WHAT IF JESUS WERE FAT?

What if There was a Spiritual Side to Dieting?

A Free, Browsable PDF “Phone” Book

Kirk W. McCrea

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To Jesus, my God, Who offers the only food for real life

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"Jesus said to them, 'My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work'"
(John 4:34)

"For My flesh is true food,
and My blood is true drink"
(John 6:55)

INTRODUCTION

Food and drink are emotional, mental, social, and, of course, physical necessities of life. Food, water, wine, eating, and drinking are mentioned over 220 times in the Gospels and Revelation, and Jesus routinely used them as illustrations for believing or not believing in Him and experiencing or not experiencing life in Him. Clearly, their spiritual inferences go way beyond the endlessly debated sacraments.

Just as there is an intimate need for food to sustain and flourish one's physical life, there is an intimate need for Jesus, with all His red-letter, self-denying, life-losing teachings, commandments, warnings, and judgments, to sustain and flourish one's spiritual life. Thus, analogies between physical diet and health with spiritual diet and health are abundant. The attributes of a physical diet are goals, self-denial, and persistence – spiritual-life themes of Jesus and His Apostles that saturate the New Testament.

This book is written as a personal testimony of a life of trying to diet with its successes and (seeming) failures, and a testimony of Jesus giving me life, and me seeking to have His life lived through me [with its successes and (seeming) failures]. A testimony (or witness) of what Jesus has done in one's life is only a molecule of John's *"what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship*

with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3). It is also prophetic, in the way every Christian is called to prophecy of Jesus: *"For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy"* (Revelation 19:10c). This testimony covers the 45 years since Jesus first snagged my heart with His Sheppard's crook at age 17. The chapters are facetiously named "Hindsight" to mirror a choppy Christian life of *"Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead"* (Philippians 3:13).

The sentence structure of the whole book is "interrogative" (What if…?) to promote reflection on the analogies between physical and spiritual food and their relationship to physical and spiritual health. God gives a measure of faith to each person (Romans 12:3) to love Him with all of their mind (Mark 12:30), for renewal of the mind (Romans 12:2), to mindfully seek Him (Hebrews 11:6), and to mindfully seek what is pleasing to Him (2 Corinthians 5:9, Ephesians 5:10). While a sinner's prayer and conversion start the process, it is the daily seeking of Him through His Son that distinguishes a saving faith from a faith of His warnings in "hearing-not acting" (Matthew 7:24-27), of *"Why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord'…"* (Luke 6:46), and of *"Lord, Lord, did we not…"* (Matthew 7:22a). What if, therefore, we always question if He meant every red-letter word He said, and what if that made up the other 99.9% of being a Christian, and what if that radically affected both our temporal and eternal lives?

Hindsight 1
The Bible on Obesity and Its Diseases

What if the Bible does not say a lot about the relationship between eating and gluttony, obesity, and their consequences? What if there is no direct listing of "gluttony" in the "seven deadly sins"? What if the Bible does, however, put food as a central focus on what life is all about, and that everyone must toil to eat from a God-cursed ground for all of life? What if the ground was also cursed to grow thorns and thistles? What if part of that curse is that we must obtain food by the sweat of our brows until we die? What if God's law outlines different land, air, and sea animals that should and should not be eaten? What if Daniel and his friends ate vegetables, but the reason the king's food was considered defiling was not given? What if it could have been spoiled, sacrificed to gods, or associated with fellowship and dependence on the enemy?

What if every stroke of God's law is still totally in effect until all of God's plans for the earth are completed? What if, however, God's grace is also in effect to make all foods clean for those who belong to Him and follow His Son? What if following His Son means believing what His Son says, including all His teachings, commandments, warnings, and judgments? What if He said, *"Woe to you who are well-fed now, for you shall be hungry"* (Luke

6:25a), and this was part of His Sermon on the Mount? What if it were part of His expectations on how we are to not love the world and live for the world, how that will impact our identity in this world, and how we are to interact with others?

What if eating, gluttony, obesity, and their diseases now fall under how we love the world, covet its sensuality, and identify with the world rather than with God? What if it falls under "diet of the world" versus a desire and pursuit to have a "diet of Jesus"? What if the self-denying, self-emptying Christian life was a loss of self and its passions promoting both physical and spiritual death but a replacement with the "rest for our souls," "joy made complete," and "peace that surpasses understanding" of *"For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him"* (John 6:55-56)? What if the original curse in Genesis to daily toil and sweat to obtain physical food was now changed to the opportunity to daily pursue the temporal and eternal blessings of *"Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal"* (John 6:27)?

Hindsight 2
What if Jesus were Fat?

What if Jesus were fat, obese, rotund, corpulent, chunky, and chubby? What if He were in need of a good diet plan? What if the modern church had created its Jesus version of the "fat Buddha or laughing Buddha"? What if, however, He was slender, skinny, half-starved, or emaciated from traversing Israel, preaching what His Father had told Him, and doing the works His Father had shown Him? What if He depended daily on His Heavenly Father for food and shelter? What if, before that, He had fasted for 40 days and nights to demonstrate to the world that *"MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD"* (Matthew 4:4b)?

What if Jesus is the Head of the church, and the church is His body on earth? What if His earthly body, however, has grown obese, physically and spiritually? What if He has the only way, truth, and life diet plan for His body to "lose weight and look great" – both physically and spiritually?

What if He gave a diet plan 2000 years ago, but the plan has since been redirected, diminished, or ignored? What if the plan included many promises in its pursuit and many warnings for its dismissal? What if, however, it's still there in red and white?

Hindsight 3
In a Mirror Dimly

What if there was a spiritual side to dieting? What if the spiritual side of life was the link not only to our eating behaviors but to our physical, mental, and emotional health? What if Jesus were the creator of all things? What if Jesus is the sustainer of all things? What if Jesus is the healer or non-healer, respectively, of what does or does not abide in Him? What if His Holy Spirit has striven alongside mankind since the beginning, and all people live and die within His spiritual/physical world? What if people generally did not comprehend or regard that in their day-to-day lives? What if that was a problem?

What if, similarly, we obese people did not even realize that we had a problem? What if, when looking in a mirror, one could mentally minimize, excuse, justify, or dismiss the signs? What if, although obese, one felt reasonably healthy throughout the day, and any physical hindrances were not attributed to excess weight but to other factors? What if short periods of weight loss (even just a week) made one feel healthier, but only justified eating more later?

What if this were a completely natural process of *self*-acceptance, *self*-esteem, and *self*-preservation? What if that's because most people did not want to deal with a negative, morbid, and mortal condition on a daily basis?

What if, rather, they had moments of reality (like looking in a mirror or when the doctor delivered bad news), but those moments would fade away over hours, days, or weeks? What if this mental redirecting contributed to the difficulty of starting and maintaining a diet?

What if Jesus, however, does know us and what we need better than we do? What if, *"the very hairs of your head are all numbered"* (Matthew 10:30), *"And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life?"* (Matthew 6:27)? What if the only way to constantly see our condition in our internal mirrors, while still having His peace that passes understanding, came through looking at Jesus and doing what He said? What if, *"For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was"* (James 1:23-24)?

What if it is in *doing*, rather than just *hearing* what He said is the way He reveals to us the difference between the way we think life is and the way He says true life is? What if the battle is not just about seeing ourselves, but about seeing His fullest way, truth, and life reflected *through* us? What if following Jesus' teachings, commandments, warnings, and judgments is the perfect law that will daily clean our internal mirrors so that *"But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does"* (James 1:25)?

Hindsight 4
In Red and White

What if everyone needed a personal coach for dieting and for all of life? What if Jesus' words, in red and white, referred specifically to His Gospels and The Book of Revelation? What if those red-letter words were the Life Coach's instruction of faith to us, and the remainder of the New Testament was subject to that? What if that's Jesus speaking, and we believed that Jesus was God and still *is* God? What if Jesus is the only True Life-Coach Who will make His Father's diet plan work for His children? What if all His peace, purpose, and power of life came from seeking to live out His red-and-white words?

What if, however, the "written word" had replaced the "Living Word" as the life coach? What if it were way easier to have a knowledge-based faith in the written word than a doing-based faith in the Living Word? What if it made for more comfortable sermons and more comfortable lives? What if all the written word *is* inspired by God and *about* Jesus and *for* Jesus, but the direct words of the Life Coach could easily be diminished, ignored, or even negated by other "inspired and important" Bible teachings such as Bible history and Old Testament figures, or by infant baptism, hair length, worship styles, predestination, pretrib/ posttrib rapture, or even by the propitiation of sins and God's forgiveness and grace?

What if the only way to get out of the milieu of the church's "important" Bible knowledge was the preeminence of Jesus' red-letter words, with all scripture being subject to those words?

What if no church doctrine arguments have ever been made about how to forgive others better, how to love their enemies more, how to be a better servant and even slave of caring for others, or how to seek the last place better? What if that's because anyone who is following Him does not let his "left hand know what his right hand is doing," does not try to tear up the tares to purify the wheat, does not boast about taking up their cross or about losing their lives to gain them?

What if the "black and white" words of the New Testament were inspired by God and about Jesus and for Jesus, but were different from the red and white words, even as Jesus said they would be? What if He said, *"I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now"* (John 16:12)? What if Peter echoed this about Paul, *"as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction"* (2 Peter 3:16)?

What if *"All Scripture is* [absolutely] *inspired by God and profitable…"* (2 Timothy 3:16a), but there is a preeminence order to our understanding in the way we are to "bear" that understanding? What if the entire Bible is about Jesus and for us to "know" and "fellowship" with Jesus? What if this comes, first, through obedience to Jesus' red-letter, self-denying, teachings, commandments, warnings, and judgments, and second, through understanding His Apostles' supplemental teachings (black and white)? What if trying to live only by faith in the Apostles' teachings was actually making us "untaught

and unstable" in our Christianity? What if we found a false comfort and security in knowing His Apostles' "hard to bear" and "hard to understand" teachings, without having the security of following all that Jesus said was true Christianity? What if, however, we looked again at the True-Life Coach's red-letter words to live out His instructions, examples, warnings, judgments each day?

Hindsight 5
Contrasting Diet Attitudes

What if a successful diet were all about contrasting attitudes? What if periods of living a successful or unsuccessful diet came from different mindset patterns of thoughts and behaviors? What if, in these dichotomous, contrasting attitudes, we were actually living an uncontrolled diet rather than a controlled diet? What if, for instance, one day our weight and goals for our weight were on our minds, while on another day we didn't think about them at all? What if, rather than visualizing our preplanned portions and times for eating, we focused more on what we could get away with eating while still thinking we were on a diet? What if another mindset focused on what we could get away with eating rather than on how we could eat even less than we planned? What if we found ourselves wrestling with *not* eating sensual foods, rather than with a disdain for them? What if we were picking at (grazing) food between meals, trying to hold out until mealtime, instead of plowing through that time while embracing the hunger and feeling healthy? What if there were times when we hated dieting, while other times we actually enjoyed it? What if we could clearly see that our other dieting mindsets were really uncontrolled dieting only during the times we were on the controlled diet? What if the uncontrolled diet made our diet perception cloudy?

What if this kind of struggle were common for many people trying to maintain a consistent diet?

What if we saw that we toggled between these diet mindsets and wondered what it was that slid us from the good to the bad, the controlled to the uncontrolled? What if we had to try to identify the toggle switches throughout life? What if recognizing the patterns was half the battle, and not recognizing them allowed the bad diet to add 25 lbs. and all the related health problems? What if it was worth the risk of overthinking this one area of life?

What if, with recognition, we could routinely fight to get back on track, shake off the webs of appetite from our mind and eyes, eat some plain vegetables for half a day, fast for half a day, and have a clean, controlled dinner? What if this "recovery" then allowed us to keep this good mindset going for a while? What if, after that, we could recognize the episodes of social eating, poor eating situations, lack of time for healthy eating, and small incidences of sensual eating that call out to our appetites to get back into our lives? What if we must train ourselves to see these appetite rallies to smack them back down?

What if a Christian's spiritual life is very much like the above two diets? What if we can easily become spiritually fat through our "flesh" that is always crying out for it to be taken care of in some way or another? What if it is very easy to drift away from, *"Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world"* (1 John 2:15-16)? What if this resulted in the loss of *"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful"* (John 14:27)? What if there

are toggle switches for the flesh that take our mind off Jesus and allow the appetites of our flesh to come alive?

What if, for instance, the flesh always wants to unwind through a plethora of worldly entertainments (eating included), such as TV, movies, gaming, and reading? What if we find, in terms of dietary goals, that it was full of sensuous foods and people who enjoyed eating, almost to the point of living for it? What if not being entertained by that greatly helped take food and eating off our minds? What if entertainment also seemed to promote self-righteous justice and violence, and not watching that helped us remain calm through life's many injustices and aggravations? What if sensuality, immorality, and adultery were common themes, and not watching them allowed our mindset to change from the flesh to the spirit? What if the appetites of the flesh, once stimulated, continue to echo for hours or days to nag us?

What if, alternatively, spiritual obesity was seen in the Scriptures as, *"And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful"* (Matthew 13:22)? What if "worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth" produced spiritual obesity due to worry about careers or having and maintaining a livelihood apart from what the Lord promises to provide us if we trust Him enough to work at building His kingdom? What if He repeatedly warned us about this throughout His Gospels because He loves us and wants us to have real life?

What if, in trying to make "the deceitfulness of wealth" applicable to our day, King Solomon did not possess the conveniences, comforts, entertainment, sensuality, and pleasures that most people now take for granted? What if, like the problem of being blessed with

too much food, the "worry of the world and deceitfulness of wealth" was a plague rather than a blessing for much of the church today?

What if, however, there is a spiritual diet plan amid worldly satiation? What if Jesus provides it in His life-giving red-letter teachings, warnings, and judgments? What if Paul summarized it in, *"Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed"* (1 Timothy 6:17-19)?

What if we must constantly be aware of and cut out the daily weeds and thorns of the world and of those within ourselves, trying to grow around us and choke Jesus out of our lives? What if, like the toggle switches in diet and attitude, we must identify them and seek to switch them to their Jesus-on positions? What if, only then, can we see with the clear spiritual eyes that are given to us, and see the kingdom of God that is alive and active in the world all around us? What if, only then, do we feel alive to pick up the spiritual tools and work on our Father's fields, ready for the harvest, or in His boats, catching more for His kingdom? What if, only then, do we find ourselves with two hands, one for lifting up to Him and one for giving Him to others – in both word and deed? What if, only then, *"And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty"* (Matthew 13:23)?

Hindsight 6
My Highest for His Utmost…Life

What if a low-calorie diet (LCD) were not just about losing weight but about changing one's attitude toward the amount and type of food eaten? What if, according to our flesh (our natural rather than spiritual self), an LCD looks like a ridiculously small amount of food to eat, but, according to the spirit, it means a thriving life with all its freedoms?

What if an LCD is something we must train ourselves to both accept and embrace from now until death? What if, in this training, we borrow Paul's approach of, *"I discipline my body and make it my slave"* (1 Corinthians 9:27a)? What if some Bible versions replace *discipline* with "strike" or "buffet"? What if this suggests an almost violent fight between the spirit and the flesh? What if enslavement *to* food and appetite means enslavement to its health consequences, but freedom *from* food means freedom to live as we were created to?

What if the struggle is real – between the spirit and the flesh? What if, in contrast (yet often taught), we don't have to worry about such things because we have Jesus' forgiveness and His righteousness? What if, however, Jesus' righteousness and forgiveness are for those who really want it and for those who are willing to "fight the good fight"? What if Abraham fought the fight of faith,

and it was considered righteousness? What if God blessed Jacob when He said, *"you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed"* (Genesis 32:28b)? What if every person of faith in the Bible strove, fought, struggled, battled, and endeavored in the path that God set before them? What if God is calling the *deeds* of His current church lukewarm?

What if the people who exemplified faith in the Bible were not perfect in their fight, and some were quite ridiculous or childlike? What if, however, it's the endurance of the fight, and those who persevere are assured victory, while those who don't are not assured victory? What if continued perseverance brings many blessings of peace, purpose, and power into our lives, while apathy or indifference will not?

What if taking care of our bodies through an LCD is one part of that fight of faith? What if our bodies are a temple of the living God? What if that fight will bless us and will make us a spiritual blessing to those whom the Lord brings to us?

Hindsight 7
Grace for Fat and Happy?

What if God did not want us to be hungry? What if God *"declared all foods clean"* (Mark 7:19b)? What if we asked God to bless all food that we eat? What if, in God, we were free to eat as we wished? What if we must eat to live? What if food and eating were a blessing from God, and we should therefore enjoy them rather than see His blessings as a burden?

What if the world's obsession with diet and health were motivated by secular vanity? What if the world follows its own "righteousness," but Christians are made free by grace? What if Jesus said, *"So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed"* (John 8:36)? What if, concerning our diet, we lived by faith, not by works, and we were not under the law but under grace?

What if Christians live by Jesus' righteousness, not our own? What if, when God sees us, He sees a skinny Jesus, not a chubby Christian? What if, by living in faith, the Lord will keep us and deliver us from the demise of our bodies? What if He will heal our obesity-related illnesses and bodily diseases? What if we can already testify that He has kept us alive, and we must only believe that He will continue to?

What if, however, the above dialogue was all the deception of God's enemy that focused on God's promises

but downplayed, ignored, dismissed, or even denounced His expectations? What if true "faith in Jesus" includes believing Him when He says, *"For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished"* (Matthew 5:18), *"All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything"* (1 Corinthians 6:12), *"Woe to you who are well-fed now, for you shall be hungry"* (Luke 6:25a), *"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption"* (Galatians 6:7-8a), *"and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness"* (Ephesians 4:19)?

What if the "sensuality" and "greediness" of food sows a body that is full of corruption – AKA obesity, diabetes, heart disease, fatty liver disease, high blood pressure, and stroke? What if we will still reap what we sow, and the body will reap the consequences of that corruption, even to the point of premature death? What if the abundant freedom and grace that the Lord gives His children were *"not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live"* (Romans 8:12b-13)?

What if God does not provide *grace* for being fat and happy? What if, rather, He is providing *patience* for us to repent, and to get to a life where we are consistently "putting to death the deeds of the body"? What if His patience was for repentance to live in His ways? What if Paul summarizes this in, *"Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not*

knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?" (Romans 2:4)? What if grace is not to be content in "fat and happy" but for the many mistakes we make as we live our lives *not* content with being fat, and certainly not happy about any failures in those efforts?

What if the verses *"for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption"* (Galatians 6:7-8a) also applied to all forms of immorality, alcohol, drugs, and the endless dissipation of entertainment? What if other deeds of the flesh, such as malice, gossip, indignation, non-forgiveness, anger, resentment, bitterness, close-handedness, and covetousness, were not actively being put to death, but allowed to go unchecked in our lives? What if grace isn't for the spiritual apathy of "fat and happy", but for "fighting," "discipline," "buffeting," and "striking a blow to" the flesh and its appetites?

What if there is the pursuit of His holiness, but He also provides a replacement passion for the sensuality of all the body's appetites and hunger? What if He gave us a secret "soul-food" that would be the most fulfilling thing we had ever wanted to hunger for in life? What if it were in pursuing all the things that He commanded us: showing forgiveness, mercy, compassion, seeking the last place, confessing Him, turning the other cheek, and ministering to "the least of these"? What if this "soul-food" is the same as He craved in, *"I have food to eat that you do not know about…My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work"* (John 4:32b, 34b)?

What if we must daily repent to follow the true Life-Coach in, *"but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life"* (Galatians 6:8), *"Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food, but God will do away with both of them. Yet the body is not for*

immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body" (1 Corinthians 6:13), *"For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh"* (2 Corinthians 4:11), *"and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf"* (2 Corinthians 5:15)?

Hindsight 8
Kenosis or Kinesis?

What if *kenosis* is defined as "self-emptying"? What if Jesus taught His followers that kenosis was part of following Him, and that our self-emptying would result in His filling, flowing, and fulfilling? What if Jesus taught that kenosis was part of a true life in Him? What if one (of many) avenues of kenosis were learning to live on a low-calorie diet (LCD) in a food- and appetite-satiated world?

What if, in contrast, *kinesis* is defined as "*a movement* [of a cell or organism] *that lacks directional orientation and depends upon the intensity of* [external] *stimulation*[1] *"*? What if most eating that resulted in weight-gain "lacked directional orientation," and was a response to "the intensity of [external] stimulation"? What if the "stimulation" was the sight, smell, or sound (preparation) of food that provoked the appetite and increased non-directional eating? What if *sight* stimulus came from any media? What if it came from "hanging out" in the kitchen? What if, even without looking at food, the *smell* of food still crept into the nose? What if it came from someone else cooking or from a passing restaurant? What if the *sounds* of food sizzling, frying, or barbecuing hit the ears

[1]Miriam-Webster Dictionary, s.v. "kinesis (n.)," accessed December 30, 2024, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/kinesis.

and stimulated the stomach, so we end up in the kitchen, facilitating the *sight* and *smell* of food? What if even describing these external "intense stimuli" makes us "non-directionally" hungry, and we should make ourselves move on rather than directionally toward the fridge?

What if kenosis and kinesis were direct opposites and mutually exclusive? What if dieting through "self-emptying" were just as spiritual as any other self-emptying of the flesh and its immorality, covetousness, malice, indignation, judgment, dissipation, and self-love? What if a physical "self-emptying" must, however, be accompanied by a "Spirit-filling"? What if this is done through the Holy Spirit in each Christian? What if a persevering LCD, because it is a form of kenosis, contributed to daily enhancing our spiritual insight, communication, and power from the Holy Spirit? What if, in contrast, uncontrolled *kinesis* to food did the opposite? What if the Spirit can be "grieved" or "quenched" by sin?

What if a life of kenosis nurtured and strengthened us for more kenosis, while chronic kinesis perpetuated itself for more kinesis? What if an LCD renewed our mind and body for more LCD, while nondirected eating pushed us in the opposite way?

What if a definition of habituation is a *"decrease in responsiveness upon repeated exposure to a stimulus*[2]*"*? What if, therefore, the spiritual side of kenosis (self-emptying) frees us from the biological relevance of kinesis eating (self-filling)?

[2]Miriam-Webster Dictionary, s.v. "habituation (n.)," accessed December 30, 2024, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/habituation.

What if Jesus says, *"If you continue in My word* [His teachings, commandments, warnings, and judgments]*, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free"* (John 8:31b-32)? What if being made free means being set free from slavery to sin? What if this applied to kinesis eating? What if He continued, *"everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin"* and *"so if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed"* (John 8:34, 36)?

What if Jesus frees us from a life of *kinesis* to recreate us as children of His Heavenly Father by forgiving our sins through His blood and by filling us with His Holy Spirit, Who teaches us to follow all His *kenosis* instructions for real life?

Hindsight 9
Disciples of Diet

What if our eating behaviors and choices were influenced by who we listened to? What if it were normal to get a lot of health advice from the medical system, media, family, friends, or co-workers? What if everyone seemed to have an opinion? What if we (consciously or unconsciously) selected pieces of this advice in the back of our minds, and it became a health coach for how to eat better and become healthy?

What if, rather than listening to anyone or everyone, we narrowed the selection of advice to that from a mainly Christian perspective? What if, even more selectively, we trained ourselves to follow only the advice of Jesus, the only true health and life Coach? What if His specific red-letter, self-denying teachings, commandments, warnings, and judgments could be translated directly into strategies for our eating and health habits? What if His voice would, over days, months, and years, renew our minds to food, health, and much, much more? What if we came to discover a new, real life in what we used to consider as our *saved* life?

What if, however, everyone also has an opinion (including this book) of what it means to hear and follow Jesus? What if there are over 40,000 Protestant denominations to facilitate those opinions? What if the

opinion of this book (just one person's personal testimony) was that taking the red-letter teachings, commandments, warnings, and judgments of Jesus literally would change one's life beyond the accepted Christian standards of today into the expected heavenly standards taught throughout the New Testament? What if taking Jesus' words literally, though, meant believing His over-the-top standards of what it means to follow Him, together with His warnings, consequences, and judgments of not taking them to heart? What if this approach to "believing Him" (e.g., believing everything He said) could be very difficult, but was the spiritual "magic" that brought daily revival and His peace, purpose, and power?

