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*"No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it."—1 Corinthians 10:13*

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## Learning How to Bounce Back

By Linda LaBissoniere, M.Ed., Licensed Counselor

*These three steps can help you defeat life's challenges and tap into the power of resilience.*



**B**ONNIE CEWE FELT LIKE A FAILURE. She was a 29-year-old high school dropout on welfare, having just left a bad marriage. With two small boys to care for, it now seemed as if she would end up working minimum-wage jobs just to survive. However, Bonnie resisted the impulse to become a victim in her mind, and decided to take adult classes at her old high school to begin her educational journey to eventually become a lawyer. After a year of adult classes she graduated from high school and was accepted into Albertus Magnus College.

Bonnie struggled daily in caring for her boys, earning a living and pursuing her education. Six days before her senior year started, she was attacked and raped by an intruder in her apartment. Afterwards he forced her into the trunk of her own car with the intent to kill her. She was able to escape, and then spent three days in the hospital recovering from her injuries.

Bonnie struggled with the trauma of what had happened. It would certainly have been easy just to focus on her pain, think of herself as a victim and give up. Instead, she forced the awful memories from her mind and returned her focus back to her lifelong goal. As a result, the following spring she graduated from college magna cum laude and was accepted into law school.

Certainly Bonnie Cewe's true story of "bouncing back," described in the book

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*Take control of your own actions and focus on what you can influence. Don't allow yourself to become stressed over what you can't control.*

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*The Spirit of Courage*, is an inspiring one. But when you and I face life's trials, what is our reaction? Are we able to continue growing? Are we able to find meaning in our difficulties or do we become "stuck" in a cycle of sadness, hopelessness and lethargy?

What character trait did Bonnie employ to overcome her obstacles and achieve her goal? She was able to tap into the powerful coping skill of resilience. Psychologists have found that people who employ the quality of resilience are able to rebound from much of what life throws at them and sustain their motivation and direction. Resilience is the ability to adapt in the face of trauma and life's ongoing trials.

How can you exercise resilience when you face life's troubles and challenges? Below are three steps to help you tap into the power of resilience.

### **1. Take control of your life**

Take control of your own actions and focus on what you can influence. Don't allow yourself to become stressed over what you can't control. This involves taking responsibility for your own actions, feelings and thoughts. Resist the tendency to see yourself as a "victim" awaiting rescue by someone else. You can't always control what happens, but you can control how you react. Realizing this important fact is the first step to becoming resilient.



Resilient people learn to control their thoughts. The natural human reaction to trials is to be filled with negative thoughts. Many are never truly happy because they are unable to dispose of feelings of anger, hurt, guilt and other negative emotions. It is also important to find lessons in your circumstances. Instead of thinking of yourself as a failure when you make a mistake, realize it was an isolated event and learn from it. If it was not just a mistake but was a sin, go to God and repent. When God forgives us, we have to learn to forgive ourselves.

You have the ability to influence what happens in your life. Focus on your strengths and recall the times when you triumphed over misfortunes. Make peace with your past, and you will be able to move on to solving your problems.

### **2. Connect with others**

The second key to developing resilience is to realize the importance of social cohesion—or simply the need to feel part of a group. Studies have shown that resilient people find at least one other person to connect with. Bonnie Cewe had wonderful parents, friends and even her sons to strengthen and encourage her.



However, because many families today are fractured, you may feel lonely in your situation. You may even feel that you have no one to talk to about important matters. If you are in this situation, it is crucial that you focus on developing relationships. Being close to family or friends can help sustain you when life throws a “curveball.”

In the long run, it is your relationships with other people and with God that will help you to find your footing again. Knowing this, make sure your focus in life is on more than your accomplishments. Take the time to make and nurture close relationships.

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*Take the time to make and nurture close relationships.*

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### 3. Find meaning and purpose in your life

People who have a purpose for their life find it easier to be resilient. Those who are able to find meaning in their misfortunes are more likely to find happiness in their future. Commit yourself to finding meaning and purpose in whatever is happening to you. Ask yourself if you can become a better person because of what you have experienced. Can you help and understand others more effectively?

