

BREAKING BONDAGE TO BISCUITS

By Michelle Stimpson

Introduction

I want to be very clear with you about something: the point of this book is not to help you lose weight. The point is to help you draw closer to God in accordance with His will for your life. Any weight that you lose will be a byproduct. The fact of the matter is: God could not love you any more or any less no matter what you weigh. The issue is your ability to carry out the will of God in your life to the fullest extent possible; your fitness (spiritual and physical) for service.

This book was written for Christians at every level of maturity in Him. One of the lies that the enemy uses to discourage Christians is: you are *not* spiritual because if you were, you wouldn't be dealing with petty human issues like food, weight, and fitness. In my case, my skinniest days were my most sinful days - years before I came to know Christ intimately. *Can I get an amen?* As time went on, the more I knew Christ the more my waistline expanded. I led a prayer group, wrote my first novel, spoke at churches and mentored others even as I saw the numbers on the scale moving. I realized that not eating well or exercising, I was buying bigger sizes and shopping in special stores, but I was experiencing such spiritual growth that I was almost numb to what was happening with my body. God was doing so much good in my life and His hand was moving so decisively that I felt immune to the demise of my earthly, temporary, physical body.

I continued to pour myself into ministry all the more, writing two more Christian novels and increasing the number of engagements I agreed to. All of this took my focus off of the fact that I was well on my way to suffering from several preventable health problems. At age 33, my knees were starting to strain from the extra weight, my back ached in the mornings, my cholesterol was high, I experienced heartburn frequently, and despite the fact that I tried to ignore the problem, my weight was one of the first things on my mind in the morning and one of the last things on my mind before I went to bed at night. I was distressed about the fact that I was gaining weight, but I reasoned with myself that it was not the worst thing in the world that could happen to me. My self-esteem was also pretty high - I kept my hair, nails, toes, and wardrobe in tip-top shape even at a size 18W. Satisfied with my spiritual growth and my overall appearance, I put my physical health on the backburner. At this point, the inverse of the lie

was working: You are *so* spiritual that you should not concern yourself with petty issues like food, weight, and fitness.

I appeased the Holy Spirit's nudge to address my health by starting a diet every so often, only to abandon the effort and subsequently gain another couple of pounds. Rather than take the issue to the cross, I kept this little food/exercise area compartmentalized and out of His complete control for several reasons: 1) I had bigger fish to fry; 2) I really didn't want to bother Him with something that I felt I could handle on my own if I'd just put my mind to it; 3) I really *liked* food and was not ready to turn that passion over to the Lord; 4) I had tried and failed so many times, I was not sure that God could deliver me from these self-destructive habits.

At some level, Christians understand that this "lose weight" frenzy is being pushed in the worldly realm, promoting unrealistic ideals for God's children. We were created to have various proportions and things like hips, buttocks, and other moving parts. Yet, the world makes it seem as though a woman with curves or a man with love handles is undesirable or even unnatural. Make no mistake about it: there is a great deal of money to be made by convincing the masses that we should be losing weight. In fact, as the "ideal" female body becomes more child-like, the line between children and women is being wickedly blurred and exploited. Christians don't jump on the "get thin" band wagon because we know that while we are in the world, we do not ascribe to the world's idea of beauty (John 15:19). The God who knows the number of hairs on your head (Luke 12:7) also knows when your body's proportions have fallen into the ideal range that He created just for you.

Another reason that those of us who know God's grace and mercy well often fail to address our weight issues is that we understand fully: the day and time of our death has already been appointed (Hebrews 9:27). The enemy cannot do anything to us that the Lord does not allow, regardless of the sins or bad habits in which we persist. We rest in that security.

