

Have You Reached Rock Bottom?

They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness. – II Thessalonians 2:10(b)-12 (NIV)

A young child, after a while, will proclaim, “I can do it myself!” We continue to claim that long after we’re young, long past the sweet confidence of mastery a first grader may possess. Weight loss is one of those things we do “all by ourselves” even when we join diet and calorie clubs or have a buddy to support us. We may, of course, pray. But we tend to pray for willpower, for weight loss, for specifics. Even when we ask for help, we want to do it ourselves, make the rules we follow – or at least choose them. More often than not, though, we choose to ignore them, to cheat on them, to overlook them for good cause – or bad cause – or just because.

I did. I tried for years and years and years to do it myself. Let’s list the ways:

- ☒ I had the diet pills the family doctor gave me at 13
 - ☒ Most weigh and pay organizations you could name, some multiple times
 - ☒ Some weigh and pay organizations you may not have heard of, the price prohibitive for many people
 - ☒ Carb blockers
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- ☒ Amphetamines (Back when they were discouraged but still legal I drove 150 miles and back to get a bottle of pills for 30 days. When I ran out and realized I was physically needing them, I had the sense not to go back to get the next month's supply.)
- ☒ A metal pin at an acupuncture point on my ear, with instructions to massage it when wanting to eat
- ☒ Graphs and charts projecting how much I'd lose by what date
- ☒ Three or four Internet programs
- ☒ A diet from a women's magazine
- ☒ Counting calories
- ☒ Counting carbs
- ☒ Counseling (3 times, years at a time)
- ☒ Hypnotism
- ☒ Motivational tapes
- ☒ New Year's resolutions
- ☒ Goals for certain major events
- ☒ Diet books
- ☒ Cookbooks with reduced calories/fat/carbs/sugar
- ☒ Books, directed at weight loss, organization, codependency, relationships, misogynists, self-esteem, and anything else marginally relative
- ☒ Partners in person and on the Internet
- ☒ Fasting one day each week
- ☒ Beginning to write a book about how with a partner I attained a total weight loss of 500 pounds, knowing I lacked well over a hundred of those before publication, and
- ☒ Giving myself shots in the stomach twice daily with a medication approved for diabetics, which I was not, but not approved for weight control

For probably five years I saw a doctor monthly who used all his powers of persuasion and prescription to help me. Using the carbohydrate blockers and appetite suppressants

he urged on me, I reached the point in my insanity I'd use the carb blockers *because* I intended to eat bad stuff.

I cannot do it myself with all the help I can recruit.

Consider the scripture at the beginning of this section. It's not a pleasant passage! Why would Paul talk of God's sending a delusion so all will be condemned? I don't know the future, but I do know the present. There's a literal hell on earth to which we're condemned when, as compulsive overeaters, we persist in insisting we can manage for ourselves.

In light of my history, and – I'm guessing – your own, consider this: Maybe it's necessary for us to absolutely reach the rock bottom of despair before we can let go and let God assume control. Defeat on my own cleared the path to finding the spiritual means to absolutely conquer the weight I've carried psychologically, emotionally, and spiritually most of fifty years. As long as I remained stubbornly independent, God could not give me the amazing peace I've found. But for God's sending me a powerful delusion so that I believed the lie and found myself condemned, I could not have reached the point of accepting gratefully the amazing act of love!

Praise God, the bottom is there so the top can be found!

Slimming Steps

What have you tried, sure you could do it on your own? Make your own list. Answer the question, "Where's my rock bottom?"

Powerless

I've tried, really tried,
yet to sooth the savage beast
eludes me. Why? Tell me why!
Others can! So why should
this craving mock me, shame me,
crush my soul? Others stroll
from the beast, a whimpering kitten
in their lives though they've indulged
with the rest of us, partied just as hard.
Am I so weak, so deficient?
Where's my will-power?
I'm sick to death of this addiction,
ready to give up.

You say there's hope just because
I give up? That I'm sick but it need not be
to death? So tell me. I'm ready to hear you.

Woe is Me!

So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? – Romans 7:21-24 (NIV)

I'm an intelligent person, a successful professional, a competent leader, a resourceful individual. I can do most things I set out to do. Why, then, can I not control my eating? Like Paul, I do what I don't want to do, have full intentions of doing exactly what I know is not only right but best for me. I understand the rules when it comes to eating as well as I do all the other areas of my life where I function rather well. **So what's wrong with me?**

Others are able to decide to lose weight and do it. I'm not. Sure, it's hard for most who feel the need to lose, but it's not *impossible*! For me, obviously, it is. I know that because I really tried hard – time after time – for all those years. And I was a miserable failure at it.

