Designed For Victory

Break Your Cycle of Self Defeat
Succeed at Your Health Goals
& Become the Spiritual Warrior
You Are Designed to Be!

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BOOK 1: VICTORY FOUNDATION

WELCOME TO DESIGNED FOR VICTORY

Our culture is overflowing with information about how to be healthy, yet most people who begin a health journey quit after a short time. Why? Because most books and websites tell us *what* to do, but few, if any, take our personal psychological baggage into account. Whether you're trying to lose weight, break a bad habit, or build a new one, the most important place to start is your MIND.

We must recognize that we are sacred to God. Our struggle for physical and psychological health is not separate from our spiritual life in Christ—it is fully connected.

That's where the Designed for Victory approach is unique. This book does provide education, but it also includes questions to help you apply what you learn to your own situation. These questions guide you through a process of growing healthier physically, psychologically, and spiritually.

Your personal situation is not only your circumstances but also who you are. It includes your home, work, and church culture. It includes your education and income level. But it also includes YOU—your joys and sorrows, hopes, regrets, and fears. It includes your talents, aptitudes, personality traits, and interests. It includes all your stresses, morals, pleasure principles, and vices.

You are a complex person. And unfortunately, information alone rarely helps. You need to sort through your baggage, release what needs to be let go, and make space to acquire what you truly need. Using the Victory tools will empower you to create real change from deep inside, instead of just making short-lived resolutions.

We need to uncover our *core issues* and deal with them. Merely addressing outward behavior with new rules, or learning new information without applying it, is as pointless as stapling "good" apples to a diseased tree.

THE VICTORY LAYOUT & PROCESS

This book is divided into short "Readings" instead of traditional chapters. These Readings are grouped into Sections, or "Books within the Book":

- Book 1: VICTORY FOUNDATION
- Book 2: Sacred SPIRIT
- Book 3: Sacred BODY
- Book 4: Sacred MIND

Once you finish VICTORY FOUNDATION and move into Sacred Spirit, you may be tempted to skip ahead to Sacred Body to chase quick diet fixes. Don't do it! In Victory Foundation, I give you nutrition and action basics you can use while exploring your faith and psychological issues in Sacred Spirit. Only then should you move on to Sacred Body for deeper diet and fitness goals.

Most readers will focus on dietary changes, but others may be working on smoking cessation, breaking a pornography addiction, creating healthier relationship habits, or something else entirely. If your health goals are not food-related, that's fine. This book is designed to help uncover the core issues behind *any* destructive pattern. Still, I recommend you learn about food, because most people in our culture need that knowledge—whether or not diet is your main focus right now.

PLEASE NOTE

WORKING THROUGH THE PAIN POINTS

Some Readings and questions will feel easy. Others may touch something so deep and painful that you'll need time—days or even weeks—to process them. That's okay. Ponder, answer as best you can, and journal. Don't shortchange yourself. Do the work, and you WILL grow. You may even want to dog-ear the hard sections and revisit them later.

If the process becomes emotionally painful, think of it like a heart transplant. The surgery saves your life, but the recovery is painful. In the end, though, you experience life more fully than ever. Don't avoid the "surgery" just because it hurts. You can do this!

I highly recommend going through this book with a partner or group. Whether you meet in person, online, or by phone, accountability and encouragement make all the difference. You'll share struggles, joys, failures, and victories. If your group is larger than two, or includes people you don't know well, visit **Designed4Victory.com** and read *How to Run a Victory Small Group.*

HEALTH VS. PEAK PHYSICAL FITNESS

Before we go further, let me make this clear: health does not equal peak physical fitness. Most of us will never look like a magazine cover or an Olympic athlete. When I ask you to "visualize" your health goals, don't sabotage your journey or your relationship with God by chasing perfection. In fact, some people who look "perfect" in magazines achieve that look through unhealthy or even damaging practices.

A few readers may achieve peak fitness. Some are already there but may need to shift their motives—from vanity or fear to honoring God. But for most of us, the goal is not perfection, it's *better health.*

As you work through this book, you'll set goals that are unique to you. They will not be your friend's, cousin's, or spouse's goals. For many Americans, better health will mean some weight loss and strength gain. But for you, it might mean quitting smoking, breaking a porn addiction, ending alcohol dependence, or tackling another issue.

This is your time to focus on YOU—not society's agenda. People who love you may guide you toward healthy goals, but ultimately, you decide what's right. You may even return to this book multiple times for "tune-ups" or to set new goals. This is not a quick fix. It's a process you can grow with at your own pace.

Also, remember: when we talk about God valuing our physical bodies, that does not mean He loves people with disabilities or diseases any less. When I ask you to pray about health goals and visualize yourself healthy with Jesus, I am not saying God loves someone with a congenital condition less than an Olympic track star.

What I *am* saying is that God cares how you treat the body He gave you. When we damage our bodies, I believe it grieves Him, and we rob ourselves of joy. Poor health caused by our own choices can keep us from enjoying life, work, family, friends, and Kingdom impact. But no matter what you look like or what condition you're in, your Heavenly Father loves you and wants the best for you.

So, let's begin with a few questions:

- Are there issues in your current state that are within your control to change? (Weight, diet, smoking, fitness, etc.)
- If you dealt with this issue, would your health improve?
- If your health improved, would you have more energy for work, family, lifestyle pleasures, and even ministry?
- Do you see how YOUR health might matter to your Heavenly Father?

AN ESSENTIAL FOUNDATION

When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple courts, he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and others were sitting at tables exchanging money. So he made a whip out of cords and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves, he said, "Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!" His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me."

The Jews then responded to him, "What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?"

Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." … the temple he had spoken of was his body. ~John 2:13-21

THE TEMPLE

In this passage, we see a side of Jesus that isn't often discussed: His righteous anger. But what made Him so angry? His love for our Heavenly Father was so intense, and His love for humanity so sincere, that He was furious to see the Holy Temple reduced to a dirty marketplace.

The Temple was sacred. It was where people could meet with God Almighty, worship, and pray. It was where forgiveness of sins was experienced. At times in history, it was even where God's very presence resided on earth. Yet people were violating this holy place.

It can be hard for us to grasp the depth of this insult. Perhaps it's like the anger you'd feel if someone urinated on an American flag, vandalized your mother's gravestone, or—worse still—if you walked into your home and found someone in your bed with your spouse. That's the outrage of violating what is sacred. The Temple was meant to be the sacred space where God's people could experience Him.

From the time of Moses, God gave Israel a physical sign of His presence, appearing like fire. His holiness was so revered that only one priest, once a year, could enter the Holy of Holies to offer atoning sacrifice for the nation. The purification rituals were extensive, because sin cannot survive in His presence. As one of my favorite podcasts says, "death by holiness" was the result of any "unclean" person stepping into God's presence. A human would die if they encountered God face to face—not because He would strike them down, but because His sheer glory is incompatible with our frailty. Like a rocket trying to land on the sun, the human would simply be obliterated.

So God mercifully condescended to His people, giving them a holy fire to show He was with them.

But by Jesus' day, God's manifest presence had already departed from the Temple. Israel had defiled herself, and God had withdrawn His all-consuming presence. The people still expected the Messiah to change this—to overthrow Rome and restore God's presence among His people, as He had with Moses leading them out of Egypt.

Even though His manifest presence was gone, the Temple was still considered sacred. Sacrifices were offered, pilgrimages were made, and people continued to worship Yahweh there. Jesus Himself still honored it. Temple worship was the way Jews declared their allegiance to the one true God, even under Roman occupation.

JESUS, THE TRUE TEMPLE

Then Jesus startled everyone by declaring that *His own body* was the Temple. Later, John and others realized the truth: Israel's Temple was only a foreshadowing of Christ Himself. The stone building was temporary. Jesus came in the flesh so God could meet with us face to face. More importantly, He came in the flesh to offer the final blood sacrifice for sin.

Anyone who puts faith in Him becomes a citizen of His Kingdom, eternal and greater than any earthly nation. As sacred as the Temple building was, it was only a symbol of something far greater—Jesus' own body. His body accomplished what the Temple only represented. The Temple was like an engagement ring; Jesus is the Groom. The ring points to marriage, but marriage itself is far more important than the ring.

John's vision in Revelation 21:22 confirms this: "I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple." Paul echoes this in 1 Corinthians 13:10, saying, "When completeness comes, what is partial disappears. For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror, but then we shall see face to face."

Hebrews 10 explains: "The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves… we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." The Temple provided access to God until Jesus came. Once the Bridegroom arrived, the shadow was no longer needed.

Jesus showed zeal for the earthly Temple, but it was His body that fulfilled the Temple's true role—the meeting place between God and humanity, where sin was removed and people could dwell with a holy God.

CHRIST FOLLOWERS—GOD'S TEMPLE ON EARTH

But there's more. Paul says WE are now the temples of Christ's Spirit. In 1 Corinthians 6:19–20 he writes, "Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit… you are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your bodies."

Read that again. If you are a believer in Jesus, you are now God's Temple. His Spirit indwells you. Together, we are His presence in the world—something no building could ever achieve.

If Jesus was zealous enough to drive out those who defiled a stone-and-wood Temple, imagine His zeal for YOU, His living Temple, to be honored and holy.

You are cherished by God—body, mind, and soul. He wants you to honor your body, purify your mind, and remove sin from your heart so His life in you can flourish.

Maybe you're reading this because you want to lose weight, quit smoking, stay clean through a recovery program, or heal from an abusive relationship. Maybe you struggle with cutting or an eating disorder. Maybe you want to grow in sexual purity, or perhaps life is ordinary and you just want better health and deeper holiness. All of these are good reasons to be here.

You may doubt your ability to change. But know this: if you surrender your struggle to your Heavenly Father, He will walk with you. And Jesus will be even more passionate for your success than He was for that Temple in Jerusalem. You matter more to Him than any building.

HOW DO YOU VIEW YOUR BODY?

Now think about its *function,* not just its appearance. Does that change your answer?

You matter to God. You are precious to Him like a beloved child to a loving parent. He values the life in every cell of your body. He designed you, and He loves you.

ONE FINAL THOUGHT

We often read scripture upside down, through our modern lens instead of its original worldview. One place this shows up is in our focus on moralism. We think we can earn God's favor through good behavior. But the Jewish Law, especially the Temple practices, shows us something else.

Temple rituals were less about adding good works and more about removing sin. God's holiness is a consuming fire—not to destroy, but to cleanse. When someone comes into His presence, two things happen: sin is consumed, and what reflects His nature is purified.

For sinners outside of Christ, nothing would remain—because even our "goodness" is steeped in sin. But in Christ, atonement has already been made. Under His covering, we are safe. Our goal now is to become more like Him: to love what He loves, obey Him, share His forgiveness, and join His rescue mission.

So we throw off sin, again and again if necessary, making room for God's life to flourish in us. This is not something to fear. It honors God when we honestly face our sin and repent. You cannot hide it from Him anyway. Hand it over to Jesus, and He will heal you. His life and power are already in you if you belong to Him.

If you don't yet know Christ, you can still gain practical insights from this book. But know this: the true solution to your deepest struggles is found only in Him. God is real, but He is pure, like the sun—get too close without protection, and you are consumed. Not because He hates you, but because your nature is incompatible with His holiness.

But Jesus offers transformation—not just morality, not just self-improvement. He transforms us at the deepest level so we can share in God's nature. And through His people, His life can shine into the world… through you.

LET'S TAKE A MOMENT TO PRAY,

> Jesus, Thank you for loving humanity and making yourself the sacrifice for the sin of the world. Thank you for loving me, and I can enter into the life of God through your resurrected life. This supernatural reality is beyond my logic and comprehension, but I believe it is true. I believe that you lived, died, and rose again to make adoption into God's family available for all humans who would take you up on the offer. Please forgive me of my own sins, and help me to root them out of my life and make room for Your life to flourish in and through me. Make my life pleasing to Heavenly Father. And please give me the strength, wisdom and courage that come from Your Holy Spirit to get to know you better, to walk with you, and to serve you for the rest of my life. Amen.

VICTORY JUMPSTART

Do you feel motivated and ready to jump right in? The process you're about to embark upon doesn't start with a grand goal that drastically alters your life (unless you are engaging in a habit that is life-threatening and needs to take immediate action). The approach of immediate, drastic change rarely works because it is too overwhelming for most of us. However, you're probably eager to start making some sort of changes, and we want to capitalize on that zeal. So, if your goal is nutrition or fitness-related, then here is a jump-start to get you going. If you answer the questions and do the work, you can start now and 'build as you go.'

✦ **Choose 1 food change and 1 fitness challenge you want to make this week.** Make each one something realistic that you know you can achieve but something that you're not doing yet. Whether you are well educated about nutrition and fitness or whether you're brand new to it, just pick something that is at your level. Here are a few examples of very simple things to implement for those who are new to nutrition and/or fitness:

Examples of Simple Food Changes:

- No sugar or sweetener in my coffee.
- Eliminate fried foods.
- Eat 1 or more servings of veggies at every meal (even breakfast!)
- Drink at least 64oz of water per day.
- If you want to really tackle something, consider your biggest 'temptation' food, whether it's bread products, ice cream or soda. What's that 1 thing you already know is bad for you, but you eat frequently anyway? Your food change for this week can be to start writing down every time you eat that kind of thing. AND write down every time you WANT to eat that thing but choose not to. Just by tracking this, see what happens! Note how your view of that thing changes. Do you eat/drink it less because you're observant about it? Is it becoming MORE tempting? Etc.

Examples of Simple Fitness Changes

- Wear my fitness tracker watch and aim for 1,000 more steps per day than I currently average.
- Get a gym membership and GO at least once this week.
- Find some yoga videos online and complete 3 of them this week.
- Every time I go to the bathroom, I'll walk up and down a flight of stairs before returning to my work.
- Walk the dog instead of just letting him out in the yard.
- Set an alarm to go off every 90 minutes, at which time I'll get up and _____, then get back to my desk.

✦ Write YOUR food and fitness changes for this week:

✦ My Food Change for the week:

✦ Challenge for the week:

✦ If you'd like a little bigger challenge, start tracking everything you eat this week. But here's the really simple way to do it. Below, you'll 10 different categories of food. When you eat something, jot it down to the right category. Whether you make changes or just make observations this week, this tool will be helpful.

- Veggies
- Fruit
- Water
- Beverages
- Protein
- Bread Products (ex: bread, pasta, cereal, rice, pastries, pop tarts, pancakes/waffles, tortillas, etc)
- Fried Food (even if it was previously listed - note that it was fried food here)
- Fast Food (even if it was previously listed - note that it was fast food here)
- Other (sauces, salad dressing, snacks, chips, dairy, snacks etc)Alcohol or other 'vices'

Veggies	Fruit	Water (list glasses or oz if you're drinking from bottle)

Protein (meat or other)	Bread Products (bagels, bread, cereal, pasta, pizza etc)	Other Beverages (name them)

Fried Food - Even if the food is listed above, list it again here if it's fried	"Fast Food"- Even if the food is listed above, list it again here if it's from a fast-food or takeout	Other - Snacks, Desserts, chips, nuts, cheese, yogurt, SAUCES etc

IDENTIFYING YOUR WHY

Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else, to the nearby villages, so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." – Mark 1:38

"I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate, that is what I do." – Romans 7:15

INTRODUCTION: THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWING YOUR "WHY"

We all struggle with staying on the path we intend to follow, even when we know what's best for us. Having a clear "why" is crucial to staying motivated and making choices that align with our goals and values in Christ.By developing a strong understanding of your "why," you can avoid falling into old patterns and start living with purpose, directed by Christ's will.

