

# Why You May Feel the Painful Trials Just Won't End

*"My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples" (John 15:8).*

The firm "click" of the Gardener's pruning shears can be heard in our lives when ...

we are confined to a hospital room,

we are fired from a job,

we are moved to a new place, surrounded by strangers,

we are isolated in a new job, surrounded by unbelievers.

Your purpose, and mine, is to bring glory to God. Jesus reiterated this purpose as He concluded His challenge to the disciples to be fruitful in service: "This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be My disciples."

You will not bear much fruit unless and until you submit to the cutting and clipping of the Gardener. Therefore, when you resist His "gardening" in your life, what you are really doing is refusing to glorify God and therefore aborting the very purpose for your existence. Solemn thoughts, aren't they?  
{eoa}

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# This Deception Is Why Some People Aren't Healed

Barb writes, "There are many in my life I have prayed for healing for years. I have learned to quit asking and thank God for working in their bodies. I quote, 'Healing is the children's bread' and I ask God to give us this day our daily bread (healing). It is difficult when these people seem to get worse and not better. Your thoughts."

My thoughts, Barb, are as follows:

"Give us this day, our daily bread ... ." The first words I heard when I read this comment were, *The bread and the wine have already been served*. It isn't that God is withholding healing. Jesus already broke bread (His body) for us when He bowed down and gave His back to be brutally whipped for our healing, and He already poured the wine; (His blood) when He shed His blood on Calvary so that we could walk in a new Blood Covenant called grace.

I've learned to stop asking "God, why?" and have challenged myself to look into that spiritual mirror and ask myself; "Becky, why?" "Becky, why are you having trouble receiving this healing from God?" "Becky, what is standing in the way?" "Becky, why are you getting worse and not getting better?" If I don't know the answer, I ask God to show me what's in my heart. And I can stand confidently before Him, without guilt or condemnation, because I know that His grace is for me and not against me, and ask for His revelation in the matter.

Sometimes, the answer lies in my past, and I'm having trouble dealing with something that did or didn't happen. It almost always has to do with negative words that were spoken, whether they were spoken by me or another, they have to be stopped, dealt with, forgiven or repented of, and then changed to

positive ones, because Proverbs 18:21 says that there is the power of life and death in the tongue. Other times, the answer has to do with my present situation.

Maybe I'm having difficulty forgiving someone, or I've done something that I need to repent of and make right. And I also need to make sure I am not focusing in on my five senses and human reasoning and instead fix my eyes on Jesus and not on the pain or the sickness. Perhaps I'm feeling insecure about my future and am starting to enter into the realm of doubt, confusion and the fear of failure that God won't heal me or couldn't heal me because I have not been living up to religious standards. If it reaches this point, my heart is a mess because I'm living in a lie that God's grace is against me and not for me.

I then need to stop and start over, repent to God, forgive myself and, last but not least, I need to open up the Bible and read, reread and read some more, until my heart is at peace and my faith has risen again so that I can actually believe again. Barb, do you think these others are a bit like me? {eoa}

*Becky Dvorak is a prophetic healing evangelist and the Destiny Image author of DARE to Believe, Greater Than Magic and, soon to be released, The Healing Creed. Visit her at .*

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## **Ripping the Mask Off Satan's Schemes to Imprison You**

I'm hopping mad at the devil, and yes he does exist. I'm mad at him because he thinks he has the beautiful, loving, well-meaning children of God fooled on a whole bunch of fronts. I

know what he's trying to do. He's got plans for evil, not for good. I'm calling him out on at least one of his especially humongous, nasty schemes.<sup>1</sup> It's stuff the devil won't tell you because he's a liar!

Here's the deal: "Evil one, because I have Jesus, I win. Not you. You have no power over my life and the lives of God's children. So stop your lying, thieving and killing plans and go somewhere else. Take your hands off me and God's people in Jesus' name."

## **The Past**

One big lie he always likes to bring up is the past. He loves to harass God's people with what they've done. Now, I remember my past and it wasn't pretty, literally. Weighing 430 pounds is never pretty.

