

WEEK 1

Taking the First Steps

Day 1

Finding New Hope

If you have been wrestling with food-related issues for as long as I did, you are probably pretty educated on the topic of eating disorders and food addiction. But just in case you're not sure, I will give you a quick overview.

What is an eating disorder?

An eating disorder is a compulsive behavior surrounding food that controls your life and also limits your freedom to eat in a healthy and normal way.

There are many different types of eating disorders. In this program we will mainly focus on the following types:

ANOREXIA:

An addiction to dieting or self starvation. This usually causes a total deterioration of a person's physical and mental health.

BINGE EATING DISORDER:

A pattern of powerful, and often secret, binge eating (quickly eating large amounts of high-calorie, sugary, fatty foods). This is often used as a drug to either numb unwelcome feelings or make life "better." As with compulsive overeating it usually causes serious weight gain.

BULIMIA:

A pattern of powerful, and often secret, binge eating (quickly eating large amounts of high-calorie, sugary, fatty foods). The binge is usually followed by purging (removing the food eaten during the binge by using laxatives, diuretics, self-induced vomiting, compulsive exercise, or starvation). Because of the purge there isn't necessarily weight gain, but it is very harmful to one's health.

COMPULSIVE OVEREATING:

This resembles the binge in bulimia (which may or may not be done secretly) or "grazing" (constant eating) over a few hours. This usually is done to escape or drown out unwelcome emotions such as anger, inadequacy, embarrassment, fear, loneliness, pain, insecurity, or boredom. This usually causes serious weight gain.

People who struggle with food find themselves in a vicious cycle. This cycle will probably be all too familiar if you are in the grip of an eating disorder.

The Eating Disorder Cycle

1. Uncomfortable feelings of dissatisfaction, anxiety, and depression
2. A pressing desire to get rid of these feelings
3. Use of food to numb the feelings (binge, purge or starvation)
4. Feelings of guilt, shame, self-hate, and hopelessness after the food abuse
5. Resolution to never binge, purge or starve again
6. Lack of ability to honor these personal boundaries
7. Right back to number one to keep on repeating the cycle day after day...

Why do eating disorders occur?

Many professionals and experts in the field of eating disorders believe that our society and the media's obsession with weight plays a huge role to reinforce the practice of eating disorders. Others believe that certain issues such as dysfunctional families, controlling relationships, illness, death of a loved one, divorce, or sexual and physical abuse may trigger eating disordered behaviors. Some claim that hereditary factors play a part in eating disorders and that certain people might have inherited a predisposition to having an eating disorder.

However, everyone seems to agree that food struggles are complex. It's not an isolated incident that causes an eating disorder or food addiction, but rather a combination of factors. From my own experience I have to agree with this.

More importantly: What can be done?

This is probably not the first time you went looking for a solution to your problem. Just like me, you probably know all about the fad diets out there and have probably tried a few yourself. In all seriousness, lots of plans make sense for people who want to shed a few pounds, but those "plans," even the Christian-based ones, fly out the window the minute life gets rough for someone with an eating disorder.

Would you picture the following scenario with me:

*You get out of bed with the best intentions in the world. You have your "plan" ready: Today is going to be awesome! You're going to exercise, eat healthy, read your Bible, and be the best woman of God you can be. **Then life happens.** You have a fight with your husband, your child gets sick, your car breaks, your boss overwhelms you with responsibilities and tasks, your past failures come out of the closet to haunt you, and you hear the familiar messages in your head that you will never "get it together." Without even realizing what you're doing, you walk over to the cupboard and "inhale" hand-fuls of sugary cereal. Guilt and shame flood over you. You did it again! What's the use, you might as well give up on this diet as well.*

People with food struggles are trapped in a never-ending conflict that cannot be cured by a diet. The only way we feel good about ourselves or accepted by others is when we look good, are skinny, and perform perfectly all the time. However, this is an unattainable goal, so we keep failing at these high expectations we set for ourselves, and keep "needing" food (or food abstinence) to cope with these emotions. We are trapped in a vicious cycle.

