

This Scripture Will Help You 'Work Out' Your Spirituality

On a short run recently, I was reminded of the importance of getting in my regular workouts. I try to do something three to four days a week.

My exercise keeps me alert, energizes me and helps me to manage any stress in my life. It's also clearly good for my physical health. Working out provides lots of benefits.

Work Out Your Salvation

Just as working out physically is beneficial, working out spiritually is, too. It's not only beneficial, but it's also a necessity if we are to continue to become spiritually healthy. The apostle Paul encourages us to work out:

"... work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12).

When you are saved, you're assured of being with God eternally. There is no doubt about this. But God wants more than that for you. He wants you to live a full life on this side of heaven, the full life that his Son died for you to experience (John 10:10). He wants you to have a degree of wellness and wholeness so you can use the gifts and talents He's given you to best serve in his kingdom. In order for that to be a reality in the here and now, you must continue to "work out" your salvation.

What might working out your salvation look like?

1. Strip off excess weight. Keeping with the exercise theme, Paul also tells us we are to strip off everything that hinders us from running the race of life (Heb. 12:1). God wants you to strip off all things that get in the way of you becoming

whole. This is part of your sanctification process.

2. Renew your mind. Again, Paul encourages you to renew your mind, because it's through the renewing of your mind that you can be transformed (Rom. 12:2). God is always working to help us become more like Christ. Renewing your mind with the truths of scripture is key.

3. Know your true identity in Christ. If you have accepted Christ into your heart, the Bible says you are a child of God (Gal. 3:26). He loves you (John 3:16). You are his beloved. You are his masterpiece (Eph. 2:10). He knows how many hairs are on your head (Luke 12:7.)

4. Forgive others and yourself – Another key biblical principle as you work out your salvation is to forgive others and yourself. Have you built up resentment and bitterness over a past relationship conflict? Are you still harboring some unforgiveness toward yourself because of something in your past? Unforgiveness will not allow you to be free and to experience the abundant life. To forgive yourself and others is crucial (-22).

These are just a few truths of Scripture in the form of spiritual exercises that are an important aspect of working out your salvation.

I encourage you to be persistent with this lifelong process. Work out your salvation! {eoa}

Dale Fletcher is a speaker and wellness coach who lives in Charlotte, North Carolina. He writes and conducts workshops on the link between the Christian faith and health. Connect with Dale at .

For the original article, visit .

What Every Christian Brother Needs From You

I took a survey of the men who attend The Man in the Mirror Bible Study.

First, I asked, "How many of you are having work-related problems? If you are, raise your hands." About 50 percent of the men raised their hands.

Then I said, "Raise your hand if you or someone in your family is having a health problem?" Roughly 30 to 40 percent did so.

Next I said, "If you're having money problems, please raise your hand." This time something like 60 percent raised their hands.

Next I said, "If you are having some kind of a relationship problem, raise your hand." Again, about 50 percent raised them up.

Then I said, "If you don't have any problems, raise your hand." A mere four men hoisted their arms.

Finally I asked, "For those who just raised your hands indicating that you don't have any problems right now, how many of you lied?"

One of the four men raised his hand, and we all had a good laugh!

When you encounter men today, whether barista or barrister, please be aware that over 90 percent of them are facing some kind of major struggle. So let's be kind to each other for the glory of Christ. {eoa}

Patrick Morley is the founder of Man in the Mirror Ministries. For the original article, please visit .

How You Can Stay Motivated When Around Food Temptations

How many times have you faced this situation? You've resolved to eat healthy, but a coworker brings in hot and fresh Krispy Kreme doughnuts into the office? Or freshly made brownies.

You know what I mean. Just substitute your favorite food temptation.

One newsletter reader wrote me to say she faces food temptations constantly. Cindy asked, "How do I stay motivated in a very stressful job with high-fat food around me at all times?" With Thanksgiving just around the corner, I thought I should share my answers to her question.

Surprisingly, two of them can be found in an old Brady Bunch song:

"When it's time to change you've got to rearrange. Move your heart to what you're gonna be. Sha na na na na na sha na na na na na ..."

