

Justine Poplaski

I remind myself that food cannot solve my problems, but only add to them.

I believe I finally understand this program. I started First Place 4 Health in 2004, and lost 20 lbs. the first 12-week session. I did not stay with the program and about a year later, I gained the weight back. I was not as successful the second time I tried it. It seemed at that time the focus was on the food, rather than why we ate. The third and fourth time I did the program was in 2005 and 2006—again not with a lot of success. I felt like such a loser, because I was unable to get rid of the weight again. I never stayed with FP4H a full consecutive year, but participated in about four 12-week sessions over three years.

I am so grateful to God that He did not give up on me. He is so faithful. I guess I am just very thick-headed and stubborn, so it takes a lot of shaking to finally wake me up. This time at FP4H has been very different. I truly believe that I understand the concepts so much better and I am finally learning to surrender it all to God more of the time. I am changing little by little in all four areas of my life.

Physically, I am exercising more and actually learning to enjoy it; I realize it is a gift that I give to me. Exercising and listening to the memory verses on the Bible study CD has helped me a great deal. I had to give away most of my 2X clothes and I am getting sizes large and 12, which is really fun. I had to cut back on of my medication because my blood pressure was getting too low. I am eating healthier and really enjoying the good foods. I plan good meals and do better things for myself than eating. Carole Lewis (national director of FP4H) said, “When wondering what to do, ‘just do the next right thing.’” This saying has helped me greatly when wondering what I need to do next. I have lost 43 lbs. and am

more at peace with myself.

Mentally, my focus is on Jesus. I realize that I am worth taking care of and that God loves me and desires good things for me. I no longer believe the counterfeit liar who tells me his way is better. I have believed his lies too long and I know it is such a deception. I remind myself that food cannot solve my problems, but only add to them. Food cannot comfort me; only Jesus can. He knows everything about me and loves me despite my failures and faults—just as I am.

Emotionally, I am not wavering and inconsistent as I was before. I am not blaming others for why I am not taking care of this body. I am the one who has the power to decide to exercise and to eat healthy. When I feel hungry, angry, lonely or tired, I look to Jesus and pray about it, not just stuff my feelings with any food.

Finally, and most important, my spiritual life is so improved. I feel closer to God and turn to Him when I need His help. The Bible studies are so great. Reading my Bible every day, working the Bible study, and learning more about His will and desires for my life is changing me. This is the greatest part of the program. When I focus on how much God loves me and wants good things for me, it makes me love Him more and desire to please and honor Him.

As an onion skin is peeled away layer by layer, so My God is working with me. I am so grateful to all the ladies at Grace Covenant FP4H group. They have been so encouraging, which is another part of this great program. Every week as we gather to go over proper nutrition and sharing the Bible study, we also encourage and pray for each other. We will help each other finally be victorious over our flesh and arrive at the place God has for each one of us. As Jeremiah 29:11 says, "For I know the plans I have for you" declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."