

Why Billy Graham's Daughter Is Celebrating Evangelical Feminism

"... For I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed ..." (2 Timothy 1:12).

March 8th was International Women's Day. I'm using it as an opportunity to think about what it means to be an evangelical woman in today's world.

An evangelical woman is one who believes in the evangel—the gospel—the Good News that God so loves the world that He gave His only Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross to make atonement for sin. And that anyone and everyone, anywhere and everywhere, who trusts Jesus Christ to be their Savior will not perish in an empty, meaningless existence, then go to hell when they die, but will be forgiven of their sin, be reconciled to God, and have eternal life—which is a personal relationship with God now, and a heavenly home when they die.

The term, "evangelical feminism," was a new one to me when I was asked to write about it several years ago. I wasn't sure what it meant. So I have taken the liberty of defining it with more clarity than just an evangelical woman. An evangelical feminist is a woman who is a strong, bold, free-spirited leader inside and outside of her home, unashamed of her faith in God, His Word, His Son, and His gospel. With that definition, I would identify myself as an evangelical feminist.

I was raised in a strong evangelical home where women were respected, honored, and who held significant positions of leadership. My maternal great-great-aunt ran off an invading Yankee soldier, running him through with her hat-pin. While my maternal grandmother bore five children, buried one, and

managed a missionary's home in Tsingkiangpu, China, she was also a nurse and supervised a women's medical clinic. My paternal grandmother not only raised four children, but taught a weekly Bible class, and helped my grandfather run a large, successful dairy farm. My mother-in-law was not only the official first Lady of several churches as the wife of a pastor, she raised four incredibly successful sons while at the same time keeping a full time job on 5th Avenue in New York City as a dental hygienist.

✘ I wonder if the term, "evangelical feminist," would describe my own mother. Her strong character and faith are legendary. I am convinced there would not be a Billy Graham as we have known him, if there hadn't been a Ruth Graham beside him. She never felt staying home to raise five children a demeaning burden. Instead, she considered it the highest privilege she could be given. She was an artist, a pianist, an intellect who read everything available, and an authority on early American log cabins. She cared for sick neighbors, stayed in touch with missionary friends, helped my father write his many best-selling books, supervised the running of a large, unique household so that my father was free to give full attention to his preaching, learned to ride a Harley-Davidson and to hang-glide. She was filled with an exuberant zest for life. When the last child left home, she stepped out to speak, and published her own poetry and writings. William F. Buckley, Jr., once related to me that she had been the sparkle at a recent White House state dinner he had attended, easily carrying the conversation at the President's table.

Evangelical feminists today, if I am defining the term rightly, are rooted in the women of the Bible, beginning with Eve, who was given equal dominion over the earth with Adam; Sarah, whose faith, along with that of her husband, Abraham, was extraordinary, enabling her to bear a son at 90 years of age—a son who became one of the patriarchs of the Jewish people; Hagar, a single mother who had a personal relationship

with God, and raised her son, Ishmael, to become the father of many nations; Rahab, whose bold, courageous act of faith saved her entire household from God's judgment; Ruth, who committed herself to support her mother-in-law, left everything behind to begin a new life and became the great-great grandmother of King David; Deborah, who was so bold in battle, the generals would not face the enemy without her; Jael, who single-handedly defeated an enemy none of the generals had been able to overcome; and on it goes until we come to the Virgin Mary, singled out by God for her purity, integrity, piety, and humility to be the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ ... and Mary Magdalene, a woman with a sinful past, who was commissioned by the risen Lord Jesus Christ Himself to be the first evangelist to the world.

So if "evangelical feminism" means women who know what they believe, who are strong in their convictions, who are bold in their actions, who are courageous to stand up and speak out for Jesus Christ while being godly wives and mothers, then I celebrate them today. And I would be honored to be counted in their number.

