God, will I ever be free?
Surrender your food struggle to God

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Introduction

Thank you so much for your interest in my eBook.

I wrote this book to tell about my battles and victories during many years of struggling with food. I desire more than anything for God to shine His light through this “jar of clay” (2 Corinthians 4:7) and touch His people.

Writing this book helped me grow in my own journey of surrendering my life to God, and I am even now surrendering this book to Him with all my heart.

These words from Scripture became the cry of my soul through many difficult years:

*But as for me, I watch in hope for the LORD,*
*I wait for God my Savior; my God will hear me.*
*Do not gloat over me, my enemy!*
*Though I have fallen, I will rise.*
*Though I sit in darkness,*
*the LORD will be my light.*
Micah 7: 7-8 (NIV)

Thank you Jesus for being my Light, picking me up countless times, and healing me!

Thank you Tony for all your help with the design and technical detail involving this ebook and my website. Thank you especially for giving me space and support to heal. I love you so much.

Thank you Jean for editing this book, I couldn’t have done it without you!

Thank you my dear family and friends for loving both the good and bad parts of me through the years, and encouraging me to press forward in search of healing and freedom.

In *His Love*

*Heleen*
Chapter 1
Stuck in a Life of Chaos

Addiction can turn an ordinary life into a heap of turmoil, lies, rejection and pain. The good things in life seem to stay beyond your reach. Moments of joy seem to last only for a second, like a butterfly that wiggles itself out of your grasp and vanishes. For someone who struggles to overcome food addiction peace does not exist…

I spent almost twenty years of my life battling different kinds of eating disorders and food addiction. As a teenager I played around with methods to control my weight such as starving, binging and purging. In my twenties I turned to diet pills, laxatives and excessive exercise. I was a born again Christian, but I lived a double life. People thought I was happy and driven, but secretly I was scared, lonely and defeated. I kept a journal on and off during those years and most entries read like this:

“Lord I don’t want to be a slave anymore! I know I am held captive by food, but how do I get out? Please get me out of this Lord. This is no life; no one should live like this! I don’t know what to do! I’m so tired of looking for answers. I am sick of diets and plans. I am tired of thinking about this every day of my life.

I know I don’t have to be fat: I can probably get pills again, or I can throw up or starve myself, but it kills me! It makes me sick, depressed and lonely. Please show me what it is to be free. I have been a slave for so long...

Where’s the life-in-abundance that the Bible speaks of? Why can’t I get it right?

You know how I’ve tried, Lord. You’ve seen my pathetic efforts to do the right things. I’ve prayed, I’ve read my Bible, but I can never seem to keep it up. It’s just like all my other plans. It seems to work for a while, but it never lasts. Every time things go a little better, I eat right and get my mind on something else, but then I forget about Bible study and I start spiraling down again. Other times I’m so overwhelmed by this food struggle that I can’t focus on praying, reading or anything for that matter...
Every time I find myself back in the day by day struggle, barely surviving.

What do I do wrong?
Please show me, or I will loose my mind!”
This cry came from my very broken heart, and it was part of my life for many years. I was stuck in eating disorders. I was secretly struggling every day and I couldn’t find a way out in spite of my best efforts.

I grew up in church and I at some point tried talking to friends and family about this, but they didn’t really understand what I was going through. They suggested more Bible study, deliverance, diets, and counseling. This helped, but I never found lasting healing. Even the few people who tried to help eventually gave up due to the ongoing nature of this struggle.

For this reason I faked “healing” many times. I sensed that people grew tired of me not being able to just “get it together” and in order to not burden them any longer; I would act as if I was doing better. Even my family believed that I “outgrew” the problem because of the “happy mask” I wore, but inside I experienced a deep loneliness. I had a secret: I wasn’t as good as the rest of them.

I would like to tell you my story so that you can better understand where my problem started and how it grew through the years until it consumed me and left me stuck in a life of chaos.

When I was in first grade I had a best friend. Her name was Charmaine and I adored her. Like any other six year old I was totally oblivious to her physical appearance, she was just my best friend, period.

I only came to realize that she was considered to be “beautiful” by the comments and reaction of teachers, my parents and other adults. She had a great smile, with deep dimples and perfectly straight baby teeth against a smooth brown skin. Wavy black hair framed her little face, and she had big brown puppy eyes with long lashes. She was very petite, too adorable in her tiny school dress and little black shoes.

The comments of the adults in my life made me wonder if I was beautiful too. I became more aware of my own appearance. Little girls love to twirl and dance in front of the mirror and I was no exception. However, even at this very young and fragile age, I would stop and stare at my own reflection. I noticed the contrast between what was considered to be “beautiful” and the way I looked. I had pale skin, freckles and fine red-brown hair. My clothes always fit snug, and my feet were flat and awkward looking in my Mary Jane school shoes. I wasn’t obese, but nobody ever said, “Awh, isn’t she adorable”.

This was not a big thing, but a seed of doubt was planted in my young heart. I was not sure if I could ever be loved for who I was. As time passed I did become aware of other “qualities” I had. I made good grades, loved public speaking, and was not too bad at playing the piano.
However, as I moved into my teen years it became perfectly clear that none of these talents mattered as much as being beautiful.

I saw how other pretty girls like Charmaine were showered with compliments and love. I saw how the attention increased their self esteem, social skills, and even academic performance, while the “ordinary” girls (like me) crept deeper into their shells. We were overlooked by the popular girls, boys and teachers alike. It was as if we did not exist.

During those formative years I felt a yearning grow inside of me. I knew what I wanted more than anything: I wanted to be one of them – the royalty of society – the thin, beautiful people.

Changing my appearance became my major goal in life, and weight loss was at the top of my make-over list. So at the young age of thirteen I started a cycle which I know today as a form of bulimia. I didn’t vomit but I starved myself for weeks. I would eat almost nothing, just liquids and a few low calorie items. My body obviously couldn’t take this for long and I would soon find myself binging for weeks, just to repeat the cycle again.

I was in boarding school during those years. Many of the girls had this starving and binging cycle going on, so I did not even bother hiding my disordered way of eating, it was the popular thing to do.

However, I was not even “successful” at starving myself. It was so hard to continue this pattern of eating and I felt defeated and depressed all the time. I managed to keep it up for most of my high school years though and I remained between a size 8 and 10, which was not nearly thin enough in my eyes.

When I was in 11th grade I had a boyfriend who was much older than me and very athletic. He insisted that I lose weight, which of course fed my low self esteem and disordered way of eating. Under his supervision I added some excessive exercise to my routine. By the time we broke up, starving, binging, and periods of excessive exercise followed by sedentary sprees were part of my life.

I met Tony, the love of my life, when I was 21. We got married and in the light of his total acceptance of me, I could, for the first time, be honest with myself. I had some serious body and food issues and I realized that I needed help. However, I honestly didn’t know where to turn. Back then, in the 80’s and early 90’s, dieting was a way of life for all the women I knew and no one thought I had a real problem.

The only time that I felt totally free from my eating disorders was during my pregnancies. I was so nauseas that I didn’t care much for food and always lost a lot of weight.

However, this actually aggravated my condition, because I saw what I could look like if I was thin, and I loved it. I loved the attention and the way I felt and I wanted more of it.
After I weaned my second baby, I decided that it was time to take matters into my own hands. I had to find a way to suppress my appetite permanently and diet pills were the answer. For the first time in my life, in my mid twenties, I felt beautiful. I managed to lose so much weight that I was down to a size 6-8.

I had enough energy from the diet pills that I could exercise all the time and looked great. I became obsessed with my appearance. I tanned, I bleached my hair, and I received the attention I craved all those years.

However, the pain didn’t go away. My heart was bleeding for that fair, medium built, freckled girl that was not good enough. I enjoyed the compliments and adoration that came my way, but I cried because reaching this goal didn’t do anything to patch the hole I had in my heart.

So I had to keep busy. Sitting still would mean to feel, and feeling would bring out the pain that I careful hid behind my perfect appearance. Nobody knew I had this problem and at times I even believed my own charade. I organized all kinds of events, led worship, finished my degree and entertained all the time. I never stopped, I became callous to sin, and I slipped away from God. I had to keep running, from God and from myself, the real me…

Charades have a way of playing themselves out though. Lies have a tendency to be exposed and masks have a nasty habit of slipping off your face when you least expect it. When my health started to deteriorate I couldn’t run anymore. On top of that, we moved to America and diet pills were not so easy to come by. It had just been taken off the market due to its dangerous ingredients (no kidding!) So for a season I turned to vomiting, but I knew about the dangerous consequences and it left me fearful and anxious that I could die and leave my kids behind. All the while my health kept deteriorating.

At the time we attended a legalistic church with a lot of “perfect” people who didn’t care to really know me, let alone know my secret. I had a couple of real friends, but even they didn’t know the full severity of my condition and what I dealt with on a daily basis.

I was so confused, so alone, and so in need of something real.

When I was truly down and out, and had no more plans left, God taught me the first step of surrender. I remember saying “Okay, I can’t live like this anymore. There is NOTHING I can do to fix this. Please, help me Lord! I am such a mess…”

I will always remember that day when I truly, from my heart, surrendered to God for the first time:
It was a Saturday and Tony was home. We had a fight that was mainly about me trying to pin my desperate situation on him without admitting that I was falling apart and in desperate need of help.

I ran out of our apartment, clutching my notebook and pen for some reason that I still can not explain. I found a bench under a big old tree, away from other people’s eyes. I cried for so long, calling out to God to help me and save me from myself! After a long time of sobbing something strange happened. A Blue Jay came and sat right at my feet, just staring at me. I held my breath, because I have a bit of bird phobia, but it didn’t do anything, it just sat there for the longest time, until I started relaxing and my fear vanished. I know it sounds corny, but it seriously felt as if God himself came and sat with me. I felt peace wash over me and I started writing. Years of pain and turmoil spilled over onto the pages. I wrote about my sin, my pride, my pain and all the things I have never even admitted to myself. It was like a personal counseling session with the King of all Kings.

How about you? I’m sorry but I can’t just write a book without asking. Have you made that first fierce move to surrender? Today could be that day…

For the remainder of this book I added scenarios from my own life and entries from my journals. I want you to have a look into my world, and see how I learned and still daily learn to surrender in the midst of real life drama, temptation and trials.
Chapter 2
What does it mean to Surrender?

