

The Real Reason You Should Disconnect From Your Diet

"I'll start my diet after the holidays," the message from the woman said. "I'll lose weight then." I heard those words numerous times in different ways just last week with Thanksgiving having just passed and Christmas looming on the horizon.

The Flip Side

Thankfully, I also heard the flip side. I heard from many women who decided they wanted the help of a coach and a coaching group to make sure they began a weight loss change plan immediately!

They wanted to change their lives and they knew the best time to start was right then. They understood the difficulties of the holidays and wanted to go through them without eating everything in sight like they'd done in the past.

No, they didn't want to start a diet. They were all ready for lifestyle change. The two are vastly different.

Diet Definition

There are two definitions of a diet. One is the type of food a person habitually eats. The other is to restrict yourself to small amounts or special kinds of food in order to lose weight.

The first defines how you would normally eat when left to your own devices. It's how you automatically eat. It's the habits you've fallen into over years and years of eating whatever you desire.

The second is the opposite of that. It's when you intentionally stop eating in your habitual way and, for a

short time, restrict yourself to small amounts or different types of food to lose weight.

Diet Disconnect

The disconnect with dieting, no matter what form of dieting we are doing, is that we have always been eating one way and have ingrained habits toward that, even habits formed since birth.

Then, all of a sudden we stop eating that way, and the next day we eat totally different. Of course we don't want to do that during the holidays. We know there will be all kinds of things we habitually eat during special times, and we don't want to feel left out.

Where Diets Fail

Diets are short-term fixes for a long-term problem. They were never meant to last any longer than it might take to lose 20, 50, 100 or more pounds. I could lose weight pretty quickly back when I weighed over 400 pounds.

The problem is, I would put the weight back on plus more when I stopped the diet. I learned nothing except that I didn't like restricted eating. What I did want was to just get the weight off and go back to eating what I wanted.

I was all about the quickest and easiest way to lose weight. I didn't think about the fact that what I really wanted was to keep the weight off for good. I really didn't want those pounds to find their way back to me and bring their friends with them.

All my life, I had been told a diet is the only way to do that. After 30 some years of dieting, I learned a hard truth. Diets don't work unless you stay on them for good, but I never could do that, and they weren't designed for that.

Change Me, Please

That's when I began to understand the only way to lose weight and keep it off was via a lifestyle change. This involved changing the way I had been eating as well as incorporating better habits for exercise, sleep, work, play and recharging myself mentally, emotionally and spiritually.

I learned quickly that lifestyle change is a process that takes time and good support from others, especially those who are committed to the journey and are doing it successfully. It wouldn't work without my total surrender to doing things God's way.

That involved being committed to do the work and staying with the process even through difficult seasons, including holidays, birthdays, weddings, anniversaries, church potluck dinners and get-togethers with family and friends.

How Lifestyle Change Works

There are some elements of lifestyle change that are the same for everyone, but each person really needs to individualize their own change plan. Just as there is no one-size-fits-all diet, there is no one-size-fits-all change plan.

First, everyone's goals will be different. So right off the bat, the plan has to be personal. Second, everyone's habits are different. The kinds of foods we eat to relieve stress, anxiety, overwhelm, sadness or even to help us celebrate are different for each of us. Third, the stay-at-home mom has a totally different kind of pressure from a busy executive or a small business owner.

Each of these elements, plus many more, play a factor in how each person develops their plan, but the tools to get there are pretty much the same. They involve setting goals, learning how to stop a bad habit, focusing on starting a good habit, taking one step at a time, recognizing why we do what we do,

understanding how to allow God to help us change those habits, learning how to intentionally focus on what we really want and so much more.

Commitment to Change

The biggest thing I had to want was a total lifestyle change. I was done with short-term fixes. I wanted a lasting fix, and to get that, I had to be committed to beginning my lifestyle change journey and then continuing it for the rest of my life.

For me it became all about changing that very first definition of diet so that what I habitually eat is good for my health rather than harmful. It's about stopping to think. It was also about knowing deep down inside that God wants me healthy.

He wants the same thing for you, my friend. He's got work for you to do. You can do some of it now, but when you get healthier, oh, the plans He has for you!