Some of us feel that food (or food abstinence) is the best thing we have going in our lives. Even though we know about the dangers involved, we feel that abstinence or purging gives us control while the large amounts of food make us happy (even if only for a moment). We're caught in this cycle and we really don't *want* to let it go. We will talk more about asking God to change our "want to" in the weeks to come.


There is LIFE after eating disorders and food addiction. There's peace, joy, healthy relationships, and a healthy body, but it's not found in fad diets or dangerous methods. These things just keep us spinning around in circles year after year, trapped in the never-ending conflict that I described above.

After many years, and countless diets, I finally found healing in letting God deal with all those places in me that fueled my food struggles. Even when I still find myself turning to food during high-stress periods in my life, I now recognize the horrible feeling when peace and joy are replaced by fear and I run from it as fast as I possibly can.

If you've once tasted the freedom in living a life surrendered to God you start to recognize the old signs of bondage quickly, and you cannot stand to live like that anymore. Don't get me wrong, I am in no way condemning every food plan on the market. On the contrary, there are sound and helpful programs and books out there. What I'm saying is the best food plan in the world will not work if we don't first find healing for spirit, mind, and body.

Identifying the Problem

Carefully read through the list of questions below, and circle the numbers that apply to you. The answers stay between you and God, but be sure to use this tool to bring some truth to your heart and shake off denial for good.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do you think about food or food abstinence all the time? 2. Are you preoccupied with a desire to be thinner and do you fear weight gain? 3. Do you starve to make up for binges? 4. Are you overweight despite concern by others for you to lose weight? 5. Do you binge and then vomit afterward? 6. Do you exercise excessively to burn off calories, rather than to stay fit? 7. Do you overeat by bingeing or by 'grazing' continuously? 8. Do you eat the same thing everyday and feel annoyed when you eat something else? 9. Do you use laxatives, diet pills, or diuretics as a method of weight control? 10. Do you hide stashes of food for future eating or binges? 11. Do you avoid all food with sugar and feel waves of shame and condemnation wash over you when you do eat sweets? 12. Is food your friend and do you often turn to food for comfort? 13. Would you rather eat alone and do you feel uncomfortable when you must eat with others? 14. Do you have specific ways you eat (or foods you eat) when you're emotionally upset, sad, angry, afraid, anxious or ashamed? 15. Do you become depressed or feel guilty after an eating binge? 16. Do you 'feel' fat even when people tell you otherwise? 17. Are you ever afraid that you won't be able to stop eating? 18. Have you tried to diet repeatedly only to sabotage your weight loss?
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?	<p>19. Do you feel powerful when you are able to abstain from eating?</p> <p>20. Do you have weight changes of more than 10 pounds after binges or fasts?</p> <p>21. Do you feel your eating behavior is abnormal? Do you try to hide it from others?</p> <p>22. Does feeling ashamed of your body weight result in more bingeing?</p> <p>23. Do you make insulting jokes about your body weight or your eating?</p> <p>24. Do you feel guilty after eating anything not allowed on your diet?</p> <p>25. Do you follow unusual rituals while eating such as counting bites?</p> <p>26. Do you feel out of control when you eat?</p> <p>27. Do you feel that you do not deserve to eat?</p> <p>28. Do you know the calorie content in all or almost all the food that you eat?</p> <p>29. Do you feel the only control you have in your life is in the areas of food and weight?</p> <p>30. Do you feel anger towards anyone who questions your eating habits?</p> <p>31. Do you believe that everything in your life would be better if you lose weight?</p> <p>32. Do you feel that you have to be perfect in everything that you do?</p> <p>33. Do you view food as a substance that could be spiritually enhancing or hindering?</p>
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If you answered yes to three or more of the above questions, you may be dealing with a disordered way of relating to food.

Please note that this is only an exercise in self discovery, designed to help you realize the seriousness of any compulsive eating habit, it's not a diagnostic tool. Please see your physician for further evaluation and a diagnostic test if you feel you have identified an eating disorder in yourself for the first time and are concerned about your health.