The feeling of shame, which I believe is really a harassing spirit, liked to follow me around and get me to the place where I ate more to try to cover up those overwhelming feelings of guilt and shame.

Today, memories of my past fuel me to never want to go back there again. I keep my before picture embedded in my mind. It feels like eons ago, but I never want to forget that feeling of despair, pain and trying to hide from everyone and every situation.

Everything has changed since then. I love my life. I love my husband. I love my children. I especially love those I coach. "In the name of Jesus, evil one, you take your hands off those God has entrusted to my care. You have no rights in their lives."

## **The Present**

The present reality for many of God's children is that the evil one still has the wool pulled over their eyes. He's

frantically trying to perpetuate his lies that sweet and starchy foods are the be-all, end-all for every problem.

Friends, that's a lie from the very pit of hell! Oh, he has many of these lies, but today I'm calling him out on this one really big lie. Food used beyond the necessary element to fuel our bodies, is not pleasure. It's bondage. And the more we think it is our friend and helper, the deeper into bondage we go.

God wants us free to follow Him, to live connected to Him. However, when we willfully rely on a substance or a desire to give us comfort, protection, pleasure and alleviate pain and sadness, we have bought into a lie and started the process for a stronghold of evil to take over our lives.

The apostle Paul tells us, "For freedom Christ freed us. Stand fast therefore and do not be entangled again with the yoke of bondage."<sup>2</sup>

Failure is a great teacher. It teaches me not to do that again. It teaches me to move forward, not stop or turn back. My past is important. It fuels me to do the right thing today.

## **The Future**

The evil one's greatest torment is our future. God talks about our future all the time, this great destiny He has in store for us. He's always reminding the evil one of his future and believe me, it's not pretty, but yours is and can be beautiful.

"The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet were. They will be tormented day and night forever and ever."<sup>3</sup>

See, the evil one cannot take us out of God's hands<sup>4</sup> once we are there, but he can tempt us and make us ineffective for the

kingdom of God. If we buy into his lies and this one humongous scheme, he will try to steal, kill and destroy all of our futures.

Jesus said, "The thief does not come, except to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."<sup>5</sup>

When we walk completely with the Lord, follow His plans for us and reject the tempting schemes of the evil one, the beauty of our future is that we have one that is out of this world, literally.

What God has in store for us is summed up in this following passage. I want you to read it aloud to yourself and insert your name where it says "you" and "your." Sincerely, do it or retype it and put your name in there. I dare you.

### **God's Plan for *You!***

"May *you*, having been deeply rooted and securely grounded in love, be fully capable of comprehending with all God's people, the width and length and height and depth of God's love, fully experiencing that amazing, endless love; and that *you* may come to know practically, through personal experience, the love of Christ which far surpasses mere knowledge without experience.

"And may *you* be filled up throughout *your* being to all the fullness of God so that *you* may have the richest experience of God's presence in *your* life, completely filled and flooded with God Himself. Now to Him who is able to carry out His purpose and do super abundantly more than all that *you* dare ask or think, infinitely beyond *your* greatest prayers, hopes or dreams, according to His power that is at work within *you*, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations forever and ever. Amen."<sup>6</sup>

This, my friend, is your future when you reject what the evil

one is telling you is good and follow wholeheartedly everything God has for you.

No need to be afraid of the evil one, just remind him of his future in contrast to yours! He'll tuck his head between his tail and leave.

<sup>1</sup> 2 Corinthians 2:10-11

<sup>2</sup> Galatians 5:1

<sup>3</sup> Revelation 20:10

<sup>4</sup> John 10:28

<sup>5</sup> John 10:10

<sup>6</sup> Ephesians 3:17-21 (with personal paraphrase)

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**Break Shackles of Guilt and  
Pain With This Liberating**

# Truth

All of us have an identity.

- Our heritage
- Our career
- Our children's career
- Our past
- Our marital status
- A trauma
- Infertility
- A gifting or talent
- Our ministry
- A success or award

Whatever it is, there is something in our life that we identify ourselves with and we feel defines who we are.

