

8 Creative Ways to Flirt With Your Spouse

Remember senior-class notables in high school? Most Athletic, Most Witty, Most School Spirit, Best All-Around, and Most Likely to Succeed were only a few of them.

I'm a bit embarrassed to tell you that they created a new category for me ..."Most Flirtatious!"

That's not necessarily something to be proud of, but I am proud that I still like to flirt with my wife, Susan. Married people should flirt with each other ... a lot!

Flirting, by definition, is playfully communicating sexual interest and attraction to someone. And flirting with our spouses can reap lots of benefits. Flirting can communicate, yet again, that we still find our spouse attractive and vice versa. It can create more intimacy with your spouse.

Flirting in front of our kids, even though they may react with something like "That's gross," will reinforce a sense of love and stability at home as they see their parents showing a healthy desire to be with each other.

So here are 8 playful, fun and creative ways to flirt with your spouse:

1. Leave a note for her (maybe on her pillow or the bathroom mirror) before you go on a trip. "I can't wait to get back to see you!" may be something you'd like to say Or, let her know you appreciate something specific about her, like "Thanks for taking care of so many details when I'm gone ... you do a great job!"

2. Leave a note on her car rear view mirror saying, "I'm jealous of this mirror because it's looking at you."

3. Serve them practically in a surprising way. If you don't normally cook, make him or her their favorite meal and have a candlelight dinner ... just the two of you. For some spouses, it's the simple acts of service that let them know you love them.

4. Text him when you get up and when you go to bed to let him know he's the first person on your mind and he's your last thought of the day. I texted my wife, Susan, saying "You are awesome! I love you!" before we went to sleep even though she was right next to me in bed. I loved how it made her feel, and it surprised me just how much it mattered to her.

5. Come up with something corny, but fun, to tell her or to email her, like "You must be overdue from the library because you've got FINE written all over you!" Or, "Can I have a fry to go with that shake?" (Search the internet sometime for more lame or goofy ideas.)

6. Turn on your favorite song on your smart phone and dance in the kitchen with them when they least expect it.

7. Get dressed up, go outside, knock on the door, and ask her out for a date ... the kids will really get a kick out of this one.

8. Post a sincere, unexpected comment of praise for him on Facebook or Twitter. This has to be done in a humble way and should have substance to it. Don't showboat, but do let the world know why he means so much to you.

There are many ways you can show your spouse you still "dig her" after all these years. These 7 Love Actions to Show Your Spouse may also help. Find what works for you, because not every idea that I shared here is going to work for you, much less for my own wife! One final thought: Even if your kids act grossed out, you're not only showing them you are into their mom, but you're also setting their expectations for how to be a healthy, flirtatious spouse someday.

If you have other ideas for how to flirt with your spouse, please share them in a comment below.

Mark Merrill is the president of Family First. For the original article, visit [here](#).

This 1 Thing Could Shave 14 Years Off Your Life

Severe obesity can cut lives short by up to 14 years, according to a new study by the U.S. National Cancer Institute.

The report, published in the journal *PLoS Medicine*, found that people who were considered severely obese can die much earlier due to the increased risks of heart disease, cancer, diabetes and other diseases.

The study is based on 20 studies from the United States, Sweden and Australia over the course of 30 years.

It addressed prevalence of class III obesity (body mass index of or greater than 40) and found it has increased dramatically in several countries.

Body mass index (BMI) is a calculation of body fat based on height and weight.

Currently, class III obesity affects 6 percent of adults in the U.S., and severely obese men and women are more likely to die earlier than people of normal weight (BMI of 18.5 to 24.9), according to the findings.

Extreme obesity accounts for 509 deaths per 100,000 men each

year and 382 excess deaths per 100,000 women, according to Cari Kitahara of the U.S. National Cancer Institute.

Visit your doctor to find out your BMI. You can also visit WebMD, but the site is not a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment and should not be relied on to make decisions about your health.

The Subtle Attempt to Take Israel Out of the Bible

New Christians struggling to study their Bible are often taught to read the scriptures as though they were written personally to them, even reciting the scriptures using one's own name in place of the verse's subject. While it is important to apply Scripture to one's own life, it is equally important to not ignore the original context of the scripture and the original recipient of that particular promise.

