

# Donnella Looger

First Place 4 Health has provided the map for me to find my way home. I was a Christian that day I Googled “Christian weight loss program,” but I was lost in my perfectionism, self-reliance and self-centeredness. Being fat is hard. I hated shopping in the extended sizes; I hated binging on junk food and I hated asking God again and again to help me stop the self-sabotage.

I asked God for wisdom according to James 1:5, but ignored the verses that followed stating: The one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do. That describes me for many years. The overweight part was obvious and I couldn't hide that, although I spent plenty of time and money trying. But I wore a mask, hiding behind it and presenting to the world that I had my act together.

God answered my prayer in finding a First Place 4 Health group in a nearby city. I contacted the leader and then decided that I could still do it on my own, taking the money I'd spend on that Member's Kit and buy a smaller outfit. I kept gaining weight and deceiving myself. The first thing I thought about every morning when I awoke was my weight, and every day I vowed to make good choices. I'd carefully fix my hair and makeup, always avoiding full-length mirrors. I'm so grateful now that my diet plan didn't work. It was awfully lonely behind that mask and like the thorn in Paul's flesh that kept him humble and dependent on God, I developed a rash on my face – an allergy to any and all creams, lotions, make-up, etc. Then I felt really exposed. Fat AND ugly. I could no longer just look at my face in the mirror, ignoring the rest of my body, and telling myself “I'm fine, yep, just fine!” I obviously wasn't.

About that time, Beverly Cody phoned me and told me a new

session was beginning and gave me the date for the Orientation. She hugged me when I walked in the door, and I fell in her arms feeling like I was home. I saw her before photo, and that of Brenda Kohlert. I now had hope.

When we did the emotional mapping, Beverly modeled for me the "why to be real." I needed to fully understand "why" before I could even care about the "how." I've learned in through First Place 4 Health why and how to be a human being instead of a human doing.

So, what has worked for me? How did I get from where I was in September 2012, to the 45- pound loss I have today? Well, just as we accept the Savior and invite Him into our lives, I've also accepted the friendships offered from fellow members and allowed them into my life. Allowed them to see where I'm messing up, offer suggestions, and to keep me accountable. I email my daily food diary to my co-leader and my networking leader every evening. Going back to that Scripture in James where he talks about being tossed about like a wave, I remember my Daddy telling me not to fight the water when he took me out in the Gulf. Even with my Daddy holding the inner tube, I'd see those white caps far off and panic. He instructed me to trust him and just float.

Growing up near the coast, we had a beach house and I spent lots of time walking on the beach, picking up sea shells, building sand castles, and writing in the sand. Every day the tide comes in and the tide goes out, taking those shells, and sand castles, and words away, giving a new slate to begin with the next morning. I've experienced lots of hurricanes in my 63 years, but you know what? Even with the devastation, the high winds, the storm surge...with each day, the tide goes out and the tide comes in. That's the way I've begun to see my lifetime eating plan. In reading Joyce Ainsworth's book: Food, Freedom, and Finish Lines, I realized that whatever strategies I adopted, they should be ones that I can live with through the weight loss and into maintenance, not

some “temporary” and usually radical deprivation.

So, I’ve created a “default” menu of sorts that works for me. At home (emphasize “at home”) I usually have a breakfast pudding that includes plenty of greens, beans, dairy, fruit, nuts & seeds –and chocolate! My lunch is almost always a hearty salad, and dinner has plenty of cooked vegetables plus I always have a healthy dessert. When I’m away from home, I eat whatever someone puts before me or whatever I really want in a restaurant. I don’t consider it a “cheat” and it never becomes a binge or causes any guilt, because just as the tide goes out and the tide comes in, my next meal will be at my own home and I’ll be right back into the rhythm of my lifetime food plan.

I lived my life on the sidelines...just watching and fantasizing about how I’d become a participant once my appearance was “perfect.” I recognize that “lie of the devil” now and exposing it has become my ministry. Our heavenly Father wants us to be healthy, happy, and enjoying all He has provided for us to do, be and have. So keeping with the analogy of the tide and the shoreline, I urge you to find that rhythm of eating, having your quiet time, and exercising at home that is pleasurable, healthy, and that you can enjoy most every day. And just as that tide comes in and takes some of that sand out to the sea, the daily rhythm will slowly but consistently take those excess pounds, along with unnecessary cares and concerns away so that you can be all that God created you to be.