

This New Year, It's Time to Break the Stronghold of Food

Let me encourage you to dream with me for a moment, asking the simple question, "What if ... ?"

What if you could be the healthiest you've been in years (or maybe in your whole life), reversing some life-threatening diseases and finding yourself more vibrant at 60 than you were at 40, all without drugs?

What if you could be fit and trim, having tons more energy for your family, your friends, your job, your ministry, your hobbies and your life, not to mention your Lord?

What if you never felt bloated or stuffed and never felt bad about what you ate?

What if you weren't ashamed of the way you look?

What if:

Your stomach didn't sit on your lap.

You could tie your shoes.

You could see your toes.

You could wear normal clothes rather than clothes that looked like tents.

You didn't have to stealthily unbutton your pants at the restaurant (and remember to re-button them when you got up to leave).

You didn't have to wear stretchy pants.

You didn't have to avoid mirrors (or plate glass windows).

You didn't have to worry about buttons bursting off your shirt.

You didn't have to buy all kinds of loose-fitting clothing to cover your fat.

You didn't have to buy even bigger clothes the next year after the holidays and your latest weight gain.

What if: (fill in the blank)? Only you know what bothers you most about your weight, and I write this not to shame you but to encourage you, since I too was once fat because of lifelong, unhealthy eating habits. My wife, Nancy, who co-authored *Breaking the Stronghold of Food* with me, considered herself a glutton, and she too has found a wonderful new way of living.

What if you could experience a dramatic turnaround in your life simply by changing your relationship to food? Would it be worth it?

Then why do so many of us find ourselves overweight and obese, weighed down (literally) with food addictions, our energy sapped, our blood vessels clogged, our hearts overworked, our later years plagued with unnecessary disease? For the most part, it is because of our unhealthy relationship to unhealthy foods and, more specifically, because we don't know how to break free (or we're simply not willing to break free) from our bad habits.

I want to tell you that if I could break free and change, you can too with God's grace and help. I want to tell you that there is hope for your physical transformation. It's not a pipe dream. It's not hopeless and impossible. It's not too late, even if you tried a thousand times, read the latest diet-fad book and taken the latest weight-loss pill, all in vain.

The reality is, once you eliminate the wrongs foods from your

life and replace them with healthy foods, your palette will crave whatever you feed it so that, over time, you will enjoy healthy foods as much as you once enjoyed unhealthy foods. This was almost impossible for me to believe when both a doctor friend and Nancy told me this years ago. No way! A bowl of fruit could never compare to a slice of NY pizza, and a spinach salad could never hit the spot at midnight like a bowl of Ben & Jerry's ice cream or some peanut M&Ms. I just didn't "like" the healthy foods, and I assumed that's the way it would always be.

The truth be told, not only did I not believe that I could ever change my palette, but I had no desire to change my palette. I thoroughly enjoyed unhealthy eating, and it's all I knew my entire life. Every year for the holidays and my birthday, my family and friends gave me every kind of sweet treat wrapped up in the most beautiful paper. Even the graduating class of my ministry school once gave me a special gift of sweets. And when I traveled to speak, chocolates and sweets and pretzels were always waiting in the gift basket in my hotel rooms, while in every airport, I knew where to get my favorite treats. (There are a lot of airports around the world!)

Today, when I walk through the grocery store, I crave apples. I can't wait to have fresh fruit in the morning in my hotel room, and I absolutely look forward to my massive, super healthy salad every night. I promise you: Your taste buds will change if you give them a chance. It just takes time.

What stops you, then, from making a life-changing transition? Is it ignorance? Lack of willingness? The power of food addictions? Lack of time?

Consider this scenario. Your doctor says to you, "You don't have to be on medication for high blood pressure and cholesterol, you can avoid serious and invasive heart surgery, you can be cured of your Type 2 diabetes, you can add years of

health and vitality to your life, and you can have so much more energy for your family, friends and job.”

You say in reply, “I know it’s true, but I love my food.”

Is that an acceptable answer? Do you really want to live the rest of your life like this, enslaved to destructive eating habits or, in the language of Paul in the New Testament, with your stomach as your god?

According to Dr. Joel Fuhrman, famous for his “eat to live” message, the health risks of obesity include: increased overall premature mortality; adult-onset diabetes; hypertension; degenerative arthritis; coronary artery disease; cancer; lipid disorders; obstructive sleep apnea; gallstones; fatty infiltration of liver; restrictive lung disease; and gastrointestinal diseases. Dr. Fuhrman actually states that we are digging our own graves with knives and forks.

The health risks of obesity dwarf the health risks associated with drinking and smoking, yet an increasingly large percentage of Americans are either overweight or obese, and many of us simply don’t know how to reverse the dangerous course we’re on.

Perhaps now is the time to take serious steps toward radical, lasting change? It’s not about dieting. It’s about changing your relationship to food, seeing it as the fuel of life rather than as the meaning of life, and it’s about changing the foods that you eat—for the rest of your life. (If you say, “Who wants to live if you can’t eat whatever you want?” then you’ve shown just how bound you are.)

Nancy and I would love to help you, and we believe if you put into practice what we’ve written in our new book and utilize the other resources we recommend, you will never be the same. We also started a brand-new Facebook page where we can encourage each other on the journey and provide practical tips for long-term success.

The new year is here. It's time for the new you. What are you waiting for?