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*People who have a purpose for their life find it easier to be resilient.*

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You may wonder how you can find purpose in your life. First realize that you are more than simply a physical and psychological being. You are also an emotional and spiritual creation. In determining your purpose, you must examine more than your goals for your physical life. You must search for your Creator and find out His purpose for your life.

How do you find God and how can you know His will for your life? The answer lies in reading the Bible, which is God’s “instruction book” for mankind. For information on how the Bible can help guide your life, request or download our free booklets [Making Life Work](#) and [What Is Your Destiny?](#)

Understanding God’s plan for mankind will help you know why we all suffer at times. Even Jesus Christ, who was perfect, learned obedience by the things that He suffered (Hebrews 5:8). You, too, can profit through suffering if you understand that your purpose is far greater than enjoying just the here and now.

Make contact with God through prayer and ask Him to reveal His plan for you. You were created to have a relationship with God. In that relationship you can attain great inner strength that will help you as you undergo misfortunes and even tragedies in life. You may have concluded that, since this world is in such disarray, there is no God or that God does not care. But I assure you it is possible to prove to yourself that God exists and that He has an ultimate plan for you. Knowing God’s existence and His plans will give you peace, when many around you are in confusion. Please request or download our booklet [Life’s Ultimate Question: Does God Exist?](#)



You can develop the quality of resilience to help you weather life's storms. Resilience can aid you in "bouncing back" from trials and enjoying life to the fullest. Recovering from your setbacks can lead to developing strengths and abilities that you never imagined. Tap into this wonderful power by taking control of your thoughts, connecting with others and finding meaning and purpose in your life through a relationship with God. By doing all this you will be able to tap into the vital power of resilience.

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## Be Not Deceived!

By Gregory Dillum

*Here are seven steps to avoid being deceived in these last days!*



**A**S WE GET CLOSER TO THE RETURN of Jesus Christ, one of the greatest dangers we face is becoming *deceived!* If Satan can trick us into believing a lie and *giving up* the truth, he has won the battle.

When asked what would be the sign of His coming and of the end of this age, Jesus said, "Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many" (Matthew 24:4-5). He added, "Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many... For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect" (Matthew 24:11, 24).

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*Becoming deceived is a very real possibility! The command, "Be not deceived," is repeated many times in the Bible.*

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The apostle Paul warned that many would fall away before Christ returns: “Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed” (2 Thessalonians 2:3).

Becoming deceived is a very real possibility! The command, “Be not deceived,” is repeated *many times* in the Bible. Our very nature lends itself to being deceived: “The heart is *deceitful* above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9, emphasis added).

How can we avoid becoming deceived? The Bible gives us seven steps to take.

**1. Pray that we are not deceived.** Ask God to protect us from deception. David prayed thus and God heard him: “In my distress I cried to the LORD, and He heard me. Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips and from a deceitful tongue” (Psalm 120:1-2).

**2. Stay close to God through obedience, prayer and Bible study.** “Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you” (James 4:7-8).



We are told to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

The Bereans were praised because they “received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11). Timothy was told to “be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).

**3. Stir up God’s Spirit in us.** God has given us a spirit of power and love and of a *sound mind*. Stir up that power—use it (2 Timothy 1:6-7)! The Spirit of truth (John 14:17) will lead us into all truth (John 16:13)—it will not lead us into deception. Stirring up the Spirit helps us to fight deception.

**4. Cling to truth we have been taught.** Jude commands us to “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). Paul commands, “Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle” (2 Thessalonians 2:15).

**5. Avoid false teachings.** There is no need to fill our minds with the teachings of deceptive false prophets. Paul tells us, “But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless. Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned” (Titus 3:9-11).

We are further told, “Shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness” (2 Timothy 2:16).

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*Jude commands us to “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3).*

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We are commanded to avoid false teachers who arise within the Church: “But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us” (2 Thessalonians 3:6).

**6. Love the truth.** A great false prophet (Paul called him “the man of sin”) will come before Christ returns and will deceive many (2 Thessalonians 2:3; Revelation 19:20; compare Revelation 13:11-17).

This man will use signs and lying wonders: “The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12).