But here's the thing:

*"Therefore, if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things have passed away. Look, all things have become new" (2 Cor. 5:17).*

The moment we received Christ, our identity changed. Very much like the moment I got married, my last named changed. I am no longer known as Rosilind Hackett. I am now Rosilind Jukić.

What's more is that our identity in Christ isn't just a spiritual identity.

It is an identity that is meant to take over our whole entire lives—our hearts, souls, minds and bodies!

No longer should our heritage, career, marital status, failure, success or anything else define who we are. Because Jesus Christ Himself has become our identity.

But the enemy is forever trying to get us to default back to old identities. He'll do everything in his power to get us to identify with our old man, and when he succeeds in that, we begin living less and less like Jesus.

He will use circumstances, disappointments, rejection, hurtful words—anything he can to get us to respond with thoughts like: “I knew I wouldn't do well with that project. I always fail at whatever I do” or “I know I gave that guy a piece of my mind, but hey—I'm Irish. My red hair was just showing.”

Or he'll get us back into a deep pit of self-pity, nursing an old victim mentality.

Or he'll make sure our lives revolve around the fact that we're single; so we can't rejoice when a friend gets married. He'll get us all wrapped up in the fact that we've had multiple miscarriages so that we can't rejoice when a sister in Christ finds out she's expecting.

We live in a culture that is so labeled and identifies so strongly with temporal stuff of this world and demands to be tolerated—even coddled.

- Those whose identity is wrapped up in being single are offended when people emphasize marriage.
- Women whose identity is wrapped up in their infertility are offended by Mother's Day, and now churches are left in a quandary every year.
- Those who identify as being special-needs parents are hurt when parents brag about their children's successes or abilities.
- Those who identify with their weight are offended by moms who brag about their weight loss or fitness abilities.

These misplaced identities have made us overly sensitive and easily offended. God never intended us to live this way because He always intended us to identify with ourselves as

new creations in Jesus Christ!

He always intended us to identify as citizens of heaven, not of Earth!

There are two quotes by my dad that I constantly remind myself of:

*"Your past and present circumstances do not have to determine your future or your identity."*

*"Failure is an event, not an identity."*

During the month of September we will be looking at how Scripture defines our identity!

Are you ready?

Here's how you can download the 30 Day Prayer Challenge for My Identity in Christ:

Simply fill in your email below, and within 48 hours, you will receive an email from me with instructions on how to download your prayer challenge.

If you've already signed up, you should have received yours already, because you only have to sign up once. After you've signed up to receive one prayer challenge, every month you will automatically receive a new one.

Let's begin renewing our mind by praying Scripture daily and filling our hearts and minds with what God says we are, as we reject the world's message of who it wants us to be!

Are you with me? {eoa}

**Rosilind Jukic**, a Pacific Northwest native, is a missionary living in Croatia and married to her Bosnian hero. Together they live with their two active boys where she enjoys fruity candles, good coffee and a hot cup of herbal tea on a blustery fall evening. Her passion for writing led her to author her

*best-selling book The Missional Handbook. At A Little R & R she encourages women to find contentment in what God created them to be. You can also find her at Missional Call where she shares her passion for local and global missions. She can also be found at on a regular basis. You can follow her on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and Google +.*

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## **7 Imperative Ways to Get Ready for Jesus' Return**

The voice of the Spirit of the Lord is resonating with an urgency throughout the whole Earth to get ready. The biggest display of the supernatural we will ever witness is about to take place—and we need to prepare.

How do we prepare ourselves?