✦ So, what is your "why"? Why are you reading this book? Why do you want to change?

REFLECT ON YOUR "WHY"

Think about why you picked up this book in the first place. Are you here to: Lose weight? Improve your health? Reduce physical pain? Manage a disease? Look or feel better?Improve your self-esteem or confidence?

Take a moment to reflect. It's important to be honest with yourself.

1. YOUR INITIAL ANSWER TO "WHY"

✦ What is your initial reason for working through this book?

2. DIGGING DEEPER: THE NEXT LAYER OF YOUR "WHY"

Now, let's go a little deeper. You may have said your "why" is to feel better, lose weight, or reduce knee pain. But why do you want that? What is driving this desire?

✦ Why do you want the outcome you stated above?

3. UNCOVERING THE DEEPER MOTIVE

There is often another, deeper motive behind what we think we want. For example, you may want to avoid a heart attack, but why? Is it because you want to be there for your children or grandchildren? Do you fear death? Do you want to feel more attractive or physically capable?

✦ What is your deeper reason behind the desire you expressed in Question 2?

4. DESIRE VS. FEAR: UNDERSTANDING THE NATURE OF YOUR "WHY"

Look at your answers from Questions 2 and 3. Are your motives based on desire, or are they rooted in fear?

Is your "why" an "I want" statement (e.g., I want to feel healthier, I want to have more energy)? Or is it an "I don't want" statement (e.g., I don't want to feel pain, I don't want to be mocked)? If your answer is a dont want statement, we want to flipt it to become an IU Want statement

✦ Identify if your answer in Question 2 was based on desire or fear.

5. FLIPPING FEAR INTO DESIRE

It's important to frame your "why" as a positive desire rather than a negative fear. If your answers were "I don't want…" statements, consider how you can flip them into "I want…" statements. For example:If you don't want to feel pain, what do you want?If you don't want to be mocked, what do you want?

✦ Rewrite your "why" as a positive desire statement.

6. FINAL REFLECTION ON YOUR "WHY"

By identifying your "why" as a statement of desire rather than fear, you have the foundation to make lasting changes. Your "why" will guide your journey, helping you stay focused on your goals and aligned with your faith.

Keep this desire statement in mind as you move forward. Let it be your anchor when old patterns or fears start to creep back in. Your "why" will be your reminder of the life you want to build with Christ.

NOW PICTURE WHAT YOU WANT!

Picture yourself at a healthy weight. Picture yourself at the gym or walking the stairs with ease. Picture yourself playing with your kids or grandkids. Picture yourself in that bathing suit. Picture sitting with your doctor as he tells you that you no longer need your diabetes medications! Picture yourself driving to work without smoking. Picture yourself in a healthy relationship. Picture yourself receiving a 3-year coin for your sobriety. Picture sitting at your computer without any fear that someone will walk in and look over your shoulder… Seriously, close your eyes and picture what you want. "Perfect Love casts out fear" ~1 John 4:18. So, let yourself take a moment to rest in the love of Jesus and visualize what you may have previously been afraid to

even dream of. Don't read on until you picture it.

- ✦ **What emotions came when you pictured what you really want?** Did you feel excited? Fearful? Energized? Loved? Worried? Empowered? You want to tap into those positive emotions! If you felt fear as you visualized yourself existing in your desired reality, then go back, visualize it again, and look for the joy.
  - Breathe deep; give yourself permission to hope.
  - Breathe deep; give yourself permission to ask God to lead you on your journey to that goal.
  - Breathe deep and dare to believe that He actually wants this for you.

Life has plenty of sorrows built in. We live in a broken world with broken people. But He wants to give you joy, not only in the life to come but in this life! God is a God who cares about your body. Jesus lived in a human body, and he healed human bodies. And this brought glory to the Heavenly Father. Why would that be any different today? Take courage! He wants you to live at your personal best. So when you picture living in the reality of what you really want (health, fitness, weight loss, chastity, sobriety, non-dependence on food, alcohol, drugs, etc), feel the joy! God does! Let this joy fill you as you begin your journey! Please do not read on until you at least try to visualize a goal and feel hope instead of fear!

NOW YOU HAVE YOUR WHY.

If you sat and sat and couldn't even picture yourself healthy, couldn't picture yourself moving through the office without breathing heavily, couldn't picture whatever it is you set your mind on that was good for you, or you only felt fear of failure, or fear of even hoping, then consider your desire (question #5) and try one more time. But, this time, close your eyes, visualize Jesus, and read the exercise on the next page …

THE TRAINING YARD EXERCISE

Take a moment to visualize the following and answer the question. Do not rush. And, any time you'd like to listen to this exercise instead of read it, find my Designed 4 Victory podcast episode entitled "The Training Yard Exercise."

Jesus stands in front of you and to your right. He has paid the price for your freedom and adoption. Now, He wants to prepare you to enter the castle of the King. You have a purpose and a role in His kingdom order. But you're not ready for it. You've been abusing your body or letting others abuse it. You've let negative voices and negative words paint the setting in your mind. So, it is time for some healing. In your mind's eye, see yourself walking through the countryside with Jesus, and ahead of you, you see the castle. But you look at yourself, and you're dressed in drab attire. You need a bath and a good scrub under your fingernails.

Look at Jesus to your right. Ask Him to prepare you.

Now, see yourself again, clean and clothed in His glory!

Then, Jesus leads you into the giant courtyard of the castle. You see a warrior's training ground. It is full of people. Some are training with swords, others are on obstacle courses, some are walking on fire pits, some are engaged in martial arts, some are meditating, and others are working out in various ways. It may look like more than you could ever hope to achieve. But Christ Himself has brought you here and says, "Come on! Let's get started! You can do this, and I'm going to help you every step of the way."

Now, ask Him, "Will you help me to picture myself as a person who is healthy?"

"Of course," He replies.

Then you turn towards your right, where He is standing by your side.

He shows you a full-length mirror. You look in the mirror to see yourself.

* * * * * * * *

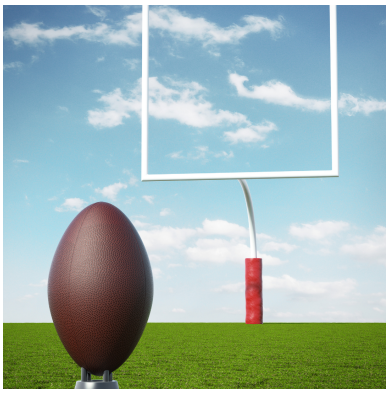
- ✦ At this moment, what do you see?
- ✦ If what you saw is ugly, ask Jesus to show you how HE sees you. Look in the mirror again and watch it transform.

You're not there yet. But Jesus assures you, "With man, this is impossible, but not with God. All things are possible with God." Mark 10:27: How did the vision of you in the mirror transform, when you looked at it the 2nd time? If you did not see a transformation, Ask Christ to show you how He sees you or how He DESIGNED for you to be. Dare to see yourself through His love, not your shame **NOTE**: This exercise can be used for ANYTHING you're struggling with in your life. Come back to this exercise when you want something that you are certain is right and pleasing to Him, but you feel fear about even daring to ask. You can literally come to the mirror in the middle of any struggle - financial, relational, sin issues, core issues of any kind!

SETTING GOALS

"I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." ~Paul, in Philippians 3:13-14

First, we examined motives. Now, we'll consider setting goals. There are two polar opposite ways to approach setting goals, and neither is much good (as polar extremes rarely are). Some people set goals and plan them out meticulously. They say that they're planning in order to be responsible. But, if hearts are examined, we may discover that they plan in order to attain a sense of control. Deep down, this person may feel the need to be in control because this person doesn't really trust God to come through.



On the other end of the spectrum sits the person who says, "Well, if it's God's will, I'll do this or that," and doesn't plan at all. This person may look godly, but quite often, this resistance to planning or setting goals is not actually an act of trusting God; rather, it shows a fear of asking God for what they really hope for. Often, this person is afraid of failure, or perhaps, afraid of success, and oftentimes afraid of the despair they'll encounter if God says (or seems to say) "no" to their request(s).

✦Do you see any of these tendencies in yourself? If so, explain now.

Here's the reality: without goals, we'll run aimlessly around a field and will not get much accomplished. But when we set up a goal, we know where we need to take the ball. We cannot stay on the sidelines analyzing forever. We've got to set the goals and get to work. In Luke 18, Jesus tells us of a widow who pleads her case over and over before a judge until he finally grants her request, even though he doesn't care about justice. He did it just to get her to leave him alone. There were many instances of people who asked things of Jesus - for healing, for food, for forgiveness … and He granted them. But notice that in each instance, the person had to ask, believe, and receive. Had they never asked, Jesus wouldn't have had the opportunity to answer! God wants us to ask Him to guide us and help us shape our goals. He will lead if we ask, but we must choose to follow! "Follow Me," Jesus says in Matthew 4:19. So, enter into this exercise prayerfully. Ask God to help you set some goals. And don't worry! You may start out with one goal and then get into the process, and God may whisper some new ones as well. It's all a process. You don't have to know the end from the beginning. But you do have to start with at least one goal. So pray about it, and let's begin.

We have already established that God does value our bodies. He values physical health. He enjoys healing! But we are responsible agents. Often, He has provided ways to be healed that require our participation. Even if He gives you a miracle in this process, you are then responsible for maintaining it! When He gives someone a miracle (and God is still giving medical miracles today), then the person who received the miracle must not live foolishly, or something "7x worse" may come (Matt 12:43-45). So, be bold with your requests and goals. Here, we'll work on setting some goals that will help us achieve what we desire. We'll start with your Why Statement and work through a simple goal-setting process. I have a few examples on the next page; then you'll work on yours.

SETTING YOUR GOALS

Example #1:

Why statement: I want to be able to play with my children because I want them to have a secure childhood and good memories of their mom.

What is your current state? "I cannot play for very long without getting winded. So our only time together is in front of a TV, or computer, or dinner table."

What needs to change for you to get what you desire?

"I need to lose enough weight to be able to play without getting winded or tired. I estimate that this is 40 pounds. I should probably also begin some sort of light exercise routine."

So, the desire is to play with your children

The goal is to lose 40 pounds and start exercising.

Example #2

Why Statement: I want to be more attractive because… (so many possible reasons!)

What is your current state? "I have a bulge around my waistline, and I have a hard time buying jeans because of the size of my rear end and thighs."

What needs to change for you to get what you desire? I need to lose about 10 pounds.

So, the desire is to be more physically attractive

The goal is to lose 10 pounds.

Example #3

Why Statement: I want to feel better, and I don't want to be held captive to a hospital bed or sofa as I age. I want my life to be productive, not wasted in pain or fatigue.

What is your current state?"I have a heart condition, and my doctor said I need to start eating healthy, lose around 70 lbs, and begin a light exercise routine in order to avert potential heart attack or diabetes.

What needs to change? (same as above - my doctor already told me)

So, the desire is to live an active life with less pain and suffering and to be productive.

The goal is healthy eating, exercise, and 70 pounds of weight loss.

Example #4 Why statement: I want to eat healthy and not be obsessed with my body image. I've struggled with an eating disorder.

Current State: my weight and fitness are pretty good. But I go through periods of gluttony when I am stressed and starvation when I am angry.

What needs to change? I need to see myself as Jesus sees me and find new ways of managing my emotions by depending on Him.

So, the desire and goal are basically the same: to depend on Jesus instead of food and see myself as he sees me.

Example #5

Why Statement: I have a habit (or addiction) that is not healthy for my body and I want to quit

Current State: I smoke a half pack of cigarettes per day

What needs to Change: I need to stop smoking.

The desire is to increase health by ending an addiction.

The goal is to stop smoking.

NOW YOUR TURN!

- ✦ What is your Why Statement? (refer back to page 3, Question #6)
- ✦ What is your current state?
- ✦ What needs to change for you to get what you desire?
- ✦ What is your goal? (Note: this may evolve. But set a goal for now, nonetheless).

Summary:

- ✦ **MY Desire**
- ✦ **MY Goal**

DEFINING "HEALTHY"

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts since, as members of one body, you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. ~ Colossians 3:12-17

WHAT IS HEALTHY?

I think that Colossians 3:12-17 is a beautiful definition of a healthy life. It covers our identity (God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved), our character (clothed in compassion and kindness …), our actions (bear with each other and forgive…), our mindset (Let the peace of Christ rule), our calling (a life of gratitude and worship that does all to the Glory of Jesus) and our community (as members of one body, you were called to peace). That is holistic health!

Though this is the ultimate overview of who we should become, I want to focus on our topic of the body and the physical.

✦ So, take a moment and write down what you think "Healthy" is. Don't personalize it; just write a definition. This is not your personal health goal. Rather, like a dictionary, what do you think "Healthy" looks like? Don't read my thoughts on this until you have written something first. You cannot expose your own subconscious (good, bad, or both) if you influence it with my thoughts first. So before reading on, write YOUR thoughts on "What is Healthy"?

Here is my definition of Physically Healthy. It's not right or wrong, just my (educated) personal definition:

- Absence from chronic disease.
- An active life, be it in lifestyle or structured exercise routines.
- Ability to think with a clear mind.
- Ability to use one's brain, skills, and talents at a level that gives personal pleasure or satisfaction.
- Ability to enjoy life, find silver linings in the midst of the pain and find personal pleasures that do not harm self, others, or nature.
- Ability to positively contribute to the world in some way (be it relational in family/friends/coworkers/church/volunteering, or having a job with impact like a doctor or educator, or doing things to help the planet like planting a garden).

You may have noticed that nowhere in my definition of healthy did I say "skinny" or even "thin." But by default, healthy is not obese, because excess fat works against almost everything I listed as part of health. The more overweight I am, the less energy I have to *do* those healthy activities, and the more my body is vulnerable to pain and disease.

According to the U.S. Surgeon General, obesity causes over 300,000 deaths per year in America. Even moderate excess weight (just 10–20 pounds for an average-height adult) raises the risk of death, especially for adults ages 30–64. Only smoking, which accounts for about 440,000 deaths annually, is linked to more U.S. deaths than obesity-related issues.

WHY FAT IS UNHEALTHY

Fat isn't just "extra padding." It stores toxins, strains joints (especially knees, feet, and spine), forces the heart to work harder, and taxes nearly every organ. Simply put, fat requires the whole body to work harder.

One study published in the *Journal of Arthritis & Rheumatism* (Dr. Stephen Messier, July 2005) found that every 1 lb. of weight loss resulted in a 4-lb. reduction in knee joint pressure. Losing just 10 lbs. meant 48,000 fewer pounds of pressure per mile walked.

