



FIRSTplace

FOR HEALTH



GOOD NEWS—INFORMATION YOU CAN USE

RISE UP O CHURCH AND HONOR THY HEALTH

By Vicki Heath

During our recent trip to the Holy Land, we had an amazing opportunity to worship inside a beautiful cathedral with a group of Chinese believers. I commented to my friend “they all look so fit.” He replied, “They have to be.” All over the world, it is costing more and more to identify yourself as a Christ follower. In some places, it may cost you everything, including your freedom. This is one more reason for the Church to be healthy, to be strong, to be ready. How fit is your church?

George Fitchett, [a researcher for Rush University](#), recently found that people who attend church or participate in some sort of weekly religious service are 62% more likely to be obese than those who do not attend church.

An [article in Medical Daily](#) reports a study from Baylor University College of Arts and Sciences, where it was found more than one-third of the clergy in the United States are struggling with obesity.

What is happening with the health of the church is not good news. The church should be leading the way in health and fitness. The health of the Church and its leadership is having an impact on the mission of spreading the Gospel. Missionaries are coming home from the mission field unable to return because of health problems. Parents are too tired to raise their kids and too tired to be married. The fields are ripe for the harvest, but the workers are few and very exhausted.

I am not into fat shaming, and neither is our God. There’s no suggestion in the scriptures that God will



love us better if we are thin. But the fact is, our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit, and the concept of stewardship is certainly biblical. God loves us unconditionally. Because of His great love for us, it should matter how we use and take care of the bodies God has given us.

What can we do?

Live a balanced life by embracing body fitness as a spiritual discipline. Exercising and eating right are ways to present your body to God daily, as a living sacrifice. Romans 12:1.

Encourage one another – find a friend, join a FP4H group. Studies show that people who are closely connected to a group for support, have a much higher success rate than those who are not.

Let us help. FP4H can help lead your church and community in corporate wellness by:

- Helping your church start a FP4H group,
- Providing excellent Bible study materials for group study.
- Coming to your church and leading a one-day wellness event.

I don’t know all of the answers for the health of the Church but this I do know: Jesus Christ can transform a life, body, soul, mind, and spirit. How does He do it? Because of who He is! He is the Light of the World; the Bread of Life, the Living Water, the Good Shepherd, the Gate, The True Vine, the Way, Truth, and the Resurrection and the Life! He can bring new life to an unhealthy Church and an unhealthy church member. Let us help, rise up O’ Church and Honor Thy Health.

For more information on “Getting Started” contact info@FP4H.COM or [click here](#)

Vicki is the First Place 4 Health National Director, an American Council on Exercise, Certified Fitness Instructor, Certified Life Coach and the Wellness Coordinator for her church in Edisto Beach, SC. Vicki is the author of *Don’t Quit Get Fit and Wellness Journey of a Lifetime*. She has led a successful First Place 4 Health ministry in her church for twenty years.

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STRONGER EVERY DAY

By Janet Holm McHenry

I should have known better. When the surgeon had discharged my son after his knee surgery, the doctor had said, “Be careful as you lift his movement and ice machines, so you do not end up in surgery yourself.”

And there I was a week later, flat in bed in extreme pain, unable to move. Day after day I had done what the surgeon had said not to do—lifted the heavy machines from one room to another, even though my back was aching.

The straw that broke my back was a large dictionary. I had leaned over to pick it up just prior to our daughter’s sleepover party for her tenth birthday and then could not move the rest of the evening while girls giggled and ran through the house.

It was not how I had planned my half-year sabbatical—taken to write a book about praying for teens. Nonetheless, I lost five weeks of mobility with surgery and recovery for what the neurologist said was “the worst blown disc” he had ever seen.



We don’t actually picture the bedridden when we think of the word strength.

Instead, we might picture weightlifters or marathon runners. However, I gained several kinds of strength while lying completely flat for five weeks. Since I could do nothing during that time—not even read a book, watch TV, or answer email—I prayed . . . for our four children, my husband, our extended families and friends, and my “route.”

More than three years earlier I had started prayer-walking for my community. While I started the practice for my health and for extra prayer time for my family, I quickly realized that God wanted me to pray for whatever and whomever I saw. Neighbors. Store owners. School teachers and bus drivers. County office workers. My multitasking exercise became my ministry as I walked and prayed. So, I didn’t want to let them down—or God—simply because I wasn’t very good at taking doctor’s orders.