Now although my first official *day of surrender*, with the weird acting Blue Jay, marked a definite turn in my struggle with food, I can assure you that it was not the end of it.

I struggled to surrender ALL areas of my life to God.

A friend once mentioned that I really needed to surrender this problem of mine to God. I had some kind of understanding of the word *surrender*, but I had no idea how to do it, or how it would play out in everyday life. Years later I heard someone say it differently: “If you don’t surrender to God, you surrender to chaos.” This triggered something in me because I knew all about chaos. It was the story of my life. Broken relationships, unfinished projects, lost dreams, financial struggles, no peace, and no control over my thoughts and feelings: Chaos!

I wanted out of this chaos, so for the first time I gave this “surrender thing” some serious thought. I tried to surrender my eating, the way I felt about food, and the way I saw my body to God before. In fact I begged him many days for almost twenty years to help me, change me, make me hate food, and give me a love for exercise and salad. But it never happened…

What was the problem? Why didn’t God just set me free instantaneously?

I knew He could do it. It was not that I lacked faith. I grew up with evidence of God’s healing power all around me. My parents had great faith for God’s miraculous working power in their lives and ministry. When I was a kid we went to many tent meetings where thousands of people would worship God, hundreds would give their hearts to Him for the first time and just as many miracles would take place. People would stand in long lines after the service to get their chance at the microphone. I would hear testimonies of how God delivered people from addiction and healed anything from a cold to cancer.

My Dad is a true Evangelist at heart, so in my teen years he started having his own tent meetings. My Mom, brother and I always served on the worship team, so I saw the joy and gratitude of the people who received healing and deliverance up close.
Tears of joy streamed down their faces as they grabbed onto God’s promises. I still cannot forget those faces, radiant with the touch of God.

Now the question I carried in my heart all those years: Why wouldn’t God just touch and cure this deformed and broken area in my life? After struggling with it for so long, I was so ready to surrender it to Him. I was holding it out to Him, shouting “Take it Lord, please take it, I surrender!” Yet nothing happened...

All the years of praying, asking, and surrendering my food addiction as best I could, had left me discouraged and hopeless. Prayer was my last resort but it seemed to have failed me, just like all my other plans.

Regardless of my state of despair, I found myself often humming an old song from Proverbs 3: 5-6 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight (NIV)

Another verse that kept popping up in my life, and made me aware of the fact that I might be missing something important was the familiar one in James 4:7 Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. (NIV)

So if the Bible so clearly says to give your plans over to the Lord and things will go well, then what was I doing wrong? How do you give your life over to Him? What is this *submit* or *surrender* that the Bible speaks of? And most importantly, how do you do it?

I really wanted to know, so my search began.

According to Webster’s Dictionary one of the definitions of surrender is “to give oneself up into the power of another” (1).

Surrender is not a very popular word in our society. In fact it clashes with the modern view of “Go for the gold”, “Be your own person”, and my personal favorite “You can do anything if you put your mind to it!”

Let me assure you from painful personal experience that I could not do everything I put my mind to! On the contrary, the more I focused my mind and relied on will-power to overcome my food addiction, the deeper I sank. It took me forever to admit that I needed help and even then I needed to be in control of things. I wanted help, but on my terms. I wanted to make a plan and have God bless it.
Looking back, I realize that I still had no idea what surrender meant although I thought I was doing it.

I had my own version of “surrender” and it wasn’t doing me any good. I kept sinking deeper into the never ending pit of eating disorders.

My search to find the true meaning of surrender continued.

Upon further investigation I came across this well known verse in Romans: “Do you not know that if you continually surrender yourselves to anyone to do his will, you are the slaves of him whom you obey, whether that be to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience which leads to righteousness” (Romans 6:16, AMP)

Something in this passage caught my eye. It doesn’t say to surrender things. It says to “surrender YOURSELVES”. Could this mean that I literally had to surrender all of me, my whole life? That would mean all of my time, my money, my relationships, my work, my interests and yes my eating habits. I started thinking about this, and how everything in my life works together, and has an effect on each other.

How many times have I just shoved handfuls of potato chips down my throat after I had a stressful telephone conversation? And how about the times I gave myself over to pastries and sweets after I spent way too much money and blew my budget?

So yes, these things are indeed tied together and although I’ve recognized this before, I didn’t make the connection that I might have been trying to surrender the wrong thing.

Basically if God instantly healed me, years ago, from my eating disorders, I would still not have learned what it is to truly surrender my LIFE to Him. I might have learned how to surrender food, but what about all the other areas in my life that needed God’s healing and guidance so desperately?

When I finally stopped my prideful demand for answers and had an honest look into my heart, I knew that this was true. During the times in my life when I abused diet pills and created a fake state of weight control, I looked good, I didn’t binge, and I had tons of energy because of the diet pills, but I still felt empty. I was still looking for something to satisfy the deep yearning in my heart. So when I temporarily gave up food as my drug of choice I “needed” something else to give meaning to my life so I started shopping compulsively (not a good idea if you don’t have much money).
To narrow it down: The state of chaos that I lived in for more than twenty years was due to the fact that I wouldn’t surrender MY LIFE to God. I was grabbing onto straws to fill the emptiness and help me “cope” with my chaotic life.

I had to choose: Would I become a slave of Christ or a slave of this world? Would I keep choosing my own selfish desires and ultimately Satan’s plan for me or would I learn what it means to TRULY SURRENDER MY LIFE TO GOD?

There is no way around it, we have to choose. There’s no middle ground. The world tries to tell us that we can boss ourselves; figure things out for ourselves, and control our own lives.

Here’s the problem that I came across; I tried my best to become my “own person”. I vowed that I would never put myself in a position to need anybody. I didn’t want people to have any power over me or tell me what to do. I was raised in a society where women still needed to “know their place” and prejudice was rampant. This affected me deeply and left me scarred and angry. I was adamant to become a strong, independent woman who would not be ruled by anyone. God was good to me and gave me a husband that respects me and saw me as his help-meet, not his doormat and while this helped me and defused a lot of my anger; my fight for independence reached far beyond my marriage.

I was very hesitant to surrender my life to God. I thought I could control my world with planning and perfection, but somehow I always ended up in some kind of bondage.

For many years I believed that I just had to work harder at “controlling” my struggle with food. As you may have guessed, it didn’t work:

Just when I thought I had this eating disorder under control with diet pills, my health started deteriorating because of the pills. I had heart palpitations, bad skin and fell prey to every virus that went around.

I thought I could control my weight by vomiting, but it damaged my teeth, throat, and vocal cords. I was worried that I might never be able to sing again if I kept it up. I was also very aware of the fact that bulimics have a great chance of having a heart attack or permanent damage to the heart.

I stopped eating for periods of time to take control of my life, but I was plagued with irritability and tiredness and I become a person I didn’t like at all.

Somehow I dawned on me that if I was not a “slave” of God, I was a slave of the things I held so dear (food and my appearance) and ultimately Satan.
You see, if we trust anything else to bring meaning to our lives, we leave ourselves open for Satan to attack in anyway he wants and ultimately get a foothold in our lives.

The good news: You are not helpless. Yes, the enemy can get a strong hold over your life if you rely on your own strength, will power and intellect to defeat him. However, he is no match for the King of Kings.

All you need to do is surrender to your Prince of Peace, Mighty God and Everlasting Father. Let’s find out how…
Chapter 3  
Rise up Mighty Warrior!

LIFE IS HARD! Let’s not pretend it isn’t. If you have done a little bit of walking on this old planet of ours, you must have experienced some of the potholes in the road of life; such as rejection, abuse and neglect to mention a few.

We are obviously in Satan’s kingdom and he is out to steal, kill and destroy. We find this in the Bible in John 10:10 *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full* (NIV)

If you have an eating disorder and you didn’t know that you are smack in the middle of a raging war where you are being assaulted every moment of every day, then I am here to wake you up to this truth.

Have a look at this excerpt from a journal I kept many years ago, and see if any of this sounds familiar:

“I open my eyes, its morning but I just want to go back to sleep. I can’t do this. I can not start this day. It is just going to be like all the others.

Tony brings me coffee and I glare at him with envy. How could he be so positive about every new day? How could he be so sure that things are going to be okay? I wish I was like that, but I have lived too many sad days, tried too many times, just to end up at the same dead end. I pick up my journal. I jot down my intentions for this day.

I drag my sorry bones out of bed and find myself staring at my closet. What would I wear? *My faded black sweats and worn out blue t shirt? I hate my clothes!* I hate that I can not buy new things until I loose weight. I wish I could change. “Please God; I beg you, help me change!”

I get a glimpse of my body as I get into the shower. I am so disgusting! I will never get in shape again. I feel panicky. I better hurry up and get out of this bathroom. I cry under the shower, begging God to help me be better. I resolve that today will be better; I am NOT going to eat ANYTHING!

No wait, that’s probably not a good idea. I think I will just eat vegetables and fruit. Or no, wait, maybe some meat with that. Or maybe I will just give up sweets.
I am such a mess. I don’t know what to do anymore. I get dressed. I feel totally defeated. I think I should spend some time with God.

I put on some worship music and immediately start crying. I am such a mess, I am just so bad. I start praying and as always I repeat over and over. “I am so sorry God, I am so sorry. I know I don’t come to you enough. Would you just help me today to not eat any sugar?”

I open my Bible and read. It feels good, but I think I need some breakfast. My mind starts racing. There are so many things I need to do: The children need to get ready, I should probably make my husband something to eat. I have to at least be a good mom and wife; I can’t let this area go to the dogs too.

I get up and hurry to the kitchen. Look at this place, I start cleaning. I wonder what I will cook this afternoon. I think I will start doing some prep work for the lunch now as well. My kids are fighting. I try and sort it out, but the oldest leave without breakfast. I feel like such a failure. I grab a bagel and pile on some cream cheese. Tears well up in my eyes while I gobble it down and pour a second cup of coffee.

My husband is looking for his keys, he gets irritated and I run around to help him find it. I feel angry because he does this to me. I always wonder about us: How can he still love me? Look at me! He must run into cute girls all the time. How can he even stand the sight of me? Maybe I will phone him and ask him about that. Maybe I will make some eggs first.”

Does any of this sound familiar?

Did you pick up on the war that was raging in my mind?

It was not even 9o’clock in the morning and already I had been assaulted by the enemy over and over again. He had me on a leash.