So let me be clear: when I talk about fat, I'm speaking medically and in terms of health—not about appearance, shame, or cultural worth. Loving and accepting people at any size does not mean pretending excess fat is healthy. You may be healthy *in spite of* fat, but the fat itself is not healthy. It acts as a toxic dumpsite and causes damage. Even for those whose conditions contribute to weight gain, doctors still emphasize healthy eating and safe weight management.

I have friends and family of all sizes, and because I love them, I want some of them to lose weight. Not because I'm ashamed of them, but because I want them to live longer, with less pain, less fatigue, and more joy in their bodies. That's how God loves us, too. We don't earn His approval by doing good, but because He loves us, He calls us to do good—so we can experience the fullness of life He designed for us.

WHY "SKINNY" ISN'T AUTOMATICALLY HEALTHY

On the flip side, being too skinny can also be unhealthy. Our culture often equates thinness with health, but skinny can be the result of disease, psychological struggles, or simply a very fast metabolism. A thin person eating ice cream and cookies daily may be damaging their organs just as much as someone overweight. Skinny does not equal healthy.

FAT PERCENTAGE MATTERS MOST

Take a look at the fat percentage chart in the picture below—it's a decent gauge. But take it with a grain of salt. I know lean people in terrible health, and I know stockier people in decent health. Genetics plays a role, but it's not an excuse. Some gain muscle easily, some stay husky despite healthy eating, some are naturally petite. But at the end of the day, fat is fat.

Too little fat harms the body, but too much—far more common today—is extremely harmful.

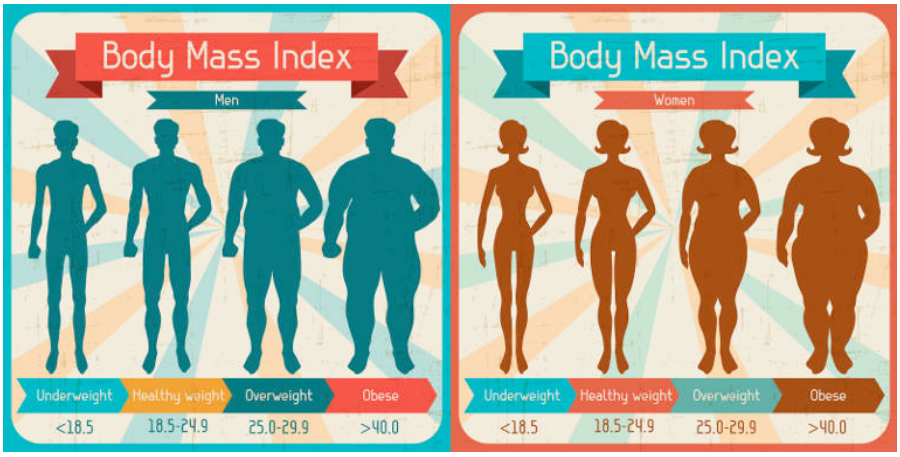
THE LIMITS OF BMI

Many gyms and doctors use BMI (Body Mass Index) to estimate weight status, but it's highly inaccurate. Muscle density, bone density, and fat placement vary widely. For example: at 5'8" and 155 lbs., am I a sprinter with lots of muscle? Someone with no muscle mass? Someone with a small waist but bigger curves? BMI alone doesn't tell the truth.

A better indicator is the **waist-to-height ratio**: if your waist is half your height or less, you're in the healthy zone. Why? Because belly fat is the most dangerous kind of fat. Even if your DNA stores fat in thighs, hips, or chest and spares your waistline, your health risks are lower. But fat stored *anywhere* in excess can still cause problems—so keep pursuing healthy habits to give your body the best chance.

If the picture on the right shows you in the obese category (or beyond), your health issues are either caused or worsened by fat. I know people who refuse to admit this, but the research is clear. The faster we acknowledge the problem, the sooner we can address it.

So now, go back to the definition of "healthy" you wrote earlier. Do you see any revisions you want to make? Add them above, and refine your personal definition of health.



DEFINING "FOOD"

Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." ~John 6:35

Jesus answered, "It is written,'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." ~ Matthew 4:4

One goal of this book is to re-train our brains to think in a new way. When we look at the truth, the lies become evident. Then, we must choose to replace the lies with the truth in our mental constructs. Some of these mental exchanges will be about physical health. Others will be about identity and spiritual health. Today, we are addressing one of the most fundamental definitions of our physical survival and well-being: What is "Food"?

Jesus calls Himself "the bread of life." He even goes so far as to tell a woman He met at a well that if she drinks the water that He gives, she'll never thirst again. He tells His disciples, "Eat My flesh and drink My blood," when He establishes the sacrament of communion or "eucharist."

Food is that which empowers us for life. In the Spiritual life, Jesus Himself is our food and drink. He is what gives us life itself. In

this physical life, we need nutrients to keep the body alive and healthy. The better quality food we give to our bodies, the better quality body we will have.

Based on people's behaviors, I've observed that the common concept of "food" (at least in American culture) is essentially anything that tastes good, has calories, and can be ingested without causing instant death. Many people's only gauge of whether or not a food is healthy is calorie count and fat content - IF they even check that. The problem is that fat and calories are not the only unhealthy thing in food. Much of our modern food has loads of CHEMICALS that slowly but surely damage the body. The practice of eating based on calories allows people to basically ignore whether or not a food product even has anything in it other than chemicals. We wonder why we're depressed, moody, achy and get sick so easily when so much of what we give our bodies to live on is actually doing more harm than good.

I think that the best thing we can do is to make a shift in our thinking that asks, "Does this thing I've ingested empower my body's life, or does the body have to work to survive what I have ingested?" I will be using a few terms fairly often throughout the book. One is "real food," and the other is "fake food" or "negative food." "Real food" provides what a body needs to stay alive - which is far more than just calories. These could be nutrients, fiber, clean protein, healthy fat, micronutrients, phytonutrients, vitamins, minerals and even the sugar found in fruits and vegetables.

"Fake food" actually taxes the body. It does damage to the body when we eat it instead of empowering the body for life. It causes harm, and the body has to fight the damage done to survive in spite of it. Our bodies are incredibly resilient, but do not think for even one second that the ailments you complain about, the aches and pains of aging, the diseases, and even depression and PMS are not related to what you eat. Each thing we ingest either helps or harms us. What we eat will either help the body to prevent or fight ailments and gain health … or it will cause or aggravate ailments. And, if you are a super healthy eater and the ailments come, you can be assured of this: had you been an unhealthy eater, the ailments would be far worse.

Today, I want to start talking about your food habits as they are right now. Before you start making changes, let's see where you are currently. It is a "look in the mirror" … an honest self-evaluation. Don't answer these questions based on the "should be." This process can only work if you're honest in the here and now, as it is. Soon enough, we will begin making changes.

- ✦ What do you consider the healthy things that you typically eat during a week?
- ✦ What do you consider the unhealthy things that you typically eat during a week?
- ✦ What does your typical eating routine look like? (Write it out!)
- ✦ What are your Personal Food Weaknesses (carb-a-holic? Sweet tooth? Drink alcohol or soda daily? etc.)
- ✦ What bad food habit(s) do you have … that you know of? (Do you eat within 3 hours of going to sleep? Do you eat while watching TV? Do you snack or "pick?" etc.)

We will discuss this more throughout the book. However, in the columns below, write down anything in your weekly eating that would obviously fit the category of "Real food" or the category of "fake" or "negative" food. I'll give you a couple of hints about fake food: Food is "fake food" if it is:

- A frozen meal entrée. … In the snack isle. ….Fried. ….Made of white flour. ….High in sugar (and is not a piece of fruit). …. Deli meat or meat that is not in its natural shape (this is arguable, but we'll talk more about it later. But for now, just realize that most meats not in their natural shape are pretty 'not healthy'). … Soda or 'energy drinks.' … ETC
- There is *much* more to say but for most people. That will be plenty to get started.

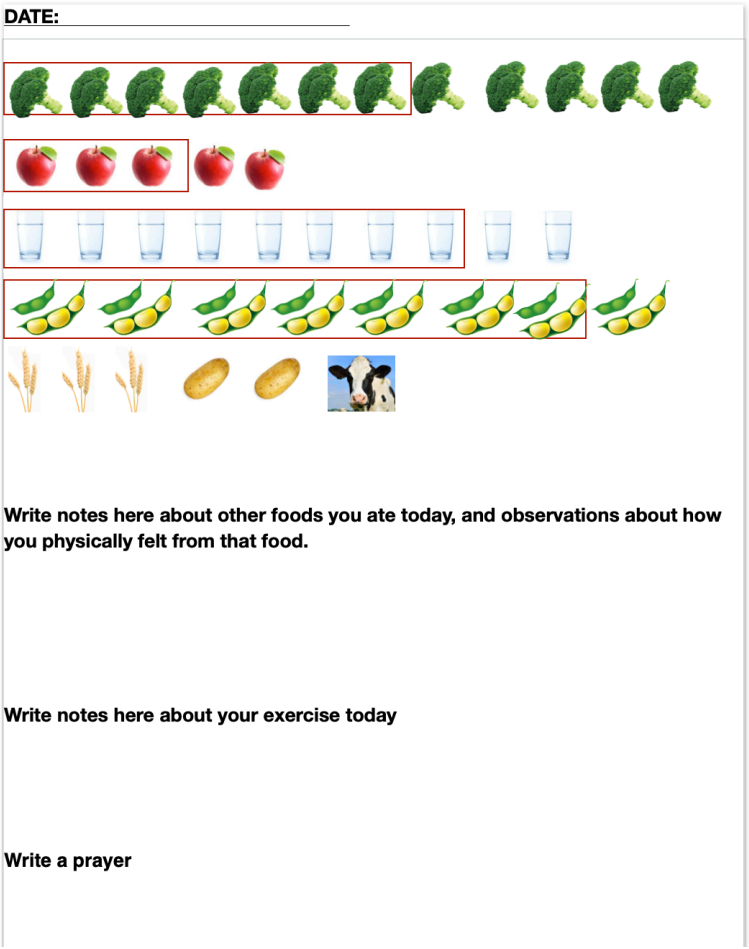
Real Foods

Fake Foods

WELCOME TO YOUR DAILY FOOD JOURNAL

But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed, and its destruction was complete. ~Jesus, Luke 6:49

The Lord has made this day! We will rejoice and be glad in it! ~Psalm 118:24



Date:

Veggies (goal 8+) 𝍸 |||

Fruit (goal 3+) |||

Water (goal 6+) 𝍸 plus a glass of lemonade, 2 coffees, and

Clean Protein (goal 5) |||

Grains ||

Potatoes || Mashed potatoes

Dairy | yogurt

Food Notes: I also had a glass of lemonade with lunch and 2 Hershey's kisses after dinner

Exercise Tracker:
25 squats
10 minute walk at lunch
stretches for 5 min.

Prayer:
Heavenly Father thank you for loving me enough to care about my physical well being. Help me to love you enough to do what I need to do, to strengthen my body for the work you have set before me. Help me to find joy in the journey, and experience you in each moment. Amen

Learning about nutrition is step one. But putting it into practice is the only way that it will make a difference. Many diet plans focus on restricting calories or eliminating this or that kind of food. Rather than doing that, the D4V approach is to place your focus on what is positive instead of negative …focus on what TO do, instead of what not to do. We want to focus on eating healthy instead of dieting tricks and fads. Fads come and go. Good nutrition is good nutrition - always.

If you focus on what you should eat, and aim to get all of that good food into our bodies, THEN, if you have room left, go ahead and have a 'negative food' treat if you still crave one. I've created a tool to help you do this that you can download at Designed4Victory.com. The concept is this:

- Each category of healthy food has a picture to represent it (veggies, fruits, protein, etc.)
- The pictures inside the red box are my recommended daily minimum servings of that kind of food.
- When you eat a serving of something in that category, cross out one of the pictures.
- When you've eaten the suggested minimum servings of health-enhancing foods per day, feel free to eat a negative food if you'd like.

However, my challenge to you is to cross off ALL the healthy food servings (not just the ones in the red box) on your daily journal page before eating any negative foods. At that point, you may not even be hungry for negative foods anymore. But, if you do choose to eat negative foods, at least you will have given your body plenty of life-giving, strengthening foods first.

Along with the food symbols to cross off, the journal pages also include space to jot down notes about your overall eating for the day, your exercise, and a space for a short prayer. It dawned on me very late in life that I wasn't praying about my dieting, health habits, etc. How silly! If I really believe that God cares about my body, isn't this issue worthy to be discussed with Him?

As I go over the pictures and what they represent, you'll get a mini nutrition lesson as well.

THE BROCCOLI REPRESENTS ONE SERVING OF VEGETABLES.

The chart shows 10 servings of veggies per day, with a minimum of 7 servings to each before you eat negative foods. But it's nearly impossible to eat too many veggies. You will get so full, yet your body will process them as needed fuel. One serving of veggies is about:

•1 cup of raw veggies.

• ½ cup of cooked veggies.

- 1.5 cups leafy greens/salad (most of the volume is air).
- 1/4 cup cooked greens (like spinach) because of how its volume condenses when cooked.

THE APPLE REPRESENTS FRUIT.

Diabetics should be careful about fruit. For the rest of us, we can have up to 5 servings per day.

•1 serving is 1 item like an apple, orange, or banana.

•Or 1/3 to 1/2 cup Berries or Melon

- Juice does NOT count as a serving of fruit - even if the label says it does. This symbol only represents actual fruit - fiber, sugar and all - not just juice.

Do you crave sugar or bread products? Whether it's candy, cake, bagels, pasta or sweets of any kind, Fruit may be the key to beating your sugar addiction. Studies show that people who crave sugar or carbs can 'kick the habit' by eating 3-5 servings of fruit per day. Most people's sugar cravings subside within a week.

THE SOYBEANS REPRESENT PROTEINS.

I am a meat eater, but there is much to be said about non-animal sources of protein. It won't take you a lot of research to discover the benefits. So, I've used the soybean symbol instead of a meat symbol for protein. There is debate about how much protein a person should eat per day, ranging from .8g to 1.2g per kg of body weight. The functional medicine docs tend to suggest 1g to make it easy. For us Americans, that's 1g per every 2.2 pounds. So, for a 150lb person, that's 68g per day. Now, if you are severely overweight, this method breaks down since as your portions should not be in proportion to your weight. And People who have an active lifestyle (frequent exercise or manual labor) need a little more than average. Now if you're seeking a truly "ketosis" lifestyle as with "keto" eating, you basically need to eat nothing but protein and fat. This is controversial. I've seen some very interesting science to support it, but its highly unrealistic for probably 95% of people, so short of that, just eat a lot of CLEAN protein, avoid pork, and keep the red meat lower than the other proteins.

Protein is made up of Amino Acids. There are 9 ESSENTIAL Amino Acids. If you don't get them, you cannot survive very long. Animal proteins are the most complete sources of ALL Amino Acids. If you are a vegetarian or want to minimize your animal consumption, you need to make sure to combine your plant foods to get a complete array of amino acids in your daily diet.

