

Walk, Stand, Sit

Psalm 1:1-6 The psalmist reverses the natural way we learn to walk. A baby first learns to sit up and then gradually pulls himself up to the standing position. Finally, when he feels steady on his feet, he ventures to take the first step. God has not called us to a natural way of walking. He has called us to a supernatural walk. We walk in His ways, we stand in His righteousness, and we sit in His presence.

Global Troubadours

Hillsong United have set the standard for contemporary worship.

It's a typical Friday night at Hillsong United. The parking lot is filled with skateboards, loud music, longhaired boys wearing ill-fitting jeans and girls huddled together in groups. Inside, thousands of teens pack the auditorium, hungry for a touch from God.

"Youth was, and still is, all about being ourselves and connecting with Jesus," says JD, one of the frontmen for the youth ministry's band, also called Hillsong United.

It is in this environment that a new generation of songwriters and worship leaders has emerged at Hillsong Church. Now one of the world's most popular worship bands, Hillsong United began their journey in 1998 at a summer camp. The youth encountered God, and the worship just did not stop.

Band leaders, including Reuben Morgan, Marty Sampson and Joel Houston—son of Hillsong founders Brian and Bobbie Houston—were

also deeply impacted. "It was during this time they had a revelation about worship for the youth ministry," says tour manager Luke Webb.

Inspired by bands such as Delirious, Hillsong United were encouraged to write their own music. "The passion for songwriting was not based on producing albums or touring the globe, but for our youth to connect with God," Webb says. "[The band would ask], 'What would our friends want to sing and worship God to?' So they would write those songs."

A year later, at the church's annual Jam United Conference, the band recorded their first album, *Everyday*. Now after 10 albums, Hillsong United has become a global phenomenon, playing to packed stadiums worldwide and landing on Christian and secular music charts. Their most recent album, *Across the Earth*, was No. 2 on the iTunes Top Albums chart after it released in May.

But for all their success, Hillsong United have always had a yearning to redress injustice they encountered while touring and to channel the passion of their global audience into social justice projects. In 2008 they launched phase one of their three-part project, The I Heart Revolution, with the release of the CD/DVD worship project *With Hearts As One*.

Last November, part two of the series, the documentary *We Are All in This Together*, screened in more than 500 theatres across the U.S. and Canada. Filmed over two years, the movie chronicles the band's journey through 42 nations, where they encountered Christians addressing such issues as human trafficking and extreme poverty.

The final part of the trilogy, , is an interactive Web site designed to inspire and mobilize users to be part of the solution to global problems. "If our worship is about great youth meetings, nice songs, lots of jumping around and a few CDs, then we are missing it," says Joel Houston, creative

director of Hillsong Church and lead singer of Hillsong United.

“Our vertical expression must have a horizontal effect. So we’ll continue to worship, praise and honor God with heart, soul, mind and strength the best we know how, but the fruit of that must be a generation who are totally committed to reaching the lost and helping those who need help, locally and globally.”

The Dark Side of Tattoos

Today it’s fashionable to get as much permanent ink on your skin as possible. Is this a healthy trend?

I had never given the subject of tattoos much thought other than occasionally to regret getting mine—until my wife, Janet, and I were ministering in New Zealand in 2003. New Zealand was settled more than 1,000 years ago by a primitive Polynesian people called the Maori. They were headhunters and cannibals who worshipped demon gods. The Maori tattoo most of their bodies, including their faces, which they carve flesh from as a wood carver would etch wood to create a design. Then they apply ink.

On a day off we went sightseeing with a local pastor. He took us to a Maori village. Inside the entrance of the village was a meeting house, and above the entrance was a statue of a demon, the face of which was carved with the same pattern as the men’s faces. I immediately came to the realization that these people had carved their faces to look like the deity they worshiped.

The Lord spoke very clearly to me to study every people group,

not just the Maori, and then write a book. As a result, I spent nearly two years researching the origins and history of tattoos and piercing. I studied Pacific Islanders, Native Americans, Europeans, Mid-Easterners, Asians and Africans in my research.

MARKED BY GOD

“Yes, I have tattoos. Please don’t judge me before you know why I wear them.”- Aaron Cannistraci [Read the counter argument to this article here.](#)

I discovered that all primitive pagan cultures throughout history and on every continent subscribed to some form of body modification or mutilation, usually involving tattoos and/or piercing. In most cases the practice was a part of demon worship. Many groups such as the Maori tattooed themselves to look like the demons to gain acceptance and power from them.

