

Long Life

I spent my 30s and 40s obese and nearly beyond hope. My obesity was a symptom of a deeper issue. I ran to food for comfort, friendship, and satisfaction. My recliner was my favorite spot in my house.

Discovering First Place For Health (FP4H) in my late 40s helped me focus on what is most important: Christ in first place, including my weight and wellness. Surrendering to God transformed my life as I turned to Him for strength. After four years, at age 50, I'd shed 116 pounds and began a new journey.

Maintaining a healthy weight required me to look deep into my past and discover the why behind my unhealthy relationship with food. Through Bible studies, teachings, and group meetings, FP4H fueled my need to prioritize my health.

Ten years at a healthy weight has changed my outlook. Now, as I approach my 60th birthday, I might have only lived 60% of my life. I have longevity in my DNA. My mom's parents lived to be 95 and 98 years of age. Both their moms, my great-grands lived to 99. Pictured is my grandfather, in his early 90s, showing off the squash he grew in his garden.

The number of centenarians (living to be 100) continues to grow with each passing year. Pew Research states: In 1990, there were 2.9 centenarians for every 10,000 adults ages 65 and older around the world. That share grew to 7.4 by 2015 and is projected to rise to 23.6 by 2050.[i] I discovered many centenarians had a strong faith and stayed active. I'm all in for living the dream up until my last day on earth.

My grandparents and great grandmothers had active and strong minds throughout their long lives. Yet, my great grandmother, Janet Keck, was an invalid for most of her 90s. Bedridden for

ten years sounds like a nightmare to me. Knowing her struggle helps me remain focused on healthy habits, so I remain walking upright each day I am here on earth.

I know my days are numbered by the Lord, yet it would be foolish not to plan for a long life. In the same way, I meet with my financial planner to figure out how long I need to work so the finances will last into my 100s, I need to assess my physical health. Taking care of my body now will pay off in the future. My blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar levels, excess fat, and triglyceride levels are all numbers worth my attention.

The enemy will try and convince us there is no hope. Yet the bible tells us in Jeremiah 29:11

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.

It's time to get serious and embrace change and say "Yes" to all God has planned.

Helen Baratta, Director of Development for First Place for Health, encourages everyone to embrace change and say "Yes" to all God has planned. She is the author of *My Place for Leadership* included in the *My Place Leader's Kit* and *Restored! Embracing Weight Loss God's Way* available at our online bookstore.