HEIGHT TO WEIGHT RATIO CHART

FEMALE				MALE			
HEIGHT	Low	Target	High	HEIGHT	Low	Target	High
4' 10"	100	115	131	5' 1"	123	134	145
4' 11"	101	117	134	5' 2"	125	137	148
5' 0"	103	120	137	5' 3"	127	139	151
5' 1"	105	122	140	5' 4"	129	142	155
5' 2"	108	125	144	5' 5"	131	145	159
5' 3"	111	128	148	5' 6"	133	148	163
5' 4"	114	133	152	5" 7"	135	151	167
5' 5"	117	136	156	5' 8"	137	154	171
5' 6"	120	140	160	5' 9"	139	157	175
5' 7"	123	143	164	5' 10"	141	160	179
5 '8"	126	146	167	5' 11"	144	164	183
5' 9"	129	150	170	6' 0"	147	167	187
5' 10"	132	153	173	6' 1"	150	171	192
5' 11"	135	156	176	6' 2"	153	175	197
6' 0"	138	159	179	6' 3"	157	179	202

1. Target weight (see chart) _____
2. Divide that by 2.2 _____= Daily Protein Goal (If you're an athlete, or do manual labor, divide by 2 because you need more protein. If you are high fat, low muscle, divide by .8
3. Divide Goal Daily Protein by 7 _____
4. Your answer will = 1 protein symbol on the Food tracking chart.

To the right is a chart that I find very helpful. There are 9 Essential Amino Acids. Six of these are not typically deficient in plants. However, there are 3 for which we need to combine plants in order to get them all. These 3 are Lysine, Threonine, and Methionine. What you see in this chart is that the foods in columns A & C can both be paired with the foods in column B to make a complete protein. Pairing foods in order to ingest complete proteins is a really healthy practice.

One more note - I'm not a big fan of the grains on this chart (which will be discussed soon), especially wheat, oats, and rye, because of their effect on your insulin levels or glycemic index. So, although pairing grains with beans/legumes creates a complete protein, you can also pair nuts and seeds with beans/legumes to accomplish an even healthier protein source.

Grains: No Lysine Or Threonine	Beans/ Legumes No Lysine	Nuts/Seeds No Methionine
Oats	Beans	Walnuts
Rice	Lentils	Cashews
Pasta	Peanuts	Seeds:
Rye	Chick Peas	Sunflower
Corn	Peas	Sesame
Whole Wheat	Soy Beans	Pumpkin
		Other

PROTEIN REFERENCE GUIDE

Non-Animal Protein

As a quick reference, **9–11g of protein** equals about:

- **Nuts** – 1/3 cup (a handful). Combine with other proteins for balance.
- **Seeds** – 1/4 cup. Incomplete protein, so pair with other foods.
- **Tofu** – 1/2 cup (≈10g). Excellent vegetarian option.
- **Quinoa** – 1 cup cooked (≈8g). Complete protein with all 9 essential amino acids. Contains 5g fiber, so it can count as either a protein or grain. Versatile—use as a rice substitute or even as a hot cereal.
- **Beans** – 2/3 cup (≈7–9g per 1/2 cup, depending on type). Affordable and filling.
- **Protein Powder** – Check your brand's label for grams per serving. Best mixed with water, oat, almond, soy, or coconut milk. (Oat milk is thicker and avoids some additives found in commercial almond and soy)
  - **Whey protein** – Complete amino acid profile, easy to digest, and doesn't carry milk's negative effects.
  - **Pea protein** – Good vegetarian option, but not complete.
  - **Whey + Pea blend** – Strong combination for full amino acids.
  - **Avoid bottled protein shakes** like *Boost* or *Ensure* unless prescribed by a doctor. The shelf-stabilizing chemicals outweigh benefits. Fresh powder-based shakes are cleaner and healthier.

Animal Protein

While meat is protein-rich, most American meat is poorly raised. Aim to purchase:

Grass-fed (best: *grass-finished*), meaning cows never ate corn or molasses.

- Organic or certified humanely raised, no antibiotics/hormones.
- On a tight budget: choose at least "no antibiotics or hormones."

Eggs

- 2 eggs = 12g protein (with the yolk).
- Affordable, nutrient-rich, and one of the best budget proteins.
- Look for labels like *humanely raised* or *pasture-raised*. If unavailable, *cage-free* is still better than caged.

Poultry

- 3.5 oz = 27g protein.
- Count 2 oz chicken as ~12g (1 serving).
- Choose properly raised poultry when possible; otherwise, buy the best label you can afford.

Fish

- 3.5 oz = 6–18g protein, depending on type.
- High in protein and healthy fats.
- Avoid *bottom feeders* (catfish, shellfish). Consider them more of an occasional treat.

Beef

- 3.5 oz = 21–28g protein (depending on cut).
  - 70% lean = 15g
  - 85% lean = 26g
- Should be eaten sparingly—think *special treat* rather than staple.
- Industrial beef comes from sick, corn-fed, antibiotic-laden cows.
- Grass-fed/grass-finished beef is cleaner, healthier, and becoming more widely available.

Form matters:

- Sausage/ground beef = highest risk for bacteria. Cook thoroughly.
- Steak = safer, less processed, can be eaten slightly pink.

Pork (Why I Abstain)

- **Health:** Pork meat carries toxins, is high in fat, hard to digest, and linked to higher risks of heart disease and cancer.
- **Cleanliness:** Even well-cooked pork may retain harmful elements.
- **Humanitarian:** 97% of pork is factory-raised under cruel conditions. Pigs are highly intelligent, comparable to dogs, making their treatment especially troubling.
- For both health and ethical reasons, I choose to live pork-free.

Bottom line: Build your protein intake around **non-animal sources** when possible, supplement with high-quality eggs, poultry, fish, or beef occasionally, and avoid pork.

WATER!

Each glass represents 10 oz of water. An adult should be drinking 60-90 oz of water per day. You may choose to start your day with coffee, but if you drink a glass of water first, it is really good for your gut health. Your water glass count is water only; not soda, not diet soda, not coffee, juice or sports drinks; just plain water. The one cheat here is tea. If you have 10 oz of unsweetened tea, it is best to brew it yourself; it can count as water. Would you clean your floor with orange juice? Of course not. You'd use water. Our bodies need water to clean them, too.

ITEMS FOR TRACKING, BUT NOT NECESSARY TO EAT

The following items are on your chart for tracking only. There is no minimum because you DON'T NEED these things. But there IS a Maximum. The goal is to not have more servings than are shown on the chart. Eating these items would be better than having negative food. So, if you're raging hungry and you'd happily eat your 2nd potato of the day instead of a brownie, then choose the potato! Just make sure to track it.

BREAD AND GRAINS

If weight loss is a goal—or fatigue is part of your daily life—you may do well to **eliminate bread products** (bread, bagels, pasta, pizza, etc.).

Your body **needs fiber**, unless your doctor has contraindicated it for a gut condition, OR you're doing a keto diet in which case you actually don't need fiber. But for the 98% of us who can't do pure keto, fiber is essential.

DON'T FALL FOR THE WHOLE GRAINS LIE! 'Whole Grains' is literally no more than an advertising word. It means nothing. It is not regulated. It has no science. What matters is the nutrition label: look for FIBER content. In a few pages we'll examine nutrition labels. Fiber doesn't need to come from bread. When you're eating plenty of vegetables and fruits, you're already getting fiber. Bread manufacturers would like you to believe that wheat, oats, and rye are the best sources, but they carry a host of problems.

Modern flours are so finely ground and over-processed that they are **very quickly converted into sugar**. And most breads and bread products also contain **added sugar**, usually in the form of corn syrup.

Later in this book we'll dive into the science of sugar, but here's the big takeaway:
Anything that is, or converts into sugar (other than fruit and veggies), puts serious strain on your **pancreas, liver, and brain**.

FOOD—NOT ALCOHOL—IS NOW THE #1 CAUSE OF LIVER DISEASE.

Functional Medicine doctors often see disease reversal (including brain-related conditions) when **sugar, bread, and dairy are eliminated**.

GOOD OPTION GRAINS

When it comes to grains, the **glycemic load (GL)** is more useful than the glycemic index (GI).

- **GI** only measures how fast food raises blood sugar.
- **GL** accounts for both the *quality and quantity* of carbs, plus how they interact in your body.

GL Ranges

- **Low GL**: 10 or less
- Medium GL: 11–19
- High GL: 20+

Out of more than 100 grains, only a few have a GL under 10. Even "healthier" grains may contain fiber and nutrients, but they still spike insulin and cause downstream problems.

Food	GI	GL
Fresh corn	35	**1.8**
Oat flour	25	**3**
Soya flour	25	**4.5**
Grains (sprouted)	15	**6.2**
Flavored Rice	70	**6.7**
Bran (wheat, oat)	15	**6.8**
Lasagna	47	**7**
Sunflower (seeds)	35	**7**
Quinoa (cooked)	35	**7.3**
Wild rice (black)	35	**7.3**
Durum wheat vermicelli	35	**8.1**
Udon noodles	62	**8.5**
Plain Oatmeal (steel cut or regular - n	60	**9**
Oatmeal (cooked on the water)	60	**9**
Linen	35	**9.7**
Yellow corn	65	**10.1**

GLUTEN

Gluten acts like **glue in the digestive tract**. Most of us don't need to go entirely gluten-free, but reducing gluten as much as possible is wise.

If you keep grains in your diet:

- Eliminate **white grains** (bleached and over-processed).
- Choose better options like **brown rice, steel-cut oats, quinoa**, or breads/cereals made without wheat (*Ezekiel Bread* or homemade recipes online).
- When buying bread/cereal, aim for 6+ grams of insoluble fiber per serving and low sugar.
  - Brands like **Kashi, Trader Joe's, Fiber One**, or traditional bran cereals are often good (but always read the nutrition label).
  - Don't trust labels like "made with whole grains"—that's a **marketing trick**. Always check fiber and sugar content.

The **one exception** to all of this is actively training athletes: growing teenage boys, high school and college athletes, marathoners, endurance trainers, or anyone doing hours of high-intensity workouts per week. They burn so much fuel that bread carbs don't cause as much damage.

Still, even athletes do better avoiding modern bread products and getting calories from **protein, vegetables, fruits, nuts, fats, and high-fiber grains**.

SOURDOUGH

My favorite "cheat" is **sourdough**.

- Store-bought sourdough has the same problems as regular bread.
- Homemade sourdough, however, contains **gut-healthy bacteria** and is easier to digest. Making it at home is simpler than most people think and worth the effort for both health and flavor.

POTATOES

Potatoes aren't grains, but they are **very starchy**. They're not a great choice for weight loss, but I sometimes substitute potatoes for bread (for example, a few potato cubes with scrambled eggs).

•Potatoes are gluten-free (bonus).

•But both white and sweet potatoes cause a **high insulin response**, so moderation is key.

GL of Potatoes (boiled vs. baked):

•Boiled white potato = 25 GL

- Boiled sweet potato = 46 GL
- Baked russet = 33 GL
- Baked sweet potato = 64 GL

DAIRY

Milk and butter **are not healthy**, despite what the dairy industry advertises. Milk's calcium is poorly absorbed compared to calcium from leafy greens, broccoli, or fish.

Other issues:

•**Lactose** is problematic for everyone. It increases mucus (bad for allergies and organs), worsens inflammation (bad for all sickness, disease, and pain), and many people lack the enzymes to digest it.

•**Modern dairy is contaminated**: cows are pumped with hormones and antibiotics, which pass into their milk.

•**Pasteurization**, while it kills bacteria, also creates other health issues.

CHEESE

Here's the good news: cheese is "okay." It still counts as dairy (with some lactose and plenty of fat), but due to unique chemical properties, it doesn't carry all the same problems as milk.

Enjoy cheese in moderation, but if you suffer from sinus problems or major health conditions, eliminate all dairy—including cheese, yogurt, and kefir.

YOUGURT & KEFIR

- Can be beneficial due to live bacteria.
- Always check the label:
  - Avoid yogurts loaded with sugar.
  - Look for listed bacteria cultures (e.g., *Streptococcus thermophilus, Lactobacillus*). If they're not listed, don't buy it—it's basically ice cream.
- A good yogurt can serve as a healthy ice cream substitute and a stepping stone to healthier eating

NEUTRAL FOODS

Some foods don't need to be tracked but are safe in moderation:

- Coffee, tea, herbs, and spices
- Non-dairy milks (soy, rice, almond, coconut, oat)
- Olive oil, balsamic vinegar, cider vinegar
- Certain salad dressings/sauces (as long as they contain no MSG, hydrogenated oils, or high-fructose corn syrup)

NEGATIVE FOODS

After you've eaten your **minimum daily health-enhancing foods**, if you're still hungry, you may choose some "negative foods." Think of this not as restriction but as **empowerment**—the more nutrient-dense foods you eat, the stronger your body will be against bacteria, viruses, disease, and fatigue.

Examples of negative foods:

- **Sugary**: cake, candy, cookies, juice, soda, pastries, doughnuts, etc.
- **Bread products**: bagels, tortillas, pasta, pizza, croissants, crackers, cereal, sandwiches, white rice, etc.
- **Low-quality meats**: sausage, bacon, burgers, chicken nuggets, deli meats, cow's milk.
- **High-fat fried foods**: french fries, fried chicken, deep-fried anything, cheese-heavy meals, ice cream, junky salad dressings.
- **Over-processed foods**: boxed meals, frozen dinners, fast food.
- Anything from the snack or soda aisle.

We'll cover negative foods more deeply later. For now, focus on filling your diet with what strengthens your body until there's no room left for what tears it down.

TRACKING

You can track your foods on the provided chart—or simply use journal tick-marks for servings. I'm also working on an app for this system. (Check **designed4victory.com** or **patreon.com/d4v** for updates.)

Key takeaway: Choose high-fiber, low-sugar grains sparingly, limit dairy, and focus your plate on whole, health-enhancing foods.