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

The Real Reason the Enemy Is Targeting You Right Now

Do you know that the enemy believes in your greatness more than you do? Why do you think you are battling fear, discouragement, frustration and brokenness? The enemy would

not mess with you if you were no threat to him, if you were not about to step into your destiny.

Stirring

He knows beyond a shadow of a doubt God is preparing you for greater things, greater vision, greater impact on the world. He knows it because he feels the movement in your spirit, the turning of your heart towards God. Until he sees that, he knows he doesn't have to work hard to keep you ineffective. When God begins stirring your spirit, the evil one wakes up and starts to work.

He puts together an action plan designed specifically to thwart your forward advance. He knows he can't stop God, but he also knows he's stopped you before and he'll try again. Why? Because his main mission is to "steal, kill and destroy"¹ your destiny.

Most of the time, he doesn't have to work hard. It doesn't take much to throw you off course. All he has to do is throw together a few things that he knows will cause fear to rise up in you, and then he's got you.

Fear

Fear is one of his biggest weapons because it's just False Evidence Appearing Real. In other words, he does what he does best. He lies to you. He loves to do that. He's a master at it. "When he lies, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies."²

He whispers half-truths and lies and builds them in your mind until you are so afraid you cannot move. Paralyzed with fear, you cower and hide. "It would be better for me to go back to the way I was," you tell yourself. "At least then I didn't have all these things coming against me."

It's exactly what the children of Israel said in the

wilderness. They wanted to go back because they were afraid they would die. Even the being in bondage in Egypt looked better than going through what they had to go through to get to the Promised Land.³

Destiny Sign

Don't worry, though, you can immediately recognize what he is doing. It's like he's flashing a neon arrow right at the very thing that will move you to your next step into your destiny.

Just look at what you are afraid of. He's going to throw a roadblock of fear so you won't go forward. So stop and think through this. What is the biggest thing you are afraid of? Where is your greatest area of resistance? What causes you to say, "That's impossible? I could never do that."

Just remember what Joseph said to his brothers: "you intended to harm me, but God intended it for good."⁴

Many things look impossible, but when you surrender and allow God to take over, all things are possible.⁵

Possibilitarian

God makes you a possibilitarian when you finally get a vision for what He is doing in you and on the earth. Of course things are impossible in your own strength.

When you surrender your weaknesses⁶ at His feet, God says, "Good, now you're ready to take this on, because you can't, but I can through you. When you are weak, then I am strong."⁷

Courage

What if when fear starts rising up in you, instead of running the other way, you run towards it. You take God at His Word and do what He says. "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be

with you wherever you go.”⁸

In the strength and power of God, you walk towards the fear and right through it because on the other side of that fear is your breakthrough, your greater, your appointment with destiny.

Promised Land

Kris Vallotton of Bethel Church says it this way, “On the other side of fear is your Promised Land.” Vallotton goes on to say that of the 10 who went to spy out the Promised Land, eight came back afraid of giants in the land. Look back at the scriptures. They never encountered a giant in the Promised Land until Goliath during David’s time. “They were afraid of an illusion. They saw what they feared,” he said.

What are you afraid of? God is not worried about it. He sees you as a mighty person of valor, just like he did Gideon hiding out in the winepress.⁸ God sees beyond your circumstances to your destiny.

He’s already got it prepared for you. Now, hand your fear to Him and just walk into your greater.

¹ John 10:10 (MEV)

² John 8:44 (MEV)

³ Numbers 14:1-3 (MEV)

⁴ Genesis 50:20 (MEV)

⁵ Matthew 19:26 (MEV)

⁶ 2 Cor. 12:9 (MEV)

⁷ 2 Cor. 12:10 (MEV)

⁸ Judges 6:11-12 (MEV)

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250 Pounds and Stopped Trying to Earn God's Favor *and* Sweet Grace Study Guide: Practical Steps to Lose Weight and Overcome Sugar Addiction and Sweet Freedom. *Get a free chapter of her memoir on her blog at Teresa Shields . Connect with her there or on her Facebook page or Twitter.*

How to Make a War Room Anywhere

Tears ran down my cheeks as I watched the closing credits scroll down my computer screen.