What if believing and acting upon His warnings and judgments were vital to keep us vital and on His narrow path? What if they were the key to obtaining His promises of an abundant life? What if they keep us moving forward toward Him and His expectations, while protecting our flank and rear from His enemy? What if all His instructions, commandments, blessings, promises, peace, joy, warnings, consequences, and judgments all work together only when believed together? What if those red-letter-Jesus words make "biblical knowledge and understanding" nothing compared to knowledge and understanding of true life, which is Jesus, Who is the Life? What if *knowledge* is not life, but *living* out His words is life? What if real knowledge only comes through doing, and personal understanding through experience? What if Jesus warned of having a biblical knowledge and understanding without acting on His red-letter words? What if He said, *"Therefore everyone who hears these words* of Mine *and acts on them, may be compared to…"* and *"Everyone who hears these words* of Mine *and does not act on them, will be like…"* (Matthew 7:24a, 26a)?

What if Jesus' commandment to *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations"* (Matthew 28:19a) referred to us being His disciples rather than disciples of a church, denominations, ministries, or each other? What if He specified this in *"teaching them to observe all that I commanded you"* (Matthew 28:20a)? What if, for instance, this book is not to "disciple" anyone in Jesus' ways but to point to Jesus for each of us to become more of His literal disciple? What if (of course) this book won't be what we remember and follow in the worst moments of life, in the worst temptations, in the decisions of believing or denying Jesus, or in the moments of basking in His peace, purpose, and power? What if only Jesus will be there at those times, and His red-letter words (whether harsh or comforting) will make all the difference?

What if this could all relate back to eating less, obtaining healthy eating habits, and losing weight? What if Jesus routinely gave reciprocal promises and warnings like *"Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied"* and *"Woe to you who are well-fed now, for you shall be hungry"* (Luke 6:21a, 25b)? What if He gave other conditional promises and warnings that would affect our hearts, souls, minds, and bodies for healing or detriment? What if an example was *"For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions"* (Matthew 6:14-15)? What if the unforgiveness of others produced bitterness that contributed to comfort eating? What if forgiveness took away the bitterness and helped our diets?

What if further healing and peace, purpose, and power came through other commandments and standards that Jesus gave, such as showing mercy, humbling ourselves, taking the last place, bearing others' burdens,

and giving with an open hand? What if it were all worth trying each day, regardless of the difficulties or setbacks? What if confession and forgiveness was part of each day with, *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:9)? What if, however, the reciprocal warnings and consequences were as literally true in the two flanking verses: *"If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us"* and *"If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us"* (1 John 1:8, 10)?

Hindsight 10
“En Garde”

What if one could do very well in one’s calorie-restricted diet for weeks and see weight loss and its benefits? What if one had a bad day that led to overeating? What if this made one think that the calorie goals for the day were ruined, and that one might as well keep eating? What if one day’s mistake then made the next day harder or just as bad? What if the calories drifted up for a week, then for weeks after that, until the diet was essentially over? What if it were only panic from a doctor’s visit that got you back on track? What if this cycle were repeated for years?

What if life is full of stumbling blocks that lead to that first “bad day”? What if stress, insult, depression, or loneliness increased a desire for comfort food? What if there was a constant bombardment of food and eating on TV, social media, or friends and family? What if these are just a few things that drove us to eat poorly?

What if we can’t (and weren’t meant to) live in a bubble (e.g., like some dieting monastery) that denied access to all sensory inputs? What if, however, we can eliminate some inputs and be mentally prepared to take on others? What if, instead of this long-term vicious cycle of fear-diet-deviation-fear, we prepared ourselves daily to be “on guard” and expected unexpected food situations to

attack us at our weakest moments? What if we succeeded in guarding ourselves and realized that failures were not the end of the world, and that we could simply put ourselves back "on guard" to salvage the day or regain focus for the next?

What if, in putting ourselves back on guard, we also had numerous weapons that could fight and kill a stimulated appetite? What if the gentle fear of daily weighing, measuring blood pressure, and checking blood sugar helped snap us back into reality? What if plain, cold vegetables were a weapon since their contrast with sensual food made them unappealing? What if God actually designed them to be food that was unsensual for better health and to act as a bucket of water on an enflamed appetite? What if vegetables not only put something in the stomach to fool it, but also cleared the mind of temptations and sensuality, and got us back on track? What if this also means that the sensual appetites which seem so loud and strong are really only short-term superficial feelings that can be dominated by refocusing on healthier things?

What if God, in both the Old and New Testaments, repeatedly warns us to be "on guard" against sin and its preceding appetites? What if He warned Cain, the first-born of people (also the first murderer) with, *"If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it"* (Genesis 4:7)? What if Jesus continued to warn us with, *"Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions"* (Luke 12:15b) and *"Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap"* (Luke 21:34)? What if these

warnings to be “en garde” shortened months and years of living in sin to daily battles that included His forgiveness and power to keep going? What if we already daily picked ourselves up to be en garde for our own little kingdoms, but we must start doing that for Jesus and His kingdom?

Hindsight 11
That Starvin' Feeling

What if a strict, low-calorie diet (LCD) seemed like fasting compared to a calorie restriction (just eating less)? What if that's because the amount of daily food intake was lower than the body's daily caloric requirement? What if, however, this was the main way the body's fat can be mobilized and used as energy?

What if the body only needed 2000 calories or fewer per day? What if the loss of one pound of body fat was equivalent to the deprivation of 3500 food calories? What if achieving a healthy weight is the goal, but it can take a long time to get there? What if it were better to have a health goal that took less time and still produced long-term health benefits? What if that goal was just one day at a time in the pursuit of daily calorie restriction? What if that affected blood pressure, blood sugar, and an overall feeling of health?

What if, in the long-term weight loss goal, a *very-low-calorie* diet (VLCD) is < 900 calories/day? What if this is ok for a day or two, but extending it for consecutive days could put the body into a starvation-defense mode that may lead to other health problems?

What if an LCD (1200-1500 calories) rather than VLCD was sufficient to produce calorie deprivation and body-fat mobilization? What if consecutive days of an

LCD can deliver fast health benefits, such as reduced excess body fluid (water retention), lower blood pressure, less heartburn, smoother digestion, more energy during the day, and better sleep at night? What if each person needed to find a level of calorie restriction that was right for them? What if everyone needs to reevaluate that for the rest of their lives, regardless of the coveted weight loss?

What if, as mentioned above, an LCD often felt more like fasting than just eating less? What if eating this many calories made one feel almost panicked to find and eat food, leading to overeating? What if a panicked feeling was normal because, after all, the body is using its fat reserves, but it would strongly prefer ingested calories? What if, however, those feelings could be controlled, managed, and diminished?

What if appetite and hunger varied in their intensity during the 5-6 hours between meals? What if the between-meal appetite and hunger sensations seemed to be different in the morning, afternoon, or evening? What if one observed that they were not always hungry, even though they had not eaten or had not eaten much? What if one observed that the sensations of hunger would dissipate or change over a relatively short time? What if, after a week on an LCD, one noticed that they could tell what time it was by the type of appetite and hunger they felt?

What if periods of appetite and hunger could therefore become predictable and therefore more mentally manageable? What if those “starvin feelings” of pseudo-fasting that occurred during an LCD ceased to cause the panic they did at first, but instead became expected for short durations throughout the day?

What if, in those momentary moments of increased appetite and hunger, we mentally trained ourselves to associate them with our bodies being “clean” – clean of

circulating fats, clean of excess sugar, and clean of the body's fight to maintain water and blood pressure levels to feed all the excess digestive processing?

What if, as Christians, we are commanded to control all the body's appetites and hungers? What if, however, an unsatisfied, angry appetite was so strong that it made our heads swoon and our throats close? What if appetites, however, were only short-term, shallow feelings that in just moments could dissipate and be replaced by healthy, clean, and holy thoughts? What if it seemed like Jekyll-Hyde mindsets: the Hyde, clouded and dirty with temptations, and the Jekyll, clear, clean, and peaceful? What if one could hardly understand the other?

What if, however, we had authority over it, and a decision of our will could be made to shake off the fog, swallow the hunger, and make our bodies flee from the settings of temptation? What if pursuing the holiness of Jesus (setting ourselves apart from the appetites and lusts of the world) was simply a matter of resistance by the mind and fleeing the scene by the feet? What if different strategies in the New Testament are given to us? What if we were to flee immorality (1 Corinthians 6:18), flee idolatry (1 Corinthians 10:14), and flee from covetousness and the love of money (1 Timothy 6:11)? What if we are to *"Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you"* (James 4:7)? What if are also called to love God with all our mind (Matthew 22:37) *"so that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes"* (2 Corinthians 2:11)? What if temptations and trials were always around the corner, and the struggle was always real? What if the only real defeat was from ending the struggle, giving up the battle, or letting defeat, indifference, or apathy have their way?

What if that is what following Jesus is, and God has provided everything we need to do it: Salvation, forgiveness of sins, His Holy Spirit within us, and His Son's teachings, commandments, warnings, and judgments? What if, even though it seems like "that starvin' feeling" to our flesh, His ways bring His short- and long-term blessings to our spirit, souls, and bodies?

Hindsight 12
Lawful but Not Profitable

What if there is a "law for pizza," but we must look at God's law and grace to see it? What if all of God's *laws* are still very much in place for all people and *grace* works with them rather than apart from them? What if Jesus said, *"For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven"* (Matthew 5:18-19)? What if the law was the foundation of God's righteousness, but being mastered by sin was the foundation of a person's heart? What if Jesus continued with comparisons between God's law and people's hearts regarding anger, lust, divorce, conceit, or responding to the worst neighbor imaginable? What if Jesus wasn't reinterpreting the law but teaching the need to "master the sin" in one's heart? What if His law, our hearts, and His grace were important to understand, not only for the sensuality and gluttony of food, but for our lives?

What if Paul, as Jesus' supplemental voice for teaching about His law and grace, said, *"All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things*

are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything" (1 Corinthians 6:12)? What if we applied that to our diets as "all foods are lawful for me, but pizza and donuts are not profitable"? What if, "I can eat them if I want, but I know that they will try to master my heart to eat more of them, and then other foods like them"? What if a limited intake of pizza and donuts is just fine? What if, however, that small luxury stimulated my appetite so that I wanted to eat too much of them now or later in the day? What if their sensory memory stimulated my appetite the next day so that I wanted to eat other sensuous foods? What if that trend slowly progressed until the sensuous foods replaced my healthy foods and my low-calorie diet (LCD)? What if, a week later, my diet was essentially gone? What if, essentially, the grace to eat a small amount of pizza and donuts was now replaced with my appetite of greed, covetousness, and sensuality? What if grace were not for binge eating, and God's law to reap what we sow were now in effect, with the resulting consequences? What if, however, grace is available to repent, start over, and keep fighting the good fight? What if that is the passion and goal of our hearts, but contrasts with the licentiousness of the heart and mind, which hopes to get away with binge eating by grace? What if we know that our flesh may still carry the penalties of our sin, but we seek God's mercy and humble ourselves to His ways in our lives? What *"If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:8-9)?

Hindsight 13
"I Will Not be Mastered by Anything"

What if Paul was not using "lawful but not profitable" to describe the repercussions of eating pizza, but of practicing immorality? What if he was referring to prostitution and that the body would "become one flesh" with the prostitute, but the Christian's body is for the Lord when it is joined with Him through the spirit? What if, with current technology, prostitution includes those using one's body on social media to make money, and adultery still includes *"but I* [Jesus] *say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart"* (Matthew 5:28)?

What if *"not be mastered by anything"* meant not to let the heart be mastered by temptation, sensuality, and sin? What if perseverance to fight the good fight (by God's grace) and repent of stumbling (cleansing by Jesus' blood) until the end was holiness in the Christian life? What if, however, a lot of licentious church doctrines denounced the struggle and took Jesus' cleansing blood for granted? What if the precepts "don't try so hard," "it's not about our holiness, but His," "we are His finished work," and many others created a false grace (and god) that made Christians think they are good to go until the rapture, that "everyone gets a crown," and "that God loves me just the way I am"? What if Jesus is warning the church, *"Because you say, 'I*

am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,' and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked" (Revelation 3:17) and *"So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth"* (Revelation 3:16)?

What if we *"will not be mastered by anything,"* whether immorality or a life of pizza, required that we include God's discipline in our flesh to get back on His path? What if Paul said of an immoral Corinthian believer, *"I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus"* (1 Corinthians 5:5)? What if Jesus was likewise severe in, *"If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell"* (Matthew 5:28-30)?

What if the salvation of our spirit, soul, and body for eternity were God's desire and our goal, but He desired that our spirit be saved at any cost to our body if we continued in unrepentant or licentious sin? What if we're not saved for hyper-grace, but to glorify God by not being *"mastered by anything"* through the Holy Spirit, Jesus' blood, Jesus' teachings, commandments, warnings, and judgments, and our willingness to live them?

Hindsight 14
“I Hate My Life”

What if a long-term (really life-term), low-calorie diet had to be done in a culture saturated with food, while always watching others enjoy it? What if it meant constantly denying oneself of delicious treats that were everywhere? What if others were constantly offering them to you? What if we had to avoid certain social situations to minimize temptation and stumbling? What if the fight for one’s diet always seemed like going against the grain, an uphill battle, or canoeing upstream where the current whips you around with the slightest deviation?

What if, over the weeks, this battle became very wearisome and one started to think, “I hate my life”? What if, however, this had to be tolerated since, in comparison, the benefits of living on a diet far outweigh the slow (or quick) death of not living one? What if the benefits were more energy, better sleep, more activity, more purpose, more self-esteem, less illness, less meds, fewer doctors’ visits, and an increased probability of a longer life?

What if thoughts of “I hate my life” were important steppingstones to thoughts of “I love my life this way, and I’m not going back”? What if periods of fatigue in the fight against addictive foods, appetite, and hunger made one remember and re-evaluate the reasons for it all?

What if Jesus said something similar about the Christian life? What if He said, *"He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal"* (John 12:25) and, *"He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it"* (Matthew 10:39)? What if He said this because the Christian life is like going against the grain, an uphill battle, and like paddling after Him against the world's current that always threatens to turn us away? What if we are not meant to go the easy route? What if following Him can look weary, but it is the only place that we will find rest for our souls, a peace that surpasses comprehension, and a joy made complete?

What if, like a life-term diet, a periodic weariness of living for Jesus is normal, but we are repeatedly encouraged to keep going? What if Paul says, *"Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary"* (Galatians 6:9), *"But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good"* (2 Thessalonians 3:13), and *"For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart"* (Hebrews 12:3)?

What if we must "sell out" completely for both our diets *and* Jesus? What if, *"The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid again; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field"* (Matthew 13:44)?

Hindsight 15
A Holy and Righteous Life

What if there is reason to believe that what happens to the inside of our bodies will be expressed outwardly? What if a poor diet is expressed outwardly by social withdrawal, illness, and lots of doctors' visits, while a good diet is often rewarded with more activity and more involvement with the world around us?

What if diet and more activity (even exercise) always go hand in hand? What if, in terms of diet, "you are what you eat" and, in terms of exercise, "you reap what you sow"? What if both work together to reduce the risk of heart disease, fatty liver disease, high blood pressure, and diabetes? What if both are necessary for complete health? What if a diet will daily maintain the body's purity, while exercise will help remove excess and restore function? What if the diet makes one feel better, while exercise lets one do more? What if diet promotes a "peace of health" while exercise promotes a "purpose of health"?

What if diet and exercise were analogous to two factors for spiritual health? What if these factors were holiness and righteousness, and holiness was defined as God's *character* in us, and righteousness was defined as His *conduct* through us to the world? What if, in other words, God's holiness was defined as His *being* and His righteousness defined as His *doing*? What if the two traits

worked together and both are required for the fullness of His Spirit living through us?

What if God's two greatest commandments reflect these factors by first loving God with everything we have (setting apart every bit of us for Him), and then by loving our neighbor as ourselves (expressing His love to the world)? What if these two factors are in the verse, *"Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress* [righteousness]*, and to keep oneself unstained by the world* [holiness]*"* (James 1:27)?

What if an excellent passage on holiness was *"Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever"* (1 John 2:15-17)? What if an excellent verse on righteousness was *"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them"* (Ephesians 2:10)?

What if spiritual health requires a diet of holiness (purity from the world) and the exercise of righteousness (His love expressed to the world)? What if they go hand in hand in, *"Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work"* (2 Timothy 2:21) and *"Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds"* (Titus 2:13b-14)? What if these things are not *for* salvation, but will be the evidence *of* salvation? What if,

once saved, we are exhorted to daily *"put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth"* (Ephesians 4:24)?

What if these things require our active participation – with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength? What if we can only learn them by practicing them? What if there is only One Who can teach us, and we are to yoke ourselves to Him daily? What if He said, *"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me"* (Matthew 11:29)? What if His teachings, commandments, warnings, and judgments are all part of learning how to have His holiness and righteousness live through us? What if, compared to our flesh and the world, they look horrendously difficult? What if, however, it is the place we find the most security, the most peace of purity, and the most purpose for our existence? What if, from that yoke, we daily experienced, rather than just acknowledged, *"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light"* (Matthew 11:28-30)?

Hindsight 16
Physical Shock and Awe

What if, compared to how we usually see ourselves, the real state of our physical health was much more serious than we were willing to continuously acknowledge? What if we wore mental blinders to shield us from the daily reality?

What if, in addition, we really didn't *feel* as obese as our bodies were? What if we didn't see ourselves as "that fat" when looking in the mirror (but pictures were always a shock)? What if we could block out the real status of our bodies by sucking it in, by reasoning that it was mostly muscle, by looking in the mirror at a better angle, by using age as an excuse, by thinking that we're not as bad as others, by thinking that we ate ok yesterday, by reminding ourselves that we *have* made some changes, or by dismissing it all with, "I have to eat to live"?

What if, however, it was worthwhile to lift off the mental blinders and excuses in order to get started or to keep the low-calorie diet (LCD) on track? What if we meditated on the fact that obesity was a silent killer working in our microvasculature? What if it were through the slow corrosion of blood vessels by fat/cholesterol accumulation, constant blood pressure stress, and sugar-induced damage? What if we normally don't think about a waxy fat buildup in the arteries that feed oxygen to our

heart? What if those build-ups will someday catch the tiniest blood clot to plug the artery and suffocate the heart tissues that depend on it? What if we never thought much about the slow erosion of blood vessels in the eyes and kidneys from years of exposure to high blood sugar? What if our minds didn't weigh in as heavily as the fat in our liver, causing once-healthy tissues to constantly inflame and scar in hopeless efforts to fight the fat?

What if you never dieted before or had made some adjustments but didn't see any effect? What if you kept making more adjustments but still didn't see any effect? What if the actual effort needed would be shocking compared to how one was dieting? What if the diet seemed like food had to become like doses of medicine taken throughout the day, and all the enjoyment of eating seemed to be almost gone, comparatively? What if the shock, however, eventually became more manageable, and there was still enjoyment of food, but at a much different level?

What if the initial shocks of dieting and progressive shocks of refining the diet were worth it? What if the shock of reality would turn into "awe" of something happening? What if, aside from improving the life-or-death struggle of our microvasculature, our LCD opened our eyes to the awe-inspiring effects of better mental health, better sleep, more energy, and a generally "healthy" feeling? What if our activity level increased as our weight decreased? What if we could then look forward to the progress of our diet, anticipating even more weight loss and health? What if we could start dreaming of having a healthy body and then slowly experience that dream come true? What if it produced a *desire* to never return to the old ways of eating food (but not with the arrogance of thinking that we never could)?

What if, after living at this level of shocking diet for weeks or months, it also became a shock to go to the grocery store and see the absolute glut and sensuality of food and its promotion to the world? What if we began to realize how much media is devoted to pushing calories and an unhealthy diet on the public? What if we begin to see the advertising everywhere we look, and it reminds us of drug pushers, only the drug is food and its sensuality? What if physical, mental, and emotional addiction to food were a type of spiritual slavery to sensuality? What if we then saw both ourselves and all obese people as spiritually enslaved rather than just lacking self-control?

What if we decide to never quit quitting (regardless of our weight)? What if the pursuit of an LCD and healthy foods could lengthen our days and increase our happiness and the happiness of those close to us, according to what the Lord has for us? What if it could become a motivation for others not to quit quitting? What if we could become a slave to healthy eating (a slave of righteousness – lacking covetousness, greed, and sensuality)? What if, instead of feeling daily satiated, we now feel daily free, clean, strong, and active? What if the former life must always remain a *shock*, and the new life, an *awe*?

Hindsight 17
Spiritual Shock and Awe

What if, like our physical health, the real state of our spiritual health came as a shock compared to how we usually see it? What if, for example, we lacked a daily understanding of the potential danger the spiritual world poses to our lives? What if it was a shock to think about Satan being the master and slave owner over *all* the kingdoms of the world and its people (Luke 4:5-6, 1 John 5:19), and a shock to really see that *"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places"* (Ephesians 6:12)?

What if we believed Jesus literally, and it was a shock to hear Him say who will and who won't have eternal life? What if, for example, He told His disciples that *"Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire"* (Matthew 7:19), *"For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions"* (Matthew 6:14-15), and *"Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who can destroy both soul and body in hell"* (Matthew 10:28)?

What if belief in benign, soothing church Statements of Faith had to be replaced with belief in all the things Jesus said were part of a saving faith and eternal life? What if the blood of God's perfect, precious Son was a gift of forgiveness and salvation for a purpose: to hear, repent, and obey all the teachings, commandments, warnings, and consequences that He told His Son to say during His ministry on earth? What if God's expectations for being saved included, for example, *"blessed are the merciful for they shall receive mercy"* (Matthew 5:7), *"but whoever denies Me* [Jesus] *before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven"* (Matthew 10:33), and *"Because you have kept the word of My perseverance…"* (Revelation 3:10a)? What if the Gospels and New Testament are crammed with such teachings but it's just easier to say, "we believe the Bible and in the propitiation of sins"?

What if it were a shock to discover how much of our physical, mental, and emotional lives were tied to our spiritual life? What if the prosperity of following Jesus wasn't monetary, but eternal gold, silver, and precious stone, rest for our souls, His joy made complete in us together with a purpose and hope of suffering and personal revelation and fellowship with Jesus in His sufferings? What if the "awe" of "a personal relationship" with Jesus came through the difficult ways He said rather than the easy ways the modern church says?

Hindsight 18
Food Associations

What if some countries had laws that required pictures of diseased organs to be placed on cigarette packages to remind smokers of what they are doing to their bodies, and to understand the connection between smoking and death? What if, for some people, those laws contributed to better health and a longer life?

What if a similar strategy were also used for food packaging in nations with obese populations? What if that's never going to happen, but what if we could still use the principle mentally during times of food temptation? What if, in those moments, we equated the perceived fat and cholesterol in a food with the image of a waxy, cholesterol/fat coating our coronary arteries? What if, alternatively, we considered the food's fat content to be identical with the fat deposits of fatty liver disease, and thought about how the body's action to clear it resulted in liver scarring? What if we envisioned the sugar or carbohydrate content of a desired food contributing directly to the processes of blindness and kidney failure?

What if visualizing such associations between food, diseased organs, and their impact on our quality and quantity of life could be a useful mental exercise when we find ourselves surrounded by unhealthy food and dealing with appetite, hunger, or temptations? What if the method,

however, relies on inducing mental fear, but both the world and church denounce almost any motive based in fear? What if, however, we recognize that God gave people a response of fear for their protection and, although it's exploited, God uses it for our good? What if we understand that fear is not permanent but temporary, allowing us to step away from temptations that will harm us and onto stable attitudes about food and a desire for health?

What if moments of fear were more preferable than the never-ending fear associated with 1) hearing bad news at the doctor's office, 2) undergoing endless medical procedures to monitor our body's damage, or 3) the disappointment of how our lives are impacted by diseased bodies? What if striving for a good low-calorie diet (LCD) with its intermittent "food-association" fears did wonders to lessen or remove the long-term fears? What if a willingness to meditate briefly on fear is a small price to pay to keep us on track, or to get us back on track?