I was a born again Christian and I walked with God for many years. According to me I just had this food thing that I couldn’t shake off.

Unfortunately that wasn’t true. Although I was saved and knew that I would go to heaven when I died, I lived a miserable life. My will, thoughts, and emotions were not surrendered to God. In fact, at times it felt as if Satan had full control over my thought life. Thoughts of despair and suicide would enter my mind many days, and I didn’t know how to make it stop.

Only when I got into God’s presence did I feel a little hope.
When did all of this change?

Well, the day I opened my eyes to the fact that I was at war. I realized with a shock that I walked into full combat every day with NOTHING, no armor and no weapons. Actually, the enemy made me blind to the fact that there was a war going on at all. He lied to me so often that I started to believe that his lies were my own thoughts. I just let any and every thought run rampant in my mind.

I had to be pulled out of this dangerous mindset. It was time for me to open my eyes to the fact that I have been harassed by the enemy and that he was using my own mind against me.

I realized that I could not trust my thoughts anymore: NONE OF IT!

I had to take it all captive, and then let ONLY the thoughts through that were in line with the truth of God’s Word. John 8:32 start to make more sense to me “Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free”

Something started clicking: The ONLY WAY to turn from being a slave to Satan is to SURRENDER TO GOD, right? So something practical I could do was to surrender my thoughts by simply being aware of what I was thinking and rejecting those negative, abusing thoughts as not my own and certainly not from God.

I was warned many times before not to leave my mind “vacant” but rather fill it with the Word of God. I never knew how true this was until I found myself stuck in eating disorders.

In the past it really helped me to go for counseling and to follow certain programs, however I couldn’t seems to stay free. This was due to the fact that the enemy declared war on me every time I tried to escape this pit of captivity. As soon as I was alone with my own thoughts, I was in trouble again.

So I memorized Scripture for the first time in my life and suddenly I had a weapon!

God doesn’t kid around when He tells us to put on the armor in Ephesians 6. We need to strap it on; otherwise we find ourselves open and vulnerable every moment of every day for Satan to attack our minds and hearts.

Surrendering my thoughts by filling my mind with the Word and resisting every other thought that came up in my mind caused a huge breakthrough in my life. However, this was only the beginning; there were still many other areas in this girl’s life that needed to be surrendered.
Chapter 4
Surrender your need for a Quick Fix

In the next few chapters I want to present to you these “other areas” that closely affected my struggle with food and that held me back from breaking free from Eating Disorders. I had to surrender all of it if I wanted freedom.

The first area was my Constant Need for a Quick Fix. I had to let it go! Every time it reared its little head I found myself back in the bonds of eating disorders.

To better understand my need for a “quick fix” from food addiction, I have to take you a little further into my story.

After my initial surrender I went for counseling and started researching the field of eating disorders, food addiction and other related material extensively. I wanted to equip myself with as much knowledge as possible in order to get rid of this food struggle once and for all.

I also felt a deep yearning to help other ladies who struggled with food, and started support groups for women at our local church.

I carefully observed the lives of these ladies. Armed with years of research, I tried figuring out what went wrong for all of us and how it could be fixed.

I listened to countless stories of success and failure. Success could obviously be measured by whether the person involved lost weight, or picked up weight (in the case of anorexia).

In my life you can see that I’m doing okay with my food struggle when I weigh a moderate weight, have clear skin and a fair amount of energy. Anything extreme such as overweight, underweight, no energy, very high energy levels and a sudden change in any of these areas can be an indication that someone with an eating disorder is not doing well.

Something that bothered me a lot during that time in my life was my own conviction on the topic of weight loss. I wanted to believe that there existed a healthy way to loose weight, but I could honestly only remember one time in my then thirty years when I lost a lot of weight and kept it off: The time I abused diet pills!

Many of my new friends in the support groups echoed this. They too found that only extreme measures helped them keep the weight off.
Although everybody agreed that purging was disgusting and humiliating, they pointed out that “We do it because it keeps the weight off”. Some of the ladies were still abusing diet pills and they were not prepared to give it up because it was the only thing that worked. Other friends opted for expensive and risky weight loss surgery. They were prepared to deal with the complications and danger for the same reason: Nothing else worked!

I agreed. All the other “diets” or “new ways of eating” only worked until I couldn’t take it anymore and then I was back to square one: Gaining weight because of binging and then turning to purging or pills to get my weight under control again.

The problem for me was that I seemed unable to change my lifestyle for good.

I cried out to God about this: There simply had to be a way to be consistent at eating healthy so that I could loose weight and maintain it!

Dangerous and lethal methods such as purging, diet pills and surgery couldn’t possibly be the only way! Who in their right mind would want to gamble with those dangerous methods anyway? I just felt so stuck…

I searched for a long time, got many answers that didn’t make much sense and tried many more of my own plans that were not successful either.

Finally when I felt that I came to the end of my rope with this, I remember praying “Okay Lord, I will surrender this. I want a quick fix, I confess but I can’t seem to find one, and I guess you are not going to give me one either. So please show me what to do”

What I got was this verse in Galatians 6: 9 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. (NIV)

From this verse I took away the thing I was obviously lacking: CONSISTENCY or better known as “keeping at it”!

I knew this was a problem for me, but how do you just “create” consistency. I’ve tried eating “good food” consistently for a while but after a few months on Weight Watchers, First Place and other solid programs, I always started slipping. These were great programs, but I simply could not stick to it consistently!

Again God brought me back to the center of it all: Losing my life to Him, submitting to Him, and seeking first His Kingdom.

There is an undeniable theme in the Bible of giving our lives over to Christ so that He can work it out for us. The day we give our hearts to Him, He wants to become ruler of all our lives, yet we hand over only a few areas that we feel comfortable to give up.
This verse says it all:
*And He said to all, If any person wills to come after Me, let him deny himself [disown himself, forget, lose sight of himself and his own interests, refuse and give up himself] and take up his cross daily and follow Me [cleave steadfastly to Me, conform wholly to My example in living and, if need be, in dying also].* Luke 9:23 (AMP)

So to get back to how this played out on a practical level:

I printed out a calendar and decided that I needed to do this thing, not for 21 days, not for 3 months, but for 365 days. See this way I eliminated perfectionism, one of my big downfalls, because nobody can be expected to do anything perfectly for such a long period of time. So if I skip a day or don’t do things perfectly, it’s okay, there are still 364 days left to make up for it.

I also knew that I had to get away from the long list of things I expected of myself daily. This always set me up for failure. So I went with only 3 things that I had to do consistently every day, NO MATTER WHAT. Something for Body, Soul and Spirit: Exercise, Time with God, and doing one thing to bring me closer to my dreams (developing my 12 Week Program at the time).

It’s was an amazing experience. It was like working on a tapestry. It all starts very slow because it’s still unfamiliar. You keep at it day after day, miss some stitches here and there, but it’s okay; it doesn’t ruin the picture. In the end nobody even notices the few mistakes; they simply admire the finished product, a work of art!

After a few months of “keeping at it” I started noticing some visible signs of change. I lost some weight for the first time in years. It went slowly, but it happened! I could tell that my metabolism was picking up due to the constant exercise by the fact that I didn’t pick up the weight I’ve lost again, even if I had a little slip-up here and there. As the days and the months passed I felt peace come back to my heart, and I had energy for the first time in years.

I realized that I was able to keep at it consistently because I gave up the notion and dream of a “quick fix”. Taking it one day at a time for the long haul opened my eyes to how the enemy used one little slip-up in the past to condemn and shame me until I was in utter despair. Now, the pressure was off.

There were so many Friday nights where I ate a few slices of pizza and just gave up on everything I have worked on all week. I would spiral all the way down into a whole weekend of binging and numb minding activities (hours of TV to not think about what was happening to me again). A weekend like that could throw me back for months even years.

After committing to God to do things consistently for a year things were so different.
Even on off days or weak moments I could simply look at my progress. It made me realize that this one mistake was no big deal at all. I used to mark my calendar with a blue dot for eating healthy, a yellow star for exercise, a green dot for surrendering to God and spending time with Him. I could look back and see a whole month almost full of all these colored dots and stars and immediately the cloud of guilt and shame would lift. The next day I would be back on track, consistently walking out my year of freedom, regardless of difficult days and slip-ups!

These days, if I overeat on a Friday night while watching a movie with the family, I just move on (of course not always, but for the most part). I surrender to God again early the next morning, go for a walk with the kids and fire up my computer to write something uplifting to someone who needs it.

So if you’re wondering, yes, I’m still doing my only-three-things-every-day, and I measure my progress not daily but yearly!

Strangely enough though, I can measure my progress mainly by my surrender, there’s a definite correlation.
Chapter 5
Surrender the urge to Control

We can not detach our relationships with others from our own emotional well being. Other people and the way we act towards them and they behave towards us have a profound influence on our lives.

So it came as no surprise that the way I tried to manipulate and control people and situations played an important role in my eating disorders.

I didn’t really think at the time that I was a “control freak”. I didn’t wake up one morning and decide, like Pinky & The Brain, that I was going to “take over the world!” No, it just sort of happened, probably because I’m a Mom and I want situations to flow smoothly and people to be happy.

Unfortunately, in order to achieve this “noble” goal, I had to avoid conflict but stay in control of everything. I had to plan everything too a tee, way in advance. I could never let my guard down in public or when we had company. My kids and husband had to be on their best behavior at all times, and making them do this was my sole responsibility.

I entertained often in order to keep our “social status” in tack. My house had to be perfect and guests had to be kept happy at all times. After all my guests had a wonderful evening I would be cleaning up till late, all along picking the whole evening apart in my mind, scanning for any form of imperfection.

I know, it’s crazy, but at the time I couldn’t see how foolish this was.

It took lots of tears and damaged relationships to see this behavior for what it was: PRIDE. For crying out loud, I even hoped to control the way people thought of and felt about my family!

This was a huge thing to surrender to God. I found it very difficult to discover who I was apart from controlling, manipulating, and pleasing people every moment of every day.

It was so interwoven with my eating disorders.

Trying to be perfect and striving to control every situation was very stressful. There was no resting or taking a break from the endless turmoil, because I carried it all inside of me. So what did I do with all this stress and inhumane pressure that I put on myself? Well, I binged of course.
Slowly through the process of surrendering all of my life to God, I started seeing how controlling and pleasing others contributed to my struggle with food. God opened my eyes to what I was doing to my life and the lives of those I loved. I had no right to control anyone.