1. Move your heart to what you're gonna be. First, you need to do a heart-check and be honest. Which do you want more: to be healthier and reach your ideal weight/size or indulge in the high-fat food? Again, tell the truth.

Now, don't get down on yourself if the answer is "I want the high-fat food more." If that's the case, you need to start coming up with strong enough reasons for being healthier.

That's "move your heart to what you're gonna be." Instead of focusing on a temporary pleasure, focus on the ultimate pleasure you'll have with a lifetime of good health and a body that pleases you.

2. You've got to rearrange. Once you get your heart right, rearrange your work area to make healthy eating easier so you're not as tempted by the high-fat food. If you're hungry but haven't kept healthy choices around, of course you'll eat high-fat foods. It's human nature.

Create your own nutritional safety zone. Keep a water jug at your desk at all times so you can stay hydrated, and don't mistake thirst for hunger. Keep healthy snacks nearby like apples, pears, oranges, a can of vegetable soup or some whole-wheat crackers. Store them in a basket on your desk or another place within easy reach. That way, you're more likely to go for those instead of the high-fat items.

Having said all that, I think it's good to have a treat every once in a while. I have a treat once a week, but I make it a delicious one. Don't waste calories on high-fat items you can take or leave. Save it for those foods you really enjoy but only eat half of what you normally do and throw or give away the rest.

Last but not least, always start your morning by asking God to show you the way of escape from the temptations you might face that day. You are promised:

1 Corinthians 10:13

"No temptation has taken you except what is common to man. God is faithful, and He will not permit you to be tempted above what you can endure, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it.

You've got the power to overcome food temptations. Your job is to ensure your heart wants to overcome them and to set up your environment to make it easy for you to do so. God will take

care of the rest. {eoa}

*Once 240 pounds and a size 22, **Kimberly Taylor** can testify of God's healing power to end binge eating. She is an author and the creator of the Christian weight-loss website . Visit today for inspirational health and weight-loss tips.*

For the original article, visit .

10 Ways to Teach Your Children About Respect

A good friend of mine is an upstanding member of the community. He is hard-working, profitable in business, conducts himself with integrity and has played leadership roles in a number of local charitable causes.

He has made a concerted effort to be respected in his town and has succeeded. The one person who should most respect him is his son, but that has been a struggle. Respect can't be demanded—yet that's exactly what we try.

Families can't function without respect, but the more we push, the more elusive it seems to be. So what's the answer? Why won't children fall into line? What kind of plan can possibly help?

There are no easy answers, but there are positive directions. First, try backing off. Families are not the military, and there is no uniform code of conduct.

If you want to earn respect from your children, I recommend these 10 things:

1. Respect your children. This will look different from child to child, but you know when you're disrespectful—and so do they. As parents, this is something we can teach by doing.

2. Respect their mother. The relationship between parents sets the tone for the greater family dynamic. When children witness Mom and Dad treating one another with love and respect—despite their differences—the standard has been set. On the other hand, when kids witness their parents tear one another down, respect is an uphill climb.

3. Be consistent. Children need to know what to expect. Inconsistency on the part of parents leaves kids floundering. Consistency is both a compass and an anchor.

4. Follow through. Another way to say this is “Tell the truth.” Think carefully before you lay out a potential consequence, because the moment you fail to follow through, your credibility and your respect fly out the window.

5. Spend more time teaching love than teaching rules. Children who are taught the connection between love and discipline can accept consequences more easily than those who are governed exclusively by “chapter and verse.” Love does not demand respect; love commands respect.

6. Live with integrity. Children are master observers. Personal work ethic, paying bills, charitable giving, helping others, being generous with tips, talking positively about others behind their backs, etc. are all areas in which we build and sustain the kind of character to which our kids will respond with respect.

7. Be a family. Do you consider your family worthy of your best? Is your family Job One? This means being proactive about family life. Have meals together, go on special trips and events. Do game nights; go on vacation.

8. Be a leader. Don't just love, love from the front. Parents

are family leaders, and one way to lead is to love from the front. Serve them. Listen to their needs and respond with care.