How God Helps Us Change

Scripture has been some of the biggest encouragement to me as I lost more than 250 pounds. This verse in Proverbs encourages me because I love how it tells me that God really does have plans just for me and, of course, just for you, too.

"You will find true success when you find Me, for I have insight into wise plans that are designed just for you. I hold in My hands living-understanding, courage, and strength" (Prov. 8:14, TPT).

Not only does He have plans for us, He promises to help us. He will give us understanding. I don't know about you, but to know God will help me know what I need to do and that He understands me gives me great encouragement.

Courage and Strength

Courage is another big thing I needed for this journey. The

definition means the ability to do something that frightens you. So to have courage means to do that thing even though you are afraid.

I was really afraid of failing on my journey. I didn't know how to give up sugar, which was one of my first goals. However, I knew it was what I had to do.

That's where the other thing God was holding in His hands just for me comes in. I needed His strength. When I gave up and admitted my weakness in the face of trying to change my inbred habits and lose one-eighth of a ton of weight, that's when His strength was completely available to help me, as it says in 2 Corinthians 12:9.

God's Got Plans for Us

There are so many times in Scripture where God promises to take care of us. He tells us in Jeremiah 29:11 that He's got everything planned out for us. He won't abandon us. He has plans to give us a future and a hope.

He even saw us before we were born and had every day of our lives recorded in His book. He knows everything about us. (See Ps. 139:13-16, NLT.)

He is taking care of every single detail of our lives. Everything that happens to us, even if it seems like a disaster and we can't tell how anything good will come of it, God will weave it into His perfect plan to bring good into our lives. He does this because we love Him and have been called to fulfill His designed purpose. (See Rom. 8:28, TPT.)

I want to encourage you today that God can bring good out of even something like gaining and then losing weight. He has done this in my life. I can't wait to see what He will do in yours! {eoa}

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study guides, including her latest, Sweet Journey to Transformation: Practical Steps to Lose Weight and Live Healthy, and her No. 1 bestseller, Sweet Grace: How I Lost 250 Pounds. She is also a blogger, spiritual weight loss coach (check out her coaching group, Overcomers Academy) and speaker at . Check out her new podcast, Sweet Grace for Your Journey.

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How You Can Be Led by the Spirit of God Every Day

Would you agree that God knows everything? If that's the case, then it seems like He could answer every question you ever had about life, and help you win every time. Which He can!

So when we talk about being led by the Holy Spirit of God, we're talking about seeking God for His direction in every area of life: having answers, making the right decisions and being the most effective in everything we do. No more wondering or wavering or frustration.

I want that—how about you?

To be led by the Spirit of God in your daily life, first you must know that He wants to lead you. You must believe that He's always wanted to lead and help His people: In fact, you were *designed* to be led by Him.

Before you were even born, God had a blueprint for your life. In Jeremiah 29:11 (NASB), it says: “‘For I know the plans that I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.’” There is a

plan for your life, and it's a good plan. He knows what it is, and He wants to get it to you. He wants to lead you. You can hear His voice!

Ephesians 2:10 (MEV) says, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we should walk in them." God created you to do good things! And He wants you to be doing them, even more than you want to.

He has promised to lead you into them when you seek and obey Him. There are many scriptures that promise God's direction—meditate on these to feed your faith: Isaiah 48:17, Psalm 32:8, Psalm 37:23, Psalm 48:14, John 16:13, Romans 8:14 and John 10:4-5.

Isaiah 42:16 is one of my favorites: "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do for them, and not forsake them." That's good news.

Asking God's direction and being led by His Spirit is so worth it! There's just nothing better than being in the center of God's will for your life. His plan is always the best plan! One very important key to being led by the Spirit is: Determine to be led by God *and nothing else*. Now, that may sound like a no-brainer, but let's face it—we've all been led by other things. We've let things like money, circumstances, pressure and outside opinions make decisions for us.

Instead of being led by those things, we must look to the *inside* where the Spirit of God lives big in us. Proverbs 20:27 says our spirit is the light that shows us the way. That means, instead of making a pro/con list or reasoning things out on your own, you determine to seek God until you understand what He wants you to do.

