



NOVEMBER NEWS

Thankful for Weird Things

Vicki Heath

Cleaning out under the house after Hurricane Matthew, I came across an old prayer journal from my first year as a Christian, 1972. My Sunday School teacher at FBC Jacksonville had challenged us to list 100 things for which we were thankful. But there was a catch. The items could not be the typical things like your family, your church, friends etc. Those things are not trivia, but I think she really wanted us to understand thankfulness on another level. Just a few from my list: electric curlers, backpack, chewing gum, softball and pay phones. Those are weird things. I wish I could remember why I listed them.

In honor of Thanksgiving and in celebration of my 44th year as a Christian, for which I am eternally grateful, I'm starting a new list of weird and unusual things to give thanks for. First on my list: pain. I never thought I would find myself giving thanks for the physical pain I have in my body. It's been three years now that my arthritis has really impacted my life. Looking back, I can honestly say that the pain has served a purpose. Here is why I am thankful for this pain:

- It has made me a more compassionate person.
- It has identified me with Christ in a new way.
- It has made me stronger physically and spiritually.

Second: Curly hair. Seriously, those of you who know that I have a love/hate relationship with my hair, I am finally thankful. Being born with natural curly hair has been a battle for me. As a teenager, the long and sleek look was in and all I ever wanted was hair like Cher. The arthritis that is present in my hands has made it really difficult to blow-dry my hair. Holding a brush and a blow-dryer for thirty minutes is a high price to pay for straight hair. Good news! I have natural curly hair that looks just fine when I just let it dry. I am now finding delight in and am grateful for—the first time ever—something that has given me much grief.

Third: Mad driving skills. Until we learned to drive a stick shift, my dad wouldn't let us get our driver's license; and being married to a Heath is even worse. All Heaths are required to have mad driving skills. That includes: drive a tractor, back up a van WITH a trailer attached, launch a boat from a trailer, parallel park a Lincoln Town car (Yes, that is the car we owned, while living in New Orleans, with only "on the street" parking.) and a variety of other mad Nascar skills. This year for our annual wellness week, it was required of me to drive a 12-passenger van from Bush Intercontinental airport to Round Top, TX in Houston traffic! I did it—giving thanks for mad driving skills all the way there.

Okay! We all agree these are weird things to give thanks for. What's the point? Thankful people are healthier; live longer, have more friends. Second point: God can use weird and unusual things to bless us and bring Himself glory. The Bible says in Ephesians 5:20 (ESV) "Give thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." On Thanksgiving Day, you can look around the table and see the obvious things with which God has blessed you. You will have to look a little closer for the small things. Start your list of weird and unusual things to be thankful for. Start today and finish on Christmas Day. It will deepen your appreciation for God who provides all of your needs. **"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows" (James 1:17). Look for the gifts.**





DEVOTIONAL ~ *Small Victories, Great Reward*

BUT THANKS BE TO
GOD! HE GIVES US
THE VICTORY
THROUGH OUR LORD
JESUS CHRIST.

1 CORINTHIANS 15:57 NIV

So often, when I declare the victories I've experienced through Christ, I get stuck on the "big ones"—those huge nuclear wars in life where simply surviving is a victory in itself. These big victories are easy to identify; they come to mind quickly, and they often draw an attentive crowd when revealed. When God gives us victories such as these, it's hard not to say thank you frequently and with great fervor. After all, Christ ultimately gave us complete victory over sin and death. That's a very big deal. But what about the smaller, less obvious victories won in our daily lives?

I remember a very specific Thanksgiving Day dinner. It was rapidly turning into what I refer to as a family fiasco. The kids were bickering. The grownups were grouchy with the bickering kids. And, of course, the turkey couldn't get trimmed fast enough. Tradition in our family has always included a special pre-dinner prayer. However, this particular year, I was wondering if we'd even eat, let alone pray

together. Thankfully, a full-fledged fiasco was diverted when my mom (God bless grandmas) finished with the turkey. Everyone was eager to fill their plates with the steaming goodness and get down to the business of eating. I know I certainly was! But I also knew that if we gave into our physical hunger before satisfying our spiritual hunger, we'd be in a great deal of trouble.

"You've got to be kidding!" my son protested, his fork lifted in anticipation. "Can't we just pray later? Besides, I don't have anything big to thank Him for this year." Normally, our family prayer time included each of us thanking God for the major victories in our lives over the past year. Right then, I realized that I had failed to teach my children something very basic but very important. Every victory is worth thanking God for. Sure, the "big ones" are awesome, but we each have little victories in Christ every single day—victories for which we often fail to thank Him.

