



FIRSTplace

FOR HEALTH



GOOD NEWS—INFORMATION YOU CAN USE

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.

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 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.



My grandfather with a squash he grew in his garden.

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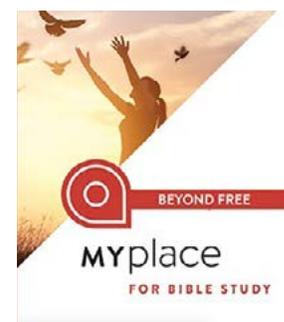
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SHOP ONLINE!



[Beyond Free Bible Study](#)



[My Place for Success Journal](#)



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EVERYDAY ENCOURAGEMENT

Encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing. 1 THESSALONIANS 5:11



EVERYDAY ENCOURAGEMENT

My neighbor Marcia lives just a few houses down from us. What a blessing she is to me as we walk together six days a week early each morning, starting out in the dark, but ending in sunrise, and thanking God for it! One morning this week, it was apparently too early for me. I put on two shirts, as it was a chilly morning (in Texas, a cold morning), laced up my walking shoes, and was ready to go—except, I looked down and noticed that I was still in my “glow in the dark” pajama bottoms. I quickly changed, but Marcia is such a good friend that she would have gone with me in those pj’s, and we would have started our morning walk with a good laugh.

We spend the miles sharing our lives with one another—family news, church news, First Place 4 Health news, weather, sports, news-news, and always prayer requests. We build each other up, encouraging one another as the Scriptures instruct us to do and finding the sweet fellowship our Lord wants for us. Proverbs 17:17 says, “A friend loves at all times.” The Lord has blessed me with Marcia, who is that kind of friend!

Our First Place 4 Health group is also filled with encouragers! We take that part of First Place 4 Health seriously and joyfully. It is an added blessing if our friends and family outside of First Place 4 Health are encouragers too. We benefit if the people we see at home, in our neighborhood, and at our work notice our progress and support us in our efforts to live the balanced life before them and before our Lord and Savior. Encouraging one another gives us a witness to others as well. “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses” (Acts 1:8).

Action Item: Looking at yourself through the eyes of another person, are you someone she would be drawn to as a friend?

Susan Ray
Houston, Texas



SOCIAL MEDIA





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FOR HEALTH



BEATING THE ODDS – GET SERIOUS

January 17 has come and gone, and so has the commitment to get healthy for the majority of Americans. According to an [article in Newsweek](#), “Strava, a social network for athletes that tracks runs and bike rides looked at more than 108 million entries in the U.S. and found Thursday (January 17, emphasis mine) is when Americans are most likely to bail out on fitness resolutions.” Research shows that less than sixty percent of us are still committed to the resolution after six months.

What happens in just 17 days? Why do so many of us just quit? How do you beat the odds? I don’t have all of the answers, but I have some. These are simple habits I have developed (not quickly, I must say,) that have kept me focused and faithful to my wellness endeavors:

- Have a quiet time with God. He is our source of strength. God is our strongest help in overcoming temptation. We cannot resist temptation with our own power. We may be able to for a while, but eventually, our will power will run out. What happens next? Yep, we give in to the temptation; whether it be to overindulge in food or skip our workouts, it’s just not possible to sustain these commitments with our own power. That is why the connection time with God is so important. He will not let us be tempted beyond what we can bear. God knows what level of temptation we are able to bear, and He has given us the resources we need to resist. And those resources are found in Him, through prayer, and through His Word. But it’s more than just spending a few minutes with God and reading a few scriptures in our Bible. We must train our ears and hearts to hear God’s voice and listen with intent to obey – quickly!



- Set a SMART goal. A smart goal is specific, measurable, action-oriented, realistic, and timed. Set one goal and the strategies to accomplish that goal. In a 2007 study, British psychologist Richard Wiseman studied the success rate of 3,000 people in sticking to their resolutions but found only 12% were able to achieve their goal. After reviewing the data on the success rate of those who fulfilled their goals, he saw the wisdom of focusing on one goal at a time. Too many goals and changes at once will only set you up for an easy quit. The more specific the goal, the more likely you will be successful at achieving the goal. One goal I have set for this year is to have my quiet time with God six out of seven days a week. The six out of seven is not permission to skip my quiet time; it’s just a reality that some morning’s there will be interruptions in my life. It’s a reasonable goal, considering how my life is not always under my control. You can find detailed information on setting SMART goals in [My Place for Fitness](#).
- Give yourself some grace. There will be days when you don’t do as well; days when it’s just not possible to exercise or you willing give in to the temptation to eat the things your body really does not need. Or, in my case, to eat more than my body needs. I don’t allow this set back to wreck me emotionally. I give myself some grace. There is a ton of research showing that it takes three months for a change to become routine. It won’t happen overnight, but it also won’t take years. An occasional sidestep from my commitments does not mean I need to quit. It means I need to receive the grace He has so lavishly bestowed upon us (Eph. 1:7) and do the next right thing, at my very next opportunity.
- Celebrate all the victories! Just this week, I asked someone to share her success story and the reply, “but I’m not at my goal yet; when I get there, then I will celebrate.” Every victory is worth celebrating. A week of saying no to extra portions; a week of consistently moving more; the day when you could finally get up off the floor! All of these are worthy of celebrating. This week I was able to get down on my hands and knees, put my knee down on the mat, and left my other leg. All of my weight was on my artificial knee. And my class cheered for me! That is a victory worth celebrating appropriately. It’s not permission to sabotage yourself, but a little encouragement goes a long way. Celebrate the success with others, especially if they reach their goals, too. God is at work, and He is worthy of our thanks. He is the One who accomplishes what we never thought could be accomplished. Clap your hands and hoot and holler over all the victories!