You may feel discouraged after doing this self evaluation test, but please remember that gaining knowledge about this area of your life is a step in the right direction. Once we recognize and admit to the brokenness in our lives, we can start moving forward out of the lies we believed for years, and start applying the truth of God's Word so we can be free.

The Bible clearly states in John 8:32 (NIV):

Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

Restoring your faith

The core foundation of this program is about restoring your faith in God and teaching you how to daily SURRENDER to Him. Not only will a full surrender to God cause you to stop looking for a way to "fix this thing" by yourself, but it will also help you start thinking about turning to others and especially to God for help. As long as we misplace our faith by trusting in our own best efforts, we won't be fully placing our faith in an almighty, all-powerful God.

This might be the first time that you are admitting to yourself that all of your best efforts to change yourself and “pick yourself up by the bootstraps” are not working. This might be the first time that you realize that God is the only one who can save you. In fact, you might not even believe it yet.

The way we build faith in God is by getting to know Him and His Word

Romans 10:17 (Amplified Bible)

So faith comes by hearing [what is told], and what is heard comes by the preaching [of the message that came from the lips] of Christ (the Messiah Himself)..

It's all about relationship. Think about the people on this earth that you trust and have faith in. They are usually people you know well. You know their character and they have proven themselves worthy of your trust. God has already proven that He can be trusted and that He loves us by giving us His Son (John 3:16). He calls us His children throughout the Bible and makes it clear that He wants to have a relationship with each one of us

GOD CAN DO ANYTHING. So if He didn't set you free from this food struggle, even after you've begged Him countless times to do so, then there is a reason, and He holds the answer. If you start to build a deep and intimate relationship with God, He will show you what is lacking in your relationship with Him and why you still find yourself in bondage. He speaks through His Word, His people, and the Holy Spirit. Don't stress if you're not familiar with what I'm talking about yet; I will explain this in the weeks to come. All you need to know right now is that in order for you to be set free from eating disorders, food addiction, or any other food struggle, you need a type of relationship with God that can go the distance.

Do you trust that God can and wants to help you?

- Maybe, like me, you didn't even realize that you stopped trusting God.
- You might even be blaming Him for the situation you find yourself in right now.
- Maybe, like me, you have been putting your trust in yourself, diets, different programs and people for a long time.
- Maybe, like me, you have to stop and remind yourself that you are turning your back on your ONLY HOPE - the only One who can save you!

Did you know that we need faith to please God, to keep hope alive, and to step into the purpose He has for our lives?



Please look up these scriptures about FAITH and write them in the spaces below:

Hebrews 11:6

2 Corinthians 5:7

Are you ready for your faith to be restored? Do you want to believe again? It's as easy as asking God. Take a look at this guy in the Bible who asked: Mark 9:24 (NIV)

Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"

I believe the boy's father really wanted to believe, but he didn't know how to do it, so he asked Jesus to get him there. Do you need help getting to a place of trusting God and giving your eating disorder over to Him? Starting asking Him today. God wants to increase your faith. He knows you, He knows how you work, and He is the only ONE who can heal you.



I invite you to join me in this prayer if you are ready to lay down unbelief

Lord, please forgive me for not trusting you to help me with my eating disorder. Forgive me for trying all this time to do it on my own and shutting you out of this part of my life.

I repent today from unbelief; please help me to believe that you can heal me.

I stand on Your Word today that says "...with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26). I will no longer believe the lies of the enemy. This food struggle is not too big for You, God, and it's not just some little thing that I have to take care of either.

I believe today that this is not something I will have to carry for the rest of my life.

Your Word says that You have come to set the captives free (Isaiah 61:1) and You don't want me to be in bondage. You want me to live a life of abundance (John 10:10).

I submit my life to You, Lord. Please use Your Word and this study to change me, all of me, forever.

Amen.

Please take the rest of this week to pray and think about this matter of unbelief.