To avoid being sucked in by deception, we must *love* the truth, *believe* the truth and *take no pleasure in unrighteousness* (sin or disobedience to God).

**7. Recognize false prophets.** Many people will believe in false prophets if their prophecies come true or if they perform miracles, thinking these are proofs that God is working through them. God gives us the true test: False prophets will lead people away from obeying Him. They will preach another god or they will teach that God’s law longer needs to be kept (Deuteronomy 13:1-5). If they preach against God’s law, don’t believe them (Isaiah 8:20)!

Practice these seven principles and it will be very difficult to be deceived!

For more about avoiding deception, see our free booklet [\*Is There Really a Devil?\*](#)



## Set Your Anchors!

By Dianne Clark

*Several precarious boating experiences brought home the spiritual lessons of having a strong and secure anchor! Here are six ways to stay firmly attached to God's anchor.*



**O**NE BEAUTIFUL DAY while our family was anchored in a cove on Catalina Island, off the California coast, the strong Santa Ana winds started to blow. In the middle of the night we realized we were in a precarious position. The winds were coming from the mainland, and there is no safe harbor on the mainland-facing side of Catalina.

If we pulled our anchor, it would have meant going all around the island to find a safe harbor—in the midst of high waves and strong winds. We decided to pray and keep careful watch during the night to see if we had set our anchor well. If it hadn't held, we would have been blown on shore. It was a terrifying experience, especially since we had three young sons with us.

When daylight finally broke we realized we were safe, but a boat next to us had lost its anchor hold and was on the shore near rocks. I can't say we didn't have a fearful night, but thankfully our anchor was set, and it held.

I have found that anchoring a boat is a lot like anchoring our lives. Anchors are important as we face the many storms that come our way in life. The storms that come crashing in can batter us financially, physically and mentally. Do we have our anchor set? Are we ready for the storms of life?

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*Anchors are important as we face the many storms that come our way in life.*

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## A steadfast anchor of hope

The purpose of the anchor is to hold your position wherever you are, regardless of the situation. It is a means of support, security and stability. Hebrews 6:19 illustrates hope's immovability using the symbol of an anchor. Like an anchor holding a ship securely, our hope in Christ guarantees our safety. Whatever the conditions at sea, the anchor is to remain fixed on the bottom of the seabed. And of course, the rougher the weather, the more important is the steadfastness of the anchor for the safety of the boat. It is a beautiful symbol of Christian hope.

In the boating world there are different types of anchors for different conditions and sizes of boats. For us, there is only one anchor—God, our Rock.

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*Like an anchor holding a ship securely, our hope in Christ guarantees our safety.*

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On a boat, the anchoring equipment consists of the anchor, chain and line. Anchoring your boat securely is one of the most basic skills necessary in boat handling. Once you learn to set an anchor correctly, with control and confidence, you can sleep easier. Anchoring poorly endangers not only your boat, but also the other boats anchored nearby.

Isn't this the same with life? An interesting thing about the anchor is that it is there, ready to be used; but if it is not attached to a chain and line and then connected to the boat, it cannot do its job of giving support, security and stability.

## Six ways to stay firmly attached

So what is the purpose of the chain? A chain should be a minimum of 6 feet long and, of course, for a large ship it should be much longer. Why a chain? It is more durable than a rope and it prevents the anchor line from rubbing against rocks or debris and being cut loose. It also helps the anchor stay in the proper position on the ocean floor, so it will hold to its maximum.



What of the chain that attaches us to our spiritual anchor? Because an anchor chain is a minimum of 6 feet long, I will give six ways we personally can stay firmly attached to the anchor. These include prayer, fasting, meditation, Bible study, congregational fellowship and faith.

The first link in the chain is **prayer**. We all know we are to pray on a daily basis. Prayer is the wonderful opportunity to talk to our Creator God. Think of prayer as a muscle; the more you pray, the stronger it gets.

I like what Paul says in 1 Timothy 2:1. We are urged to make requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving for everyone! He even goes on to mention kings and those in authority.