There is a reason – one that sounds preposterous at first – but when you finally accept it, not just in your head but in your heart, it's absolutely liberating! The reason is that for a compulsive overeater like me, it's not a personality flaw; it's a physical illness. I'm as much allergic to sugar and similar carbohydrates as other people are to nuts or bee stings or alfalfa. I cannot tolerate the carbohydrates I crave. When I give into the craving, I'm like an alcoholic driven to

madness by the overwhelming need for alcohol, or the drug addict for the drug. Sugar is my drug of choice. When I give in to the craving, I give in head over heels, a snowball barreling for the edge of a precipice.

You know, in some ways the problem for a compulsive eater can be even more difficult than the alcoholic's. Why? Two reasons.

- ✠ An alcoholic can avoid drinking alcohol forever, once the physical craving is past. Unless the compulsive eater has unending intravenous feeding, though, eating food remains necessary.
- ✠ An alcoholic is often an angry person, angry at the world and mad at the face in the mirror. Venting anger at other people while socially dangerous at least does vent, extruding the venom. A food addict tends to be a person who follows the rules, who turns to food because it's proper – unlike alcohol which, at least for many of us from the Bible Belt, was always suspect. Our rage is just as real as the alcoholic's, but instead of expressing our anger, we deny it, stuff it inside, and tamp it down with food.

Woe is me!

But wait. There's hope. Thanks be to God.

Thanks be to God – through Jesus Christ our Lord!

So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin. – Romans 7:25 (NIV)

Slimming Steps

Write down the ways you've hidden your eating from others. Have you stashed food in secret? Stolen it? Gone from one restaurant or store to another so you don't buy so much the clerk thinks badly of you? Have you eaten from the garbage pail or spoiled food? Do you clean the plates into yourself when you clear the table? Do you buy a dozen donuts so it looks like you're taking them to the office then eat the evidence before you arrive? What behaviors make you feel like a hopeless sinner?

Quintet for One

Loneliness echoes
through crowded rooms, seeking out
me, the insecure.

Moving to a town
of closed cliques is an empty
chasm of edges.

Who am I? I lack
definition, mirroring back
what I think you want.

Lonely is married
year after year to one who
knows nothing of me.

I don't know your name.
Can it be you hurt me less
being so formless?

Embarrassment, Humiliation, Shame

When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk. Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you for this? Certainly not! – I Corinthians 11:20-22 (NIV)

I don't know about the parties, evidently during the Communion dinner, but I certainly know the kind of eating behavior being described. I've lived it far too many times, year after year. Then I've stuffed more food down to kill the sting of the embarrassment, humiliation and shame.

Why I believed I could stand beside the cake or cookies and not take a plate, just sneak an unnoticed crumb or seventy as I visited, I have no idea! Stopping at a trash can beside the highway or at a service station to empty the car of evidence instead of throwing it in my own dumpster didn't change the food I'd consumed, just the evidence that might have linked it to me.

Does God look down on us for our bingeing? I don't think so. I believe he's bitterly sorrowed, but his love doesn't turn to scorn, he doesn't give up on us. He continues to love us and longs for us to turn from our folly and find out there really is a sane way of life, one so deceptively simple we cannot find it with much searching. We can only find it by giving up.

We have precisely one moment in time, and it is the present. Yesterday and the days, months, years, and decades before haunt us, but we can't grasp them, can't change one iota of our behavior – or the results. Tomorrow is a wisp of air out of reach, always one day from our grasp. We can act today in ways that benefit tomorrow, that make tomorrow more pleasant, but we cannot effect any change in tomorrow. The revision is only possible today, right now. Not five minutes ago, not an hour into the future. Right now.

What are you eating right now? If you are eating, is it something you'll approve of from the vantage point of the future? If not, are you willing to put it down? Are you able to eat appropriately this moment? Can you continue to do that the rest of today, moment by moment? Today is all you have. But you have today!

Slimming Steps

Write down everything you eat today. Be honest. If you have a friend with whom you can share the journey to slimness, are you willing to tell that person honestly and completely what you eat today? Will you do that, one day at a time?

This Lonely Choice

In a crowd or with one or a few
I remain solo, apart, alone.
My best friend is my loneliness
for with myself I don't have to talk
or remember that name I forget.
I know I'm alive when I ache.

