

Tending the Temple

WHAT A LOSER!

by | Matthew McNutt

I am an obesity survivor.

It's a label I wear with pride. One I earned through discipline, sweat, and tears. But more importantly, I'm an obesity survivor not because of some TV show or desire for attention; rather I had a motive that gave me focus and strength through my weakest moments. I labored under the conviction and passion that I could (and would) rebuild my temple, forming it into one that gives honor and glory to God.

Embodied Souls

For years I didn't connect my spiritual health with my physical health. So while my heart and mouth claimed I belonged to Jesus, my 366-pound body proclaimed my lack of self control, discipline, and respect for my body.

Somewhere along the line I allowed the same Gnostic heresies that the Apostles fought thousands of years ago to invade my beliefs. In effect I lived a life that claimed my soul was right and important and my flesh was fallen, disconnected, and not a priority.

Like many of us, I took New Testament passages on our bodies being temples of the Holy Spirit and used them as warnings to teenagers against having sex or doing drugs, but I failed to see what these Scriptures had to do with my expanding waistline.

But the Bible is much more holistic than that: "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

Old and New Testament Temples

In studying the temple—the building, that is—in the Old Testament, I found that it overflows with writings about the holiness, sacredness, importance—even necessity of the structure. Chapter after chapter, book after book, biblical writers focus on the care, maintenance, love, and respect required to keep this incredible dwelling place for God in good shape.

God often lays foundations for a long period of time before revealing deeper meanings behind life's truths. For example, God instituted marriage with Adam and Eve, yet we don't find out until a long period of time after that marriage is used as a teaching tool to help us understand the relationship between Jesus and his bride, the church (Ephesians 5:15-33). For thousands of years the Jews made sacrifices—and because of them, today we can more easily grasp the significance of Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

In the same way, God uses the importance of temple care (the building) to drive home how important it is to care for the most important temples of all (our bodies).

Physical and Spiritual Health

Out of shape and overweight, I finally made the connection that my physical health and spiritual health are vitally intertwined. In neglecting the care of my body, my spiritual life had actually

Note from the Editor: Youth Pastor Matthew McNutt was a contestant on last season's *The Biggest Loser* on NBC. Though he didn't win, he sure did lose: 176 pounds—more than 48% of his original body weight! In fact, he's inspired some of us at *The Journal of Student Ministries* to lose weight, as well—which has also inspired us to share that with you. This is the first in a series of installments designed to help us take better care of our bodies. Come join our journey at www.tjosm.com.

suffered, too. As Yancey and Brand write in their book, *Fearfully & Wonderfully Made*, "Where is God in the world? What is He like? We can no longer point to the Holy of Holies or to a carpenter in Nazareth. We form God's presence in the world through the indwelling of His Spirit."

Whether I realized it or not, I wasn't in a position to experience the fullness of what God calls us to because my temple was in complete disarray. But this also gave me a tremendous sense of excitement and purpose. I wasn't going to lose the weight simply for image or to win a prize on *The Biggest Loser*—I was doing it to rebuild my temple.

And 1 Corinthians 10:31 brought me even more excitement: "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God!" Have you ever truly thought about that? How we eat—how we nourish our temples—can be worship. Our exercise can give glory to God.

That changed everything for me.

Flipping the Scales

As I write these words, I've lost more than 150 pounds in about six months. I reached my goal weight literally years ahead of what I thought was humanly possible, and I've done it all at home—no trainers, no fad diets, no pills, and no other gimmicks. You can do it too, and/or you can help your students do it. There are four key aspects to a healthy weight loss plan:

A Deeper Purpose

I remind myself daily that I'm worshiping God through my eating, saving my life for my family, and now finally able to model healthy spiritual and physical living to young people—which is critical when we hear that youth obesity has tripled in recent years, leading to an increase in diabetes and other weight-related health issues. We even need plus-size car seats because there are so many overweight toddlers! Don't you think it's time for the church to do something about youth obesity?

Support

I have a team of supporters, people on my side who hold me accountable and remind me of my purpose in my darker moments. They are the ones I go to when I'm struggling or feeling weak. Many times I've had to confess my own self-sabotage; but because of that, I was soon able to resist my unhealthy temptations and grow in strength and confidence, which ultimately made it easier to press on.

Nutrition

By taking the time to learn about healthy eating instead of assuming I knew all that was necessary, I discovered plenty of alternatives to my favorite foods. And I finally understand calories and their significance.

The average person burns about 2,000 calories a day just existing (depending on age, height, and body type). Eating more