And who was in authority at that time? The notorious emperor Nero. So besides our family, friends, congregations and those on so many prayer lists, we must remember the leaders of the nations.

The second link is **fasting**. The main purpose for fasting is to draw near to God. It is certainly very difficult, but it is a tool that should be used more often than just on the Day of Atonement. Fasting pleases God as it shows how sincere we are in seeking Him. Besides drawing closer to God in order to gain His mind and perspective, we should fast when we need to make changes in our lives.

Those times may include when we are in a heavy storm of trials or when we want to ask God to intervene in someone else's life who may be struggling with a problem or who is seriously ill. What a blessing it is when you have friends or family who love you so much they are willing to fast for you—and you for them!

The third link is **meditation**. In our very busy lives, we should take the time to meditate. Meditation is thinking seriously and carefully on a particular topic. It is a time of reflecting. It can help us to comprehend something important or to focus on an area of need.

I like what Psalm 119:148 says, “My eyes stay open through the watches of the night, that I may meditate on your promises” (New International Version). This verse reminds me of the watches sailors set when they are on the sea at night. God's promises are our sure anchor.

The fourth link is **Bible study**. Why wouldn't we want to spend time each day in Bible study? It is the Word of God and the best instruction book available. There are many different programs available to read through the Bible each year. That is good to do, but it is also important to conduct additional studies on topics of interest or need. God gives us true understanding as we pray and study. Often, as we read the Word of God, He shows us where we need to make changes in our lives, and He gives us wisdom to deal with the trials we face. We must be ready to listen!

The fifth link is **congregational fellowship**. Hebrews 10:24-25 stresses that we should stir up love and good works among one another. How can that occur unless we are fellowshiping together? God realizes that it is difficult to survive spiritually on our own. We need the support of one another, and this occurs through Christian fellowship. The Church is the Body of Christ. Recognize and appreciate the brethren for what they can contribute, and think how you can contribute to the overall growth and strength of the body.

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*When we have faith, we know that God will be with us through all of the storms in life.*

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The sixth and last link of the chain is **faith**. Faith is the belief we have in God, as well as the assurance that we can approach God. When we have faith, we know that God will be with us through all of the storms in life. He lets us know that He is near us, *especially* when our circumstances are difficult, our prayers are urgent and our needs are great.

So often we meditate or think about our problems with fear (or, of course, worry). However, we are told over and over in the Bible to “fear not.” This means we must replace our fear with faith, which will bring us peace. The Lord our God is with us and will give us the courage to go on. His help is always there, and is given freely to those who are anchored to Him and who seek Him.

## Our lifeline

The next part of the anchor is the line. This is the actual rope that is attached to the chain and then to the boat. In boating you let out enough line so there is some freedom between the boat and the anchor. You don't want it to be too tight. You normally let out 5 to 7 feet of rope per 1 foot of depth of water, but this also depends on the weather, the seas and where you are located.

In our spiritual lives, I see the line as the continuing support we must receive so that no matter what storm we face, we are holding fast. It is the support we give and the support we receive, keeping us from being cut loose and drifting away from our anchor. This support comes from our family, our friends, our pastor, his wife and our neighbors.



One time while boating on Lake Mead, we were in a narrow cove with an extremely rocky bottom and could not set our anchor. After many tries, we finally dropped the anchor the best we could and attached two lines to our boat. We took those lines in our dinghy to the left and right sides of the cove, and tied the lines to rocks. At last we were secure and not drifting into the shore of the rocky cove. We considered them extra lifelines. That is what each of us should be to one another.

We all should feel confident that we can call on someone as our lifeline to help support us when the trials are so heavy we are having difficulty staying connected to our anchor. This falls in line with Galatians 6:2, which tells us to bear one another's burdens.

Whether we are a child, parent, spouse, friend, pastor's wife, neighbor or coworker, we should always be ready to notice when someone is drifting or bent under a great burden. We should be willing to step alongside the person and help him or her carry the burden, as well as help the person stay secured to the anchor. All of us must be a good friend and a good neighbor. We must love our neighbor as ourselves, and that certainly means we should be a willing lifeline to one who calls for our support. Likewise, we should never feel that we need to face our problems alone. Call on someone you can trust who is willing to pray or even fast with you to help you remain anchored.