I had laughed and cried ... and cried the ugly cry ... as I watched Priscilla Shirer transform from a mediocre Christian wife in a dysfunctional marriage to a prayer warrior staking her claim, holding the line and demanding victory.

The next morning I got up, quietly padded into our living room, turned on the heat and glanced around. *Where could I put my war room?*

We live in a 750-square-foot home, and every room in this house is a high traffic area. Even our bedroom isn't private, since you have to walk through it to get to the boys' room.

We don't have closets, either. We have wardrobes. Amoiress, if you want to get fancy with it. I suppose you could **try** to climb in it. It would be uncomfortable, if it didn't fall apart first.

So, where could I put my war room?

What Is the Purpose for a War Room?

First of all, I had to ask myself: *Is it the war room that is significant, or what it represents?*

I think the answer is obvious. It's what the war room represents, otherwise our war room will be no more effective than any other method we've tried and failed at in our effort to make our prayer life more effective.

The purpose for a war room isn't the room itself, the purpose is to have a place where we can be free from all distractions, where we can focus, and where we can get alone in that "closet" with the Lord and simply spend time with Him.

For some, that may be a physical room, for others—like me—it may need to be something more creative.

A Creative War Room

Once I had in mind what I wanted, decided to make my prayer journal my war room. However, I wanted to make my prayer journal something *more*, so I first grabbed an ordinary notebook and made myself a cover.

I used packing tape to cover this, but you could use clear contact paper. Then inside I divided it up.

1. On the first pages, I write down the things I pray for daily: family, unsaved loved ones and so on.

2. Next, I write down prayers that need answers: healing for my friends, loved ones walking through hard seasons of life and more. I date these needs so that I can track when they were answered.

3. I made an "Answered Prayers" section in the back of my journal and date the answered prayers.

4. I have a prayer strategy for my husband and marriage. I

made a calendar so that every day of the month I have a specific prayer to pray over him and our marriage

5. I have a page specifically dedicated to my battles.

Now here is where it gets exciting!

Over the next many pages, I keep a journal and battle plan! I regularly write about how God is orchestrating circumstances, or what He is speaking to me, about the battles I'm facing and the strategy I am using to overcome them.

I believe this is critical to my spiritual walk, because journaling and strategizing helps me to remain intentional about moving forward and walking in a victorious mindset.

So many times we get entrenched in battle, and our mindsets become bogged down in the battlefield as the focus shifts from being a victor to being a victim. We can't afford to do this! The moment we become a victim, we've become a prisoner of war (POW)! But God never intended for us to be a POW! He wants us to be a victorious warrior.

Read what Paul wrote here:

“And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has resurrected together with Him, having forgiven you all sins. He blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us and contrary to us, and He took it out of the way, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed authorities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them by the cross” (Col. 2:13-15).

Dear ones, when you received Christ as your Savior, he took your dead, rotting, and defiled spirit and made it alive in Him! He forgave all your sins and completely wiped out the death sentence against you. Then, He utterly disarmed the enemy. And had He only done that it would have been enough; but He went a step further.

He took the enemy captive. In Psalms we read, "The chariots of God are twice ten thousand, even thousands of thousands; the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place. You have ascended on high, You have led captivity captive; You have received gifts from people, yes, even from the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them" (Ps. 68:17-18).

God is a mighty warrior and His army is countless and dressed for battle! Paul refers to this verse in Ephesians when he describes that Jesus first descended to hell after His death on the cross and then ascended on high after He completely disarmed the enemy, leading "captivity captive."

But He didn't even stop there! After He led the enemy into captivity, he made a public spectacle of them! Imagine what that means! Picture with me what captivity would mean in medieval times: a warrior on a horse with his captives chained behind him stumbling along, stripped bare and being paraded through the streets while people cheered, shouted, jeered and cried a victory cry because they no longer had to live in fear of the enemy!

