

PRESSING ON...

"I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:14



A Publication of Chicago Christian Counseling Center

Jan | Feb 2019

Taking God to Therapy



■ by Kathy Krentkowski, MA, LCPC, LMHC

Emmanuel – God with Us.

We've sung the song and reflected on this truth over the Christmas season. The birth of Christ and his entrance into our world changes everything. What a great way to begin this New Year – reflecting on God with us.

I read a book about a woman who takes God to couples counseling. She has some issues she needs to address and seeks help communicating about what's been going on. I love this idea. God with us – in our search for healing and recovery, even in your therapist's office!

God is with us and he cares about what you need to say:

God, I've got some issues with you.

God, I have some things I need to talk about.

God, we are not doing well, and I really want to work on our relationship, and I think we need help.

Through Christ you have access to the God

who says "Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known" (Jeremiah 33:3). People seek counseling when discomfort of body, soul and/or spirit creates the need for healing, and resources of their own are insufficient. If those who come into therapy chose to engage God directly, they have the hope of him revealing things that will completely change their present moment.

Have you ever thought about therapy being a place where you can work on discovering great and hidden things from the God who is with us? We can learn to interact with the Holy Spirit as we allow ourselves to practice stillness and opening our hearts as we listen to him speak. Many times the voice of God is distorted or drowned out by our own thoughts or the countless loops of feedback and input received from outside sources. It is a practice and discipline to become quiet and still. It may seem strange at first, but next time you are seeking an answer, close your eyes and take a deep breath. Invite Jesus to speak. Open your mind and heart, expectantly, to the Spirit of God who speaks to us through our senses and tells us

he is here, with us, even in the discomfort, the need and the desired changes.

Let this be a year where you not only become increasingly more aware of your moments, but you also become aware of the voice of Father God.

Take a moment right now. Allow yourself to quiet and settle into this moment. Close your eyes and breathe deeply. Let your brain have a break and awaken your heart to hear. What do you notice? Invite the Spirit to speak to you. Listen, not with your brain, but with your heart.

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DOING WEIGHT GOD'S WAY



■ by Katie DeYoung, MA, LMHC, LCPC

It is common knowledge that the combination of a well-balanced diet and exercise lead to a healthy lifestyle. However, knowledge in this area doesn't always lead to action. Why is that so? What makes it so difficult to begin losing weight and to maintain this loss once it's achieved? In seeking to answer these questions, the following paragraphs will address how your mindset can impact your weight for better or worse. This article is not about weight loss, but rather discusses the importance of being healthy and honoring God with a mindset that properly directs our hope, surrenders our results, and seeks God throughout the entire process.

Hope

Prior to taking action in one's weight loss journey, it seems common for people to exhibit feelings of complacency or a sense of denial that their weight problem will get any worse. There is an ongoing hope present, which leads to a belief that their weight has finally stabilized. Now hope is a beautiful part of the Christian walk, but it

needs to be placed in appropriate items. The Bible warns that "hope deferred makes the heart sick" (Proverbs 13:12, NIV). Therefore, it is absolutely necessary to clearly see one's weight situation for what it is. Wishful thinking isn't going to change the facts. Taking off the blindfold and coming to a place of acceptance is a wonderful first step to living a healthy



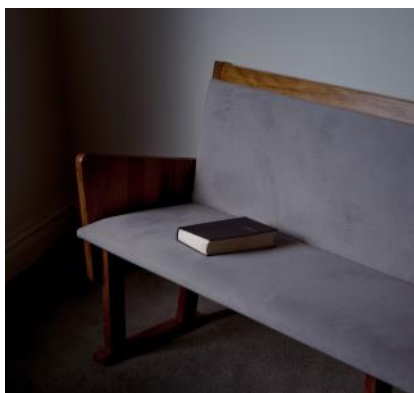
lifestyle. In this situation, it seems more fitting to place our hope in God to help provide the clarity of mind and overall acceptance needed, no matter the weight.

Surrender

Another common factor attached to many individuals' journey with weight loss is the ever-present disappointment when after depriving ourselves of those tasty treats and exhausting ourselves with demanding workouts we find that all of our hard work did not make a dent on the bathroom scale. With this disappointment in mind comes the word surrender. As Christians, we need to work hard and make the right health choices for the sole purpose of bringing glory to God. Rather than making decisions that will achieve the end goal of losing 50 pounds, we need to surrender these results to the Lord. God informs us that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, therefore we have a responsibility to keep our bodies as healthy as possible as a way to honor him (1 Corinthians 6:19, NIV). With this particular responsibility at the forefront of our minds

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For the Lord speaks:

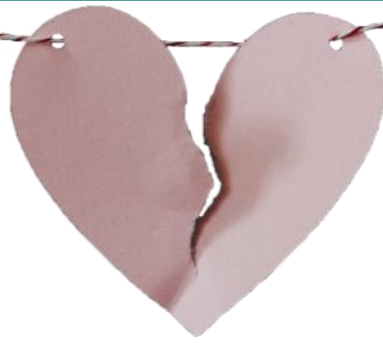
- In the gentlest whisper (1 Kings 19:12).
- Like a shepherd whose sheep find security in (John 10:27-28).
- Like a piercing sword penetrating to the depth of our need (Hebrews 4:12).
- With a word that quiets the raging storm (Mark 4:39).