In 1991 hikers in Europe found the frozen, well-preserved body of an “Alpine Iceman.” More than 5,000 years old, he is the oldest frozen mummy ever discovered. He was found with a grass cape, a copper axe, a quiver full of arrows, flint for making fire, and numerous tattoos on his body, including a cross on the inside of the left knee. (It was not a so-called “Christian tattoo.”) He had six straight lines 15 centimeters long above the kidneys, and numerous parallel lines on the ankles.

Subsequent X-rays of his body revealed chronic degeneration of bone and cartilage in the spine and arthritic wear and tear of the knees and ankles. Presumably these tattoos were done by a shaman or medicine man who was invoking the gods on behalf of this man to rid his body of pain.

In 1891, archaeologists discovered the 4,000-year-old mummy of an Egyptian priestess of Hathor—the Egyptian goddess of love. She had parallel lines tattooed on her arms and thighs as well as an elliptical design below her navel. The tattoo below her navel is believed to have had sexual connotations linked to fertility.

Headhunters such as the Maori from the Philippines, Taiwan and other Pacific islands tattooed themselves to appease the gods before the headhunt and to commemorate their success afterward. South American headhunters also used tattoos as part of their rituals. The Hawaiians have actual tattoo gods they consult before doing a tattoo. The Chinese and Japanese used tattoos to ward off evil spirits, to appease different gods and, like the Romans, to identify or “brand” criminals. Roman slaves were tattooed as a sign of ownership, often marked, “Tax Paid.”

Native Americans tattooed themselves and their captives. The Inuit tattooed themselves upon arriving in the cold arctic regions to appease the gods so they would allow them to settle there and survive in the harsh climate.

In the Mideast, Babylonian and Canaanite and Hebrew shrine prostitutes tattooed themselves as part of their worship. Baal worshipers wore tattoos on their hands to gain power from Baal. In India, shrine prostitutes tattooed themselves to look like the various gods they worshiped. In primitive areas of India the wife of the village sorcerer is the tattoo artist.

Because of their dark skin, black Africans didn't use tattoos as much as they used scarification. This involves cutting the skin with a sharp instrument and then rubbing it with ashes or caustic plant juices that form permanent blisters. Dark pigments, such as charcoal or gunpowder, are then rubbed into the wound to provide emphasis. The wounds are periodically reopened to enhance the raised scar effect.

Other African traditions involve extreme forms of body piercing. Lips and ears are pierced and objects implanted inside, causing the lip or ear tissue to elongate and conform to the shape of the object. Ethiopian women wear a lip plate, which causes the mouth to protrude to resemble the beak of the spoonbill, a creature they worship.

The letting of blood and body modification have always been associated with pagan worship and witchcraft. Pagans and Christians alike know there is power in the blood. In spite of the current interest in tattoos even in the church, all research points to one conclusion: The root of tattooing never changes; it is, and always has been, a pagan spiritual activity.

SHOULD YOU TATTOO?

Some Christians say it's OK to have tattoos. What do you think? Should Christians get tattoos? Join the very controversial debate.

Your Body Is a Temple

During the last 11 years Janet and I have been heavily involved in the ministry of deliverance. We have ministered to multiplied thousands of people in individual and group settings. We have dealt with people from all walks of life, from many different nations and races. We have ministered to the depressed, the oppressed and even the possessed. We have seen countless people who have been negatively impacted by the spirit realm as a result of things they have done or things that have happened to them.

The goal of our deliverance teaching is always to impart a greater understanding of the spirit realm. Believers need to know how it affects them and to be aware that everything we do in the natural has a spiritual consequence, including the marking or piercing of our bodies.

It's not surprising that Satan and his demon spirits are doing what they have always done, trying to gain man's attention, affection and worship. In my research I found that in every culture tattoos were used as a means of invoking, appeasing or glorifying demon gods. Satan is still seeking to take man's focus off God and direct it to himself.

Today in our culture and society we see an explosion of fads such as tattoos and piercings. Though I don't fully understand it, Satan is attempting to mark as many people as he can through these means. Perhaps on the day of judgment the accuser of the brethren, the devil, will stand before God and try to claim those so marked as his own.

