



TRANSFORMING SELF IMAGE

by | Matthew McNutt

I'm not sure when I realized just how bad my self image can be.

It's strange in a way because the stereotypes would have us believe that girls are the ones who really struggle with body image. Honestly, as a teenager, and then a college student struggling with all sorts of self-image issues, I thought I was some sort of bizarre freak of nature.

Body image issues can come in many forms and center on a variety of different issues and or features. For me, it was a weight issue. My obsession with just how ugly my weight made me feel peaked during my college years. My response was to try and starve the weight off; I would literally go days without eating, relying on diet and appetite suppression pills to keep myself from consuming anything. And when I finally would eat, it was usually just a few crackers or something equally small. Even as I starved myself down to 200 pounds – about 30 pounds less than any of my doctors would want my 6' 5" frame to carry, I still looked in the mirror and saw nothing but fat.

Even when competing on *The Biggest Loser*, I saw some of these old issues resurfacing. I remember standing in front of the mirror on the day of the live finale, wearing nothing but my boxers, and feeling nauseous at the thought of millions of viewers seeing my failure to finish losing the weight. To my eyes, I could only see the roll of fat around my waist, still there after months of exercise and dieting. Literally countless thousands of sit-ups, ab workouts, and more could not get rid of it. I actually weighed in for the finale at 190 pounds after starting at 366 pounds. That roll of "fat"? It was the loose skin that

was I not fat, I was seriously underweight. In fact, I was borderline gaunt. Even though I was competing on the show for the equivalent of several years of a youth pastor's salary, I told myself that I would never take the weight loss to the point of being unhealthy; I didn't want to send the message to teens that there's anything more valuable than our bodies, the temple of God. And yet, my lousy way of viewing myself led me to do exactly that. It was an eye-opening moment to see those photos of my starved body and remember my feelings of near panic I experienced on the day of the finale because I was ashamed at how overweight I still thought I looked.

That's the moment where I finally started to realize that even after months of spiritual introspection and Bible studies on the temple, my self-image was still wrapped up in the physical and our culture's values instead of viewing myself with God's eyes. One of my favorite passages is 1 Corinthians 3:16-17: "Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?...God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple" (emphasis added). It's so amazing to me that while I looked at my body and saw an imperfect, declining, overweight disappointment, God saw (and sees) something sacred, holy, and beautiful—a body worthy of being God's temple. That blows my mind! And that's when it finally hit me; God doesn't see my value where I am now; I don't need to get my body to a specific place to honor God with it. God takes joy in the destination; God sees me as I will be one day: Perfect.

If I'm honoring God and taking care of my body—God's temple—with my eating and exercise choices today, then God is honored and worshiped today. I don't need to make myself a "good enough" temple; God has already done that. I simply need to live today in such a way that honors the incredible value that God has given my body.

We need to see ourselves as God sees us, and not the fallen, broken self-image that many of us are plagued with. If we can do that, we'll be one step closer to living the way God hopes we will live. 🙏

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remained after deflating my body 176 pounds in less than a year. (That stuff doesn't go anywhere!)

After it was all said and done and I saw the photos of myself, I finally began to see what the others were saying all along: Not only



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