Let the Holy Spirit speak to you about laying down all of your own striving to try and change this area of your life. When you surrender your struggle to God, He will show you through His Word which part you have to play in all of this, but it's important for you to know that you are not alone; the Holy Spirit has been given to you as your comforter and helper (John 16:4).

Day 2

Facing Denial and Pride

Are you maybe still in denial about your problem or at least the severity of it? I'm asking you this because denial is a universal problem for people with addiction. Most people only seek help after some strained relationships, problems on the job, or damaged physical health.

?	<p>Why is denial such a problem?</p> <p>First of all, people fear what others will think of them when they admit to having this problem.</p> <p>Second, denial is Satan's oldest trick in the book. If people don't see their own sin, they don't repent, they don't receive God's forgiveness and help, and they stay in bondage.</p>
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Even right now the enemy might be telling you the following lies:

"You can stop this behavior anytime you want."

"It's not that bad, it's not like you have a real addiction."

"This is just nonsense, you've heard it all before."

"You just have to find a better diet."

"You don't need help with this, you should just get it together yourself."

Ask yourself this: If you could fix your way of dealing with food, wouldn't you have done so years ago? Would you hurt yourself and the people you love **on purpose? Would you throw away your money, time, relationships and health **on purpose**? Would you live a life in chains of shame, anxiety, and self-hatred, if you could run free? **I don't think you would.****

I beg you to not be that person who goes down the path of denial for years and years.

EATING DISORDERS AND FOOD ADDICTION ARE BEHAVIORS THAT CAUSE SERIOUS PHYSICAL PROBLEMS, EVEN DEATH.

How do you get rid of denial?

There is something that keeps denial alive: PRIDE

Pride is one of the biggest obstacles in our way. If pride is present we usually find it hard to admit that anything is wrong, or that we are dealing with a serious eating disorder. It might be that you grew up in a family where you always had to put on a "mask" in public, or pretend that everything was fine when you were in fact falling apart or hurting on the inside. **This behavior of "keeping up pretenses" or "wearing a mask" has pride at its root.** To pretend that your life is perfect keeps people at a distance and gives the message that you don't need anything from anybody.

To really live free we have to come to a place where we admit that pride might have slipped in ever so subtly. PRIDE IS A SIN; IN FACT GOD CLEARLY STATES THAT HE HATES PRIDE



Please look up the following verses and write them in the spaces below:

Proverbs 8:13

Proverbs 16:18



These two verses talk about the other end of the spectrum, humility. Please summarize these verses in your own words.

Isaiah 66:2

James 4:10

Can you see how pride could be a huge obstacle in your pursuit for freedom while humility could benefit you greatly? _____

You may have laid down pride before, but it is unfortunately one of those things that can sneak back into our lives if we do not ask the Holy Spirit to search our hearts for places it might be hiding. In fact, we would be wise to do this on a **daily basis**.

One of the places pride hides is in low self esteem:

It doesn't seem possible, but the fact is that a person with low self esteem is always busy with herself in the same way as someone with a huge ego. She is painfully aware of her own behavior and any mistake is met with self loathing and shame. In a later week we will discuss the importance of having a healthy self image, and what that means. For now it is important to note that putting oneself down can be yet another form of pride and a way to stay self centered and self focused.


The sooner you get denial and pride out of the way, the sooner you can be on your way to freedom. If you are too proud to admit that you have a real problem, you might:

- Minimize it and think that you don't really need God
- You might harden your heart
- You might resort to your own will-power again
- You might end up denying this for another year, yet at some point find yourself back at this crossroad

Not sure if you have a problem with pride?


Pride tends to hide in corners where we least expect it, so have a look and see if you missed some pride hiding out in the corners of your life.