For example, a special verse that brings comfort to a person who may be experiencing difficulty is Isaiah 49:16 "See, I have inscribed you [insert name] on the palms of My hands." This verse lets the believer know that they are known by the Lord, and He holds them before Him, as it were, in the palms of His hands. It is a beautiful verse.

It may be a great surprise to many to learn that the verse is originally intended for Jerusalem, the city that personifies the people of Israel, for verse 17 goes on to say "Your walls are continually before Me." An over-personalization of the scriptures can actually result in a Christian who can recite verses from their Bible but has failed to understand what the book is about.

Another tendency in Bible study is to study by topic or book, which is understandable for such an immense volume as the Bible. The danger, however, is walking away from a Bible study understanding everything there is to know about a particular topic but not knowing the overall story of the Bible itself.

The Bible is the story of God's love for the world, His plan to redeem that world, and the battle against that plan. The object of God's love was always the world, and He chose Abraham to birth a nation through which He would carry out His plan to redeem that world. This is the overarching story that the Bible tells, and central to the story is the calling on the nation of Israel.

The Bible is, in fact, a Jewish book: written by, about, and largely for, Jews. Jesus even said that salvation is of the Jews. Christians are partakers of that salvation and are able to apply the scriptures to their own lives, because they are the heirs of Abraham by faith. Through Jesus they are adopted into the family and are part of Abraham's family tree. But, they do not replace the original family they are grafted into, nor do they annul God's promises to the Jews.

Some Christians have tried to claim that the Old Testament should no longer be read literally about the people of Israel; it now only applies spiritually to the church. This is known as Replacement Theology: the idea that the church has replaced Israel in the plans and purposes of God. This spiritualization of scripture is actually a rejection of scripture by rewriting it to mean something other than its original meaning.

While some Replacement Theologians would deny rejecting or rewriting scripture, others are quite blatant about it. One such group is Sabeel. Founded by Palestinian Anglican Canon, Naim Ateek, Sabeel propagates Palestinian Liberation Theology and disregards any portion of Scripture that disagrees with Ateek's anti-Semitic views. He calls for Scripture to be "de-Zionized" by removing all "Zionist" portions that afford any

significance to the nation of Israel and any connection of the Jewish people to the Holy Land.

While that may sound ludicrous to most, Sabeel has the ear of some mainline denominations, one being the Presbyterian Church (USA). The group's influence over the years has fanned the flames of Replacement Theology in the PCUSA and finally resulted in this summer's vote to divest from companies doing business with Israel.

That denomination also published an anti-Semitic study guide earlier this year entitled "Zionism Unsettled" in which Sabeel authored a chapter as did Replacement Theologian Gary Burge.

The study guide was unbalanced and malicious, and it intentionally over-simplified the extremely complicated Arab-Israeli conflict in order to vilify Israel and Zionism. It was so biased that some Jewish groups called it "hate speech."

The study guide ended with a group exercise suggesting that liturgy and hymns be edited so as to avoid words like Israel, Zion, exile, covenant and return, as they might cause worshipers to confuse these biblical terms with modern events and people in the Holy Land.

Interestingly, all of this manipulation and conniving is with one intent in mind: rid Scripture of the role of the nation of Israel. This is in complete contradiction to the words of the Apostle Paul that Israel's calling cannot be revoked. Speaking specifically of the Jewish people, He said in Romans 11:29, "For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable."

The problem is, of course, that if you want to remove Israel from the Bible, you will have little Bible left. Christianity then loses its spiritual roots, churches lose their moral authority, and their membership numbers dwindle. The PCUSA membership has dropped 26.8 percent over the last 10 years. Let's hope they see the error of their ways before it is too late.

Susan Michael is the U.S. Director of the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem , creator of .

7 Awesome Ways to Surprise Your Wife in 7 Days

Recently, I have been very busy and distracted. You know the feeling: too much to do at work, the car broke down, family troubles and so on.

This isn't mind-shattering information, but it is true for many of us. The question I had to answer when I realized I was so distracted was, "how long am I going to allow myself to stay in this state?"

Busyness and distraction can pull you away from what is most important in your life. For me, I could tell distraction was pulling me away from my son, but I could also tell it was causing some separation in the relationship with my wife.