HOW TO READ A NUTRITION LABEL & THE INGREDIENTS LIST

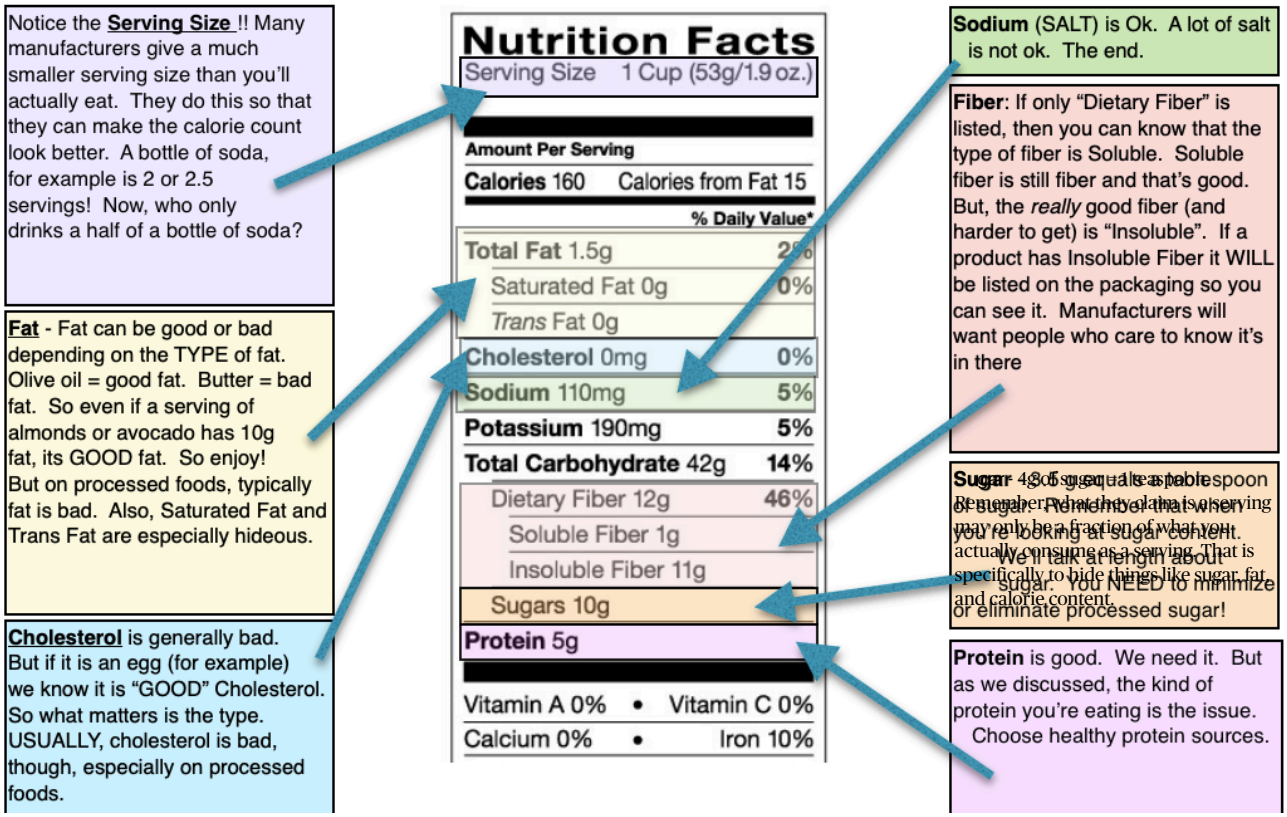
Self-control happens at the store - not in your home.
For, once you buy something, you (or someone you care about) will inevitably eat it.

So, let me say it again - SELF CONTROL HAPPENS AT THE STORE, NOT IN YOUR HOME! If you know it's bad, JUST DON'T BUY IT!!!!

If you are not one to read food labels, don't be ashamed - you are not alone. I can't believe how many intelligent and educated people I know who have never read a nutrition label or ingredients list. However, you really need to start doing it. So, here are some quick tips on reading the only two parts of food packaging worth reading. IGNORE EVERYTHING on food packaging, EXCEPT the nutrition label and ingredients list. I don't care what's on the packaging, except the words "organic," "certified humanely raised," or "gluten-free," and what's on the nutrition label and the ingredients list.

There are a few simple rules of thumb when it comes to ingredient lists.

1. LESS IS BETTER - the simpler the ingredients list, the better!
2. If you need a master's degree in organic chemistry to read the label, put it back on the shelf. A good ingredients list should be fairly simple to read.
3. If the ingredients have "ites" and "ates" on it - not good. Nitrates, Nitrites, etc, they're all carcinogens and harmful to your body. Certain foods are typically so jam-packed with ites and ates (like hot dogs and deli meat) that if you see a package that says "No Nitrites and No Nitrates," then that's a good thing. You can feel better about buying that (better but not optimal).
4. Don't buy anything with Monosodium Glutamate (MSG). If you see MSG or Monosodium Glutamate in the ingredients, put it back. There are lots of words that can be substituted as well. Food manufacturers can hide it in the ingredients list. A quick rule of thumb is that MSG is usually anything that is 'flavor boosted' or is a high-intensity flavor. Soups and salad dressings are typical offenders. Super intense flavored chips and crackers also usually have it. Look also for anything with "Gluta" in the word: GLUTAmic Acid, Potassium Glutamate, etc. For more on this, I suggest going to this article: http://articles.mercola.com/sites/articles/archive/2009/04/21/msg-is-this-silent-killer-lurking-in-your-kitchen-cabinets.aspx scroll to the end and see all the code words manufacturers substitute for MSG. Now for the Nutrition Label. Let's look at one and dissect it. The explanations are color coded to the label



This is just a small example of how deceiving packaging can be.

The fist column is Cheetos Flamin Hot - an OBVIOUSLY terrible fake-food. The other 3 labels are touted as "healthier' or just all together "healthy" but look at the fat content, the types of fat, sugar, and salt.

1. The 2 snacks are very similar in the nutrition label. 28g = 1oz, so with the same serving size listed : Both have the same saturated fat count, while the "natural" has more sugar and salt than the 'flamin hot'. However, a glance at their ingredient list shows that the flamin' hot has MSG. And ANYTHING WITH MSG AS AN INGREDIENT NEEDS TO BE ILLEGAL and never eaten!
2. The "Healthy Choice" meals have saturated fat, added sugar, and over 20% of the RDA for daily sodium intake. Not to mention what we discussed about the ingredients being ":over processed: and depleted of nutritional content, and harder for your body to digest and utilize.

So just become a reader. Ignore the fancy words on the packaging and read the ingredients and the nutrition label. It will take some time at first, but it will get easier for 2 reasons.

1. **You'll start finding your new 'standard purchases'** - for example, if you've been buying Skippy Peanut Butter, but you take the time to read some labels and find a peanut butter that is both affordable and has NO ingredients except peanuts and salt, then whenever you buy peanut butter in the future, you won't have to read labels anymore. You just get the brand-item you know has no added sugar and other crap.
2. With a little research you'll discover key words to avoid on nutrition labels, like MSG. So reading will become easier.

MENTAL SHIFT : DON'T "DENY YOURSELF" ... RATHER, EMBRACE YOUR HEALTH

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me." ~Matthew 16:24

Before you begin setting goals, I'd like you to consider a shift in perspective that will set you up for greater success.

As a Christian, you may be familiar with scripture or teaching that says, "Deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Me." But I believe this instruction of Christ has often been misunderstood. Many Christians throughout time have thought that to "deny yourself" means we should deny ourselves all pleasure. But God invented pleasure. So I am quite sure that theologies which focus on the denial of all pleasure are not what Jesus was talking about in Matthew 16.

To "deny yourself, pick up your cross, and follow Me" does mean that there will be times when we deny ourselves things that are pleasurable. And for some, it has even meant terrible physical agony and martyrdom. However, I am convinced that no one is called to create their own agony or go looking for a way to become a martyr. Rather, as we follow Christ, we are called to put Him and His Kingdom's work first, above our self-interest, even if it means enduring hardship or pain. That is the way of the cross.

We will talk more about pleasure later. For now, I want to flip the language of Christ's instruction into a positive statement instead of a negative one. Saying "no" to the things that enslave us—such as food, porn, alcohol, TV, gossip, drama, self-pity, and fear—frees us to say "yes" to the things that are truly good for us, such as healthy food, prayer, worship, service, scripture reading, healthy friendships, loving sex, and courage.

Often, we think of denying ourselves as a difficult task, and in one sense it is. To deny our carnal nature (the part of us that craves physical pleasures) can be quite a challenge! But following Jesus does not have to be drudgery. It can be bliss. Every "sacrifice" given up has a far greater reward in return. Sometimes that reward is not seen until the next life. But most often, the reward can be experienced here and now.

For example:

- Denying ourselves a diet full of sugar and fat may be difficult, but it rewards us with reduced inflammation, which causes pain and disease.
- A healthier body equals less pain and more pleasure in day-to-day life.
- A healthier body also enables us to contribute more to our loved ones and to society, which creates mental and emotional satisfaction.

When we say "no" to the things that damage us, our hands are free to receive Jesus and live according to our design. We can trust Him in every aspect and moment of life, and the joy that comes from this far outweighs momentary, damaging pleasures.

This journey is not about denying yourself. It is about embracing healthy choices. The more we embrace what is healthy, the less room there will be for what is harmful.

And our success matters. Weight-related ailments are reaching epidemic proportions. Typically, when Christians speak about treating the body as a temple, they refer to abstaining from harmful substances such as drugs, cigarettes, or drunkenness. Few people think of food in the same category as drugs, drunkenness, and adultery. But what we eat can do terrible damage to the body.

According to the CDC:

- Cigarette smoking causes more than 480,000 deaths each year in the United States. This accounts for about one in five deaths in America.
- Obesity-related deaths total 300,000 per year. The actual number may be far higher since being overweight increases the risk of acquiring deadly diseases such as heart disease and cancer, each with its own CDC totals.
- Being overweight also increases the severity of these diseases. No matter how the numbers are calculated, the fact remains that diseases are more frequent and more severe in those who are overweight.

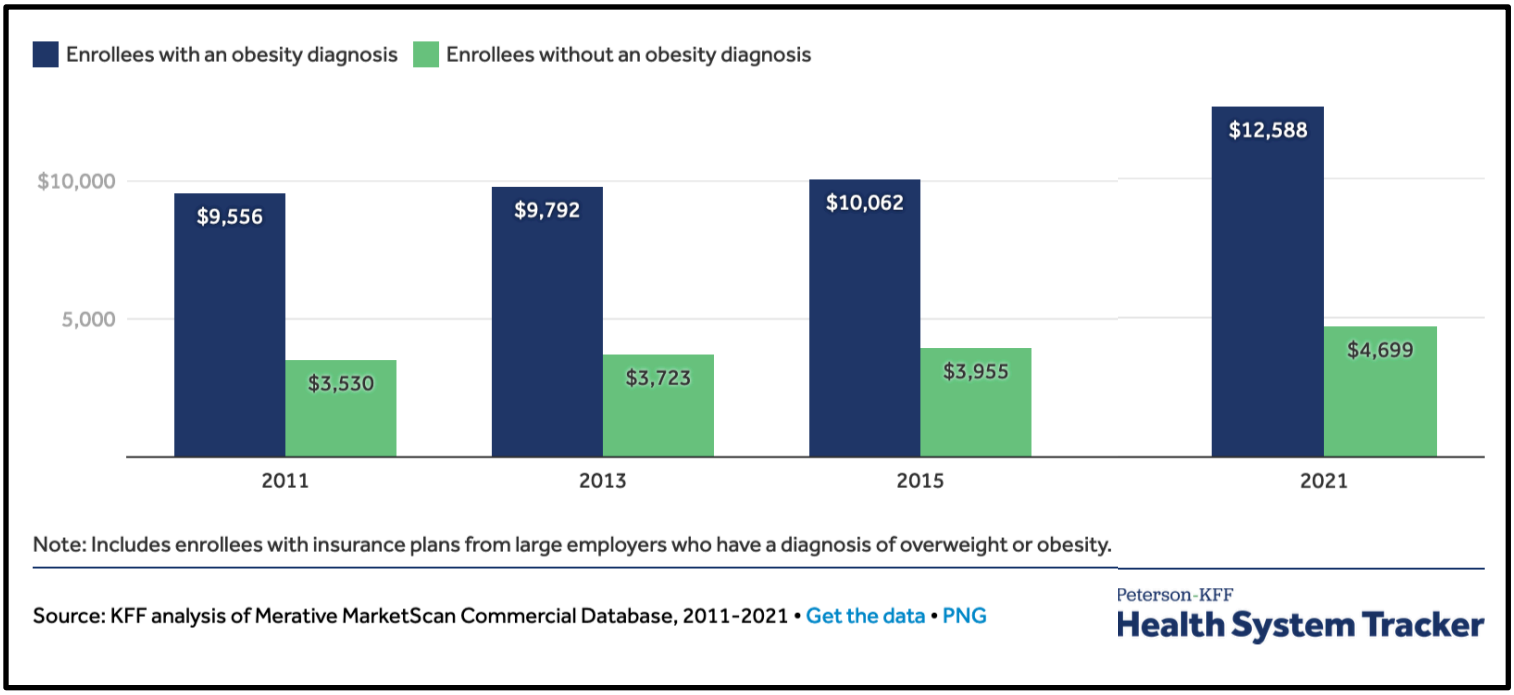
The Surgeon General reports: "If you are obese, your risk for a number of serious health problems multiplies. Eight obesity-related diseases account for a staggering 75 percent of healthcare costs in the US. These diseases include Type 2 Diabetes, Non-alcoholic Fatty Liver Disease (NAFLD), Hypertension, Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome, Lipid problems, Dementia, Heart Disease, and Cancer (especially breast, endometrial, colon, gallbladder, prostate, and kidney). Many more could be added to that

list. Obesity also increases your risk for asthma, sleep disorders (including sleep apnea), depression, pregnancy complications, and poor surgical outcomes." (http://articles.mercola.com/sites/articles/archive/2013/12/21/obesity-death-risk.aspx)

There is also growing evidence that diet may contribute to brain conditions such as Alzheimer's, Dementia, ADHD, and Autism.

In 2016, the aggregate medical cost due to obesity among adults in the United States was $260.6 billion. The medical costs for obese individuals are much higher than for those within a healthy weight range.

But beyond statistics, there is another factor rarely measured: the damage caused by the types of foods people eat. When we fill our bodies with pesticides, hormones, antibiotics, chemical preservatives, and ingredients that require a PhD in chemistry to pronounce, our bodies must fight to stay alive. This constant fight strains the organs, compromises the immune system, and adds to the body's inflammation load. And inflammation plays a role in every negative health condition—from a stubbed toe, to heart disease, to Alzheimer's. This impact is too great to be captured in numbers. My opinion is that the problem of "what we eat" is far more extensive than scientific agencies can estimate.



As Christians, we must include nutrition in the conversation about how we honor God with our bodies. We are all going to die, but how and when should not be taken lightly. You cannot dismiss responsibility by saying, "When my time comes, God will take me off this planet one way or another." Really? That may be true if we live in obedient relationship with Him. But if we are irresponsible—drinking and driving, playing Russian roulette, stepping in front of a bus, or eating ourselves into an early grave—that is not on God. That is on us.

Furthermore, your fitness (or lack of it) affects both your quality of life and your ability to serve as Christ's ambassador. If we bring pain and disease upon ourselves through poor habits, we limit what we can do in this life. If that inability to serve is your own fault, you cannot blame God. You cannot say, "Well, I guess my diabetes (or other condition) was meant to be," when it was preventable or even reversible. You have been given this one life. If you blame God for health-related pain or disease caused by your own lifestyle, stop. The time to take personal responsibility for your body is now.

I know I sound harsh right now, but many people will not wake up to a gentle alarm. It is my duty to sound the wake-up call. Though I want to comfort my readers, there are moments when I must sound the alarm. Your life—and even your death—may literally be at stake.

What you do with your body and your life affects not only you, but also the well-being of the Body of Christ, the Church.

- Are you able to contribute?
- Or are you wasting your time here on earth?
- Are you able to serve?
- Or do your self-inflicted health issues keep you home?

Though this is a hard reality check, it is not meant to guilt anyone unnecessarily. My goal is to help you stop blaming others, stop blaming God, and start taking responsibility for the things you can change.

"Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction." — Galatians 6:7-8a

BUT TAKE HEART!

Here you are, taking steps toward better health! Do not give yourself a guilt trip. No matter what is in your past, let's cheer for the decisions you are making now and celebrate every step forward.