This could be the last year you make a New Years’ Resolution to lose weight. It is possible that 2020 is your year for success if you stay focused on the One who begun this good work in you. He is faithful to complete it. We are done with the quitting!

Vicki Heath

Vicki Heath is the National Director of First Place for Health. Vicki is a certified fitness instructor for the American Council on Exercise, a certified life coach and Wellness Coordinator for her church in Edisto Beach, SC. Vicki is an author of the books Don’t Quit Get Fit, Wellness Journey of a Lifetime, and My First Place. She strives to bring others into the Kingdom through health and wellness.



HEALTHY RECIPES

CHICKEN BISCUIT STEW

Ingredients

- 4 3-oz. cooked boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cubed
- 2 tbsp. reduced-calorie margarine
- 1/2 c. all-purpose flour
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- 1/4 tsp. pepper
- 1/2 c. nonfat milk
- 1 10 1/2-oz. can chicken broth
- 1/3 c. chopped onion
- 1 8 1/2-oz. can cut green beans, drained
- 1 8 1/2-oz. can sliced carrots, drained
- 1 4 1/2-oz. can refrigerated buttermilk biscuits

Instructions

Preheat oven to 375 F. In heavy saucepan, melt margarine over medium-high heat; stir in flour, salt and pepper. Gradually add milk and broth, stirring with as whisk until blended. Cook 4 minutes or until thick and bubbly, stirring constantly. Add chicken, onion, green beans and carrots, cook 1 minute and remove from heat. Carefully split biscuits in half horizontally. Place over chicken mixture to create topping. Bake 20 minutes or until biscuits are golden brown.

Nutritional Information Per Serving: Number of Servings 6 • 271 Calories • 7g Fat (25.0% calories from fat) • 25g Protein • 25g Carbohydrate • 2g Dietary Fiber • 53mg Cholesterol • 752mg Sodium



PUMPKIN ORANGE COOKIES

Ingredients

- 1 jar Smuckers 100% Simply Fruit Orange Marmalade
- 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup all natural applesauce
- 3 packets Sweet 'N Low
- 4 teaspoons Sweet 'N Low Brown Sugar
- 1 egg (well beaten)
- 1 can (15 ounce) pure pumpkin (not pumpkin pie mix)
- 2 tablespoons orange juice concentrate
- 1 tablespoon orange peel (grated)
- 1 tablespoon pumpkin pie spice

Instructions

Combine flour, baking soda and salt in medium bowl. Combine applesauce, egg, and all Sweet 'N Low in a large mixing bowl. Combine dry and wet ingredients; add in pumpkin, orange juice, orange peel and pumpkin pie spice, and 1/2 jar orange marmalade. Drop on prepared cookie sheet (sprayed with Pam) by spoonful and bake at 350 degrees for about 12-14 minutes. For Glaze: Heat the other half of the orange marmalade in microwave and dip cookie (top side only). With fork, pick up pieces of the orange peel and place small pieces on the top of cookie. Nutrition Information: Serving Size 1 cookie • Number of Servings 35 • 23 Calories • trace Fat (6.6% calories from fat) • 1g Protein • 5g Carbohydrate • trace Dietary Fiber • 4mg Cholesterol • 37mg Sodium.





HEALTHY RECIPES

SPAGHETTI SQUASH GRATIN

Ingredients

- 1 (2-pound) spaghetti squash
- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt, divided
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, divided
- 1/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper
- 2 28-ounce cans whole tomatoes, drained and chopped
- 3 oregano sprigs
- 3 thyme sprigs
- 1/2 cup (2 ounces) grated fresh Parmesan cheese
- 2 teaspoons chopped fresh oregano
- 1 teaspoon chopped fresh thyme
- 1 15-ounce carton fat-free ricotta cheese

Instructions

Preheat oven to 400°. Pierce squash with a fork. Place squash on a baking sheet; bake at 400° for 1 hour or until tender. Cool. Cut squash in half lengthwise; discard seeds. Scrape inside of squash with a fork to remove spaghetti-like strands to measure 4 cups. Heat olive oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add garlic; cook 2 minutes, stirring frequently. Add 1/2 teaspoon salt, 1/4 teaspoon black pepper, crushed red pepper, tomatoes, oregano, and thyme sprigs; bring to a boil. Reduce heat, and simmer for 20 minutes or until thickened, stirring occasionally. Discard oregano and thyme sprigs. Combine remaining 1/2 teaspoon salt, remaining 1/4 teaspoon black pepper, Parmesan, and remaining ingredients. Spoon 1/2 cup squash into each of 8 (8-ounce) ramekins. Spoon tomato sauce evenly over squash; divide ricotta mixture evenly among ramekins, spreading to cover. Can also spread in 8x8 baking pan. Bake at 400° for 50 minutes or until lightly browned.