When I realized that, I knew I had been doing wrong.

I realized that I needed to regain my focus and pay attention to the things that really matter in my life. We can't let distractions pull us away from our walk with Christ. We can let business keep us away from our children or family. And, husbands, we can't let useless distractions keep us apart or away from our beautiful wives.

We can do better. We can stay focused.

If you can relate to being too busy or too distracted sometimes, then you need to consider doing something substantial. I'm not talking about buying some cheap or

thoughtless gift either; I'm talking about meaningful gifts or time that will make an impact in your wife's day.

The seven-day marriage challenge for husbands was a personal work in progress a few weeks ago. God brought up this idea and continued to pour in ideas and options (substantial options). Personally, I did the seven-day challenge, and although it took a little extra time and effort everyday, it made a huge impact in the heart of my wife and the quality of our marriage.

Here are seven awesome ways to surprise your wife in seven days You can start tomorrow or you can start at the beginning of next week. Either way, just do it.

DAY 1–Intentional Touch

Starting out easy is the best way to do it. I say easy, but being intentional about holding your wife's hand or putting your arm around her can be difficult. As you take on day one, make sure it is a day you can be around her more often. Don't wait for her to initiate, take the lead and be intentional about a soft (non-sexual) touch.

DAY 2–Meaningful Text or Note

Everyday the challenge is going to get more and more involved. It's all right; you can handle it. If you and your wife are regular "texters," then go beyond the normal boring texts and send her something meaningful. For example, be specific about your appreciation for her or thank her specifically for being a great wife and/or mother. If you don't text, grab a post-it note or something and write a similar short message. Leave it somewhere she can find it. Let's keep this love machine rolling.

DAY 3–Actual Card

The little note the day before was nice, but ramp up your game

with an actual card. Leave work early or hit up the local store on your lunch break and pick out a nice card. Again, don't go cheesy with the card, take some time to read and find a card that expresses how you really feel. Pick a card design that maybe relates to her style. Don't just let her know that you're thinking about her, but you actually know what she likes! To do it right, pick up this card on day two and surprise her on the morning of day three. If you can't, pick it up during the day and give it to her that night. Do it!

DAY 4—Small Gift

Well, I finally did it: I threw some images on my zip drive and headed to an instant-photo counter to print some images. I always remember my mom doing this, but I have somehow avoided it. Anyway, my small gift recommendation for day four is to get one to three pictures picked out and get them printed. Note, be sure to pick out a frame first and then print the pictures. I printed three images, got a decent frame and had it put together by the end of day three. On the morning of day four, I was able to text her and surprise her with its location hidden in our house. You don't have to do pictures, but try to come up with an inexpensive and meaningful gift. She'll appreciate it and love you!

DAY 5—Flower Time

But flowers are only for holidays, birthdays and anniversaries, right? Wrong. Getting flowers for your wife should happen at any time. The flower surprise can really happen in a few ways. An easy way is to stop in to a shop after work and pick out a nice, small bouquet. Another great way would be to call a local shop and have them deliver the flowers to your house or where she works. Use your best judgment. And try not to go with the standard dozen roses. Get creative and have fun with your choice. Pick a small cluster or a different flower type. Let her know that you put some real thought into it!

DAY 6–Big Gift

What does your wife really like? What does she seem to always talk about or buy a lot of? If you can figure out the answers to those questions, you will know what kind of bigger gift to get for your wife. And by bigger, I mean something of more value by either cost or thought. I personally went with a new charm for one of her bracelets. They are something she really likes and always looks forward to getting more. Again, put some thought into this gift and make it special!

DAY 7–Date Night

Whatever you're feeling at this point, please don't feel overwhelmed. All of the challenges listed above take very little time to execute and deliver. You can always choose to end the challenge on day six, but taking your wife out on a fun date night will definitely be a great finish to the week. Plan ahead for this date, and do something fun and out of the ordinary. Take the time when you're out to talk about the other surprises and discuss what she liked best and why. Listen closely to what she has to say, and make it a point to address her favorites more often.

Are you ready to accept this challenge? You and your marriage might need this more than you think.