9. Don't try to be their friend. This can be hard because we all long for our kids to like us. But that's not something we should strive for. Don't worry about being loved—be their father instead. The “like” part isn't a real factor, because that's not why you're there, is it? You are there to love them, and part of that is protecting them from themselves. Do what's best for them even when they disagree.

10. Tell the truth. We're not just talking about words here. Tell the truth about what you believe—and then follow through. Tell the truth about what your values are—and then live them. Tell the truth about your love—and then love with as much energy as you can muster. Be genuine, let your gifts come through and do your best at being who you are. Your children won't love anything short of your authentic self. {eoa}

For the original article, visit .

What You Can Do With Your Supernatural DNA

Can't carry a tune? Not an artist? Bethel Church's Theresa Dedmon says it doesn't matter, because you have supernatural DNA for creativity. On this episode of Sid Roth's “It's Supernatural,” Dedmon says she wants to help you release that gift.

From Moses to Revelation, God used creativity to transform and tell his message,” said Dedmon, head of prophetic arts at

Bethel's School of Supernatural Ministry. "In Genesis 1, it says God created. And if He's creative, and in Genesis 1:27 it says we were made in His image, that means as believers we have the same power of creativity because Christ is in us. We just haven't accessed it yet."

Watch the video for the rest of Roth's interview with Dedmon. {eoa}

The Answer for Aching Disconnection in Your Soul

Just over four years ago, a group of friends both encouraged and challenged me to begin a ministry based on my writing and work with men. I decided to listen to their voices because in them, I distinctly sensed God's calling upon my life.

But the jump from a safe and secure teaching job into the unknowns of a start-up felt like a jump out of an airplane. I was assured that the parachute would open, but there were many times when I was sure this free fall would end in disaster. Perhaps I felt it most keenly in the anxiety attacks that began to haunt me during the first couple of years. They ranged in intensity from the distressing to the debilitating. There were many causes—financial peril, emotional turbulence and spiritual confusion—but I'll never forget the surprising solution.

It was all in the eyes.

During one of those anxious days, I went to have coffee with an older man who had been a great encouragement to me. When we

greeted each other, he put both hands on my shoulders, looked into my eyes, and said, "It's so good to see you." My eyes continued to lock in on his at moments as we talked about our lives. He shared some of his concerns, as did I. But at some point, I became aware that my anxiety was lessening, and by the end of our time together, it had vanished. Instead of anxiety, I felt a calm and a peace that completely surprised me. But later, as I thought about it, I realized what had happened: my friend had loved and heard me.

It was all in his eyes.

Feeling heard and loved by others is critical to our emotional health as men, but this experience is also woven into the fabric of the gospel. In fact, it's the whole point of the gospel. The older theologians called it the Beatific Vision. Paul spoke of it this way: "yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and blameless and above reproach in His sight" (Col. 1:21-22). There it is—in God's sight, in His eyes, we are completely holy. There is nothing left to separate us from His love. We are His beloved sons, perfect and cleared from all charges. In that love, we are sustained, guided, nourished and comforted, but most of all, we are known and heard. This is not just one gift among others God gives us through the death and resurrection of His Son. It is *the* gift—the gift of Himself.

One day, our eyes will fully see His eyes of love for us, but for now, we can all catch a glimpse of that experience. We can enter prayer knowing we are heard and walk through the day aware His eyes are upon us. We can approach Jesus in our minds and imaginations, seeing Him watching us, and allow ourselves to "waste time" in His presence, enjoying His delight in us as His brothers.

This posture is not just the remedy for anxiety, fear and loneliness, but for something far greater: the aching disconnection in the human soul. Ultimately, we all long for

union with God. To be seen and loved in His eyes moves us gently yet tenaciously toward that union.

It truly is all in the eyes—His eyes. {eoa}

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Your Weight-Loss Struggles Could Stem From This Life Issue

One of the insights I received in my weight-loss struggle is if someone has a severe weight problem, weight is usually not the only area that's out of control. Financial challenges or relationship drama are usually part of the picture.

I was thinking about this because yesterday, I went to a financial management class at my church called "Render My Money." I attended a Crown Ministries course on money management several years ago, which was excellent. However, I think I'm ready to go beyond the basics and learn more about investing, which is what this course promises to teach.