What if this whole process were remarkably similar to the Christian life Jesus calls us to? What if we found out from Jesus, our only spiritual doctor, that to thrive and grow spiritually, we also needed to pursue His commandments, warnings, and promises as if they were daily food and drink for our spirit, soul, and body? What if a life in Him was also responding to His warnings about sin getting hold of us (much like bad food and appetite) and that it will stagnate our life and result in a type of living death that can produce actual death? What if He requires us to follow Him (like a diet) to have a life that will last for eternity? What if, like individual diets, each person does so with the faith and resources provided? What if the world still tempted us and sin always sought to make itself a way of life in us? What if we could,

however, remember past and future consequences of sin, and believe the warnings and judgments the Lord spoke?

What if He gave us all kinds of warnings with impending judgments, but few now consider them relevant? What if He said things like *"I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!"* (Luke 12:4-5) and *"I gave her time to repent, and she does not want to repent of her immorality. Behold, I will throw her on a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds. And I will kill her children with pestilence, and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds"* (Revelation 2:21-23)?

What if this fear-factor technique was meant to be momentary, to keep us on His straight and narrow path, away from the disaster that unrepentant sin can bring? What if there is forgiveness and grace for all faults, but in the context of continuing to strive for His righteousness and His holiness in our lives?

What if these warnings (like the covers of cigarette packages) were visuals to snap us out of the fog of sensuality and covetousness that blankets the world? What if being under His judgments was the most life-giving and fear-reducing thing we could do? What if we could then daily strive, fight, and battle to clothe ourselves with His holiness, away from the world, while practicing His righteous acts, toward it?

Hindsight 19
Diet Witness

What if our healthy, low-calorie diet (LCD) not only helped us but also served as a testimony to others suffering from obesity? What if, even though obese, our efforts at eating just a little of the healthiest foods at restaurants or social gatherings testified to others of the importance of dieting and our heart's desire for health? What if telling others that it has made us feel much better or increased our abilities or activities is also a testimony? What if we could say that the diet has led to greater mental peace and contentment, which, in turn, has been a blessing (by reducing stress) for loved ones and friends?

What if this testimony resulted in other obese people experiencing life-changing eating habits and weight loss? What if they, in turn, became witnesses to others for a healthy LCD? What if one person's diet testimony had the potential to affect many people?

What if diet witnessing, however, had to be done with love, compassion, and empathy for *others* rather than in pride and accomplishment for *ourselves*? What if we must boast in God's mercy to get us on the right path rather than our victories in being on it? What if "witness" also meant confessing our chronic obesity, medical problems, and difficulty in changing anything?

What if we included witnessing of Jesus' contribution to our LCD? What if we acknowledge that He opened our eyes to the dangers of obesity and its consequences for our family and us? What if we thanked Him publicly for extending our lives so we could make the changes? What if we testify that self-control is a gift of His Holy Spirit, which we must still decide to use and work at? What if we teach that He determines our life span, and disciplines us to establish His character and conduct in us? What if we boast that, if there is anything good in us, it is from His power in the midst of our grumbling and complaining and unwillingness?

What if a witness of diet and health is analogous to the witness of His life in us? What if witnessing of Him is much more than evangelism (an explanation of the "propitiation of sins") and includes forgiveness of others' sins against us, mercy toward others, and providing for the needs of others? What if they are all done in Jesus' name? What if we simply confess Him by saying, "We know Him, and He loves us"? What if He mandated that witness in, *"Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven"* (Matthew 10:32-33)?

What if we don't have to worry about other people's spiritual conditions, responses, or their arguments because it is *our* witness of Him in our lives and it is *"What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands… and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you…what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ"* (1 John 1:1-3)?

What if we are always His witnesses in both His word and His deeds (even dieting) *"so that our joy may be made complete"* (1 John 1:4)?

What if this book were just one person's witness of Jesus based on what they have seen and experienced of Jesus in their life? What if it seemed to all be experienced in grumbling, complaining, and hypocrisy, but, nonetheless, found to be the only real life and real hope one can have? What if the only witness that matters is to take Jesus' teachings, commandments, warnings, and judgments literally and use them every minute of every day? What if, compared to that, the rest of this book is blather, and one should spend their time reading and applying Jesus' red-letter words, instead?

Hindsight 20
Persecution of the Diet Witness

What if, in our diet witness on the benefits of a healthy low-calorie diet (LCD), there was indifference, mockery, and even bullying? What if our witness was more often met with negativity than approval? What if, for instance, it only compelled people to explain *their* "right way of dieting," which foods worked and which didn't, or the one change you're missing that will give you eternal youth? What if others might say it's a waste of time because people can't stick with an LCD or lose weight with it? What if you don't lose much weight from an LCD but you are healthier, and that looks ridiculous to most people who only diet for body image? What if the witness of eating an LCD is vexing to an obese person living a calorie-unrestricted diet, and who has no interest in healthy, low-calorie eating? What if, even if they do want to be healthy, they resent the guilt, shame, or fear they may feel in not having started?

What if a lack of approval by others is normal and should be expected? What if people normally strive for an outward rather than an inward appearance? What if those without a crowd-pleasing appearance or those striving only for inward appearance will always be mocked? What if, as Christians, that is ok because we are only called to plant the seeds (even of health), and we know that God is

the only One Who will cause the seeds to grow? What if any type of witness for spiritual health may plant a seed that sprouts into a whole new life at some point? What if the Sower of the seed (Jesus' words) was either blind or unconcerned about tossing valuable seed along the road, onto rocks, or into thorns?

What if persecution dealing with food and righteousness done for God started at the beginning? What if, *"Abel was a keeper of the flocks, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the Lord of the fruit of the ground. Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering; but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell"* (Genesis 4:2b-5) and *"Cain told Abel his brother. And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him"* (Genesis 4:8)? What if the spiritual side of all persecution is jealousy related to one's position with God? What if jealousy was always at the heart of God's enemy and remains the basis of all the enemy's deceptions?

What if a diet witness for God was found in the self-denial of dieting and eating habits? What if it also came through other things, like a lack of covetousness for the world, humility in seeking the last place, being peacemakers, confessing that Jesus has saved us, showing mercy rather than judgment, and even just greeting those who do not greet us?

What if these outward displays must come from an inward pursuit? What if we were commanded to, inwardly, focus on *"whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any*

excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things" (Philippians 4:8b)? What if Jesus warned about the opposite of these inward things in, *"That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man"* (Mark 7:20b-23)? What if we were told these things because the pursuit of inward holiness must always accompany outward righteousness? What if this is important for persecution of the diet (or any) witness because, *"Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted"* (2 Timothy 3:12)?

Hindsight 21
Fasting Prayer and Dieting Prayer

What if fasting and prayer were things that each Christian should practice in life? What if, however, fasting was not meant to be used as a method for weight loss? What if it is a holy time, to set oneself before God apart from physical needs? What if fasting is meant to have a limited duration? What if we are reminded that even worship for the Lord in communion must be with a right heart of, *"Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly. For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep"* (1 Corinthians 11:27-30)?

What if Jesus' forty-day food and water fast demonstrated that the spiritual life reigned over the physical? What if, *"MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD"* (Matthew 4:4b)? What if the fast was a prelude to all His temptations and cleansed His body and self-denial focused everything on His Spirit rather than the flesh?

What if our short periods of fasting (like a meal or a day) were to set ourselves apart for God, to cleanse our minds and bodies from the fog of food and appetites of this world, and to seek a closer union with Him? What if He expected us to fast, saying, *"But the days will come; and when the bridegroom is taken away from them, then they will fast in those days"* (Luke 5:35)? What if He instructed us, *"Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance so that they will be noticed by men when they are fasting. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face so that your fasting will not be noticed by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you"* (Matthew 6:16-18)?

What if the primary purpose of fasting was in seeking a closer union with God, but a secondary effect was in cleansing our bodies and stabilizing our minds towards food and other appetites? What if that's necessary because our bodies are a temple of the Holy Spirit that needs to be subjected, managed, and taken care of? What if Paul said, *"Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are"* (1 Corinthians 3:16-17)?

What if prayerful fasting and a calorie-restricted diet (LCD) overlapped to keep our bodies internally healthy, reduce body weight, and control appetite and worldly lusts? What if self-control through an LCD also contributed to more intimacy with the Lord?

What if gluttony and sensuality are extensions of the lusts of our hearts, and *"That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. For from within, out*

of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man" (Mark 7:20-23)? What if uncontrolled appetite is included with *deeds of coveting* and *sensuality*, or *envy* and *foolishness*?

What if the foods themselves are not as important as the attitude of the heart, soul, mind, and strength of a person who eats them? What if Jesus also said, *"'Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him, because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?' (Thus He declared all foods clean.)'"* (Mark 7:18b-19)? What if fasting for God and dieting for health demonstrated faith for our will to be in His will, or for our worldly needs to be met by our need of Him, or our passion for this world to become our passion for Him? What if fasting and dieting are a practical expression of love, a living form of worship, and a living acknowledgment that *"MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD"* (Matthew 4:4b)?

Hindsight 22
Identity Crisis – Food

What if our identity, or who we are in this world, contributed to our ability or inability to control appetite and hunger? What if insecurities about our lives impacted our eating habits and desires? What if food were not only for enjoyment, but for the secure feeling of eating whatever, whenever, and however much we wanted? What if food and eating were an outlet for control in the uncontrolled circumstances that affected our identity among family, friends, job, or church? What if, given this, dominating our appetite and changing our eating habits required a little more thought and strategy than just giving up a couple of foods that we liked?

What if the concept of identity with its security was very important in the kingdom of Heaven? What if God commonly uses family lineages to illustrate the importance of being adopted into His lineage? What if God blesses us with family or career identities, but, compared to His eternal kingdom of glory, they are short-lived? What if all identities were only steppingstones to finding our true identity, which is in Jesus? What if there is no other identity except belonging to the Creator as His physically and (hopefully) spiritually created?

What if, however, God's enemy constantly attacks each person's God-given identity (e.g., a father, mother,

son, daughter, child, friend, or employee) to discourage and steal God's blessing that He's given each person? What if, through these attacks, people's life identities are injured or lost, and they then disbelieve or curse God? What if they then fill the identity void with a plethora of different worldly identities (including food) to find some kind of security? What if, compared to the full inward life which Jesus promised to give those who identify with His teachings, commandments, warnings, and judgments, any other identity of the world or attribute of the flesh is a vain, destructive one?

What if God, through the identity of Abraham's lineage, promised to send Jesus stating, *"And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed"* (Genesis 12:3)? What if the blessings bestowed on Abraham would extend to *"all the families of the earth"*? What if, as Christians following Jesus according to His teachings, we can know: *"For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, 'Abba! Father!' The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him"* (Romans 8:15-17)?

What if God's calling for an identity in Christ, however, was associated with a *lack* of identity in this world (through, *"if indeed we suffer with Him…"*)? What if we "*consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong,*

and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, so that no man may boast before God" (1 Corinthians 1:26-29)? What if we also, *"Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?"* (James 2:5)? What if Jesus' calling for all Christians to follow Him included losing one's identity in, *"For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it"* (Luke 9:24)*?*

What if, then, there is tremendous hope in the lack or loss of our identity in this world? What if self-identifying as children of God starts a new life with a new purpose: to grow up and be like His Son? What if daily self-identifying with all of Jesus' teachings, commandments, warnings, and judgments provides real, enduring purpose to the identities given by God and real decay to those which He hasn't?

Hindsight 23
Identity Crisis – Growing Pains

What if, in terms of motivation to start and maintain a lifelong diet, our new identity in Jesus also gave us a whole new life, filled with peace, purpose, and power? What if the benefits of this life included becoming physically healthier and losing weight? What if, however, the new diet and life did not negate having to go through episodes of illness or injury, the process of aging, and our eventual death? What if striving to control food and health still needed to continue through difficulties until the end?

What if there were other comparisons between dieting and living a Christian life? What if the amount and types of food that we needed to eat for a low-calorie diet (LCD) were radically (even insanely) different compared to what we had been used to eating for decades? What if an LCD would take a lot of reeducation, daily diligence, and a lifetime of perseverance? What if, likewise, the life that Jesus outlined and exemplified for us was radically (even insanely) different compared to how we have ever lived? What if striving for His life would take reeducation, daily diligence, and a lifetime of perseverance?

What if Jesus told us what these things – the reeducation, daily diligence, and perseverance – were supposed to look like? What if He told us what the goals and signs of success were? What if He told us the

conditions for our retirement, rewards, and inheritance (our spiritual diet) in His Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7)? What if, like physical dieting, He knew that some would keep going in their spiritual diet through all life's difficulties until the end, while others would abandon Him (Revelation 2-3)? What if He warned us not to abandon Him and His words, and provided ample provision (forgiveness and grace) for faults, mistakes, and hindrances to keep us going (1 John 1:8-10)? What if He alone will judge each person's heart for the quality and quantity of the spiritual diet they had of Him throughout their lives (John 5:28-29, 2 Corinthians 5:9-10)?

What if a life of following Jesus – the reeducation, daily diligence, and perseverance – went completely against the trends of the world and the grain of most people's lives? What if, in places like His Sermon on the Mount, He told us the blessings of following Him (and the consequences of not) on things like lust, adultery, covetousness, giving to those who ask, confessing Him, being peacemakers, thoughts about others, showing mercy to others, forgiving others, seeking the last place in family, work, or society, humbling ourselves, and serving others?

What if, in pursuit of a physical or spiritual diet, going against the trends of the world and the grain of our flesh required complete abandonment of our former ways of thinking about life and practicing it? What if the Apostle Paul described it as: *"But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ"* (Philippians 3:7-8), and Jesus described it as: *"And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy*

of Me. He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it" (Mat 10:38-39)?

What if this all sounds like a very difficult way to live, and like a complete loss of identity to what we consider normal? What if, however, this new identity of living in Jesus fills an enormous emptiness in our spirits and souls? What if, compared to the food this world has to offer, we find that a diet of Jesus as the bread of life and living water will reveal to us the only true life with all of God's peace, purpose, and power?

Hindsight 24
Identity Crisis – Until Death Do Us Unite

What if our new identity in Jesus gave us the motivation and power to keep trying to transform our eating habits and willingness to forgo appetite and deny hunger to reap the benefits of better health and weight loss? What if we made mistakes and had lapses, but because of our identity in Jesus, we had the purpose to pursue it even among all of life's ups and downs, and, although difficult, it changed our lives?

What if our new identity were to be part of the betrothed bride of Christ? What if the bride of Christ is the church that has been under preparation since Jesus' ascension? What if the actual marriage hasn't happened yet, but happens after His return? What if the church is supposed to make herself ready according to the groom's teachings, commandments, warnings, and judgments? What if, *"It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints"* (Revelation 19:8)?

What if "getting saved" had a purpose – to make one ready for eternal life because they wanted that life in them, by the way that God has for each person to live out according to His Son? What if that is the hope and passion of the Christian life? What if it is full of difficulties, temptations, trials, and suffering? What if that was what a

true “personal relationship” means to the long-suffering, holy, and righteous Son of God who will be worshiped throughout eternity, rather than a spiritual life valet who will hug you at the gates of heaven?

What if those who have made themselves ready will be dressed for the wedding feast, while those who have not will be tossed out? What if, *“But when the king came in to look over the dinner guests, he saw a man there who was not dressed in wedding clothes, and he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you come in here without wedding clothes?’ And the man was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ For many are called, but few are chosen”* (Matthew 22:11-14)?

Hindsight 25
Appetite or Hunger?

What if, to gain control of one's eating habits, appetite and hunger were considered as two separate things that should be defined and individually dealt with? What if it were possible that one's appetite could be stimulated without being truly hungry? What if, alternatively, appetite produced a superficial, false hunger that led to unnecessary eating?

What if, in a calorie-unrestricted diet, appetite rather than hunger was the driving force contributing to most habits of unhealthy eating? What if these habits went on for days, years, and decades? What if one's appetite chronically damaged the body's tiniest blood vessels, leading to failure of organs such as the heart, liver, kidneys, and eyes? What if, long before these organs failed, one's quality of life was obliterated by inactivity, feeling poor, discomfort, pain, constant doctor's visits, medical procedures, and the daily anxiety, depression, and/or resignation of it all?

What if, in contrast, true hunger was the body's response to a lack of calories needed for daily activity and true hunger was the goal of dieting? What if true hunger was not present all the time but occurred only intermittently while the body was compensating by mobilizing stored energy (fat)? What if true hunger could

only be recognized and appreciated when the body's appetite was routinely subdued? What if true hunger was actually way easier to control than a mentally habituated appetite?

What if God has purposefully given each person their body (our "flesh") with all its various appetites? What if appetites were created as a blessing for us to enjoy, but only in the context of His laws and grace? What if, apart from His laws and grace, they incur His curse of death because of sin? What if true hunger only existed apart from gluttony and sensuous eating? What if the enjoyment of food appetite will still exist even when eating smaller amounts of healthy food *in the context* of the body's hunger? What if hunger and appetite will always exist while we live in the flesh, but true life only comes when appetite *follows* hunger rather than the other way around? What if following one's appetite only produces a false hunger, and a deceptive appetite produces a life on the brink of death?

What if most diets were like a battle between the will and appetite to 1) eat this but not that, 2) eat only this much and no more, or 3) not eat until such and such a time? What if, sooner or later, those battles always fail? What if, however, the real battle isn't *between* the will and the appetite, but *against* the appetite itself? What if the goal was not to eliminate appetite (which cannot happen), but to subjugate, deflate, subdue, and quash its voice from a roaring lion to a squeaky mouse that's still around to appreciate healthy, calorie-restricted meals?

What if these ideas were important because it's a completely different way of looking at food and eating it? What if a daily battle against food sensuality for the rest of one's life will keep appetite in submission? What if the smallest sensual indulgences only serve to feed and

strengthen the appetite, while the smallest nibble of healthy food will help diminish it?

What if, like physical training, there is mental training for non-sensual, healthy foods that diminish appetite? What if vegetables had the power to cleanse both the palate and the mind of sensual appetite? What if a "work out" plan included a stash of raw, easily accessible vegetables that were always on hand to be purposefully eaten when appetite was on the rise? What if vegetables, together with distracting oneself with errands, chores, work, or exercise, would alleviate the temptations to eat unhealthy foods or snacks? What if this success allowed one to immediately see how superficial and weak the temptation actually was?

What if, after just days of these appetite-quenching mental workouts, our perspectives on food changed, and we became used to eating 50-75% less than we did on a calorie-unrestricted diet? What if, in contrast to the enslaved appetite, true hunger allowed the true appetite to enjoy healthy foods? What if, even better, one became only intermittently hungry and without any appetite plaguing them? What if, furthermore, the stomach shrank, the weight slowly came down, the physical activity slowly started going up, and the mind became "health-hungry" in its desires? What if subduing the appetite, rather than gaining willpower over it, was the goal of dieting?

What if differences between appetite and hunger had a spiritual equivalent? What if, concerning appetites, the Apostle Paul warns us through the "once saved" who had fallen in, *"For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things"* (Philippians 3:18-19)?

What if a life lived for our body's appetites (our flesh) was opposite to a life lived for Jesus? What if Jesus says that, in contrast to physical appetites, there is a spiritual hunger that is necessary for the kingdom of Heaven? What if He says, *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied"* (Matthew 5:6)? What if, like the ability of vegetables to kill an appetite for sensuous foods, a hunger for Him and pursuit of the life He outlined (in His red-letter teachings and warnings) will kill the many appetites of this world as in, *"I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst"* (John 6:35)? What if Paul described this spiritual life over bodily and worldly appetites in, *"I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need"* (Philippians 4:12)?

What if all appetites of the body, like food, were superficial and weak? What if an abundant, full-feeling life was discovered from Paul's statement on how he dealt with his appetites in, *"I buffet my body and make it my slave"* (1 Corinthians 9:27a, NASB77)? What if Paul's "*secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need"* was constantly pursuing Jesus' in, *"he who comes to Me"* and *"he who believes in Me"*? What if the body's needs are like nothing when Jesus is the pursuit, goal, and eternity in our minds?

What if our appetites, in contrast, were always trying to keep us from following Jesus? What if willpower to destroy all appetites was not the goal, but buffeting them to willfully replace them by following Jesus on how we are to live? What if Jesus has an assortment of "spiritual vegetables" to quench the flesh, and give life to

our spirits and souls? What if this were a daily, mental-spiritual workout that makes us ever more "Spirit-hungry" in desire? What if the spiritual vegetables included glorifying God by the forgiveness of others, showing mercy, helping those in need, or seeking the last place in all areas of life? What if other vegetables included leaving the judgment of others in God's hands, yet believing His warnings and impending judgments for our own sins and shortcomings? What if doing this routinely leads us back to humility, His cleansing blood, and His peace?

What if the pursuit of our appetites is death, and the pursuit of Jesus ways is life? What if the death of appetite and the hunger for Jesus were more than enough to live on, even in the most famished life?

Hindsight 26
The Dichotomy of Food

What if "eating for obesity unto death" or "eating for health unto life" represented two completely separate lifestyles? What if the worldviews of the two were totally different? What if the perspectives on food and its enjoyment were completely opposed? What if, to a person eating a calorie-*un*restricted diet, a person on a calorie-restricted diet would appear to have "gone off food," and "dropped off the [food] planet"? What if, conversely, a calorie-restricted person would see an unrestricted person as being on a path of destruction?

What if the lifestyle of an unrestricted person included driving to doctor's appointments while scoping out the best place to pick up food afterward? What if a restricted person drove past those same places in amazement that they used to go there and with relief that they no longer did? What if the unrestricted person daydreamed of where they wanted to eat out that week and routinely scoped out online menus? What if the restricted person also meditated a lot on food, only with the purpose of keeping appetite-suppressing, protein-filling foods on hand? What if the calorie-unrestricted person viewed meals and eating out like mini vacations from life, while the restricted person was annoyed at having to eat out and wanted their own food, instead? What if the unrestricted

person always saw the weekend as a time of food and relaxation, while the latter knew that weekends were the worst for eating too much and strategized how to get through them?

What if the unrestricted person's life of food revolved around periods of satiation, while the restricted person's life of food revolved around the invigoration of healthy hunger and the contentment of mastering their appetite? What if the satiated enjoyed a transiently full stomach and sleepy mind, while the unsatiated thrived on an alert mind and active body?

What if the unrestricted constantly deceived themselves about the dangerous state of their health, while the restricted continually worked to remind themselves of the damage already done? What if the unrestricted were occasionally anxious about the number of their remaining days, while the restricted enjoyed making the most of theirs? What if both dieted, but the unrestricted practiced it occasionally and forgot about it often, while the restricted stumbled occasionally and practiced it always?

What if the life of a saved, born-again Christian can be as dichotomous as the above in all the body's appetites and indulgences of the world? What if they were living according to a Jesus-unrestricted or Jesus-restricted life? What if the Jesus-unrestricted person's ideas of life were to build their security, live their dreams, cross off items from their bucket lists, and (apart from work) eat, drink, and be merry? What if the Jesus-restricted person's ideas of life were to constantly involve themselves with Jesus in building the kingdom of Heaven, dream of being there forever, daily working on the bucket lists that Jesus gave everyone, and bask in both the difficulties and rewards of being yoked to Jesus?

What if, more specifically, the Jesus-unrestricted considered how to thrive in work, family, and leisure time, while the Jesus-restricted considered how to best glorify Jesus during work, family, and leisure time? What if the unrestricted always felt tired and beaten down by life, while the Jesus-restricted felt thrilled to be tired by glorifying God and sought God's internal rest and revival? What if the unrestricted could testify to the verse *"Though youths grow weary and tired, And vigorous young men stumble badly"* (Isaiah 40:30), while the Jesus-restricted could experience the verse *"Yet those who wait for the LORD Will gain new strength; They will mount up with wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary"* (Isaiah 40:31)?

What if the Jesus-unrestricted felt like they never had enough money, while the Jesus-restricted understood that *"'The silver is Mine and the gold is Mine,' declares the LORD of hosts"* (Haggai 2:8) and that they were God's children? What if the Jesus-unrestricted were enslaved by finance, and the Jesus-restricted were set free to serve Jesus with or without it? What if the Jesus-unrestricted think about their money, time, and talents as, *"And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours"* (Matthew 25:25), while the Jesus-restricted live out, *"For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me"* (Matthew 25:35-36)?

What if the unrestricted strategize on how to increase their contacts, influence, and recognition at work, and the Jesus-restricted believe *"But it is not this way among you,"* and seek *"whoever wishes to become great*

among you shall be your servant; and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all" (Mark 10:43-44)? What if the unrestricted are always looking to unburden themselves with others' baggage, while the restricted *"Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ"* (Galatians 6:2)?