That warrior is Jesus Christ.

Those captives are our enemies.

We are the crowd! We have been set free. We no longer have to live in fear! {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 +.

Diet Lies Could Be Part of Your Problem

Diet is a four-letter word, and not a nice one at that. Diets are part of what got me into the mess I was in when I weighed 430 pounds.

Part of the problem with a diet is I had been programmed to believe I could eradicate a lifetime problem of losing and regaining weight by going on a “diet” for a short period of time, and then going back to the way I’d grown accustomed to eating.

Diet Lies

This is a lie straight from the pit of hell. I’m really sorry to say that because I, more than anyone else, wish it was true that I could just lose weight and go back to Grandma’s oatmeal cake.

A diet is a short-term fix to a long-term problem. Still, I prayed for an easy answer to my monumental problem. There must be a new pill or diet or magic shake which would remove the weight. Something so I could have my cake (weight loss) and eat it too (the literal cake).

Even weight loss surgery did not fix me. After a while, I found a way to eat sugar. That stopped when I reached the turn-around point, the time when I made the commitment to lay down my addiction to food a day at a time.

Food Addiction

People say, "Once an addict, always an addict." This is true to some extent. I can never proclaim that I have beaten my food addiction. I can only say, I now have tools God gave me to work on my addiction.

It is a lot easier now than it was five years ago, because I have changed my habits. I'm rarely tempted, and if I am, I know how to get through it hanging on to Jesus every moment. I more readily recognize those moments of temptation and am reminded I never want to go back to where I was.

That picture of me when I weighed 430 pounds wasn't a coached picture. No one told me look unhappy. They were actually telling me to smile. In my pictures today, no one has to tell me to smile, either. Joy flows naturally when I don't have to lug 260 extra pounds around with me.

#KickWeight

Getting rid of the physical pounds, as well as the emotional baggage, is such a relief. It's another of a long list of reasons I am opening #KickWeight, a lower price point Christian weight loss coaching class. I want you to experience that same thing.

#KickWeight is not a diet program, however we will talk about food. I'll tell you how I eat, since everyone seems to be interested in that. Right now, eating is the furthest thing from my mind. However, tapping into what God has next for me is always on my mind. Food is simply the fuel to get me there, not the entertainment along the way. That mindset shift is a major one for me.

What I do in #KickWeight is inform, encourage, inspire and coach my tribe towards a lifestyle change. We'll talk about how to change your mindset towards becoming healthy so that "your body will glow with health and your very bones will

vibrate with life.”¹

Information alone, though, is not enough. We have way too much information already. What is needed is to have mentor who knows what you're going through, someone who's lost weight with God's help. That's where I step in. I will be so bold as to say it's actually my calling. Without your involvement, though, no change will happen. It will take your dedication and hard work.

What Do You Want?

You have to want to get healthy. It has to be number one on your list and you must realize it is number one on God's list for you. You cannot accomplish the things He's put you here on earth to do if you aren't healthy.

God always gives us a choice. He never forces us. He simply gives us a multiple choice test and then tells us the answer.

“I call heaven and earth to witnesses against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live”²

I opened #KickWeight just for you. This is the first time I'm offering a coaching class at this extremely low, rock bottom price point. #KickWeight is a combination of information and coaching. It is exactly what I needed when I was super, morbidly obese. That's why I know it's what you need as well. To find out more and reserve your spot in the group, click [HERE](#). {eoa}

¹Proverbs 3:8, MSG

²Deuteronomy 30:19, MEV

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When It Seems Like God Is Moving Too Slow

"Here's your packet of music," she said. "I recommend that you practice using the piano soft pedal, because most of the students can't sing that loud. Plus the pianos we use for festival aren't all that great sounding. Also, you should practice the songs using the metronome, because it can be challenging to go from song to song changing tempos.

"Yes, of course," I said.

