

The Diet

Changing the way we look at Scripture

After many New Year's resolutions and listening to so many, sometimes myself included, I have witnessed failure after failure and wondered why and how. With so much sincerity and heart-felt convictions to be faithful to their decisions, one after another have come to a close in a short time. I know how much diets mean to people, not just for cosmetic appearances but for health issues. People put in a good and honest effort, but they often fail and give up. But there is a scapegoat, diet, don't do it, most people who go on a diet do good for a time but then end up putting on more weight than they had when they started the diet.

Years ago, in my fifties, I made it my plan to lose some weight. At 193 lbs, I was heavier than I had ever been. When I thought about all that had brought me to this place, I felt discouraged and disappointed with myself. I made a plan to stop eating junk food and took a look at what foods seemed to put weight on. This was easy; it was everything I was eating and the amount I ate. I decided to limit my intake and food type cold turkey. It was maybe the most difficult long-range task I had ever taken on.

I began by praying, asking the Lord to give me the strength and desire to follow through no matter how difficult it became. I remember driving through town; I could smell all the different foods being made in every restaurant; it was as if it was calling me. I would let go of another prayer asking for strength not to be swayed by desire and lust (to have a yearning, desire, or craving).

The first weight loss was easy; I cut out Gatorade and dropped ten pounds. I was retaining too much fluid. Now, down to 183, I was feeling confident the remainder would be simple. It wasn't; I fell back to some of my old habits, not in significant amounts, but enough that I stopped losing weight. At this point, I felt like I didn't look heavy; I didn't feel so bad, but that wasn't the mission I was on. Every pound I went up, I felt guilt, and it felt convicting, almost like I needed to wash away those things that kept gnawing at me like dust on a windy day. Something needed to change; it wasn't the world but me.

After much prayer and sometimes with tears, I realized that a diet needs to be a complete change in our lives. I began to compare it to Biblical verses. This may sound crazy, but it began to work. We are to examine our own selves and not against others, **Galatians 6:4: But each one must examine his own work, and then he will have reason for boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another.**

It is easy to allow ourselves to compare all we do and desire against others, "My clothes are better than theirs," "I've been to church six Sundays in a row, and I have not seen these people here for months." "Wow, that guy is really fat, guess I'm not doing so bad after all."

Unfortunately, we grow up comparing ourselves to others in many ways. We look for reasons to justify our beliefs and understanding, and in this, we isolate ourselves from what God wants to do in and through us. So, once I finally got serious about my diet, I decided to get on the scale daily. Every day, I can see the direction I am going and revisit those prayers to God and the commitments I made to myself. I can make adjustments before things get out of hand. I found if I stopped getting on the scale daily things went back up and getting rid of the extra weight was a struggle.

Here is the shocker: Once I began telling other people about this, they told me, “They say you shouldn’t do that; it is not recommended.” I have never met them, and they have a lot of opinions. Is this a family with the last name of “they”? “They” seem to be everywhere telling others what to tell others to do and don’t do. I have looked for “they” hey for a long time, and truthfully, I believe they are some mystical fabrication in people's subconscious.

As I return to Galatians 6:4, I am reminded to look at myself and my life, not comparing it to others but against the things of God. Although neither God nor Jesus is mentioned in this verse, if I am to evaluate my own actions, there must be a place of measurement, and if I am to reflect the image of our Christ Jesus, then He must be the one I seek to be like. It should not be “They” who set a path before me but instead, the path my Lord has placed before me, the righteous path.

As I look to the Scripture each day and reflect on those teachings, why should I not do the same with my weight and appearance?

Galatians 5:7-11: You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? 8 This persuasion does not come from Him who calls you. 9 A little leaven leavens the whole lump. 10 I have confidence in you, in the Lord, that you will have no other mind; but he who troubles you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is.

This may be a good place to address “them” them’s is always the people who I guess know best. Let us look a bit closer to what all this means as we put the puzzle all together.

Each morning and every night, as I stand on the scale, I can see how my weight is; it becomes a reminder of my prayer to God and the frustrations I had trying to lose weight. At the same time, I begin to reflect on the day; how was my walk with our Lord this day? Was I hostile or helpful? Did I spend any amount of time with one who need to be reassured in our Lord?

Jesus said, John 3:3; Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” As I reflect on the day, can I see the new man? Have I truly been born again? Like the food we overeat, sin is a load we place upon ourselves; we burden ourselves with the extra

weight, whether from sin or neglecting our diet. It becomes a load we need to address and rid ourselves of.

James 1:15: Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. Once you think you can get away with a little sin, a little more may not matter. We far too often justify our wrongs, finding reason and making excuses for our wrong doing.

