

How Prophesying Into Her Own Life Gave This Woman the Strength to Lose 250 Pounds

The heart-pounding strains of the *2001 Space Odyssey* theme stuck me as I walked through the doors of the Freedom Seminar. I am sure I looked as frightened as I felt.

My friends Nancy and Judy, who had paid my way, along with friends of my fellow trainees, were cheering us on as we entered the room. Then the doors closed and there we were: 24 strangers together with those who would guide us for eight days.

It was February of 1994. I weighed 430 pounds. Life was never going to be the same again.

How Committed Are You?

During the opening session, Russ, whom I knew as my adult Sunday school teacher now turned trainer, stood in the middle of the circle where we were seated. Without moving, he made eye contact with each of us.

Then, he said, "We are all here for a reason. We are all on a journey. We want something for our lives that will bring us greater freedom. Our journey will take commitment to this process.

"Right now, I want you to think about this question. How committed are you to this process with, 0 being 'no commitment' and 10 being 'Wow, I'm all in, 100% committed'?"

Immediately, I felt like I was a two. I was there to write a story for the regional Christian newspaper I edited and published. I was there in observation mode. I wasn't there to be a part of any process. Sure, I needed to lose weight, but I

didn't expect this seminar to help me do that.

I would stay for the duration because my friends paid the fee, but I was definitely not there for any participatory aspects. Then he said, "So let's do some sharing. Stand and tell us where you are and why."

I stared at the floor. Then to my surprise, people started getting up and talking. The first ones who stood were the go-getter types. They were all passion and excitement. They were all-in, but they had valid reasons as to why they wanted the process to work.

What Keeps You There?

Then one brave woman stood and said she was a two because she was skeptical that anything would help her. Finally, someone like me, I thought. I greatly identified with her.

Russ asked her, "What are the barriers that keep you at a two?" I don't remember what she said, but I remember what I was thinking. "I don't want to have to stand up in front of all these people and say my biggest problem is what they already know just by looking at me. My weight is the barrier that has me stuck."

Then he asked, "What would it take to move you to a five?" My unspoken answer was that it would take me understanding what was driving me to eat. Then, I realized that if I felt anything could actually help me figure that out, it would move me to a 10. The answer couldn't be that I was just born to be fat.

How Is This A Reflection of Your Life?

When I came back to myself, Russ was asking another question. "How is this exercise a reflection of how you do your life? And what would it be like if you always did your life at a level two commitment? What would it be like if you could do

your life at a level 10?"

He had my wheels turning. I knew if I stayed at two, I'd be stuck for life. If by some chance I could begin to live my life at a 10, I could do anything with God's help. I knew God wanted me to live at that 100% commitment level. I also knew that I was holding back being all in because of the foods I loved to eat.

That day, I began to dream of what it would mean if I were all-in, living life at that 100% level and not settling even for 99%. Observation mode went out the window, and I decided I was all-in for the process.

The entire eight-day seminar was a spiritual, God-directed journey just for me. I sensed throughout the entire time that God was directing my every step and my every thought. I felt His presence more strongly there than in any church service I had ever been in.

What Kind of Person Can Have What I Want?

Towards the end of the seminar, we spent some intense time in small groups working to discover what we wanted to be our true identities. It began with me asking myself the question, "What do I really want?"

After a lot of drilling down to get to what that really was, I said, "I want to write books."

Pat, the trainer working with me, asked, "What kind of person can have what you want?"

That took more time and more back and forth with questions from Pat and my group until I got down to the real answer. It stemmed from something Russ had said during the seminar. He had defined "holy" as "whole and healthy."

God Words

Then in a flash, God dropped words into my mouth. I said, "It would take a whole, healthy, happy person to write the kind of books I want to write."

I didn't think about it. I just said it. After I said the words, I saw their truth. No one can be an author unless they are whole emotionally, mentally, physically and spiritually. They need to be healthy in all those areas in order to have the clarity, stamina and energy they need to stay with the process of writing a full-length book.

They also need to be happy. The process of writing needs to bring them joy. They need to be happy within themselves.

During the seminar, I had gotten a glimpse of the areas in which I was sadly lacking. I wasn't whole emotionally. I had a lot of issues I needed to deal with. I had faulty mindsets. I had spiritual disconnects. I wasn't even sure I trusted God.

I knew before I came that I wasn't healthy. Weighing 430 pounds did not a healthy woman make. My weight was not just affecting my health, it was affecting every part of me.

I wasn't happy. I should have been. I had a wonderful husband, great children and loved what I did. Yet I knew personal happiness was missing.

Self-Prophecy

The next step was a huge one. In order to have what I wanted, I had to prophesy into my life. I had to declare to the group who I was. The trainer called it making a contract with yourself, but it just felt as though I were lying.

How was I going to do this? Remembering I was 100% committed to the process, though, I took a deep breath, gathered all 430 plus pounds of me and said, "Hi, I'm Teresa. I'm a whole, healthy, happy woman of God."

I can still hear the applause. It was one of the best days of

my life.

Life-Guiding Statement

That statement has guided me every day since then. At every Freedom Seminar reunion, we would introduce ourselves with our “I am” statements. Though it took me many more years before I fully stepped into that self-prophecy, God used that statement to guide my life.

I remember the first time I went to a Freedom gathering after I had lost 250 pounds. Embracing the fact that I had fully stepped into my self-prophecy made tears come to my eyes.

God knew my future back then. He pulled back the curtain of my life and inserted His words into my mouth. They were words that said what my destiny would become.

As the seminar came to end, 24 strangers, who’d become more than friends, gathered in a circle with their arms around each other’s shoulders and sang a final meaningful song together.

I sensed God crying tears of joy with all of us. I know every single piece of my Freedom Seminar experience was God speaking into my being, breathing His life into me, guiding me on my path.

Thank You, Jesus, that today, I am a whole, healthy, happy woman of God. {eo}

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

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