Or perhaps Satan is encouraging people of all cultures to mar their bodies through some form of mutilation because he knows we are made in God's image, and he hates God and anything that resembles God.

When I minister, I often ask people if they have ever played "Monopoly." If they have, I ask whether they have ever gotten into a family feud while playing and have had to get out the rule book. People laugh as they recall digging out the rules.

God has given us a rule book, a set of rules to play by that enables us to win this game of life. We call it the Bible. The Bible was given to us to help us and to protect us from harm. It clearly teaches us the wiles and schemes of the devil.

Leviticus 19:28 gives us the "rule" for tattoos. It says, "'You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor tattoo any marks on you: I am the Lord'" (NKJV).

When God first gave this command to the Israelites, He was drawing a line of demarcation between His chosen people and the Egyptians, whose land they had just left, and the Canaanites, whose land they were about to enter. Both of these cultures were steeped in witchcraft and the occult. Both openly worshiped and served demon gods, and both used tattoos

as part of their idolatry and pagan worship. God was trying to protect the Israelites from opening themselves up to demonic influence.

We too are God's people, and He wants us to "'come out from among them'" (2 Cor. 6:17). He wants us to separate ourselves from the world and the world's fads. When we do that, we will avoid doing things to our bodies that God never intended us to do—and that includes getting tattoos.

Let me make it clear that there is absolutely no such thing as a Christian tattoo. In fact, the mere term "Christian tattoo" is an oxymoron! A tattoo may be a religious symbol, but there is nothing Christian about it.

If we truly belong to Christ, we should know and understand that our bodies are not our own. Engaging in the practice of body modification indicates that we believe the opposite. Yet the Bible clearly tells us: "Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body" (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

Rolling Stone magazine quoted famous tattoo artist Paul Booth as saying that while he is tattooing people, "he allows his clients' demons to help guide the needle." I pray this article will prevent you or someone you know from further defiling these earthen temples we call our bodies. I pray it has given you a greater understanding of the unseen world, as well as insight into what's behind the ink.

If you already have a tattoo or piercing and are wondering what to do now that you know the truth, here are some steps you can take. First, repent to God for violating Scripture and for bloodletting, which is witchcraft. Also, repent for defiling the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Then renounce the spirits behind the tattoo or piercing. Witchcraft and rebellion are a given, but many tattoos have


images that need to be addressed. Sexual tattoos may invite a spirit of perversion, a skull and cross bones a spirit of death, a religious tattoo a spirit of religion and so on. If you have a piercing in other than an ear lobe, remove it and repent for defiling your temple. And whether it's a tattoo or a piercing, anoint it with oil and break any assignment of the enemy that came in through the modification of your body.

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SHOULD YOU TATTOO?

Some Christians say it's OK to have tattoos. What do you think? Should Christians get tattoos? Join the very controversial debate.

Read Through the Bible in 2010

In a year when everything in life seems shaky, you can find  stability in God's unchangeable Word.

Almost everything we buy today comes with

an instruction manual. Even coffee at the local drive-in comes with a warning such as “Caution contents may be hot!” Whether or not we decide to read the manual is up to us, but at least it’s there if we need it.

Wouldn’t it be great if life came with an instruction manual? Well, actually, it does. It’s called the Bible.

Whether or not we read it is our choice, but God has made it readily available to us.

A Sound From Down Under

Australia’s Hillsong Church may be on the other side of the world, but its music and ministry style have affected every continent. We talked to Pastor Brian Houston about the global impact of Aussie faith.

It was 11 on a Sunday morning when Elva Hoene visited Sydney’s Hillsong Church for the first time. Clutching her daughter’s hand in anticipation, the visitor from Germany stepped into the sunlit foyer.

The place was abuzz with activity—children squealing, coffee brewing and music drifting through the sanctuary doors. She couldn’t believe it. After years of singing the renowned worship songs back home, she was finally here. She knew the morning would have a profound impact on her.

But on this day, it wasn’t the worship or preaching that stirred her the most, it was the welcome from the volunteers

and a beautiful detail at the entrance to the church—a long, red carpet and a glass sign that simply said, “Welcome Home.” The tears welled. For the longest time, Hoene hadn’t felt the warmth she was experiencing that day. *I finally feel like I am home*, she thought.