In my story, I mentioned how I had over \$19,000 worth of

credit-card debt when my weight was at its highest. I know that was not a coincidence. Problems that started small soon spun out of control because I refused to face them. Weight and money—the story was the same. I had an “I’ll do it tomorrow” attitude. As a result, one error piled on top of another until the problem seemed insurmountable.

Although I didn’t realize it at the time, my quest to get my finances in shape helped me to lose weight. It started with me asking for help because I realized I did not have the wisdom to get myself out of the mess I was in. I went to Consumer Credit Counseling Services (CCCS). The counselor there helped me create a budget and consolidate my credit card bills in their Debt Management Plan. A certain amount was regularly withdrawn from my checking account, which CCCS used to distribute to my creditors.

My goal was to pay off the entire \$19,000-plus in five years, but it was accomplished in 3 years, 11 months. God is awesome! During that period, I also decided to attend the Crown class so I could find out how to wisely handle my money from a biblical perspective and not get in such a fix again.

I won’t lie and say it was easy, because it wasn’t. I could not accumulate more debt, and I had to live on cash. I had to renew my mind and cultivate a “do it now” attitude. I had to be a grownup and make myself do the work. I had to encourage myself when my mind told me things were hopeless and to just give up.

I had to humble myself and ask for help. Again, money and weight—same story. It starts with telling yourself the truth and writing that truth down so you can see it in black and white (or blue and white, depending on the color of the ink). And then you must take action. All the plans in the world will not change your situation unless you act.

Here’s a little ditty I made up to motivate myself during that

time:

Nothing takes the place of action

Not plans

Not promises

Not intentions

Just action

So move!

Making the necessary adjustments in attitude is the first step to regaining control over weight problems or financial issues. The time to step is now. {eoa}

*Once 240 pounds and a size 22, **Kimberly Taylor** can testify of God's healing power to end binge eating. She is an author and the creator of the Christian weight-loss website . Visit today for inspirational health and weight-loss tips.*

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Holy Gratitude: Experiencing True Transformation

"The miracle of a changed heart that lives a lifestyle of gratitude and thanksgiving to God for what He has done is a miracle that will last forever in eternity!"

When Jesus walked upon the earth, multitudes of people were touched by His life and ministry. His name became a household word because of the reputation of His miraculous deeds. Everyone was clamoring to be in His meetings because miracles and healings were happening everywhere He went.

Like everyone else, they had heard the stories about Jesus.

They had heard of the miracles that followed Him everywhere He went, and they had heard about other lepers that had been cleansed by His touch. They had no other hope for a cure as there was no medicine that could help their terrible plight. They knew if they had any chance at all of having a future, it would only come through an encounter with Jesus.

Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem and was passing through a village in the regions of Samaria and Galilee. The 10 lepers heard He was coming. What pressure they must have felt. Here was a potential source of healing, but could it happen for them? Or would it happen for them? Was this going to be a great testimony of victory and healing, or would their hopes be dashed in cruel disappointment?

But these 10 men began to yell out to Jesus, desperately crying, "Jesus! Master! Have mercy on us!" When Jesus heard their cries and saw their desperate condition, He called out to them and told them to "go show yourselves to the priests" as required in the Old Testament law. They believed and obeyed. The Bible says, "And as they went, they were cleansed" (Luke 17:14).

Can you imagine what that must have been like for these men when suddenly they began to feel the power of God surging through their bodies and saw new tissue and skin beginning to cover the horrible leprous sores that had covered them? They watched in amazement as their bodies began to be healed and saw the bodies of their nine friends be healed as well! Their lives were being saved. Their families and futures were being restored. Their death sentence from the horrible disease of leprosy was being reversed. Everything in their lives had now changed because of the miracle Jesus had just given them! Or had it?

In verse 15, the Bible says that one of them, a Samaritan, when he saw that he had been healed, returned back to Jesus and "with a loud voice glorifying God, and fell down

on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks.”