- 1. Make sure you are in right standing with Jesus Christ.** Romans 10:9 tells us that “if you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”
- 2. Forgive and be forgiven.** Matthew 6:14-15 makes it plain, “For if you forgive men for their sins, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men for their sins, neither will your Father forgive your sins.”
- 3. Be about your heavenly Father's business and win people to Jesus.** Mark 16: 15-16 tells us what His business is: “Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He who believes and is baptized will be saved. But he who does not believe will be condemned.” 1 Corinthians 9:19, Paul unselfishly writes from his

heart, "For though I am free from all men, I have made myself servant to all, that I might win even more." And Proverbs 11:30 tells us what type of person cares enough to evangelize the lost: "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who wins souls is wise." Mark 16:17-18 instructs us how God wants us to evangelize: "These signs will accompany those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

4. **Be empowered with the Holy Spirit for the task ahead of us.** Zechariah 4:6 gives words of wisdom how to accomplish the Father's business: "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts." Acts 1:8 tells us how we will be empowered: "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you shall be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."
5. **Encourage yourself spiritually and learn to operate in the prophetic.** "He who speaks in an unknown tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church" (1 Cor. 14:4).
6. **Study the Word of God.** "Study to show yourself approved by God, a workman who need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15).
7. **And my final point, live like you believe.** "Be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man viewing his natural face in a mirror. He views himself, and goes his way, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But whoever looks into the perfect law of liberty, and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this man will be blessed in his deeds" (James 1:22-25).

If we will put these seven steps of faith into action, we will

be ready. {eoa}

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# **Silence Satan's Cruel Lies and Listen to This Truth Instead**

Sorry honey, but when you said "King Sennacherib" in your sermon, Jayme was so hungry that she only heard "snackrib," and I heard "saccharine," which made me want an ice-cold soda made with real sugar.

For the suggestion box: Serve snacks and beverages before church.

But when you started to describe how Sennacherib talked trash to the Israelites, I forgot about soda and gave you my full attention.

Your tone of voice snapped arrogant and a cruel kind of sassy, and I felt the king's words as you spoke them to us:

*Do you not know what I and my fathers have done to all the peoples of other lands?*

*Were the gods of the nations of these lands surely able to deliver their lands from my hand?*

*Who from among all the gods of these nations that my fathers utterly destroyed was able to rescue his people from my hand?*

*For will your god be able to rescue you all from my hand?*

*(2 Chron. 32:13-14 MEV)*

Slam.

Slam.

Slam.

Slam.

While you hurled Sennacherib's lines at us, something like scales fell off of my eyes, and I could see that over the last few weeks Sennacherib's ghost has been haunting me.

*Don't you know you're going to get up in front of those students come September and totally blow it?*

*Do you really think you'll ever be an excellent teacher?*

*What makes you think you're going to do any better this year than you did last year?*

Where did those thoughts come from? Certainly I did not fabricate them myself. They were mantras scratched out on pamphlets of war, dropped by a clever foe.

Propaganda: Information, especially of a biased or misleading nature, used to promote or publicize a particular political cause or point of view.

The Assyrians released their propaganda:

*And they proclaimed it also in a loud voice in the Judean language against the people of Jerusalem who were on the wall to frighten and terrify them ... (2 Chron. 32:18 MEV)*

That's exactly what the enemy had been doing to me—calling out to me in my own language, to terrify me and make me afraid.

And I had been listening. Listening and believing.

But don't worry, preacher. I picked up what you were putting down. Now I can see the evil whispers for what they really are, so I'm purposefully shutting my ears to the demoralizing lies of the enemy king.

To my dear readers: Have you been terrified of something? Lies! Don't listen to the enemy. It's a cruel trick, I tell you.

**Stand your ground.**

Our God is with us, and we have to hold onto the hope of living victoriously.

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## **3 Ways You May Be Tearing Your House Down**

I married later in life. Fact is, I wasn't sure if I'd ever get married. The one thing I always wanted to be was a wife and mommy. When all my school yard buddies wanted to be firemen, nurses, police officers and mailmen, I wanted to be a wife and mommy. The years of being single among all my married friends granted me an inside view into what this verse really meant:

“Every wise woman builds her house, but the foolish pulls it down with her hands” (Prov. 14:1).

Over the years, I watched those who built their homes, while others teared theirs down—with their own hands.

That is a pretty amazing statement right there. They don't

just bulldoze or take a wrecking ball to their homes. No, literally with their bare hands, they tear down their own homes brick by brick.

Have you been guilty of engaging in some demolition? I have from time to time too.