A month after surgery I had a major physical challenge—to fly to a national prayer conference, where I would speak about my prayer-walking. While others on the plane lifted my luggage for me, I wondered how I would lift a message about ministering to one’s community through prayer when I hadn’t been doing that myself.

The morning I arrived, the conference director and an author on prayer approached me and asked how I was doing.

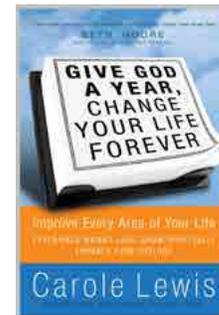
“Feeling a bit weak,” I said, “both physically and emotionally.”

And so they prayed for me, using scripture verses that now I incorporate almost daily as I pray for others: “Blessed are those who strength is in you, whose hearts are on the highway. They go from strength to strength until each reaches God in Zion” (Psalm 84:5,7).

I’ll never forget their prayer that day because it helped me understand that we do not have to summon strength. God will provide exactly the strength we need each moment so that as we rest in him, we are equipped for all the challenges of our lives.

Janet McHenry is an award-winning speaker and the author of 24 books, including the bestselling *Prayer-Walk* and *The Complete Guide to the Prayers of Jesus*. She is also the author of *Stronger Every Day*, the newest *First Place for Health Bible* study and an earlier study, *Training for Success*. Janet loves speaking at conferences and retreats and can be contacted through her [website](#).

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SOCIAL MEDIA





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FOR HEALTH



STAND STRONG

You hear, O LORD, the desire of the afflicted; you encourage them, and you listen to their cry.

PSALM 10:17

My childhood was marked by traumatic events that produced a lifestyle of emotional pain. As an adult, I became caretaker for both of my parents. Food became an addiction and resulted in major health problems. I wanted to die. Daily I asked, "God, why did You wake me up?" Now I ask,

“ LORD, WHAT ARE WE DOING TODAY? ”

That transformation began to take place through knowledge of God's Word, the work of the Holy Spirit and encouragement from First Place 4 Health friends. Sometimes our journey takes an unexpected turn. On March 26, 2005, I was almost killed in an auto accident. In the ER, although my body showed no visible signs of injury or pain, further diagnosis revealed the true picture of my life-threatening injuries. My family was told that I would not live. When I did live, I was told that I might never walk again. But I did learn to walk again! My nephew contacted Beverly Henson, a First Place for Health friend, informing her of the accident. Within 24 hours, prayers and encouragement from First Placers (some I had never met) began to pour in!

Their outpouring of love was so incredible that hospital staff came to see and ask who I was. The day before I went home, a hospital volunteer delivered more gifts and cards and asked, "Are you someone special?" My answer was, "Yes, I am a child of the King." She asked, "What country?" I said, "All of them!" Through her tears, she responded, "I am too!"



I stand amazed in the presence of a loving, powerful and holy God! The physical therapist told me that before I could walk again, I must learn to stand. Standing is more than a physical position; it also is a mental, emotional and spiritual position. We are able to stand strong through the promises and instruction contained in God's Word, and the support of prayers and encouragement from God's people. God hears the cries of His children and leaves evidence of His presence in every situation!

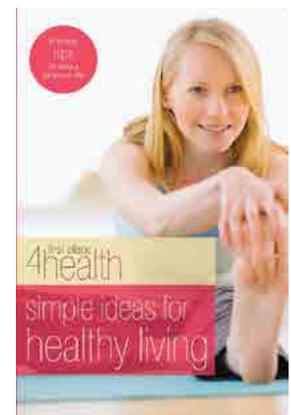
Prayer: Lord, give me the strength to stand strong mentally, physically and spiritually. Help me to see who needs a card or helping hand today.

Stephanie Rhodes
Arlington, Tennessee

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[Better Together](#)



[Simple Ideas for Healthy Living](#)



[Healthy Happy Cooking](#)



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STRONG LEADERS

By Helen Baratta

Traveling through Israel on the dusty trails where the Bible greats walked taught me how fallible we are when we try to lead in our own power and strength. As it turns out, the Lord works His way when we relinquish control and acknowledge our weakness.