Please take a look at these questions and circle the ones that apply to you:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you detected that you are overly critical of yourself and others? For example: Do you replay the behavior of yourself and others over in your mind and analyze every detail? • Do you set high standards for yourself and others and do you feel guilt and shame (even on behalf of others) if these standards are not met? • Do you find yourself putting others down or gossip in order to feel better about yourself or to make yourself appear better than others? • Do you often control or manipulate other people and circumstances? • Are you highly sensitive to the remarks of others and cannot stand being criticized? • Is it hard for you to ask for help, or admit that you cannot do it all? • Do you have to do things perfectly even at the expense of relationships and your own sanity?
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I challenge you to let God into your "heart of hearts" today. Let Him put His finger on the very dangerous place where you might have hidden pride. The enemy hides pride behind all kind of "innocent" veils so that we don't recognize it in our lives and stay in bondage. Don't let him fool you any longer, please join me in this prayer of repentance today.

Pride has kept women, like you and I, from freedom, healthy family lives, great ministries, and above all, a deep and intimate relationship with Jesus.

	<p>PLEASE PRAY THIS PRAYER WITH ME</p> <p>Jesus, I never meant for pride to slip into my life, but it did. I wasn't even aware that I carried so much pride, but today I ask you to forgive me. Come wash me from this sin of pride and please open my eyes to any hidden pride that can keep me from living life in abundance. The enemy used pride to keep me from asking You to help me with my eating disorder. I believed that I could stop any time and that I was in perfect control, while I was in bondage all along. Please show me all the places of pride in my life, daily. I want to root it up for good.</p> <p>Thank You that You love me, God. I accept your forgiveness and love. Amen</p>
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Please take a few minutes and write your own prayer to God in the space below:

DAY 3

A Testimony of Hope

How facing denial, pride, and unbelief helped me

It took me a while to get over my denial. Like most people I didn't even know or believe that I was in denial. I struggled with pride in my life that actually fed the denial, but I would NEVER for one minute think that I was prideful. I had such low self esteem and I always tried to keep everyone happy. How could I possibly be dealing with pride?

When I finally opened my heart to God and let Him show me the truth, I realize that I **turned my pain into pride**. It started when the sin of pride prevented me from looking at what was hurting me. I didn't believe anything was wrong with my past and I especially didn't want to let go of the "ideal childhood" that I had created in my mind. Pride kept me from looking back and facing the fact that things were in fact not so peachy.

By refusing to look back at my past, I was holding on to grudges against my parents and other people. These grudges and pain from my past kept me in bondage, regardless of my superficial efforts to deal with the symptoms. Unforgiveness was standing squarely between me and God, and God was the only One who could free me.

- **I was actually very proud that I "used" my past pain to become a perfectionist.** I was determined to control my life and everything in it. I now realize how much pride went into that one thought. I also know now that no one is perfect and that you cannot control anyone other than yourself (and even this can only be done through the power of the Holy Spirit)
- **When I saw that I wasn't in control of my weight, I simply had to find a way to control this area as well.** I refused to look at the danger involved in abusing diet pills. I just wanted to be thin at all cost. This prideful attitude also made me deny the fact that I was bulimic and that I could die from this disorder.
- **I cared more about what people thought of me than about my health, my loved ones, and my relationship with God.** I thought being thin would take away my pain and when it didn't, I just had to find another way to make the pain go away. I then had to have the perfect outfits, decorate my house perfectly, and be the perfect hostess. I was totally self-absorbed 24/7 and I couldn't even see it.
- **Despite the outward charades I always felt sad and hopeless, like I was crying on the inside.** I had a deep yearning for God that I kept trying to fill with other things, yet pride kept me all along from crying out to God for help, or asking people around me to teach me how to surrender to God.
- **Constantly pleasing the people around me turned out to be my prideful way of controlling them.** I was trying to control what other people thought about me, and how they felt about me. I wanted to have "perfect relationships" and I prided myself in the fact that I had no enemies, no one disliked me, and I always avoided conflict.

But this was an unnatural state of living. If we control others, we cannot grow in relationship with God and find self-control, which is part of the fruit of the Holy Spirit. So as long as I controlled others, I was not in control of myself. I was always anxious and my eating disorder prevailed.

