

How Being Fat Saved My Life

I have a confession to make. I didn't start my healthy living journey as a spiritual quest. I felt far away from God. I felt shame and guilt over the fact that I weighed 430 pounds.

I knew God was calling me to make a deeper commitment, but how could I go deeper when I couldn't even resist a piece of candy?

 **My daughter and others loved me even at my extreme weight. Mother's Day 2002.**

I feel a little like Paul when I tell you my religious pedigree (see Phil. 3:4-6). I was a Christian, daughter of a preacher, in church all my life, graduated from a Baptist university with a major in journalism/religion and from an interdenominational college with a master's degree in theology, worked in national and state denominational headquarters, taught adult Sunday School, discipleship classes and seminars, edited and published Christian publications.

I was religious. I had a lot of head knowledge. I wasn't killing every Christian I met, like Paul. No, I was only killing one Christian—myself.

Applying all my religious training to eradicate my deepest failure was beyond me.

God used a story told by a man I respected to change my life. What I had tried for over 57 years to change, God changed in a second using my mentor's story.

His story did not mention God. There was no scripture, but God was everywhere in that story.

At that moment, though, I wasn't thinking about God. I was thinking about what he was saying. He had allowed alcohol to control his life over 25 years ago. Now a successful businessman with a wonderful family that included a dedicated

wife, loving children, grandchildren and great grandchildren, he was admitting all of that would not have been possible had he continued to allow alcohol to rule his life.

Although I'd never heard of sugar addiction when he said, "Sugar is just one molecule away from alcohol—alcohol is liquid sugar," all the pieces fell in place. I just knew that I was a sugar addict, if there even was such a thing.

The story gripped my soul and spirit. It took hold in a way I still can't explain today.

Giving up alcohol was his new beginning. The cravings began to go away.

To stay the course he placed perimeters around himself. He didn't put himself in situations where he would be tempted.

He stopped alcohol, but he started something in its place. He started with small steps until those became ingrained in his lifestyle.

I related it all to giving up sugar. It was understandable and doable, but it wasn't necessarily chapter and verse from the Bible.

Unfortunately, the Bible had become old hat to me. It was a culture, a lifestyle, but so was eating everything with sugar and flour. The Bible and eating ran together in my mind.

God had to go outside my culture to get my attention. He did it with a story because I am and always will be a storyteller.

The truth unfolded before me and I knew. I knew this was the answer I'd been looking for.

I began the journey with an admission. I admitted I was powerless over food and my life had become unmanageable.

You have to know what a monumental admission this was for me.

I was a control freak. I wanted to control everything in my life. Admitting I had something I couldn't control was saying I was weak, and I never wanted to be weak.

I began to realize truths from scriptures I'd known forever; such as, when I am weak then, and only then, is God released to be strong in my life (2 Cor. 12:9). And all things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything (1 Cor. 6:12).

God was in every step of the journey cheering me on even when I didn't recognize it was Him. I look back and see His fingerprints all over the lenses of my life.

I began to feel His grace like the wind at my back urging me on to be more, go further, push myself more.

Admission two was easier. I need a power greater than myself to restore me to sanity.

What I had done to my body was just plain insane. When I looked at where I was and where I wanted to go I knew I needed a Greater Power to help me.

I began to picture Jesus with me everywhere—at the supermarket, the gym, in my office, fixing supper, raiding the kitchen for a late night snack.

Sometimes I didn't like Him being there but He stayed and gently reminded me with the question, "What are you doing?", or sometimes with the reminder of why I had chosen this journey in the first place.

Admission three came when I had been on the journey for a while and had begun understanding the stronghold addiction had on my life.

I made the decision to turn my willful want for foods made with sugar and flour over to the care of God as I understood

Him.

I let God out of my carefully constructed box. I allowed Him to mess with my piety and religiosity. When I did that I allowed Him finally to be God of ALL my life.

What I ate and how I exercised became a focus. The doctors, counselors and trainers I met with took priority in my time schedule.

I realized if I were ever going to fulfill God's call on my life I HAD to focus on getting my body healthy. I am no good to anyone if I am not able to function.

What began as a journey of desperation morphed into one of determination and continues as one of declaration to the strength and power of God in my life. Now, I disciple others on this journey.

The closeness with God I had longed for all my life became more real as I started pressing in closer to Him, talking to Him like a friend, listening for His voice everywhere.

Scriptures began to come alive with reality as I experienced allowing Him to fully lead me. Sermons made sense. Songs radiated through me. I saw Him in secular books, movies and people. I saw Him in my life and the lives of my friends. I saw Him in the homeless guy on the corner with the sign "Stranded, Broke and Ugly" and wondered how his life would change if he could hold up the sign, "Free, Prosperous and Beautiful."

It happened on the journey. I wasn't there first and then the journey happened. The journey happened so I would begin to get there.

I know just as God used my weakness to start me on this journey, He is using this journey to bring me closer to Him. The closeness to Him is beginning to catapult me to my

destiny.

God will use whatever it takes to reach us—to save us and set us free—body soul and spirit.

It may not seem spiritual at the time, but if you are His child, it will be the most spiritual journey you can ever take.

Teresa Shields Parker *is an author, blogger, editor, business owner, wife and mother. Her book, Sweet Grace: How I Lost 250 Pounds and Stopped Trying to Earn God's Favor is available on Amazon in print, Kindle and Audible. This story is from her blog, .*