**Pride is a sin and I needed to repent.**

I asked God to give me a change of heart and a new attitude: So what if our family fights sometimes? So what if my kids don’t always look like they just stepped out of a shower? So what if my house is a mess most of the time, and so what if I go through a few humiliations due to it?

**Here’s a good example of a day out of my Life when I was still clutching control…**

It was a Sunday, Super bowl Sunday to be specific, and I was starting to talk to God the week before about my control problem. And here came the test.

It started early Sunday morning. We were running late for church and my husband announced that our oldest son needs to practice his driving and he was going to drive us to church. I didn’t say anything but I was thinking “This is not the time for this; he is just doing it because he wouldn’t make time for it otherwise. We are going to be late, and people are going to think badly of us”

However, before I could say anything, the Holy Spirit was so kind as to remind me of my control tendency and that I could really let this one slide. It took every bit of strength in me, but I did it and it all actually turned out well.

Coming home from church was a different story: I decided that my husband is not doing a good job as driving instructor and by the time we reached the store I said as much and I was a nervous wreck. I needed food, lots of it too, and having a family super bowl party was just the excuse I needed. I bought a lot of junk food that we didn’t plan on buying, and that I had no business eating, and I felt guilty and irritable all the way home.

At home I presented the “spread” and also announce that everybody was going to watch football, regardless of the fact that most members of our family are not exactly sports fans and that we have never watched the super bowl in our home, seeing that it’s not exactly a South African tradition.

Needless to say, by the end of the day, I was a mess. I was mad at my family members for not falling in with my plans, I felt sick to my stomach of all the junk food, and utterly exhausted of all the “controlling”.

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I used to do my “best controlling” over weekends and I still have to guard against it.

It was mostly a pride thing: I wanted our family to present a “perfect” image.

For example: On summer weekends we should ALL be taking walks, have a BBQ and ride our bikes TOGETHER. Likewise, during winter we should all be around the fire place, building puzzles and cracking nuts TOGETHER.

This was all great and dandy when the kids were still little, but as they grew older it became a losing battle that I fought. It stole my peace and it kept me eating all along.

I had to admit to myself and everybody around me that we were not the perfect family, in fact nobody is. I had to stop worrying about what others thought of us as a family and just live a little. I had to leave my loved ones (especially my husband) alone to do a little living themselves.

These days when I feel the urge to control, I try to stop and ask myself:

Do I even want to do the family outings I make everybody else do?
Would it seriously be so difficult to let my husband off the hook for a change?
If I want this so bad, how can I do it without controlling everybody else?

Giving up control and its twin brother perfectionism changed my life. I never knew what it meant to have real peace until I gave up trying to control everyone and everything.

It really hit me that I didn’t have any control over situations and people anyway. I had to surrender even my loved ones to God. He is ultimately the one who can change their circumstances, hearts and attitudes. I only had control over myself, to surrender or not…

Controlling everything and everyone was eating me alive and I was eating to keep it alive!

Surrendering the control to God meant less stress, and less stress meant that I didn’t need the crutch of overeating anymore.
Chapter 6
Surrender People Pleasing

Paul says in Galatians 1:10 (NIV) *Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ*

*We are only true servants who can contribute to the lives of others if we first surrender our lives to God and let Him tell us how to serve others.*

Here is how it works: If you spent time with God and hear what He expects of you, you give your time wisely to those who truly need it.

*There is such a fine line and only God can help us walk it. Sometimes we need to do something for ourselves to be able to hold on to our servant’s hearts, and other times we need to get our hands dirty and do something for someone else when it’s least convenient.*

God has the answers to every situation in your life, and He might just want to teach you to say “No” to people every now and then.

When you are serving out of a balanced life, filled with the Spirit of God, you usually do things with a good attitude and heart.

On the other hand; when you just do things so people would like and appreciate you, you might find yourself often resentful toward people.

*The truth is: YOU CAN NOT KEEP EVERYONE HAPPY AND YOU SHOULDN’T EVEN TRY.*

Trying to do so could cost you your sanity and peace.

*However, if you are a people pleaser, like I have been, you will know that it’s not easy to shake off this way of living.*

I had to make a conscious effort every time I encountered another human being to not try and please or impress them. This actually links very closely with controlling people. See, sometimes we do things for people in order to control them, a little word called *manipulation.*

So, every time I picked up the phone, I had to double check my motives. Every time I started a conversation, I had to let the Holy Spirit search my heart for pride and people pleasing that might be lurking (Psalm 139:23).
Now I know this seems like hard work, but I have found such freedom in walking away from people pleasing that it was totally worth it.

It took away so much of the fear that I carried around inside of me.

**This fear was imbedded in a lie I believed: “I have to please certain people in order to feel good about myself.”**

The truth is that other people’s acceptance and praise never made me feel good for long. I would soon find myself back where I was before; insecure and worried about who to please next.

However, knowing that I was truly loved and accepted by God, and living to please ONLY HIM, changed how I felt about myself and other people.

Now, every time that I stop for a minute and wait to really hear His voice, He tells me that He accepts me, just as I am. He will not reject me if I say “no” to a friend’s request, turn down an invitation, step down from a position, or take a day off for myself. **He accepts me even if I do absolutely nothing and accomplishes absolutely nothing!**

**Here’s an example of one of my struggles with people pleasing. Now I know it seems trivial, but seriously, have a look at your life and you will realize that it’s the little things that rocks the boat.**

I was thinking about what snack to take to our small group meeting. I wanted to make special little meatballs. However, I clearly felt the Holy Spirit nudging me a few hours earlier to not make the meatballs because it takes time and will interfere with the only time I would have alone with God for the day (while my baby was napping)

I knew I could take cheese and crackers that would take only a few minutes of my time to prepare, but I really didn’t want to. I wanted to do it my way!

When I started searching my heart I realized that I usually like to prepare something special in order to be complimented about it. My pride simply wouldn’t let me take an ordinary snack to small group.

I ended up letting it go and just enjoyed a peaceful Sunday, reading and talking to God, but believe me; it took almost an hour of wrestling with this thing in my mind. I almost didn’t surrender to God’s will and that could have affected the rest of my day, as it did many times before when I slaved away at a “perfect” dish.

However, the enemy was obviously getting desperate to still ruin my weekend and make me follow my old familiar trail of despair. When we got back from our small group that night, I felt a very familiar and very unpleasant feeling: Shame. I often experienced shame after a social engagement. Some people would describe it as a from of social anxiety.
I would go over every word I might have said wrong, and every behavior of my kids that might have been out of line.

This was not new to me, and neither was the pattern that followed: I binged on all kinds of junk food to try and numb the feeling and quiet my thoughts.

However, this time, because I have been more aware of the enemy’s lies and attacks on my life, it dawned on me after a while that this kind of behavior was weird and those thoughts of condemnation could not possibly be my own.

I took a bath and started talking to God about what was going on. What did He want me to do? How could I get rid of these voices? Simply rebuking the enemy had not worked in the past...

I picked up the Word when I got into bed and read the passage in John 13 where Jesus washed the disciples’ feet and prompted them to do so for others. I realized that I was always reflecting on how well people thought of us as a family, instead of how much we served as a family.

The truth hit me, as only God’s Word can! It changed my whole perspective, because yes, we didn’t act perfectly and people could probably always find something that we did wrong, but we served and many were blessed. It was about a change in focus, being focused on others instead of self. I felt a deep relief to not be plagued by fear and anxiety anymore...

The above experience marked a definitely turn in my striving to please others. God set me on a journey that I’m still walking out, away from people pleasing. I am praying often that He will uproot any form of it that might return to my life.

However, this doesn’t mean that I stopped serving others. There is a big difference between being a servant and pleasing people.

People pleasing come from selfish motives: “What would they think of me? How can I act so that they would love me or be impressed by me?”

A person with a true servant’s heart asks: “What can I do for others so that God can be glorified through me?”
Chapter 7
Surrender your Difficult Times

It’s hard enough to surrender to God when things are peachy, but when things happen that shake our world, we can easily fall back on our old and familiar coping mechanisms.

Even if we know it’s not beneficial to our situation we usually just want something that can calm our nerves or numb the pain. It really is like taking a pill for a headache without giving the source of the headache a second thought. It’s easier, it’s less confrontational and it is familiar.

STOPPING in our tracks in times of stress or difficulty takes everything we have, and sometimes we just can’t do it. My first instinct is always to do something “real”. It makes more sense to run around and fix things or at least draw up a plan of action.

After starting out on this journey of surrendering my life to God I realized that this behavior was not helpful at all. In times of trouble, I needed God more than ever.

So I prayed earnestly that He would help me STOP and talk to Him in those times. The few times that I actually turned to God made such a difference and I wanted more of that in my life. Not only would the Holy Spirit calm me down with His tender voice, but He will provide me with more than just a “drug”. In His presence I will end up getting a solution, or make sense out of all the chaos that the situation created in my head.

I am a very emotional person and unlike my husband difficulties and stress gets the better of me. I usually feel this incredible uneasiness pressing on me. When crisis such as a discouraging phone call, a problem with one of my kids, stress in our marriage, or too much responsibilities hits, I go into a state of denial.

I will only vaguely be aware that something is bothering me but the underlying stress will cause me to binging or “graze” as a way for me to numb the feelings of unease.

God made us with feelings and He knows that we need to deal with pain, unforgiveness, bitterness, and unresolved anger. The sooner we deal with this the better, preferable right when it happens.

Unfortunately that’s not always possible, something happens, we don’t have time to deal with it, we stuff it, we don’t feel good, we eat something to feel better and we go on with the next pressing thing. This cycle goes on and on and before we know it we have so much garbage piled upon us that we think we are basket cases.
If we can, in difficult times, STOP on purpose, get to a quiet place and deal with what we’re feeling, God can help use. This is called surrendering your difficult times, including pain, stress and troubles to Him.

These days I am turning more to God during hard time, and I am praying that I would start running to Him always and skip the drama altogether.

Here are some of my reflections from a weekend when I was still struggling to get a grip on surrendering my hard times to God. On this particular weekend I had some victory and I could clearly see the difference surrender made in my life.

**Friday:**

I felt so sad on Friday. Our financial situation was weighing heavily on me. I also got a phone call from a friend that was disturbing and hurt me a great deal. I felt so restless.

I started my day with God and surrendered the day to him, but by late afternoon I was feeling depressed and trying to figure out a way of dealing with my situation.