Discussion: Why do you think this challenge is necessary, and how could it impact your marriage?

Prayer: Father, thank you for my wonderful wife and marriage. Give me the courage and strength to accept this challenge and pursue it everyday. Thank you.

Action: Stop making excuses, and start planning how you will accomplish this seven-day marriage challenge!

Maturity is a blog built on establishing spiritual maturity in today's man. The goal is to assist men in building better

marriages and help them grow in maturity and explore different aspects of manhood. features new weekly blog posts, daily social media updates and a powerful resources page. Stay up to date with the Manturity blog communities on Facebook and Twitter.

For the original article, visit .

Weight Loss: Better Results When Medically Supervised?

If you're overweight, it's only a matter of time before your health goes downhill. Research shows those extra pounds could lead to serious illnesses, from heart disease to cancer to diabetes and more.

But some folks are dropping the extra weight and keeping it off, thanks to medically supervised weight-loss programs.

Shedding the Weight

John Blair used to be too heavy to walk comfortably around the block. But now that he's lost 162 pounds, it's easy.

"Well I feel great," he said. "I feel great about it. It does have results. And that's what's making me feel great."

He's talking about the medically supervised weight loss program in which he's participating at Virginia's Bon Secours Weight Loss Institute.

Just eight months ago he tipped the scales at a staggering 526 pounds, barely able to squeeze into size 66 jeans. But now those jeans are far too baggy for him to wear.

Blair said he's thrilled to once again be able to climb steps one foot per stair and to have enough energy to rake the yard.

He wants to lose about another 100 pounds in order to reach his goal of 250, the same weight as when he was in the military.

Supervised Success

The medically supervised weight loss program produces fast results and motivates you to stick with it.

Participants have four meal replacements a day, which means no outside foods at all. The meal replacements used by The Bon Secours Weight Loss Institute are the New Direction Weight Control System.

"They're powders," Blair explained. "Some of them form into soups, some are puddings, and some of them are just shakes. And then they do have bars you can substitute one a day. It's satisfying. It really is."

Blair is especially glad to have gotten off some of his medications and to have gotten rid of his unhealthy belly fat. After failing with other diets, he hasn't cheated one bit on this one, not even during the holidays.

"My food was coming," he recalled. "I knew it was coming. I didn't have to have the ham and the yams. I didn't have to have that."

His supervised weight loss took place under the watchful eye of Dr. Phillip Snider, director of the Bon Secours Weight Loss Institute.

"We check a patient's lab test," he explained. "We check a person's medication list to see if they're on medications that may be promoting weight gain."

"So I may suggest medication changes from that aspect," he

continued. “We also look at how their medication needs change during their weight loss because someone on insulin is going to need a much lower dose of insulin. Their blood pressure medicines may decrease.”

Keeping It Off

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, reducing your weight by 5 percent is considered “significant weight loss.” This medically supervised program can lead to a 30 percent drop.

“Compare that to bariatric surgery: they may be down 40 to 50 percent of their original weight. So we’re getting changes similar to, not as much as, but similar to bariatric surgery, and people aren’t having to go through the surgery,” Snider pointed out.

Anyone who has ever dieted knows that losing the weight is only half the battle. The other half is keeping it off. One of the keys of the medically supervised weight loss program is accountability.

Participants regularly gather at least weekly to discuss their progress and challenges. Their encouragement and support are invaluable. Then, they keep in touch daily through social media.

They also meet regularly with a dietician, like Barbara Mekkes, to learn how to make good choices once they’re back on real food.

“When people start realizing the role of protein, fats, and carbs in the diet, they get a sense of empowerment,” she said.

Mekkes teaches her clients to avoid sugars, especially high fructose corn syrup. She advises steering clear of starches, like bread.

When it comes to fats, she recommends staying away from

hydrogenated oils, also known as trans fats. And she said folks are better off avoiding the highly refined oils like corn, vegetable, and others that make up most of the oil aisle at the grocery store.

On the other hand, Mekkes said some saturated fats, like coconut oil, are healthy, as are the natural oils like olive oil. But she warned not all olive oils are the same.

Since its popularity has taken off, some olive oils contain highly refined materials. To know whether yours is good, Mekkes suggests placing it in the refrigerator. A good olive oil will turn cloudy after it's been in there a few hours.