Galatians 6:8b-9 continues: "Whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time, we will reap a harvest if we do not give up!"

Your first step may have been purchasing this book. Now you are reading it. You have even discovered your WHY and set at least one goal. You are doing something to change. So no matter your state or situation, be encouraged if you have begun the process. Do not stop. Keep putting one foot in front of the other and see where God takes you.

Time for Reflection

When you think of dieting or giving up a bad habit (too much TV, too much alcohol, smoking, gossip…), the mentality is that you are giving something up.

- What, at this moment, are you attempting to "give up"?
- Now, shift your perspective. When you "give up" that thing, you make room to embrace something else.
- You may let go of an hour of TV to embrace an hour of time with your kids.
- You may let go of cake to embrace a body energized by fresh foods.
- You may give up cigarettes to embrace healthy lungs, more energy, more money saved, and longer life.

What will you be embracing as you give up what you listed above?

It is important to define what you will embrace, or else you may end up filling the void with the same harmful habit or with something worse.

"Stop sinning, or something worse may happen to you." — Jesus, John 5:14
"When a demon is cast out, it leaves. When it returns and finds the house unoccupied, it brings seven other spirits to go in and live there." — Jesus, Matthew 12:43-45

This does not mean we should avoid "cleaning house." It does mean that when we let go of harmful things, we need to replace them with something good—something of God.

So, once again: What will you be embracing as you give up what you listed above?

WELCOME TO YOUR WEEKLY GOAL SHEET

"Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food and treat your servants in accordance with what you see." ~Daniel 1:12-13

I am going to hand you a tool, but don't begin using it just yet. The following few pages will explain *how* to use it. It is a very empowering tool - and hopefully an enlightening few pages. I suspect that most readers will use this tool for dieting and fitness. However, it can also be used for other health goals, such as quitting an addiction, eliminating bad habits, and starting good habits. Each week, write out and answer the following questions on a clean page of your journal:

- ✦ Date
- ✦ What ONE thing will you add or subtract this week?
- ✦ PROS & CONS (identify them in advance so you can be prepared in the face of temptation)
- ✦ Your NON FOOD Reward for Success
- ✦ Your Consequence for Cheating
- ✦ Are there STEPS you need to take to set yourself up for success with this goal?
- ✦ NOTES and/or PRAYER
- ✦ Optional Measurements (Suggested monthly, not weekly. And note: CONSTIPATION AND BLOATING are real killers of tracking progress. So if you can tell that either of those is present (due to hormones, ailment, or even a bad cheat) wait a day or two to take your measurements after it passes.

Here is how to approach each question:

WHAT 1 THING WILL YOU ADD OR SUBTRACT THIS WEEK?

You will focus on one change in your lifestyle each week by adding something in (a good habit) or subtracting something out (a bad habit). Once you become consistent with that thing (whether it takes 1 week or longer), then make another change. For example:

- **ADDING SOMETHING**: You may choose to drink a glass of water every morning before you eat or drink anything else, add 5 minutes per day of stretching, or add veggies to your daily food consumption (if you currently do not eat them).
- **SUBTRACTING SOMETHING**: You may want to eliminate dessert foods (doughnuts, cake, cookies, etc.) this week, eliminate late-night snacking, or eliminate soda or fried foods.
- NOTE: When you subtract something, you should decide, in advance, what you'll replace it with. For example, my best friend decided to stop eating ice cream. Problem: She ate a bowl every night for years. So, this one subtraction was a very big deal. I suggested that she replace the nightly ice cream with yogurt. Not fro-yo (which is just glorified ice cream), but actual yogurt. And not just any yogurt (because many yogurts have a LOT of sugar). She found a brand that had a lot of the good bacteria that make yogurt healthy and had a low sugar content. Making this change didn't overhaul her life, but it was one very important, healthy change. And, because her yogurt was so much lower in fat and sugar than the ice cream, she began to crave it less (which was a nice side effect).

PROS & CONS

Most of us need a reminder to motivate us when we are doing something difficult. On one of the following pages, I will explain how to create and use a pros/cons list on this goal sheet

REWARD AND CONSEQUENCE.

- The reward is something you'll give yourself when you achieve your goal for the entire week.
- The consequence will be what you'll do if you don't keep to your goal.
- This is important. For many people, the diet has no instant rewards or consequences that we can immediately, consciously recognize, except an occasional stomach ache or that 'fatigue' that sometimes follows a large meal of bread and sugar. Therefore, we must impose some rewards and consequences to help us stay on track. Your brain's 'rewards center' helps you maintain good behavior IF that good behavior comes with a reward. So, go ahead and give yourself a reward for succeeding at your goals … until success itself becomes reward enough.

ARE THERE STEPS YOU NEED TO TAKE TO SET YOURSELF UP FOR SUCCESS WITH THIS GOAL?

For example, If your goal is to eliminate bread products this week, what steps will set you up for success? Perhaps give away whatever bread remains in your house or put it in the freezer so it doesn't go bad. Or, gather all the pasta into a bin and put it in the basement for the week. Do you need to hide a Pizza shop menu? Do you need to NOT drive passed a bakery on your route home from work? Think about what you can do to set yourself up for success, and write it down.

SPACE FOR SOME PERSONAL NOTES PRAYER, AND OPTIONAL MEASUREMENTS.

Tracking measurements is far better than tracking weight. Why? Because a pound of fat is about the size of a baseball, while a pound of muscle is about the size of a golf ball. As you lose fat and gain muscle (if that is a goal), your body shape may change for the better while your weight stays the same or goes down very slowly. Take a picture of where you are now if you want. Take another picture in a month, etc. This section is not mandatory. Rather, it is a tool you can use if it is beneficial to you.

Note: I debated including this in the book. For some, it will be empowering. For some, it will be frustrating. There may be times when the measurements don't get better. But keep eating healthy anyway!!! Being healthy has benefits. And if you are making major changes and not seeing any physical results, please consult a doctor of functional medicine. They are like the Sherlock Holmes of medicine, taking your "whole person" and whole history into account.

You can begin using your weekly assessment today!

PORTIONS

"For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again, even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body."
~Philippians 3:18-21

The American expectations for portion sizes have become, well, gluttonous. Much of our desire for so much food is because we're malnourished in spite of the huge amounts of food we consume. Malnourishment can be due to undiagnosed gut issues that prohibit the intestines from absorbing nutrients, or it can be because the food we eat is nutrient-deficient. Here, we're going to discuss how to approach our food portions, as well as some basic bad eating habits that contribute to overeating.

INCREASE PORTIONS OF HEALTHY FOODS. DECREASE PORTIONS OF NEGATIVE "FOODS."
We want to focus on the QUALITY of our food. Calories are not what matters (most). Really! 600 calories of healthy food are very different than 600 calories of negative food. If you eat 600 calories of veggies (even salad with olive oil/vinegar dressing, or grilled veggies with butter or olive oil), your body will utilize it entirely differently than the 600 calories of tortellini or Pizza (about 2 slices) or cake!. I'd much prefer you eat 600 calories of veggies than even just 200 calories of cake! What you eat is far more important than how many calories you consume. It takes a far greater volume of quality food to get to a higher calorie count than of negative food. For example, it takes a few pounds of vegetables to get to 600 calories, but 1 bagel with cream cheese or slice of cake with frosting! And the negative foods leave you feeling hungry or unsatisfied, even if the calorie content is higher.In regards to your regular food consumption, remember that your stomach is about the size of your closed fist. If you eat that much food, plus a full glass of water, you should feel full. But, what we typically consume is from 2 to 6 times that amount.

THINK FRENCH,
Slow Down & Savor the Flavor. When it comes to fat and sugar foods (cake, ice cream, pie, candy, potato chips, cookies etc.), if you do not entirely eliminate them from your life, then start thinking French when you eat them. Serve yourself small, "French" portions of unhealthy food (or don't eat it at all). You can teach yourself and your family to savor every bite. Make a big deal out of every decadent bite. Eat slowly and savor the flavor. One of my sons has mastered this. Long after everyone else has eaten a dessert, he is still slowly enjoying his.

I sincerely believe that one of the essential keys to ingesting less at meals is to savor the flavor. Have you ever noticed that when you only have a small portion, you take smaller bites and let it melt in your mouth? You enjoy it as a delicacy. But, when you have a huge portion, you tend to gobble it down before your brain even processes it as pleasure. You're left with a clean plate and no real memory of what you just ate. Then you decide to have a second serving so that you can eat it a little more slowly the 2nd time around and actually enjoy it. But if we just SLOW DOWN WHILE WE EAT, we might not feel the need to go back for seconds. If we eat slowly, we enjoy our food more and consume less.

TRAIN UP A CHILD IN THE WAY S/HE SHOULD GO…
My kids never tasted a sugar treat until their first birthday cake. And even then, they received a small piece of cake with the frosting scraped off. And guess what? They were thrilled with that! For the first few years of their lives, I was able to control the amount of fat and sugar they consumed. A shot glass of M&Ms was an exciting dessert. A mini cupcake with barely any frosting was a joy. There is no reason a small child should have a jumbo cupcake. YOU shouldn't even have that jumbo cupcake, so why would you give it to a child who is 1/5 your size?

But I had family members berate me in front of my kids for not giving them huge portions of cake or sweets at events. And that, my friends, is the problem. My kids were delighted with small portions of sugary foods at very infrequent times until other people made me look like a jerk for being concerned with their well-being. But I mostly held my ground, and now, as teenagers, I am happy to see that they are *usually* pretty good about making healthy food choices for themselves. [1]

- ✦ What changes in your approach to food can you think of just based on what little we've discussed so far?
- ✦ Can you think of any foods you typically eat that may not be very good for you?
- ✦ What steps can you take to reduce the size of your portion at mealtimes?

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[1] However, even the best training does not insure that someone will make good decisions for themselves. So do what you can, but be careful not to sacrifice your family relationships on the alter of health food. For example, my youngest is genetically ADHD (as am I and my ex husband). His ADHD is pretty severe, and often, the ADHD brain CRAVES sugar and carbs (because they turn into sugar). So as much as I attempt to give that kid healthy food, when he is not in my presence, his choices are often bread and sugar. He's a skinny kid, but it is still unhealthy. So I talk with him about it from time to time, only offer healthy options for the meals he eats at home, and give him a highly absorbable daily vitamin. There was a time that I was a bit tyrannical with him about his food choices. But it was, (to my shame) unkind and did not do any good. So I confess my mistakes in hopes that it helps prevent you from making the same ones.

YOUR REWARDS & CONSEQUENCES

For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done. Matthew 16:27

We live in a culture of instant gratification and desire instant consequences. Our brains are so accustomed to instants that most people only recognize reward and consequence if they immediately follow an action. Most of us have a hard time associating delayed gratification and delayed consequences with earlier actions.

Our minds have been programmed to expect instant rewards and consequences, but our bodies do not operate this way. I promise you that if you are eating fast food, processed foods, and very little "living" healthy foods, your body will make you pay for it later. Many people think that "my aches and pains (and even diseases) are just "part of life." Most people do not recognize that 10… 20… 40 years of bad eating and living habits may have been the direct cause of their ailments, diseases, aches and pains. Just because something does not instantly kill you does not mean it's ok to put into your body!
It does not take smoking, drinking, late nights and drug use to destroy the body. The foods we choose can do just as much damage. It may take a decade or two for the damage to reveal itself, but it is there.

So, as we take this issue seriously, let's give our brains some instant gratification by establishing rewards and consequences for our eating patterns. That way, our brain can associate negative foods with negative consequences and positive foods (and activities) with positive rewards.

YOU have got to fight for you!

YOU have got to fight for all that matters to you.

We will work on a list of rewards/consequences below. You can add to the list in weeks to come as you think of more things. You can draw from this weekly list on your goals and assessments page.

A friend of mine had a fantastic idea when she quit smoking. She put a big jar in her room. Every day, she took the money she would have used to buy a pack of cigarettes (about $5/day at the time) and put it in the jar. Then, after a few weeks, she'd use the money in the jar to buy something wonderfully indulgent to reward herself: a purse, new shoes, a massage … once she even saved up enough for a weekend away with a friend. A version of this for dieters would be that every time you're about to spend $1 on a doughnut, $2 at a vending machine, or $7 at a fast food drive-through, Stop. Put the money aside and make a smart choice. Then, put the money in a jar when you get home. When you've saved enough, buy an indulgent non-food reward! This is just 1 idea, but if it works for you, use it! What non-food rewards can you save up for using this method?

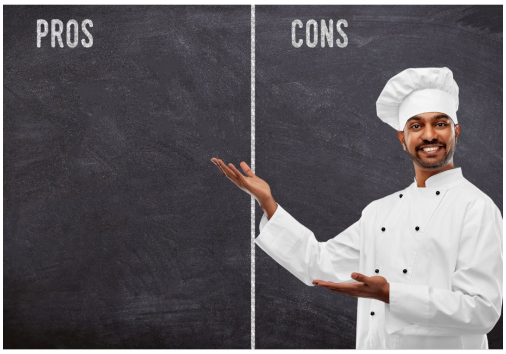
✦ Saving money is not the only way to reward yourself. What other ways can you **reward** yourself for small and large victories?

You can also set up consequences if you cheat. I read somewhere about a woman who had a weekly housekeeper. On weeks that she cheated on her diet (or smoked, or whatever it was), she would clean the house herself but still pay her housekeeper! What a great motivator to not cheat!

✦ What **consequences** can you think of for yourself?

PROS AND CONS

Put on the full armor of God so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. ~Ephesians 6:13



Success requires preparation. In Ephesians 6, Paul presents one of the great metaphors of Christendom. He compares knowing who we are in Christ to wearing spiritual armor. We prepare by dressing ourselves in the armor "so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand…" Success in your quest for health also requires preparation. Whether we're talking about food, sex, how we spend our time, what we feed our bellies, or what we feed our minds - we must prepare and make decisions about how we will respond before the moments of temptation come. One way to begin seeing the healthy choices as rewarding and the negative foods and choices as toxic is to do a little pros and cons list; yes, a pros and cons list.

When you crave negative food, grab a tablet and pen (or your computer or smartphone) and begin a PROS list. What benefit does that food have? Obviously, there's the taste. Also, write about the associations you have with that food. Is it comforting? Why? Did your mom give it to you when you were sad? Does it feel warm and gooey, and the little reward centers in your brain go "bling bling!" when you eat it? There can be a dozen reasons.

Then, write the CONS. I'll give you a few right here: intestinal problems, heart disease, fat gain, liver damage, kidney damage, adrenal fatigue, brain rush, then crash, addiction… Then there are the mental cons: you'll feel like a failure and miss out on an opportunity to depend on Christ and more.

So, let's practice. Choose a food that's a real 'weakness ' for you. Write the Pros for eating that thing. Then write Cons. Then, write what you can do instead of indulging. It may be to substitute a healthy snack for a negative food, or it may be to exercise, pray, call a friend, or go to bed.

HERE IS AN EXAMPLE OF THE PROS AND CONS OF MY BIGGEST WEAKNESS :

CRACKERS AND CHEESE AFTER 8 PM.