Only one of the 10 who had received a life-saving miracle returned to give thanksgiving to the One who had just saved his life! Jesus received the praise and gratitude of this man but then asked the questions, “‘Were not the ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Were there not any found to return and give glory to God except this foreigner?’ Then He said to him, ‘Rise, go your way. Your faith has made you well’” (Luke 17:17-19).

This was a remarkable miracle, but it is also a story that unfortunately reveals a very common characteristic found in human nature. It is the lack of gratitude for the blessings of God. Many people may be passionate in their desire to reach out to Jesus in order to receive a miracle when they are in some kind of trouble. They will make all kinds of petitions and offer God all kinds of deals if He will agree to give them what they want. Yet the content of their hearts is much like the attitude that Jesus found in these lepers. They might cry out for mercy in their appeal for God’s help, even as the lepers who referred to Jesus as “Master.” But once the kindness of God has been demonstrated and their need has been met, they simply go on their way as though they owe nothing back to Him in return. This is exactly what happened in the hearts of nine of the 10 lepers.

Holy Gratitude: True Transformation

One of the men was different. He was a Samaritan. When he realized that the leprous sores that had covered his body and were taking his life were disappearing before his eyes, he returned back to Jesus and, “with a loud voice glorifying God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks” (Luke 17:15-16). He had called Him “Master” before he received his miracle, but he returned to worship and glorify Jesus with thanksgiving as his “Master” after he received it as well. Many people will call Jesus “Master” when they need

something, but how many will continue to treat Him as "Master" by their worship and thanksgiving and surrender after they get what they needed?

There were 10 lepers who were touched by the power of God and saw their leprosy healed. But I believe that only one leper was really changed! This was the Samaritan who returned to give thanks by glorifying God in surrender to Jesus as his true "Master." Of this man Jesus said, "Your faith has made you well."

Thanksgiving in our hearts is as powerful a transforming force as the touch of God that heals leprosy. A transformed heart that has truly been changed because of the touch of God is a greater miracle than a healed body. There were many people in Jesus' day that saw and experienced for themselves the power of His miraculous touch yet their hearts were never changed! We can see this truth again and again throughout the Gospels. The greatest meetings Jesus ever had were in the cities of Bethsaida, Capernaum and Chorazin (Matt. 11). These three cities had come out to the wilderness where Jesus had gone to rest because they were hungry for His power and touch. Jesus was moved with compassion saying that they were like sheep without a shepherd. He taught them, healed them of all their diseases and supernaturally fed them with a boy's lunch of two fish and five loaves. Thousands ate until they could eat no more.

Yet, it was the same people that are referenced in Matthew 11:20 where we read, "Then He began to reprimand the cities where most of His mighty works were done, because they did not repent." Jesus went on to give a stinging indictment of them all, saying that if Sodom and Gomorrah had experienced what these people experienced, they would have repented and judgment would have been withheld! In reality as difficult as it may seem, many, if not most, of the people who were the recipients of Jesus' greatest miracles may very well be in hell today! How could such a thing be? It's simple. A miracle

of healing will produce a physical change that will last only for a lifetime. The miracle of a changed heart that lives a lifestyle of gratitude and thanksgiving to God for what He has done is a miracle that will last forever in eternity! Ten lepers were touched and blessed, but apparently only one was transformed by the great power of thanksgiving that was in his heart.

In this season we call Thanksgiving, may the power of God flow through us all in a new and fresh way that will produce a holy gratitude in our hearts that will bring forth a transformation in our lives! May we live in a state of continual thanksgiving to Jesus for all that He has done in our lives. May we never just seek His touch in our time of need and then go merrily on our way without taking the time to return and love and worship Him and give Him our best in return! When we come to Jesus like the leper, to thank Him and worship Him and to give back to Him out of the gratitude of our hearts, it is then that we will discover the true treasures of the kingdom of God in our lives. Thanksgiving lived out every day truly makes Jesus the Master in our lives. {eoa}

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A Gut-Wrenching Life Story of Pain and Heartache Turned to Joy

Our world is in desperate need of heroes and heroines who choose to live well in spite of overwhelming circumstances and

enormous disappointment. How we choose to live during the most difficult moments of our lives will actually write the story of our legacy.

This is Barbara Johnson's incredible story of pain, disappointment and joy.