I mentioned that the anchor lines are never taut—usually the boat is swinging freely so it does not tug excessively on the anchor. This is how it is with us: God gives us a degree of freedom, and we do likewise with our children. He gives us freedom to make choices and decisions. Do we always make the right choices? Perhaps not, but we can always make corrections and seek help so we do not become separated from the anchor.

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*Not being anchored  
to our loving God is  
dangerous to our  
spiritual lives.*

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Anchoring can also be seen as making sure the boat is secure before you leave. We have often seen people leave their boats without making sure their anchor was properly set. This may cause damage to their boat or to the boats of others. You must take a bearing of where your boat is in relation to the shore as well as other boats, making sure it does not change, before you leave your

boat. Waves and/or wind might drag your anchor or possibly move your boat toward another boat or the shore.

In much the same fashion, there are spiritual bearings to take. How are we doing with our prayer, Bible study, meditation, fasting, fellowship and faith? We must take our personal bearings often.

### Facing the fog

One afternoon, while returning from Catalina in our cabin cruiser, my husband and I came into a fog bank so thick we could not see 6 feet in front of us. The GPS showed we were about a mile from the Long Beach breakwater, but our radar showed many images in front and to the sides of us. Immediately we stopped the engine and set our anchor.

How thankful we were for that decision! When the fog lifted, we saw we were surrounded by huge container ships anchored due to a strike on the docks.

Sometimes our trials are so heavy we feel we are lost in a fog. But it is during these times we must be anchored securely to our great and loving Father.

Anchoring mistakes in boating are dangerous to our physical lives. Not being anchored to our loving God is dangerous to our spiritual lives. As the storms of life toss us around, our anchor must be solid. It will give us an inner strength that will remain firm regardless of the trials we may face.

Remember to check your spiritual anchor—the anchor itself, the chain and the line. Do you have all the elements in place to keep you attached to the most important anchor of all? If not, *set your anchor!*

For more about developing a secure anchor to God, see our free booklet [You Can Have Living Faith](#).



## Surviving the Bullies: A Story of Answered Prayer

By Sherrie Giddens

*God can sometimes answer the simplest of prayers in the most surprising of ways.*



**I** WAS GOING TO FLY UNDER THE RADAR, avoid being noticed and do my best to survive.

There were only a few months of school left, and the atmosphere was increasingly becoming tense. There were various groups; one in particular seemed to have taken control of the hallways. The leader was a young man who towered over the other students as well as most of the teachers. He was muscular, showing signs of being more man than boy. His voice was deep, and he seemed to be afraid of no one. We will call him “Dennis.”

His locker was four doors down from mine. Keeping my head low and never looking in the direction of Dennis or his friends, I did my best to avoid any kind of attention. I heard and saw things that were unsafe for me to know about. I decided being deaf and blind would be a good decision. On the occasion that I did look up, I was quickly informed that if I ever opened my mouth, I would regret it.

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*I was going to fly  
under the radar,  
avoid being noticed  
and do my best to  
survive.*

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I had a few classes with this young man. The teachers seemed to share a certain amount of fear with the students, doing their best not to anger him.

My prayers that year centered on one thought: to get through each and every day alive and well. There were other threats to be considered. One student found pleasure in making me her personal punching bag. I was doing my best to avoid her and praying that she would find something else to set her attention on.

### How can you love a bully?

When you are young, it can seem that loving your enemies is a tall request. It is a tall request for anyone, but it is a valuable one to honor. In Romans 12:20, Paul shares an insight with us: “If

your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.”

In fulfilling a need of your enemy, you may cause him to see his error and perhaps in some cases even warm to you. As an enemy softens toward you, he may not become a friend, but the process could yield some unexpected results.

During history class, I sat two seats behind Dennis. He came to class one day, obviously in some distress. He raised his hand and asked if he could go to the restroom. Seeing him suffering, the teacher seemed to get some pleasure. He refused to let this young man leave the classroom. He had never turned down this kind of request, and I found myself feeling pity for Dennis.