What if the unrestricted sees so much of life as a burden, while the Jesus-restricted experience *"For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome"* (1 John 5:3)? What if the Jesus-unrestricted still feels yoked to the entire world's lusts and difficulties, while the Jesus-restricted finds rest in working with Jesus; *"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light"* (Matthew 11:29-30)?

What if it is important for both to know *"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary"* (Galatians 6:7-9)?

Hindsight 27
Goals and Milestones

What if, through the months and years of dieting, there were goals and milestones to strive for? What if one goal, for instance, was to have a weekly weigh-in with a goal of losing 1-2 lbs. per week? What if there were a monthly goal to lose 5-10 lbs.? What if these goals made one anticipate weigh-in days? What if this process contributed to the drive, passion, and vision to reach a healthier weight and live a fuller life because of it?

What if other milestones in the fight against obesity included losing 10% body weight for the body to begin healing? What if other medical milestones were home blood pressure or fasting blood sugar levels? What if they were clinical milestones (at doctor's office visits) of reduced fatty liver enzyme levels or A1C levels? What if these were all milestones that would tell us our bodies were healing and becoming stronger? What if milestones increased motivation to keep pursuing other goals?

What if these goals and milestones, however, might take months and years to achieve? What if that's normal since the diet must continue for a lifetime? What if we even set goals and milestones for the last days of our life? What if we do this because we recognize that our lives are not our own? What if we believe that God is responsible for bringing us into the world *and* for taking

us out? What if we remember that each person's days are numbered by God? What if Jesus said, *"And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life?"* (Matthew 6:27) and *"But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?'"* (Luke 12:20)? What if our days can also be readjusted according to His judgments, will, and purposes? What if there are examples of this throughout the Bible, including King Hezekiah (Isaiah 38:5), Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5), the immoral Corinthian man (1 Corinthians 5:1-5), and even believers who superficially received the Lord's supper (1 Corinthians 11:27-30)?

What if God, being the heavenly Father of our spirit, soul, and body, has His own milestones for each person, and He very much wants us to be a part of them and share their motivation and excitement? What if one milestone is being born again: our first true repentance and forgiveness of sins through His Son? What if He had unseen milestones for us before that, ones designed to prepare our hearts for being born again? What if there are others that are expected for a spiritual baby growing into a spiritual child, a spiritual child growing into a spiritual young person, and a spiritual young person growing into spiritual adulthood? What if, like natural life, we were not aware of reaching many of them, but our parents were?

What if we experienced a continuum of learning as a new Christian, not in knowledge, but in life experience – for doing His will and doing our part as part of His body? What if this growing was always a transition between living for ourselves or living for Him; between working for ourselves or seeking to have His good works live through us? What if it is a struggle between the verses *"and now who will own what you have prepared"* (Luke

12:20b) and *"we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them"* (Ephesians 2:10)? What if our inheritance in Him will be about how we persevered in walking in the works He prepared for us? What if the transition between our physical and spiritual lives mattered in *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad"* (2 Corinthians 5:10)?

What if we set milestones for our spiritual lives in forgiving others, in giving our time and resources to the Lord by serving those in need, and in seeking out the last place among people? What if it was the determination, the persistence, the purpose, the endurance, and the stubbornness to keep His ways, even though we don't look good to others doing it, or others are unappreciative about it? What if the pursuit of these milestones of His ways brought peace, purpose, and power to our lives? What if we found that the good works He prepared for us were the only way to live, and "woe to us" if we abandoned them? What if, *"And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us"* (Romans 5:3-5)?

Hindsight 28
In the World but Not of the World

What if "being in the world but not of the world" seemed like a ridiculous situation to people who are mentally and emotionally addicted to food and its sensuality? What if, in their addiction, they always had to be around unhealthy foods, eat them with others, and even prepare them for others? What if they had to do this while very hungry, while watching others freely indulge, and while being questioned about why they were not enjoying them too? What if this was not an attractive way to live the rest of their lives?

What if, spiritually, everyone grew up in what the Bible calls the "flesh" with all its various appetites and habits that were harmful when lived apart from being under the submission and control of God? What if everyone had their own way of living, but after coming to Jesus for forgiveness and salvation, had to exchange their ways for His ways to supplement His life? What if all Christians were spiritual children of God who were expected to be "in the world, but not of the world"? What if Jesus said of His true disciples, *"They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world"* (John 17:16)? What if we still had to somehow live in this world without living for it? What if John wrote, *"Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of*

the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever" (1 John 2:15-17)? What if the love of this world or ourselves were displayed through immorality, covetousness, food, dissipation, malice, contempt, or anger? What if these things displace the love of God for the love of the world and ourselves? What if we do not fully know God in our lives until we are "not of the world"?

What if Paul said, *"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect"* (Romans 12:2)? What if the "renewing of our minds" meant to develop the mind of Jesus rather than a knowledge of the Bible? What if we could only really know Jesus by following Him? What if it were about keeping the "good works" He instructed in the Gospels about how to love His Father with everything and love our neighbors as we love ourselves? What if we are not saved *by* good works but *for* them? What if they are not *our* good works but *His* good works living through us? What if Jesus' good works were not conducive to the ways we knew life to be, and true faith was expressed by continually setting aside our lives for Jesus' ways? What if salvation is not by *our* works but by *His* works that started at the cross and continue through us? What if John summarized this with another statement, *"By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, 'I have come to know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By*

this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked" (1 John 2:3-6)?

What if the true beauty of being in the world but not of the world seems like a difficult life, but it comes with the continual cleansing blood of Jesus for all mistakes, the peace and power of His Holy Spirit in us, and an ongoing "rest" for our souls? What if, to the world and our flesh, walking in the same manner as He walked still looks horribly burdensome? What if, however, we discover that *"For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome"* (1 John 5:3)? What if this is the only way we can live as His children who are in the world but not of the world? What if, *"More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ"* (Philippians 3:8)?

Hindsight 29
Waste the Food

What if some people don't care about wasting food, but others do? What if some even eat too much in order not to waste food? What if, in bodies that are overflowing with fat, it is more important to waste the food to cut the calories for holiness?

What if it were God Who controls the blessings (e.g., food, water, and shelter) of every person? What if Jesus showed us this, in part, by feeding the 4000- and 5000-member crowds who had already been with Him three days without food? What if, after everyone ate their fill, the disciples picked up 7 and 12 baskets, respectively, of leftovers? What if we are not told what happened to those leftovers? What if His *provision* is the point of the story rather than the *fate* of leftovers? What if it is He Who provides every person (and animal) with food and will take the credit for it? What if He is still providing everyone's daily manna? What if, with whatever level of blessing He gives, denying ourselves and sharing with those in need are a small reflection of the love He has been providing since the beginning? What if we lose the food to reflect His righteousness?

Hindsight 30
Feeding Narcissism

What if some bad eating habits and obesity are due to society's narcissistic ideas of "love yourself," "forgive yourself," "help yourself," "pamper yourself," or "do it for yourself"? What if people think it's a great idea to treat themselves (over and over)? What if some overeating is not from feeding the appetite but from feeding narcissism?

What if the antithesis of self-love is found in loving Jesus? What if Jesus spoke of seeking popularity in *"My time is not yet here, but your time is always opportune"* (John 7:6)? What if He also said, *"The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil"* (John 7:7)?

What if we stopped blessing ourselves with food because "we deserve it," and lay down ourselves to someday share the glory of the *"name which is above every name"* (Philippians 2:9)? What if, *"For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it," "For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and WILL THEN REPAY EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS"* (Matthew 16:25, 27)?

Hindsight 31
Seeing is Believing

What if seeing the pounds come off was highly motivating for continuing one's diet? What if getting on the scale 2-3 times a week helped keep focus on the day's eating plan, and reminded one of the purposes for restricting caloric intake? What if knowing that *it's actually working* inspired one's diet and made one want to eat even less?

What if 2 lbs. per week was the maximum anyone should see in weight loss efforts? What if that translated into getting on the scale 2-3 times a week and seeing a .7 to 1 lb. loss each time? What if that was almost too fast, and a better goal might be 1-1.5 lbs. a week? What if that meant seeing a .3 to .5 lb. loss each time on the scale? What if less than 1 lb. a week weight loss was also just fine? What if even .5 lb. or less, translating into a 1-lb. loss every 2-3 weeks, was still great because it was an indicator of eating well and not taxing the body with food? What if some kind of weight loss means "seeing is believing"?

What if one could also see the effects of spiritual things in their life? What if fasting and prayer have long been done to seek God, because letting go of physical needs is spiritually cleansing and a way to seek after His will and intimacy?

What if, beyond prayer and fasting, taking on Jesus' yoke (Matthew 11:29) was also done each day by living out His commands to forgive others, show mercy and compassion to those in need (regardless of judgment or justice), seek the last place in society's grind, humble oneself, and be a peacemaker in disputes? What if "seeing is believing" through these (sometimes difficult) "movements of the yoke" made us more aware of Jesus being with us each day? What if we started to see Him at work all around us and in our lives? What if we saw His timing for things in our sleep, in our eating, and in our day's activities? What if we routinely saw Him use the day's circumstances for ministry opportunities? What if we saw Him in the hindrances of life: slow traffic, a broken washing machine, or a detached tooth filling? What if the "good" or "bad" of life became "all good" because we knew He "kept" us in any circumstance? What if, like John, we could say, *"What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life—"* (1 John 1:1)?

What if obedience to Jesus led to "seeing is believing" that inspired more obedience that led to more seeing? What if, *"He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him"* (John 14:21)?

Hindsight 32
Believing is Seeing

What if a good effort in a calorie-restricted diet saw little if any weight loss over days, weeks, or even months? What if this is maddening because one is putting in a lot of effort and focus and seeing absolutely nothing? What if the reason for this seems to be unknown and may be a slower BMR with age, the body reducing its BMR from what it thinks is calorie starvation, or perhaps the retention of water in highly active adipose tissue (since this is not just fat, but complex tissue that needs cells, blood vessels, lymphatics, and immune cells)?

What if it's common to see plateaus in weight loss despite a consistent diet? What if, despite the plateaus, one sees other effects from dieting, such as lower blood pressure, lower blood sugars, more energy, less bloating, and better sleep? What if, after some days or weeks of plateaus, there is a sudden loss of 2, 4, 6, or 8 lbs.? What if this is commonly known as the "whoosh" effect? What if the reasons for this are unknown? What if then, some people lose weight linearly, while others lose it in steps?

What if, however, not seeing any weight loss over time translated into not believing that the diet is working, and then concluding that it's not worth the effort? What if this results in going back to bad (or very bad) eating habits

and, instead of reducing fat, the body's health is reduced by higher blood pressure, blood sugar, and fatty build-up?

What if, as a goal, weight loss is way less important than staying on a diet? What if "not seeing" weight loss with the result of "not believing" in the diet is a pivotal point between unseen health and unseen death? What if, when not seeing the weight loss even though we are dieting well, we must visualize the unseen aspects of health throughout our entire body that come from the diet? What if we continue on in "faith" that the diet, itself, is generating health, and "will" ourselves to continue it?

What if this is very analogous to our spiritual lives? What if real faith in Jesus is first believing in order to see rather than first seeing to believe? What if Jesus said, *"Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe"* (John 4:48) and *"Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed"* (John 20:29)? What if faith that allows one to see is not just acceptance of His propitiation of sins for their own benefit but, again, *"He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him"* (John 14:21)? What if, *"for we walk by faith, not by sight"* (2 Corinthians 5:7)?

What if we will *see* God's promises come from *faith*? What if it takes faith to believe in Jesus' propitiation of sins, but it takes faith to continue in His expectations for what that will look like? What if it takes faith to forgive others, turn the other cheek, not covet, seek the last place, confess Him in a world of hate, bear others' burdens, love those who do not love you, love your enemies, and lose your life for Jesus in order to gain it? What if we can't "see" the effects of that faith, and all we see are the waves

crashing around us? What if we do, however, see His rest for our souls, His peace that surpasses understanding, and His joy made complete? What if we see His provisions of food and clothing more than a sparrow and lilies of the field? What if we must first believe *"seek first His kingdom and His righteousness"* (Matthew 6:33a) in order to see *"and all these things will be added unto you"* (Matthew 6:33b)? What if, *"for we walk by faith, not by sight— we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord. Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad"* (2 Corinthians 5:7-10)?

Hindsight 33
The Addiction of Food

What if some foods are more addictive than others, and once you start eating them, it is hard to stop? What if the appetite wants a variety of other addictive foods the next day? What if just one addictive food can ruin the next day's diet, and the next, and the next?

What if the first course of action is to recognize and admit that, like other addictions, one has a problem: food? What if, like other addictions, it is a life-threatening problem? What if the second course of action is to not forget that one has a problem? What if, in addiction, it is easy to forget that one has a problem and to mentally shelve it for a later time?

What if rejecting addictive food wasn't just about the calories, but about the sensuality it would signal to our brains and body to want more today, and more tomorrow? What if it takes vigilance to apply the brakes, wash the thoughts out with some vegetables, sip some coffee to warm up, and take a minute to refocus on the body's current and future health? What if it were possible to toggle the mind from the sensuality of food to the peace and purpose of life that comes from health? What if, in just a few seconds, one can change an attitude of food sensuality and lust into "gross"?

What if, spiritually, there is an addictiveness within us to the world around us in, *"all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world"* (1 John 2:16)? What if this included food and entertainment, immorality, lack of forgiveness for others, covetousness of time and money, striving for better positions (from careers to check-out lines), avoidance of those in need, and avoidance of talking to or even greeting a neighbor? What if these things are the ways of the world and we are told, *"Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him"* (1 John 2:15)? What if, like addictive foods, a worldly life must be replaced by our vigilance to keep God's ways? What if, like diet and healthy foods, keeping God's ways brings about spiritual health which then impacts physical, mental, emotional, and financial health? What if, *"The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever"* (1 John 2:17)?

Hindsight 34
The Prodigal Dieter

What if a Prodigal Dieter is one who finds themselves having abused their freedom of food for years, if not decades, by eating all kinds of tasty, sensuous foods (addictive, high-calorie foods)? What if one's body is now suffering the consequences of that in hypertension, heart disease, stroke, diabetes, acid reflux, and liver disease? What if a once beautiful smorgasbord of life has become a pig trough for death? What if the Prodigal Dieter finally comes to their senses and realizes that the blessing of food has become a pathway of death? What if they desired to stop what they were doing and begin eating as if their body was a temple of the Holy Spirit, and practice the type of eating that would bring it health? What if they considered it as part of a repentant life towards God from Whom they received forgiveness by His Son's sacrifice for all their food sensuality, indulgence, and gluttony?

What if repentance included a long trek back to the Father's house, and the Prodigal Dieter knew he would have to reflect on his life the whole way? What if, along the way, he read the Bible to learn more about himself and about all the blessings that his Father wanted to give him? What if he did read some but it was confusing at parts and not really clear the way he would like it to be? What if he found, however, that there were highly educated people

who had gone to school to study the Bible and who had spent decades outlining its theology (the study of God and His teachings)? What if this had been done for the past 2000 years, with one teacher building upon another's? What if there had been large and small shifts in the teachings, which were then built upon by generations of teachers, each along their line of training?

What if, despite the differences, all the teachers agreed that *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life"* (John 3:16)? What if the Prodigal Dieter learned all about the many passages of scripture of the hope and promises of God for him and his new life? What if he were now free from his past sins to love God as he would, and to stand upon His promises and claim His blessings for now and eternity? What if, in all this freedom from sin and hope for the future, the Prodigal Dieter also noted a couple of verses that were particularly dear to his heart? What if he saw that Jesus fed the multitudes at least twice and that each time *"They all ate and were satisfied"* (Mark 6:42)? What if he also saw that God *"Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things"* (Acts17:35b) and *"Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights"* (James 1:17a)? What if the Prodigal Dieter also discovered *"Thus He declared all foods clean"* (Mark 7:19b) and concluded that food was a blessing from God and that he was free to eat it? What if he now understood that gluttony and sensuality were things under the law and that He was no longer under the law but under the blessings of God's grace?

What if, on his continuing journey to his Father's house, he passed by many upscale grocery stores, great restaurants, and tasty fast-food places? What if he was at

first hesitant to go into these places for food along the way because these were the very things that had led him into the trouble from which he was leaving? What if he decided, however, to at least go into one of the nice grocery stores and see if they had any "convenient" health foods? What if he discovered all kinds of "convenient" foods that the store and many others told him were "healthy"? What if he saw it as God's blessing in that the foods were really quite delicious, and that there was a plethora of such foods to sample and eat along the way?

What if he also discovered that some of these foods were also sold at convenient fast-food places? What if he found that he could treat himself once in a while to the less healthy choices offered at these same places? What if he found that mixing and matching was a good idea so that he could eat one healthy and one less healthy thing so that the former would negate or cleans the latter? What if he lost track of how much he was mixing and matching and, besides, food was a blessing from God and he was no longer under the law but free in His grace?

What if, to add to his blessings and freedom from his former sins, he found that many of his new friends and teachers of the Bible were also at these places and that he could share in the blessings of these treats with them? What if he even stepped out in faith and occasionally asked for God's blessing on the food?

What if the Prodigal Dieter, however, was no longer told of the Deceiver of the nations who was intent on also deceiving the church? What if Jesus warned over and over about this and warned us to keep all His teachings? What if that is because He is God and all that He said will come true in the way He wants it to? What if His red-letter teaching is straightforward on how we are to live and to fight His good fight so that we will have His

rest, His promises, and His blessings? What if we do have His abundant forgiveness, grace, and freedom for life, but in the context of yoking ourselves to all His teachings, commandments, warnings, and judgments?

What if He repeatedly warned about not following His teachings and commandments? What if that's because they are real food for spiritual life after we are given that life by His blood? What if forgiveness and grace was not to eat the "freedom" foods that the world and church enjoy? What if it is not His food, but theirs? What if we turn away from all the "convenient" pseudo-spiritual "health" foods and keep ourselves under His conditional warnings and judgments to have true life in Him? What if we are not born-again by foods (works) but for food – His food (His holy and righteous works living through us)? What if there was no need to worry that His food would produce pride because they are all about dying to self in order to live for Him? What if the world and the church will not embrace those works in you?

What if He said that true Prodigal Dieters must follow Him in, *"My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work"* (John 4:34) and *"Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life"* (John 6:27a)?

Hindsight 35
Dirty Dieting

What if the sin of gluttony was on par with idolatry – the worship of anything apart from the One True God? What if gluttony is a form of self-worship that uses food to seek control and comfort, or to express self-love? What if, at one time, the church defined gluttony as being preoccupied with the pleasures of food and eating? What if those who ate like that lived to eat, ate impulsively, and were heedless of their health and oblivious to their weight?

What if one discovers that Jesus would forgive them of all previous gluttony and sensual eating? What if He may, through His forgiveness, heal the ill effects of those sins on the body? What if one learned that salvation was not earned but given freely by God's grace and by Jesus' sacrifice and completed work on the cross? What if one were taught that there are no good works that can make one worthy of eternal life? What if all that is true and worthy of giving one's life over to daily thanksgiving and praise to our Heavenly Father?

What if we also learned that we are God's children and that, because of Jesus' righteousness, we are holy and blameless before His eyes? What if we learned that all subsequent works as His children are like the attempt to take our own righteousness in hand that will lead to bragging about our own goodness? What if, in terms of the

Christian life, we cannot make ourselves any more acceptable to God than we already are because we are always sinners who are always in need of His mercy and grace? What if our attempts to do so were, biblically, like wearing unclean clothes (filthy rags) (Isaiah 64:6) and were an insult to Jesus' finished work? What if this makes all good works and righteous deeds out to be "filthy rags"?

What if, however, this is a universal deception by God's enemy and, although we are not saved by our good works and righteousness (but by Jesus'), we are saved for them? What if, after coming to Jesus through salvation, our very purpose in life is to practice and display the good works of Jesus' love to the world? What if the good works are not ours, but the continuing life of Jesus living through us? What if the passage containing the most famous John 3:16 verse of salvation also contains: *"But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God"* (John 3:21)? What if, *"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them"* (Ephesians 2:10)? What if these works are a manifestation of the Holy Spirit in us? What if, *"However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him"* (Romans 8:9)?

What if, when applied to a diet that seeks to avoid gluttony and the sensuality of eating, the deceptions that "good works are like filthy rags" and of "God is pleased with us just the way we are" caused us to dismiss the body's health as a temple of the Holy Spirit? What if we thought our eating habits and our weight were not a spiritual problem?

What if the sins of food were not about God's righteousness (His good works) but about His purity (His holiness) within ourselves? What if, again, righteousness and holiness were separate traits of the Holy Spirit in us? What if displaying God's righteousness represented the spiritual garments we wear since *"It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints"* (Revelation 19:8)? What if the purity (bright and clean) of the garments is represented by His holiness (purity of spirit, soul, and body) we seek to attain (Revelation 3:4, 5, 18)? What if "filthy rags" were not about the absolute state of the heart, but about people trying to be righteous, but the lack of holiness in unrepentant sin made their attempts filthy? What if it were a prelude in Isaiah's petition to change them in, *"we are the clay, and You our potter"* rather than to say, "filthy rags are just the way we are and thanks for loving us, anyways"?

What if, therefore, a calorie-restricted diet of healthy foods is essential and a worthwhile pursuit of God's holiness in us? What if, whether dieting, fasting, or any other good work, we obey Jesus to *"anoint your head and wash your face so that your fasting* [work] *will not be noticed by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you"* (Matthew 6:17b-18)?

Hindsight 36
Bridging Hopelessness to Hope

What if, after months of dieting, the liver enzyme levels were still high, the weight loss was at a crawl (if not at a standstill), the blood pressure was still up, the doctors were still intervening, and many were saying that your diet was all wrong? What if one feels hopeless in their diet?

What if, alternatively, your diet is going fine and your body is responding well, but other problems, such as injuries, illnesses, or accidents, have postponed or negated your health goals? What if many life issues robbed one of feeling good through physical health? What if these problems seemed to make hope fade over many weeks or months? What if life, in general, seemed like a slippery bar of soap that can never be controlled? What if one feels desperate to feel both healthy and at peace?

What if there were many things we could do to distract our minds from hopelessness, or many pursuits that we could do to seek change for a hopeful future? What if, however, none of these things would, in themselves, ever totally mask hopelessness or provide absolute assurance of hope? What if the purity, permanence, and passion of hope could not be found in the physical world, but only in the spiritual? What if only the spiritual would provide absolute assurance of hope while giving tangible, periodic glimpses of it in the physical?

What if Jesus gave us different avenues or bridges to find His hope and purpose in our lives? What if one bridge was not just in being "born again" but in being born again to be yoked to Him (like a young ox bound to an old, experienced ox) to do the things that He is still doing in the world? What if He said, *"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light"* (Matthew 11:29-30)? What if the "learn from Me" part isn't based on Bible learning, but on the experience of following Jesus? What if it isn't in the limelight of a ministry leader, but in the obscurity and underground of all Jesus' ways with the people and the world that God has given each of us? What if it is learning to love an unloving world as He does, tending to its needs in the face of apathy and criticism, confessing Him among those who hate Him, and waiting for people to return and grow in Him?

What if this is the new life in Him that happens from being born-again through Him? What if He gave a long sermon (Matthew Chapters 5-7) on the specifics of how to do this? What if, by yoking ourselves to Him, we discover that He has always been working in a world of hopelessness? What if we see that it's not a pretty process to the flesh or the world, but it is a beautiful creation, seen or unseen, within people? What if this work brings us to the assurance of His future and His hope in both us and others? What if, *"'For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart'"* (Jeremiah 29:11-13)?