Next time you are in your therapist's office, keep an open seat for Emmanuel, the God who is with us. ■



Kathy Krentkowski is a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor and Licensed Mental Health Counselor and sees clients in our Evergreen Park, IL & Schererville, IN locations. 2

Is Bitterness Making You Sick?



■ by Debra Crockett, MSW, LSW

Have you experienced a wrong, an emotional injury that left you feeling hurt, angry, and wanting to strike back? We have all been around that bitter, resentful person who is angry at the hand they have been dealt in life. Perhaps that person is you. We want to explore how you can obtain release from prolonged feelings of bitterness or help others who may be ensnared by bitterness.

The Roots of Bitterness

Sometimes we do not realize that our feelings of bitterness are actually rooted in traumatic life events over which we had no control. It may be helpful to explore or reflect on what may have caused bitterness or resentment.

Traumatic events during childhood – physical/emotional abuse, neglect by a parent, sexual abuse or assault, divorce or separation of parents, parental alcoholism/substance abuse, or witnessing verbal/physical abuse - are painful experiences that can leave a lasting imprint and cause feelings of resentment because they occurred.

Painful events during adulthood – death, divorce, marital difficulties, personal illness or injury, job stress or termination, financial difficulties, among other challenges – are all experiences that can contribute to feelings of bitterness.

Effects of Bitterness

We may know the biblical command to "...Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice." (Eph. 4:31). However, we may be unaware of how bitterness is affecting us physically and emotionally. The cause of anxiety, depression and other illnesses may be unresolved bitterness.

Sadly, the person who is bitter and resentful is also repelling people at a time when they may need them most. Bitterness may cause isolation. Bitterness sucks energy and finds no peace. But there is an antidote to the feelings of bitterness. Obtaining release from bitterness is work, but the resulting emotional and physical wellbeing is worth it.

Antidote to Bitterness

Forgiveness provides the emotional, physical and spiritual healing we need and is the antidote to bitterness. Scripture reminds us to "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." (Eph. 4:32) Just as bitterness may result in physical and emotional illness, there are health benefits associated with forgiveness. According to a November 4, 2017 Mayo clinic article titled "Forgiveness: Letting Go of Grudges and Bitterness," forgiveness can result in improved physical as well as emotional health including less anxiety, stress and hostility, lower blood pressure, a stronger immune system, improved heart health, fewer symptoms of depression and increased self-esteem, among other benefits.

Start Healing

How can we cope with the feelings of bitterness and simmering resentment against the parent who may have abused you, the spouse who abandoned you, the boss who fired you, illness or death?



Here are a few steps that will aid you in forgiveness and starting the healing process:

1. **Acknowledge that bitterness exists.** We need an honest self-assessment, which is often done with the help of a trusted friend or counselor.
2. **Get in community which will help you cope.** God designed us for "one another" which includes "loving one another", and "bearing one another's burdens" includes emotional heartaches. Remember there is not a quick fix to lifelong hurts. Healing is a process and there are people who can help you along the journey.
3. **Give the hurt and bitterness to God.** Sometimes we are angry at God for allowing the hurt to occur. By acknowledging the hurt to God, you are submitting to His sovereignty. This is the most difficult step. By submitting to God's sovereignty, we are acknowledging that despite how deep and hurtful the past may have been or how we may have been wronged in the present; we have a loving God who will use even unjust, wrongful experiences ultimately for our good and His glory. "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to His purpose." (Romans 8:28).

I will never forget my own healing journey in forgiveness with a family member who wronged me. I harbored simmering resentment toward the person for years. One day during a woman's bible study class, the Holy Spirit revealed my sin of bitterness during prayer. I broke down in tears as I asked God's forgiveness. I then experienced His supernatural joy and peace.

Letting go of bitterness and beginning your journey toward healing through forgiveness will not be easy. It requires the power of the Holy Spirit, sometimes on a daily basis. I guarantee that the joy and peace that accompanies forgiveness is well worth it. ■

References:

Mayo Clinic Newsletter, (2017, November 4). "Forgiveness: Letting Go of Grudges and Bitterness." <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/forgiveness/art-20047692>



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Our Mission Statement

Promoting health and wholeness through professional counseling, consultation and education from a Christian perspective.

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and being careful to approach any weight loss with an appropriate mindset (that of surrender), we are protecting ourselves from the disappointment that may come with any setback or lack of progress.

Seek

In addition to bringing honor to God with the decisions we make surrounding health and wellness, another result of taking care of our bodies is in learning how to love ourselves in the process. Many people seek after the final results of weight loss and believe that love and happiness will come when they have successfully achieved what they sought out to do. After all, the Bible says "seek and you will find" (Matthew 7:7, NIV). However, God wasn't referring to weight loss in this verse, as no amount of dieting will produce true fulfillment or eternal joy. God desires for us to seek after a different object-

himself. Seeking after God and experiencing the ultimate love he has for us should transform the love we have for ourselves. One way to love ourselves is by taking steps to live out healthy lives (physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually). Another way to love ourselves throughout this journey is to avoid depriving ourselves of things that bring momentary enjoyment, allowing the occasional brownie or ice cream cone guilt free. God loves us as we are and desires for us to do the same.

The Christian life is full of ups and downs, and the struggle with one's weight is no exception. Take a moment on this weight loss journey to consider your mindset. A prayerful reflection on the following questions will help you determine whether you are doing weight God's way. What is it that I am placing my hope in? In what ways is God asking me to surrender? What (or whom) am I seeking and for what purpose? Open up this part of your journey for God to work in and through for his glory as you do weight God's way. ■



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