Live enough years with an ache,
you grow numb and feel few
ups or downs. Life is gray. You forget
how to laugh or to cry. Alone
with stranger or spouse, small talk
falters toward loneliness.

I cling to despair and to loneliness,
to the comfort of knowing the ache.
I don't want to remember to talk
when the words breaking silence are few.
I'm accustomed to feeling alone;
short-lived joy I might never forget.

Never knowing, you need not forget.
It's safer to falter in loneliness.
It's not frightful to suffer alone
when long habit has softened the ache.
The times of regret now are few,
and to dream of escape is mere talk.

And yet, I've begun now to talk.
How unlikely am I to forget?
The rewards of old patterns are few
and the profligate cost is my loneliness.
Can I really survive with the ache
when I perceive myself one alone?

Solitude's pleasure from being alone
is a fib, just ingenuous talk
when you know what it is by the ache
that you'll never again just forget.
The comfort once settled in loneliness
perishes. Remnants and shards, just a few.

I can't regress to a lifetime alone, can't forget
my thought, my talk of ubiquitous loneliness.
Friendships may ache – but give me a few.

I Give Up

Then Nathan said to David, “You are the man! This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. I gave your master’s house to you, and your master’s wives into your arms. I gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more. Why did you despise the word of the LORD by doing what is evil in his eyes?’”

...

Then David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the LORD.” – II Samuel 12:7-9a, 13a (NIV) [Read II Samuel 12:1-13a]

“I give up.” Not many months ago I would have told you those words reflected defeat. Now I know they bring freedom, victory, peace, serenity, joy, and sanity. Blessed sanity. And weight loss is an exciting byproduct of sanity! But first, surrender is necessary – and *oh* so positive!!!

Consider David when finally confronted with the question, “What have you *done*?” David knew God. He had been chosen by God to be king over Israel. Together they had confronted the world, and David knew what it was to depend of God’s guidance.

He forgot.

He was king, and he decided he could make decisions and run things. He did a lousy job of it. He and Bathsheba bore the consequences of their actions in the loss of the child of their misconduct. David repented completely, but, having faced his failure, accepted with it the aftermath. Don’t you

suspect he had many sleepless nights during his misconduct? Don't you know he would have expected God to be as kind to him as he was to Uriah the Hittite? I cannot accept the idea God zapped the child for the parents' acts. The consequences David experienced were dire, but they were out in the open, not the fear of the unknown, and now he could move forward, no longer relying on his decision-making abilities but again turning to God.

My life was unmanageable. My misdeeds weren't as dramatic as David's, but they abounded, and they haunted me. I was intelligent, educated, a natural leader. For what reason would I expect not to be able to do what other people were doing? Like eating sanely. Like gaining the respect of those closest to me. Like living a meaningful life, not just existing, an automaton drearily plodding through the assigned tasks. Why could I not love and be loved? What was wrong with me?

What I hated most was for someone to say, "I don't know how you do all the things you do." I felt so fake, so bogus. I wasted hours every day, avoiding doing what needed to be done, then rushed through the tasks when deadlines loomed and facing the job at hand was easier than facing myself, a failure once again.

My life was out of control, both in eating and in every other area. I had to have help. I needed sanity.

This morning I experienced a wave of the old madness. Nothing major was wrong, though I could name minor inconveniences. Suddenly, with no more justification than that, the old insanity washed over me, a longing that for a long time had daily sent me to the donut shop. I didn't fall prey today but rejoiced in the wake-up call. Again, I accept my insanity, I accept my inability to control my own life and even what I put in my mouth. I give up. And I thank God for his willingness to pick up the responsibility.

Slimming Steps

How do you feel the insanity? Write about what you've tried to manage and cannot.

Willpower

I tried, tried for years to achieve
though I felt like I'd balanced on rope
not tied, just stretched over a chasm,
way off the edge of a cliff.
I juggled responsibilities while playful
innocents moved the rope, tripped
me, kept me off balance.
I saw nothing, blinded by masks
I hid behind, as misplaced as my life.

From the cliff, though, came a kind voice
of hope, news help awaited nearby
if I only gave up my efforts to manage,
reached for solid rock by stretching my
hand, asking for help, and trusting.

Step Two

Came to believe
that a Power greater than
ourselves could restore us
to sanity.

So Who Is God?

Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?"