Nutrition Information: Number of Servings 6 • Calories 117 (21% from fat) • Fat: 2.7g (sat 1.1g, mono 0.9g, poly 0.4g) • Protein: 7.8g • Carbohydrate: 15.1g • Fiber: 1.1g • Cholesterol: 13mg • Iron: 1.5mg • Sodium: 531mg • Calcium: 200mg



GREEN SALAD WITH APPLES AND WALNUT DRESSING

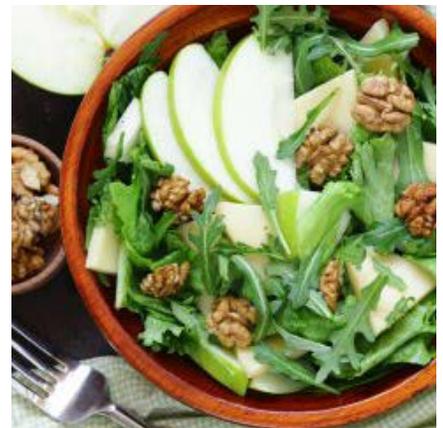
Ingredients

- 6 cups gourmet salad greens
- 1 cup (2-inch) julienne-cut Braeburn apples
- 2 tbsp. cider vinegar
- 2 tbsp. maple syrup
- 2 tsp. Dijon mustard
- 1/2 tsp. walnut oil
- 1/8 tsp. salt
- 1/8 tsp. ground red pepper

Instructions

Combine salad greens and Braeburn apple in a large bowl. Combine vinegar, syrup, Dijon mustard, walnut oil, salt and ground red pepper, stirring with a whisk. Drizzle over salad and toss gently to coat.

Nutrition Information: Number of Servings 8 Per Serving 73 calories • 2.2g fat (28% calories from fat) • 1.6g protein • 13.7g carbohydrate • 2.5g fiber • 0mg cholesterol • 159mg sodium



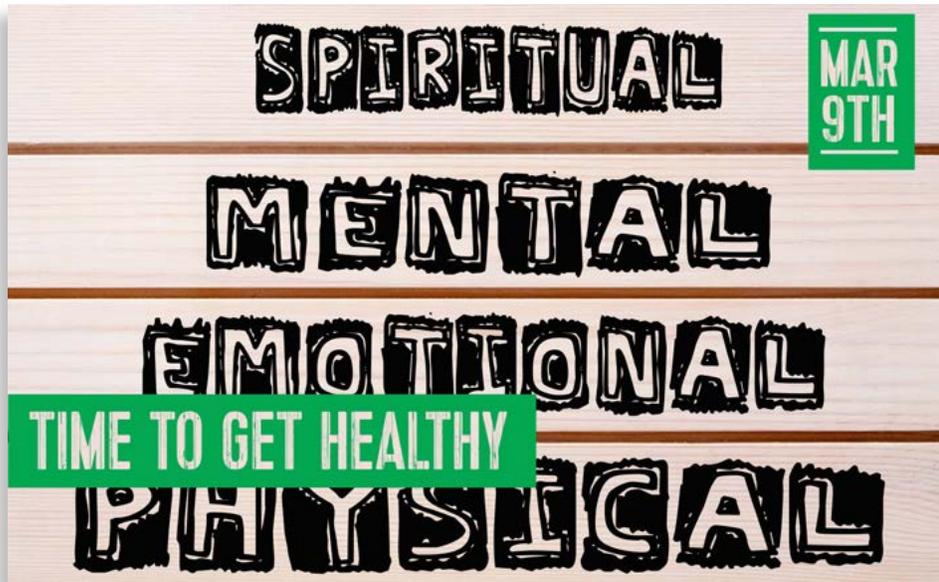


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UPCOMING EVENTS



ONLINE GROUPS

Starting in February

[Online](#)

WEBINAR - TIME TO GET HEALTHY

March 9, 2020

[Online](#)

RESTORE ME: EXPERIENCING FREEDOM FROM FOOD STRONGHOLDS

May 3-5, 2020

Sandy Cove, MD

SUMMIT 2020 - SAVE THE DATE

July 24-25, 2020

Cincinnati, OH

WELLNESS WEEK

October 8-15, 2020

Round Top, TX

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