

Steve's Story

My weight problem started as a child. I (Steve) was more than just a little husky. I was fat. I weighed one hundred pounds in the first grade, which was incredibly unusual in 1963. Unfortunately, I had started developing bad eating habits almost as early as I began eating. Most of the food I ate was either fried or loaded with sugar. The only thing that saved me from debilitating childhood obesity was my love of sports. I got involved with football at an early age and ended up being good at it. So, even though my diet left a lot to be desired, I was able to keep my weight somewhat in check thanks to my activity on the football field.

Football also gave me the chance to go to college. While several small schools wanted to recruit me, I ended up accepting a full scholarship to Liberty University. Stepping onto Liberty's campus as a freshman, I assumed that I would eventually become a coach or maybe a businessman. However, shortly into my first year, I felt a clear call from God to go into full-time church ministry. While I loved playing college ball, suddenly I knew that nothing other than pastoring would bring me contentment and joy long-term.

My life at Liberty became consumed with football training, weekend games and doing all I could to prepare to be a pastor. I discussed my call with my girlfriend, Debbie, who later became my wife. We both agreed that we were meant to go into ministry together. We were young, ambitious, energetic and ready to live out our newfound passion.

After graduation, I made a terrible decision—one that would have negative effects on my health, my calling, my ministry, and my personal life. I decided that I was finished with exercise. After over a decade of football drills, cardio conditioning, and weight training, I was tired of the exertion. And I figured that, since my football days were behind me, I didn't have any reason to work out anymore. My

new passion, my all-consuming drive, was ministry. I wanted to start a church and I threw myself into the process full-force.

The good news is that the new church began to grow. The bad news is that I began to grow right along with it. Even though I stopped exercising like a college football player, I never stopped eating like one. So I kept growing and growing and growing—until I finally topped out a little over 340 pounds.

Letting my weight get out of control was one of the easiest things I've ever done. People in my church brought me food all the time. If I mentioned that I liked something specific (like Hershey's Milk Chocolate Bars), I would be showered with that very thing. My busy, sporadic schedule led to a lot of fast-food meals. Not to mention, I spent most of my days sitting down. I was either at my desk, in the car, or in meetings. Add in an ongoing addiction to ice cream, which I had to have every night to ease the stress I felt, and I was whipping up a recipe for disaster.

In Galatians 6:7, Paul wrote that if you sow to your flesh, you will reap corruption. That is exactly what I was doing. I was sowing to my flesh by overeating and under-exercising. In the process, I was corrupting the body God had given me. I ended up with three major diseases: high blood pressure (aka the silent killer), high cholesterol, and diabetes. Before I realized it, I was facing a future of medications, doctor's appointments and possibly an early death.

My ministry was growing and prospering. I had a beautiful family who loved me. And I was walking around afraid I would drop dead at any moment, leaving both in distress. The worst part is that, deep down, I knew I was responsible for my condition. I felt humiliated, desperate and alone. I wanted nothing more than to change the reflection in the mirror back to that healthy, vibrant man I used to be.

Today, with intentionality and God's help, I have lost 130 pounds, and have completely reversed my high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes. I am disease free! Plus, out of this experience, God has opened the door for me to create a wonderful ministry called *Losing to Live*. In fact, it was through *Losing to Live* that Nelson and I grew closer, as he was struggling with some of the same challenges.

Before & After