She left, and I went downstairs. Opening the piano bench, I pulled out the metronome. *Ah, you metronome. My old enemy.*

Top left of every song is a number. Sometimes 112. Sometimes 97 or 66 or 42.

One hundred twelve? Challenging. That's a snappy pace requiring serious practice.

Sixty-six? Comfy. Give it a good sight read and no problem.

Forty-four? Cursed. Cursed 44. So slow, like the 15 miles per hour they want us to drive in front of our school. Sloth speed and not my style at all. I was raised by the man who liked to tap his foot to a lively beat.

“Come on—put some pep in it,” Dad would say.

Forty-four has never met pep.

But 44 it was, so I listened to the metronome tick before I played the first measure. *Nice and easy*. But soon my rhythm was off, and I had to take a deep breath and start over. TORTURE.

I went to the school, and I played all of those lively songs that were so much fun. Then came the girl who had inflicted me with 44. *Slowly*, I said to myself. I played the introduction, and she began to sing. Oh, her voice and the words and the melody were so beautiful. Holding back became easy for me, because her voice was dancing and running.

A rich tempo.

In this discipline, of meeting the time demands of a song, I feel the same **rhythmic changes** that I experience in my walk with God. Sometimes I walk in comfortable movement with Him through my days, and then at times He bumps me up to a pace that is way faster than I would like, where I fight panic and a feeling that things are moving almost out of control.

Sometimes there is a slow walk with God, and **I push against the empty space**. Quiet sound. Long pauses. Impatient, I want things to move forward, but if I restrain myself and stay, stay, stay in the slow place. Soon I hear His voice dancing and running through my life.

“Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him” (Ps. 37:7).

Soul metronome setting: 44.

If you are in a season where it feels like God isn't moving your life anywhere fast, I encourage you to find your favorite slow song and listen to it. Appreciate the design of the song and the beauty of the controlled, steady rhythm. God sets the

tempo in these kinds of days, just as he does in the exciting, lively seasons you experience. We must discipline ourselves to keep the set rhythm.

How Do You Know the Meaning of Your Life?

We finished going through the song a second time, and I asked if she had a voice teacher. When she said no, I asked if I could make a few suggestions before we ran through her solo again.

“I think you need to sing these two words loud and forcefully because of what they’re saying,” I said.

“Well, I don’t really know what this song means,” she said. “It’s hard to know what dynamics to use when I don’t get the lyrics.

So we talked through the story the songwriter was telling. It was sad, and I made a mental note to bring Kleenex to this district music festival performance.

As this young woman needed to interpret the song she was singing, so she would know how to perform it, so we need to interpret the story we are in, so we know how to live.

Paul David Tripp, in *Instruments in The Redeemer’s Hands*, says this:

We need a framework for generating valid interpretations that help us respond to life appropriately. Only the words of the Creator can give us that framework.

Yesterday I received this brief email from the editor of my book: "I sent Gretchen the manuscript." That means there are only a few short steps left, for my book to be assembled by the publisher and ready for purchase. Soon I will be able to say to you, "Here it is." Then yesterday afternoon a friend shared one of my blog posts, and so many people visited my website that it crashed several times in the afternoon.

How do I interpret a day like that?

The words "editor" and "publisher" could make me feel puffed up—like I am really something. A crashed website could make me feel like I have arrived.

Now you are valuable. I hear this tempting whisper in my ear.

How should I interpret these experiences I have as a writer?

I think of this passage of Scripture I memorized many years ago, in which Jesus gives me an exact framework for my writing life:

Suppose one of you had a servant plowing or looking after the sheep. Would he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, "Come along now and sit down to eat?" Would he not rather say, "Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink"? Would he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do? So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, "We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty." (Luke 17:7-10 NIV)

Who am I, if I have a book being published and a popular blog post?

An unworthy servant.

Is the Lord applauding me and thanking me for my writing work? No. He is telling me to get busy on the next tasks at hand for

the day. I am to continue, in humility, whatever duty he has put in front of me. Time to empty the dishwasher.

