

Here's What You're Really Seeking in Your Weight-Loss Journey

Belonging is a big deal to us. We will do almost anything to belong. We will fix our noses, lift and tuck our faces and other body parts, enhance some parts and try to reduce others. It's all because we want to find a place to belong where we are at peace with ourselves.

I totally get it. I felt this way when I weighed 430 pounds. I felt like everyone was looking at me, pointing fingers and talking behind my back about my size. I didn't want to be slim and trim. I just wanted to look halfway normal, whatever that is.

After I lost weight, I realized that others don't really care about how we look; they are focused on themselves. It is this self-focus that tends to make us want to fix ourselves in some way.

What we are really looking for, though, is not just to fit in but to be at peace with who we are. There is only one place to find and discover peace and that is in following Jesus completely.

Shortly before Jesus began His final journey to the cross, He spent some time sharing parting words with His disciples. He said many things but two things really jumped out to me and I realized how seamlessly they go together. One is obedience; the other is peace.

Obey Me

Jesus spoke clearly about what He expected of His disciples. He didn't mince words. "All who love Me will do what I say ...

Anyone who doesn't love Me will not obey Me," (John 14:23a, 24a NLT).

It doesn't get any clearer than that. Jesus had one expectation: "If you love me, obey my commandments" (John 14:15).

When we hear this, most of us think of the Ten Commandments, and we figure we haven't killed anyone or stolen anyone's husband or wife, so we're good. There's a lot we could say about every commandment, and we can logically argue that obedience is to how Christ is leading us and not to the Old Testament law. Still, the Ten Commandments are a good place to begin to understand what Jesus expects of us.

All we have to do, though, is focus on the first commandment. This is where most of us fall short. "You must not have any other god but Me," (Ex. 20:3). For years, I had another god I was worshipping. I didn't think of it that way, but it was true. I was worshipping the god of my stomach, my belly, my appetite.

Living to Eat

Paul also didn't mince words when he talked about this. "Many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things" (Phil. 3:18b-19, NIV).

I lived to eat. I did not eat to live. Food was all I felt I had to look forward to. It marked my days and the passing of time. Some folks have said that boredom is a big problem for those who have weight to lose. For me, it wasn't boredom. It was that I had come to rely on food as the one thing that I always had access to in order to calm me and give me a moment of peace.

Being stressed and overworked was one of the main reasons I

ate almost continually. It was a reward for working hard. It wasn't that I was bored. It was that I was too busy.

Then, if I slowed down, I also rewarded myself with foods I loved, which were never salads, but always something baked like Grandma would have made. I followed the dictates of my appetite. My mind was set on earthly, self-centered things that I wanted.

Peace

The second thing that struck me about what Jesus told His disciples was that He was leaving them with the gift of peace of mind and heart (see John 14:27), "Not the kind of fragile peace given by the world, but My perfect peace" (John 14:28b, TPT).

The Amplified version adds, "Let My perfect peace calm you in every circumstance and give you courage and strength for every challenge." We know that in verse 26, Jesus promised the disciples that He would send the Holy Spirit, who is the helper, comforter, advocate, intercessor, Counselor and strengthener.

The Holy Spirit is actually the Spirit of Christ. He is sent in Jesus' name in His place to represent Him and act on His behalf (see John 14:26, AMP). What Jesus is trying to get across to His disciples and to us is that the only way we can have peace is by following Him.

It's plain and simple, but to make it even easier, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to live within us and help us remember everything Jesus has told us to do (see John 14:26, AMP). He gave us commandments, but He didn't leave us alone to figure it out. He sent the Holy Spirit.

It's Not That Hard

It's not a hard thing that He's asking us to do, and He's not

punishing us. He's setting us free to live in peace. That only happened for me when I finally surrendered my food addiction to God.

What I mean by that is I accepted that I needed to change. I owned my specific issue of sugar addiction. I then laid sugar down at His feet and asked Him to show me how to walk out my journey.

That doesn't mean that I gave it up cold turkey. I'd tried that before and it only worked for a limited period of time. No, I allowed God to teach me how to walk out my journey by relying on His strength instead of my own.

Dancing in Grace

The key to all of this is to dance in the light of His grace to the point where we are joyfully engaging with Him in His element. His element is grace. He told Paul, "'My grace is always more than enough for you, and My power finds its full expression through your weakness.'" So I will celebrate my weaknesses, for when I'm weak I sense more deeply the mighty power of Christ living in me" (2 Cor. 12:9, TPT).

I was always weak around food and trying to muster up my own strength to beat it. This never worked. When I finally admitted I had a problem and I needed God's help to get through it. I no longer saw myself as unable to fix things. I saw how great and how good my God is to give me strength where there was none.

Now, I can agree with Paul and say that when I am weak in human strength is the time I realize that I am strong only when I am truly drawing from God's (see 2 Cor. 12:10, AMP).

Living in Peace

Many of us live in discouragement, discontentment and despair rather than the peace that Jesus promised us. If you are like

me, part of it may be that there is something you know God has told you to do that you have not yet done.

It might be following Him in a healthy lifestyle. It might be forgiving someone or asking someone to forgive you. It might be pursuing a specific calling. Whatever it is, you will never be at peace until you are following Jesus in all that He has shown you to do.

What is He asking you to do? What step will you take toward that? When will you start? {eoa}

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This article originally appeared at .