Within a few minutes a young lady showed up at the classroom door. She asked to see Dennis. I knew her to be his girlfriend, although I had never spoken to her. The teacher denied her request and even laughed. Again I felt as if something was very wrong, and the teacher was enjoying it. She begged to be able to just give him a note. She was again denied. As she turned to walk away, our teacher looked at Dennis with a smile. I no longer had any doubt that the teacher was enjoying it and taking pleasure in

his power over the situation.

I am not sure why I made the decision that I made, and I see now it wasn't the wisest or most respectful one. However, in spite of that, I believe that I personally experienced what it can mean to heap coals on the head of your enemy.

I raised my hand and asked if I could be excused to use the restroom. I was granted my request and left the classroom. As I reached the hall I broke out in a run, catching up with the young lady. As I reached her, I put out my hand and told her to give me the note. I would see that Dennis got it. She pulled her hand back, questioning my motives. She did not trust me, anymore than I would have trusted her.

Explaining that I did not know what was in the note, but just wanted to help, I held out my hand again. She slowly placed the note in my hand and wiped a tear from her cheek.

### **Random act of kindness**

I had asked to go the restroom; I made my stop, and then proceeded back to the classroom. I walked past Dennis's desk and dropped the note in his lap. I thought I was being so clever. As I took my seat I began to notice everyone was looking at me. All eyes, including that of the teacher, were turned in my direction.

My heart pounded and I questioned the wisdom of my decision. I sat there looking at my teacher, waiting for what was to come. At that moment Dennis stood up and walked out of class. He looked so ill; my heart went out to him. With the attention on him, all eyes left me. I was glad, hoping to again take my place under the radar.

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*It has also taught me to see my enemies as human beings who are at times vulnerable and fragile.*

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By the end of the day, it was obvious that any chance of going unnoticed had passed. What happened that afternoon had become common knowledge not only among the students but the teachers as well. I waited all day, believing that I would soon be questioned by the principal. My prayers never changed—I just wanted to survive.

The next day I saw that I was no longer going unnoticed. Other students were pointing and whispering. Approaching my locker, I came face to face with the young lady who spent her days finding ways to make mine miserable. She told me that after school, she would be waiting; it was time that I had a real beating.



*God, are You listening?* All I could do was pray and believe that He was listening. I am not sure how it happened; I only know that it did. I felt an arm go around my shoulder, and I looked up to see Dennis towering over me. My heart jumped, and for a minute I thought I might pass out. A group was forming in the hallway, and I was going to die (at least that is what I thought).

He leaned forward, and shared his thoughts with the young lady in front of me. Anyone who even thought about hurting me would have to answer to him. He then looked at the crowd and told them to leave. He said nothing else; he went back to his locker and his friends.

### Unexpected answer to prayer

The young lady left and never bothered me again. My prayers had been heard, and although the tension in school increased, I was able to feel a sense of security knowing that God did hear me. I continued in my prayers for protection, but always added my thanks for what He had done.

Dennis and I went back to our usual way of doing things. I did my best to not draw attention to myself, and he continued to rule the school. Once or twice he smiled in my direction. It was his way of letting me know he had not forgotten me, and that I was safe. Although I found it reassuring, it was for other reasons. I knew God had heard me, and Dennis was His answer to my prayers.

Those in my school who meant harm to one another, and at times even to me, were no match for God’s strength. Paul shares another thought with us in Romans 8:28: “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.” This verse allows us to see how much God cares about our daily lives and struggles.

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*Those in my school who meant harm to one another, and at times even to me, were no match for God’s strength.*

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The next year, Dennis and many of his friends did not return. The school took on a different atmosphere, and the students and teachers alike seemed to be less tense. The young lady who had previously been a problem for me had lost interest.

I do not advocate making decisions that could cause us or those around us harm. I believe that God honored my soft heart toward an enemy. He also answered my prayers for protection. He expected me to learn from that lesson and to be careful about the kind of decisions I make in the future.

I have learned to trust Him more fully, carrying the many lessons learned in this one event throughout my life. It has also taught me to see my enemies as human beings who are at times vulnerable and fragile. I look forward to the day that Dennis and his friends learn the truth about living God's way of life.