"I encourage people as much as possible to go to the expeller pressed or cold-pressed fats," she added. "Those are more fats that are straight from the origin."

The Right Amount

Even if you're eating healthy food, you can still gain weight by eating too much of it. That's where a "portion plate" comes in handy.

It's an actual plate that's divided into sections indicating what to eat and how much of it. That way, participants in the program train themselves to eat the right amount.

And the right amount isn't just important when it comes to food. Getting the right amount of sleep also can make a difference.

"We've talked several times about how sleep, how you're producing ghrelin in your stomach," Blair said. "If you don't get enough sleep, the ghrelin takes over and that makes you hungry. Things like that I never knew before."

Snider also recommends his patients wear a "fitness tracker"

on their wrist, which reminds the wearer to stay active.

“A lot of them will send your smart phone a text message when you’ve been still for more than an hour,” he explained. “(It will) tell you ‘time to get up and move.’ Some of them will give you a vibrating alarm when it’s time to get up and move.”

A Longer, Healthier Life

Finally, there’s the emotional component – what was behind the weight gain in the first place.

“A lot of people do have a food addiction or they turn to food during times of stress or anger or boredom,” Snider explained.

“And so our goal is to try to teach people alternative ways to get that relaxation, the break from the stress, maybe some of the relief from the boredom in other ways besides turning toward food,” he said.

So whether you have 20 pounds to lose, or more than 200 pounds like Blair did, a medically supervised weight loss program may be just what you need for a longer, healthier life.

For the original article, visit .

Finding Real Hope in the Faithfulness of God

There are times in the lives of all believers when they may face doubts and discouragement. No matter what the reason for one’s disappointment, the Bible offers guidance as well as

examples of others who have experienced the same.

But today, we can find considerable encouragement not just in the biblical stories of the Israelites of old, but in the story of God's faithfulness to His people throughout history, even up until today.

The Faith of Our Fathers

The Puritans were so encouraged by the story of the ancient Israelites that they took from it direction for themselves. They yearned for freedom from their "bondage" of persecution at the hands of the corrupt state church, just as the ancient Israelites had been freed from slavery in Egypt. So, the Puritans crossed their "Red Sea," which was the Atlantic Ocean, and arrived on the shores of their "Promised Land," upon which they founded a nation built on religious freedom.

Later, the African slaves in America also found great comfort in the Bible stories as they saw parallels to their own experiences. They felt their enslavement was much like that of the Hebrews in Egypt, and their exile and captivity like that of the Jews in Babylon.

Therefore, the stories of Daniel and Moses gave them great hope of deliverance so they sang songs like "Didn't my Lord deliver Daniel" and "Go Down Moses." Their hope of freedom was expressed in the black spiritual "Pharaoh's Army Got Drowned."

God's Faithfulness to Abraham

The 11th chapter of Hebrews highlights various biblical characters that believed God and acted accordingly, and it has brought encouragement to believers for generations. The Apostle Paul urged the discouraged believers of the early church to learn from their fathers who, with faith and patience, inherited the promises (Hebrews 6:11-12). He then specifically pointed to Abraham as an example of one who patiently endured until he obtained the promise.

Paul's message is clear: God is a faithful God. Just as He fulfilled His promises to Abraham, we can trust Him to fulfill His promises to us. We receive strength and courage from the stories of those who went before us and who patiently endured in faith before they saw the promises fulfilled.

But let's take a closer look at Abraham. While Abraham did live to see the fulfillment of God's promise of offspring, other promises had not yet been fulfilled when he died. For one thing, Abraham lived as a foreigner on the land God promised him. It did not become the "possession" of His descendants until some five hundred years after his death.

God had also promised Abraham that through him all the families of the earth would be blessed. That fulfillment only took place some 1,500 years later when the atoning death of Jesus purchased salvation for every person who would receive it.

God is Still Fulfilling Promises

God is still fulfilling His promises to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and that realization should bring great encouragement to all of us. For, just as God promised Abraham that his descendants' possession of the Promised Land was forever (Genesis 17:8), He later explained that their right to live on the land was based on their relationship with Him (Deuteronomy 29:24-28). It is truly a holy land for a holy people.