My denial about having an eating disorder looked like this:

Denial: *"I don't have a disorder, I just need to find the right diet and lose some weight. I'll be fine."*

Truth: I could never find the right diet, because I was really trying to fill a deep longing inside of me with food. So I had to turn to dangerous methods (abusing diet pills and finally purging) to lose weight.

Denial: *"I don't have a disorder, the pills are just helping me to have more self control, and I can stop taking them any day."*

Truth: When I stopped taking the diet pills due to complications to my health, I couldn't stop bingeing and had to turn to more drastic measures (vomiting). The pills and vomiting gave me a false sense of "self-control". These dangerous methods became another god or idol I turned to instead of the only true God.

Denial: *"Okay, maybe I do have a problem, this can't be normal, but I'm sure I can stop this if I try harder."*

Truth: I couldn't stop it myself. It was only when I finally realized that all of my best efforts were useless that my denial finally fell away, and I started surrendering my struggle to God.

My denial about needing help looked like this:

Denial: *"I just need to read the right book; I don't need to let people into this."*

Truth: I didn't get any better; all the books just made me feel better for a little while. I needed others to hold me accountable and teach me how to have a daily relationship with Jesus.

Denial: *"I'm good at so many things, how could I possibly fail at this? I should be able to get this right if I try harder."*

Truth: I kept failing because I wasn't perfect, and I desperately needed God and other people to help me. I spent years trying to fix myself, without any success. I was ready to look for a helping hand.

Denial: *"Surely this isn't something I should ask from God, He would have healed me by now if He wanted to. This is probably one of those things that He wants me to do for myself."*

Truth: The truth was that I lost faith in God; I didn't think He could or wanted to heal me. In my eyes this eating disorder became HUGE, much bigger than my God. This was a sin and I had to repent from my unbelief.

My denial about the danger surrounding this problem look liked this:

Denial: *"This is not a real addiction. It doesn't affect me like alcohol or drugs would."*

Truth: I couldn't function normally in many areas. The food struggle became the center of my life and took up all my attention, it became gradually worse and affected all of my relationships. Most importantly, it diverted me from the very reason I was born: To glorify God in and through my life.

Denial: *"I can't die of this, it's just a problem with food."*

Truth: I started developing health problems from the pills, the vomiting, and the huge amounts of sugar and fat. Slowly my eyes opened to the many people around me who die every day from eating disorders.

When I finally worked through my denial, I knew that:

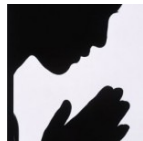
- This is definitely a problem in my life. I do not eat in a normal, healthy way.
- I needed help, not just a quick fix. I also knew I needed God and people in my life who would tell me the truth that I so desperately needed.
- I could lose my health if I didn't get help. Carrying on like this was not worth it. I could lose the people I love; in fact, I could lose the one precious life God gave me.

I finally came to a place where there was no more hiding behind denial. I was down and out. I repented from the sin of pride and unbelief that I let into my life. I asked God to help me trust and believe Him again. This was my first big step. I felt such relief when I took this step towards surrendering my life, and especially my eating disorder, to God.



Are you ready to take the first step out of the jungle of denial and pride? Please write down ways that you have been denying the existence or severity of your problem with food.

Now write down ways that pride might have contributed to the problem and kept you from reaching out for help.



PLEASE PRAY THIS PRAYER WITH ME

Lord Jesus, I admit today that you are all powerful and all knowing. The Bible says that we can ask you for wisdom when we need it.

I need your wisdom to see past years of denial and pride into what is really going in my heart. Please help me to find the truth through your Word and the power of the Holy Spirit in the days and weeks to come.

Please show me practical steps that I can take to start letting You and other safe people into this broken area of my life. Thank you that you Love me Lord! Amen



We will be talking more about these things in the weeks to come, but please take a moment now to write your own prayer in the space below. Also write down practical steps that you can take as it comes to mind during your time in prayer.