Hoene, like millions of others, had heard about Hillsong from her small church. She had sung the popular worship songs “Shout to the Lord” and “Mighty to Save,” watched the YouTube preaching clips and attended with thousands of others a Hillsong United worship event in Amsterdam. But it wasn’t until she took the 9,940-mile trip to Sydney that she experienced the heartbeat of the ministry—to invite people into God’s presence.

For two decades, Hillsong has captured the attention and imagination of Christians worldwide with their inspiring praise and worship. From the slums of Rio de Janeiro to the bustling streets of Stockholm, millions—more than 11 million in fact—have bought, downloaded and listened to Hillsong music.

Since its first release in 1988, Hillsong has recorded more than 60 albums, including live worship, and kids and youth CDs. They have been distributed in 80 countries and collected more than 30 gold and platinum awards in Australia and the U.S.

According to John Coleman, vice president of Integrity Music, the demand for Hillsong music has exploded. “The congregational anthem ‘Mighty to Save,’ with a recent Dove Award for Worship Song of the Year, is the second most popular song in American churches today,” he says. “*Across the Earth*, the latest release from [the church’s youth ministry] Hillsong United, debuted at No. 1 on the American Billboard gospel charts.”

For senior pastors Brian and Bobbie Houston, the praise and

worship flowing from Hillsong is an expression of the church's heart—to “connect people with the living God,” as its mission states. In Sydney alone, Hillsong ministers to some 21,000 people in three main campuses and 14 extension services. Last year, a fourth campus opened in Brisbane. Internationally, Hillsong has churches in London; Kiev, Ukraine; Moscow; Paris; Stockholm; and Cape Town, South Africa.

And while church planting all over the world is not on the agenda for this megachurch, its pastors have become multimedia missionaries, beaming their TV program to 180 countries. The Sydney-based International Leadership College trains more than 900 international students each year. Meanwhile, thousands flock to the church's annual Colour Your World women's events and Hillsong Conference, which drew 20,000 attendees last July.

A Local Church at Heart

Yet leaders say the scope of the ministry is a sign of what God wants to do through His church, not just one congregation. “The church across the earth is incredibly valuable,” says Darlene Zschech, a Hillsong worship leader whose music helped bring the church international attention. “And God is using it to be His felt presence to the broken and suffering ... to be His hands and feet. My prayer is that people everywhere will fall in love with the potential of their local church.”

It's this love for the local church that continues to drive senior pastors Brian and Bobbie Houston, who have woven community action and social justice into the fabric of the ministry. Recently the church launched One for Another, an umbrella organization for its compassion ministries.

In her book *Heaven Is in This House*, Bobbie Houston writes that God wants to turn His church into a tangible expression of heaven on earth. “His church is not a building,” she writes. “It is not a program or an event, not a gospel

television program for that matter. It is not even a Sunday or weekend service that gathers believers. His house is the tangible framework that embraces and cherishes His people and causes them to flourish in life.”

Although initially struck by the church’s worship ministry, author John Bevere says the Houstons’ passion to reach a hurting world has made the strongest impact on him. “Each time I come away from Brian, Bobbie, their team and the church with a greater desire to reach hurting humanity and represent Jesus with excellence,” says Bevere, who has spoken at several Hillsong conferences.

U.S. congregations have grown “in amazing ways” as a result of Hillsong’s worship and “the excellence [the Houstons] exude in representing Jesus and reaching the lost,” Bevere adds. “I don’t believe the American church would be where it is today had it not been for the influence of Hillsong.”

In Australia, that influence can be felt across all denominations—most notably in the Assemblies of God (AOG), a denomination independent of the U.S. church that has grown from 10,000 people to 215,000 in the last 30 years.

Keith Ainge, national ministries director for what is now known as the Australian Christian Churches, suggests Brian Houston’s leadership and the influence of Hillsong has made a significant contribution to this growth. “When Brian became national AOG president in 1997, he brought a fresh vision and leadership to the movement,” Ainge says.

“His example and that of Hillsong raised people to a new level of commitment, which has impacted the worship, the way the church is run and the culture of Australian churches. Despite the decrease in the established church in the last decade, churches like Hillsong have increased.”

But for all its influence in Australia and across the world,

Hillsong is, and always will be, a local church, Houston says. "I have always been passionate about 'the church'—not just our church, but the global church and the potential of the church to help people—to make a difference and shout God's fame," says Houston, who grew up as a pastor's son in Wellington, New Zealand.