We started our visit on the Sea of Galilee. I stood in awe on a stony rise overlooking a beach where Jesus called Peter to be a disciple. I relate to Peter. Like him, I say things I ought not, miss an important concept, or get something completely wrong as I run ahead of Jesus. As leaders, we follow Jesus and learn from our mistakes. Strong leaders learn from their mistakes.

Riding alongside the Dead Sea on the way to Ein Gedi, our tour guide shared the story of David, running and then hiding from Saul and his army. Saul was in full pursuit of David, threatened and afraid. He wanted to rid the earth of David. David trusted God and took refuge in the mountains of Ein Gedi and was put in a position where he could kill Saul and put an end to Saul's death threat.

The same day my FP4H Bible study referenced 1 Samuel 24:1-10 pointing out David honored God and honored others when he chose not to kill Saul. My Bible reading plan only days later, had me reading the same passage. God's wonderful coincidence had my attention. David honored God with his restraint and self-control.

I am thankful for the Holy Spirit's fruit of self-control. A fruit I need to live out a God-honoring life. As leaders, we must spend time with the Lord and ask Him to shower us with all the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). Strong leaders honor God with self-control.



Now home from Israel, my bible reading plan has me in 1 and 2 Kings. Elijah's story of calling fire down from heaven jumps off the page. The views from Mt. Carmel where Elijah stood his ground, strengthen my resolve to stand my ground.

As leaders, we must deal with resistance coming from all sides. We are pulled in multiple directions. We are challenged about our chosen priorities.

Sometimes we feel bullied by the world. As leaders, we must trust God and stand up to the resistance placed in our path. Strong leaders trust God for the outcome.

Maybe you are like me and in awe of what God can accomplish when we agree to join Him and His plan for our life. In 2006, I was a reluctant leader, starting a First-Place group at my church weighing in at 274 pounds. I had no idea what God had planned, yet I was willing to:

- Learn from mistakes
- Honor God with self-control
- Trust God for the outcome

Are you ready to be a strong leader? Embrace change and say "Yes" to all God has planned.

Helen Baratta Director of Development for First Place for Health. 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.

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[Leader Essentials](#)



[My Place Leader](#)

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[My Place
Leader's Kit](#)



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SUCCESS STORY

by Christopher Lawson

Picture on the left, over 500 pounds!

I have always had a misinterpreted relationship with obesity, being overweight, and the connection to food and mood. Of course, that led to depleted self-esteem and positivity issues throughout life.

Fast forward to 2012. I call this my “newbie year.” My youngest was born, and this is the year that my maximum weight was reached. In time for a physical at doctor’s office, I had consciously worked on losing; losing 40 pounds of well over 500 pounds, feeling accomplished. The doctor walks in the room and acknowledges the loss, but delivers the impact blow, “If you want to see your kids all graduate, you need to step on the accelerator!” Accepting the challenge. I started home exercise programs, bought the shakes, joined the various groups, even bought what claimed to be the “magic pill” for success in weight loss and transformation. Some of you may have experienced that temporary success, great at the beginning, but lacking the consistency that eventually led to depleted motivation and lack of buy-in.

Looking for something different (Christian weight loss program) in the bookstore, I found Bod4God by Steve Reynolds. Finally the challenge I was looking for, physical and spiritually trying. That challenge empowered and turned me into an active participant in church teaching, and studying, and working to disciple others. Then came the next powerful discovery in the back of the book, First Place 4 Health! During a workout, I truly believe that the Holy Spirit was stirring in me, leading me to expand my existing territory and that I was ready for more.

After collaborating and praying with my wife Devon about the challenge that was set inside me, we ordered the FP4H Group Starters Kit. We started the study, Seek God First, and I was hooked. The more engaged we became, the greater the sense of accomplishment and buy-in we were creating. First Place 4 Health has enabled me to find consistency and challenge of engagement in all aspects of my life. For over two years now, I’ve found a creatively powerful and uplifting way to honor and talk to “dad” daily. Continued coverage of the First Place 4 Health devotionals and Bible studies work to gain that wisdom from His word. I’ve lost the worry of doing this alone. Devon has honestly become my greatest support and accountability partner. She’s behind me when I need a push. In front of me when I need to be led or carried. Beside me when I need the encouragement of a best friend. She’s gained the insight into the daily struggles I’ve dealt with for years. Now she is the “Healthy Happy Cook.” Every day is a day we give reverence to the Lord by what we do at our kitchen table, not just the table on Sunday morning. Results from my First Place 4 Health journey are the continued loss of body fat, losing over 270 pounds, eliminating over 100 inches of body mass, gained over 30 pounds of muscle growth, improved wisdom in His work and the mission work set forth for the community that we are to disciple to further His kingdom.