Day 4

Journaling and Memorizing Scripture

I will be asking you to write things down in a journal as we move through this study together, and I hope to encourage you to make it a daily habit even after you've completed the 12 weeks. Please purchase a journal as soon as possible. It can be a fancy one or simply a notebook from a dollar store (I always buy these because I fill them so quickly). You can also choose to start a journal on your computer or iPad. If you are part of my online program, you can even journal on the private members' forum. Many ladies who journal on there told me that it has been a great accountability tool for them and they also receive encouragement from other women who struggle with the same issues.

Journaling is a very effective tool that I have been using for years, so please don't skip this step. Your journal can take on the form of a very private prayer journal where you write things down as God reveals it to you through this program and His Word, or it can be a journal where you simply write your thoughts down as you walk out this journey of freedom. It depends on your style and preference, but it is VERY IMPORTANT to do it. I know it might seem like something trivial, but it plays a huge role in identifying lies of the enemy that might be popping up in your head on a daily basis that you are not even aware of. Even more so, it is a constant reminder of the TRUTH of God's Word that we as Christians have at our disposal.

Once you're ready please write down the following verses in the front of your journal and take a minute to meditate on these. You can take one more step by writing these verses on note cards that you can take everywhere with you. The idea is to start reading these verses all the time until you've committed them to memory. If you are not familiar with memorizing Scripture, then let me encourage you that this will become one of your strongest weapons when the enemy comes at you with lies.

The Word of God is our sword, our offensive weapon, so don't be afraid to strap on your sword; you will be needing it on our journey together.



[Start today by writing down these verses in your journal.](#)

Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

Micah 7:7-8 (AMP)

But as for me, I will look to the Lord and confident in Him I will keep watch;

I will wait with hope and expectancy for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me. Rejoice not against me, O my enemy! When I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light to me.

God has good plans for your life! He cares so much about you and He wants you to have a good future. He wants you to let go of the past and start something new with Him TODAY.

These verses meant so much to me, because I was sure that I had failed too many times for God to forgive me. I was sure that there was no more turning back for me and that I had used up all of my chances with God.

I remember shouting these verses all the time when I first started this journey. I would literally shout, "You keep quiet, Satan! I might be doing this again and I might feel so gross about myself right now, but this is not where I'm going to stay. The Lord is my light in this deep pit. I am going to be free!"

It might be time for you to take a stand against the enemy who has been planting lies of guilt, shame, hopelessness, fear of failure, and insecurity in your mind. Please believe me when I tell you that it can only be done through the power of the Holy Spirit and by the truth of God's Word. We will be memorizing a lot of Scripture together in the weeks to come in order for you to have a weapon against the lies of the enemy.



Please write down one more Scripture passage in your journal for this week. Copying these verses into your journal is a great way to really hear it and receive it into your heart.

Isaiah 61:1-4 (NIV)

The Year of the LORD's Favor

*The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me,
because the LORD has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim freedom for the captives
and release from darkness for the prisoners,
to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor
and the day of vengeance of our God,
to comfort all who mourn,
and provide for those who grieve in Zion—
to bestow on them a crown of beauty
instead of ashes,
the oil of joy
instead of mourning,
and a garment of praise
instead of a spirit of despair.
They will be called oaks of righteousness,
a planting of the LORD
for the display of his splendor.
They will rebuild the ancient ruins
and restore the places long devastated;
they will renew the ruined cities
that have been devastated for generations.*

These words are referring to the One, Jesus, who came to set the captives free, heal the broken hearted, and bring good news to the poor. Jesus Himself confirmed that these words have been fulfilled in and through Him (Luke 4: 18-21).

I have memorized this passage and it has become such a source of encouragement and power to me through the years, especially on days when my flesh is weak and the attacks are fierce. JESUS HAS COME TO SET US FREE!



PLEASE PRAY THIS PRAYER WITH ME

Thank you Jesus that you have good plans for my life! Thank you that you don't give up on me, but that you are my light even if I find myself in a very dark pit right now. Please hear my cries for redemption and healing, and pull me out Lord. I can not do this myself, I need you desperately!