Barbara Johnson lived an extraordinary life filled with the stuff of which most women only dream. Born in 1927, Barbara, as a young woman, married the man of her dreams, had four lively sons in succession, and by the early 1950s was living, literally, the great American dream. The Johnsons were active in their community and especially in their church as youth leaders.

The entire Johnson family was preparing to go with their church on the annual youth retreat in 1966 in the mountains of California. Barbara's husband, Bill, was driving alone while Barbara had the two youngest sons in the car with her. Their two teenage boys were riding with the youth group in the church van. About 10 miles from the resort site, Barbara's headlights beamed on the figure of a large man lying in the middle of the mountain road covered in his own blood. Although he was unidentifiable due to his horrific head injuries, Barbara knew who he was because she had ironed the shirt he was wearing only hours ago. It was her beloved husband and best friend, Bill.

The prognosis was not good, but Bill lived through the unending night. The doctors gently told Barbara there was extensive brain damage and although he might live, the old Bill would be gone. After a week of vigilant prayers, the doctors informed Barbara that Bill was permanently and completely disabled.

There was a possibility that he would be a blind vegetable for the rest of his life, never to leave the hospital. Barbara knew she served a God who delights in touching broken people

and making them whole again, and so began Barbara's journey into deepening her faith.

Barbara and her family adopted Mark 10:27 as their life verse: *"With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible."*

One year later, after days of faith and failure, tears and laughter, therapy both mental and physical, and a relentless belief in a healing God, Bill returned to work as a full-time mechanical engineer. He had been healed in spirit and in body!

For one short year, the Johnson family settled back into a normal, but much more thankful routine. Then in 1968, Barbara and Bill's oldest son, Steve, joined the U.S. Marines and was sent to Vietnam. Steve loved the Lord with his whole heart and although the parting was painful, it was also peaceful. On July 28, 1968, the Johnson family learned that their eldest son was safe in the arms of Jesus.

In the summer of 1973, Tim, their second son, took off in a Volkswagen with two friends to "find himself." They spent the summer wandering through Alaska and not only did Tim find himself, he also found Jesus Christ. Tim joined a church fellowship in Alaska and was baptized there. Tim was a changed young man who was now filled with the Holy Spirit, and with purpose and direction.

The desire of Tim's heart was to come home at the end of the summer and to rebuild some bridges he had unfortunately burned. The new Tim wanted to spend time with his parents and with his two younger brothers.

On the night of Aug. 1, 1973, Tim's blue VW was in a head-on collision with a drunk driver who was on the wrong side of the road. Tim was instantly ushered into the arms of his Savior.

In June of 1975, Barbara and Bill discovered that David, their third son, had embraced a gay lifestyle and he then

disappeared into the gay community for 11 years with no contact at all with his family.

How does a woman, a mother, go through such horrendous circumstances and not lose her mind? If your name is Barbara Johnson, you start a joy box. Barbara's joy box was just a little shoebox that she began to fill with things that brought her joy. When a note from a friend arrived in the mail, she would put it in her joy box. When she found a Scripture verse that was particularly comforting, she would write it on a card and put it in her joy box. She found a book of jokes from when the boys were little and stuffed that in her, by now, overflowing box. The spring flowers from the yard went in along with a favorite recipe or two.

When her pieces of joy outgrew the shoebox, Barbara bought a plastic tub and began filling the tub with little pieces of life that stirred up joy. When her joy memorabilia no longer fit in her dozens of bins, she emptied their guest bedroom and it became her joy room. When the guest bedroom could no longer hold it all, Bill built an addition onto their California ranch home to fit all of the notes, the poems, the music, the pictures, the Scriptures and the mementos that reminded Barbara and Bill that they served a God of joy.

When a car accident nearly took Barbara Johnson's husband's life, she filled his hospital room with Scriptures, quoted the Word of God over him, and had her sons memorize Scriptures to pray over their beloved dad.

When her first son was killed in Vietnam, she reached out to other mothers who had lost sons and had a cassette tape made with Steve's life story on it. She sent this recording to other grieving mothers and ended Steve's story with the comfort of the hymn, "Safe in the Arms of Jesus."