If they sinned, their sin would be punished with exile; they would be removed from the land God had given them. But God always promised a return to their land, and the spiritual restoration of His people. Psalm 89 confirms that although He would punish their sin, His loving kindness would never be withheld, nor would His faithfulness ever fail. "My covenant I will not break, nor alter the word that has gone out of My lips" (vs. 34). Israel's promised inheritance and restored

relationship with God was a sure thing.

Christians should find great comfort in knowing that although God allows His children to suffer the consequences of sin, using that time to teach us and correct our ways, that we can have an expectant hope of return to His presence and His goodness in our lives.

So, in times of discouragement and doubt, remember the return of the Jewish people to the land God promised to Abraham, exactly as foretold by the Hebrew prophets thousands of years ago. We can find hope in this amazing demonstration of the faithfulness of God.

Susan Michael is the U.S. Director of the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, creator of .

As a Father, Have You Taken a Free Pass?

At 18 months old, my son wakes up every morning with a mission: To eat, have fun and be shown love.

At age 30, I wake up everyday with multiple missions. Not only am I raising my 18-month-old alongside my beautiful wife, but I am also working my full-time job, maintaining the personal property (house/ cars) and making sure my family stays safe and comfortable. I have no problem with these duties, as they are what I am called to do as a husband and father.

Your mission might be very similar to mine. Maybe you have a boy or a girl, or even multiple kids.

Even though I understand the missions, I sometimes struggle

with making sure my son is one of my main missions. Especially as a new father, I often wonder about the following questions and thought you might as well:

After 8-10 hours of work, how much more can I really offer to my child when I get home? How do I juggle time between my hobbies and family? How can I keep Christ as my first mission with all of these other ones? How can I make sure I don't treat fatherhood like a free pass?

Free Pass? A father with a free pass doesn't take the extra time he has to spend with his kids. A father with a free pass leaves the responsibility of raising his kids to his wife. A father with a free pass doesn't realize the importance of raising a son into manhood. And a father with a free pass doesn't model how a real man should act and behave to his daughter.

There are too many fathers out there that have a mission at work, but they lack in their mission at home. Too many fathers think they have a free pass when in reality their family is there waiting for him to step up as the father, God is calling him to be.

There is no "free pass", so man up and start taking the lead.

In my short time of learning how to be a better and more engaged father, I have started to develop a few habits that will help keep me focused on my mission. If you are a new father or soon to be father, consider these few ideas and start applying them as you see fit in your journey.

1. Turn off your distractions. You've probably seen or heard of this tip a million times now, but it's a vital part of your fatherhood mission. When you pull in the driveway after work, take one more look at your phone or emails and then turn it off. Or at least keep it somewhere inside where it won't distract you. Try to stay away from any other distractions and get engaged in the life of your wife and children. Talk to

them, ask them questions and learn about them. Trust me, the other "important" things can wait.

2. Research fun ideas for your kids' age. Take some time at night or on your lunch break to find out what some fun things are you could be doing with your child. My son is 18 months, so I need to be finding fun activities for us to engage in. Maybe your son or daughter is older; take some time to see what they are into and get involved. Doing this will make your time with them fun and it will make it obvious that you care for them and love them.

3. Engage in activity. Look, I know you're tired, and maybe this tip isn't for everyday; but apply as often as possible. Given my sons energy at his age, I know it's going to be hard for us to have fun if I'm just sitting around and watching him play. I need to get into the fun with him! I love going outside and exploring with him. I love getting my hand tools out and watching him try to use them. The point is to not just sit back, but to honestly engage! Find ways to engage in the life of your children today!

4. Pray for them. A recent article about how to bless your family offered some creative ways to pray for your wife and children. As a father, it is my responsibility to be praying for my son and family in general. I have learned that I need God's grace and wisdom to help lead me along in my mission. Take some time at the beginning or end of your day and pray for your children. Above all other tips, this is the one you need to remember and act upon.

5. Don't stop. Doing some of the ideas above is great, but doing them week in and week out is the consistency needed in fatherhood. Your consistency in spending time with them will build a solid foundation of trust. It will also set a great example for how you seek God out consistently.