What if another bridge to hope was suffering for vision into God's omnipotence, omnipresence, and complete purpose for everyone and everything? What if the prophet, Job, found unlimited hope (even through rebuke) from his vast sufferings? What if God answered the hopelessness of Job by His *omnipotence* of, *"Now gird up your loins like a man, And I will ask you, and you instruct Me! Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding"* (Job 38:3-4) and *"Have you ever in your life commanded the morning, And caused the dawn to know its place"* (Job 38:12)? What if He spoke to Job of His *omnipresence* in, *"Have you entered into the springs of the sea Or walked in the recesses of the deep? Have the gates of death been revealed to you, Or have you seen the gates of deep darkness?"* (Job 38:16-17)? What if He reminded Job of His *complete purpose* for everything in the earth with, *"Who has put wisdom in the innermost being Or given understanding to the mind?"* (Job 38:36) and *"The ostriches' wings flap joyously With the pinion and plumage of love* (but)*…She treats her young cruelly, as if they were not hers; Though her labor be in vain, she is unconcerned; Because God has made her forget wisdom, And has not given her a share of understanding"* (Job 39:13-17)? What if God rebuked Job with, *"Will you really annul My judgment? Will you condemn Me that you may be justified?* (Job 40:8)?

What if Job's response to this was, *"I know that You can do all things, And that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted. 'Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have declared that which I did not understand, Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know"* (Job 42:2-3) and *"Therefore I retract, And I repent in dust and ashes"* (Job 42:6)?

What if Job's trials were harder than most people can imagine? What if, however, God allowed it, restored much more to Job, and brought Job to be with Him since? What if Job complained about it but endured it? What if Job did not "curse God and die" as his wife suggested? What if he was blessed beyond measure after the trials, and right now sees all those troubles as only a blink of an eye through which God still speaks to billions of people who have lived after him? What if Job no longer considers himself a hopeless victim of circumstance?

What if, finally, there was a bridge to hope found through praising God and giving thanks in all circumstances, even though we don't feel like it? What if, during times of feeling the most *unkept*, we discovered we really are the most *kept* people of God? What if we are in the deepest pit only to discover that He is also in it? What if we discover that His Spirit continues to strive with all people until a designated time? What if He allows the trials and sufferings of this life for His purposes above us, in us, and through us? What if suffering from the witness of *"Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know"* is a very hopeful thought?

Hindsight 37
The *Lembas* Effect

What if, when really getting into a healthy, calorie-restricted diet, one found that it took much less food intake to feel satisfied, with the feeling that eating more would be unnecessary? What if this is because the appetite is now under control and the stomach has shrunk? What if the body had also become well-adjusted to metabolizing its own body fat as an energy source, and the *mental* need to eat was therefore greatly reduced (and the *urge* to eat sensually was stifled)? What if this made one happier about their diet and weight loss progress? What if this represented the breaking of old habits for new?

What if small morsels of food ingested in the new eating habits, although not stimulating the appetite, seemed transcendently nutritious, satisfying, and adequately energizing? What if this effect lasted from days or weeks of caloric reduction and healthy eating?

What if the Middle-Earth fantasy, *The Lord of the Rings,* described this concept with the elven *"lembas* bread*"*? What if *"The* lembas *had a virtue without which they would long ago have lain down to die. It did not satisfy desire, and at times Sam's mind was filled with the memories of food, and the longing for simple bread and meats. And yet this waybread of the Elves had a potency that increased as travelers relied on it alone and did not*

mingle it with other foods. It fed the will, and it gave strength to endure, and to master sinew and limb beyond the measure of mortal kind[3]*"*?

What if the fictional *lembas* bread had a reality in Jesus, Who calls Himself, "*The Bread of Life"*? What if Jesus often compared Himself to food necessary for sustaining both spiritual and physical life? What if He wasn't implying metaphorical food but real, sustaining food that sustains life in place of and above physical food? What if His food has a "*lembas*-effect" and, likewise, "this waybread of [Jesus] had a potency that increased as travelers relied on it alone and did not mingle it with other [worldly indulgences]*"?* What if, "It fed the will, and it gave strength to endure, and to master sinew and limb beyond the measure of mortal kind"? What if Jesus' sustaining food of life was only found through emptying ourselves of this world's endeavors – its purposes, drives, and appetites? What if we had to constantly die to self in order to constantly live through Him?

What if this *lembas*-effect food was the same food that Jesus ate while on earth? What if *"Jesus said to them, 'My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work'"* (John 4:34)? What if "Jesus in us" meant Him living through us? What if our fullness (His *lembas* effect) came from the fullness of His good works through us? What if it was His forgiveness to those who have hurt us, His compassion and mercy to those who scorn it, His provision to any who are in desperate (or scornful) need, His ability to be a peacemaker, His role

[3]J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Return of the King*, (Random House Publishing Group,1994), 277.

to serve all regardless of their contempt, His humility and quietness, and His daily surrender of His physical life to His heavenly Father?

What if Christians, however, didn't want to recognize that they all lived near "Mount Doom" until Jesus' return? What if many Christians sought the *lembas* bread of life without death to self? What if they wanted to be filled up with Jesus without first becoming empty? What if they didn't want *"to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship"* (Romans 12:1b)? What if Jesus summarized His *lembas*-effect with, *"For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it"* (Matthew 16:25)?

Hindsight 38
Always in Earnest

What if God warned us about our Christian life with, *"Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is"* (Ephesians 5:15-17)? What if we always had to watch our Christian walk? What if this also applied to a healthy, calorie-restricted lifestyle? What if people addicted to food and eating must always be in earnest about what and how much they put in their mouths? What if, even in an established diet, circumstances like stress, illness, or life changes eroded our resolve for physical health? What if we must keep watch and mentally prepare ourselves to stand firm? What if we must know how to immediately get back on our feet after stumbling? What if we must be aware of the slow, barely comprehended drift in the amount and type of food eaten? What if one expects this and must periodically revive the diet – even within the diet?

What if the real danger of change, stumbling, or drift is in losing focus on or in giving up the fight? What if the weight returns, and the blood pressure, blood sugar, sleep apnea, liver damage, heart disease, and degraded lifestyle continue as a prelude to death?

What if, like appetite and food, the appetites of the flesh are constantly drawing us away from the Spirit and from Jesus –through changed circumstance, stumbling, or drift? What if we are warned that this can happen and to be ready for it? What if we are told, *"Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour"* (1 Peter 5:8) and *"Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap; for it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the earth. But keep on the alert at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man"* (Luke 21:34-36)?

What if, before His return as King and Judge of the earth, there was a need to prepare to be able to *"stand before the Son of Man"*? What if this preparation was not "biblical knowledge" but "Jesus following," and training ourselves to obey His ways? What if the training régime was in His Sermon on the Mount (reiterated throughout the New Testament)? What if isolating and believing "God's grace" apart from Jesus' commands was a deception? What if *"Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall"* (Matthew 7:26-27)? What if it is only through *practicing* His ways that we can be *prepared*? What if the real danger of stumbling or drifting from His words, however, is in ignoring or giving up the fight completely?

Hindsight 39
Guilt, Shame, and Fear

What if guilt, shame, and fear were implicit for starting and maintaining a healthy diet? What if those are God-created feelings we are not meant to live with indefinitely, but are short-term nudges to wake us up, get us back on track, or keep us on track? What if they are guardrails directing us to a full-quality life? What if responding to God in guilt, shame, and fear will cause them to be diminished or completely absent and replaced with health, confidence, and purpose?

What if there was *fear* of the morbidity and mortality that obesity can cause; what if there was *shame* in the loss of not being able to do more in life; and what if there was *guilt* in continuing to eat in a way that promoted obesity? What if, having started a successful diet or reached a healthy weight, guilt, shame, and fear helped us to remember to stay on course by eating healthily in a world that was overwhelmingly pushing for the opposite? What if guilt, shame, and fear were steppingstones from a path of darkness onto a path of light with a fulfilling life?

What if guilt, shame, and fear were part of all the emotions that God had designed in us? What if they are there for a reason, and they should not be avoided? What if God created us with two components: the flesh and the spirit? What if He created our spirit to be eternal and our

flesh as a temporary incubator for the spirit's development? What if everything in the flesh is good when it's used according to God's design, but is an incubator for spiritual morbidity outside of that design?

What if, in this spiritual reality, guilt, shame, and fear were not useless things to be conquered, but were God-given tethers between the flesh and the spirit? What if the tethers, if used by design, acted to "nag" the conscience and raise red flags of spiritual danger? What if they were necessary for the process of spiritual rebirth and conformation to Jesus' image?

What if, in proof of their purpose, Paul said that God's law is the tutor that leads us to Christ (Galatians 3:24)? What if every person also has the law of God written on their hearts and every person feels its tug throughout their lives (Romans 2:14-16)? What if then, the guilt, shame, or fear from *not* fulfilling God's law is what reveals our deep-seated need for Him? What if, upon coming to Him with our sin and repentance, He would cleanse us from all sin which created that guilt, shame, and fear? What if His law, written on our hearts, could now find peace by Jesus living through us according to His teachings (Matthew 5:17, Romans 13:10, Galatians 6:2)?

What if Jesus said that He didn't come to remove that tether between the spirit and the flesh because He did not come to abolish God's law? What if the law continues to act as a tutor within our hearts, even after being born again, for us to discover its fulfillment of life, not by its letter, but by God's Spirit living through us to fulfill His two greatest laws? What if that life no longer looks like a list of dos and don'ts, but like the daily motivations and actions of our hearts? What if it now looks more like *"Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life"*

(Luke 21:34), *"being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts"* (2 Corinthians 3:3), and *"all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds"* (Revelation 2:23b)?

What if the motivations and actions of the heart are kept in line by guilt, shame, and fear so that they can only be fulfilled by God's law as lived out by Jesus' law of love? What if God's law, His love, and our love for Him have always been linked (Matthew 24:12)? What if the law can only be fulfilled through love (Galatians 5:14): *"Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law"* (Romans 13:8), *"Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ"* (Galatians 6:2), and *"For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome"* (1 John 5:3)?

What if guilt, shame, and fear are part of the daily warfare of a Christian to lead us to perfect love and life in Christ? What if, *"For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please"* (Galatians 5:17), and the outcome of this enduring and endearing struggle is always victory?

Hindsight 40

Thy Rod (For Dieting) and Thy Staff (For Health)

What if guilt, shame, or fear were found to be flashing like a road sign when we are in a lifestyle of overeating and obesity? What if we saw from God's word that gluttony is a sin and that our bodies are temples of His Holy Spirit, which can be ruined by the sensuality and idolatry of food? What if we came to really believe that *"the* [future] *wages of sin IS death"* (Romans 6:23a), where the sin is enslavement of our heart or mind to food? What if poor or failing health resulted from unhealthy eating habits, and these also contributed to the danger signs? What if nobody liked guilt, shame, or fear and failing health, but they acted as God's "rod" to redirect us to His path of life?

What if the flashing signs of guilt, shame, and fear were finally enough for us to embark on a life of confession and repentance away from food and toward a life of self-denial and self-control with Jesus? What if we begin to eat better and lose a little (or a lot of) weight? What if we also begin to feel better, and our blood pressure and blood sugar levels go down? What if we become *more* energized from eating less?

What if guilt, shame, and fear were necessary to get us started, but the blessings of the new life were motivation to keep us going? What if the flashing signs of

guilt, shame, and fear of obesity were still needed even on the right path of health, but the love of a more fulfilling life allowed them to become more memory rather than reality? What if even knowing that we are on the right path of health brings us more peace and purpose? What if our self-image among other people improves (even without losing that much weight)? What if the pain of guilt, shame, or fear was dampened (or extinguished) just because we knew that we were making the effort and fighting the good fight? What if God's rod was more of a staff that leads us to green pastures in life? What if this confidence carried over to other struggles of health or life circumstances like those in the "valley of the shadow of death" and we now have experience that His staff would lead us through it?

What if Psalm 23 said, *"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever"* (Psalm 23, KJV)?

Hindsight 41
Armor for "Diet Persecution"

What if a low-calorie diet (LCD) required eating very little food, and one had to maintain this diet at social events such as dinner parties, church potlucks, or restaurants? What if, having been an obvious big eater in the past, one felt ridiculous while trying to eat much less in front of others? What if an LCD was like a billboard announcement to the group that you were trying to diet? What if this, in turn, inevitably brought out the "knowledgeable" food experts who entice you to eat more or the "diet critics" who loudly declare the superiority of their own methods?

What if you were just starting your new eating habits and found this frustrating or mocking of your dieting efforts? What if that frustration caused you to overeat or give up your diet at social-eating events? What if it made you feel self-conscious about your weight, hypocritical about trying to eat well in public, or ashamed of repeatedly failing to lose weight? What if it led you to be a reclusive, closet dieter who tried to avoid anything that would reveal your dieting efforts?

What if other people's attitudes about diet seemed like a kind of "diet persecution"? What if the word "persecution" applies because an LCD is one path toward holiness in the Lord? What if dieting, in part, is caring for

the temple of God, emptying oneself of the needs of this world, humbling oneself towards desires of the flesh, and represents an act of surrendering one's life to God? What if an LCD is a small fulfillment of, *"Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship"* (Romans 12:1)?

What if we dealt with "diet persecution" (or any persecution that comes from following Jesus) by using the full armor that God provides each of us? What if, by reminder, that armor is *"Having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; in addition to all, take up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God"* (Ephesians 6:14b-17)?

What if dealing with diet persecution began with a spiritual "armored attitude" or "superior attitude" to engage in the battle? What if most teaching say that the components of God's armor are mainly defensive and that *"the sword of the Spirit"* is the only offensive weapon? What if, however, all Christians are called to be in a spiritual battle the battle must include an "attitude" of offense where the clothing and armor provide the authority to use both offense and defense? What if God's armor isn't for physically or emotionally hurting others but for testifying of Jesus and bringing His light into the lives of others [which, conversely, may "hurt" those who hate His light or "repulsion" to whom Jesus is the smell of death (John 3:19-21, 2 Corinthians 2:14-16)]? What if this also provides the defense that gives more confidence and purpose in life? What if, for instance, the "sword" isn't the

ability to give perfect, applicable scripture quotations, but an attitude of engagement based on one's testimony produced by the Living Word? What if we engaged with, 1) humility to confess years of not eating right that are producing the possibility of illness and death (James 5:16), 2) a witness that Jesus considers our bodies to be a temple of His Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16-18, Matthew 10:32-33) and 3) that we have to start somewhere, however imperfectly, and trust God for the rest (Romans 8:11)? What if our "on the offense" response was a part of Jesus' calling for us to be witnesses of Him and to participate in the spiritual battle of His kingdom *"to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places"* (Ephesians 6:11-12)?

What if an attitude of being on the offense, however, should always be used with grace in the form of humility, praise for others who don't need to diet, and thankfulness that we are still given the opportunity to try? What if we should always *"Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person"* (Colossians 4:6)?

Hindsight 42
When Less is More (and Easier)

What if, paradoxically, it became easier to eat less when one… eats less? What if the stomach shrinks, the appetite is stifled, and the energy-producing endorphins are increased? What if the sensational appetite is suppressed and replaced by a periodic true hunger that can be more easily controlled? What if the body (and mind) become accustomed to a low-calorie diet, and the body more calmly goes about its business of metabolizing excess fat to meet the body's energy needs? What if the body (and mind) can then graciously accept the small portions offered it? What if this meant learning to live on the edge of true hunger rather than on the unhealthy path of appetite-driven hunger?

What if both external, healthy calories and internal fat calories from one's own fat breakdown or catabolism (called gluconeogenesis) worked together in a balance of nutrition like they were designed to? What if a little intake by mouth and a little extraction from within were the norm for a healthy body?

What if these minimalistic eating habits of health were analogous to other physical, emotional, and mental balances, where the health of each can only be completely fulfilled from within, spiritually, by God? What if people, instead, sought fulfillment from an excess of anything

external rather than from a daily spiritual communion with God? What if TV, entertainment, gaming, working, family, and anything in this temporal life could not provide fulfillment apart from the constant pursuit and priority of a deeper fellowship with God? What if, even less (of the world) was always more (with God)?

What if, *"MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD"* (Matthew 4:4b)? What if, *"These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full"* (John 15:11), *"the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard you hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 4:7), *"And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 4:19)?

What if one could then find the fullest peace and purpose in God and in life under any deprivation? What if less in this life is more in Jesus? What if, *"did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?* (James 2:5), *"He has said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.' Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me"* (2 Corinthians 12:9), and *"For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it"* (Matthew 16:25)?

Hindsight 43
Blood Flow

What if blood pressure was normally elevated during exercise and baseline while at rest? What if this is because the brain increases or decreases blood flow to about 600 muscles in the body, depending on their activity? What if blood pressure was also elevated by other factors such as stress, fright, sickness, injury, or other life problems? What if, like exercise, these factors made large demands for blood to deliver oxygen and nutrients as well as remove waste products? What if that meant more blood had to be pushed by the heart, which resulted in increased blood pressure?

What if another need for increased blood flow involved the digestive system, which comprises a large number of tissues and organs? What if the digestive system included the mouth, esophagus, stomach, small intestine, and large intestine? What if it also included organs such as the liver, spleen, pancreas, and fat tissues? What if, when activated, all these digestive tissues and organs required more oxygen and nutrients, which in turn required increased blood flow to get there? What if, for example, an adult has a digestive tract that is about 30 feet long, with 22 feet being the small intestine? What if the intake of one meal took 6-8 hours to process through the small intestine and then 1-2 days more of processing in the

large intestine? What if, however, a meal was consumed every 4-6 hours, and this means that the small intestine was still working on the previous meal or two before the next meal went in? What if digestion represented work for the body that required energy, oxygen, nutrients, and the removal of waste products? What if the constant input of food necessitated increased blood flow that contributes to higher blood pressure just like exercise, except without the aerobic and circulation benefits?

What if a healthy individual eating well-spaced, small amounts of healthy food had digestive-related blood flow that was not taxing the heart and the body, but an unhealthy, obese person eating closely spaced, large amounts of unhealthy food was constantly taxing? What if a low-calorie diet (LCD) dramatically eased the heart from the burden of digestion, and blood pressure was reduced within a week of starting such a diet? What if the body was quickly restored to its normal function of taking in a small amount of food every 6 hours, breaking that down, absorbing out the good stuff, and then packing up all the unusable parts for later expulsion? What if the good stuff went to cells all through the body to bring them energy and other nutrients rather than going back to the liver to be converted to fat molecules that were then shuffled off and incorporated into adipose tissue that also needed more blood? What if, after only a short time of calorie restriction, the body issued a big sigh of relief?

What if the dynamics of blood flow is a great analogy of how God's grace and mercy are for the spiritual life but not for the flesh? What if grace and mercy are the spiritual "blood flow" that go to either exercised muscles of faith or to the worldly fat buildup of our lives? What if our lives are mostly lived for ourselves and our love of the world, but His grace and mercy still flow for us to repent

in, *"Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?"* (Romans 2:4)? What if, in contrast, His grace and mercy are for *"those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life;"* (Romans 2:7)?

What if His grace and mercy for fat will expire, for example, in Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11), in the Corinthian believers' misuse of the Lord's supper as, *"For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep"* (1 Corinthians 11:30) and for, *"sin leading to death"* (1 John 5:16b)? What if, *"So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh – for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live"* (Romans 8:12-13)?

What if saving faith is to hear and follow all that Jesus says is part of eternal life? What if that belief is consuming His ways as the bread of life rather than our ways of the flesh and the world as the junk food of death?

What if, *"If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water'"* (John 7:37-38), *"I have food to eat that you do not know about"* (John 4:32), and *"My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work"* (John 4:34)? What if the self-emptying of holiness and the muscles of faith do require a life of effort? What if believing Jesus to follow Him is not "works of the law," but life in Him as He defined it? What if following Him is always exercising the muscles of faith while minimizing the fat of this world, but *"the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us"* (Romans 8:18)?

Hindsight 44
The Weighted-Down Life

What if we are commanded to *"Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be* weighted down *with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap; for it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the earth. But keep on the alert at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man"* (Luke 21:34-36)?

What if a "weighted down" life also occurred from obesity and poor eating? What if, for instance, the loss of only 5 pounds from dieting could be understood by lifting a 5-lb. weight and carrying it all day to realize that we no longer have to carry that? What if the same comparisons were made with 10- or 20-pound weights? What if it seemed incredible to be carrying that much extra weight around? What if these comparisons made it easy to understand why the body was not happy with a "weighted-down" life of obesity and poor eating, and responded with so many health problems? What if these problems were actually God's mercy to warn and wean us off that life? What if periodically doing these weight comparisons helped motivate us to start an LCD, lose more weight, or keep the weight off?

What if, when a person first experiences Jesus' forgiveness and mercy, the "weighted down" feeling of sin is removed and there is a tremendous relief of conscience in guilt, shame, and fear? What if the book, *Pilgrim's Progress*, uses this symbolism extensively?

What if, once a person comes to Jesus and is "born again," there are dozens of New Testament verses that tell us about the riches, blessings, freedom, grace, security, dependability, and faithfulness we have from God through His Son, Jesus? What if there is no longer a need for the guilt, shame, and fear that we once had? What if we were repeatedly told of the riches we now have in Christ, and the inheritance of royalty that we will have, and that the main thing, now, is to rejoice, celebrate, and praise God? What if, biblically, this could be summarized as having become *"rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing"* (Revelation 3:17b)?

What if, however, continual repentance from current sin is still necessary to "keep the weight off"? What if failure to live a repentant life would still produce the "weighted down" warning of Jesus, above, with spiritual "fat weight" from dissipation such as gaming, social media, and most entertainment; drunkenness or sensuality of the world's lusts; and the worries of life for money, insurance, and comfort? What if these hampered one's spiritual life to rob them of their joy, peace, and purpose in Jesus, and set them up for His End Times tribulation and judgment?

What if all the emphasis on rejoicing because the weight of sin was taken off by being born again, however, failed to emphasize the equal calling for a life-long fight to keep the weight off with a spiritual diet of following Jesus' teachings, commandments, warnings, and judgments? What if failure to confess and repent at the

level Jesus taught – by laying down one's life in order to find it – would make one spiritually fat and unfit? What if the whole verse on riches and wealth used above were *"Because you say, 'I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,' and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked"* (Revelation 3:17)?

What if Jesus repeatedly warned us on how to keep the weight off with such commands as, *"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy"* (Matthew 5:7), *"Do not judge, and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned"* (Luke 6:37), and *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad"* (2 Corinthians 5:10)? What if spiritual fat (like body fat) could only be kept off by 1) repentance from not following Jesus' commands and then 2) walking forward to fulfill them each day? What if Jesus gave us many teachings and examples to follow for a real Christian life, and we need to take His red-letter words in both the Gospels and Revelation literally and personally?

Hindsight 45
The Diet-Plan Leash

What if there were dozens, even hundreds, of different diet plans with the goal of getting people to eat healthier and lose weight? What if, however, the plans were all just variations of, "this *type* of food is ok, but that type is not," or "this amount of food is ok, but that amount is not," or "there is a specific time to eat and a specific time not to"? What if an unlimited number of combinations could be used to construct (money-making) "new" and "effective" diet plans?

What if, whichever variation is used, most plans won't be only raw vegetables and water, because each plan is designed to retain some enjoyment of food without completely sacrificing all appetite and taste? What if this sounds reasonable since most people 1) like to eat, 2) like good food, and 3) still need to participate in a society where food is integral to socializing and entertaining?

What if, however, people still fail diet plans because most people 1) like to eat, 2) like good food, and 3) still need to participate in a society where food is integral to socializing and entertaining? What if these reasons actually reflect a deeper "love" of food that was intrinsic to their life values? What if this love of food or its lifestyle will always be a type of "leash" that slowly or abruptly tugs us back into poor eating habits?

What if, therefore, a lifetime of successful dieting still requires constantly changing one's attitudes about 1) liking to eat, 2) liking good food, and 3) needing to participate in a society where food is integral to socializing and entertaining? What if, without this change (or at least a continual fight for change), one will always be on a mental/emotional leash to the habit of eating the wrong food (sensuality) and/or too much food (gluttony), no matter how temporarily successful a given diet plan was? What if all this is to say that it isn't a particular diet plan that must be mastered but the love of food, the sensuality of food, and the mental or emotional codependence of food that must be recognized and fought against?

What if proof of this concept is seen from a changed perspective of food and eating by those who have lost significant weight and manage to keep it off? What if, similarly, those who have never struggled with eating and obesity do not usually display the same level of love, passion, and/or co-dependence for food and eating as an average obese person?

What if the root problem of unsuccessful diets is that the love of food is greater than the love of being healthy and maintaining a healthy weight? What if getting rid of one leash meant being willing to take on a different leash? What if the leash for love for food had to be replaced with the leash for the love of health? What if the love of food meant a total disregard for the love of health and, conversely, the love of health resulted in a constant disregard for the love of food?