He met Bobbie when he was 20 and she was 17. They married in 1978 and left New Zealand a year later to join the ministry team of Sydney Christian Life Centre, run by Brian's father, Frank Houston. After planting two churches, they pioneered Hills Christian Life Centre in 1983.

Young and full of vision, the Houstons rented a public school hall in the sparsely populated suburbs of Northwest Sydney, known at the time for only two things—market gardens and the largest Holden car dealership in Australia. It was a good place to build a church, the Houstons thought.

So they did what they knew to do: They set up chairs and an antiquated sound system. "Even though we were small and had a piano with missing keys and a piano accordion, I remember the worship being so anointed and feeling like God was in that school hall," recalls Donna Crouch, executive pastor for Hillsong CityCare.

"The music back then was quite raw," Zschech adds. "It was rough, like any new church. We had this funny array of lovely people who sang—we could never get a choir together. The agenda was to worship. Come as you are and do your best. That hasn't changed."

Phil and Lucinda Dooley, pastors of Hillsong Cape Town, remember a great sense of fun and adventure. "As a young person, I thought our senior pastor was so cool," Phil Dooley says. "He had a very hip mullet and a long handlebar moustache. In fact, I think Brian and Bobbie both had mullets."

“The church was full of life and passion, vision and strong leadership,” Lucinda Dooley adds. “And you never knew what was going to happen next.”

The Song Heard Around the World

What did happen next was extraordinary. It was the late 1980s, and the church had been growing exponentially—moving from the school to a warehouse and eventually to an entertainment complex.

It was during this season of growth that the Hillsong Conference was established, and Brian Houston encouraged Geoff Bullock, the church’s worship leader at the time, to start writing songs. “I always believed God had given me a passion for a church that would influence people through music that reflected the heart of the church,” Houston says.

With the vision in place, Bullock and Houston began writing songs: “Geoff’s were great; mine were forgettable,” Houston says.

Soon after, in 1988, Hillsong released its first album, *Spirit and Truth*, followed closely by *Show Your Glory* in 1990. But it wasn’t until 1996 when the church released *Shout to the Lord*, that global recognition came. “It was a great, yet difficult time,” reflects Zschech, who wrote the album’s title song. “Just prior to recording the album, our worship pastor stepped down.

“I just remember sitting on my driveway on a very hot Sydney day eating lemonade ice blocks with Brian and [my husband] Mark saying, ‘What are we going to do?’ Brian just turned to me and said, ‘You’ll have to lead the album.’ I told him I couldn’t. His only reply was, ‘Yes, you can.’”

That week, Zschech apprehensively led the team in the studio and recorded the album, which was produced in partnership with Integrity Music. Soon after its release, the album hit the

Christian music charts in the U.S. “I remember getting a call from [Willow Creek pastor] Bill Hybels at the time who said, ‘This song [“Shout to the Lord”] is stunning,’” Zschech recalls. “It just went crazy. Letters began pouring in from all over the world.”

What began as a cry from Zschech’s heart, written on the keys of her mother’s old piano and presented to the worship team apologetically, has now been sung by more than 35 million people worldwide and translated into 80 languages.

Nominated for Song of the Year at the 1998 Dove Awards, the worship anthem has been performed at the White House, the Vatican and in 2008 by finalists in the popular reality show *American Idol*. In 2009, the compilation album by the same name was certified gold, selling 500,000 units.

Although *Shout to the Lord* was clearly a turning point for the church, there were other highlights—the growth of their two conferences; the launch of Hillsong Sisterhood, a global women’s movement; a partnership with Compassion International and Watoto Child Care Ministries in Uganda; the opening of a 21-acre facility in northwest Sydney by the prime minister of Australia; and the planting of Hillsong churches worldwide.

And while some have viewed this growth as the result of a well-crafted marketing strategy, Brian Houston simply says, “It’s been the grace of God.”

“Honestly,” Houston adds, “we have never gone out there and tried to produce clever music or build crowds. We have just done what’s come naturally. In fact, even in our wildest dreams, I would never have thought for a second that this would happen.”

Nor could he have predicted what was to follow. In the late 1990s, a new generation of songwriters from the youth ministry began emerging—a generational transition that Houston says has

been critical to the church's longevity. Today, Hillsong United is one of the most influential worship bands in the world.

"One of Hillsong's greatest strengths is the way they train and raise up each generation for leadership and give them opportunity," Coleman says. "Churches are now looking to Hillsong as a model and wanting to see that kind of thing happen in their own church."