Out of the mouths of babes, I thought, as my young daughter spoke up and said, "Thank You, God, for cupcakes and for helping me on my spelling test." Her simple thank-you was all we needed to start celebrating and thanking God for our victories. I knew then that we would make it through Thanksgiving with attitudes filled with gratitude, not grumpiness.

As I brought that heartfelt prayer to a close, I was able to thank God for the victory we had just enjoyed while sitting around the table—a special victory for a very special day. Thanksgiving is the perfect holiday to honor God for the victories He has orchestrated in our lives. Why not start a new tradition and thank God for making you victorious through Him? And remember to celebrate the many battles won (big and small) along the way. *Father, so often I forget to thank You for who You are, and that it is You who gives me the victory in every area of life. Thanks for providing all that I need, and much more, according to Your riches in glory.*

Journal: Every day for the next week, record what you are thankful for, no matter how seemingly insignificant. At the end of seven days, reread those pages and reflect on how richly God has blessed you.

Carol VanAtta

This devotional was taken from Healthy Holiday Living, available now in the First Place 4 Health online store—www.FirstPlace4Health.com



Organic on a Budget

With the higher costs of organic foods, you may be wondering if the organic bananas you've been putting in your cart are worth the extra money. There are a few reasons that some organic foods are worth the cash.

- ✓ **They Have More Nutrients:** Reports of organic food not being better for you are outdated. A brand new analysis of about 100 studies, including more than 40 published in the past 7 years, found that the average levels of nearly a dozen nutrients are 25% higher in organic produce.
- ✓ **They May Help you Lose Weight:** Research in rats found that those fed an all-organic diet (versus conventional food) had lower weights, less body fat, and stronger immune systems. Plus, the "clean diet" animals were calmer and slept better.
- ✓ **You Consume Fewer Toxins:** Eating the 12 most contaminated fruits and vegetables exposes you to about 14 pesticides a day. A study supported by the EPA measured pesticide levels in children's urine before and after a switch to an organic diet. After just 5 days, the chemicals decreased to undetectable levels.



These are the best foods for your hard-earned grocery budget.

Produce. Some fruits and vegetables have higher pesticide residues that government lab tests show even after washing. These include: peaches, apples, bell peppers, celery, nectarines, strawberries, cherries, pears, grapes (imported), spinach, lettuce, and potatoes. Always buying these foods organic is ideal, but if you can't, focus on those you eat all the time.

Savvy Shopping Tip. Buy organic produce in season (preferably local), when it's most affordable--usually at half the cost.

Milk, Yogurt & Cheese. Per half gallon, organic milk is more expensive, but it's worth the splurge. Recent studies show that organic milk:

- contains 75% more beta-carotene
- has 50% more vitamin E, a powerful antioxidant that fights cancer and heart disease.
- provides 70% more omega-3 fatty acids.

At three servings of dairy a day, milk can be a frugal option—about 50 cents per 1-cup serving (versus 31 cents for conventional).

Savvy Shopping Tip. Download coupons. Many organic dairy companies offer printable coupons on their sites for as much as \$1 off a half gallon of milk or container of yogurt.

Meat & Poultry. Studies have shown that organic meats contain more omega-3s, essential fatty acids that are linked to reduced rates of heart disease, depression, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, inflammation, and Alzheimer's disease. Animals raised organically can't be given antibiotics or growth hormones.

Savvy Shopping Tip. *Become a "flexitarian":* Choose beans as a protein source a few times a week. A 15-ounce can of organic beans is just \$1.20, and a 1-cup serving provides 36% of your daily fiber needs. Beans are some of the highest ranking antioxidant foods.

Nearly every mainstream supermarket now carries organic store-brand options that will save you money. Look for those items and to stay on budget and buy organic when you can.



Fitbit Faith ~ Sherry Leggett

“I’m going downstairs and make sure the doors are locked,” announced my husband one night after I’d already collapsed in bed. I smirked at his hasty chivalrous exit, as I knew his true motivation was either he had yet to make his daily Fitbit step goal, or he was close to beating me or another friend on the number of steps in friendly competition. I wearily thought, “Did I get my daily time and steps with Christ today?” I call it my “Fitbit faith”—a modern version of putting on the “full armor of God” (Ephesians 6:11-16). Verse 11 states, “Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.” For the *fitness enthusiast hopeful* or the *beginning soul exerciser*, here are four launch pad ideas to use fitness trackers to increase your activity and increase your Fitbit faith.