So what's the point: if we shouldn't be chasing a worldly ideal and overweight Christians are under God's grace, why bother? We are warned in Romans 6:1-4 not to abuse God's grace just because He has made it available to us. Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19) and we are to make them presentable to God for His service (Romans 12:1). Again, this is not a book about weight loss. It is about allowing God's supreme rule in every area of our lives - diet and exercise included - for His glory. By aligning ourselves more fully with the will of God for health, we close one more door to chaos and the enemy's influence in our lives. Lack of discipline in one area of life leads to lack of discipline in other. Conquering this area of food bondage through a stronger

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.

Romans 12:1

relationship with God empowers us to seek Him in more fully and allow Him further influence other areas lives.

That is the point of this book.

A growing Christian's struggle with weight is a classic enemy back-door set-up that leaves us open to attack. As God continues to grow us up in Him, the enemy has to "up" his game. In fact, the more wisdom and discernment we seek and receive, the more sophisticated the enemy has to be with his devices and schemes. What better way than with food? Unlike drugs, alcohol, or most other addictions, food is vital to our survival. When a Christian is gaining in wisdom and becoming more sensitive to sin, the enemy's alternative route is to take perfectly normal God-given appetites (like food and sex) and distort them.

Furthermore, the effects of overindulgence, lack of nutrition, and inactivity are so gradual that even if we are comfortable with what we see in the mirror, our bodies' responses are often delayed for many years. Those responses may manifest themselves through diseases or conditions, or they may reduce the total number of life-days that we are fit for service because our immune systems were down and we caught the flu, our minds were bogged down with guilt about pigging out, or our energy levels were down so we had to skip an opportunity to minister - all due to lack of discipline in the area of diet and exercise.

Mind, soul, and body are connected, and God is the able to sanctify each one (1 Thes. 5:32). God has a very special plan for each of us, and He compels us to address matters in a very specific order as He conforms us to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29). If you have not yet reached the point that your unhealthy habits are an issue for you, you may not need to read this book at this time in your spiritual journey. I have bought books, read a few paragraphs and put them on the shelf with the understanding that when I was ready, I would come back to them.

*For those God foreknew
he also predestined to be
conformed to the
likeness of his Son, that
he might be the firstborn
among many brothers.*

Romans 8:29

However, if the Holy Spirit has had a serious talk with you about the need to address your health, it is time. If your weight is one of the first things you think of in the morning and one of the last things you think of at night, it is time. If your weight or poor eating habits exaggerates other physical or emotional problems, it is time. If a great deal of your mental energy is consumed with your body image, it is time. The Bible tells us in Psalm 34:19, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all." The Lord never promised that we would not be confronted with problems. He did say, however, that He would deliver us from them *all*.

If you are not a Christian, I hope that in reading this book, you will come to know the hope that Christians have in the power of the risen Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and the power of the Living Word of God - the Bible.

Deliverance is an inside-out job, and that is precisely where this book will begin and end. If you want expert nutritional advice, perfectly balanced meal plans, gourmet healthy recipes, or professionally developed exercise routines, you can find a list of recommended books in the Appendix. If this is your first time confronting your health or weight because you will want to learn what it means to eat “right” and exercise.

The rest of us have tried enough diet plans, read enough books, signed up for enough exercise classes, and own enough exercise tapes to know that every “diet” comes down to this: eat balanced meals, exercise, and drink water. There, I saved you several hundred dollars. This book isn’t the book you read when you want to start a new diet. It’s the book you read *before* you start a new diet.

Please know that I am not a psychiatrist, a psychologist, a counselor, a dietician, or a physician of any kind. To that effect, I must add a disclaimer: this book is not intended to take the place of professional counseling, dietary or medical advice. I am simply one woman who has (by the power of the living God) been released from an unhealthy relationship with food, and I want to share the gospel with you.

Each chapter in this book is followed by a set of questions designed to open your thoughts and prayers toward the Lord. Feel free to write in this book or simply respond in your personal journal. Whatever you do, write and then bring your concerns before the Lord in your personal prayer time.

Journaling

Have you brought this issue before the Lord in the past? What happened?