What if, however, the love of health over food took a lot of mental and physical work, and that effort would be necessary for the rest of one's life? What if the rewards were worth the effort? What if each person must identify their own mental and physical leashes to food? What if,

for instance, some mental leashes started with sensual food advertisements on TV? What if the smell of cooking or other people eating and enjoying their food triggered the wrong food desires? What if standing in the kitchen or looking in the fridge was a mental leash? What if all these things were an inevitable part of life, but could also be fought by looking away from the TV, anticipating temptations at mealtimes, prepping healthy food to limit pondering others' food, and forcing oneself to physically leave the kitchen and think about something else besides food? What if a small walk outside, looking out the window, or envisioning one's body getting stronger were all effective at making the food leash go slack and replacing the old leash with a new lease of health and life? What if, over time, one's attitude about food and health changed, and the body got healthier? What if, however, the battle must always be maintained, and the mind must always be on the alert?

Hindsight 46
Old Leashes or New Leases

What if the idea of "leash or lease" is important in the whole process of the Christian life? What if Paul extends the "leash" concept to how our spirits are subjected as slaves to either an unrighteous or righteous way of living? What if he said, *"Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness"* (Romans 6:16-18)?

What if the New Testament uses the word "slave" 65 times, not to promote the enslavement of people, but to illustrate the spirit and dedication that individuals will have to either a life for or a life apart from God? What if another well-known scriptural example is *"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light"* (Matthew 11:28-30)? What if this is a good example of replacing the burdens (or leashes) of an old life

with a different burden (a yoke with Jesus) for a new life, which is much lighter and provides rest for the soul? What if the idea of a "yoke" was a pretty solid type of leash (think of a young ox yoked together with an older ox as the older teaches the younger how to work together), but the work was found to be surprisingly less burdensome and restful for the soul? What if working with Jesus in the type of life He laid out for us, for example, in His Sermon on the Mount, meant forsaking the old life we had to pursue His teachings and commandments? What if these things will often sound horrendous to our old selves, but will give us surprising peace, purpose, and power in a new life that is yoked in following Christ's life? What if, for example, forgiving others, no matter what they did, wiped away our bitterness toward them and toward life itself? What if showing mercy and being a peacemaker opened our eyes to the great love God has for the world and us? What if, by seeking the last place in life, we found that more of our life needs were met?

What if the concepts of leash, lease, slave, yoke, and burdens are present throughout the New Testament to teach us how to spiritually grow up and live once we are born again? What if another spiritual-leash example is *"but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many"* (Mark 10:43b-45)?

What if a life of shaking off the leashes of an old life for the lease on a new life was found in serving God and others as Jesus commanded, and it's the only way life can have purpose and our eternal life share in the glory of God? What if we are admonished many times to keep going in, *"Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due*

time we will reap if we do not grow weary" (Galatians 6:9), *"But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good"* (2 Thessalonians 3:13), and *"For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart"* (Hebrews 12:3)?

Hindsight 47
Daily Hunger Patterns

What if the calorie-restricted diet was going well, and this meant that a daily allotment of calories was established, eating out was curtailed, healthy meal choices were ingrained in one's mind, and snacking was brought under control? What if some (or many) pounds have come off, the blood pressure was lower, and one's body felt less taxed and more active?

What if, during days or weeks of dieting, one noticed a daily pattern of periodic hunger? What if one could even tell what time of day it was by a hunger flare-up or type of hunger? What if, for example, the flare-up occurred at 10 am and 3 pm, respectively? What if the most intense time of hunger was an hour or two before dinner? What if there were also a couple of hours of annoying appetite-type hunger (like snacking) between dinner and bedtime? What if they became predictable?

What if, first, these patterns of hunger are a good sign because the calorie restriction is working – the body is finding its energy internally rather than externally, and the stomach is empty and shrinking? What if much of the digestive tract is at rest and the burden is off the liver and pancreas (to process) and the heart (to distribute) all the excess junk calories?

What if these patterns were a predictable, short part of each day that could be anticipated and endured without panicking? What if knowing they wouldn't last indefinitely helped us get through them, and plans could be made to stay busy during those times? What if, for example, one could exercise, chew gum, eat some raw vegetables, or drink some warm, low-calorie beverage, broth, or vegetable juice? What if each of these things can fool the stomach into quietness until the next meal?

What if, spiritually, all hungers and appetites of the flesh could be recognized as only temporary responses that will go away? What if feelings of lust, anger, malice, indignation, or covetousness could be recognized as short episodes that the mind can command and dominate until they go away?

What if we are told to fight these good fights by fleeing temptation, working out our salvation in fear and trembling, not giving the devil any opportunity, not letting the sun set on our anger, not sinning in our anger, keep forgiving, keep showing mercy, avoiding enticements at all corners, confessing our sins to each other, keeping our eyes off this world and on Jesus, and seeking God's forgiveness and the forgiveness of others when failures do occur (1 Corinthians 6:18, 2 Timothy 2:22, Ephesians 4:26, Matthew 6:14-15, James 1:14, James 5:16, Matthew 14:29-30, 1 John 1:8-10)? What if it's the fight that matters, and it's the fight that brings results and reminds us of the hope to come?

Hindsight 48
Echoes of Love

What if one ate dinner but then felt nagged by an appetite to continue eating? What if that appetite was not hunger, but a remembrance of the enjoyment of eating and the relationship of eating and relaxation? What if this appetite was only an "echo of love" for food, and it must be waved away for a couple of hours? What if eating some raw vegetables helped make the appetite go away? What if the appetite was really just a flimsy thing that could be contained, yet if not contained, it could be a scary thing with the power to wreak long-term havoc on the body?

What if appetite will always be with us throughout life, but in reality, it is only a periodic, thin veneer that can be easily ripped through with a little mental effort, patience, and strategizing? What if, as a Christian, it was to be a daily way of life, even as Jesus told us, *"If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross* daily *and follow Me"* (Luke 9:23)? What if Paul said, *"I affirm, brethren, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die* daily*"* (1 Corinthians 15:31)? What if, like daily physical food and drink, we had a daily need for the spiritual bread of life and living water of Jesus? What if we must diet on the physical food but feast on the spiritual food? What if Jesus said, *"I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he*

who believes in Me will never thirst" (John 6:35)? What if a spiritual appetite could replace all physical appetites? What if it's still true that *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied"* (Matthew 5:6)?

What if, however, this daily replacement of physical food (or other appetites) for spiritual food required some work? What if Jesus said, *"Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal"* (John 6:27)? What if Jesus, by example, also worked for this food because, *"My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work"* (John 4:34)? What if, for our part, it required a little effort, patience, and strategizing? What if we are told to *"Resist the devil, and he will flee from you"* (James 4:7b) and *"Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak"* (Matthew 26:41)? What if there were all kinds of "works" to be done including prayer, mercy, helps, peacemaking, and the bearing of other's burdens? What if Jesus said, *"My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working"* (John 5:17b)? What if these things (like carrots on the stomach) would hamper any of the body's "echo-of-love" appetites?

Hindsight 49
Is a Low BMR the Enemy?

What if basal metabolic rate (BMR) were defined as the amount of energy that a body uses for the basic metabolic processes of staying alive? What if it were all the energy the body used while at rest, apart from eating, digesting, exercising, or even moving? What if the BMR accounted for 60-75% of daily caloric intake?

What if BMRs are found to vary widely between individuals, genders, and ethnicities? What if BMR also varied *within* a person as they got older, gained or lost weight, changed their diet, were hot or cold, or were sick or stressed? What if, regarding diet, one suspects they have a lower BMR because it seems harder to lose weight as they get older, diet longer, or have lost significant weight? What if these observations are made by many frustrated dieters? What if "the struggle is real" and the frustration can lead to abandoning the diet?

What if a low BMR seems bad, but research has suggested possible health benefits connected to it? What if associations between increased lifespan and low BMR have been observed in animal and human studies? What if mechanisms proposed for this longevity include lower metabolisms that create less overall workload by the body? What if lower BMR was also associated with less production of free radicals in living tissues (i.e., less

oxidative stress) and increased DNA repair? What if these things, however, are not confirmed, largely because of the tremendous variability of BMR among and within people?

What if a lower BMR may be good, and those not seeing fast weight loss shouldn't abandon their dieting efforts? What if dieting must first be for one's health on the inside rather than for better looks on the outside, and the important goal of a diet is to reduce the stress of digestion, excess calories, and the chronic injuries they cause? What if diet, rather than weight loss, was the primary contributor to better health?

What if, likewise, spiritual health from within is always biblically more important than outward appearance? What if changing the way we think about others, shunning our rights and possessions, fasting, and laying down our lives for God were all actions that healed the inside to flow outside to others?

What if the frustrating variability of BMR between and within people was actually God-given to each person? What if the variability is also a good analogy for the variability of faith that God gives each person? What if Jesus call this "talents" in, *"To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability"* (Matthew 25:15a)? What if Paul said, *"For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith"* (Romans 12:3) and *"Only, as the Lord has assigned to each one, as God has called each, in this manner let him walk. And so I direct in all the churches"* (1 Corinthians 7:17)?

What if, like BMR, each person's faith and calling is variable? What if, spiritually, each person's calling and life, whether small or great, is tailored by God and has

significant purpose? What if Lazarus, the beggar at the rich man's gate, was rich in faith by waiting for God's deliverance? What if the rich man, in turn, chose not to use his allotted faith to help Lazarus? What if the New Testament records many small or great ways of faith to glorify God, and it is the use of those ways that will make a person great in His kingdom? What if Jesus is still saying, *"But many who are first will be last, and the last, first"* (Mark 10:31) and *"Sitting down, He called the twelve and said to them, 'If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all'"* (Mark 9:35)?

What if there are low- or high-BMR faiths in people, and each Christian's utilization of that faith has more value than gold in God's kingdom? What if the seemingly inconsequential low-BMR faith people are the ones seeking to live by B-attitudes, shunning the desire to call others a fool, reconcile with others at all cost, avoiding lust, turning the other cheek, praying for those who persecute them, greeting those who do not greet them, and loving those who do not love them (see Matthew 5)?

What if any level of BMR-faith is meaningful because *"we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them"* (Ephesians 2:10)?

Hindsight 50
Starvation

What if dieting to lose weight is hard? What if achieving a healthy weight requires constantly depriving one's appetite and enduring uncomfortable hunger for a certain amount of time? What if one had spent years eating for pleasure, sensuality, and satiation, and the end result was morbid obesity and the collapse of internal health? What if an equal effort of self-control and perseverance was required to completely lose *all* the weight? What if there was simply no way around it? What if this principle might be seen in Jesus saying, *"Woe to you who are well-fed now, for you shall be hungry"* (Luke 6:25a)?

What if that is depressing, but the benefits of being healthier, more active, and alive can be seen almost immediately and long before the weight is completely lost? What if it's worth getting over the enormity of it and getting on with the self-control and perseverance of it?

What if the time required for the self-control and perseverance needed to lose *all* the weight were based on differences between a calorie-*reduced*, calorie-*restricted*, or calorie-*starvation* diet? What if a calorie-*reduced* diet might be defined as giving up a few bad eating habits thought to contribute to weight gain? What if, for example, reducing calories by giving up ice-cream or not eating after 7 pm resulted in weight loss? What if a calorie-

restricted diet was defined as both changing those habits and budgeting total daily calories to a defined amount, and that effort resulted in the loss of 1-2 lbs. per week? What if a calorie-*starvation* diet might be defined as restricting food intake to the point where the body spends the majority of a day in caloric deprivation?

What if, in an imaginary world of easy dieting, calorie reduction and restriction worked just as hoped, and one hardly noticed the eating changes, the excess weight just melted away, and no one ever needed to consider a calorie starvation diet? What if, with more imagination, the diets worked great with any basal metabolic rate, regardless of how many times one had previously lost and gained weight, or how old one was?

What if, in the real world, the body actually stores fat to supply a caloric reserve to use when conditions of caloric starvation exist or when the body is under extreme stress? What if body fat will mainly be mobilized and used when the energy intake (calories eaten) is lower than the body's daily energy needs? What if a definition of the body's daily needs included a slow or fast BMR plus daily activity? What if, therefore, caloric starvation is defined as not consuming enough calories for the body's daily use?

What if successful dieting is tremendously variable among people? What if most people have heard of those who just give up ice cream and lose 20 lbs. or achieve the same just by eating healthier, controlling the time of day they eat and don't eat, or skewing the source of nutrients (e.g. low carbs, high protein, or high fat)? What if others, however, seem to never be able to lose substantial weight despite major prolonged efforts of diet and exercise? What if, therefore, each person's ability to metabolize fat will vary for calorie-reduction, restriction,

or starvation diets throughout life? What if it's up to each person to figure out and adjust their diet throughout life?

What if the real issue, however, is not success from the variety of diets but to figure out how not to abandon them throughout life? What if the issue is to keep at it, regardless of the many changes in life's circumstances and bodily needs? What if it's not about the outward goal to *look* thinner but the inward goal to *be* healthy, and any form of caloric diet will help that?

What if, regardless of the status of health and obesity, the issue is to be a good steward of the temple (the body) that God has given us? What if this is always the goal, no matter what happened in past years, last week, yesterday, or this morning? What if, like calories, we must still be in the world but not of the world and starvation from *"all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world"* (1 John 2:16) will always be the fight and goal for the best spiritual and physical health? What if just a reduction or restriction will always promote cheating and license, and completely contrasts the pursuit of *"For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it"* (Matthew 16:25)? What if, in this epic lose and life, we are still commanded and expected to 1) take one day at a time (Matthew 6:34), 2) forget what lies behind (Philippians 3:13), and 3) *"press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 3:14)?

Hindsight 51
On Becoming "Skinny Jesus"

What if the Christian life were analogous to calorie-reduced, restricted, and starvation diets? What if following Jesus is hard and, like dieting, looks overwhelming and depressing? What if the goal of following Jesus was *to become* like Jesus and required perseverance to endure the temptations and trials of this life for a lifetime rather than for a quick, easy fix? What if, like the endless self-denial of calorie deprivation, this reflects Jesus saying, *"If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and WILL THEN REPAY EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS"* (Matthew 16:24b-27)?

What if it's one thing to "get saved" and another thing for salvation to have its purpose of becoming like Jesus? What if, using the diet analogy to illustrate the spiritual Christian life, we are "saved" for the purpose of glorifying God by losing the "worldly fat" and gaining the "spiritual fit"? What if, however, the opposite was actually

taught in modern Christianity? What if, using church teachings to illustrate the physical, a Christian doctor said to a morbidly obese person not to beat themselves up about it and that it was not a problem to continue eating poorly and to be fat because Jesus has forgiven you of the gluttony and sensuality that made you obese? What if the doctor said, "You don't need to work for change because 1) His forgiveness for you is a finished work, 2) dieting is a 'good work' that would insult His free gift, and 3) your efforts would be like filthy rags in His eyes"? What if this were also like saying, "I'm forgiven for my eating and obesity, and my sins are covered by His blood; so, when God sees me, He sees skinny Jesus instead of fat me"?

What if, opposite to these modern church teachings, we are actually saved to work at and even die for becoming like "skinny Jesus" (according to the acts of holiness and righteousness He taught)? What if salvation only started with a sinner's prayer but was proven out as true salvation by the sanctification of a life of faith that pursued "skinny Jesus"?

What if it were possible to "get saved" but then live a Christian life according to only a worldly- *reduced* or worldly-*restricted* life, but the life was, in fact, not according to Jesus' red-letters and thus still worldly? What if this resulted only in the appearance of living for Jesus but did not really approach the world/self-*starvation* life of Jesus' teaching that *"whoever loses his life for My sake will find it"*?

What if our real peace, purpose, and power from Jesus came only when a worldly/self *starvation* was found through literal belief and obedience to Jesus' teaching, commandments, warnings, and judgments? What if the starvation (rather than reduction or restriction) of worldly things involves emptying our love of this world to fill that

void with both the *holiness* (purity) and *righteousness* (good works) of God? What if worldly starvation included abandoning worldly entertainment and pleasures (including food), and replacing them with *"whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things"* (Philippians 4:8b)? What if this was spiritual holiness? What if the spiritual fitness of righteousness came through His good works living through us? What if those activities included forgiveness of others, showing mercy to others who wrong us or need help? What if we are to bear one another's burdens, not be covetous, and seek the last place in life for others' sake? What if we are saved to be skinny Jesus: clean (holy) on the inside and active (righteous) on the outside?

What if the details of worldly starvation and spiritual filling were described in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7)? What if His teachings are not laws, but expectations of life for His true children to grow in? What if He continually warned us to look for these things in our lives and to not be deceived into abandoning them (like a diet)? What if our lives will always be variable, but our desires and efforts reflect true saving faith? What if, *"for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord"* (Ephesians 5:8-10)?

Hindsight 52
Stumbling Blocks are not Excuses

What if there wasn't enough time in the day to eat healthy? What if one became too hungry and the only food available was unhealthy? What if healthy food costs too much? What if a crazy schedule didn't allow for eating at a set schedule? What if socializing meant that everyone expected you to eat? What if all these things made you lose focus on your diet?

What if all these things were, however, normal challenges to any diet that resulted in eating too much or eating the wrong kinds of food? What if it were important to forgive slips in our diet? What if we shouldn't be too hard on ourselves and shouldn't beat ourselves up about these things? What if we shouldn't feel ashamed about mistakes? What if having a positive attitude fosters motivation and success in life? What if, without good attitudes, we would become too frustrated and give up on our diet or even our walk through life and feel defeated?

What if, however, the process of forgiving ourselves, dismissing the shame, and shrugging off the dietary mistakes made us accustomed and comfortable with the mistakes? What if, slowly, they didn't bother us so much, and this led to a little more food here, and a little less healthy food there? What if the result was that those little mistakes still stimulated our appetite for comfort

foods the next day, for which we forgive ourselves the next day and the next day and the next – and then we find ourselves enslaved again to our appetite and its resulting obesity and related diseases? What if it was only the next doctor or ER visit that shocked us back into the reality of a pending "death by food"? What if, worse, even the medical visits no longer greatly affect us because we had come to believe that we're *entitled* to the excuses because "that's just the way life is"? What if we become justified in our own minds to make those mistakes? What if we believe that "most people are in the same boat," "it's not our fault," "that's how God made me," and "only God can judge me, anyway"?

What if the real mistake isn't ruining the day's diet by eating the unexpected cake at work or the potluck after church, but by accepting the lies that "it's all good," "it wasn't my fault," "I'm just going with the flow," or "I'll do better tomorrow"? What if the lie of "I'll do better tomorrow" never seemed to happen, and the tomorrows only got worse and not better?

What if the true dietary mistake is in entitling oneself to the mistakes, because those mistakes will eventually put one on a gurney for a life-altering, life-threatening health crisis? What if doctor and ER visits are serious wake-up calls to remove the dieting stumbling blocks that other people say are normal and justifiable? What if we try to be a little harder on ourselves, wrestle head-on with mistakes and desires, and rely on Jesus', rather than our own, forgiveness? What if we need to endure the temporary guilt, shame, and fear of dietary stumbling blocks to get us back on track? What if it's better to be a "too-hard-on-yourself" defeatist than to be defeated by obesity?

What if, however, the feeling of defeatism was only a temporary steppingstone to continue the diet rather than a life of guilt and shame? What if attacking the diet again immediately brings back the blessings and strength of body and mind obtained just from pursuing a healthy lifestyle? What if the only path, regardless of the stumbling blocks, was to "not quit quitting," "keep on keeping on," or "remain calm and carry on"? What if we said, like the Apostle Paul, who was under compulsion to preach the Gospel to the world around him, say, *"'woe is me if I do not…'* (1 Corinthians 9:16b) continue my diet to take care of my body, which is a temple of God and His Holy Spirit within me"? What if, rather than forgiving ourselves and being easier on ourselves, we leave forgiveness and grace to Jesus and keep working? What if Jesus' forgiveness and grace are for us to continue in His way of endurance, perseverance, and holiness, rather than to be used as an excuse to continue in the ways of unholiness? What if, again, we say like Paul did, *"Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead"* (Philippians 3:13)? What if, in regard to our own temple or in any other aspect of life that Jesus commanded us (in holiness, purity, forgiveness, mercy, compassion, bearing other's burdens, seeking the last place, or witnessing of Him), we always make it our goal to *"press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 3:14)?

Hindsight 53

"You Surely Will Not Die" – Death Motto

What if, relative to healthy eating, we compared God's first warning *about* sin with Satan's first deception *for* sin? What if God warned Adam not to eat fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in, *"for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die"* (Genesis 2:16-17)? What if Satan deceived Eve about this warning with *"you surely will not die!"* (Genesis 3:3-4)? What if these are the "prototype" warning and deception for all past and present sins ever committed by people? What if most people (including Christians) no longer believe God's warning that *"you will surely die"* and are deceived into believing *"you surely will not die"* or suffer because of sin in the world and in ourselves? What if it's believed that suffering and death are based on statistics and biology rather than in God? What if all physical life were firmly tethered to the spiritual, and therefore suffering and death were totally connected to the spiritual?

What if the Bible still regards gluttony and sensuality as sins, yet the mentality towards being overweight is usually not about self-control, discipline, fear of the Lord, or eating for Jesus, but that "some people are just that body type," "this is the way God made me," "I was born with a large appetite," "my family has always

been big eaters," "I'm in God's hands," or "God loves me just as I am"?

What if God's warnings, however, are always given in love, together with a desire that we should pursue a true and full life with Him rather than an empty, dead-end life based on our own ideas of right and wrong? What if heeding His warnings that "sin brings death" set us on a road of true life? What if, with food and over-eating, His warnings are not that we fear a slice of pizza, but that we fear the effects of its sensuality that leads to more slices or a desire for equivalent sensuality throughout life? What if it's about believing the warning, admitting our desire for constant indulgences, and humbling ourselves to do better, either slowly or quickly, and continuously for the rest of our lives? What if a Christian's eating habits also included, *"for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live"* (Romans 8:13)? What if it's about a change in pursuing "the bread of this life" for the "bread of Jesus" in all the ways of self-emptying, holiness, and righteousness that He showed us? What if there is still a passion in life for food, but it becomes for the spiritual food that He offers in John 4:32-38 and *"Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man shall give to you, for on Him the Father, even God, has set His seal"* (John 6:27)?

Hindsight 54
Get Off the Grid

What if you had 5 years of calorie-tracking data on a weight-loss program and then lost it all through a stupid mistake? What if, however, this highlighted the fact that you were paying more attention to foods, calories, and numbers on a scale than to just eating less, fighting sensuality, learning to deal with hunger, and losing weight? What if calorie budgeting was really just a means to "cheat now" in order to "abstain later," but the "abstain" part was usually forgotten? What if calorie counting was really just a way of trying to feel in control of "what can I get away with," even though the diet was really not in control? What if counting meant that an eating mistake ruined the daily calorie budget, which led to mentally throwing in the towel for the rest of the day? What if, despite rigorous counting, the effort only documented 5 years of a failed diet?

What if, instead, one got "off the grid" of monitoring consumption and health habits and started dieting and losing weight the old-fashioned way – eating way less per meal, abstaining from eating between meals, and enduring long periods of hunger? What if doing this brought more focus, ability, and confidence for the hard, "not eating" part of a diet? What if not counting calories helped one forget the mistakes of yesterday (or that

morning) and allowed one to focus on the hours and days ahead? What if this reflected the New Testament verse *"forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead"* (Philippians 3:13)? What if "forgetting what lies behind" put the focus on the benefits *of* the diet rather than our floundering efforts *in* the diet?

Hindsight 55
Get On the Grid

What if getting "off the grid" is a nice idea, but if one could do that, they probably don't need to think about their daily food intake and eating habits, and they probably aren't even overweight? What if being "on the grid" is way better to be aware of calories, types of calories, weight, blood pressure, blood sugar, and exercise? What if it provided a daily gentle reminder (and even fear) to stay on track or get back on track? What if higher blood sugars *should* produce mental alarms? What if that's why they're done? What if just monitoring one's blood sugar at different times of the day also affected between-meal snacking or absent-minded carb intake throughout the day? What if reasonable blood sugar levels throughout the day were a good indication that the diet was ok, and one found that if the diet was ok, the blood pressure was usually ok? What if the first purpose of monitoring wasn't to see overall victories (which is a good second purpose), but to provide real-time awareness of what the diet is doing to the body?