- 1. Obtain equipment for success.** There are several options from one of the many Fitbit models to Nike Fuelband, Jawbone UP, BodyMedia Fitcore, Garmin or the Adidas MiCoach. You can track steps, calories, distance travelled, pace, caloric intake, and even heart rate and sleep. Equipment for your spiritual journey, could include the “sword of the spirit”—the Bible, Bible app, First Place 4 Health Bible study, prayer journal, or pen. Think of devotions and Bible study as exercise for your soul. Prayer is always a convenient tool, but if you want to grow, you need to set up your environment to help you be successful at Fitbit faith.
- 2. Develop a habit.** Guided by data, such as calories burned or steps taken, you will have ongoing motivation and guidance. Commit to wearing your Fitbit for 30 days; establish the habit of putting it on before you leave home each morning. Also, put on your faith every day by utilizing your equipment. Try doing devotions or Bible study every day for 30 days, even if briefly. You will observe God giving you direction and strength every day! “Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ” (Romans 10:17).
- 3. Establish a goal.** Make a SMART goal—Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound—to make slow, steady progress. An example goal might be, “I’ll increase my steps by 1,000 a day over last week’s average steps per day. I’ll do that until I obtain an average of 10,000 steps a day.” Over time, these small improvements will make a difference, and your goal will soon be your new normal! Faith-building goals could be, “During breakfast, I will do some type of daily devotions for 30 days.” Soon you’ll realize the power and strength provided by God that flourishes with the routine. Instead of mentally fighting to get in your devotional and prayer time, you will actually crave that time.
- 4. Invite a friend on your journey.** Fitness trackers also have apps that host challenges to groups aiming for the same goal. Several research studies have shown social exercise (whether via a digital support group or live) aids in helping us perform more regular exercise; therefore, helping us keep that Fitbit from coming to a halt in a drawer!

Finally, on your faith journey, get involved in a First Place 4 Health group or a church to deepen your transformation in your spiritual life and provide accountability. The Bible reminds us that we are encouraged when we see faith in another believer ... “that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith” (Romans 1:12).



5 Keys to Long Term Impact ~ Helen Baratta

We all want to see our groups thrive and grow. Many of my conversations are with people responding to a prompting of bringing FP4H to their church. Some have been involved previously and others are brand new to the program. We are thankful when we discover FP4H and spend much effort on starting a group. The challenge is the long-term success of our groups.

Here are the core components to start, develop and maintaining a healthy FP4H group.

1. **A clear purpose and vision for your group.** What do you believe is God's desire to do through your group? What role does your group play in your church's vision? Hopefully, your group is developing healthy disciples who will impact God's Kingdom.
2. **Know what you are.** When I hear a group's focus is centered on the Bible study and not the full curriculum, I ask about the group's health. Most share they aren't making progress. Our balanced program includes accountability, encouragement, a renewing of the mind, healthy action steps, and a reliance on God's strength. The FP4H materials are evidenced-based. Your group will experience transformation as their willingness to change increases.
3. **Value coaching and training.** FP4H exists because of volunteer leaders who love the Lord, honor him by living balanced, healthy lives and share their knowledge with others. Our leaders need constant support and encouragement so they are able to remain confident and focused on what God has called them to do. Thank your leader by setting aside funds for their leadership development. Create an annual budget with the goal to send your leaders to local or national training.
4. **Serve together.** Groups that serve together stay together. Consider a food drive, walk in a 5K charity race, serve fresh fruit at a community fair, hand out water at your local trail or start a prayer walk around a park. "For even the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve others, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45 NLT).
5. **Disciples make Disciples.** Share your transformed life with others. If your FP4H group is making disciples, then your group should be multiplying and making other groups. Be willing to send and be sent. In ten years my church has grown from one group to six groups in four locations. When we have others from another church attend our group, we are excited at the potential of sharing with another church. If your group is not growing, assess what you might change to begin the multiplication process.



I wonder why every church doesn't have a FP4H group to train and teach their disciples the importance of Christ-centered self-care. Caring for our body, the temple of the Holy Spirit, has spiritual importance equal to prayer, worship, Sabbath, Bible reading, tithing, and serving others. Although there are other areas, you could focus on, I hope the ideas shared will help increase the longevity and long term impact of your group. If you want God to do something new in your life, you too must be willing to do something new.



Upcoming Events

Online FP4H Groups

Classes beginning soon!