What’s my end goal? Not being satisfied or finding my finish line. Increasing the intensity or resistance until my savior and Lord says “well done!” My encouragement and challenge to others is:

1. Stay true to self (Seek God First).
2. Continued understanding and wisdom (Biblical study).
3. Believe you can. (Phil. 4: 13)
4. Eliminate doubt and worry.
5. Start where you are and get moving. (Work as if for the Lord).
6. Discomfort and pain are necessary and part of growth in life.
7. Have the attitude and determination to run the race daily.
8. Be content, not satisfied.
9. Max out! Give Him your all.
10. Break the chains! We aren’t to be average, normal, shift the focus from things of this world to things of heaven.
11. Failure is growth. My weakness is His strength.
12. Life is a balance of either intensity or resistance, so use them to win for Him.





HEALTHY RECIPES

EATING HEALTHY MAKES A STRONGER YOU

We're busier and busier these days and feeling exhausted can be an everyday thing. Switching to healthy food choices can give you the energy you need to accomplish everything you have on your to-do list. And when it comes to eating well, taking small steps can make a big difference. It can become a habit, just like drinking your morning coffee or going to bed at 9 pm every night.

This is the first of a series on foods that make you stronger. Let's start with a word that can make some grimace – vegetables. Do you ever look at your tracker at the end of the day and think eating more vegetables needs to be your food goal for the next week - again? Just the word vegetable can represent a harbinger of childhood misery and the hours spent at the dinner table waiting for you to eat them so you could go play. Or could remind you of the childhood rule to eat your vegetables before you could have dessert. But times have changed, you're an adult now, and just as your life has evolved so too should your relationship with vegetables.

Vegetables are chock full of the necessary proteins, vitamins, and acids that are critical to your body's functions. For example, beets perform amazing feats in your body like reducing your oxygen intake during workouts, allowing you to exercise for up to 16 percent longer. So here are a few good-for-you vegetables along with recipes that kick them up to adult-level deliciousness.

BROCCOLI

This green vegetable is packed with bone-healthy vitamins like C, A, and K and can reduce the overall risk of cancer.

PARMESAN BROCCOLI

Roasting is the key here. Roasting sweetens the broccoli and you great caramelization with crunchy edges. It soaks up all that great lemon flavor.

- 4 to 5 pounds broccoli
- 4 garlic cloves, peeled and thinly sliced
- olive oil
- 1 1/2 teaspoons salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 2 teaspoons grated lemon zest
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 3 tablespoons pine nuts, toasted
- 1/3 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 tablespoons julienned fresh basil leaves (about 12 leaves)



Preheat the oven to 425 degrees F. Cut the broccoli florets from the stalks, leaving an inch stalks. Cut the larger pieces of broccoli floret in half. You should have about 8 cups of florets. Place the broccoli florets on a sheet pan large enough to hold them in a single layer. Toss the garlic and broccoli and drizzle with 5 tablespoons olive oil. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Roast for 20 to 25 minutes, until crisp-tender and the tips of some of the florets are browned. Remove the broccoli from the oven and immediately toss with 1 1/2 tablespoons olive oil, the lemon zest, lemon juice, pine nuts, Parmesan, and basil. Serve hot.



HEALTHY RECIPES

SPINACH

Spinach has the power to form healthy new cells and is a rich source of vitamins, minerals, and fiber.

SPINACH SHAKSHUKA

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for drizzling

1 large yellow onion, finely chopped

1 small jalapeño, seeded and finely chopped

4 garlic cloves, finely chopped

1/4 teaspoon ground coriander

1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1 teaspoon kosher salt

10 ounces baby spinach

2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice

4 eggs

Freshly ground black pepper

Feta cheese and roughly chopped fresh cilantro, for sprinkling



Heat the olive oil in a large pan set over medium heat. Add the onion and jalapeño and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened, 6 to 8 minutes. Add the garlic, coriander, cinnamon, and salt, and cook, stirring, until fragrant, 1 to 2 minutes.