I wanted to go shopping, anything to break the dreariness of this Friday. One tiny problem though, no money. Plus, I knew I was just trying to numb the pain and shopping did not exactly help me in the past. On the contrary, it can seriously exacerbate the whole situation, and I knew it.

So I resisted going to town and by the time Tony came home, I actually felt rested and glad that I skipped the shopping and all the guilt that would have accompanied it. I was ready for our regular family night. I made some of my favorite shrimp stir-fry and a frozen pizza for the kids. I ate only a small slice of pizza and I just enjoyed the movie without guilt.

I felt the Holy Spirit nudge me to not watch a second movie with the guys but rather opt for a bath and some worship music. I felt God’s presence so clearly and it filled me with such a sense of peace and joy. I was so grateful that He helped me give my day over to Him in spite of my own sadness and worries.

**Saturday:**

Saturday morning came and what do you know: No sugar-hangover. I tip-toed down stairs and soaked in the silence. I wasn’t tired but ready to sit down with God and just talk to Him over a fresh cup of tea. It ended up being such an intimate time between me and God.

By the time everybody woke up, I made some eggs and was off to the gym. I haven’t gone to the gym over the weekend in the longest time. I had to stop at the store on my way home and prayed while driving there, asking God to help me buy only what I needed and not blow our budget. I got a few extra things, but I told Tony about it and I didn’t feel guilt pressing on me.

Later that afternoon I spent some more time with God, and I started listening to what he wanted from me with regards to our finances and my friend.
Can it be that I can literally ask Him everything and just talk to Him all day long as I do to my family? Could he really be bothered with little things such as when would be the best time to do the laundry?

Sunday:

Sunday morning I purposely let go of the urge to control everybody. This is so not me, I could feel the Holy Spirit working through me and it felt so good to not be my controlling self.

On Sunday I did encounter a few moments when I wanted to take the old familiar path.

A crisis came up where I had to make some difficult decisions regarding our future; this made me nervous and anxious. I caught myself standing in front of the refrigerator wanting to get a “quick fix”, but I went upstairs instead, sat in my chair with my Bible and for a second the thought crossed my mind: “This is not normal, who deals with life in this weird, holy way?”

But as soon as I opened the Bible I started crying, I didn’t even read anything, I was just so aware of His presence. I was aware of how close He felt to me, and I knew that He cares about my life.

Please hear me on this one: He wants to be involved in every human’s life; that is how He planned it. However, somehow in our messed up lives, we bought into the lie that we are alone, out on a limb, not a branch that is connected to the Vine, with living water flowing through our veins.

He truly is the Living Water who brings new life to our bones every time we drink, and the Bread of Life who can satisfy our souls every time we feel empty and weak!

Isaiah 55: 1-2 (NIV) invites us to do just that:

Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come; buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good and your soul will delight in the richest of fare.
Chapter 8
Surrender your Days of Celebration

This was and still is to some extend one of the really tough ones for me to surrender: Celebrations. How do I give holidays, birthdays and other special days over to God?

On these days I saw the truth about my food addiction so clearly: Not only was food my drug of choice, but it was also my idol. Food made life worth living, and at time of celebration food was at the center of my world.

What am I saying? Does this mean no more birthday cake, Christmas cookies or Easter ham?

No, I tried to convince myself that I can go “cold-turkey” in the past, but it always backfired.

My problem in this area was again SURRENDER. I did not want to surrender my days of celebration to God. He couldn’t possibly ask me to stop controlling my holidays and special days too, could he?

Those were the days I gave myself liberty to do the things I usually don’t, and eat the food I usually can’t.

I always planned my special days carefully. I took charge of every detail especially the food. No ordinary food would suffice. It had to be exquisite delicacies. I would also feel anxious about the amount of food. I was always afraid that there will not be enough.

The truth: I was really worried there would not be enough food to fill the void inside of me. Unfortunately, never mind how much I ate, I could never fill the void, it just made it worse.

There was also the problem of leftovers, which have a way of turning one special day into a three day feast. A little feast like that could easily make me spiral down into a week or even a month of eating high calorie, fatty and sugary food.

I can not begin to describe the despair, the pain, and the feeling of utter disappointment in myself at the end of every single “special day”.

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Let me paint a picture for you of a certain Valentine’s Day from my past:

I got up at 6am on this Valentine’s morning, not because I am such a fan of this holiday, but because we have the tradition of giving chocolates and having at least one meal together on Valentine’s day (my brilliant idea of course!).

Today it had to be breakfast, because everybody had somewhere to go. It really started last night when I had to go to the store. I bought sausages for breakfast and boxes of chocolates for everyone (and myself incase I don’t get one). I spent way too much money on this and I felt guilty and mad at myself.

I got up early to make breakfast without spending time with God. Actually I am known to not make time for God on days like this. Needless to say, everybody was in a hurry and the only ones who really appreciated my effort were the little kids.

I didn’t get anything from Tony, but he was taking me to a movie that evening (my plan of course) so it didn’t bug me too much, just enough to make me eat a couple more pancakes and sausages.

After breakfast I squeezed in a little time with God, but not really deep, intimate time of surrendering my day to Him. Actually I didn’t want to talk too much with Him, because I was afraid that He might tell me to give up baking the Valentines cookies with the kids, or making the shrimp dip, or heaven forbid, tell me to eat something healthy for dinner.

I really had it all planned in my mind: “This day might not be as full of love for me as I would like it to be, but I can make it full of delicious food, and maybe it will numb me enough so that I won’t have to think about anything else”.

It’s not that I have a bad marriage, it’s just that we have work and kids and more work. So romance is sort of on the backburner, has sort of been for the last ten years. Honestly, it hurts, but I didn’t want to feel it or admit it.

If I would have taken the time to surrender my day to God I might have talked to Him about this or figured it out somehow. So by 3pm I was tired (from baking cookies), stuffed and depressed. So what was a girl to do? Surrender? Stop and take some time to let God heal her broken heart? Maybe read the Word or a good book? Maybe take a nap while the baby is sleeping?

Never! I had to get to the store to go load up on supplies for dinner. Did I ask God to be with me? Did I at least cry out for help as I was sinking? No way. I was on one of my missions of “This is my day; I will do as I please, even if it kills me!”

I ended up buying food for an army, which of course added to my guilt and depression and sent me on another binge.
Tony and I had a pretty good time at the movies, but I was so drugged out on sugar and stuffed that it left me self conscience and withdrawn. There was the obvious absence of joy, peace and God’s favor.

The day after was of course not much better. I still didn’t want to talk to God. I still had a bunch of food sitting in my refrigerator and I didn’t have the strength to resist the urge to just eat it all.

Finally after two days of this, I gripped my Bible close to my heart and started crying about my sin of “protecting” my pain at all cost and in the process abusing my body. I especially cried about all the years of my life I’ve wasted, doing this.. Finally. I started praying for strength to break this habit of self preservation that leads to self destruction.

Looking back at the above scenario, I can tell you that it was really not even about the food at all. I wanted to hang on to certain days in my life where I didn’t have to answer to anybody, not even God.

I guess this would not have been so bad if it wasn’t so destructive. One day like that filled me with so much guilt that it could make me spiral down for weeks.

I had other Valentines days, thank goodness, when I remembered that I was loved by God, and that He didn’t want me to be perfect. He just wanted me to turn to Him, and surrender my days, even the special ones. He is all for celebrations, and he wants me to have fun, eat good food and experience love, but His plans for me are always much better than my best efforts.

These days I try to get up early on a special day, to just sit, ask, and listen.

I found that He cares about the detail. He’s not shocked by requests such as: “I need a little fun/love/ joy in my life today Lord. Please help me get the real thing and not settle for cheap substitutes.”
Chapter 9
Surrender your Idols

Finding things or people to worship and rely on for our emotional well being is a dangerous game that we all play.

Seriously, anything can become an idol if you give it half a chance. That’s why it’s extremely important to surrender every relationship and passion in your life to God.

I picked up a few idols along the way and every time one of those idols reared their ugly heads in my life it aggravated my food addiction.

I didn’t want to hear it at the time of course, but holding on to these idols kept me stuck in bondage.

**Shopping**

I mentioned earlier in this book that I shopped for a while to try and fill the void in my heart.

Hours of time and heaps of sanity can be wasted by wandering aimlessly through the stores.

Don’t get me wrong, I love shopping, it’s still one of my favorite pastimes, and that goes for almost every woman I know. Also, I’m 100% city girl. My idea of a great vacation consists of a little time on the beach and lots of time in big shopping malls.

So, when I lost weight by using diet pills, I loved how I looked, but I missed the eating. I needed something to give color to my life. I was still not in a close relationship with God, and not in touch with the purpose He had over my life either, so life without food was pretty meaningless.

I remember spending hours planning what to buy, thinking about clothes, paging through magazines to find the perfect outfits and then more hours going from store to store to find great deals for me and my family.

I also shopped for my house; the perfect dishes for different occasions, with matching table linen and silverware. All of this took so much time and energy. We didn’t have lots of money so I had to go from store to store for the perfect “find”.

Shopping was my idol, the thing that took second place to food in giving meaning to my life.
I knew shopping stole my time, and obviously my money, but I needed something to help me handle the difficult things in life, and celebrate my good times.

Of course we all have to buy stuff, and we definitely can buy pretty things, God created beauty. However, it again comes down to surrender. Shopping, surrendered to God is fun, without the stress, guilt and obsession.

**Television**

I noticed the following disturbing pattern in my life:

- When I’m too afraid to try new things, I watch TV, and when I watch TV I eat junk food.
- When I’m sad and hurt, I suppress those feelings by watching TV and eating junk food.
- When I’m tired and just want to relax, I watch TV and eat junk food.
- When I’m angry or anxious I calm myself by watching TV and, of course, eat junk food!

Although I don’t watch TV all day long (I would feel too guilty), I do tend to turn to TV for emotional support, relaxation and stress relief.

In my life, as you can see from the above scenario, overeating and watching TV was very closely related, and I didn’t want to give it up

**However, it never helped me, on the contrary, it always left me depressed and hopeless afterward.**

I started by just dialoging with God about it. TV and food made me happy, if only for a short while. It helped me to forget all of my troubles, relationship issues and financial worries. I could just zone out, climb into someone else’s life and savor the taste of all kinds of goodies. I obviously needed something real in my life, but food and TV wasn’t that something.