What if Jesus says that Christians, likewise, should be constantly monitoring their thoughts and hearts for their love of themselves, the world, or for His ways? What if His whole Sermon on the Mount was about being aware and making adjustments to the mindset and heart we have

in our interactions with Him and others? What if He covered judging others, forgiving others, looking in lust, calling someone an idiot, seeking the last place, pride or shame of Him, channeling anger and hurt to a purpose and eternal glory, and finding rest, joy, and peace in the troubles and even death in this world? What if Paul said, *"Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?"* (2 Corinthians 13:5)?

What if, as Christians, we do need to constantly monitor ourselves, and do so by examining our reactions and intentions through Jesus' teachings, commandments, warnings, and judgments? What if we do these things to thrive spiritually, and we confess and repent of our mistakes to keep doing them?

Hindsight 56
Defeat the Tempter not the Temptation

What if Jesus tells us to pray *"and do not lead us into temptation…"* (Matthew 6:13a)? What if this is strange because it implies that God Himself would lead us into temptation? What if this, however, was verified by Jesus Who was specifically led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan (Matthew 4:1-11)?

What if the instruction to pray *"lead us not into temptation…"* also implied that we had a heart and mind that were *unwilling* to be tempted? What if this meant that He expected our heart and thoughts to be disinclined, averse, and loath to the very idea of being tempted to sin? What if He, rather, expected that our spirits desired to thrive on fellowship with God, and wanted nothing to do with anything which could alter that fellowship? What if Jesus, when tempted by Satan in the wilderness, did not wrestle with "should I or shouldn't I" but desired with both His heart and mind (regardless of His body being exposed and starving in the wilderness for 40 days) that His life be only with His Father? What if it then became a swipe with the sword of His mouth (His word), rather than a "struggle," that stopped each attack of the Tempter?

What if, in contrast, we were not fellowshipping daily with God and we had an unrecognized desire of our flesh so as to live for it rather than be constrained by Jesus'

ways? What if, although we acknowledged that "this or that" sin was bad and that we should make every effort to avoid it and stop it, there was part of us that actually liked the sin and wanted to succumb to it at some point? What if we conned ourselves into thinking that we could fight each temptation, and even if a mistake was made, then "all's forgiven, anyways"? What if this mind game, however, deceived us into believing that "we were at least trying"? What if this process went on for years until we thought it wasn't worth the fight, and our conscience became seared to its spiritual implications?

What if James said, *"But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death"* (James 1:13-15)? What if this means that the "lust" is already present before the temptation comes? What if lust is latent and just waiting for an excuse to become active? What if, for example, the *desire* to lust caused one to stand in front of the fridge "to resist" or make brownies "for others" while trying to diet? What if the *desire to lust* led to watching immoral content on social media or movies, or to say things to someone that will hurt them or start an argument? What if one either has or doesn't have a mindset that's looking to be tempted? What if this mindset is where the real battle of sin is, rather than fighting the temptation with a mind already set on losing?

What if Paul, likewise, described this process in *"For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it*

is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him" (Romans 8:5-9)?

What if, going back to *"lead us not into temptation,"* the predictive factor in yielding or not yielding to temptation occurs in the willingness or unwillingness to be tempted in the first place? What if Jesus, although led by the Holy Spirit to be tempted, had no desire to be tempted? What if Jesus willingly fasted without food or drink for 40 days (yet miraculously stayed alive by the Holy Spirit), and only then became hungry? What if Satan then tempted Jesus to make and eat food? What if, although starving, Jesus did not need to fight or struggle with this temptation because He already detested the idea of satisfying the flesh over the spirit? What if, because of His mindset, the temptation could not cause Him to be *"carried away and enticed by* [His] *own lust* [bodily hunger]" because the delight of His spirit, soul, and body was for His Father, God, rather than for the needs of His flesh? What if, in this mindset, God's word was a sword that could be easily swung with, *"It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD'* (Matthew 4:4)? What if His Spirit did not *struggle* to say this but *soared* in saying it?

What if, at that point, Jesus was also proof that a physical man can live without food since His body was beyond sustainable levels of dehydration and malnourishment? What if His physical body was only alive by the Holy Spirit, and His mind was completely satisfied by fellowship with His heavenly Father? What if,

regardless of His body's critical condition, He had no willingness to live for or be controlled by the flesh?

What if we say that this doesn't apply to us because we aren't Jesus, and much more was expected of Him? What if we say this was His specific calling to be tempted and not ours? What if, however, Jesus called each of us to great or small situations that will require us to lay down our heart, soul, mind, or body for Him? What if Jesus' temptations in the wilderness were for us to know that the physical world is not our provider, even unto death, but God's spiritual world is? What if real life in Jesus were, *"But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ"* (Philippians 3:7-8)?

What if, *"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood* [including its lusts] *but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places"* (Ephesians 6:12)?

Hindsight 57
Temptations vs. Trials

What if temptations and trials were different biblical concepts? What if both were important for our dieting efforts and our day-to-day spiritual and physical lives? What if each could be considered as a type of testing for us? What if, however, they were each designed to develop different aspects of God's character in us? What if both were difficult things to go through, but their purpose was to reshape our mind, soul, body, and spirit?

What if a general definition of trials were the loss of convenience, stability, and certainty in life? What if temptations were defined as the attempt to replace the love of God with the love of one's life or the love of the world? What if trials tested our faith in God under different conditions, while temptations tested the passion we have for our heavenly Father?

What if trials and temptations could occur separately or in combination and were not always easy to tell apart? What if, for instance, Jesus overcame Satan's first temptation after not eating or drinking for 40 days, but His body underwent great physical deterioration (since angels later came to minister to Him)? What if He also had been alone and exposed to the wilderness elements for 40 days, and all these things were physical and mental trials before the temptations even started? What if it was one

thing to be tempted when hungry but another to be tempted in a physically ravaged body on the verge of death? What if the coming temptations of comfort or the seemingly permanent security of never having to go through this again and being in control of His life had to be rejected in the same ravaged body? What if (when applied to the ridiculous level of our highly pampered lives) the *trials* of life made the *temptations* even more difficult?

What if the purpose of this world, however, was to be a spiritual proving ground where God first gives us spiritual rebirth through salvation and then raises and molds us into His Son's character (holiness) and conduct (righteousness)? What if we are not citizens under the laws of a celestial government, but are like children subject to both the grace and discipline of a perfect Father? What if this means we must learn how to live again, and trials and temptations are integral to the learning curve? What if they won't be done perfectly, but they *must* go to completion for our faith journey in these temporary bodies? What if the following verses made us like Jesus: *"Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing"* (James 1:2-4), *"And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us* (Romans 5:3-5)?

Hindsight 58
The Politics of Dieting

What if politics could influence one's diet, or dieting could influence one's politics? What if politics is a strong part of one's worldview, and a worldview is defined as a concept of what life is all about, or a concept of what the world should be about? What if then, politics were linked to one's expectations, sense of justice, hopes, and dreams? What if the condition of the world around us was either at the forefront of our minds or in the background of our thinking?

What if, in contrast, Christians have a different worldview from the Bible, which says: *"And he* (Satan) *led Him* (Jesus) *up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, 'I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish'"* (Luke 4:5-6) and *"We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one"* (1 John 5:19)?

What if this spiritual worldview says that all the kingdoms in this world (and their politics) were temporary, banal, and bent on one deception: to live and die apart from a living faith in God and His ways? What if, in fact, there is only one kingdom that has any meaning, purpose, motivation, reward, and future? What if that is

the kingdom of heaven which God desires all people to find, prepare for, and live for while still on earth? What if the world and all life were not about physical life but a proving ground in which to find and live out either a spiritual life or a spiritual death? What if the only true worldview was found in His laws and ways, which He first wrote on human hearts, then on stone tablets, and then on the conscience of those who truly believe in His Son to follow Jesus' words, examples, and life?

What if, in politics, all monarchs, heads of state, and leaders of political parties fell under *"there is no* [governing] *authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God"* (Romans 13:1b)? What if, however, no government has ever declared itself to be a representative of Jesus and His ways, and few have adhered for very long in representing themselves as subjects of His Father? What if their perspectives and behaviors did not represent the kingdom of heaven but, more aptly, that of *"the whole world* [which] *lies in the power of the evil one"*?

What if, similarly, the same could be said for the authority of the church and its world views? What if the heads of churches, leaders of denominations, founders of missions, and prominent church voices associated themselves more strongly for or against various political leaders or the world than they do with Jesus, Who is the only leader and head of the church? What if, instead of Jesus' words, examples, and life, Christianity were based on whatever politics, church doctrines, traditions, and platitudes that made it more acceptable, more comfortable, and/or more affluent? What if it is Jesus, however, Who tells us what a true Christian will look like and how their heart's desires will be judged? What if He warns us to evaluate ourselves and others as His true disciples

according to His words, warnings, and impending judgments (Matthew 12:33-37, John 14:21)? What if His word living through us (in contrast to "biblical knowledge") is the signature of true faith in Him?

What if then, politics could influence one's diet, or dieting could influence one's politics? What if the politics of the kingdom of heaven, as told through Jesus' ways, warnings, and impending judgments, changed our worldview and was the passion to focus on the Author and Perfecter of faith and our purpose for dieting? What if persistence in controlling our food and eating for Jesus was a form of worship to Him? What if He will guide our physical lives into our spiritual lives on earth and then into the reward of His glory?

Hindsight 59
***"All Foods are Clean,"* but…**

What if Jesus declared all foods to be clean (Mark 7:19) to know He will bless all foods? What if food, however, can still defile the body by sin? What if the defilement wasn't the physical properties of food but the spiritually based behaviors in consuming it? What if Jesus, in the same passage, said these defiling behaviors include covetousness, sensuality, greed, and foolishness (Mark 7:19-23)? What if Jesus, therefore, turned the problem of food from what one eats to the behaviors in eating it, and the defiling behaviors affected our physical lives?

What if working to remove the behaviors were part of how we express a "saving faith" in Jesus? What if believing Him went past a "just get me to heaven" sinner's prayer to include replacing the food motives of covetousness, sensuality, greed, and foolishness with good eating habits and a low-calorie diet of healthy foods? What if we could then testify that this "working faith" or "living faith" made us feel much better and produced better numbers on the blood pressure and glucose monitors? What if the constant work it took to replace these motives was like a personal revival in our lives and became just another part of "dying to self in order to live for God"?

Hindsight 60
"The Sin Which So Easily Entangles Us"

What if, even though we're forgiven for slips in a diet, the behaviors create an "echo" that affects our minds and dieting efforts? What if, for instance, one bad episode created a fresh, pleasurable memory of satisfaction that distracted us from our diet the next day? What if that second day's distraction compounded over the next days and weeks, delaying our bodies' ability to lose weight and become healthier? What if we still thought we were trying, but the stumbling blocks had made the effort fruitless? What if, without realizing it, we were being led farther away from our revival in physical health? What if, therefore, the real defilement of sin (or periodic gluttony and self-indulgent eating) was its ability to entangle us within it through complacency and forgetfulness?

What if we thought it wasn't a big deal since we knew that *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:9)? What if the mistakes became routine and the forgiveness became routine and, over time, the routine mistakes looked less like mistakes and more like "that's just the way things are" or "I can't help who I am"? What if the real defilement of mistakes – forgiveness without repentance or not even a desire for repentance – eventually robbed us of health and life? What

if Jesus and His Apostles continually warn about this? What if, for instance, the 1 John 1:9 verse also required two flanking verses to make it valid? What if the life-giving promise of "forgiveness" also required the life-humbling attitudes of "*If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us"* and *"If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us* (1 John 1:8,10)? What if, apart from these flanking verses, the use of 1 John 1:9 deceived us into making sin more entangling and more acceptable?

What if this problem goes way beyond eating behaviors? What if God has an enemy whose purpose is to ruin His creation, His plans, and His children? What if that enemy uses food, diet, or any physical blessing of God to do this? What if that enemy also wants his attempts to become theologically ok and part of the normal Christian life? What if, instead of seeking *"If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it"* (Matthew 16:24-25), God's children have instead come to live by: "He loves us as we are," "He is always pleased with us," "we are part of His finished work," "His forgiveness and grace are sufficient," "When He sees us, He only sees Jesus," and "He is smitten by love for us"?

What if the theology of modern Christianity is that God always loves us and is pleased to have us as His children, no matter what we do, rather than Jesus' theology that He died so we can live a life pleasing to Him? What if even Jesus included the requirement to please His Father in, *"He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him"* (John 8:29b)? What if, *"Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him"* (2

Corinthians 5:9), *"(for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord"* (Ephesians 5:9-10), *"and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight"* (1 John 3:22)?

What if the theology that "God is always there for us" has allowed sin to pervade the church? What if it has become common and acceptable to take God's name in vain, make coarse jokes, be entertained by any sensuality and violence, live lives of dissipation, covet any kind of convenience or luxury, short-change others when we can, ignore or even disparage those who are in need, disdain those who do not have our "church values," and consider ourselves to be self-made yet God-protected?

What if the church knows that they are forgiven for any sin, but they are still entangled in it? What if this is referred to in, *"How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace"* (Hebrews 10:29)? What if the church has been deceived, has disregarded Jesus' warnings, has chosen not to fight, and has accepted their "sabbath" rest ahead of schedule without any work to rest from?

What if, instead, we discipline our lives with His holiness and righteousness and not ignore or fight against the discipline that God has for those He loves? What if we *consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin; and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, 'MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE*

OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM; FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES'" (Hebrews 12:3-6)?

Hindsight 61
Healthy and Unhealthy Fear

What if the fear of morbidity and mortality from obesity was a good, rather than bad, thing and was useful for starting a diet, getting healthier, and working to maintain it? What if, however, the idea of living in constant fear and dread in order to be healthy was not a popular motivation for dieting? What if, in addition, most people's minds avoided constant fear by finding both conscious and subconscious ways to soothe, excuse, or forget about morbidity and mortality? What if this is demonstrated by many who resolve to diet after leaving the doctor's office (or emergency room) but are off their diet only days later?

What if the fear response, however, was a specific reaction created by God to protect us from daily risks and from life choices and practices that God's enemy seeks to destroy our lives with? What if fear is meant to be an essential tool for teaching and directing us toward God's ways as taught through His Son? What if fear was never meant to be constant or walked in, but it is to be used as either a steppingstone to get us out of our mistakes and back onto Jesus' path or as a guardrail to keep us from plummeting into sin during the whiteout of temptations?

What if fear were a guardrail in the daily temptations of sensuous foods or overeating, and the fear

that comes from a quick reflection of our current obesity, its diseases, and how our behavior is contributing to them would help clear our minds? What if a shock from the scale, the blood pressure cuff, or the glucose monitor could help keep us in reality? What if moments of fear allowed us to move somewhere else, do something else, and replace the temptation with thoughts of a clean, strong, and healthy life? What if a little fear could conquer a lot of temptation?

What if, alternatively, we had been tempted by food, given in, and found that the sensuality of food had, yet again, led us to more and more indulgences so that the diet slipped or was altogether abandoned? What if the scale, the blood pressure cuff, or the glucose monitor could help snap us back into reality? What if we can use fear as a steppingstone to reflect on the short and long-term consequences of a slipped diet, and help us step back on the path of health?

What if, like any good parent-child relationship, a measure of fear in the parent's authority can protect and instruct a child who is learning how to live? What if, like any other thing of God's creation, the concept of fear is distorted? What if, for instance, fear was so overused that children grew up being afraid to go near a street or a car? What if, alternatively, the concept of fear was taught to be unwanted so that children played in the street and (hopefully still) grew up being casual about traffic, even daring cars to hit them? What if God is the only perfect parent Who will use fear in just the right balance for each of His children?

What if a major strategy of God's enemy throughout history has been to either overuse or dismiss the ideas of fear? What if past centuries have seen the overuse of the fear of God (through the controlling fear of

a church or government), while the current trend is a dismissal of fear by society? What if society, for some time, has been saying and teaching "there is nothing to fear, except fear itself"? What if decades of the "invincibility" deception have worked, leading society (and the church) to believe that all fear is bad and should be conquered? What if, in contrast, the Bible teaches that an unrestricted fear (in contrast to a healthy fear) of God is essential for our protection and growth into the fullest life He has for us? What if, although the modern church can no longer hear, He gives them severe warnings throughout the New Testament? What if He gives these because everything He says and tells us is on how to have real life, and everything outside of Him is real death?

What if, more specifically, Jesus taught a lot about the fear of His Father, and He gave a plethora of warnings, judgments, and consequences that were for believers rather than for the world? What if the New Testament is saturated with these warnings? What if, again, this is because God is life and everything else is death? What if fear of these warnings acts as guardrails or steppingstones to keep us on or get us back on His path of life?

What if, however, all these warnings, judgments, and teachings of the fear of God are doctrinally ignored, downplayed, or negated? What if Jesus, specifically addressing His disciples and those who would follow Him, gave one of His most direct teachings on fear in, *"Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell"* (Matthew 10:28)? What if this teaching on the fear of God was preceded by teaching not to fear the world even during persecution (Matthew 10:16-27)? What if this teaching on the fear of God rather than the world was continued by the promise of God to provide what's

necessary through this short, transitory life (Matthew 10:29-31)? What if Jesus continues teaching the fear of God by the costs of following Him: from confessing Him (Matthew 10:32-33) to the need of losing our lives to gain Him (Matthew 10:34-39)?

What if these warnings are there because He wants us to have His fullest blessing and provision in this life and share His rewards and glory with us in the next? What if Jesus and the New Testament speak just as much of warnings and consequences as of rewards and the sharing of His glory?

What if then, the only thing to fear is not fear itself, but the fear of losing our fear of God? What if this is the only kind of fear that is not only healthy but life-giving for body, soul, and spirit?

Hindsight 62
To Fear or Not to Fear

What if "to fear or not to fear" was the same as "to eat or not to eat"? What if most people gave up a diet out of the fear of being hungry? What if the fear wasn't based on malnutrition or starvation, but the feeling that hunger will never go away, and the idea that they will always have to live that way? What if the hunger, however, was actually superficial and it would go away after 15 minutes to 1 hour? What if the hormones triggered by an empty and shrinking stomach would eventually subside, and the liver would start producing enough energy from all the fat reserves marbling the body? What if one just needs to willfully tell the body to suck it up, keep calm, and carry on? What if each successful endurance of a hunger attack was mentally registered as a victory and produced confidence that one is in control of their body and their health? What if successes were also cumulative to make these types of hunger attacks less frequent, more predictable, and more manageable?

What if, like Paul, it was possible to conquer the fear of the flesh's whining and complaining with, *"but I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified"* (1 Corinthians 9:27)? What if, in addition to food appetites, the fear of "never being able to live like that"

also applied to all the lusts of the flesh and love of the world? What if the flesh's desires and the mind's loves were only based on years of patterning and conditioning from people, TV, social media, and even the church? What if one could take mental control of any desire or appetite, especially when done for God with the power of His indwelling Holy Spirit and Jesus' blood for the forgiveness of errors? What if one could willfully turn away each day from the voices of "more," "it's all good," "love yourself," "treat yourself," and "live life to its fullest" to the peace, purpose, and power found in *"take up his cross and follow Me,"* and *"he who has lost his life for My sake will find it"*? What if the only place to find *"rest for your souls"* in this life is to *"take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me"*?

Hindsight 63
Bitter Disappointments

What if years of dieting efforts have seemed to be for nothing? What if times of success were only washed out by longer times of failure? What if the concept of yo-yo dieting seemed to have been defined by you? What if one made many, many changes to their diet over the years, but to seemingly no avail? What if the effort to lose weight seemed to get harder as you got older? What if, despite a long-term reduction in caloric intake, the weight loss seemed completely stalled? What if the focus necessary for dieting efforts seemed constantly under attack from illness, life crises, peer pressure, or living among those who love food and eating? What if years of dieting have only led to bitter disappointment?

What if, to extend these depressing thoughts, many other life efforts over the years have become fruitless and ineffective? What if careers have come and gone (or are fizzling out), family and friends have come and gone, and even fellowship and church ministries have come and gone? What if one thinks that the wording in Ecclesiastes should be changed from *"'Vanity of vanities! All is vanity'"* (1:2b) to "Futility of futilities! All is futility"? What if Solomon's words continue, *"So I hated life, for the work which had been done under the sun was grievous*

to me: because everything is futility and striving after wind" (Ecclesiastes 2:17)?

What if a Christian sought to dismantle bitter disappointment with the "power Christianity" theology that the Christian life is not about disappointment but about power? What if that power was supposed to be full of visible joy, hope, love? What if it was supposed to be a light shining in a dark world that everyone would see and just desire so much that they would also believe in Jesus?

What if, alternatively, the church presented the "inevitably futile outcome" theology of "God loves you just as you are" and "God will meet you where you are"? What if they taught that it was "futile" in trying to be or do anything because we're not able, it's what you are, and there was no point in fighting it? What if, for instance, you can't help being fat, can't help overeating, and you shouldn't beat yourself up over it? What if, anyways, it's because "we're not perfect - just forgiven" and "that's the way God made you"?

What if, however, both these teachings: the "power Christianity" or the "inevitably futile outcome," only contribute to more bitter disappointment because one really does want the change that accompanies hope? What if, contrary to these teachings, there was peace, purpose, and power in enduring the bitter disappointments themselves? What if our hopes for a normal, commonplace, or dynamic life were actually led into various bitter disappointments as a conduit to replace them with the true, everlasting hope of the kingdom of heaven? What if the Bible is packed from beginning to end with how one loses their life to gain it? What if this is the reason for life? What if we are not born to live the best life, but born into earthen vessels that will be changed into spiritual, eternal ones?

What if the Bible's heroes of faith were never acknowledged for the great results they achieved for the kingdom of heaven, but for their faith to endure the bitter disappointments of not having a normal, commonplace, or dynamic life? What if we can't know the bitter disappointments of Noah enduring years of mockery and labor, or the seemingly lost wanderings of Abraham that were followed by decades of greater trials and uncertainties? What if the Bible's heroes all had a life of similar uncertainty and bitter disappointments? What if, in addition, our bitter disappointments will probably never compare to the millions of faithful whose lives reflected *"tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection: and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment"* (Hebrews 11:35b-36)? What if, (hopefully) we will never comprehend *"they were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground"* (Hebrews 11:37-38)?

What if, however, we should all experience some level of uncertainty, insecurity, and bitter disappointment in this life to have "His power perfected in our weakness," "fellowship of His sufferings," and endurance to be "perfect and complete, lacking in nothing"? What if the real Christian life will always be found at the level of our heart, soul, mind, and strength that loves God and His Living Word, Jesus, *"piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart"* (Hebrews 4:12)?

What if each bitter disappointment had a purpose if they were replaced with *faith* and *following* (in contrast to just *faith* waiting for Him to make things better)? What if that path is never futile, no matter how futile things seem around us? What if it's only on this path that "the struggle is real"? What if:

"And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7)

"He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him" (John 14:21)

"So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body" (1 Corinthians 15:42-44)?

Hindsight 64
The Futility/Utility of Pride

What if one motivating factor in dieting was to have pride in ourselves for self-control, losing weight, and a better self-image? What if, however, the Bible strongly discourages pride? What if, *"GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE"* (James 4:6b) and *"For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world"* (1 John 2:16)? What if, in contrast, we are told to *"Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time"* (1 Peter 5:6)?

What if, however, God is the creator of every emotion and reaction in us – including pride? What if we must believe that, if used in their proper context at their proper time, none of His created works are evil? What if that meant there *is* a place for pride in Him?

What if, for example, the Apostle Paul said, *"For our proud confidence is this: the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you"* (2 Corinthians 1:12)? What if he differentiated spiritual pride from self-pride with, *"Therefore in Christ Jesus I have found reason for boasting in things pertaining to God"*

(Romans 15:17), *"LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD"* (1 Corinthians 1:31b), and *"We are not again commending ourselves to you but are giving you an occasion to be proud of us, so that you will have an answer for those who take pride in appearance and not in heart"* (2 Corinthians 5:12)?

What if Jesus boasted constantly, not in Himself, but as a Son who boasts in His Father? What if He said things like *"Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone"* (Mark 10:18b) and *"When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me. And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him"* (John 8:28-29)?