## **3 Ways We Tear Our House Down**

### **1. A Critical Spirit**

When we allow our spirits to become critical, bitter and filled with gossip, we destroy the spirit of our marriage, home and children. A critical spirit demolishes a home rather quickly, but a joyful spirit that encourages and fills the home with praise builds the home into a luxurious mansion and haven for the family!

We do this by first taking charge of our thoughts and then our tongue, by filling our hearts, spirits and mouths with praise. Turn each negative and critical thought into praiseworthy and positive thoughts. Allow God to cleanse your heart of bitterness, and purpose never to gossip in your heart or with other women.

Stop! “You mean you can gossip in your own heart?” Yes, you can! By thinking, meditating and creating mock conversations about or with the one you are angry with. And it breeds anger, criticism and bitterness.

Let us not be foolish women by tearing our houses down with criticism, bitterness and gossip.

Let us us be wise women by building our houses with praise, gratefulness, faith and grace.

### **2. A Worried Heart**

As mothers and caretakers of our homes and families, we often

allow worry and anxiety to fill our hearts. We worry about how to care for our families when money is tight or sickness takes over. We grow anxious over our children's futures and our husband's job security. Worry is a cancer that eats away at our hearts and spirits. It guts out our homes and leaves them cold and empty.

However, a quiet spirit is a spirit at rest knowing that God always provides:

*"I have been young, and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor their offspring begging bread" (Ps. 37:25).*

A quiet spirit knows that God loves and wants to care for our family even more than we do, and He will provide, even from unexpected or unknown sources. It is a faith-filled spirit that fills its home with rich promises of God's Word and the warmth of His peace that blankets the home in the luxurious comfort of His presence. Hebrews says that if we don't have faith we cannot even please God.

If we want to please God then we have to have a secure, quiet and steady faith in Him to provide and bring health to the ones we love.

We can build our homes with the building blocks of faith by memorizing verses about not worrying, reading books of great men and women of faith, and encouraging our children to join us in prayers for miraculous provision. You can also keep a "Faith Chart":

Draw a picture of a thermometer and color in each level as God answers prayer. Write the answered prayer beside each level. This will give you a visual picture of how God provides and it will be a visual reminder to your children as well.

This is building your home with your own hands as a wise

woman!

### **3. A Nagging Tongue**

There is nothing worse than a nagging wife. Even the Proverbs say that it is better to be dirt poor or to live in a corner attic than with a nagging wife who will not stop her endless prattle.

Here are a few pointers I have learned from my husband:

1. *Lists and men do not go together.* Do you want to frustrate your man? Give him a list with Nos. 1-10. They do not bode well for his nerves.

2. *Men don't mind be reminded, but don't remind him constantly and every day.* Gentle but clear, occasional and distinct reminders are helpful but not when they are combined with complaints and sarcasm.

3. *Men don't mind being reminded as long as they feel gratefulness for all of the things they are already doing:* like going to work everyday, helping out with the kids or helping out around the house. Reminders combined with a grateful spirit will earn your "muchos kudos"!

A wise woman can build her home by first building gratefulness in her own heart for what her husband already does and reminding herself that her husband needs Saturdays for downtime. When it becomes a "honey-do" day, he will quickly burn out. Give to your husband by first giving yourself a grateful heart.

And then wisely build your home with love and gratefulness—the other stuff will get done in its own time!

So this year, let us purpose to be wise builders of our homes and marriages. It's a lifetime commitment.

We can start today by answering the following questions:

1. What you are thankful for in your family and marriage?
2. What you find unique and wonderful about your family and marriage?
3. What first attracted you to your husband?
4. What character qualities do your children excel in?
5. What are those things your family or marriage can offer to your community and church family?
6. What answered prayers or divine provision have you experienced recently?

I am starting today. Who will join me?