Paul David Tripp goes on to say:

We need God's perspective to interpret the facts of our existence.

We all interpret what is happening in our lives, but are the stories we tell ourselves correct?

Now I ask—do you understand the story you're in? How are you explaining your experiences? How do you know the meaning of your life? What does the Bible have to say about your situation, your relationships, and your value?

When You're Sick in Spirit and Don't Want to Move

If he had been a southern man and the mother-in-law had been a Texas girl, she would have been appalled for him to see her lying there like that—with no lipstick on and hair mussed by the pillow.

But he would have been a gentleman and paid no mind to her appearance.

Gently taking her hand, he would have helped her sit up. With that, the dangerous fever would have left.

And she would have gotten up and set out chips and homemade salsa on the bar. She would have asked all those guys if they would care for some sweet tea, and she would have made sure

the ice cubes went all the way to the rim of the glass.

... if he had been a southern man and the mother-in-law a Texas girl.

But it was Jesus and Simon's mother-in-law. I think, though, that he still was the gentleman and only the choice of food set out by the woman would have made the story different.

How do we know when a woman has come back from the brink of death? Because we see her get busy at home.

Dinner is in the crockpot.

Clean underwear is in the drawers.

Beds are made.

I have been sick in spirit before—not feverish, but anxious or grieving or lonely. And in those times the hardest thing to do was a regular chore. To get out of bed and get dressed, load the dishwasher and think of what to make for dinner all seemed impossible tasks.

But then the Lord would lift my chin, and I would find life and energy in my soul again. The most joyful sign of inner health was that I actually felt like tidying up the living room or wiping down the bathroom sink.

“So He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her. And she served them” (Mark 1:31).

To be helped up is a great gift, isn't it? To be able to get up and go about our daily tasks?

So I pray today that the Lord will take you by the hand and help you rise to serve the people in your life. What a great celebration that you are alive and well.

Two Words We're All Tempted to Say: I Quit

I quit everything. Nothing I was doing was what I really wanted to do, and it was killing me. I had to focus on loving and taking care of myself, or I wouldn't be around to do anything anymore.

I had started gaining weight again after having the monster fix of gastric bypass surgery. Most everyone who has the surgery loses weight at first. With less weight and more energy, I began my normal trend of doing everything anyone asked me to do.

No Time for Help

I sat on any board of directors of any organization who asked. I wrote articles for organizations, published their newsletters, helped promote events, led small groups, led various training events, helped with seminars, built a website, started blogging, served on church committees, ran a business and managed a family, which included doing laundry, grocery shopping, bill paying and fixing meals.

Nothing I was doing was bad. Everything I had my hand in was good, and I liked helping others. I just didn't have enough hands to do it all. When that happens to me, I turn to food to stave off the overwhelming burdens I feel.

About a year after surgery, I discovered I could eat sugar and other foods I couldn't before. Surgery did not fix the core reasons why I ate in the first place. I began eating all my old comfort foods again. Before I knew it, I was once again in the morbid obesity category.

“Enough is enough,” I said. “I’m doing something about this.”

Working on Me

I had to understand what my issues were such as, why do I keep running back to certain foods whenever I can? I needed help, but I had no time for help. Understanding that monumental truth helped me revise my to do list.

One at a time, I let go of the priorities everyone else had for me. I quit everything.

Then, I started working on me. I began going to a weight loss group. I started seeing a holistic doctor who helped me start various vitamins, minerals and natural hormone supplements. I saw an allergist and a chiropractor who both believe in wellness therapy. I got a trainer, and began seeing a physical therapist.

I exercised at least six days a week for an hour. I stopped eating sugar and flour and started eating protein, vegetables and fruits. I took life purpose coaching training, which also helped me understand myself more.

Most importantly, I allowed God to teach me what my core issues were, and how to walk through forgiving others, renouncing lies and hearing God’s truth for my life. I allowed God to transform every part of me—body, soul and spirit.