*On a scale of one to ten, how do you feel about your body image? Justify your score.
(1=I can't stand to look in the mirror, 5 = I am okay with what I see but I need some
improvement, 10 = I love what I see in the mirror)*

*How much time a day do you spend thinking, meditating, feeling guilty, feeling proud, or
otherwise mentally engaged in thoughts about your health or your body?*

Chapter 1 – Jesus Our Deliverer

Contrary to what some believe and what some have experienced, deliverance is not always a matter of a one-time climactic moment when you blink and – poof – everything had changed. Granted, I know people who have been instantly healed from sickness and disease, suddenly delivered from debt, abruptly released from the desire to smoke cigarettes or drink alcohol in the twinkling of an eye. I often wondered, “Lord, why did you heal that person so quickly, but you’re letting *me* suffer for years and years with my weight? It’s not fair!”

Here’s a diary entry from early in my bondage-breaking days:

Father, I don't have problems with the big picture. I'm having trouble with the little things. Why did you make a system like this? Why can't we just do an average plan- where we add all the good hours, all the bad hours, and divide by 24? And if the hours average out on the fitness side, we get to lose pounds accordingly. And if the hours add up to the bad side, we gain pounds accordingly. I know it's silly, Lord, but it's just a suggestion.

When I wrote that entry, I felt like a victim of my weight. I was fed up with myself, my body, and almost with God. Nine years prior to this journal entry, I lost quite a bit of weight. It had taken me nearly a decade to put on over sixty pounds (which, of course, took me over my old record high). Since then, I’d tried every diet gimmick and pill I heard of: Atkins, Weight Watchers, the diet patch, Phentermine, TrimSpa, Metabolife, Xantrex, Apple Cider Vinegar, Protein, Slim-Fast, All-Fruit-and-Vegetable, liquids, and starvation. I also owned The Firm system, an Ab-lounger, an aerobic step, an aerobic trampoline, a solar suit, an exercise bike, countless books, several workout tapes/CDs, four gently-used gym memberships, and I temporarily owned two treadmills (both of which I sold at some point because I got sick of looking at them).

Before we go a step further and look at God’s answer to my question of why I suffered so, let’s look at some instances in the Bible where people were immediately delivered from a bad situation. And I’m not talking about people who were sick for a day or two like Peter’s mother-in-law (Matthew 8:14-15). I’m not even talking about people who were dead and rose again like Lazarus (John

11:38-45). I'm talking about folks who wrestled with a seriously disturbing issue for a great deal of time.

Take a moment to familiarize or re-familiarize yourself with these desperate people.

- Woman with the issue of blood – Matthew 9:20-22
- Blind man – Luke 18: 35-43
- Man delivered from demons – Matthew 8:28-32
- Woman at the well – John 4:6-25

Now let's contrast these people with Paul, who finds himself in the predicament that many of us occupy today:

“We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?” Romans 7:14-24

Sound familiar? You know what you ought to do, but you don't do it. And the thing that you should not do is the thing that you find yourself doing. *Preach, Paul!*

Let me go back to the question I posed earlier. I wanted to know why God healed those Old Testament people but let the New Testament people like me and Paul and you suffer. Why couldn't we have a once-and-for-all deliverance experience? God answered my question, “You *did* have a once-and-for-all deliverance experience.”

I was like, “When? Did I miss something?”

God was very clear with his response: when Jesus died on the cross and rose again for me, that was the experience. That was the end-all-be-all answer for deliverance. Jesus died so that we could be have abundant life (John 10:10). He is not going to come again until He’s ready to take us home, so we can stop twiddling our thumbs and (in essence)

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.
John 10:10

begging for Jesus to come back to earth in human form and die all over again. He has already been here and done that. His work is finished. He is not going to do it again; once was enough. He left you, me, and Paul with something that the woman with issue of blood, the blind man, the demon-possessed man, and the woman at the well didn’t have: His Word (the Bible) and the Holy Spirit. He left us with the power of life and death in our tongues (Prov. 18:21), He left us with the power over the enemy (Luke 10:19) and He left us with the hope of eternal life through Himself (John 11:25).

