

The Apostle of Health

Small-town pastor Steve Willis catapulted to national prominence when he appeared on the ABC miniseries *Jamie Oliver's Food Revolution* challenging his congregation to embrace a healthier lifestyle.

The teaching pastor of First Baptist Church of Kenova, ., says health is just as much a spiritual concern as it is a physical one. "What we do with our bodies matters to God," Willis says.

He explored the spiritual aspects of health after noticing numerous ailments in his community, many of which he says stemmed from obesity. Around this time a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report was released and dubbed the area the nation's unhealthiest.

The pastor soon began a sermon series challenging his congregation to change their lifestyles. His church also started the Biggest Loser, an exercise class derived from the hit TV show. According to Willis, participants have collectively shed "about a ton" of weight—apparently enough for several national news outlets and the *Food Revolution* producers to notice the church's efforts.

"Just as parents want to set a good example for their children, we're working to be a good example to churches who are watching what we do," says Willis, whose endeavor mirrors such Christian initiatives as last year's Fight of Our Life health tour by gospel artist Kirk Franklin.

While teaching physical stewardship, Willis also plans to team up with Oliver to put a dent in the federal school lunch program's processed food ethic.

"We're working on what we need to do next to see this go on a larger scale," Willis says. "If that means working with people

in Washington, D.C., to make some necessary changes, then that's what we're willing to do."

