

Diana Fessler

Let's begin in November of 2008, several months after my eighteen year-old daughter left the family. I was sinking into a deeper depression than usual, we did not know where she was or for that matter, whether she was alive or not because she was very ill when she left home at seventeen. My eating had gotten completely out of control; some days I'd eat all day and some days not at all—not very good for a diabetic.

A friend suggested a small group gathering she was leading so I would get out of the house; she knew with my health issues I was basically a time bomb ready to explode at any time. My weight topped off at 235 pounds. I have a heart condition and I'm diabetic as I mentioned. I have a neurological disorder, which leaves me in chronic pain daily. I am only 5'5" tall so carrying that much weight was taxing to say the least. My doctors were all kind in their urging me to lose, but I just didn't do it.

I went with my friend to the orientation meeting of this new class, First Place 4 Health, listened to the plan and thought, hmm... I knew most everyone in the class and thought it might be nice to get out. I could do my old Weight Watcher® program and they'd never know the difference. Then it came time to weigh in. I had weighed people in for years before, so I didn't think much about it until I got close to the scale this time. I had a full blown panic attack. There was no way I was getting anywhere near that scale at all! A very kind facilitator talked me through the attack, prayed with me and got me through that first evening—scale and all. I did what I planned, the Weight Watcher® program, and worked about half the studies for the first book and only lost three or four pounds.

I am not sure what it was or what the one thing was that triggered the next event, but that's when I finally bought into the program and went to work. I sing in the Praise Band

in our Contemporary Worship service and one Saturday at practice while singing Matt Redman's *You Never Let Go*, I actually visualized God's hand reaching down as I reached up to Him! I could feel Him! I am definitely an auditory person, so for me to have a vision at all is a miracle in itself! WOW! I knew then that I could do the new program with His help because He was holding on to me. If I could stand there and sing praises loud and sweet enough for God Himself to reveal Himself to me in my absolute darkest hour, I knew this was my moment to grab on and do the program wholeheartedly.

For the next eight months, I worked the program and did the Bible studies. After a total of eleven months, I lost 87 pounds and I went from a size 2X to a size 8 or 10, depending on the style.

The one thing I want to be sure you hear from me is that if I never lost an ounce of weight, I would still promote the First Place for Health program as long as I live, because it gave me my soul back. I found my faith, and my spirit. The Holy Spirit never left me; I just let others cloud my judgment of myself. Since I always had low self-esteem issues, it seemed perfectly logical I would get that wrong too. Through First Place 4 Health, I now believe in myself. After eighteen years of therapy and counseling, I was never able to look into a mirror at myself and see me! Last summer for the first time, I looked right in that mirror, smiled and said "I love you!"

The difference with the previously mentioned program and First Place 4 Health is that while they both acknowledge that there may be underlying issues that cause you to overeat, First Place 4 Health with all its tools, especially the bible study, gives you ways to overcome those obstacles. In my case I was sexually abused as a young girl and used being overweight as a way to hide my body. I figured people saw ugly like I did. I know now that my body is a temple for God and by taking care of my body and keeping it healthy I honor Him. I am more

physically equipped to go out into the world and make disciples for Him, praise Him, and be His hands and feet here on earth.

In May 2010, my cardiologist told me to stop losing weight, something I thought I would never hear anyone say to me! At that time I weighed 153 pounds. I have struggled with about six or seven pounds trying this maintenance thing out, but I am very excited that it is all within my reach. God has "never let go of me" and the First Place for Health program literally saved my very life—body, mind, spirit, and strength. Thank you from the bottom of my defibrillator (I mean heart).