When you are led by things on the *outside*, you're relying

exclusively on your own natural senses and ideas to lead you. You're trying to make decisions and go in a direction *on your own*.

Compare this with Proverbs 3:5-6, which says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and *lean not on your own understanding*; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths" (emphasis mine). I like the way The Message Version says it: "Listen for God's voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; he's the one who will keep you on track. Don't assume that you know it all."

Our human understanding is so limited. But God knows everything. Yes, He gave you a brain and He wants you to use it; but sometimes His leading and the so-called logical direction don't match. Always go with His direction. You don't want to rely only on your understanding because you just don't know everything you need to know.

Say this today: "I am led by God's Spirit. I believe I received His leading and guidance in every situation." {eoa}

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How This Woman Conquers the Spirit of Death in the NICU

One of the victims of the spirit of death is the vulnerable—those who can't fight the good fight of faith on their own, and such is the case in the NICU ward. But Terri, a woman of faith, my friend and one of my intercessors, stood in the gap for one of these precious and vulnerable babies the other week with great results. Let's read and see just how she conquered this spirit of death on behalf of this little baby.

Terri writes:

God has called me to minister in our local hospital by cuddling the babies in the NICU ward. Recently, I had two consecutive nights scheduled. The following day, an email was sent out to the volunteers for that night. I was taking my granddaughter to an event that day and hesitated to respond. I kept checking to see if anyone had responded, but no one had. It was late afternoon when I took my granddaughter home, and there was still no response, so I responded that I would go in that night.

The previous night, I was given a 3-day-old baby who was fitfully crying. I prayed, "Oh Lord, please help me." We are not told the history of these babies, but the nurse shared she was 3 days old, unable to keep formula down, and they were thinking of transporting her to another hospital. This baby girl had an IV running and was angry. The nurse placed her in my arms with a pacifier, asked if I was OK and left, telling me to call if I needed help.

This precious, sweet baby screamed while arching her back. As I always do, I called on Jesus, "Please Lord, let this baby feel Your hands and Your heart. Let me get out of the way." And I prayed in my natural and in my spiritual language. Very

soon, the cries subsided, and she relaxed, with a cry coming just once in a while. I said, "Thank You, Jesus, for the peace for this baby."

I held her for two and a half to three hours, until it was time for me to leave. Again, I prayed, "Oh Lord, let her continue to feel You." I went in the next night and was assigned to hold that same baby. I was expecting the same situation as the previous night, but when I got to the room, this precious little girl was quiet, and she had no IV. The nurse gave me a brief report and said she was even keeping her formula down. I began to cry as I was telling her God had answered my prayers, and she agreed! And I held a very content little baby that night as I continued to pray into her spirit.

While listening to Terri share this testimony with me, I asked her the following question: "Terri, how would you say that the teachings from my books about our words and standing in faith helped you to conquer the spirit of death over this child?"

She responds, "Standing in faith is believing God at His word. Seeing His work is such a faith-builder. To experience the power of our words which are so important—it's a testimony in itself. Our words do make a difference, and we should choose life-giving words. Renounce every morbid and negative word spoken over these children, even your own negative thoughts."

I ask, "Terri, how do you speak to these babies when they are suffering pain?"

She answers, "All I am allowed to do is hold the babies. I'm not told much about the babies for reasons of confidentiality. When I am holding an "angry" baby that's arching their back, my voice doesn't change per se, as I want the babies to hear a soft, but confident voice. But I put emphasis on the words that declare life. (Gotta tell you, the tears fall!) I pray positively into their spirit. Taking authority in Jesus' name

is what we are to do and then we are to expect Him to manifest. God is faithful.”

As I continue to listen to Terri share with me her story, she says, “The nurses have been very open to me walking the unit, praying before I go to my assignment. God prepares the hearts.” So I ask her, “Did you ask the nurses for permission to pray? Or did you just tell them that’s what you are doing?” And she responds, “Actually, I just told them, and they didn’t say no.”