The example you set as a father to your children will be the

standard they apply to their walk with God. Don't worry, we all have a lot of work to do and we're in this together. Now let's take it a few steps further.

Discussion: What is one way you could improve in your fatherhood mission this week?

Prayer: Father, thank you for placing me in this leadership position for my family. Help me to consistently find ways to engage with them daily. Amen.

Action: Once you know where you need to improve, start taking action on it today.

Maturity is a blog built on establishing spiritual maturity in today's man. The goal is to assist men in building better marriages and help them in grow in maturity and explore different aspects of manhood. features new weekly blog posts, daily social media updates and a powerful resources page. Stay up to date with the Maturity blog communities on Facebook and Twitter.

For the original article, visit .

What's the Most Cost-Effective Weight Loss Program on the Market?

Weight Watchers is the most cost-effective diet program, according to a new assessment of commercial diet regimens.

The findings by researchers at Duke-National University of Singapore Graduate Medical School also found that the diet

drug Qsymia offered the best value for the money in a comparison of weight-loss medications.

The Jenny Craig program generated the greatest weight loss but was the most costly option tested, according to study, published in the June issue of the journal *Obesity*.

“The obesity epidemic has serious health and cost consequences, so employers and third-party payers are beginning to consider how to provide some coverage for commercial weight-loss programs,” said researcher Eric Finkelstein, a professor at Duke-NUS and the Duke University Global Health Institute. “These results will help them make better purchasing decisions to maximize the health gains using available resources.”

Finkelstein and research assistant Eliza Kruger based their findings on an assessment of high-quality clinical trials of commercially available diet/lifestyle plans and medications with proven weight loss at one year or more.

Three diet/lifestyle programs and three drugs met the criteria for the cost-effectiveness analysis: Weight Watchers, Jenny Craig and VTrim along with the diet pills Qsymia, Lorcaserin and Orlistat.

Several meal-replacement products were excluded despite showing some success—including Medifast, Optifast and Slimfast—because they did not meet one or more inclusion criteria. Weight-loss surgery also was excluded.

In terms of price, Weight Watchers was found to have an average annual cost of \$377. The expected annual cost for Vtrim users was \$682. Because of the relatively high cost of Jenny Craig food, it was the most expensive option, with an annual cost of more than \$2,500.

Expected annual costs for the diet pills was \$1,743 for Lorcaserin; \$1,518 for Orlistat; and \$1,336 for Qsymia.

Average weight loss at one year ranged from about five pounds for Weight Watchers to 16 pounds for Jenny Craig. Those on Orlistat lost a little more than six pounds. Those on Vtrim and Lorcaserin both lost an average of about seven pounds. Weight loss for those on Qsymia averaged a little less than 15 pounds.

For the original article, visit .

This Cancer-Causing Ingredient Probably Sits in Your Fridge

Attention all only-organic eaters: I'd like to have your attention in particular as you might have read this title and thought, "I bet whatever ingredient it is isn't in *my* fridge! I'm the healthiest eater I know!"

With all due respect, you might be mistaken as the ingredient I'm about to address appears in a plethora of organic products.

A few months ago, I was scanning the ingredients label on my carton of almond milk and came across a word that I still haven't the slightest clue how to pronounce: *carrageenan*. I also examined the labels of my So Delicious coconut yogurt, and my husband's Horizon chocolate milk and noticed they also contained this mysterious substance.

I figured, it's probably harmless—these products are organic!

Little did I know ...

I immediately pulled out my handy-dandy smartphone to begin investigating. It turns out carrageenan, found in many dairy and non-dairy products, deli meats, infant formulas, even flavored coconut water, has been proven to be carcinogenic. The ingredient is extracted from a red seaweed (sounds healthy so far, right?) called *Chondrus crispus*, which is popularly known as Irish moss. Companies include the extract to improve the texture of their foods.

So, how is something derived from seaweed cancer-causing? Studies conducted by Joanne K. Tobacman, a medical doctor and associate professor of clinical medicine at the University of Illinois College of Medicine, linked undegraded carrageenan—the type that is widely used in foods—with malignancies and other stomach problems. She also discovered that it causes inflammation, and inflammation is a well-known root cause of many serious diseases, including Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and cancer.