MY PRO'S

I love crackers. They taste delicious. When I'm tired, I can crunch on some crackers, stay awake, and keep working. Cheese is delicious. It is also filling, so it helps take away munchies that come with late-night work. It's also chewy and feels good in my mouth. Right now, I feel hungry.

MY CON'S

- One bowl of crackers never satisfies. The salt and flavorings keep me coming back for more. Crackers trigger an insulin response that results in fat being stored by the liver (or something like that). 2 bowls of crackers are the caloric equivalent of a piece of cake. "Whole grains" is an advertising scheme, not a justifier of a food. There's no fiber in those crackers, and that's what matters. Dumb crackers. If I could stop eating crackers, I'd probably drop 5 pounds. They also cause bloating and increase inflammation because of the wheat. They have zero, ZERO nutritional value.
- Cheese is dairy, and dairy products stimulate the production of mucus. My allergies are bad enough without adding cheese. Dairy can also increase joint inflammation. My arthritic wrist doesn't need me to be eating cheese.

WHAT CAN I CHOOSE INSTEAD IF I'M REALLY HUNGRY?

- First, I'll drink a glass of water.
- Next, I'll try an apple, a small bowl of edamame or celery with hummus, which is both crunchy and filling.
- Or maybe I should just go to bed.

Your pros and cons may be stream of consciousness like mine, or they may be bullet points or a chart - whatever works for you.

DO A PROS AND CONS LIST NOW FOR ONE OR TWO OF YOUR BIG TEMPTATIONS. THAT WAY, YOU CAN BE PREPARED WHEN THE TEMPTATION COMES.

- ✦ PROS (include why you want it and what its psychological component is besides taste if there is one).
- ✦ CONS (if you don't know the cons - google it!)
- ✦ REPLACEMENTS

BODY IMAGE

Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting, but a woman (or man) who fears the Lord is to be praised. ~Proverbs 31:30

Take a moment to consider your perception of your own body.

- ✦ Write down words that come to mind as you visualize yourself or think about your body. They may sound positive, negative, self-aggrandizing or self-abusing. Just be raw and honest with what pops into your head as you think about how you view your own body.
- ✦ What kind of words did you use about your body? Were they all negative, like "fat,""ugly,""weak," or "painful," … Were they all positive, like"strong," "healthy,""powerful," or "beautiful"?
- ✦ If your words were all negative, I'd like you to take a moment to think positively about your body. What can you say that is positive? Even if you are 300 pounds overweight, can you breathe? If you're 50 pounds overweight, can you still walk? Is your body functioning? If nothing else, your eyes work, and you can read this book. So, find something positive to say.

Here are two lists. One of them is a psychologically healthy self-evaluation. The other is a potential eating disorder. See if you can tell them apart.

Self Evaluation #1

- fat legs
- fat gut
- love handles
- i hate my feet
- i need to workout more
- my arms look like spaghetti
- my back hurts
- but at least I have big boobs.

✦ **Do you see the difference? How can you improve your list now?**

Self Evaluation #2

- Strong legs, but a mix of muscle and fat
- flabby belly, but heck, I birthed 2 kids with it,
- don't like my feet - they're weird looking, but they get me where I'm going!
- great immune system, i almost never get sick
- winded when I climb stairs but walking the mile to work is fine, not sure why stairs get me.
- my arms are weak, I'd like to get them toned
- achy back and neck, but stretching helps a bit.
- my boobs are too big. I think that contributes to my back pain.
- I like my calves, they're nice. I can pull off an above the knee skirt.
- At 45 I still have 20/20 vision - THAT's cool
- Pretty grateful because I've never had any organ issues. So far, so good.

A NOTE OF BODY IMAGE EXPECTATIONS

You may hope to look like these pictures. Sorry to tell you, but you probably wont. Seriously. If you are in the .01% of people who can take photos like this, you will ONLY look like this on photo shoot days. These bodies take diligence at micromanaging what is eaten, and spending a good amount of daily time working out. AND there is a whole 24-48-hour protocol of non-eating, hardly drinking, and even taking laxatives before a photo shoot to get skin to suction to muscle look like this. The people who posed for these pix don't even look like this on most days! Some readers may get here and start doing photo shoots and competitions. That's great! But, let's just assume that 99.9% won't. And, that's *not* a bad thing!

This second set of pictures represent a much more realistic and HEALTHY expectation. "Rock Solid" is an achievable goal for some. "Lean and Healthy" is a good and achievable goal for all!

I LOVE this picture. This woman is deciding to make changes. She's showing up and doing what she can! Here, it looks like she is stretching as part of her workout (SMART). She WILL be rewarded for that if she does not give up! And, so will you.

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. ~Galatians 6:9

Now, it's time to consider your list again before moving on. Use this space to rewrite your body image words. Some readers will have to admit that they have issues. For example, I know many seriously overweight people who have mentally disconnected their weight from their health issues. They think the two are not related. One friend refuses to admit that her hernia issue is probably being caused by the excess 75 pounds she is carrying on her body. Another friend started this process with me when she was PRE-diabetic but fell off the wagon and then became diabetic. She finally admitted the correlation between what she eats and her disease (which was indisputable, but she still only recently admitted it). Now, she has mentally shifted, made the lifestyle changes (mostly diet-related), and has made so much progress that she is OFF her medications and no longer diabetic!! I'm so proud of her! Another friend has constant knee and joint pain and "can't figure out why." But she is at least 150 pounds overweight. Her pain is a direct result of her weight, but she rarely admits it. And, even for someone who is in a healthy weight range like me, in the times I've gained weight and gone as little as 10 pounds over my top-end healthy-weight range, I begin to feel sluggish and run down.

YOU NEED to admit when you have issues, or you'll never fix them! So, if you have genuine health issues related to lifestyle (eating, drinking, smoking, over-medicating, sedentary lifestyle, etc.), then admit it here. You need to address it! Ignoring the cause of your discomforts, pains and ailments, is like someone who has been seeing a drip from their ceiling for months and ignoring it. Then, when the bathtub crashes through from the 2nd floor into the kitchen, they say, "Well, gosh! I wonder why that happened?" And they still refuse to admit that the dripping pipe they ignored for months was the cause. We do that with our bodies! There are all sorts of ways we live in denial and then act stupid when bad things happen. Sorry to be so blunt, but it's true.

However, some readers need to stop hating themselves and lighten up! Stop staring in the mirror and loathing yourself because you don't look like an airbrushed picture of the model in the magazine. Start appreciating the beauty of your body - especially its beauty scientifically. It is AMAZING!!!! Don't just consider your body aesthetically; consider your body as a functioning organism.

✦ To both kinds of readers and everyone in between, take a moment to re-write some constructive observations and praises.

WONDERFULLY MADE

For you created my inmost being. You knit me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
Your works are wonderful; I know that full well ~Psalm 139:13-14

Here, we'll do a very brief overview of our anatomy. Someone is far less likely to treat something with disrespect when they have honor for it. Someone who does not value the planet throws trash out of the car window. Someone who has respect for the planet will recycle or plant a garden. People are not likely to vandalize a Van Gogh because it is precious … and heavily guarded. However, vandalism often happens in abandoned buildings. Likewise, I think that gaining a little understanding of our bodies' awesome complexity will help us treat them with respect and honor.

This overview will be utterly simplistic for a medical professional. However, if you are a non-medical professional, gaining a little knowledge about your body's systems and how they work together will be helpful. Your body is not a bunch of isolated organs. When one is harmed or in distress, others are affected in one way or another. Every part of your body affects every other part. The more we understand this, the more preventative health measures make sense.

Note: Don't read this like you're studying for a test. Please read it for curiosity and to understand that your body is complex and all things relate to each other. Your gut health affects your brain health. Your heart health affects your lung health, and so on.

CARDIOVASCULAR SYSTEM

This system includes the heart, blood vessels, and blood, which transports oxygen, nutrients, hormones, and cellular waste products. Your heart pumps over 5 liters of blood per minute while resting. There are 2 primary circulatory loops:

Pulmonary circulation transports the 'used' blood (oxygen-depleted) from the right side of the heart into the lungs, where the blood receives new oxygen and then is returned to the left side of the heart.

Systemic circulation carries the oxygenated blood from the left side of the heart to all of the body's tissues. During this journey, the blood removes wastes from body tissues and returns depleted to the right side of the heart to start the process all over again. The pulmonary and systemic circulations are measured when your blood pressure is measured.

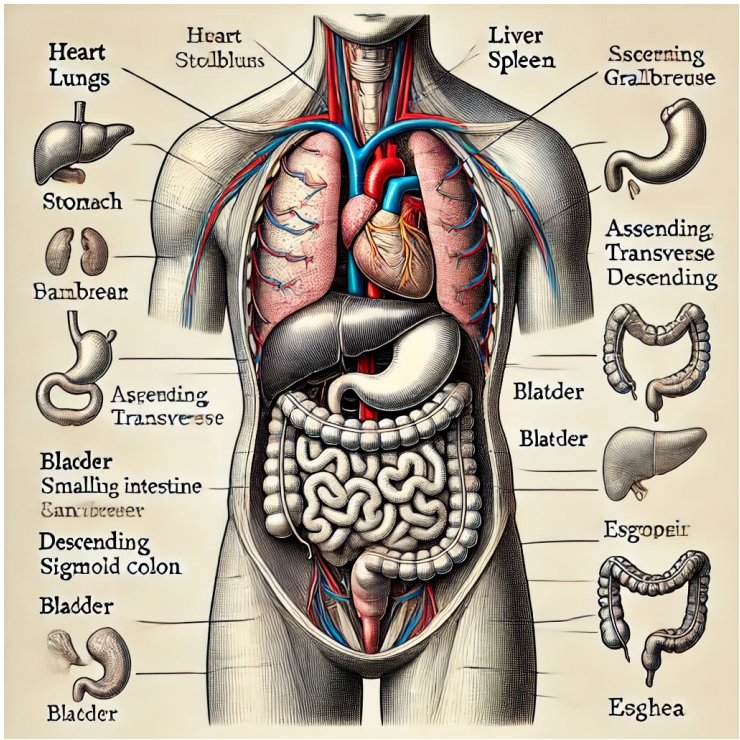
RESPIRATORY SYSTEM

The lungs are the primary organs of the respiratory system. The human body's cells require a constant stream of oxygen to stay alive. The Respiratory System provides oxygen to the body's cells while removing toxins, including carbon dioxide, a waste product that can be deadly if allowed to accumulate.

DIGESTIVE SYSTEM

The digestive system is a group of organs working together to turn food into nutrients and energy that will sustain the entire body's functions. The Digestive tract starts at the mouth, includes the esophagus, stomach, intestines, and colon, and ends with excretion. There are also organs of the digestive system that assist the process but through which food does not pass; this includes salivary glands, liver, gallbladder, and pancreas. Did you know that the core of your health, immune system, and brain function resides in how well your digestive system works? Without digestion, the body gets none of the nutrients needed for life. Immunologists talk about a "healthy gut, healthy body."

Also, did you know that a human can hold over 40 pounds of waste (poop)? Many diets that claim fast weight loss and fast inches loss help someone whose gut is very clogged to start emptying. They are deceitful because they claim fat loss. When they're not helping you lose fat, they're helping you lose clogged-up poop. But that is still extremely important! A clean gut is the key to better health and more energy! Cleaning a gut healthily (not tons of laxatives) is essential. We will talk about this later, but it is important to drill this into our brains: healthier gut = healthier body. A poop (or more) per day is really important!



URINARY SYSTEM

The kidneys filter the blood to remove wastes and produce urine. The ureters, urinary bladder, and urethra form the urinary tract, which drain urine from the kidneys, store it, and then release it during urination. Besides filtering and eliminating wastes from the body, the urinary system is responsible for maintaining the balance of water, ions, pH, blood pressure, calcium, and red blood cells throughout our body.

IMMUNE AND LYMPHATIC SYSTEM

The immune and lymphatic systems are closely related and share many organs. The immune system is our body's defense system that kills harmful bacteria, viruses, pathogens, etc.

The lymphatic system is a network of capillaries, vessels, nodes, and other organs that transport a fluid called lymph from various tissues to the bloodstream. Lymphatic tissue in our organs filters and cleans the lymph of debris, abnormal cells, or pathogens. The lymphatic system also transports fatty acids (good and bad) from the intestines to the circulatory system.

NERVOUS

The nervous system consists of the brain, spinal cord, sensory organs, and all of the nerves that connect these organs with the rest of the body. Together, these organs are responsible for the control of the body and communication among its parts.

SKELETAL

Our bones make up our skeleton, and our skeleton is the frame by which we engage in the activities of our lives. Our muscles attach to various points on bones. Bones like the ribcage, spine and skull protect our organs. However, there is more. Each bone is a complex living organ that is made up of many cells, protein fibers, and minerals. New blood cells are produced by the red bone marrow inside our bones. Bones act as the body's warehouse for calcium (which is essential for many life functions at a cellular level), iron, and energy in the form of fat.

MUSCULAR

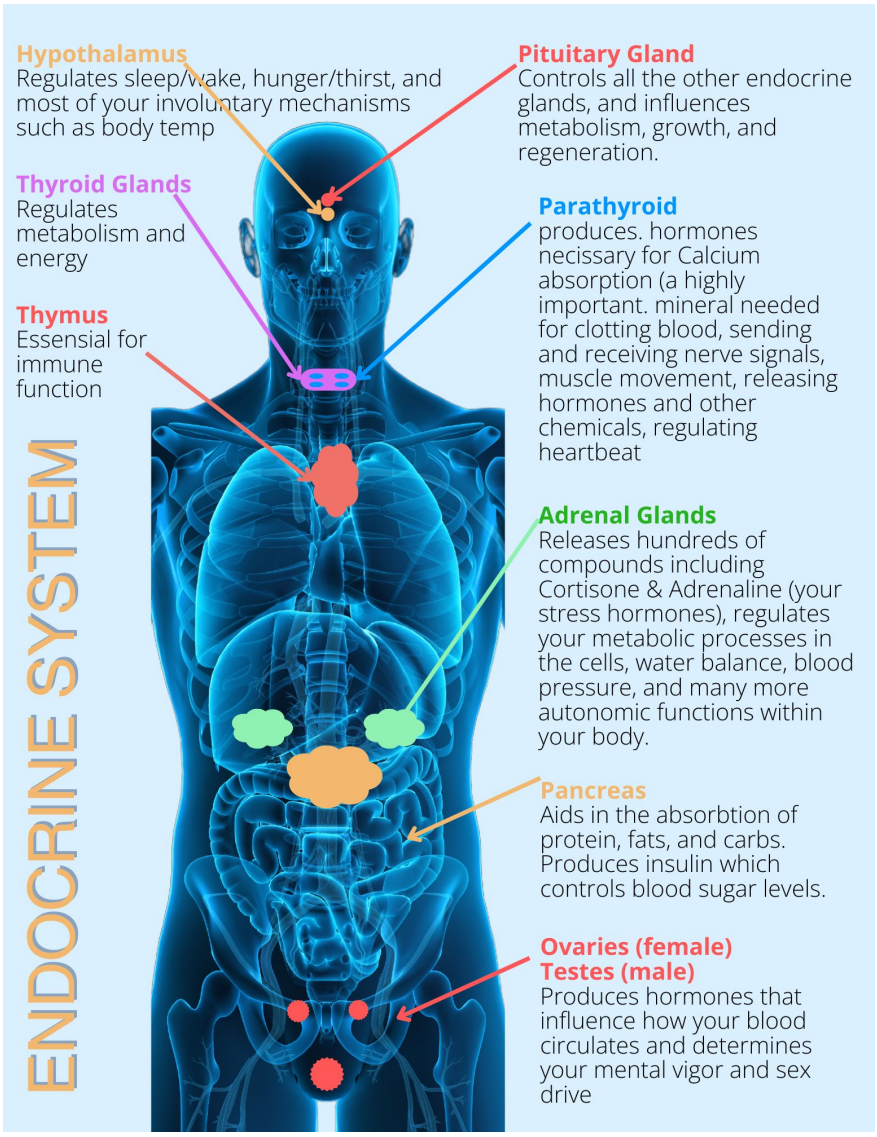
The muscular system is responsible for the movement of the body and its organs. Muscle tissue is fed by blood vessels, connected to tendons and is webbed with nerves. It's probably obvious, but we can do more when we have strong muscles than weak ones. That is true of both the muscles that move our skeletal frame and the ones that move our organs (like the heart muscle pumping blood and the muscle fibers of the intestines pushing food through).