She adds, “I am so humbled and overwhelmed with the goodness of God. I have never had prayers answered so quickly. Talk about a faith-builder. Becky, you said to anoint the babies with prayer, and as I was coming home the other night, Holy Spirit said before I get to my assignment, I am to touch and pray over each doorway while I walk the unit, as I cannot go into these other rooms. He has led me every step of the way. I have never felt so blessed!”

Just like Terri, you also can learn how to conquer the spirit of death in your everyday situation. {eoa}

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How You Can Use Every Aspect of Christmas to Point to Christ Himself

Now that I'm retired, I have had a little time to catch some of the Christmas specials and movies. The theme is always the same: someone needs love and is facing a sad Christmas or has decided not to celebrate Christmas because of some disappointment or loss they experienced, and the season is filled with pain and bad memories. Then a "miracle" happens, and they meet their soulmate or someone who brings love into their life, they are filled with joy and discover the "true meaning" of Christmas. However, Christ is rarely mentioned, and the only spirit they experience is in the clinking glass of bubbly. It's all about love, family and friends, but where is Christ? Since God is love, we can only truly find unconditional love, real joy and perpetual peace in Him. He is what Christmas is about.

Some see the secularization of Christmas as an offshoot of its pagan origins when Christians merged the celebration of Jesus' birth with pagan practices and the winter solstice. As a result, and as a matter of conscience, they won't celebrate it at all.

What's a Christian to do? We're surrounded by the sights, smells and sounds of the season. Are we to be like Scrooge and say, "Bah, humbug"? Are we to teach our children that the season is really of the devil? Let's face it; we can't escape the holiday season with its bombardment of music, decorations, lights, wonderful smells and get-togethers. And neither can the world.

When I was a child, I was so excited at this time of year! I could hardly wait to see what surprise Santa had left for me.

I associated all the fun of Christmas with the jolly round man in the red suit. This myth was much more enticing than the real Christmas story, with its drab colors and gruesome details about Herod sending Roman soldiers to murder babies because he wanted to kill Jesus.

Years later, as a teacher in a Christian school, I pondered my childhood memories and wondered how I could relay the wonder, joy and beauty of Christ to the children. I wanted them to experience the Father's indescribable love toward them. I wanted them to know that Jesus is the reason for the season and we celebrate because He came to give Himself for us. We give gifts because the Father gave us His greatest gift, His Son, for our redemption. Far from being drab, it was the greatest announcement ever! (See Luke 2.)

However, I also knew I could not keep my students from being influenced by the culture, decorating trees and visiting Santa at the mall, so I asked the Lord how I could help them learn to focus on Him in spite of the worldly emphasis.

In response, Holy Spirit began to show me how to use the very things that sometimes turn people away from Him as a means of pointing them to Him. As we decorated the classroom, He gave me insight about Jesus related to every item we used.

"Children," I said. "Everything about Christmas points to Jesus." Then I shared what God had shown me.

I told them that the word "Christmas" means a celebration of Christ. He's the greatest gift! A Christmas tree is shaped like a triangle with its top pointing toward heaven—where Jesus came from and where we will go someday to be with Him. The tree's shape also speaks of the Trinity: Father, Son, Holy Spirit.

The lights on trees and in neighborhoods speak of Jesus being the light of the world. The candles remind us to be a light to others just as He is the light.

The round shapes of the ornaments and wreaths remind us that God is eternal, with no beginning and no end. The holly wreaths with their prickly leaves remind us of the crown of thorns once placed on Jesus' head.

The colors of Christmas are red (the blood of Jesus) and green (everlasting life). Gold reminds us of His majesty and that the streets in heaven are paved with gold. The glistening snow, pure and white, is a symbol that "though [our] sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow" (Isa. 1:18b).

The angels are as real today as they were on that first Christmas when they visited the shepherds. Christmas carols enable us to join the choirs of heaven in adoration of Him who is worthy to be praised. Candy canes look like shepherds' staffs and remind us that He is the good shepherd who gave His life for the sheep. The dove stands not only for peace, which God extended to the earth through the sacrifice of His Son, but also for the Holy Spirit who is our friend, Counselor and teacher.

When we taste appetizing holiday foods, we can rejoice in the goodness of the Lord: "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good" (Ps. 34:8). When we smell sweet fragrances, we can reflect on the wonderful aroma of His presence—and the fragrance of Christ that we as believers carry in the world (see 2 Cor. 2:14-15).