Add the spinach and lemon juice to the pan, turn the heat to low, cover, and cook, tossing occasionally with tongs, until the spinach is very soft, 7 to 10 minutes. (If the spinach does not fit all at once in the pan, add a little at a time, adding more as the spinach in the pan wilts.) Uncover and evenly spread the mixture across the bottom of the pan. Use the back of the spoon to make four to six shallow indentations in the surface of the greens mixture to hold the eggs while they cook.

Break the eggs into small cups and gently slide them into the indentations. Raise the heat to medium, cover the pan, and cook until the whites are set but the yolks are still a bit runny, 4 to 5 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat. Drizzle a little more olive oil on top and sprinkle with pepper, feta, and cilantro. Serve hot, directly from the pan. Serves 2

Nutritional Information: 274 Calories, 11g Carbohydrates, 12g Fat, 13g Protein, 4g Fiber, 267g Cholesterol

SWEET POTATOES

They are rich in vitamin A, strengthening the immune system, eye, and bone health.

SPICY SWEET POTATO WEDGES

1½ pounds sweet potatoes, unpeeled, cut into ½-inch wedges

2 tablespoons olive oil

Kosher salt

1 teaspoon spicy chili sauce, such as Sriracha

1 garlic clove, grated



Preheat oven to 425°. Toss sweet potatoes with oil on a rimmed baking sheet and arrange in a single layer; season with ½ tsp salt. Roast until tender and browned in spots, 35–40 minutes. Remove from oven; while still hot, toss potatoes with spicy chili sauce and garlic. Season with salt.



HEALTHY RECIPES

TOMATOES

They have something hard to get in any other food--lycopene. And, because of this, tomatoes can help protect skin from UV rays, lower cholesterol, and even prevent some cancers.

BAKED POLENTA & TOMATO SALAD

- 1 cup balsamic vinegar
- 1/2 teaspoon honey
- 2-3 bay leaves
- 1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 3 ripe tomatoes
- 18 ounces packaged of prepared polenta
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- salt & pepper
- fresh basil leaves



In a small pot, combine the balsamic vinegar, honey, bay leaves, and red pepper flakes. Stir until honey is dissolved into the vinegar. Over medium heat, allow the vinegar to reach a low boil. Cook for about 10 minutes until it has reduced by half and the consistency of honey.

Allow to cool, remove bay leaves.

Slice the polenta into thin (1/4 inch) slices. Brush each side with a very light covering of olive oil. Sprinkle salt and pepper. Place on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Bake at 400°F for 15-20 minutes, until the edges begin to become crispy.

Assemble the salads. Layer thick slices of fresh tomatoes, baked polenta, and basil leaves. Top with desired amount of vinegar/honey reduction.

Lisa Lewis is the author of Healthy Happy Cooking. Her cooking skills have been a part of First Place for Health wellness weeks and other events for many years. She provided recipes for 14 of the First Place for Health Bible studies and is a contributing author in Better Together and Healthy Holiday Living. She partners with community networks, including the Real Food Project, to provide free healthy cooking classes.



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UPCOMING EVENTS

Restone
Experiencing Freedom from Food Strongholds

May 5-7, 2019
Sandy Cove Retreat
North East, MD

Featuring Jennifer Kennedy Dean, author, speaker and Executive Director of The Praying Life Foundation

ARKANSAS/OKLAHOMA WELLNESS WORKSHOP

May 4, 2019

Siloam Springs, AR

RESTORE: EXPERIENCING FREEDOM FROM FOOD STRONGHOLDS

May 5-7, 2019

North East, MD

PENNSYLVANIA WELLNESS WORKSHOP

May 8, 2019

Oakdale, PA

NORTHEAST WELLNESS WORKSHOP

May 18, 2019

Wakefield, MA

SUMMIT 2019

August 16-17, 2019

Houston, Texas

NEVADA WELLNESS WORKSHOP

September 7, 2019

Reno, Nevada

WELLNESS WEEK

October 10-17, 2019

Round Top, Texas

WEBINAR

MAY 13TH

GETTING STARTED WITH FITNESS

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