When her second son, Tim, was killed, she spoke in church that very Sunday morning and the altar was filled with Tim's

friends who gave their lives to Jesus.

When her son, David, disappeared for 11 years into the gay community, Barbara began Spatula Ministries to peel parents off the ceiling when their children break their hearts.

Barbara's books have sold millions of copies and she changed hundreds of thousands of people's lives because of her testimony and her refusal to give into depression and hopelessness. Her commitment to embrace joy at the very worst moments of her life took supreme diligence but Barbara managed to do it because of God's power that had been gloriously given to her and because she knew her Father intimately. {eoa}

Carol McLeod is an author and popular speaker at women's conferences and retreats, where she teaches the Word of God with great joy and enthusiasm. Carol encourages and empowers women with passionate and practical biblical messages mixed with her own special brand of hope and humor. She has written five books, including *No More Ordinary*, *Holy Estrogen!*, *The Rooms of a Woman's Heart* and *Defiant Joy!* Her most recent book, *Refined: Finding Joy in the Midst of the Fire*, was released last August. Her teaching DVD, *The Rooms of a Woman's Heart*, won the Telly Award, a prestigious industry award for excellence in religious programming. You can also listen to Carol's "A Jolt of Joy" program daily on the Charisma Podcast Network. Connect with Carol or inquire about her speaking to your group at .

When You Feel Powerless

Against Food

A Take Back Your Temple (TBYT) reader named Ivy wrote me the following message the other day. I share it with her permission:

Hi Mrs. Kim,

I am very grateful for your website. I know you are led to write under Holy Ghost inspiration. However, if you ever are led, please write a piece on feeling "Hopeless Against Food." This is the strongest addiction because you don't need drugs, alcohol or fornication, but you need food to survive. Quite naturally we will reach for (what) we like, which pulls us out of portion control. As soon as this happens more than once, the pounds lost come back. Thank you for your time."

I empathize with Ivy because she is not alone. At one time, I felt like a hopeless food addict. But God showed me that a change of perspective can change everything.

If you have ever felt hopeless against food or if you feel that way now, then the following letter I wrote to Ivy will shed new light on this situation.

Dear Ivy,

Thank you for writing me. What a challenge to write about feeling "hopeless against food"! The challenge wasn't in coming up with words to write; the challenge was capturing all the Lord was speaking to me about this.

You said you think food is the strongest addiction because you don't need drugs, alcohol or sex to survive. However, you must eat to survive.

You are right in that food can be a strong addiction to overcome, depending on how certain substances affect your brain. And food is unique in that you must face it several

times a day.

But these facts don't override the truth. I'll share what I mean later in this letter.

Let me pause and ask you a question. Do you like feeling hopeless against food? This is a serious consideration.

You see, some emotions become like familiar spirits to us. They are like a comfortable robe we put on. We have wrapped ourselves in this robe for so long that the thought of going forward without it frightens us. We think if we leave that robe behind, we will be left without comfort.

In a way, feeling hopeless gives us permission to settle where we are. We may not be happy, but at least we are in a familiar place.

However, the following words will minister to you if you do not like feeling hopeless and want to know what to do when you feel that way.

Take a moment to pray and ask the Holy Spirit to bring understanding and show you how to apply the following words to your life so you don't have to stay at Hopeless. He is our built-in Comforter!

You can't conquer what you won't confront. So let's confront the hopeless feeling.

Proverbs 23:7 says, "For as he thinks in his heart, so is he." So what are your thoughts before you feel hopeless against food?

You likely think things such as, *There's no use in fighting. This is too hard. I might as well eat it. I've tried before and failed. Food is destined to defeat me forever.*

With thoughts like that, hopelessness comes. What would be the natural action to follow such a feeling?

It is natural to act according to how you feel. You grab whatever food you are feeling hopeless against. It is easy because you can reach out and grab it, right? You could not do that if it were not close to you. You eat it as quickly as possible. Your tongue enjoys the taste, but in this case, the tongue's enjoyment comes at a cost.

Joy and hopelessness cannot live in the same space. So when you settle at Hopeless, then you sacrifice joy.