Yes, we can see the secularism—even paganism—in this season. We can shun it and speak disparagingly about it. Or we can choose to turn the symbols of the world around and see in them a reflection of the glory of our God. As my students and I learned, looking at them as an expression of His goodness helps to make the season a truly wonderful celebration—not of Santa and gifts, but of Him whose name is truly called "Wonderful" (Isa. 9:6).

Prayer Power for the Week of Dec. 15, 2019

This week, thank the Lord for sending His Son, Jesus, to reveal the Father and provide forgiveness, peace and reconciliation. Pray that hearts will be opened to receive God's love and the provision He has made through Christ for the whole world. Continue to pray for worldwide revival, beginning with our own nation. Ask for sound counsel, protection and wisdom for our president and those serving with him. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem, our military and their families, and those suffering tremendous losses. Ask God to make you a blessing this season. Read: Isaiah 9:6, John 3:16.

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How the Enneagram Can Take Your Marriage Where God Wants It to Go

“If you’ve been married longer than a honeymoon, you quickly realize that what you thought was a ballroom dance becomes Twister.”

So says pastor and counselor Jeff McCord, who with his wife, Beth, known as “Your Enneagram Coach,” coauthored a new book, *Becoming Us: Using the Enneagram to Create A Thriving Gospel-Centered Marriage*. The McCords first came to the Enneagram (a personality typing tool), they say, because of their own experiences with marital conflict.

As with many couples, things started to get difficult around

the six-to-seven-year mark, while the McCords were expecting their second child. “We were lost,” Jeff says on the *Hope for Your Marriage* podcast series on Charisma News. “I was in my second year of seminary and wondering, *Is my marriage going to be a disaster?*”

During that time, someone introduced the McCords to a book on the Christian perspective of the Enneagram, a tool that, Beth says, really opened up her thinking about their relationship. Understanding her personality type (Enneagram 9), she says, “Helped me to understand why we were struggling. Whenever we were having some struggles, I would want to think positive about it and not really address it or maybe shut down and withdraw completely.” And understanding Jeff’s type (Enneagram 6) helped too.

“All of those things that I was doing to try to navigate around complex issues were only stoking the fire more for him, because for him, abandonment is one of his greatest fears,” Beth explains. “So whenever I didn’t engage with a situation that he felt like needed to be addressed, he felt like I was abandoning him, like this was the beginning of the end of our marriage, while I was never thinking in that direction.”

Understanding the different ways they viewed their relationship and their struggles, Beth says, helped them to have compassion, empathy and more understanding for each other. Even today, the couple continues to rely on the Enneagram to help them navigate the challenges marriage brings. “We tell people it’s like an internal GPS, where here’s a current location, your main Enneagram type,” she adds. “And then here’s your destination, which is being more like Christ. And each type has their own path. ... We need to focus on Christ and surrender to Him in a very unique, specific way. And if we don’t, our mind and our heart can wander off so much that we fall into those same common pitfalls time and time again.

“So we encourage people to use the Enneagram like a rumble strip on the highway that alerts us like, ‘Hey, if you keep thinking this way, or behaving this way and interacting this way, you’re going to land into that same common pitfall,’” says Beth.

To hear more about how the gospel-centered Enneagram can transform you and your marriage, listen to this podcast. For the McCord’s free assessment that will help you discern your own Enneagram type, [click here](#). The McCords are also offering their *Discovering You* course at a 50% discount for Charisma readers; get it here [ydiscovering-you](#) and use coupon code **CHARISMA**. {eoa}

Why Christmas Carols Can Communicate Deep Spiritual Truth

What puts a song in your heart?

–Your favorite playlist?

–Your wedding song?

–Christmas carols?

One of my favorite parts of the Christmas season is the music. You may be tired of hearing Christmas carols that have already been playing since Halloween. For many, the joy of those carols slowly dissipates until we have nothing left by Dec.

25.