Contact: helen.baratta@fp4.com

New England Area Wellness Workshop

November 5, 2016

St. Albans Union Church

St. Albans, Maine

Contact: pattygallison@gmail.com

Leader Webinar - It's all about Balance

November 14, 2016

Contact: helen.baratta@fp4.com

Southeast Wellness Workshop

January 14, 2017

Gap Hill Church of God

Six Mile, SC

Contact: byers3895@bellsouth.net

Texas Coastal Wellness Workshop

January 21, 2017

Palacios, TX

Contact: Debbie.mosier@gmail.com

Fun & Fitness 4 Life Weekend

January 20-22, 2017

Sandy Cove

North East, MD

Contact: helen.baratta@fp4h.com

Summit 2017 – My Best Life

July 21-22, 2017

Atlanta, GA

Keynote Speaker: Gwen Smith

More info. coming soon!

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

Ask the Dietitian

Question:

I looked at the nutrition ingredients for the Greek yogurt I eat, and knowing it is higher in protein than the average milk product, should I add to my calculations a milk and a meat? I've just counted it as a milk.

Answer:

Without seeing the yogurt label, here are some general guidelines:

A cup of milk is expected to provide 8 grams of protein and 30% of your daily calcium in about 80-90 calories. An ounce of meat is expected to provide 7 grams of protein in an average of 75 calories. Therefore, if the yogurt doesn't have 15 grams of protein, then there isn't enough there to worry about counting it as "both" meat and milk, especially if it doesn't provide 165 calories in the serving. The extra protein is helpful in keeping us full, and I don't like to "take away" from the meat servings unless absolutely necessary, so I usually tell my group to count any kind of yogurt as just milk. Most of the individual serving cups provide 15-20% of your daily calcium so only count as 1/2 or 2/3 cup milk instead of a full cup.

Be sure to watch the calories overall with flavored yogurts. If someone is having trouble meeting their meat group goals or consistently over on calories and not losing any weight, they might count the Greek yogurt as 1/2 oz. of meat, along with whatever milk it provides, but otherwise it should count as a milk.

Charlotte Davis, R.D., L.D.



Healthy Crockpot Vegetable Soup

- 1 cup onions, chopped
- 1 cup carrots, sliced
- 1 cup zucchini, sliced
- 1 cup dry lentils
- 1 cup parsnips, chopped
- 1 cup celery, diced
- 1 cup smoked turkey sausage
- 4 cups vegetable broth
- Salt
- Pepper
- 2 cups chopped Kale

Put all ingredients but Kale in Crockpot on low for six or more hours. Add Kale 5 minutes before serving and cook until wilted. Serves 4

Nutritional Information: 150 Calories, 21g Carbohydrate, 3g Fat, 10g Protein

Tracker: 1 oz-eq. Meat, 1 cup Vegetable

Savory Potato Soup

- 1 cup peeled diced potatoes
- 1 cup chopped celery
- ½ cup chopped onion
- 1 tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. pepper
- 2 tbsp. margarine
- 2 tbsp. flour
- 1 tsp. dill
- 1 cup nonfat milk

Put potatoes, celery, onion, salt and pepper in soup pot; add just enough water to cover potatoes and cook until potatoes are tender. Melt margarine in skillet, add flour and milk, mixing well. Add milk gradually, stirring constantly to make smooth sauce. Cook 5 minutes; add drained vegetable mixture and dill and heat thoroughly. Serves 8

Nutritional Information: 135 Calories

Tracker: 1 cup vegetables (or grain), ½ cup milk

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<https://smile.amazon.com/ch/26-4599454>.

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Creamy Pumpkin Soufflé Pie

- 1 (1.5 oz.) box sugar-free vanilla-flavored nonfat instant pudding
- 1 cup nonfat milk
- 1 (16 oz.) can pumpkin
- 1/2 tsp. nutmeg
- 1/2 tsp. ginger
- 1/2 tsp. cinnamon
- 1 cup Cool Whip Lite
- 1 graham cracker pie shell

Combine pudding mix and milk in medium bowl; stir well. Add pumpkin, nutmeg, ginger and cinnamon; stir. Gently fold in whipped topping. Pour into pie shell. Chill for one hour or until set. Serves 8

Nutrition Information: 65 calories; 1g fat (16% calories from fat); 2g protein; 12g carbohydrate; trace dietary fiber; 1mg cholesterol; 124mg sodium.

Special Sale Bundle for Christmas!

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