What if, in human terms only, pride in oneself or in some cause allows one to get back up after being knocked down? What if, in Christian terms, there will be a lot of "knocking down" from living in our own body of flesh that is often hostile to God, living in a fallen world, and living among fallen or imperfect people? What if, therefore, love for God to get knocked down and keep going also includes a tremendous pride in Him, His Son, His Spirit, and His kingdom because He has actually *enabled* us to be His children, however undeservedly we are? What if this is not the pride of riches and fame of the world, but the inglorious pride of a soldier who gives their life and has their life taken from them for their nation, or in the Christian's case, the kingdom of Heaven?

What if that kind of pride will always be seen as complete foolishness by the world (or by our own flesh)? What if few will pat us on the back for the life-style and life-choices that faith in an unseen kingdom requires? What if Jesus' teachings and commandments reveal a life

that is completely opposite to that of the world's expectations? What if there is to be no covetousness of anything, constant humility, forgiveness, mercy to all people, seeking out the last place in society, and always taking care of others before ourselves? What if He said, *"He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it"* (Matthew 10:39)? What if, in Jesus' expectation of true life, where the world's knockdowns are common, our spiritual pride, spiritual ownership, spiritual stewardship, and spiritual position in God's kingdom, is essential?

What if spiritual pride alongside the flesh's humility was integral to the delight of our heart and was the only way to live? What if our pride in Him – in His righteousness living through us – was the breastplate of righteousness that also protects us from the surrounding darkness? What if, *"But HE WHO BOASTS IS TO BOAST IN THE LORD. For it is not he who commends himself that is approved, but he whom the Lord commends"* (2 Corinthians 10:17-18) and *"work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure"* (Philippians 2:12b-13)?

Hindsight 65
Trained and Retrained to Eat

What if many (but not all) kids, if given the choice, would live off the worst foods imaginable? What if these included sweets, desserts, ice cream, snack foods, macaroni and cheese, or any other processed fast food? What if, to prevent this, it was up to the parents to teach them how to eat, what foods are healthy and unhealthy, and how not to overeat? What if the parents, however, still liked the occasional, frequent, or constant consumption of unhealthy foods? What if, therefore, children learned how to eat by their parents' examples, but the parents, themselves, had been gaining weight for decades?

What if the parents and the children were constantly bombarded by the world around them with the availability of poor foods and the encouragement to eat them? What if a large part of media was devoted to both selling unhealthy foods and to making people want to eat them? What if, despite decades of promoting healthy foods and a healthy lifestyle, the unhealthy foods are still there and still consumed as much as ever? What if we live in a spiritual world that is bent on defiling people and teaching defilement in any way possible, including food?

What if Jesus explained the world in which we live as Satan's domain? What if, *"And the devil said to Him, 'I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been*

handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish'" (Luke 4:6)? What if John reiterated this in, *"We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one"* (1 John 5:19)? What if Jesus told us that Satan is a father, instructor, or a mentor of people in, *"You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He… does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies"* (John 8:44)?

What if, regardless of being a parent or child, everyone must therefore retrain or re-evaluate themselves in what to eat, when to eat, and how much to eat? What if a lifetime of retraining, reminding, rededicating, and readjusting one's mind and practice toward food was essential for health and lifespan?

What if each Christian must be retrained not only in food but also in their thoughts and behaviors? What if we must become spiritually like children all over again? What if we must take Jesus literally when He says, *"Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven"* (Matthew 18:3b)? What if our Heavenly Father is the only true father who must see to our retraining in life (no matter how old we are)? What if His Son is the only true instructor on how we are to live, and His Holy Spirit is the only true teacher Who will speak to us daily? What if Jesus said this in, *"But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers. Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. Do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ"* (Matthew 23:8-10)?

What if, in terms of eating or any aspect of life, we must seek out our Father for how to live? What if we must

follow His Son in emptying ourselves, resisting God's enemy, enduring the mockery and pride of others, and in doing all things for the love of our Father? What if we must daily listen for the voice of the Holy Spirit, Who will remind us of Jesus' teachings, commandments, warnings, and judgments?

Hindsight 66
Not for the Vaint of Heart

What if this book was about health, weight loss, and reducing the burden of disease caused by sensual eating and overeating? What if it was not, however, about the pursuit of looking better? What if the vanity of "looking better" is nothing in comparison to actually "feeling better" and pursuing control over the flesh and this world? What if it were more about what's in the veins than about being vain, about how to *not* eat without the conceit, about developing a heart that's tender not a body that's slender, about seeking out the good book rather than the good looks, and all about Him instead of being slim? What if, ugh, this book has already become hard to "stomach" because of these "what-ifs" and "rhyme-bots"?

What if, however, avoiding sensuous foods and eating less were more important for overall health? What if any obese (or non-obese) person should be motivated more about health rather than looks? What if, as Christians, we wanted health because our bodies are temples of God's Holy Spirit and vessels of His ministry to the world around us? What if, then, the book focuses more about the consequences of sensual eating and overeating, and figuring out how to use those consequences as a motivational reality to achieve more health? What if the pursuit of a diet also required

uncomfortable mindsets of obesity-related morbidities and premature mortality? What if, therefore, this book was not for either the vain of heart nor the faint of heart? What if it was not concerned with either outer looks or with handholding one through the mistakes of a life of sensuality and gluttony?

What if, however, there is healing for obesity by just trying to strive against it? What if there are many blessings that come from this good fight, but no blessings that come from indifference, avoidance, or dismissal of the fight? What if we discover that it's God's patience for our repentance, rather than grace, that keep us going during indifference, avoidance, or dismissal? What if His blessings are conditional for walking in His Spirit, striving against sin, following His Son, and fighting the good fight? What if we weren't expected to "look good" while seeking and doing these things?

What if this pattern extends beyond food and eating to all other desires and passions of life? What if our God is a very jealous God because He is the only true God and only true creator of us? What if He wants us as intact, complete, sanctified, and perfected for our eternity spent with Him? What if that's more on His mind than the comfort or happiness of our lives? What if He's a long-suffering God who expects His children to share a little of that to know His mind, heart, and fellowship? What if that's His idea of having "a relationship" with Him, rather than just having said a sinner's prayer?

Hindsight 67
The Fat-Finding Mission

What if many people who are obese have no idea that they have a problem with obesity? What if they do not even consider themselves to be fat? What if, alternatively, many obese people who know they're obese do not appreciate the risk to their health that can ruin their lives and greatly increase their risk for premature death? What if, ironically, these people may even see it in others, point their fingers and wag their heads, yet not understand that they are in the same position?

What if the ability to recognize the problem is a common problem in most addictions? What if the first problem in obesity is always to recognize that one has a problem? What if "my name is so and so, and I am obese" needs to be the first step toward healthy eating and losing weight each day? What if this must be a daily step for the remainder of our lives? What if we must never lose sight of this, regardless of our success?

What if a continual recognition of obesity does not reverse the problem of obesity, but provides some humility with which to make daily changes in what foods are eaten and how much is eaten? What if this kind of daily humility is like spiritual fertilizer, from which better things can emerge and grow?

What if, spiritually, a daily identity with sin is part of the general brokenness of life, not to act as an excuse, but to seek and nurture Jesus' qualities of our personality, including gentleness and patience with others, avoidance of judging others, forgiveness of others, and mercy and compassion for others? What if the humility that stems from recognition of our inherent faults can result in the most rewarding life, and can make us like children who our heavenly Father delights to provide for and teach to become like Him?

What if, however, we must ask the Lord to open our eyes to our weight condition, our eating habits, and ways to change? What if we must also ask Him to open our eyes to "spiritual obesity" in other areas of our lives? What if our standard for how to live life is Jesus and His life? What if we recognize that we can never measure up to Him, but that making Him our standard brings us humility and the eyesight to see what needs to change to have the fullest life and to glorify Him? What if a lifetime pursuing change in self-love, pride, immorality, covetousness, lack of forgiving others, indignation, and dissipation is what is needed? What if, while recognizing and correcting these factors of spiritual obesity, we discover that we have become yoked to Jesus, have a peace that surpasses understanding in all circumstances, have the fullness of His joy, and have rest for our souls? What if we find that things which appear most burdensome to our flesh (our old nature) are no burden at all to our heart, soul, mind, and strength?

Hindsight 68
The One-Two (or More) Punch

What if our dieting effort seemed to be knocked down for the count? What if it was due to a bad day with difficulties that were like a series of one-two punches?

What if, before this, we were at the height of a successful diet and felt like we had both appetite and hunger under control and had, over the weeks, established some very nice eating habits for a healthy diet? What if we then encountered a difficulty that made us feel like eating more? What if a bad day interrupted our scheduled mealtime and we had to continue running on empty? What if we just had to call it a bad day and get through it?

What if, however, there were other challenges like personal illness or injury or, perhaps worse, the mental/emotional challenge of the illness, injury, or loss of a loved one? What if these one-two (or more) punches distracted us from our dieting efforts or caused us to eat more for comfort or perceived strength? What if we soon found ourselves replacing our diet with more convenient, less healthy foods? What if all this allowed our appetites to regain a foothold in our minds and behaviors, and we found ourselves struggling day after day to get back on course? What if eating only got steadily worse over the following days and weeks and we went completely back to our old eating habits?

What if this happens because a life of self-denial dieting is bumpy rather than smooth and steady? What if it wasn't supposed to be smooth, steady, and always successful? What if the only thing guaranteed to be smooth and steady was a life of sensual, self-indulgent eating with its inactivity, poor health, illness, and premature death? What if dieting were supposed to be an up-and-down battle with periodic stability? What if this up-and-down fight, however, still decreases medical interventions and increases our ability to participate in the fullness of life that Jesus has for each of us?

What if taking the occasional one-two (or more) punches in a life of dieting was ok and we must know that it's never a lost cause to shake it off and get back to today, one "today" at a time? What if Jesus said, *"So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own"* (Matthew 6:34), and Peter said, *"Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord"* (Acts 3:19)? What if taking one day at a time fighting for what if right, and looking forward to the "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord" were a Christian life?

What if the Christian life is more messy than good looking? What if it is full of difficulties – both temptations and trials – and us constantly having to re-find our feet with which to walk behind (follow) our Lord? What if He didn't come to carry us through the difficulties of life but command us to *"Get up, pick up your pallet and walk"* (John 5:8)? What if we are to go through the one-two (or more) punches for His life rather than for our own? What if following Him means having Him live through us so that our lives reflect His life in both His words and deeds?

Hindsight 69
Made for It

What if, for more than 160 years, there has been a battle between the ideas of creation and evolution? What if understanding this battle could help bring purpose and persistence to a diet? What if understanding came down to having a purpose or lack of purpose in life, and this made a huge difference in how we approached and maintained a lifetime of dieting effort? What if the purposes of creation were not the trite teachings of "knowing God's will," "finding Jesus," "getting saved," "glorifying God," or "for God's pleasure"? What if there was a purpose specific to each person who has ever lived at whatever level of society they lived? What if that purpose was "to have dominion"? What if, for those who love God and wish to follow Him, there are empowering themes of "rulership," "ownership," "proprietorship," and "priest" throughout the Bible?

What if the ideas of evolution try to strip all that away to a meaningless, self-promoting, survival-of-the-most-fit, no need to love God or one's neighbors' existence? What if it is the (pseudo) scientific basis for people to ignore the Bible's warnings of "eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die" (Luke 12:15-21, 1 Cor 15:31-34, Isaiah 22:12-14)? What if the silly arguments for evolution – because "bugs have eyes and humans have

eyes" or "natural selection of the most fit drives it" (rather than most life just dies from preset lifespans) – can be debunked with a little reasoning?

What if there was a tremendous purpose in life, given by the Creator for each person to pursue and be blessed by both temporally and eternally? What if, in the milieu of all the darkness and death of this world, people, regardless of ability or social status, could be saints, ministers, priests, and lights of the kingdom of heaven to the world around them? What if this has always been about "faith," not just faith to trust God with one's life but faith to take Him at His word about what this temporal life is to look like – now from Jesus' teachings and commandments that are a summary of God's law for one's heart on how to love God and love their neighbor? What if that faith will see the smallest efforts in following Jesus blossom into eternity for themselves and a wake of others?

What if these grand purposes could affect the motivation to persevere, not only in diet, but in all that Jesus has laid out for us? What if this life and its difficulties are but a blink of an eye in eternity?

Hindsight 70
Healthologists

What if there were mountains of information on nutrition, metabolism, and weight control? What if there were thousands of diets to choose from? What if different experts seemed to say different things? What if different people said different things about what diet or eating habits worked best for them? What if there were so many voices on health that it became overwhelming and discouraging trying to find the best way to be healthy? What if this book is yet another voice in the air – another confusing, unmatched piece of a giant puzzle on the picture of true health?

What if each person, therefore, must become their own "healthologist" to find what diet works for them? What if, despite all the "ways" to health, the only true way was to see it work (at some level); to see the effects that it has on blood pressure, fasting glucose levels, A1C, and weight loss? What if some diets may not produce good results while others will? What if there seemed to be a common thread of diets that did work? What if it were up to each person to take ownership of their health and monitor their blood parameters at home? What if some level of being a "healthologist" was required to become healthy and stay healthy?

What if it were necessary to have some knowledge of carbohydrates, proteins, and fats? What if a basic understanding of metabolism and the body's energy needs were important? What if pondering the outcomes of each fat-associated disease was vital to reducing their effects on one's life? What if social philosophies needed to be considered, such as "am I eating to live or not eating to live?" What if other social "norms" had to be recognized and undone? What if anyone can do these things and should do them to become their own personalized "healthologists"?

What if, in Christianity, there were thousands of spiritual "healthologists (individuals or denominations) teaching according to their particular ideas on spiritual health? What if mountains of books have been written about spiritual health and spiritual living? What if, rather than slog through all the sermons, books (including this one), and videos to find what works, each person must ultimately become their own spiritual "healthologist"? What if Jesus has all precedence in spiritual health – He decides what saving faith looks like? What if He is the author and perfecter of that faith? What if our spiritual healthology, therefore, must come from Jesus' teachings, commandments, warnings, and judgments? What if the remainder of the New Testament only provides "explanation and mystery" to Him, and the Old Testament is His prelude?

Hindsight 71
Eating Poison

What if we ate certain foods for decades that tasted good, comforted us, and were even considered nutritious? What if, however, our bodies and health became disheveled with a high BMI, diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, sleep apnea, and/or liver disease? What if we then learned that certain foods contributed to those disorders and that they were, in fact, acting as poisons within us? What if this may be scripturally reflected by the "Daniel Diet" compared to those who ate other things?

What if the concept of foods as long-term poisons was very hard to swallow, considering we had eaten them our whole lives, they did not make us immediately sick, and they even made us feel satiated and relaxed (especially after a hard day's work)? What if we never considered them to be "junk food," but just regular food that people ate to live? What if we now had to consider this "normal" food as worse than "junk," but as "poison" that was causing the body to break down and destroy itself? What if we discovered that our "normal eating to live" had always been an insidious path to death?

What if, however, we faced up to this fact, decided to accept it, and changed our minds about which foods would slow down or stop the diseases in our bodies? What if we were determined to change our whole outlook and

way of life on food? What if it could be done, but it would require a lifetime of focus and effort? What if the first steps in this process were to consider certain "normal" foods that might contain certain carbohydrates and fats as actual "poisons" that we cannot put into our bodies? What if we had to condition our minds and train ourselves to look at those foods as poison? What if this was horrible since everyone around us was stuffing them in? What if, however, we separated ourselves from these practices? What if we decided to stand apart from the crowd?

What if we routinely reflected on the obesity-related maladies of our bodies and on the ways seemingly "normal" foods can worsen them? What if that helped us avoid these foods, or even spit them out if we had inadvertently taken a bite? What if we mentally associated the feelings of satiation from "normal" foods with "poisons" producing disease and death within ourselves? What if the negative associations of foods were then positively associated with thoughts of cleansing, health, and renewed strength by not eating them? What if this new mindset decreased our obesity, blood pressure, blood sugar, diabetes complications, sleep apnea, the progression of fatty livers, and the risk of heart disease and stroke?

What if there were many other spiritual aspects of "normal" life that were likewise slowly killing us because we didn't recognize that they were "poison"? What if the crazy idea that a "normal" life, even consisting of education, employment, marriage, children, and retirement, had the ability to kill us both spiritually and physically just as insidiously as "normal" food does to the body? What if Jesus calls every Christian away from a "normal" life into one that is completely enmeshed in the will of His heavenly Father? What if Jesus said crazy

things like *"If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple"* (Luke 14:27) and *"He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it"* (Matthew 10:39)? What if, seeking to forgive others, seeking the last place, humbling oneself as a child, turning the other cheek, "giving your shirt as well," not coveting, bearing other's burdens, and loving one's enemies did not facilitate a "normal" life but facilitated *"He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it"* (Matthew 10:39)?

What if it's ok to have (or not have) education, employment, marriage, children, and retirement, but pursuing Jesus' teachings, commandments, warnings, and judgments will make those things second or even seem to put them at risk? What if, however, we recognized that *"since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things"* (Acts 17:25b), following His "loss of self" ways is life? What if making His blessings second or putting them at risk was actually the safest way to have and care for them? What if that's just not how people think about "normal" life? What if *not* pursuing Jesus in order to be "normal" is, in a spiritual reality, a slow poison of life because it has excluded the giver of all life and blessings and, apart from Him, is decay and death?

Hindsight 72
Guess Who's Coming for Dinner

What if, spiritually, there are always two people eating for a Christian with weight problems? What if the first person eating is our own spirit and body that should consume a normal, healthy, calorie-restricted diet, while the second person eating is referred to, biblically, as the old self, the natural man, the body of sin, the outer man, the flesh, or the sinful nature? What if the second person did not eat for sustenance, but ate to soothe past or current emotional, mental, or physical injuries? What if this outer man engaged in the pleasures of eating in order to find temporary relief from internal or external difficulties?

What if this outer man (the flesh) had endured years of unrecognized sources of pain - even from childhood? What if the flesh sought distraction from the pain through food or other pleasures, which, unfortunately, only created a cycle of more pain? What if this were spiritually known as "enslavement" of the flesh by unrighteousness? What if one knew the difference between the right and wrong way to live, but always seemed turned toward the wrong way? What if Paul wrote of this enslavement of the flesh in, *"For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the*

very evil that I do not want. But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good" (Romans 7:18-21)?

What if the flesh is first enslaved through mental or physical injury and then through deception and dissipation to ease that injury? What if this resulted in a lifetime of uncontrolled eating or other vices, which made the flesh vulnerable to still more mental or physical injury? What if freedom from this vicious cycle and enslavement to sin was *"Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"* (Romans 7:24-25a)?

What if we can thank God because He sent His Son to suffer and die to forgive our sins and set us free from this enslavement? What if we can thank God for raising His Son from the dead to lead us and for giving us His Holy Spirit to empower us? What if we can thank God by submitting ourselves to His Son's red-letter ways, the only way of fulfilling true salvation life? What if, *"For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace"* (Romans 8:6), *"But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you"* (Romans 8:11), and *"for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live"* (Romans 8:13)?

What if *"putting to death the deeds of the body"* is a difficult, life-long fight that is called the good fight? What if, throughout this good fight, seeking His forgiveness and grace takes care of our mistakes, and His Holy Spirit empowers us to continue in the fight? What if,

regardless of how the good fight seems to be going, we know that we have fellowship with Jesus and have life in Him? What if the good fight was lonely, but we can know that we are His children and His heirs? What if, no matter how tough the good fight becomes, we can know that our suffering with Him will lead to being glorified with Him? What if, *"and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him"* (Romans 8:17)?

What if, once saved, there is now a new self, an inner man, and a child of God who was spiritually born again to Him? What if the new self could only be fed, not by *knowing* God's word, but by implementing all that Jesus said and did? What if *"Jesus said to them, 'My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work'"* (John 4:34)? What if *"the will of Him who sent Me"* was for us to believe His Son's teachings, commandments, warnings, and judgments on how we are to live as Christians? What if our first person (our spirit) must eat this food, and the second person (our flesh) must be subjugated to eating it?

What if it is only by eating this type of food that healing comes to those past sources of pain that drive one's outer man to dissipation and enslavement of the flesh? What if, for instance, forgiveness of others for everything (Matthew 6:14-15) rips out the roots of bitterness (Acts 8:23, Hebrews 12:15) in us, and we discover that those roots were enslaving us to food or other vices? What if forgiveness of others' sins against us would heal past injuries and defend us against current insults and abuses? What if we forgave parents, relatives, siblings, spouses, friends, acquaintances, and co-workers no matter what their infractions? What if, through forgiving them, we then recognized that their natural selves (their flesh)

were also enslaving them and creating their injuries?

What if this enslavement has always plagued the world since *"We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one"* (1 John 5:19)? What if the forgiveness of others not only heals us, but leads to the healing of others? What if we became completely spiritual in "eating for two" in, *"Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me"* (Revelation 3:20)? What if this verse was not about "getting saved" but about repenting to do the red-letter work and ministries He commanded us? What if we read the letter again while there's still time?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kirk McCrea became a Jesus-believing Christian in December 1979 and was amazed by the forgiveness he felt from less than 20 years of bearing his sins and dealing poorly with the sins of others that he felt were against him. He was even more amazed at reading Jesus' words in the gospels about how Christians are to think, act, and live. Here was a reason not to be disappointed, angry, or resentful of others. Here was a reason to not steal, lie, and be self-centered for "survival of the most fit" against other's criticisms and stifling. Here was a reason to "be good" for God in the ways that His Son said and, even if it wasn't pleasing to others, it was pleasing to Him, and He would take care of them now and reward them in eternity. Here was a reason not to have to live for oneself or for others but for God. This registered as "great news" and brought immediate "rest for his soul."

Kirk was very eager to start this new life with all its blessings and to have more of that "rest" which came from believing and following Jesus. He was eager to gain others' biblical knowledge and to see how they lived out this new life. God led him to a Christian group in college and a new church at home to grow in fellowship with other believers. There, he soaked up all the teachings and soon got baptized. After some time, however, Kirk felt empty and dismayed without knowing why, and he even asked

his pastor and friend if this was all there was to Christianity – being born again, prayer, going to church, going to Bible study, and occasionally witnessing to others. The pastor winced in empathy but encouraged Kirk to wait on God for His direction.

Kirk then spent the next 24 years trying see and find God's direction for career paths that fizzled then flourished, love interests that fizzled then (after that) flourished, and how disappointments, backsliding, resentment, rebellion, illnesses, or injuries made any sense for someone who genuinely wanted God in their life. After all that, Kirk's "personal relationship" with Jesus was not going so well: he wasn't too hot, and he wasn't lukewarm, but he was definitely too cold and knew he couldn't continue that way.

By that point, Kirk needed to think about which church and its teachings he wanted to go back to, but it occurred to him that Jesus needed to be the One who discipled him. So, just like the start of that "personal relationship" decades before, he was "instantly amazed at Jesus' words in the gospels about how Christians are to think, act, and live." Kirk rediscovered that, "here was a reason not to be…" this way and that way, but instead to be Jesus' way. He rediscovered that Jesus' words *were* God's directions for his life, and those were more than enough. Jesus redefined Kirk's personal relationship with Him according to His teachings, commandments, warnings, and judgments – and His promises of peace, purpose, and power that would come from pursuing that redefinition.

Jesus calls every Christian to a personal relationship with Him by being "yoked" to Him (yes, with a spiritually heavy, wooden, unbending yoke between him and them) to learn His ways. To the flesh it looks (and

often feels) horrible, but to the soul it is pure "rest." After a couple of decades of learning, resisting, yielding, needing, and enjoying the yoke, Kirk can say that it's the only way to live and that it's the only way to true life. Kirk is (facetiously) far from caring about being theologically right or wrong about the preeminence of Jesus' teachings over Paul's, or about Paul's teachings being used apart from Jesus' (ugh, sorry). He does, however, care about having a saving faith in the Author and Perfector of faith who is the only giver of the daily Bread of Life and Living Water necessary to live the fullest life and to be prepared for when *"the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house"* (Matthew 7:25a). Jesus' ways are the only way to have purpose, perseverance, and hope in all trials and temptations in the one-day-at-a-time difficulties. They are also the only way (as He repeatedly warned) to prepare, keep watch, and stay alert for the disastrous floods that will precede His return. (https://www.kingsbooktable.org).