But Christmas carols can provide more than mere distraction and entertainment. They communicate spiritual truths in wonderfully memorable ways. If you're like me, you may have a difficult time with memorization, including memorizing Scripture verses. But if you know the words to many familiar Christmas carols, you probably have more Bible verses memorized or paraphrased than you realize!

For example, consider the lyrics of "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing," originally written by Charles Wesley. Before you groan at the thought of listening to yet another Christmas carol, read the words as if for the first time...

Hark! the herald angels sing/

"Suddenly there was with the angel a company of the heavenly host praising God" (Luke 2:13a).

Glory to the newborn King/

"Glory to God in the highest" (Luke 2:14a).

Peace on earth, and mercy mild/

"and on earth peace" (Luke 2:14b).

God and sinners reconciled/

"and good will toward men" (Luke 2:14c).

Joyful, all ye nations rise, join the triumph of the skies/

"I bring you good news of great joy which will be to all people" (Luke 2:10a).

With the angelic host proclaim/

"Suddenly there was with the angel a company of the heavenly host praising God" (Luke 2:13a).

Christ is born in Bethlehem/

"Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11).

Hark! the herald angels sing/

“Suddenly, a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God” (Luke 2:13).

Glory to the newborn King/

“Where is He who has been born king of the Jews?” (Matt. 2:2a).

Enjoy the carols of Christmas. And while you're at it, enjoy the amount of Scripture you didn't know you knew!

Think of your favorite Christmas carol—how many Bible verses can you identify in its lyrics? {eoa}

Ava Pennington is a writer, speaker and Bible teacher. She writes for nationally circulated magazines and is published in 32 anthologies, including 25 “Chicken Soup for the Soul” books. She also authored Daily Reflections on the Names of God: A Devotional, endorsed by Kay Arthur. Learn more at .

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How Supernatural Experiences Can Help You Bring Unbelievers to Christ

Experiencing the supernatural should be a normal part of the Christian life. But did you know when combined with the gift of discerning of spirits, these experiences can also be used as a tool to share the gospel?

“It’s normal to have supernatural encounters,” says prophetic minister Jennifer Eivaz on the *Take 10 With Jenn* podcast on the Charisma Podcast Network, pointing out that the Bible reveals this truth. “I had experienced the supernatural my entire life. My experiences changed in scope [from] before I was a Christian versus after I was a Christian, but I always had them.”

Scripture also “shows us ... what supernatural encounters to accept and what to reject and why,” Eivaz says. “And so it’s normal to see and experience angels and demons. It’s normal to have visions and dreams from God. It’s normal to encounter a wide variety of miracles.

“The supernatural is not limited to a one-time experience for us as Christians because our God’s supernatural; He doesn’t have any limits,” Eivaz adds. “And at the same time, a lot of unbelievers are experiencing the supernatural, but in a much different context. They experience the supernatural, and it creates this hunger in them to want more, but they don’t know how to discern it. They don’t know how to sort through it.”

This experience of the supernatural, Eivaz says, carries confusion for nonbelievers. “If their home becomes haunted, they don’t know they should cast the demon out. If they start to experience psychic or telepathic abilities, they don’t know how to classify that, and they reach out to the occult, they reach out to New Age sources for answers. People who need healing or deliverance, they go to ... shamans and exorcism to try and get relief instead of going to Jesus and to His church.”

And Eivaz adds a critical point. “As Christians, we need to embrace the supernatural, but we need to do so with the gift of discerning of spirits in operation, and we need to do so intelligently and effectively, because we can reach people like this for Jesus Christ.”

To learn more about the gift of discerning of spirits and how God can use an interest in the supernatural to draw people to Himself, listen to this podcast.

How Fresh Trust in God Moved This Woman to Break Her Addiction to Comfort Foods

Everyone loves comfort food. This time of the year, comfort foods abound when family and friends get together to celebrate the holidays. Too much comfort food, though, ends up in us being very uncomfortable because of the weight we've gained.

What Is Comfort Food?

Comfort food is defined by different people in different ways. It really depends a lot on the types of food we think of as easing our discomfort. These foods many times are connected to people we love, and the food becomes a connection to them even if they aren't around.