Suppose you have been doing great on your diet, but here comes vacation, and everybody knows that any eating and all eating on vacation is a freebee, or is it? We get back home, step on the scale, and realize what we have done. I need to lose weight. Sin is much the same. Can you ask God, “God, can I just keep the miniature Buddha doll we got on vacation? “They” told me it will bring good luck if I just ask it to do so.” Or perhaps you overspent the amount of money you had set aside for vacation, and now a bill will not get paid in time. You get a fifty-dollar late fee and think, why? I have been doing so well, but now I have a late charge, extra weight, and more work ahead of me.

It is amazing how little enjoyment we actually get from a few minutes of indulging. That banana split looks so good. You buy it, and you’re enjoying it to the last bite. Then, you drink the last of the soda you had sitting there. You drink down the soda, and the flavor of the Banana split is gone; how much weight will it cost you for a moment of ice cream? What punishment are you willing to risk for just moments of fake pleasure that will never last or bring good things into your life? The new car we buy gets old in no time at all. It was so nice for the first six months, but it has become just another car, and you have been stuck with the payments for years. Just a bit more food or a bit more sin will not be that bad. The only things I have found to support me and keep on renewing me are those things of God, a walk with Jesus, and talking with the Holy Spirit; these things last.

Sin is the same; how much sin is tolerable? Some seem to think that just because we will continue to sin as long as we are in the flesh, a little bit of sin is okay. It does not need to be what many define as a large sin or an egregious sin; it has more to do with where your heart is. Can you set aside the conviction that you yourself decided to place upon your own life? Will you feel good once the taste is gone? A little leaven goes through the whole lump.

James tells us of the desires we must learn to fight. The truth is we will never be capable of resisting desires on our own. We must faithfully pray for our Lord's help and strength. If we fully understand the weight of sin that is much like the result of overeating, then we can see better the negative effects life places on us. Can one steal only the tire off of a car and be alright with it, or not really murder a person but come close and remain alright with the legal or spiritual outcome?

Romans 7:18-20: For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. 19 For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. 20 Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.

1 John 1:8: If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. Stumbling and wavering in trust, we need to ask of ourselves, can I do this on my own? The answer is no. Can I rid sin from my life on my own? I can't even lose weight on my own. You see those ads on TV about having your fat removed; in just one visit, you can get that body you have worked so hard for but can never remain faithful to your commitment.

This would be a quick fix to the diet problem; see the doctor with the new ridged vacuum cleaner, and it will suck that fat right off of you. While Jesus is nothing like the fat removal doctor, He removes much more than the weight of indulgence from you; He removes the stains of all your past life as you enter into your eternal life. He took upon Himself the burdens you have been carrying. Now, you may not be able to see that weight removed day by day as you step on the scale, but your heart will find contentment and peace in a much-confused world. When all things in your life are new; you will find security and strength you could not find in any other place.

“Who is he who overcomes the world: This tells us we overcome primarily because of who we are in Christ, not because of what we do. We overcome because we are born of God, and we are born of God because we believe that Jesus is the Son of God — again, not in a mere intellectual sense, but we put our lives on the fact that Jesus is the Son of God for us.” David Guzik, 1 John 5:1.

It is difficult to convince non-believers at times; they may resist the invitation because they blame Him for all the hard times in their lives, never noticing that most trouble begins within themselves. Once we become filled with the Holy Spirit, we can step onto the scale knowing that no matter what our weight is, God accepts us if we only believe.

The scale has a way of keeping me obedient to many issues in my life. It sounds so simple, but yes, there have been days when I didn't want to even see the scale. It can sometimes feel like a person looking at you, judging you, and convicting you, but once you realize the scale is merely a tool to help you, you find it to be a friend.

How is the scale different from our lives in Jesus? Scripture is much like the scale we use. Scripture helps us see and understand God's will for us and reminds us of our need to draw closer to our Lord and evaluate our lives in Christ Jesus. One I only need to step on; the other I need to faithfully and prayerfully pick up and study, to study with a desire to learn more, to become more like our Lord. Yes, the simplicity of a regular

household scale has done wonders in commitment. It is so simple to stray away in little measures and justify all of it in our own hearts and minds. However, much of it can become as the child who is about to slide down the grassy hill on a piece of cardboard; once you've gone a few feet, you begin to gain speed, and before you know it, you are at the bottom, and the climb back up seems impossible. Set your sights on our Lord, seek Him out with all your heart, soul, and mind, and He will be found. Once you have found Him, hold onto the hand that has been outstretched for you.