I have read books and followed programs where people told me to “eat the Word” and that God should become everything to us so that these things don’t matter. I understand their point, however even after falling deeply in love with God and starting a daily walk with Him, I was still craving “other” things. I tried following their advice by denying the fact that I am human and that I needed things and people in my life, but it only resulted in me clinging to idols!

**The truth: God made objects to enjoy, relationships to enrich our lives, and gave each of us a natural curiosity about certain areas of life so that we will pursue our purpose on this planet.**
Seriously, God wants us to enjoy life; otherwise he wouldn’t have given some people the ability to write beautiful poetry, gave others heavenly voices, or certain individuals the speed to run races (think Chariots of Fire). We have to discover again what we love, and who God made us to be. **Your specific talents were given to you so that you will enjoy it and glorify God through it.**

I love this quote from George Bernard Shaw:

*This is the true joy of life: the being used up for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; being a force of nature instead of a feverish, selfish little clot of ailments and grievances, complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy."

I found that there is a certain joy and a zeal for life that comes ONLY by doing the thing that makes you tick. Those things have been tucked in our hearts by the One who made us.

So these days I am remembering more often to surrender my idols to God. When I’m scared, angry, anxious, sad, or tired I stop and ask Him what I can do to bring LIFE to this situation, not just numb it with TV. Sometimes a good book might relax me and lift me up. A long bath might soothe my tired body. Starting a new project, like this book that I have been procrastinating for so long, might help me overcome my fear of new things. Having tea with a friend might help me deal with my pain or hurt feelings.

There are things in your life that are very different from mine that can bring great joy and satisfaction to your life. If it’s directed by God and done for His glory it will enrich your life in ways that you could never have imagined. Ask Him…go ahead… He created you!

Of course there will also be times when God clearly calls you into His presence and NOTHING else will suffice.

Have you also bought into the lies of the enemy, telling you that certain destructive habits bring meaning to your life, while it really destroy your life? Please don’t settle for cheap imitations while you can have the real thing. The road to your talents and dreams might not be the easiest road. You might have to overcome fear or stop procrastinating, but it will be totally worth it. You will feel excited about life when you get up in the morning and the addictions and idols that you thought you needed so badly will loose their grip on your life.

**Idolatry is a sin and God hates it. I’m repenting and turning from it daily, because it steals my life and robs me from so much JOY and SATISFACTION.**
I have had ladies in my support groups who were senior citizens. It brought me to my knees and made me call out to God “Lord is there really freedom from this bondage? How can some women struggle with this their whole lives? How can I even begin to give them hope?”

I didn’t get my answer then because I still believed that one day I will just wake up and this food struggle will simply be gone. I wasn’t quite ready to surrender the desire for “instant freedom”. I had this picture in my head of how my freedom should look like and I insisted that God do it my way.

However, it didn’t happen that way. Although I haven’t purged in many years, and feel the urge to overeat seldom, those thoughts of “planning a binge” do come back when I am not surrendered to God. I have occasionally turned back to food for comfort when I was drifting away from God’s presence.

Every time I would get tired of the slow pace of God’s freedom plan for me, and I would make up my mind to take control of my own life again. However, every time I did this, I would come face to face with my old habits and addictions.

So if you ask me if I am free from eating disorders my answer is: “Yes, God has set me free”

And if you would ask me how long I have been “sober” my honest answer has to be: “As long as I stay in His presence, and surrender the control of my life to Him, I am free from food addiction and eating disorders”

I realize this might come as a shock to you. Maybe you don’t want to believe that you are not part of the group who receives instant healing, but rather in the crowd who has to walk it out.

Maybe you are still refusing to give up your plans, I understand.

But consider this: Can it be that the plan God has in mind to bring you to freedom looks different than the one you envisioned?

Have you considered that His way might be the most wonderful, joyous and blessed road you will ever travel? (See Jeremiah 29:11)

Surrendering the “Picture of your Freedom” is difficult, but do it anyway, because it is so worth it.
Chapter 11
Surrender your Plans

The chaos in my life was bad enough while I was still single, but once I became a mom, this affected me so much more. I knew that I wanted to be the best mommy I could be. I loved my kids so much; I didn’t want my disordered behavior to harm them in any way. I simply had to get a grip before I did any harm to them.

Unfortunately, I was still trying to do all of this in my own strength and through my own will-power. So my life became one big mess of schemes and plans. I was convinced that I alone was responsible to make a plan to save us all.

I had a new plan: This time I would take control of my food addiction by just eating what I wanted. I would just relax, ignore the extra weight I already carried around, and pretend not to notice the pounds I added on daily.

I chimed in with the argument of other women before me “Why should anybody tell you how much you have to weigh or what is cute and what isn’t?”

I still strongly believe that we should not succumb to the pressure of the media and the world around us, but there is a wise and Godly way to turn from it, and this was not it. “I will show them” never helped anyone. So this plan of mine also backfired: The overload of sugar and fat left me exhausted and depressed.

I didn’t want to go anywhere. Instead of helping my family, it handicapped us in a different way. I was too tired and uncomfortable in the heat to go to a park or a pool in the summer. In the winter I couldn’t afford to buy bigger snow gear, so I ended up watching everybody have fun in the snow while I sipped my hot chocolate and cried tears of frustration.

The few times I convinced myself that I didn’t have to be thin in order to wear a pair of shorts or put on a swim suit, I felt so self conscious and humiliated that it was almost not worth it. Watching the skinny moms around me didn’t help! I felt the yearning to be thin like a physical pain in my heart. Shame would wash over me as I held back the tears and vowed, like so many summers before, that I would look better next summer.
I was trying so hard to convince myself that I didn’t care about my physical appearance, but this just caused me to eat more than ever before. There were so much shame, guilt, and pain and I needed something to drown it out. Plates piled high with creamy pasta and stacks of doughnuts were my drug of choice.

Although I was pretending to be satisfied with my body, I was still constantly making dangerous plans in my head to lose weight.

This cycle went on for years! I became the slave of my addiction. By trying to manage or “boss” my own life, I just ended up spinning around in the never ending cycle of captivity. All my plans were sheer folly.

What I didn’t realize at the time was that this was actually Satan’s master plan: If he could get me to believe just one lie every morning, he had won the battle. Day after day I believed the lie that I could still control this monster of Food Addiction.

I would tell myself every morning: “Today I have to do something about this. Today I will take control. Today I will beat this thing. I will not eat. I will exercise till I drop dead. I will have a perfect day!” Just there, in that very moment when I uttered those words, I placed a smile on my enemy’s face. He knew the minute I surrendered to my own plans I was already defeated for that day, just like all the previous days of my life.

We were made to be ruled by God. We are His creation and with Him in charge we function like we’re supposed to. Without His rule, we are looking for something else to rule us. We are kidding ourselves to think we are strong enough to rule our own lives.

So we find different ways to cope with life, but before we know it this “thing” we are using to survive takes a hold of us and we’ve create a monster that we can not control.

God is the only one that can help us move way beyond mere “coping with life”. Note that I didn’t say studying the Bible from front to back or serving on every church committee will bring meaning to your life and help you through the difficult times. No, if you are ready to surrender your WHOLE LIFE to God, you better be willing and ready to be swept of your feet. To surrender to Him is to get to know Him, to fall in love with Him and especially LEARN HOW TO WALK WITH HIM every day for the rest of your life. It has nothing to do with what you can do, but rather with what you BELIEVE He can do in you and through you.

Surrender has nothing to do with our circumstances. Through all the ups and downs in my life, eating disorders followed me. I always felt the chaos regardless of my circumstances.
I remember how I constantly tried to create a “clean place” in my mind: A place of peace and stillness where I wasn’t plagued by the chaos caused by eating disorders.

Every day I would crave a “perfect” day with no overeating, no purging, and no fear of food. I yearned for something or someone that could get me to that place.

I thought for a long time that I just needed someone to love and that the right person would bring peace to my world. It wasn’t true. I could never found that place of peace in the love of my parents, my husband, or my dearest friends. People don’t possess the ability to love us unconditionally and perfectly. They are flawed and broken just like us.

Every day I felt lost and so incredibly lonely. I would find myself crying out to God many times a day, but I would never actually surrender my plans to Him.

Of course not all of my plans were useless. God used my search for answers as well as the testimonies and research of others to help me. I strongly recommend that you have a look at these tools that God can use to bring you to freedom:

- Going through counseling or following a program to deals with the pain and wounds from your past is crucial; otherwise you might stay emotionally handicapped for the rest of your life, never fulfilling the purpose God has for you.

- Putting up clear boundaries in relationships, forgiving people who harmed you, and being truthful in your approach to others are very important if you want to move out of bondage.

- Putting healthy habits like healthy eating and exercise in place is your responsibility and no one can do this for you.

- In the same way, putting off unhealthy habits like too much TV or coffee is also something you have to take responsibility for.

But when it’s all said and done, after we picked a solid program, joined the gym, and found a healthy way of eating we still have to surrender all of our plans to God!

Believe me when I say that this was the most difficult part of SURRENDER for me. No more planning, no more fussing, no more talking with my husband about my latest plan, no more reading and surfing the web for answers, and no more telling God what He should do.
I SIMPLY HAD TO STOP!

At one point I knew exactly what to do. I’ve read and researched everything, and I’ve planned my way out of this jungle of eating disorders to a tee. It was time to give it over to the One who possessed the power to put it into action and the One who knew how to tweak my plans so it would really benefit me and bring me to freedom.

I know that I’m probably talking to a great crowd of planners, just like me, so I can almost hear the gears in your brains turning:

What does she mean by stopping?
How do I do it?
Do I need to pray more?
Does it mean more Bible study?

Yes and no.

I am not talking about “quiet time” as a chore on your checklist.

I am not talking about doing this as part of a PLAN to get somewhere.

I am talking about bringing all of your plans to a halt in order to STOP AND LISTEN TO HIS PLAN FOR YOUR LIFE.
I used to say this often: “I’ve tried EVERYTHING and NOTHING works!”

However, if I wanted to be honest with myself then I had to admit that there was ONE thing I never seriously tried: STOPPING, BEING STILL, WAITING IN GOD’S PRESENCE TO HEAR HIS VOICE AND SEE HIS FACE.

We already established that if we want to hear the voice of God in our lives we need to STOP, LISTEN AND OBEY Him.