How is it possible to develop this type of attitude toward the "enemies" in your life? Request the free booklet [The Ten Commandments](#) to learn how to live a life that shows love to others, no matter their actions. And see ["What You Need to Know About School Bullies"](#) for information on dealing with this challenging situation.

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## I Am the Biggest Loser, and You Can Be Too!

By Janet Treadway

*I hope my story and the food tips included at the end will inspire and help you reach or maintain a healthy weight.*



**O**NE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL SONGS I heard recently was titled "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" performed by Israel Kamakawiwo'ole. The sad thing is this very talented man's life was cut short by his battle with obesity.

Throughout the latter part of his life, Iz suffered from severe obesity and at one point he carried 769 pounds on his 6-foot-2-inch frame. He endured several hospitalizations and died of weight-related respiratory illness on June 26, 1997, at the age of 38. A tribute to his life and the song is on YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oltAGuuru7Q>).

“F as in Fat 2008: How Obesity Policies Are Failing in America” reports that “obesity is one of the most serious health problems in the United States today. Adult obesity rates have doubled since 1980, from 15 percent to 30 percent. Two-thirds of adults are now either overweight or obese.

“Childhood obesity rates have nearly tripled since 1980, from 6.5 percent to 16.3 percent. Additionally, the obesity epidemic is taking a toll on the U.S. economy by adding billions of additional dollars in health care costs and hurting our country’s ability to compete in the global economy.”

The article goes on to say, “Obesity and overweight are contributing factors to over 20 chronic diseases, including some cancers, arthritis, and even Alzheimer’s disease and dementia.

“Increasing evidence shows that maternal obesity adds major complications during pregnancy, putting babies at increased risk for pre-term birth and infant mortality.

“Obese children and teenagers are developing diseases that were formerly only seen in adults. For instance, approximately 176,500 individuals under the age of 20 have type 2 diabetes, and 2 million adolescents aged 12-19 have pre-diabetes. Obese and overweight children are more likely to become overweight and obese adults and are on a track for poor health throughout their adult lives. Overall, this generation of children could be the first to have shorter, less healthy lives than their parents.”

You can read more from this report at

<http://healthyamericans.org/reports/obesity2008/Obesity2008Report.pdf>. It is staggering!

I, too, was one of those that was overweight. Not like Israel, but enough that it affected my health. I was having continued heartburn, was exhausted all the time and could not go upstairs without shortness of breath. I just figured I was getting old and would probably die in a few short years. There was no way I could lose this weight! I had tried to diet before with no success until I saw an advertisement in the local paper that changed my life.

It was an advertisement to join a 10-week weight loss challenge that offered money as a prize! You paid \$29 up front for the 10 weeks, and the money would go to the people who came in first, second and third place in losing the most body fat. Being the competitive person that I am, I decided to join.

The program involved going once a week to weigh in. Classes were taught on how to eat better and of course they offered their products that you could buy or do your own thing. After three weight loss challenges, over a seventh-month period, I won! I claimed the title of the “Biggest Loser” after losing 60 pounds total and beating out 28 other people with the most body fat percentage lost.

How did this program work for me when other programs I had tried had failed?

**1. I began this program by asking God to help me.**



I wanted to succeed. I have learned throughout my Christian life that it is God's desire to help us succeed in all that we do.

In Matthew 7:7-8 God tells us to ask. "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened."

I needed God's help!

## **2. Group support.**

It was very encouraging to go every week to my class where we all shared a vision and shared a goal. We would sit around and talk about things we had learned and what we were doing to reach our weight loss goal. We would also applaud people with their weekly weight loss.

This is much like our Church family. We all have the same shared vision, the same goal. And it takes a lot of encouragement from one another to continue in this walk with God. Group support in whatever we set out to do helps us reach our goals.

## **3. Leadership support.**

We had to have someone to encourage us along who was knowledgeable, who had been there herself and who had a great desire to see us reach our goal. My weight loss coach, Michelle, had been overweight herself so she knew what it was like to have the low self-esteem and to struggle to lose that weight. She also had the expertise to teach us how to change our lifestyle and our eating habits—to teach us good nutrition! She was also a great cheerleader. She would express great excitement in my week-to-week success.