I also evaluated the things I had been doing. Was there anything I had been doing which tugged at a deep part of me? Something I truly missed? What was the cry of my heart, the thing that made me tick?

Write the Vision

Among the entire list of things, the one I loved the most was blogging and writing. Years ago, I chose a life verse. This needs to be one that shouts at me every time I see it in Scripture or think about it.

Mine is: "Write the vision. Make it plain so those that read it may run with it" (Hab. 2:2). There it is. That's who I am. Everything else pales in comparison to that. If I have to choose one life action, that would be it.

It's not just about writing. It's about writing the things which matter in a way that will help people incorporate the truths into their lives. In order to do that, I have to be connected to the One who makes my one thing matter.

Vibrating With Life

Trusting God with my entire heart means not leaning on what I think, rationalize or understand, but surrendering completely to Him. When I do that, He will show me the next step.

God says surrendering to Him brings results that align with my ultimate goal of being whole, healthy and happy, living a life full to overflowing with His purposes.

That's what began to happen when I quit everything and concentrated on only doing what fit into His purpose for me.

I decided to love myself in the same way God loves me. I decided to listen to that still, small voice inside, and be the best me possible. I decided to run with the thing that makes me light up inside. In the process, I lost weight, but gained so much more.

Teresa Shields Parker is a wife, mother, business owner, life group leader, speaker and author of *Sweet Freedom: Losing Weight and Keeping It Off With God's Help*, *Sweet Grace: How I Lost 250 Pounds and Stopped Trying to Earn God's Favor* and *Sweet Grace Study Guide: Practical Steps to Lose Weight and Overcome Sugar Addiction*. *Get a free chapter of her memoir on her blog at . Connect with her there or on her Facebook page.*

5 Ways to Lose Weight and Keep It Off

One question I am frequently asked by people is how I have managed to lose 40 pounds and keep it off.

It is hard enough to lose a lot of weight and even harder to keep it off!

Having resolved some of the inner stuff that was keeping me bound to comfort eating, I began to systematically employ new disciplines in my life.

I am a firm believer that if you try to lose weight too quickly, or by methods that cannot become lifestyle habits, you will not be successful in the long run. You may take off 5 or 10 pounds, but they will come back on just as quickly when you resume normal life.

Here are five things I've done to lose weight and keep it off.

These are part of my everyday lifestyle now!

1. Reduce Stress

I know this is probably not in very many diet programs, but stress affects the body in so many ways. One way it affects the body is by weight gain. Not only does stress often affect the way we approach food—comfort eating, eating too quickly, eating too much and craving foods that cause us to gain weight—it also affects the way our bodies metabolize food.

This was not an easy thing to do because my stress was twofold: I was a perfectionist and expected far more of myself than what was reasonable, but I had also overcommitted myself

and was forced to excuse myself from most of those commitments.

The result was that I was finally able to breathe again ... and focus on getting healthy!

2. Vitamins and Supplements

Sadly, our modern diet lacks the vital nutrients we need to keep our bodies running healthily. Furthermore, what the FDA recommends for a proper daily dose of vitamins is often barely enough to keep our bodies running at its bare minimum. Even when we eat fruits and veggies, we are not getting nearly enough nutrients to supply our bodies with what they needs, so good quality supplements are needed on a daily basis to give our bodies good solid support.

I take about 10,000-11,000 mg of Vitamin C as ascorbic acid, a multi-vitamin, a B-complex, Vitamin D, Omega 3, and probiotics.

You should determine what your body's needs are and create your own vitamin regimen. Oftentimes a multi-vitamin isn't enough and with many vitamins, our bodies will simply eliminate the excess when we've taken too much. Do your research before taking extra vitamins.

3. Good Diet and Healthy Portions

For most of us, our diet consists largely of grains and unhealthy carbohydrates (as opposed to healthy carbs founds in fruits and vegetables), while often miserably low in good roughage and vitamin-rich raw foods that help our bodies to function at their optimum. Is it any wonder that we are a society that is run-down, sick, fatigued and on far too much medication?