God said to Moses, "I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'" – Exodus 3:13-14 (NIV)

Have you ever met a celebrity? Once I ate beside a U.S. Senator. He had no intention of engaging in conversation, of acknowledging people around him other than demanding the oversight of his not having received a slice of pie be rectified, and immediately! I made a nametag for another senator and misspelled her name, much to her disgust and my chagrin.

George W. Bush was different. In his gratitude for the meeting background work I'd done, setting up the room, etc., he kissed my cheek. A couple of weeks later I stood in a coliseum full of people listening to him. As he walked past me, leaving through the crowd, he recognized me, calling me by my title. Then he said he wanted Laura to meet me, having some aides bring her forward.

When people step out of the newspapers and off the TV screens into your life, they're real. Some such experiences please; others disgust. But the person on TV or in newsprint never stops being real after the experience.

I've always known God through the Bible, stained glass windows, works of old masters, and sermons. I studied New Testament Greek so I could read the original text. I'd taught Sunday school, and instructed the teachers, and I'd even

preached twice. I brought to the rooms of recovery a thorough understanding of the Bible, from historical, theological, and archaeological aspects.

Then God stepped off the pages and into my life. He'll never be the same. He is. He is real. He is vital, caring, present, understanding, compassionate, accepting. He is love – love I've never before known from any source.

However, now that I've met God, who is Love, I find love all around me.

In the past, I believed God performed miracles. I found myself entranced by stories of my own great-grandfather's faith great enough to heal people. And mules. But as strong as my belief in God's awesome power had been, the power became real and personal for me on December 17, 2006.

That's when I knew he not only had performed miracles in the past but that he could and would accept my burdens and relieve me of the insanity of my life. That's the day I stopped turning to food for comfort, for I met Comfort himself.

Slimming Steps

Who is your God? How well do you know him? Can he meet the needs that drive you crazy? What kind of God do you want? What do you want him to do for you? Write it out. God can climb out of the box you may have found him in and into your life.

A Modicum of Faith

Newborn as Shiloh roiled, Sam modeled wisdom, grace —
an unpretentious man. To Arkansas then on
they trekked. They built a church and scattered seed, a place
in Texas dawned a home, a farm from faith and brawn.

Sam served and sowed from youth through eighty years of love,
attuned to all of life, revered for prayers he spoke.
His unobtrusive faith invoked response above
the ken of prouder men while healing hurting folk.

Sam melded foot and severed toe, stanching blood with words
and healed a distant mule by speaking through a phone.
Example etched in children trust that undergirds,
and evenings he would sing, a radiant baritone.

A simple righteous man, a man I never knew —
Pacific battles raged as Sam progressed in peace,
a saint. And now Sam's grandson's daughter finds it true
that mountain-moving faith exists and shall not cease.

Is God Everything or Nothing?

[Servants of God are]... known, yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything. – II Corinthians 6:9-10 (NV) [Read II Corinthians 6:3-10]

The old hymn says, “I surrender all.” Have you thought about the meaning? A dictionary might tell you surrender is a verb meaning to relinquish possession or control, to give up or abandon. What does it mean on the battlefield?

Surrender can either be conditional or unconditional. Capitulating to God means the latter, unequivocally. Normally a belligerent will agree to yield completely only if utterly incapable of continuing. A white flag or raising empty and open hands above the head triggers set procedures of acceptance under United States Army policy.

- ☞ Silence (they cannot plan an escape)
- ☞ Search (for weapons, maps, orders, etc.)
- ☞ Secure (tie up or guard)
- ☞ Safeguard (from dangers)
- ☞ Separate (to facilitate control)

To surrender is to open yourself to humiliation, no longer having a voice in decisions about your life. It means we’re no longer in charge.

Would you surrender to God? I thought I did when I was twelve and joined the church. When I was nine I decided to be a missionary, proclaiming that intention into the next

decade. I got an advanced degree in Christian education, worked as church staff in three places, wrote United Methodist and Baptist curriculum materials. I thought I'd surrendered to God. But that was the media God, the one I got third hand. Only when I really knew him could I reach the point of actually yielding control to him, and that gladly.

The Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, describes this as a dilemma faced by addicts, whether to alcohol, food, or other behavior:

[W]e had to fearlessly face the proposition that either God is everything or else He is nothing. God either is, or He isn't. What was our choice to be? (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, page 53)

Until the understanding that came through working the Steps, I had no real relationship with God. So for me God was really nothing, or at least not everything. When I got to know him, he was everything, and surrender came naturally.

Slimming Steps

Is God everything or nothing to you? What personal experiences have you had with him? Write about it.