The miracles and signs that Jesus performed while He was here on earth were necessary because people didn’t have the kind of power that we have today, after His death and resurrection. Jesus said that He *had* to leave in order that the Comforter would come (John 16:7) thereby giving us all a piece of Him to nurture and grow within our hearts, our minds, and our souls. Jesus knew that, in physical form, He was just one man and, quite frankly, that’s limiting. God knew that there would be billions of Christians all over the globe who, centuries after Jesus’ physical, natural body would have deteriorated, would still need a source of spiritual power. Something so strong, so potent that every believer could tap into It instead of having to bust through crowds trying to touch the hem of Jesus’ garment. In order to do that, we need the Comforter – the healing, delivering power of God.

The miracles and signs that continue to occur today confirm that the Holy Spirit indeed is still here, still doing the work of the Father. He did not leave us here by ourselves, and He has given us everything we need to be victorious until He comes to claim His own – at which time we will cease to even care about the toils of every day life.

I’m the eldest child, so I was often left to care for my younger brothers when my parents worked late or went to run errands. I wasn’t always happy about having to watch them, as no teenage girl looks forward to watching her pesky little brothers. Nonetheless, as the eldest, the responsibility often rested on my shoulders. My parents trained me well and they knew that I was ready to take on some additional responsibilities in the family. Because they knew that I might need something in their physical absence, they always left me with everything I needed: instructions, a phone number to call in case things got tricky, and authority over my brothers. From time to time, my parents would call and check on me to make sure that things were going well. From time to

time, I would call on them if I had a question about an issue that I didn't feel I was prepared to handle. But for the most part I was expected to draw upon all that they had taught me and all that they had left me to keep a vigilant watch over our household.

In some ways, this situation is a lot like the situation with me and God. Jesus Himself is not physically here with me. I feel Him inside of me and I often feel His embrace through a loved one or a friend, but I don't have Him physically and visibly sitting in a chair right next to me, ready to rest His palm on my forehead to deliver me from whatever ails me. The Holy Spirit within me actually misses the physical Jesus and can hardly wait for the day that I am reunited with Him. In the meanwhile, He left instructions (the Bible) about what I am to do until He returns. He left a means of communication (prayer), and He left me with power in the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8).

So here we are, Christians with the instructions, the Word, the means, the authority - alas, we still struggle with strongholds like food addiction, depressive episodes, and compulsive spending. Let's go back to the book of Romans and look at what Paul had to say in Chapter 8. Verses 9 - 14 tell us that while we are in a body, we do not have to yield to the demands of our bodies.

But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

The answer is not in a diet plan, an exercise plan, or even in the very valid concerns that you have for your health. The answer lies within the power of the Holy Spirit. So, here is Paul telling us that if we walk in the Spirit, we can overcome the flesh. Like some of you, I had read this passage of scripture, gotten all fired up, and then found myself at the donut shop within an hour. Not because the Holy Spirit had failed, and not necessarily because my faith had failed. It was because I had not put the two together in my mouth and then released them to do their powerful work in my life.

God's word is life (Matthew 4:4) and it will not return void (Isaiah 55:11). *My* words might return void and *your* words might return void, but God's words won't. Let's use His words instead of our own words; His thoughts instead of

our own. After all, they are higher than ours (Isaiah 55:8-9) and are mighty for the tearing down of strongholds (Hebrews 4:12). So what does that look like? Glad you asked. Let's start with your motivations.

Journaling

When was the last time you called on God for help? What happened?

Have you read the verses mentioned in this chapter before? What did you learn from reading them just now?

Did the Holy Spirit highlight anything for you in the scriptures?

Recall a time when God came through for you when it seemed that there was no way you would make it through. Summarize that time here.
