

What is the Relationship Between Feelings, Faith and Food?

Will my personal faith have any impact on how I take care of myself physically?

The First Place model is based on the concept that God cares about all areas of our lives and that they cannot be compartmentalized. Each area impacts the other when they are in proper balance. Sometimes we have great success in one area of our life while we struggle in another. If we do not address our struggles, they will negatively impact our successes. Jesus said:

"...I say to you, do not be anxious for your life, as to what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor for your body, as to what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body than clothing?"

Matthew 6:25 (NASB)

"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

Matthew 6:33-34 (NASB)

Core Center of Peace

We are called to be people who have a core center that is at peace, that in the depth of our soul there is a worry-free zone. Now, most of us do not live like that most of the time, but usually it is because we are overly concerned about things over which we have little control, or issues that do not deserve the level of energy we spend on them. Our faith can help us to find peace and that peace will impact our emotions and relationship to others, ourselves, and even to our eating.

This peace is not a denial of pain or concern, but instead a redirecting of our thoughts and energy on the presence of God in our lives, and not being overwhelmed by circumstances.

Self Worth

Making peace with ourselves may mean making peace with our body image. We have too often been convinced that our worth is directly tied to how we look. This is true in many of our experiences in relationship to our society. Some think that First Place is primarily concerned with weight loss; therefore, how we look. That is not the goal of this Christ-centered program. It is to bring all things under the Lordship of Christ – that includes what we eat and how we care for ourselves, but it also challenges the value system that the world has promoted.

Few can measure up to the idealized bodies that secular media has presented as the “look of success.” Many who come close to the right appearance find themselves living lives of frustration, fear and insecurity. Our value is not in our physical appearance, but in the fact that we are children of God.

Source of Distortion

How we feel about ourselves is often the result of childhood experiences. How important people viewed us in our early years can impact our sense of worth and confidence. If too much importance was placed on appearance or comparison to others, then often in adult life we still are trying to measure up. These distorted views must be challenged and a new way of thinking and feeling must be put in its place. That is what faith can do when it fulfills the promise of “making all things new.” Being discouraged because the latest diet is not getting us to a place of acceptance can be discouraging, and that in turn sabotages the self-improvement goals. Eating responsibly and exercising reasonably can be the result of making peace with ourselves [including our physical looks].

Domino Effect

We often see how one bad decision can trigger other even more damaging decisions. But we should also be aware that good decisions could encourage other areas of our lives. Sometimes we want to tackle the most difficult problems before we address anything else. There are times in emergency that this is the best thing, but often when we see little success, we begin to see even our strong areas begin to weaken. In the First Place program, there are many areas of growth that are addressed. Some people love the Bible study, but struggle with the eating program. Others discover that the scripture memory comes easily, but the weekly meetings are difficult to keep. Instead of giving up on the difficult, let the successful growth areas encourage you. As one area strengthens, let it cheer you on with, "If I can grow there, I can grow in this area as well." Build off of that strength and be an encourager to others who do not find your success area easy and let them be a support to you with their success area.

Don't

- * give in to false values of our society.
- * give in to self defeating negative self talk.
- * give in to negative feelings that can dictate life choices.

Do

- * remember that the life worth living is more than the physical.
- * remember that you are a valued child of God.
- * remember that each success will impact other areas of your life

Dr. Bill Heston

bheston@fpchouston.org

Bill Heston works on the staff of First Presbyterian Church of Houston