¾ cup cheese. Cover with foil coated with nonstick cooking spray. Refrigerate for 8 hours or overnight. Preheat oven to 350° F. Remove casserole from refrigerator and let stand at room temperature 15 minutes. Bake the casserole, covered, at 350° F for 30 minutes. Uncover and bake an additional 30 minutes or until bubbly around edges and the cheese begins to brown.

Nutrition Information: 293 calories, 10g fat, 12.2g protein, 41.4g carbohydrate, 4.7g fiber, 31mg cholesterol, 720mg sodium

Brussels Sprouts Gratin

- | | |
|---|--|
| 2 hickory-smoked bacon slices | 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper |
| 4 large shallots, thinly sliced | Cooking spray |
| 2 pounds Brussels sprouts, trimmed and halved | 1 (2-ounce) slice French bread baguette |
| 1 cup water | 3 tablespoons butter |
| 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt, divided | |

Preheat broiler. Cook bacon in a large skillet over medium heat until crisp. Remove bacon from pan, reserving drippings; crumble. Increase heat to medium-high. Add shallots to drippings in pan; sauté for 2 minutes or until tender, stirring occasionally. Add Brussels sprouts and 1 cup water; bring to a boil. Cover pan loosely with aluminum foil; cook 6 minutes or until Brussels sprouts are almost tender. Uncover and remove from heat. Sprinkle with 1/4 teaspoon salt and pepper; toss to combine. Spoon Brussels sprouts mixture into a 2-quart broiler-safe glass or ceramic baking dish coated with cooking spray. Place bread in a food processor, and process until finely ground. Melt butter in skillet over medium-high heat. Add bread crumbs and remaining 1/4 teaspoon salt to pan; sauté for 2 minutes or until toasted, stirring frequently. Add cooked, crumbled bacon to toasted bread-crumbs mixture. Sprinkle the bread-crumbs mixture over Brussels sprouts mixture. Broil 3 minutes or until golden and thoroughly heated.

Nutritional Information: 133 Calories, 5.8g Fat, 5.9g Protein, 17.9g Carbohydrate, 4.6g Fiber, 14mg Cholesterol, 2.1mg Iron, 280mg Sodium

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