Coleman is also quick to point out that churches need to have their own distinctive. "When the worship leaders and songwriters encounter the truth of God and His presence in a church environment, the songs are born out of that—out of the house," Coleman says. "I think [Hillsong's music] is testament to what's going on inside spiritually and under Brian and Bobbie's leadership."

Bible teacher Joyce Meyer says the Houstons are humble, authentic leaders. "They are not only who they say they are, they are the real deal," she says. "Without question, they have changed the music landscape in churches throughout the U.S. and around the world as both their sound and songs have become synonymous with praise and worship. Their anointed ministry helps to bring people into the presence of God in a powerful way."

But not everybody is celebrating Hillsong's success. For years, the church has been a magnet for criticism from mainstream Australian media and some church leaders. News reports and academic dissertations have taken aim at teaching that critics say is too focused on health and wealth. The AOG's Ainge believes the nation's secularism fuels the condemnation. "Australia has never seen a megachurch like Hillsong before," he points out. "And what they don't understand, they criticize."

Unmoved by the detractors, Houston remains committed to seeing

people empowered. “We are always full of hope for the future,” he says. “We never dreamed that Christians the world over would sing songs penned by our worship teams, or that our conferences would have multiplied thousands, or that Bobbie would lead a global sisterhood of women that are radically making a difference across the earth.”

Has the vision changed? “It’s the same as it’s always been,” Houston says. “It’s about a healthy house and what that represents.”

“Brian and Bobbie love God’s house, God’s people and a broken world—it’s as simple as that,” says Christine Caine, who became a member of Hillsong 21 years ago and has since founded Equip and Empower ministries. “I am secure in the fact that even though God has elevated the profile of Hillsong, they have remained true to their core of loving God and loving people,” she says.

And on the day Elva Hoene visited from Germany, it wasn’t the success of Hillsong United’s music, the church’s global recognition or the thousands who follow Brian Houston on Twitter that impressed her. It was the love of the volunteers that made her feel at home.

“I felt so honored and so appreciated as a person,” she said, as her eyes welled with tears. “It was fantastic. Although it’s such a huge congregation, the church has made such an impact. They noticed me. That’s the church I’ve been looking for.”

Nicole Partridge is a freelance journalist based in Australia who writes for magazines, newspapers and relief organizations. Her November cover story for Charisma featured Australian missionary Irene Gleeson. She lives in Sydney with her husband and two children.

More Online

See our slide show of popular worship bands making strides on the humanitarian front at .

Feedback January 2010

Healthy Resolutions

You don't have to go through another year overweight and out of shape. Take these 10 steps to good health.

Would you choose to fly on an airline that had a track record of arriving safely at a destination only 5 percent of the time? Of course not! You wouldn't dare set foot on one of that company's planes. Yet every day, dieters around the world embark on a new diet with the same success rate.

Some hop on board the latest hyped-up, low-fat, wonderworking program that has made it past the late-night infomercial phase to become a *New York Times* best-seller. Still others prefer a more adventurous journey with a no-carb, miracle pound-shedder that has a host of B-list celebrities touting its amazing results. Of course, almost all who set out to lose weight via one of these diets swear that it will be absolutely,

positively the last one they'll ever try.

It seems everyone is looking for the "diet to end all diets." Sadly, people are looking for something that doesn't exist. Why? Because in the long run, dieting just doesn't work.

Some reports indicate that only 2 percent of all dieters manage to lose weight and keep it off for good; others claim it's closer to 5 percent. Although those figures are hotly contested, what we do know for certain is that even those researchers who support dieting concur that diets fail at least 80 to 90 percent of the time.

After a year, the overwhelming majority of dieters regain whatever weight they've lost. Worse still, almost two-thirds end up weighing even more within four or five years than before they started their yes, there are those who may lose 100-plus pounds on certain programs. However, the vast majority of patients gain the weight back—and usually more weight—because they have become metabolically compromised.

You're probably wondering: *Dr. Colbert, why would you even recommend a diet plan if diets don't work? And why should I bother trying to lose weight if it will most likely come back?*

I'll be honest with you: If you are just looking to continue the pattern of following here-today, gone-tomorrow fad diets, you may as well put down this article now. Why? Because I think dieting, over the long haul, is one of the surest ways to become frustrated, discouraged, fed up and even depressed about losing weight.