However, this is not possible if we are constantly busy with a million things. I recognized this as a big problem in my life. I never had time for God.

THE THING THAT HAD TO GO WAS NEVER ENDING ACTIVITY

As long as I kept my body and mind busy, I couldn’t hear the voice of God.

As long as I couldn’t hear Him, I couldn’t obey Him.

As long as I was not obeying Him, my life remained a chaotic mess.

I became aware of the necessity to STOP one day while watching my kids play. I was pondering on the whole obedience-thing (that I just couldn’t get right) when God dropped something in my heart.

I noticed how I required obedience from my children in order for them to be safe, happy, rested, well fed and have good relationships. However, there is a certain understanding on their part when I say “Obey Mommy”. They know what I want from them. I need them to stop, look me in the eye and listen to my instruction.

The comparison struck me. If nobody listened and they were just hurrying off while I tried to tell them something, boy would they be in trouble. I would for sure give my teenagers an earful if I was trying to tell them something and they continued to listen to their music.
In the same way, when I don’t get reaction from the little ones, I would actually plant myself in front of them, stop them in their tracks, and cup my hands around their little faces to make sure they are listening to me. This way I knew I had their full attention and they would actually get the message.

I needed to come to God, ready to listen. Not distracted by a million things, but ready to hear what He wants to say and teach me.

I was running around like a mad woman, trying to “obey” God according to what I thought He wanted. Every now and then He would stop me in my tracks and give me some revelation and insight, but then I would run off again, convinced that this time I knew it all and I could now plan the rest of my life around the epiphany I just received.

Sometimes people are stopped in their tracks by something huge, but even an unexpected stop in the road that jerks you to a halt, does not guarantee that you will listen to God.

So why not stop now, out of your own free will, because you know you need God and you’ve done all the other stuff already anyway.

Was stopping easy for me? Goodness no! I would do anything; warfare prayer, work my fingers to the bone, do research, counsel people, just don’t ask me to stop! I would quickly shoot up a prayer” God you’ve got to help me!” then lay my list of good intentions before him and ran off to do those “good things”

I thought for sure that I knew exactly what I needed to get me happy and free. All God had to do was bless my little plan, and everything would be amazing.

The last thing I thought I needed was to stop and listen to what He was saying about my life, His purpose for me and how to overcome my food addiction.

The Bible talks about WAITING often.

One of my all time favorite passages about waiting is found in Isaiah 40: 30-31:

Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint (NIV)
Did you read those verses? Don’t we all need those things desperately? I always seem to be short on energy and I’m sure I would be much more inclined to exercise if walking and running were all gain and no pain. Can you imagine having physical and emotional resources of strength that never dries up?

We are promised all of the above if we only wait in His presence, yet waiting is the one thing in our society that people don’t “get”. I am no exception, I don’t want to wait! I especially can not just trust patiently. There has to be something that I can do to heal my kid, help my husband, save my friend, and better serve the church.

I would rather read about the virtuous woman in Proverbs 31 who barely gets any sleep than ponder on the verses about waiting.

I know that I’m not alone in my misery. This striving spirit is part of the world we live in today. People are judged and measured by two things: APPEARANCE AND PERFORMANCE. So if you can’t get your appearance up to par you have to perform in order to measure up.

I grew up with a Dad who worked, built a church and studied to be a pastor all at the same time. My mom was a virtuous woman if ever I saw one. She could do anything from oil paint, arranging flowers, play piano, sew, organize, and bake up a storm. Then she still had time to be an amazing wife and mother!

So performing at all cost came natural for me. It never occurred to me that this might be the thing that caused me to cry in agony every night in the shower where no one could hear me.

I am not pointing fingers at my parents. I am very aware of the fact that they too were just products of our society. Everywhere I turned I heard the message that I had to be successful, make some money, have a career, and get a degree. Those same voices would urge me to be super mom, domestic diva and business woman extraordinaire!

In my book this meant only one thing: I had to be busy from dusk till dawn, even if I felt like an empty shell, chasing the wind.

Of course I married a man who would rather be caught dead than not working. Don’t get me wrong, I adore him and I couldn’t ask for a better husband or father for my children, but I look at him and I see myself: Always going, always striving.

And yet I constantly yearned for peace and for something I could not express in words.

Today I know: I HAD TO GET OFF THE RUNAWAY TRAIN!
Maybe you don’t feel like you have to perform at all times or work yourself to a pulp.

**However, the problem doesn’t just lie in working too much, but also in keeping busy. Anything that prevents us from STOPPING AND LISTENING can hinder us from finding freedom.**

I tried working less for a season and just took life “easy”. Did I stop and listened? Nope, I kept busy: I drowned myself in books, crafts, TV, old movies, entertaining friends, baking, painting, taking up new hobbies and redecorating my house. I would do anything to pass the hours, anything to not look at my life, anything to numb the ache in my heart.

However I would always catch up with myself, and there it was… a gaping hole inside of me… yearning for the only One who could satisfy my soul. God was what I needed all along. He had the key to my freedom, the answers to my struggle, and the roadmap to my dreams and desires.

But I couldn’t see it, so I would turn again to food to fill the emptiness.

**It seems so easy; just settle down, just calm down, just listen. Maybe we don’t believe it because it is so simple. Of course the enemy preys on this unbelief. You can count on him to remind you of a long list of things that are urgent and still needs to be done before you can go to bed.**

**Think about this:**
The Devil only needs to keep us busy enough so that we can not hear the loving voice of our God. If we don’t hear His voice we don’t get to know His heart toward us. This way we never fall in love with the One who first loved us, we won’t obey Him, and we are as good as dead in our bondage.

**How then does one get off this runaway train of perpetual activity? First of all you have to let go of the excuses. In the next chapter I will tell you all about my best excuses.**
Chapter 13
Surrender your Excuses

Seriously, we have to all STOP MAKING EXCUSES!

Please listen to this very important point I want to make: There is always something, and it’s always important, and it always had to be done yesterday.

When I was in college studying was my excuse. After that the excuses kept coming: Had to find a career. Had to find a husband. Had to plan my wedding. Had to focus on my pregnancy. Had to raise my kids. Had to get my Masters. Had to get involved at church.

Another “legitimate” excuse of mine was: I had to read more books and do more Bible Studies to find healing from my eating disorder. All of which were very helpful in dealing with a lot of my issues, but even the books kept on pointing to something I chose to ignore: WAITING in His presence.

Listening and waiting: Not for a ten point game plan, just waiting for the sake of being with Him, hearing His voice, and doing what He asks of me.

I wish I could have written a step by step manual to get you there. But this is exactly the point: There is no step by step plan. There is a path, and there is a lamp for our feet (Psalm 119:105) and we are filled with the Holy Spirit who empowers us to walk on this very foreign but amazing journey, day by day, moment by moment.

Your life is not going to look like mine, because you have your own excuses of why you are avoiding intimacy with God. In the end there’s only one thing left to do:

“DO IT: STOP, WAIT AND LISTEN!”

By all means, read books, change your habits, deal with your issues, but let it be God who leads you to it. God sometimes uses people or certain tools to bring us to a place of healing. However, if we start to put our trust in those people or objects, it just becomes another excuse to keep us from God’s presence and thus keep us from true healing.

How many times have you or someone you know testified of God’s amazing work in their life, just to start idolizing the tool or person God used, and end up back in bondage?
Let me assure you it is **ONLY IN HIS PRESENCE** that we are changed for good; not through some amazing teaching, program, therapy group or new way of eating. These are all just ways God can bring it about in your life, but permanent change lies in a new relationship with the Lover of your Soul, Jesus.

**Read about this change in one of my favorite verses:**

2 Corinthians 3:18 (AMP) *And all of us, as with unveiled face, [because we] continued to behold [in the Word of God] as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are constantly being transfigured into His very own image in ever increasing splendor and from one degree of glory to another; [for this comes] from the Lord [Who is] the Spirit*

Even while writing this book, I have to stop and talk to God, hear if this is what He wants. There are times in my life when His presence seem so much more real, for instance after a Spirit filled conference or worship service. But on a normal day, swamped with dirty laundry, diapers, moody teenagers, family trouble, or a stressed out husband, this whole listening to God thing could sound pretty far fetched.

I would glance at my big leather chair where I spend most of my time with God, and I would remember the laundry that still needs to be folded. As soon as I sit down my little girl would climb on my lap for some “mommy-love”, my husband would phone with an urgent order that I have to put through, or I would remember about a friend that I had to call three days ago. Excuses, very real excuses mind you, are always with us!

Let me remind you again: We are at war. There is a battle raging over our freedom. Satan has us in bondage and there is no way he would just willingly open up the prison door and let us walk free. **But there is a key and that key is God’s presence.** It is in His arms, on His lap, or at His feet where the chains start falling off.

**One Big Problem: Did you know that we can actually kill our own appetite for God’s presence?**

When I first fell in love with Jesus there was a natural yearning for His presence, but life has a way of robbing us of that yearning. As the years went by, all I had to do is simply ask Him for that yearning and He would give it to me again. This is something God wants to give to us: A yearning for His presence and His Word.

However, sometimes I had given in to my own excuses and the enemy’s tactics for so long that the yearning for His presence literally died. I still had the gaping hole, the terrible hunger and thirst for something more, but I wouldn’t recognize it as a yearning for God’s presence anymore.
Days would go by, weeks, months; even years where I started feeling more frazzled every day. The pain would later be so fierce that I would cry like a baby while stuffing my face with any food I could lay my hands on.

Thankfully God is so faithful. He would always draw me back into His presence. I would experience again the love and joy I have been missing. I would again step into wonderful times when I let down my guard of unbelief and started searching after Him with all my heart.

However, these times were only sporadic. It was not the theme of my life and thus not sufficient to keep me out of bondage. What I needed was a CONSISTENT WALK with Jesus.

The parable that Jesus told in Luke 8:13-14(Amp) applied to my life:

*And those upon the rock [are the people] who, when they hear [the Word], receive and welcome it with joy; but these have no root. They believe for a while, and in time of trial and temptation fall away (withdraw and stand aloof). And as for what fell among the thorns, these are [the people] who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked and suffocated with the anxieties and cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not ripen (come to maturity and perfection). (Emphasis mine)*

As soon as trial or temptation came, I would turn away from God and try to make my own plan to get out of the mess. Also, when anxieties, cares, riches or pleasures came it would suffocate the seed in my life so that I couldn’t bear any fruit.

