

Leatrice Roberts

I love to eat. I always have. I grew up on yummy salty, bacon-grease flavored food. Although I was a very active child, I was overweight. I had a brutal awakening at about age 14 when I suggested that I join my sister, her boyfriend, and his friend on a date. She turned to me and said, "Why would he want to go out with you?" I weighed 148 pounds, and I decided to lose weight. My mother, a career dieter, helped me implement a restrictive food plan. The doctor prescribed diet pills, which I took for several years. I began a life-long cycle of dieting to lose weight but always gaining it back. I gained weight with each of my three pregnancies and tried many varieties of weight-loss programs that brought no long-term results.

At one time my husband and I worked at the food pantry at our church. One night I was working there and got really hungry. There was a box of week-old donuts that looked so good that I ate one. Although it didn't taste that great, I kept eating another one—and another one—and another one, until I had eaten almost the whole dozen donuts. After we got home, I was so mad at myself for overeating, that I decided I would make myself throw up to get rid of all those horrible donuts. So, I did. Afterwards, I felt really good.

This began 14 years of bingeing and throwing up, also known as bulimia. My bingeing and purging didn't stop the weight gain, but it did slow it down. I don't really remember why I finally decided to share my struggle with bulimia with my doctor, but I did. He sent me to a wonderful psychiatrist who listened prescribed medication to help me with those uncontrollable urges. Over several months, I was finally able to stop this horrible disease.

In August 2016 my husband, Mark did a horrible thing. It tore our family apart and on March 9, 2018, Mark went to prison to

serve a 25-year sentence. We had isolated ourselves from our church family, staying incognito in a new large Sunday School class and sitting in the back of the church. My sister agreed to let our old class know what had happened, and even before I returned, they welcomed me with open arms.

About the same time, my friend Beth invited me to a celebration for First Place for Health. They were starting a new class in a few weeks, so I decided to join. I went to the orientation meeting and met Carole Lewis and another new girl, Betsy, who both greeted me with a hug. At the first meeting, I weighed in at 250.6 pounds. I started the program with great energy. I bought only what I needed to eat and did my lesson each day. I called my prayer partner several times during the week and learned my memory verse. I also listed everything I ate on my Food Tracker. When I went to the next meeting to say my memory verse and weigh in with Mary. I was crushed that I had only lost 0.2 of a pound! I would have quit right then, but Mary gave me a hug and encouraged me to keep trying. By the end of the first session, I had lost the most weight of anyone in my class (about 13 pounds), had perfect attendance, and had said all ten of my memory verses at the celebration luncheon.

□ Slowly and steadily over the next two years, I stayed faithful to the program. Each session I lost more weight. It wasn't coming off fast, but it was coming off. On the day I reached the 50- pound mark, I yelled, "I did it!" Everyone was so excited for me.

Once I lost 50 pounds, I started thinking about what was next. So, I decided that I would continue to try to lose more weight. If I could, fine; if I couldn't, that would be fine, too because I had actually learned how to eat in a way that would make my body healthy. Praise the Lord, I have been able to lose more weight. I have now "officially" lost 88.8 pounds! When I first joined First Place for Health, I was wearing size 2X: dresses only—no pants. Now I am wearing a size 12 dress,

pants, and shorts, and a medium-sized t-shirt!

□My life is great! I know my dear Lord Who loves me, and I have my family, church friends, and my First Place for Health sisters around me. My challenge ahead is to, for the first time in my life, maintain my weight loss. After two-and-a-half years of losing weight with First Place for Health, I now have the knowledge, skills, practice, and support to do so. One last lesson I am learning is to NEVER get too hungry. I always have fresh veggies to nibble on between meals, and they fill the need to eat, allowing me to make wise choices when I do have the meal. I love going out to eat, and I enjoy healthy entrees at my favorite restaurants. Recently I turned 71, and I had a bite of dessert. I have learned that one bite of these rich foods is plenty, and I really enjoy that one bite! Allowing God to work in me through First Place for Health and becoming a part of such a wonderful Christian sisterhood satisfies me like food never could.