The following is from Dr. Tobacman's testimony on carrageenan before the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB):

“Carrageenan has been used in thousands of biological experiments over several decades, because it *predictably causes inflammation*. Inflammation is well-known to be the basis for many human diseases and is associated with over 100 human diseases, including inflammatory bowel disease, rheumatoid arthritis and arteriosclerosis. Inflammation also is linked to cancer” (emphasis mine).

The next question you may be asking is why does carrageenan show up in *organic* products? According to the Cornucopia Institute, a “populist farm policy research group” according to its website, the reason is “due to carelessness by government regulators, misinformation supplied by corporate ‘independent’ scientists advising the USDA, and successful lobbying by carrageenan manufacturers and food processors convincing organic consumers that it's both a safe and

necessary ingredient.”

Unfortunately, yet not surprisingly, it seems that the NOSB continues to approve of the ingredient, despite overwhelming evidence and strong opposition, because several of the board members and the companies they represent profit from carrageenan-containing products.

If you find out that in fact your favorite milk, yogurt or ice cream features this harmful substance, you'll want to check out replacements right away. The Cornucopia Institute provides an extensive list of both carrageenan-containing foods and those that are carcinogen-free. I encourage you to visit the link and even contact the companies that are using carrageenan to see if they might be willing to change their minds for the sake of your and your family's health.

Alternatively, the Internet has some wonderful resources to teach you how to make your own dairy and non-dairy products at home, so I encourage you to do a little research and try a recipe or two.

And one more tip before I go: If you're unfamiliar with an ingredient listed on your bottle of juice, your protein powder, your energy bar, etc., please look it up. The truth about carrageenan should serve to teach us that just because a product or company claims to be “all-natural” or “organic,” that doesn't necessarily make them 100 percent healthy.

Sadly, greed, carelessness and corruption spring up everywhere—even perhaps within companies whose products bear the peaceful image of a pleasant farmstead or the benevolent face of a cow. It is up to us to make sure we're doing our absolute best to keep our whole selves—mind, body, and spirit—healthy and fit as temples of the Holy Spirit.

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For the original article, visit [www.fitnessandfaith.com](#).

7 Reasons Christians Don't Evangelize

There is no shortage of pundits who are providing to us the gloomy and dismal state of American congregations, and, indeed, of many churches around the world. For sure, I am among the guilty.

While personal evangelism is ultimately a heart issue between Christians and God, we do see ways this disobedience to the Great Commission is manifesting itself.

Despite all the negative information you have heard from me, I remain an obnoxious optimist about local congregations. One of the reasons I am so optimistic is that many of us are no longer ignoring the problems. One of the early steps to church revitalization is a willingness to “look in the mirror.”

With that in mind, in this article I try to help church leaders look in the mirror if their churches are not evangelistic. And here are seven factors that leaders may see when they get that honest perspective.

1. There is no priority of evangelism. I know. That sounds too self-evident. But churches that do not make evangelism a high priority are really making it no priority at all.

2. Many laypersons believe that evangelism is what we pay the

pastors and staff to do. Such a perspective is first unbiblical and, second, unproductive. Evangelistic churches always have enthusiastically evangelistic laypersons.

3. Many churches have an excuse mentality. So pastors blame it on the laity. The laity blame it on the pastor. And both blame it on culture, the denomination or some other external scapegoat.

4. Too many church members do not connect prayer with evangelism. Many members are pretty good at praying for those who have physical needs. But many are woefully lacking in praying for those who have the greatest need: a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

5. Too many Christians fail to be compassionate and Christlike to others. Evangelism always ultimately includes a clear articulation of the gospel. But too many Christians never get that opportunity to share the gospel, because they fail to show Christ in their actions and compassion.

6. Most church ministries are not intentionally evangelistic. The church should always seek to make certain any and all ministries include intentional efforts to share the gospel.

7. Some church members are concerned that new Christians will change their church too much. I'm serious. I've heard that line many times. When I was a pastor, I was chastised by a church member who told me I was leading too many people to Christ. They were, she said, changing her church too rapidly.

These are seven of the key factors that are hindering evangelism in churches, at least from a symptomatic perspective. What would you add to this conversation?

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For the original article, visit .