The food then becomes sentimental to us and evokes feelings associated with that person and how that person made us feel. In other words, the foods certain people prepared at certain times in the year seem to hold the emotions we felt when we were with those people.

That's why my great-grandmother's oatmeal cake is the epitome of comfort food to me, but so is my grandma's real country-fried steak, mashed potatoes and gravy. They are all attached to women who played key roles in my life.

Feel-Good Food

It's also interesting, though, that comfort foods always seem to be high in carbohydrate content and calories. So as we eat them, we feel comfort and alleviation of any negative emotions that are plaguing us. They make us feel good.

Studies have shown that men and women eat comfort foods to alleviate different types of emotions. Men eat comfort foods when they feel happy in order to celebrate, while many women eat them when they feel sad or depressed in order to try to feel more positive.

When we eat the comfort foods, they make us feel better for a while. Then the emotion hits us again, and we need more of them to get the same feeling. That is especially true if the food is extremely high in carbs and calories.

Weight Gain Is Inevitable

This is where the uncomfortable part comes in. We can live on comfort foods to make us feel better emotionally, but we will gain weight. Then, we get stressed about that and want to lose the weight.

So we greatly restrict our intake and stay away from comfort foods, and then we get depressed again, throw caution to the wind and start drowning ourselves in comfort again.

It is an endless cycle. I know; I've been there. I was sure there was no way out. I didn't want my emotions out of control and eating was the only way I could figure out how to keep them anywhere near under control.

Broken

When I began to understand I was a sugar and comfort-food addict, I saw why I was always stuck in the Romans 7:19 conundrum: "For the good I desire to do, I do not do, but the evil I do not want is what I do."

I wanted to stop eating all things that were making me gain weight, but I didn't do it. I didn't want to gain weight, but I did it anyway.

My problem was actually threefold: I was broken emotionally, metabolically and spiritually.

Broken Metabolism

My metabolism was that of an addict. I had low beta endorphins, the feel-good hormone, and low serotonin, the hormone that says everything is right with the world. Foods with high sugar and carb content help elevate those hormones in our bodies. Problem solved, right? Wrong.

The effect of those foods on the body wears off after a while, and we need to eat more, hence the feeling that we can't stop eating the brownies or the sugar cookies. Those with broken metabolisms also have low blood sugar. When our blood sugar is low, our body asks for more sugar.

To combat that, we need to eat small amounts of protein throughout the day. That's why I always eat protein first if I'm feeling hungry. It helps me be intentional about what I'm eating, because when my blood sugar is low, my mind gets foggy, and I can't think logically.

Emotionally Broken

Being emotionally broken simply means I did not learn how to process my emotions as I was growing up. There were many reasons for this, but suffice it to say, it was just easier to ignore my emotions by eating them away than to deal with them.

I shoved them down to the cellar of my life, where I thought I'd buried them. When some situation would trigger them again, I threw comfort food at them. This double brokenness ran rampant over my life for way too many years.

Today I understand more clearly that God gave us emotions for

a reason. What we eat will affect how we feel, but feeling those emotions and processing through them is the best thing we can do for ourselves and those around us.

Spiritually Broken

All along, God had been telling me to stop eating sugar and breads and eat more meats or proteins, vegetables and fruits. This was exactly what I needed to do, but I was too spiritually broken to listen to Him.

I thought I was good spiritually, but I was rebellious and was not listening because I didn't think I could do what He wanted me to do because I was always weak around sugar. I was 100% right about that. I am weak, but I did not realize the complete ramifications of Paul's words.

"He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor. 12:9-10, NLT).

Trust God

It took me a while to trust God and rely on His strength instead of my own weak and shaky foundation. Then I realized that the biggest issue I had was really a spiritual one. "Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death? Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 7:24-25).

I had to go through some deep inner healing to finally trust God to lead me on this journey. God is always a gentleman. He didn't rush me. He took me step by step through a process to finally surrender everything to Him. In the process, I lost over 250 pounds from my highest weight of 430 pounds, and

learned to readily express my emotions in good ways and love God with every part of me. {eoa}

Teresa Shields Parker is the author of five books and two study guides, including her latest, *Sweet Journey to Transformation: Practical Steps to Lose Weight and Live Healthy*, and her No. 1 bestseller, *Sweet Grace: How I Lost 250 Pounds*. She is also a blogger, spiritual weight loss coach (check out her coaching group, *Overcomers Academy*) and speaker at . Check out her new podcast, *Sweet Grace for Your Journey*.