A Bible story is a good example of people who settled at Hopeless. Numbers 13:26-14:10 tells the story of what happened once God's people arrived at the land of Canaan, which the Lord promised to give them.

Out of 12 men sent out to spy out the land, 10 of them came back with a bad report. In verses 27-29, they listed the obstacles they faced to take possession of the land. Now, nothing is wrong with acknowledging the facts.

In your case, you feel hopeless against food—a fact. The fact is that there are certain foods you currently eat that make it difficult to control your portion sizes. When you eat these foods, you overeat. When you overeat, you gain back the pounds you lost.

But are facts and the truth always the same thing? No. Feeling hopeless (a fact) and being hopeless are different things.

Being hopeless speaks to your identity and is a conclusion. It is what you choose to believe, and it settles a matter in your heart. Scripture says that as a man thinks in his heart, so is he.

The 10 spies looked at the facts and made the following statement their conclusion: "We are not able to go up against the people because they are stronger than we" (Num. 13:31).

The problem is that the 10 spies left God's word and presence

out of their facts. So they drew the wrong conclusion!

In the absence of God's word and presence, people will use facts from what they see with their natural eyes or use the past as substance from which to draw their conclusions, their truth.

When you feel hopeless against food, Ivy, check your thoughts. Are these thoughts based primarily on what you see with your natural eyes or your past? If so, then you are in danger of drawing the wrong conclusion.

You can acknowledge facts, but don't make the same mistake those 10 spies made. Don't leave God's word and presence out of your facts. Remember these truths:

You have Christ in you, who is the hope of glory (Col. 1:27), so you are never without hope.

The Lord will always make a way out of temptation (1 Cor. 10:13).

If you lack wisdom in this area, you can always ask God for it in prayer (James 1:5).

God's strength is always available to you to empower you to do what you know is right (2 Cor. 12:9).

In your message, you said that food addiction is stronger than others. I disagree because all addictions hijack the brain's God-created reward center. So it isn't conducive to healing to have a contest of "my addiction is worse than your addiction." For everyone who suffers from addiction, the bondage is the same and is real.

You make a valid point in that food is needed to survive. The fact is that you have foods that cause an addictive response in you. These are best handled through avoiding or limiting them because of the harm they cause you.

It is the same as an alcoholic choosing not to keep a well-stocked liquor cabinet in the home, a drug addict getting rid of the secret household stash or a sex addict blocking porn sites from the computer.

These are all wise means to protect addicts from further harm.

Regarding food, it would be terrible if the foods that cause you harm were the only ones you could eat! After all, you would need these foods to survive.

That is not the case though, is it? You have other food choices available to you that enable you to survive—and thrive. If you don't remind yourself that you have other choices, then you will fixate on the foods you have chosen not to have.

I also advise not starting food fights with yourself over foods that trigger your addictive impulses. You do that whenever you keep problematic foods before your eyes. Why waste energy fighting avoidable fights? You won't have time or energy to fight the unavoidable ones.

Whenever you have an unavoidable confrontation with a problematic food, consider it a weight you must lift.

Just like lifting weights in the physical, your resistance to that food will be challenging. Breathe through it. Put on your faith goggles and see past the challenging moment to your victory on the other side. That future victory to come will give you strength in the present.

Hold on to your hope and never let it go. Be like Jacob in Genesis 32:24-29 when he wrestled with an angel of the Lord. Jacob would not let go until he received his blessing.

Ivy, you have already been blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus (Eph. 1:3). But it is up to you to grab hold of them through believing in God's word above what

you see with your natural eyes and above what you have experienced in the past.

God wants you to succeed in this area even more than you do! After all, you play a vital role in winning lost people to Christ Jesus. I ask you to memorize the following Scripture and meditate on it today:

“For this reason we do not lose heart: Even though our outward man is perishing, yet our inward man is being renewed day by day. Our light affliction, which lasts but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Cor. 4:16-18). {eoa}

*Once 240 pounds and a size 22, **Kimberly Taylor** can testify of God’s healing power to end binge eating. She is an author and the creator of the Christian weight-loss website . Visit today for inspirational health and weight-loss tips.*

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