

Sara Ward

I love how Carole Lewis says, "If you want to lose weight, start on your knees." Over the last year, that saying rings true in my life.

I grew up in a large Christian family where we all played sports and ate healthy. Growing up in a family where they encouraged me to eat healthy, I never worried about my weight. I was very active and enjoyed being the perfect weight for my age. It wasn't until the summer of 2007, that things in my life began to be more than I could handle. During this time, there were a lot of changes going on in my life; unhealthy relationships where I felt utterly alone and very scared. I was mad at God for allowing this to happen. Some of those things were: my best friend moved away, my boyfriend at the time was very verbally abusive to me, I was looking for a new job, I had no friends, and I felt all alone. I shut down and pushed people away. I turned to food because that was the only thing in my life I thought I could control. I began to hate myself even more when I began to change and had to buy bigger clothes. My family and friends tried to help by telling me what to do, but all my heart wanted was someone to accept me for who I was.

In the spring of 2008, God brought a wonderful friend into my life who reached out to me. It was through her that she encouraged me to start seeing a counselor at my church. Through the next four months, I really unpacked some of the hurt and anger that I had been carrying around for way too long. It was also where I first said out loud that I had a food problem and really want to change. In the church bulletin, I saw a class starting up in the fall called, "First Place 4 Heath." I knew that had to be the next step so I told God that I will give it a try. From the minute I stepped into that room the first night, I felt like I was loved and accepted. The group was so welcoming and friendly that I

instantly made friends. For the first time, I felt like I was not alone on this weight loss journey.

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own, you were bought at a price. Therefore Honor God with your body. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

I had tried so many other diets in the past, but none of them with Christ at the center of it. I was so blown away at the fact that God really did care what I put into my mouth and how I took care of my body. My verse I claimed is 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own, you were bought at a price. Therefore Honor God with your body. God really did care and He wanted to join me on this journey, too. I love how Carole Lewis says, "If you want to lose weight, start on your knees." Over the last year, that saying rings true in my life. I was tired of going through the motions and telling God I was going to change, but never really surrendering every part of my life to him. I told God I didn't want someone who told me how to work out or what to eat. I had enough of that in my past. What I needed, were friends to pray with me, encourage me, and to be my biggest cheerleaders. God provided safe and trusted friends in my life at just the right time where I could open up and allow my heart to heal. I still felt overwhelmed because so many areas in my life needed to be changed. But God told me to just take one step at a time, and leave the mess up to him.

When I started First Place 4 Health I was 305 lbs. I had a very bad Starbucks addiction. I used to get one every day or even twice day. I have since realized Starbucks was more of an emotional attachment rather than an enjoyment. I would also go to fast food every time I could. Driving home late at night was the worst for me because it was so easy just to drive through instead of spending 15 minutes when I get home fixing something healthy to eat. I would eat junk food late at night

as I watch T.V. and I had no clue as to how big of portions I was eating because I just wanted to eat. I am also an emotional eater, so anytime life became too hard for me to handle, I would run to food for that instant gratification. I could only walk 15 minutes without getting tired and I was so mad of not being able to do things I wanted to do because of my weight. I also felt that God could never use me again because of the mess I have made of my life. Today I have cut down on my addictions, or have eliminated them. I can walk more than an hour and I have fallen in love with bike riding. I am proud to say I am still drinking starbucks but I'm making better drink choices and only having 2 to 3 a week. I have stood up to those negative thought and have replaced them with positive ones. One of my really good friends tells me all the time, "Satan take a hike, you have no control over Sara's mind". It makes me laugh every time she says it, but it paints the perfect picture of how we can take control again. Psalm 73:25-26 says, "In heaven I have only you, and on this earth you are all I want. My body and my flesh may fail but you are my strength and my choice forever". The change that God has done in my heart of freeing me of the hurt, sin, anger, worry and un-forgiveness has been the most heart wrenching, and painful process. But it has brought me to a deeper place in my walk with the lord.

I am down 80 lbs. in a year, praise the lord. I have not yet reached my life time goal but have grown in my walk with the lord tremendously. My motto is one word "variety", which could mean, eating a variety of foods, doing a variety of exercises, worshiping God in a variety of different ways, and having a variety of verses to help me fight off Satan's attacks. In doing this, I leave less room for boredom and more room for enjoying this new way of living. I'm excited to reach my next goal. Believe me, I still have setbacks and hang-ups, but that's what God's second chances are for. I truly believe that out of my mess I have made of my life, God wants to take every part of it and make it into something beautiful. That is why I

press on towards the goal, to win the prize, for which God had called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. (Phil 3:14)

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