This article originally appeared at .

Christian Actress/Singer Jamie Grace Shares the Heart Behind PureFlix's 'The Beverlys'

"Anybody can make a difference," said Jamie Grace, a Christian actress, singer, vlogger and new mother.

Grace, who stars in *The Beverlys* on PureFlix, revealed how her heart for fostering children and adoption actually intertwined with the show.

"No, you don't [have to foster lots of children] to make a difference," Grace says. "Even my character in *The Beverlys*,

she's not a foster mom. She's a young, aspiring singer, aspiring songwriter. She's not a foster mom at all. She's just taking time out of her day to be like, 'Oh, I can help. I can do something. I want to love these kids.'

"That's just something that really speaks to my heart in such a good way," Grace continued. "When it comes to foster care, like it's not always about 'OK, which one of you guys can foster the most kids, and which one of you guys can seem like a hero?'

"It's not about being a hero; it's just about being human, and it's about doing what God has called us to do, which is to love the vulnerable," Grace said.

Read the rest of this article at [Movieguide®](#). Find out what God is doing in Hollywood! {eoa}

Why Even a 3-Year Separation Didn't Keep This Couple From Their 'Happily Ever After'

Marv and Linda Rooks had a fairytale start to their marriage, spending five months in Europe as an extended honeymoon and doing what Linda says were "all kinds of fun things." "For the first six years, I thought he was wonderful," Linda shares with host Marti Pieper on the *Hope for Your Marriage* series on Charisma News, recalling how their love endured even during the season of her working to help put him through law school.

And then, like so many other couples, that fairytale marriage became less and less captivating. “Once we had children ... your lives kind of go in different directions sometimes,” Linda says. “And so he was building the law career and focused on that; I was focused on the children. And we really did have a good marriage—he was very good with the children, and we had a lot of good family times. The problem with us was that we didn’t resolve issues. And so, when issues would come up, problems would come up, we would just tend to kind of shove them under the rug, and we didn’t resolve them and move on.”

Within a few years, she and Marv were starting to argue more and more, Linda says, though she didn’t really know why. They had also established an unhealthy pattern, she adds. “What would often happen is that we would have an argument and he would leave the house, and then he’d come back an hour later, and we would both act like nothing happened.”

Linda expected them to follow this pattern one Easter afternoon when the couple had yet another argument and Marv walked out. “I had the ham on the table and the silver and the china, and everything was fixed up, and yeah, [I thought he would] come back, and we’d have dinner. But he didn’t come back.”

“It was devastating,” Linda says. “My whole world started falling apart.”

She’s never forgotten that feeling—or the tools God used to guide her through what became a three-year separation before God restored her marriage. For many years now, the Rookses have led a “Marriage 9/11” ministry at the Orlando megachurch they attend, and Linda has written two books focused on helping couples with troubled marriages, including her most recent, *Fighting for Your Marriage While Separated*, which recently won the Nonfiction Book of the Year award from the Advanced Writers and Speakers Association.

So how did Linda and Marv move toward their “happily ever after” despite their struggles? Linda shares three key tips:

1. **Give it time.** “So often, a person feels so devastated,” Linda says. “They don’t think there’s any help, and so they rush to different conclusions.”
2. **Put your spouse on the back burner.** A wise friend gave Linda this unusual counsel near the start of her separation: “Focus on God, and let Him show you what He wants to show you.”
3. **Surrender your marriage to God.** “Just completely give it to Him, [put it] in His hands. I have a lot of stories in my new book, *Fighting for Your Marriage While Separated*. And in every one of those stories, it’s like there’s a common thread,” Linda says. “... And each one of them, before their marriage got back together ... they really let go and surrendered to God. They were doing everything they could; they were doing a lot of the right things. But until they totally surrendered to God, it didn’t turn around.”

To hear more of Linda’s wise advice on fighting for your own happily ever after, listen to this podcast.