Benjamin Franklin wisely said, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." Many modern diseases, such as

diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure and cancer, could be prevented in many cases by maintaining a healthy diet. Fewer grains (even though the FDA recommends grains be the bulk of our diet, they are not quite so necessary in such portions!), more fruits and vegetables and healthy fats in moderation.

Replace your supposedly “healthy” margarine with healthy fats: butter, lard, avocados, olive oil and coconut oil. Eat probiotic-rich food on a regular basis: yogurt (not flavored), kefir, sauerkraut, kimchi and other fermented foods.

However, in some cases, it is possible to have too much of a good thing!

Watch your portions. Use a calorie counter, such as My Fitness Pal, to make sure your calorie outgo is more than your intake.

Plexus Slim has helped me considerably in learning proper portion sizes. You can learn more about Plexus products by joining my new Facebook Group dedicated to Plexus!

4. Exercise

I know, I know, this is the one where we all groan. Me too. I’ll admit, I don’t like to exercise ... at all. OK, I do like to walk, but getting me out of the house on a walk is the hard part.

But a sedentary lifestyle is very hard on your heart!

What helped me to up my physical activity was a Fitbit. The competition available with the Fitbit spurred me to action! I wear it 24/7—I never take it off, and it has helped tremendously!

Exercise should involve sweating, which helps our bodies eliminate toxins. Exercise also helps to release endorphins, a happy hormone.

When you exercise you feel better and you sleep better!

5. Sleep

As much as our bodies need activity, it also needs good rest. By resting our bodies, we rejuvenate our organs and empower them to work better at keeping our bodies a well-oiled machine.

Also, our brain works better, and our reaction times are much sharper.

Studies prove that a sleep-deprived driver has slower reactions than a drunk driver, thereby making him a more dangerous driver. That's crazy!

Sleep deprivation is a chronic problem in our society. Our over-taxed schedules demand that we sleep less and work more. Sleep is considered a waste of time and those who promote eight to nine hours of sleep plus an afternoon cat nap are considered spoiled and lazy.

When People Let You Down

Last week, Spanish class was awesome, awesome, awesome, awesome, not so hot. My students made me want to weep with their success on more than one occasion. They really made some great advancements. Then came Friday and what I thought was going to be a super easy matching vocab test, but they didn't impress me so much.

"Oh man, we have a test today?" said two of my guys in a panic. (Picture me giving them the stink eye.)

So I came home all slumpy shoulders.

"How was your day?" Matt asked.

"OK," I said. (Slump.)

"Just OK?" he said, which I heard as, "Go ahead and tell me every minute detail about your day and what has you all droopy because my entire existence has meaning when I hear about your life."

I told him about the test and how I was hoping for better.

"You should probably allow them an off day," he said. "We all have an off day."

That changed my entire perspective. My students had been working with excellence all week, but they were tired coming into Friday. Maybe they should get a chance not to be perfect sometimes.

And so I bring you to the good news for all of us:

"It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed; His compassions do not fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness" (Lam. 3:22-23).

What I hear in this verse is that the Lord allows us to have an off day. **All is not lost**—we find Him faithfully there waiting for us the next morning.

He is merciful (that is, withholding the stink eye).

He loves us. We are more than a project to complete; we are His children.

Thank the Lord He is helping us work toward perfection but doesn't expect us to hit the mark every second of the day.

This best news goes up and down the line. For us it means we are allowed to have one of those days where we feel like we have dropped the ball every time we've turned around.

For our people, it means we should be generous toward them. When our husband or our sister or our kids or our boss has an off day, **we can practice giving the same treatment we're receiving** fresh from the Lord every morning. We can offer faith and love and mercy.

And you know what our people will do when we let them off the hook for once? They'll sigh—the way we girls sigh when we take off the constricting tights that we wore at work all day. You know what I mean.