Thank you that you came to set the captives free and to bring healing to the broken hearted. I stand on your Word today and declare that there is healing and freedom for me in Jesus.
Amen



Did these verses encourage you? In the space below, explain what these verses meant to you, and be prepared to share it with the ladies in your small group.

Day 5

Pin Down Your Dreams

I have a very important question for you: What does freedom mean to you, or in other words, what is it that you really want from God?

Here are some of the dreams I had:

- Clothes that actually fit. Forget about being super cute, I just wanted to feel comfortable in my own skin without having to keep buying bigger clothes
- Pictures of my family, with me actually in them
- Courage and ENERGY to pursue my dreams of writing and teaching
- Confidence in relationships (to trust some and let go of others)
- Playing, running, and swimming with my kids (without feeling ashamed about my body and physically unable to do some things)
- Getting rid of the condemning voices inside my head
- Loving God in a new way (not just me constantly begging Him to help me with the food)
- For crying out loud, just one Christmas without guilt about what I eat, and shame about how I look!

Many of these dreams of mine were purely self centered, and God gradually changed them to become more God-focused as I grew in relationship with Him. Others were truly things that the enemy had stolen through the years, and those things God restored to my life as I learned to surrender to Him (John 10:10)

I will encourage you today to make your own list and write down all those things Satan has stolen from you, as well as those long buried desires and dreams.

If you're like me, you'll probably start bawling at this point, and it's okay. I want you to know that you are surrounded in this moment by a cloud of witnesses who came through their own struggles, cheering you on to throw off those things that entangle you, and instead look to the purposes and longings God placed in your heart so that you can run the race He set before you.

Hebrews 12:1 (NIV)


Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

Maybe you don't know what to write just yet, or maybe you only have one or two things you can think of. Whatever the case might be, I know God will reveal it to you now that we've stirred the water a little. Like my list above, your desires might mainly revolve around finding freedom from your food struggle, and that's okay too, because God also desires for you to be free. However, the more we grow in our relationship with God, the more He reveals our true purpose and desires.

There's a reason why we are alive and why He put us on this planet: It is to glorify Him. We glorify God by growing in relationship with Him, and allowing Him to work through our gifts and talents to reach a broken and lost world around us with His love. However, if we are so focused on SELF (weight loss, appearance, food addiction, eating disorders, etc) those deep longings to glorify Him are suppressed and we miss out on the very reason we were created.

So I'm here to remind you, dearest one: **THERE IS SO MUCH MORE TO YOU THAN THIS EATING DISORDER.** Hidden behind years of struggle and obsessing about weight, food, and diets is the TRUE YOU that wants to glorify God and truly live. I dare you to find her again. We will talk more about all of this in Week 2, but I want to encourage you to search your heart, start to think back when you were just a little girl, think of what you loved to do or the dreams you had. When last have you done something truly amazing? Not amazing to others, not something you did to impress or please anyone, but something you thought was truly amazing because you loved it. When last did you laugh out loud? When last did you feel the hours pass by like minutes because you were doing something that you felt really passionate about?

I know she's in there somewhere, the daughter of the King, and she wants to be free of her shackles and her years of bondage! Like me, you might have had a deep longing for years to just experience a little taste of freedom. That kind of freedom, joy, and fulfillment is only found in a close relationship with the King of all Kings.

	<p>PLEASE PRAY THIS PRAYER WITH ME</p> <p>Lord, I know that you have put me on this earth to glorify You. Thank you for giving me talents and abilities to serve You and your people. Please remind me of those gifts and talents that I may have forgotten about. Please bring healing and freedom to my life so that I will be able to use those gifts for your glory.</p> <p>Thank you for always loving me Jesus, even in my lowest state. Amen</p>
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Take today and the rest of the week to pray and meditate on what it is that you really desire and dream about. Keep adding onto your list, and be prepared to share some of your dreams and desires with the ladies in your group.



Please start making your list in the space below (and also transfer it to your journal so you can look at it daily):