*Rosilind Jukic, a Pacific Northwest native, is a missionary living in Croatia and married to her Bosnian hero. Together they live with their two active boys where she enjoys fruity candles, good coffee and a hot cup of herbal tea on a blustery fall evening. Her passion for writing led her to author her best-selling book The Missional Handbook. At A Little R & R she encourages women to find contentment in what God created them to be. You can also find her at Missional Call where she shares her passion for local and global missions. She can also be found at on a regular basis. You can follow her on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and Google +.*

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## **Take This Simple Yet Powerful Step to See the Glory of God**

*“Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?” (John 11:40).*

Having commanded the stone to be rolled away from the place where Lazarus was buried, Jesus challenged Martha not only to

obedience but to expectant faith: “Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?” (John 11:40). In essence, He was saying, “It’s time to place all of your small, mustard seed-sized faith in Me and My promise to you.”

Martha had said she had faith. She intellectually believed what Jesus had said. But Martha needed to make the transition from faith to trust. After all, while belief is the consent of the mind and faith is a choice of the will, trust is a commitment of the heart.

The time had come for Martha to put her faith into action by surrendering all her hopeful expectations and heartfelt longings and practical common sense and simply trust Him. And the time has come for you to simply trust Him. Trust Him!  
{eoa}

*Anne Graham Lotz, founder of AnGeL ministries, has proclaimed God’s Word worldwide for more than 30 years. Her newest book, Wounded by God’s People, is available at .*

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## **The Secret to Overcoming Addictions for Good**

What happens when everything changes? Transformation of any type is a process—we all know this. Many times we want it to happen in a miraculous instant, be easy and painless with the least interruption possible. This is true whether trying to get out of debt, working on a difficult relationship, discovering a career direction or overcoming a problem with alcohol, drugs, food, pornography, gambling or any other addiction. It will take time, and everything—I mean everything—will have to change!

## **Butterflies**

It's no secret that I love butterflies. Of course they are beautiful to look at, but I love them for the analogy of transformation. They do serve a purpose in nature of pollinating flowers and plants, but I also believe God put them here on Earth to teach us about how everything must change when we surrender to His perfect design for us.

Butterflies start out in a totally different form as a caterpillar. As everyone knows, caterpillars are hungry. Their main job is to eat in order to fuel their transformation process.

When the time is right, a specific hormone is released which triggers the beginning of the chrysalis stage. This whole process is orchestrated by our more than brilliant Creator. They enter this dark time that very little is known about except that they undergo a radical change.

Everything about them changes. All that is caterpillar melts and rearranges into a creature that no one who knew them before will recognize. They used to eat leaves and crawl on the ground. Now they eat nectar and fly.

## **Metamorphosis**

This feels very much like the process happened to me. One of the dictionary definitions of a metamorphosis is "any complete change in appearance, character, circumstances." One only needs to look at my before and after pictures to understand my physical metamorphosis. God's design for me was not to gain a tremendous amount of weight, be sad and unhappy. He had abundant life in store for me (John 10:10), but it seemed impossible (Luke 18:27) when I was drowning in my own fat at 430 pounds.

What I love about God is that He can take our worst messes and make them into our greatest message. He used my desire to lose

weight to draw me closer to Him. I learned I couldn't lose weight on my own and keep it off. I could only do it by allowing Him to be my strength and lead me step by step. This, then, became my process for weight loss and total transformation.

## **Chrysalis**

I had to enter my own chrysalis where everything about me changed, and I emerged with everything totally rearranged. My mindset changed. The way I handled my emotions changed. Where I got my determination to go on changed. My ideas about what, when, how much and why I ate changed. My feelings about exercise changed. Understanding the things that gave me pleasure totally changed. (Hint: It no longer had anything to do with food.)

Most importantly, my concepts about what God wants from me and for me radically changed. I realized I had to stop trying so hard and simply surrender all that I am, including my tremendous weakness for foods made with sugar and flour, to the will and care of my almighty God who is more concerned about me than even I am.

## **Surrender**

I learned, He works best through people who understand and fully admit their weaknesses. He says, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9).

Scriptures I knew began to come alive, jump off the page and into my life. My purpose and meaning began to become clear to me. I'm here to let others know they, too, can overcome anything with God's help.

"I know both how to face humble circumstances and how to have abundance. Everywhere and in all things I have learned the secret, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and

to suffer need. 13 I can do all things because of Christ who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:12-13).

