

Marie Rascoe

My wellness journey started almost 30 years ago.

I was introduced to First Place for Health in January, 1991. However, back then, it was only **First Place** with signature colors of teal and pink. Announcements began to appear in our church bulletin, which were rather vague at first, with more information to follow. My curiosity was sparked as to what this was all about. From the onset, I believed I needed to be involved.

I had quit my job and started college full time a year earlier. My daughter, Ginger and I went to *First Place* orientation together. They told us the verse for *First Place*: "**Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added to you.**" Mathew 6:33.



As the orientation unfolded and the 9 Commitments were presented, I began to think this was all I needed to add to an already busy schedule. It didn't take long to realize this was much more than just another weight-loss program. I had tried other things that were out there and never did anything for a very long time nor had much success. We were asked to pray about whether or not we should be involved in *First Place*. I had never prayed about my weight before. By then, my heart was pounding and I knew this was for me.

Ginger and I joined that first class together at our church. I had not weighed in a long time. That first night, when I saw the scales go to 189 pounds, tears came in my eyes. I had

reached a place of mentally telling myself that even though I had no control over my weight, I could still serve God and grow spiritually and offset this uncontrolled area of my life. I had never prayed and asked God to help me in this area. I thought I should be able to do this part by myself. It had always been a vicious circle of try and fail and try and fail. But this time, for some reason, it seemed different. *First Place* was a fresh approach to the same problem. I felt hopeful for the first time.

Ginger was a great accountability partner. We faithfully walked every day at a walking track in our neighborhood. In the winter or rainy weather, we could walk in a nearby mall that opened for walkers at 6:00 a.m. We followed the eating plan; weighed and measured our food and stayed committed. My husband and son ate what we ate with very few alterations. We had no sugar. I had never even attempted to not have sugar. I really didn't think it was possible, but we did it.



Marie with her daughter Ginger on a trip to Alaska.

I was taking a full load of classes that semester and later realized that the disciplines of *First Place* were actually helping me in my school work also. Memorizing Scripture was adding strength for me in classes that required memorization as well. I juggled a new full time job, carried a full load of classes, ran a household (somewhat) and taught a Sunday School

class along with other "Mom" responsibilities. Yet, I saw God honoring His Word and the commitments I had made to Him. At the close of that first session, I reached my weight-loss goal of 20 pounds.

The next session, my leader asked me to lead a class, as the ministry grew in our church and we now had four classes. At the end of that session, I had another 10 pound weight-loss. God was giving success in an area of my life that I had never committed to Him before. ***"No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it."*** I Corinthians 10:13 This verse became a real source of strength to me. I was learning to pray these verses. God was working in my life. He was changing my desires to align more with His. He was actually providing strength for me to face all the responsibilities before me. All glory to God.

I remember one session; I took a 4-hour long evening classes at the Air Force base. I was leaving class one night, crying as I walked down a flight of stairs outside. I had missed my son's Friday night football game and everything overwhelmed me. I tripped on the last step and sprawled out all over the sidewalk. A couple of fellow class members helped me get up and recover my books and papers. When I got to my car, I knelt down beside the door and said, "God, What are you doing? "This is too hard." I was referring to the full load, missing my kids' activities, plus the commitments of *First Place*—all at the same time. The verse came to me: ***"Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach."*** Deuteronomy 30:11. Once again, His grace was sufficient for my needs. I reached my goal weight of 142 pounds by spring of 1993.

Our *First Place* director continued to ask me to lead a class over the years at Calvary Baptist Church in Shreveport,

Louisiana. In 1998, God opened some amazing doors which led to my husband and me moving to Colorado. Although, let me say to you – this did not happen until completion of my Master's Degree.

I packed up all my *First Place* materials and moved them with me, but I never expected to use them. God never let me go from this ministry. My director in Shreveport sent me the Bible Study book their classes were using so I could follow along with them remotely. After the first year in Colorado, I introduced *First Place* to my church.

Except for a couple of sessions, God has allowed me to be in this ministry till today. Although I still struggle to lose those last pounds, God has helped me to keep the weight off for almost 30 years. I praise Him for His great faithfulness to me. Yes, I have more to lose, but I have a strong, healthy body. My cholesterol is low and I have no health issues. I only take one thyroid pill. I praise God for His work in my life. Without *First Place*, I may still be floundering around with every quick fix diet or pill that comes along.

Today, I am in a new season of life, but God still calls me to carry on in this ministry. Leading a virtual class has added a new dimension of fun. My future is in His hands I and I am secure. My verse for 2020 is Psalm 92:12-15: ***“The righteous will flourish like a palm tree; they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon. Planted in the house of the Lord. They will flourish in the courts of our God. They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green, proclaiming, “The Lord is upright; He is my Rock.”***

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