After treating more than 40,000 patients during the last 25 years, I have observed some definitive commonalities among those who repeatedly attempted to lose weight, only to gain it back. I have also found a medically verifiable answer that leads to lifetime success in this area.

So what makes my "I can do this" diet different from diets in

other books? The “can do” part, for one thing! It’s doable, and it works. As a medical doctor, I deal with getting results—verifiable results that prove a patient is on his way to long-term health, not just fixing an immediate problem.

Yes, my diet is far more than a diet; it’s a lifestyle. It does not offer you a quick-fix approach to anything. But it does offer you principles that are meant to last for life, principles that have been proven to work for thousands of individuals for more than a decade and counting. If you want to lose weight and keep it off, follow these 10 steps to a healthier life:

- **1. Make a commitment to lose weight.** A commitment is more than a goal. It is a framework for your progression in life, a long-term vision that goes beyond just reaching your targeted ideal weight. And when you combine rock-steady commitment with positive emotion that propels you to the next level, suddenly succeeding on a daily, weekly or monthly basis becomes much easier.
- **2. Set reachable goals.** When you embark on a lifestyle change to lose weight, it’s crucial to establish goals. However, they must be realistic if you hope to reach them. An unrealistic goal for weight or clothing size sets you up for discouragement, and people who become discouraged will usually stop the program altogether and eventually gain back all their weight.
- **3. Keep a food journal.** Keeping a food journal while losing weight is a tremendous motivator for most individuals because it creates accountability. I am not recommending that you track your calories every day during the program. That, like many dieting techniques, can become such a burden that it is more harmful than helpful. To get an idea of how many calories you are ingesting daily, however, you need to start this program by recording everything you eat and the associated

calorie intake for three weekdays and one weekend day.

You may discover your meal portions are too big. Or you may find out your calorie count for a particular meal is much higher than you thought. It will be easy to determine such problems if you simply take the time to record what you eat and the number of calories consumed in a food journal.

- **4. Measure yourself.** You do not need a scale or any other fancy tools to evaluate your progress—just a simple tape measure. By focusing on your waist measurement and achieving your goal measurement, you will eliminate one of the main risk factors for disease, toxic fat in your abdominal area. You can track other measurements, such as body weight and body fat percentage, along with your waist measurement *once a month*—not once a week. Log these in your food journal so you will have a clearly established goal.
- **5. Eat the right foods in the right combination.** Your body needs three food components daily: carbohydrates, proteins and fats. All the calories you consume can be attributed to one of these groups. Healthy, low-glycemic carbohydrates should comprise about 40 percent of your total calorie intake per day, good proteins 30 percent, and healthy fats another 30 percent. Each meal should contain all three components. Avoid all white flour and white sugar as well as beverages and food products that contain artificial sweeteners. (For more details about exactly what foods to eat and beverages to drink, see *Dr. Colbert's "I Can Do This" Diet*, available January 5.)
- **6. Eat at the right times.** One of the most important principles of the "I can do this" diet is to eat three meals a day, with no carbohydrates after 6 p.m. The reason is that these three meals provide the fuel your body needs at the times it needs the fuel most. The most

important of these three fueling times is breakfast—a meal many people often skip.

- **7. Eat healthy snacks.** The correct fuel mixture at meals should control your hunger for three to four hours. Yet most people go longer than that between meals, allowing their blood sugar to drop and causing a noticeable decrease in energy and mental clarity. The right mid-morning and mid-afternoon snacks will enable you to remain hunger-free and productive for several hours, and a snack an hour before bed will help ensure restful sleep.
- **8. Control your portion size.** Most Americans eat *more* of what they eat than is healthy for them. We have become accustomed to ignoring serving sizes on food labels and eating the amount we've trained our stomachs and brains to demand. It's time to exercise some portion control!
- **9. Engage in physical activity.** Exercise is essential. This truth applies universally to every human being, but especially to anyone hoping to lose pounds. You can restrict your diet and eat less than your daily requirement, yet without burning off calories through physical activity, you have only half the equation.
- **10. Take safe weight-loss supplements.** A weight-loss supplement is a nutritional product or herb intended to *assist* your healthy eating and activity plan with the ultimate goal of losing weight. A supplement comes alongside; it does not replace.