## **Grace**

All my life had been about trying harder, striving more, always attempting to "earn" what I already had in Christ. It's not that I didn't know the Scriptures said I was saved by grace and not by any kind of "works" I had done or would do (Eph. 2:8-9). It's just that I couldn't fathom how God could just sit back and not require me to work harder.

I especially knew that I had fallen extremely short of doing what God had showed me I needed to do in order to lose weight. I knew I couldn't do it on my own, so I tried to earn His smile in other ways like teaching Sunday School, leading small groups, writing articles, publishing newspapers.

## **Love**

These were all good and important works, but they had to flow out of my love for Him, not because I was trying to earn something from Him. Today, knowing I am doing what He is leading to me to do as one of His daughters is my greatest privilege and my life mission. I can truly say wherever He leads me I will follow in obedience born of love. It's His love that forgave me for nearly eating myself to death. It's because of His love I hear His voice, listen, follow and obey (John 10:27).

This transformation has been very physical. I've lost more than 260 pounds. It's been very emotional. I've learned to embrace and manage my emotions with God's help. It's been very mental. I am allowing God to renew my mind and give me the mind of Christ. It's been very spiritual. I don't take a step without Jesus.

## **Weakness**

I no longer try to maintain an act of strength. I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that am weak. I know, though, that understanding my weakness is a really good thing. It is only when I am weak that I get out of the way and free God to be strong through me (2 Cor. 12:10).

I love butterflies because everything about them changes to make a glorious creation. I also love the fact that I was once a caterpillar and am now transformed into a butterfly. Are you ready for your transformation? {eoa}

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## **10 Ways to Love God With Your Whole Mind**

Do you know what week this is?

Apple week.

Not pie, sorry.

I will go to our storage building and pull out my box of apple décor, because “an apple for the teacher,” you know? My kids have always known that when the apples go up, summer is officially over and school is soon to start.

And I say that when the nighttime temperatures start to dip

into the low 40s, you must say, “Goodbye, goodbye summer. Come again when you can stay longer.”

Brains that have thought only of lemonade and kayaks for a few months now have to get warmed up for learning, and I think it’s a good time for adult brains to warm up for thinking too.

Jesus tells us the greatest commandment of God:

*“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind” (Luke 10:27).*

## **10 Ways to Love God With All Your Mind**

**Pray continually.** This is first a discipline, to stay in conversation with God. Then one day you wake up and find you just can’t help it. God is an indescribable companion.

**Challenge every thought.** Paul David Tripp, in *War of Words*, says, “We just let our thoughts run without challenging them.” Is your current thinking running away with you, or is it reined in to obey Christ?

**Read well.** I highly recommend *Counterfeit Gods* by Timothy Keller. It’s a game changer for the human soul.

**Memorize a Bible verse.** Work on it every day until it’s in your heart. Then start another one.

**Improve your craft.** God has given you special gifts that help build His kingdom. When’s the last time you worked to improve what you do? Read a book on the subject. Learn something new about it. Get organized. Pray for God to guide you in using it.

**Evaluate your expenditures.** We constantly think about money and where we want to spend it. Challenge your thoughts on money and see if they’re lining up with God’s.

**Commit your future to the Lord.** We don't know what's going to happen tomorrow, but we spend an exorbitant amount of brain power thinking about it. Choose to think biblically about your own future.

**Create a helpful environment.** When you walk around your home or work area, does your environment distract your brain from praying or encourage you to think about the Lord?

**Think well of others.** Pray for your enemies. Do the mental work to forgive. Overlook faults on a regular basis. Give the benefit of the doubt.

**Mentally bring the gospel into every situation.** How does God's story of creation, the fall of man, redemption and hope of transformation fit into each circumstance in your day? Let the gospel be a lens through which you choose to look at the world.

Let me leave you with this shout from Scripture: "Wisdom is principal; therefore get wisdom. And with all your getting, get understanding" (Prov. 4:7).

Do you have any other good ideas about how to love God with your whole brain?