

This May Be the Missing Spiritual Step in Your Weight-Loss Journey

No matter how hard it is to forgive someone who has mistreated you or one of your children, siblings, husband or friends, it is exponentially harder to forgive yourself than any other human being.

No Excuses

Although I shared recently that the most difficult person I've ever had to forgive was the man who abused me, that just isn't true. The most difficult person I've had to forgive has been myself.

See, I know what I've done. I can't get away from it. I can make excuses for why I did certain things. I can feign lack of knowledge. I can blame it on my upbringing. I can blame genetics.

In the final analysis, though, it comes down to this: No one spoon-fed me sugar, comfort foods and all the great foods I love to eat. Nope, I did that all by myself. No one forced me or even encouraged me. They didn't have to. I loved certain foods more than my very life, and I would eat them whether anyone wanted me to or not.

When the Engine Dies

Doing that for most of my adult life meant I gained up to 430 pounds. I was a walking heart attack waiting to happen. The doctor told me I might have five years before it happened, but one day, my heart would just give up.

It's kind of like putting the four-cylinder engine from my little Honda Fit in a semi-truck and forcing it to pull the

load. First of all, it probably couldn't be done, but if it could it would not move that truck very far for very long before throwing a rod or doing whatever engines do to totally blow up.

That's what was happening to me. My heart was designed to power a normal-sized body, not one that had morphed into the super morbidly obese category. When the cardiac surgeon gave me five years to live if I didn't lose weight and keep it off, he seemed rude and uncaring.

No Excuses

However, it was the most effective communication I've ever received from a physician. There was no beating around the bush. The news was delivered directly and succinctly.

Lying there in the hospital bed after he and his entourage had left, it finally hit me. I was a 45-year-old woman who had single-handedly managed to eat herself into extreme obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure and congestive heart failure. At any minute I could die, and it was all my fault.

I tried to place the blame elsewhere, but every time I tried to point a finger to something, there were way too many fingers pointing back at me.

Why Do I Want to Live?

During the time in the hospital, I finally began to formulate specific reasons of why I wanted to live because just saying I wanted to live wasn't working. I knew in the moment of temptation that desire would morph into I want to live to eat that piece of red velvet cake.

No, the reasons I wanted to live had to be greater than what I wanted in any given moment. They had to be over-arching. They had to matter, really matter, to me.

With tears in my eyes, I cried out to God and told Him why I

wanted to live. I want to be here for my children to see them grown up and do all the great things they would do. I want to be here to continue to love and grow old with my husband.

I want to be here to write the books God has always shown me will be in my future. I want to be here to live out my purpose. Those became my big- picture dreams.

What Have I Done?

As I thought about those dreams, though, I became increasingly more angry with myself. *What have I done? Why can't I get a handle on my weight? Why do I continue to eat instead of stopping when I am full? What is wrong with me?*

I resonated completely with Paul's words. "I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway ... Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death?" (Rom. 7:19, 24, NLT).

It was in those moments that I realized like everything we go through, God has a process for this, too. In the next verse, Paul says, "Thank God, the answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 7:25a).

Accepting That I Have Sinned

I finally got it. I finally understood that when I don't do the good that God wants me to do, it is plain and simply sin. When I do what I know is wrong, it is also sin. So how does Jesus free me from sin and the conundrum I find myself in?

He gives me grace when I forgive myself and ask for His forgiveness. Many times in my life, I would cry out to God and say, "Oh God, I'm sorry I overate this weekend and gained weight. Forgive me."

God forgives me, but the problem is, I didn't forgive myself because I didn't accept responsibility for what I clearly did.

Acknowledging my own sin and accepting responsibility for it is the first step in the process of forgiving myself.

This process began in that hospital room, but it didn't culminate until I was willing to admit what I had done was my fault. No one else's. I could not go forward on my journey to transformation until I mourned what I had done, forgave myself, cried tears of repentance and then began the process of totally changing my lifestyle.

Not a Quick Process

This was not a quick and easy process for me, but it was necessary to walking out my journey. There have been many milestones along the way. One of them was when the doctor gave me five years to live. One was when I stated out loud that I forgive myself and then, surrendered sugar to God.

The milestone I love, though, is the moment when my husband and I were in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, doing some shopping after I had done a TV interview. All of a sudden it hit me. I have let all the pain go for what I had done to myself.

I have forgiven myself. It took daily work and doing what I knew God had asked me to do all those years ago, but the process paid off. God brought beauty out of the ashes of my life and I am the better for it.

How to Forgive Yourself

You may be thinking, *That's all well and good, but you don't know what I've done.* No, I don't, but God does and He will forgive you. He tells us He removes our sin as far as the East is from the West. Do you know how far that is? It is for eternity, because there is no end to the universe (Ps. 103:12).

We know this verse, but many times I've found when talking with individuals I'm coaching that they believe God can forgive them, but they can't forgive themselves. I admit it's

a hard thing to do, but realize that when God says He won't forgive us if we don't forgive others, we are included in the "others." We have to forgive ourselves for God to forgive us.

I don't know about you, but I can be my own worst critic. Don't keep yourself from receiving God's grace and mercy. Accept, admit and repent of what you have done wrong. Then turn around and go the other way with God's help. {eoa}

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