Most supplements for weight loss have no sound clinical research supporting their claims, and some—including those containing fenfluramine, ephedra and aristolochia—are dangerous. However, there are a number of safe and effective dietary supplements that look promising for weight loss. My favorite is PGX fiber because it suppresses appetite by making you feel full, but there are several others described in my

book that you may want to try.

Following the lifestyle principles described above will provide many benefits beyond weight loss. It will help you improve your overall health, manage stress and prevent stress-related eating. In fact, it is the best program you can be on during not only the good times but also the most chaotic times of your life.

Don Colbert, M.D., is board-certified in family practice and anti-aging medicine. He has also received extensive training in nutritional and preventive medicine. Colbert is the author of the *New York Times* best-selling book *The Seven Pillars of Health*, as well as best-sellers *Toxic Relief*, *The Bible Cure* series and *Eat This and Live*. His most recent book, *Dr. Colbert's "I Can Do This" Diet* (), releases January 5.

LOSE IT FOR GOOD

Did you resolve, to no avail, to lose weight last year? Visit to find practical ways to stick to this year's health resolutions and lose it for good.

Charisma Online January 2010

Go to digital.charismamag.com to get the gems found only in our digital magazine.

Steps to Financial Freedom

Have you developed a strategy to help your family cope with the economic crisis our world is facing today? If not, it's not too late for you to determine the root causes of any financial difficulties you may have and put into operation wise solutions that will help you and your loved ones better weather this financial storm and prepare for your future.

As a certified financial planner and 30-year veteran of the financial-planning industry, I believe that personal financial planning is essential to remaining solvent in today's world. You can begin today by taking the following seven steps to financial freedom.

Take inventory. Before you can figure out where you want to go, you must determine where you are. This is the first step.

Buy adequate life insurance. A good rule of thumb for a family with children at home is to buy life insurance on the breadwinner equal to 10 times his earnings. This will provide a lump sum of money you can invest to replace his income.

Pay off all consumer debts. This

includes credit cards and finance companies—anything beyond your automobile and home. These consumer debts primarily represent consumption, not investment, and have the highest rate of interest.

Cut out all unnecessary spending, and then apply that freed-up money toward your smallest debt. Each time you pay off a debt, take the monthly payment you had been making and put it toward further debt reduction on your next-highest debt.

It may take you several years to get completely out of debt, but this is the best and quickest way to do it. Staying out of consumer debt will be one of the most critical things you can do to remain financially free in the future.

Start an emergency reserve. I advise that you set aside two to three months' living expenses—the bare-bones amount on which you could live—in an emergency reserve fund. This could be a bank account, an interest-bearing money market fund or something similar.

Ideally, I recommend that people build up at least three to six months' income in conservative, liquid accounts of some type.

It's also important to begin a long-term savings plan. Little by little, accumulate assets.

Pay off your automobiles. Financially, your best bet is to buy a reliable automobile and drive it as long as possible.

Buy used cars, service them, and keep them as long as possible. The second alternative is to buy an inexpensive new car, service it well (changing the oil regularly), and keep it for a long, long time.

Prepay on your home. Prepaying on a home can save thousands and even hundreds of thousands of dollars, regardless of whether you have a fixed or variable mortgage.

The most important of these steps for your financial security is to cut back on spending to get rid of all consumer debt, starting with the most egregious debts first. Strategize to come up with specific ideas you can implement to eliminate your debt during this difficult economic season. Challenging times create the best opportunities.

Follow the example of successful people. Often the best way to learn is to study the example of someone who has done exactly what you are trying to do.

There are people who are living debt free and prospering right now—right in the midst of a world gone financially amok. Look at the lives of some of these individuals, and let their sound financial wisdom influence your financial practices and strategies.

Jerry Tuma is founder and president of Cornerstone Financial Services, host of the nationally syndicated financial show

Smart Money

and co-author of a book by the same name. He is also a highly acclaimed speaker on the economy and investment market and author of *From Boom to Bust* (Excel Books).

Love Is Costly

☒ I frequently stay in hotels during my ministry travels.

When I am in my room, I always put the “Do Not Disturb” sign on the door so nobody will bother me. Hanging this sign on my hotel room door is acceptable. Putting it on my life isn’t.

Have you ever noticed that God does not always do things on your timetable or in ways that are convenient to you? Paul told Timothy that as a servant of God and a minister of the gospel Timothy had to fulfill his duties whether doing so was convenient or inconvenient (see 2 Tim. 4:2).