That is what we are all learning in our Christian life. When we overcome or come through a trial, we turn around to help others through those difficulties! The best teachers are those who have been there.

## **4. Accountability.**

Yes, there was accountability. The scale was the mirror to my success or lack of success each week. If I had been good that week, then I looked forward to stepping on that scale. On the other hand, there were weeks I dreaded it! There was a penalty if we gained weight. We had to pay \$1 for every pound we gained.

This reminded me of a scripture that applies in our Christian life. "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life" (Galatians 6:7-8).

## 5. Reward.

Certainly the monetary reward is what got me in the door. The reward I received, though, was far greater than the money I received. It was a reward of better health and better self-esteem.

We also walk this Christian life because we know God has offered us the greatest reward anyone could hope to have! “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6).

Even though I earned the title “The Biggest Loser,” I am a winner because of all that I have learned from this wonderful class. You can too! You can accomplish things you never thought possible, especially when it comes to your health!

We do not have to be a part of the statistics of obesity! The impossible is possible! If you are overweight, find what works for you. You, too, can be the biggest loser and come out the winner.

### Seven food tips that help

1. Stay out of fast-food restaurants! Did you know that a Big Mac has over 700 calories? That is without the French fries. If you do plan to go out, check the restaurant’s Internet site or other sites that give calorie and nutrition information to find out what is best to eat.



2. Drink lots of water (see [“9 Reasons to Drink Water and How to Form a Habit”](#)).

3. Count calories! Find out how many calories you should take in daily and stick to it as much as possible. To lose one pound per week, subtract 500 calories a day from your daily caloric rate. You can subtract calories by eating 500 calories less or by burning 500 calories through cardio [exercise](#). For example:  $1,900 - 500 = 1,400$ . It really works. I have averaged losing a pound a week.

4. Buy groceries from the outline of the store, along the walls. Avoid processed foods if you can. Also there are books that can help you decide what best to eat, like *Eat This, Not That* by David Zincenko and Matt Goulding. They also wrote a book for children as well: *Eat This Not That! for Kids! Be the Leanest, Fittest Family on the Block!*

5. Learn to read labels. Read before you eat. If you can’t pronounce it, chances are it’s not good for you (<http://www.howtobefit.com/learn-food-labels.htm>).

6. Get a good scale and monitor your weight. This helps you keep on track.

7. Should you get off your diet or binge, don’t throw up your hands, quit and say, “It’s no use.” I have fallen off the wagon many times. You have to allow yourself from time to time to eat something you really enjoy. Just get back in there and as time goes by it will get easier and easier. It is so worth it. Don’t give up!

When I started doing all these things and being aware of what I was putting in my mouth, the weight started coming off. Remember, it is a lifestyle change that you cannot get from a pill!

For more about living a healthy life, read or request our free booklet [Making Life Work](#) especially the chapter on [“Keys to a Healthy, Long Life.”](#)

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## Letters to the Editor

### [When a Friend Is Hurting: How You Can Help](#)



This is a fantastic article. I just had this same conversation with my sister yesterday as we were trying to figure out how to communicate better when each other is going through a rough time. Much of what Becky Sweat mentioned in her dos and don'ts were things that I, after praying about it during the conversation, touched on with my sister. Thanks for the article.

### [Interesting Web Site](#)



I think your Web site on the Bible is interesting. I am hoping there are some good books on the Bible and archaeology floating around somewhere that I may have, please. If it helps any, I am unemployed due to unpaid care-giving responsibilities and due to serious health problems—cancer, degenerative bone disease.

Thank you for listening and praying,

— Daniel Marsh

*Thanks for your e-mail. We're glad you find our articles interesting. If you go to [www.ucg.org](http://www.ucg.org) you will find many interesting articles, booklets and Bible studies that may interest you. You might also be interested in our magazine [The Good News](#). All of our literature is free of charge, so take a moment and check out the site, you may just find some things you would like.*

Some feedback messages are edited for space and/or clarity