All of these were excuse (even legitimate excuses) that the enemy used to keep me from consistently walking with God. Instead of running TO Him in difficult times of trial and temptation, I would run AWAY. I was unable to share with Him even my times of joy and celebration. I would rather turn to other humans, because it was more familiar and came “natural” to me. I never knew how “natural” it can be to share my life with Him if I only stopped the excuses and got to know Him, DAILY.

I read Jeremiah 29:13 “*Then you will seek Me, inquire for and require Me, and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart*” and I would wonder what it would be like to search for Him with all my heart and actually find Him, for good.

I look back at my life, and the first time I really started searching for God (to know Him more and fall in love with Him) was when I was about 31. We moved to the USA when I was 29 and very pregnant with my third baby. I experienced a devastating loss of all my abilities and self-worth, something very common when you have to find your way in a different culture.
In this foreign country I stood before God naked, stripped of all my charades, all my talents, my pretenses and my false securities. It was just me and Him, and I had nothing to say.

Without the things I always did to keep busy: leading worship, directing plays, organizing fundraisers, and all the other “important” things I was doing, there was just a big NOTHING.

I didn’t know why I really served God. Looking back I can now see what happened: I was in the active service and duty of a King whom I never really knew.

The sad part was that all those years He wanted to know me. He was waiting for me to come to this point of stillness for 31 years.

So when I was finally ready to have more than the sporadic “spiritual highs”, I stood amazed. What I found was such joy and love in His presence. I started learning about Him, the one who gave it all for me, and saw the beauty of Jesus so clearly for the first time. I got to know a God of love and kindness that I could never even began to fathom. It truly filled me with such fullness and satisfaction that I can not put into words.

It deepened my love for my husband and children. It filled me up to the brim so that I could even love the unlovely and forgive my enemies.

In His presence I could be the person I always wanted to be. It didn’t remove me from life and made me weird (something I was afraid of). No it made me dive into living, into giving and loving. I was so filled with Him that I could freely give. I felt a freedom that had nothing to do with what I did or didn’t do that day.

I couldn’t wait to go to church. In the past I always felt obligated to go, because I usually had some form of service to perform. Now, there was nothing to do but to go worship the one I love.

Life was so different and during that time God truly set me free from bulimia, so much so that I never looked back.

The sad part is that although I was free from bulimia, I lost the intimacy with God.

Somehow all of this faded away. I was so disappointed. I thought it must have been only a figment of my imagination, something like a crush or a fling. It broke my heart, because I was so sure that this could not possible be the kind of love that could be lost, or that could grow cold. Yet it did, and I wanted to know why.

If you experience something so life changing, you don’t just give it up like that…
I pondered for a long time on how this happened, and I realized that it was me who walked away from Him. Not suddenly, but slowly, through busyness and excuses.

I found Him in this awesome way in a time of great trials and financial hardship and then walked away when things improved.

I saw myself like the prodigal son, without friends and money, returning to his father, ashamed. However, I wondered for the first time what happened next. Did the prodigal now appreciate his father or did he take off again as soon as his luck started changing?

**I didn’t plan to simply use God to get what I wanted.** When I found Him in those difficult times I genuinely didn’t feel that I would ever need anything else again. I was okay without money and I knew that I could live without friends and fame.

I remember saying to one of my dear friends that I didn’t need a house of my own or more money or anything of that sort, as long as I had Jesus I was okay.

Maybe I should have held my tongue; pride was obviously knocking at my door. When our financial situation changed and we adapted to the culture, our life started changing. I got more involved in church and I slowly slipped into another lukewarm Christianity.

I started yearning for the approval of men, a house of my own, furniture, good clothes. I know, everybody wants those, right? It is just natural to want things, but at what price?

Please understand that the problem doesn’t lie with the things and the friends and the decorating. **Well, in a way it does, because it can all become excuses to keep us from God, but the main problem lies in the abuse of the most precious gift given to us, the gift of time.**

**Giving my time away to so many other things took me slowly, but surely, away from my first love. (Revelation 2:4)**

I stopped waiting in His presence. I fell back into the excuses, the quick prayers, the list of requests, the begging to set me free. I once ran free in His presence, but now I found myself back in chains of overeating, begging God to break the chains while I held the key in my own hand.

**I had to STOP the train AGAIN and get off!!**
Epilogue
Let the LIGHT in!

In the end I can summarize “Surrender” in my life as “Letting the Light in”

Nobody can simply drive out darkness. The only way to get rid of darkness is by turning on a light. I tried for so long to do it the other way around. I wanted so badly to get rid of the “darkness” in my life.

It never worked, because I could not do it, I had to turn the “light” on.

I couldn’t simply let go of all the junk food, the TV watching or the excessive shopping. I’ve tried doing that for years, and it NEVER worked! It only made me panic and sink deeper into my pit of despair.

When I started surrendering my life to Him simply by STOPPING, LISTENING AND OBEYING, I realize that there are always a few things that I am actually able to do, and others that only He can do.

I didn’t have to make all of my bad habits disappear. I didn’t have to try and be a better person by using my will power; I just had to do my part.

• So I started eating fruit and vegetables regularly because He said so, and ignored the fact that I still ate junk food too.

• I started going to the gym every morning because He said so, and ignored the days I made only a pathetic attempt to exercise or couldn’t get up at all.

• I started writing, playing piano and getting together with friends, and ignored the days I still closed the blinds, watched TV and ate Cheetos.

• I started stealing some quiet times for me and God to be refreshed, renewed and to learn more about Him, and I ignored the days I was too involved in life to even think about God.

These days there is a lot of Light in my Life and I have nothing to do with it. I simply STOP, LISTEN and ask Him to help me do the things that are my responsibility.

It’s the kind of Light that drives out the darkness. Sure, darkness always tries to creep back in, but I’m not scared of it anymore. I don’t have to chase it away; I can simply surrender again to the Light and see the darkness disappear.
What about you dear friend? Are you ready to let the Light of God into your life?

It’s the only way to drive out the darkness of overeating, binge eating, bulimia, anorexia and food addiction.

I realize that this might all be very new to you.

• Maybe you don’t know anything about Jesus. It would be my greatest privilege to lead you to Him. He wants to have a personal relationship with you. Please go have a look on my website and click on: Give your Life to Jesus

• Maybe you have never walked with Him consistently and know that your answer lies in having a daily, intimate relationship with Jesus. I would encourage you to have a look at Week 2 of my Online Program to learn more about falling in love with God.

• Maybe you find it impossible to sit still in God’s presence. I know how it feels. I would recommend that you find a Bible Study that can keep your thoughts captive and help you discover who God is and how much He loves you. If you are in the midst of a Food Struggle I recommend joining a Beth Moore Bible Study or doing it on your own with CD’s. These two studies of Beth will benefit you most in getting to know God in the midst of your struggle:
  - Breaking Free: Making Liberty in Christ a Reality in Life
  - Living Beyond Yourself: Exploring the Fruit of the Spirit
You can find more information on my website. Look for My Favorite Blogs and Websites

• Other excellent studies for men and women that I recommend are from Max Lucado and also John Eldredge. You can find more information on my website. Look for My Favorite Blogs and Websites

• My 12 Week Online Program might be worth your consideration if you need day by day coaching and encouragement. This will set you on a journey to lay down your past hurts, overcome your tendencies to control or please others, set new habits of exercise and healthy eating in place, and get to know God in an intimate way.

Whatever journey you and God choose to bring you to freedom, my prayer is that the Holy Spirit will stir you heart today so that you will take the first step of crying out:
  “Lord I surrender this struggle to you, I can not fix it!”
About the Author

Heleen is married to Tony and mom to Jean, Terrance, Jason and Christie. She lives with her family in Oregon, USA. She loves to be a mom and finds great joy in spending time with her family and visiting with friends.

Heleen was born and grew up in South Africa. She gave her heart to God when she was only a small child and loved Him ever since. She always felt a deep yearning to teach about the love and mercy of God and an overwhelming passion to reach out to the brokenhearted and people in bondage.

When she experienced first hand the healing power of God in her life after struggling with eating disorders for many years, she simply had to tell others about it. She started reaching out to women at her local church and lead support groups for women for many years.

Feeling a pressing need to better help the ladies who joined her support groups, she starting delving into the Word of God and studying the field of eating disorders extensively. Over a period of time she developed a 12 Week Program which focuses on the things that brought permanent change and healing to her life and the lives of the ladies she encountered.

With the help of her husband, Tony, she developed a Website for Women Struggling with Food and a 12 Week Online Program. She took up the challenge in order to help their family financially, but more so to reach a larger audience of women with her testimony, trusting that God will supernaturally use it to break off the chains that bind others.

Heleen received a Bachelors Degree from the University of South Africa in 1998 and is working on a Masters in Biblical Counseling. She has done a great deal of lay counseling under the supervision of experienced and godly counselors. She trusts God to use her humble offering of transparency coupled by the Holy Spirit's counsel and leading to bring women to a place of freedom. She is very aware of the fact that without God she can do nothing, but with God all things are possible!

Visit Heleen’s Website: Women Struggling with Food
Please click here: http://www.EatingsDisorders.com
For more Information about the 12 Week Online Program
Please click here: http://www.eatingsdisorders.com/12-week-online-program.php

Visit Heleen’s Blog
Please click here: http://www.blogeatingdisorder.com/

Heleen’s Blog

About the Author
- About
- The Story of how I found my strength with the help of the support groups.
- A Quest to
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Most Recent Posts
- Sugar Highway
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- My Story of
- How to be

Your Most Recent Comments
- Walla Walla is for all the people that need...
Resources


Scripture quotations are from the following versions with corresponding abbreviations:


Suggested Reading List

*Hope, Help and Healing for Eating Disorders* by Gregory L. Jantz  
*Conquering Eating Disorders* by Robert S. McGee and Wm. Drew Mountcastle  
*Inside Out* by Larry Crab  
*Food and Love* by Gary Smalley  
*Mercy for Eating Disorders* by Nancy Alcorn  
*Boundaries* by Henry Cloud and John Townsend  
*Approval Addiction* by Joyce Meyers  
*Get out of that pit* by Beth Moore  
*Victory over the darkness* by Neil Anderson  
*Waking the Dead* by John Eldredge  
*The Purpose Driven Life* by Rick Warren  
*Finding favor with the King* by Tommy Tenney