INTEGUMENTARY

The integumentary system consists of the skin, hair, nails, and exocrine glands, all of which have protective functions. The exocrine glands of the integumentary system produce sweat, oil, and wax to cool, protect, and moisturize the skin's surface. They can each be observed diagnostically. In other words, acne, rashes, eczema, nail conditions, and hair conditions - can all be valuable information when looking into health issues.

ENDOCRINE

The endocrine system includes all of the glands of the body and the hormones produced by those glands. By regulating the functions of organs in the body, these glands help to maintain the body's homeostasis (or balance). Cellular metabolism, reproduction, sexual development, sugar and mineral balance, heart rate, and digestion are among the many processes regulated by the actions of hormones. Diet and gut health have a huge effect on the endocrine system and vice versa.



REPRODUCTIVE

If you're old enough to read this book, you've already had sex ed. Obviously, when our health is good, our reproductive systems function well. If you're considering taking a libido-stimulating drug, consider getting healthy first. Healthy bodies are happy bodies. Happy bodies are more likely to successfully engage in sexual activities and create new lives that encompass all of the beautiful systems we've so far.

IN THE END ...

As you run through an overview of your body, what are some things that you can focus on, in awe, that you previously took for granted? When I first began to study anatomy, I was in AWE of all the things that could go wrong just in the gestation period of a human in the womb. It's a miracle that any of us survive at all.

God designed your body. He knows it better and more thoroughly than any medical expert ever can. If you have ailments, do you bring them to the Father and ask for His healing? You can. We should all take personal responsibility for our health, pray to God for healing, and consult doctors who understand the science discovered about God's amazing design.

IT'S NOT ABOUT WILL POWER

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me, you can do nothing." ~ Jesus, John 15:5

By now, you may have two different extremes of thinking. The first is, "If I work hard enough, then I'll have success!" The opposite is, "This is all too much work. I give up." Neither way of thinking is beneficial, for it is not by "willpower" that you will achieve success in the Spiritual realms. In our physical experience, we are stronger as we become more independent, asserting physical, mental, emotional, and psychological strengths. But even here, we are not strong enough to be utterly independent. We are much better off when we are interdependent - in other words, when we have strong relationships in the workplace, family, friends, church, and community … we are better TOGETHER than alone. "It was not good for man to be alone," said GOD in Genesis. But in the Spiritual reality, it is, in a sense, very different. We become stronger when we become more dependent ... on GOD.

IN THE SPIRITUAL REALITY IN WHICH WE NOW LIVE AS CHILDREN OF GOD, TRUE STRENGTH COMES FROM DEPENDENCE ON GOD, NOT INDEPENDENCE!

Read these excerpts from Jesus's words in John 14 & 15

I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these because I am now going to the Father, and I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. ...If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor, to be with you forever - the Spirit of Truth. … He lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. … Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching … the Counselor, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. … My peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. … I am the vine; you are the branches … you are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Now, remain in me and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain on the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in Me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers. Such branches are picked up and thrown into the fire and burned, If you remain in Me and my words remain in you, then you may ask whatever you wish and it will be given you. This is to my Father's glory that you bear much fruit showing yourselves to be My disciples. The Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now, remain in My love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed My Father's commands and remain in His love. I have told you this so that My joy may be in you, and so that your joy may be complete! My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he would lay down his life for his friends!"

Did you read that? Did you really read it? Here lies the summary of the goal of our entire life on earth … ready? Live your life dependently on Jesus. Crave Him. Walk with Him. Learn from Him. The more you do, the more He will give you His Spirit to grow. And, as you draw near to Him, you will want to obey Him. You will want to live as He lived. You will want to live a life of love that brings Him glory. The more this is your desire, the true desire of your heart, and the more this desire influences your thinking and your actions, the more you will pray that which He Himself would pray, and He will grant every one of those prayers!

How can we draw near to Jesus? First and foremost, we must be reading His words to us. If we were to read nothing else for the rest of our lives, it must be the Gospels. The Hebrew Scriptures (Christian Old Testament) and the New Testament after the gospels all point to Jesus. Every single story, every single instruction - they all ultimately point to Jesus. So, if we are going to saturate ourselves in anything, it must first and foremost be Jesus's life and words.

Secondly, we must recognize that we're in partnership with Almighty God! There are many things in our lives (both physical and spiritual) that require partnerships. The better we can partner, the more successful we will be. A great athlete needs a great coach. A business visionary fails without a grounded partner who can realize the vision. It takes a man and a woman to make a baby. The list can go on and on.

When discussing our relationship with God, remember it is exactly that - a relationship, a partnership. So, we may read, "Apart from Me, you can do nothing," ~Jesus. And then, we may read, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart," ~ Paul. These statements may sound contradictory. But they are not. It is simply two sides of the same coin. We must work. But *how* we work comes from one of two motives:

Motive #1: We can work on our own. We can depend on our cunning and ability to figure things out and on our strength, savvy, or resources to make things happen.

Motive #2 - We can work depending on God, seeking His glory, not our own. We can learn and obey His ways. We can ask Him for guidance, power, wisdom, love, joy, peace, patience … And He gladly provides them all! The more we ask, the more abundantly He'll give. Ask only a little, and He may give you only a little! In God's design, our achievement is not about "getting" but about receiving and using what we receive responsibly. So, ask, ask, ask!

- ✦ Do you typically work out of mode #1 or mode #2?
- ✦ Are there some areas where you depend on God and others in which you depend more on yourself? What are they?
- ✦ What step(s) can you take to begin depending on God in an area of your life where you are currently depending on yourself?
- ✦ Is there something you don't desire but you know you should?

For example, you have no desire to forgive someone, but you know that God calls you to forgive. Or, perhaps you have no desire to eat healthy, but you know you need to. You may not want to stop having unmarried sex … you may no longer feel love for your spouse … you may have no desire to do the right thing …

But if you ask God to give you forgiveness, love … new desires … His desires … He is honored to answer those prayers.

- ✦ What comes to mind as you read this? Pray it now :-)

CHRIST'S POWER THROUGH US

But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God, not us.
We are hard-pressed on every side but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. ~ 2 Corinthians 4:7-9

DID YOU KNOW THAT YOU HAVE POWER?

Most of us have been crushed during this life. You may have been crushed by others beating you down (figuratively or literally). You may have been crushed by having hopes unfulfilled, by rejection, or by your failures. You may have been crushed by guilt or a feeling of unworthiness when you heard the gospel.

Being crushed by the gospel is actually a good thing at first. It shows us our need as sinners to receive Jesus' work on our behalf. But, too many of us stay crushed instead of letting the gospel rebuild us into something better. Some (often well-intentioned) people preach a gospel that is only half of the story, focusing on the fact that humans are steeped in sin and cannot earn anything from a Holy God. We deserve judgement. Only through Christ can our sin be paid for in full.

All of this is true, … But, Then They Stop There.

Seriously. That's the entire gospel for many people. That's the supposed "Good News". And, if you don't like it, you're made to believe you're ungrateful. You're told that you should be grateful for any scraps of food that God is willing to give you because it's better than punishment. Verses like Ephesians 2:8- 9 are misapplied to lead us to believe this is the entire gospel. *"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast."*

But that is not the entire gospel! It is the message of salvation. There is nothing we can do in our carnal nature to earn God's approval. There is nothing we can stand on but Christ. We must realize that we are steeped in sin, incapable of cleaning ourselves. We are pitiful and guilty. It is Jesus who rescues us, cleans us, and adopts us into the royal family. But unless you're seeking God's forgiveness on your deathbed, life does not end there. That is where the good news starts, but not where it ends!

The rest of your life is to be lived as a beloved child of God. As a dear child, you have great privileges and serious responsibilities. You do not continue to live your life as an orphan. You do not continue to live with the same motives and goals as you had before you handed your life to Jesus. I will not prattle on. But I want to point something out to you.

Most of the Christians I've met throughout my lifetime (even many Christians in 'leadership') do not live in the power of Christ that we have been given. I KNOW of this power, yet I know I only take advantage of a scant bit of it. And I do not mean power in the way politicians, kings, and corporate mongrels use power. I mean, the power of Spiritual Authority to live a holy life purging sin and enjoying righteousness, a life of love overcoming all and bringing glory to our beautiful Savior.

In that light, what I also mean by power is this: as an orphan, you have no family, no love and security, no rights, and no responsibilities. But as the child of a royal family, you have incredible rights, responsibilities, power, privilege, love, security,

honor, and inheritance. As the child of God—the one true King—you have all these things, but most of us (including myself) usually do not live as if we do.

Why don't Christians realize the power that is ours? Probably because we are heirs to a kingdom that we cannot "see" with our physical eyes (in many regards). What we "see" is a world in chaos. We see our need for income to live in the Western World. We see anger, bickering, and hate crimes. We see war over oil and genocides based on pride. Soon, those wars will be fought for food and water, and things will worsen. Humanity is fueled by our focus on survival, selfish ambitions, and Satan's goals for mankind's self-destruction.

But our citizenship is in the Kingdom of Heaven! We have dual citizenship. So, we live here for now and will be headed home someday when God is ready to take us.

Ok. Keep following me here - there's a point coming.

We are children of a God who is not confined by space and time. But, our physical experience is limited to 4 dimensions (height, width, depth, and time). Most people, most of the time, make all judgments about their lives based on this physical experience of 4 dimensions. What we fail to do is live outside of what we 'see.' That's where faith comes in. That's where prayer comes in. That's where obeying God comes in, even when it doesn't make sense to the world.

Did you know that science has mathematically discovered that there are many dimensions at work in our universe (maybe 11 or more)? Though we can only realize and engage with 4 of them, there are more that make this universe work. We do not have the physical faculties to engage with the rest of them, but they exist. God created them, so He certainly participates with them. Our God is not limited by the same laws of time and physics in which we find ourselves confined! He may use them, but He may also choose to bypass them. You are the child of the living God. He created everything. He decided to save you from His wrath and adopt you as His child. He loved you long before you began to love Him. So, why do you doubt Him? Your Heavenly life began at salvation. You were pathetic and dirty in your sin. But now you are washed clean with the blood of Jesus. But are you living with the power of that blood? What are your goals? What are your dreams? Are they focused on this life? Do they stop at 4 dimensions? Do you talk to God as if Those 4 dimensions confine him? Do you dream only as big as what YOU can accomplish? Your Heavenly Father is GOD. Get it? GOD. And He adores every one of His children.

✦ What are your worries? What is holding you down?

Can you pray that God will show you how He stands above your circumstances? Can you ask Him to help you to believe that He is enough? Is he more? Is he all? And that He would teach you to walk with Him in power - the power of love and life? Take time to write about how believing that God loves you and that He is not confined by these 4 dimensions (nor do they ultimately confine you) affects you.

YOUR CRIES - GOD'S REPLIES

We will talk about replacing the lies of darkness in our minds and culture with God's truth. The more we know who our Heavenly Father is and who we are designed to be, the better we can live this life on earth. One of my church's pastors ended a sermon based on what you see below. I want to share it with you early on in your process so you can have it to return to as often as you need it. If we can really believe these truths, they can radically change us from the inside out. So, thank you, Justin Dela Cruz, for this. It brought me to tears when you preached it, and just about every time I've read it since.

You say: I'm always worried and frustrated.

GOD SAYS: Give me all your worries and cares 1. Peter 5:7

You say: I don't know what to do.

GOD SAYS: I will direct your steps. Proverbs 3:6

You say: I don't have enough faith.

GOD SAYS: I have given everyone a measure of faith. Romans 12:3

You say: I'm too tired.

GOD SAYS: I will give you rest. Matthew 11:28-30

You say: I can't do it.

GOD SAYS: You can do all things through Christ Jesus, who strengthens you. Philippians 4:13

You say: I can't make ends meet.

GOD SAYS: I will supply all your needs. Philippians 4:19

You say: I can't handle this.

GOD SAYS: Cast your cares on Me, and I will sustain you. Psalm 55:22

You say:I can't go on.

GOD SAYS: My grace is sufficient for you 2. Corinthians 12:9

You say:I'm exhausted.

GOD SAYS: Those who wait on me shall renew their strength. Isaiah 40:31

You say: I'm all alone.

GOD SAYS: I will never leave you nor forsake you. Hebrews 13:5

You say: I'm not able.

GOD S AYS: I AM able 2. Corinthians 9:8

You say: I'm not smart enough.

GOD SAYS: If any of you needs wisdom. You should ask me for it. James 1:5

You say: It's impossible.

GOD SAYS: What is impossible with men is possible with Me. Luke 18:27

You say: I am afraid.

GOD SAYS: I have not given you a spirit of fear but of power, love, and a sound mind 2. Tim 1:7

You say: It's not worth it.

GOD SAYS: You will reap a harvest if you do not give up. Galatians 6:9

You say: I can't forgive myself.

GOD SAYS: In Christ, I forgave you. Ephesians 4:32 / Romans 8:1

You say: Nobody Loves me.

GOD SAYS: I have loved you with everlasting love. Jeremiah 31:3

CONGRATULATIONS

You have completed the introductory section of this process.

Here is how I recommend to proceed.

- Print copies of the Daily Food Chart and Weekly Assessment Tool. Commit to using them! Put them somewhere you'll use them every day. If you do nothing else in Sacred Body, this alone will help you progress in your health goals. They're that useful.
- Pick a day of the week for your Weekly Assessment Day. Let's say it is Sunday to coincide with a typical work-week cycle. On that day, fill out your "Weekly Goals & Assessment Sheet."
- For the rest of the week,
  - Work through the material at your own pace. You might spend a whole week on ONE reading because it is so profound to you and your situation. You may whip through 7 or 8 readings in another week. And, there may be times you have to skip the WORK of reading because it hurts too much. Dog-ear that page so you can return to it when you're ready for the challenge.

Keep an eye on Designed4Victory.com or sign up for my mailing list The full book Designed for Victory, and other developments will be coming in 202^