



This is the *Health Matters* podcast.

Fit for Freedom with Laurie Graves

I'm your host Kimberley Payne and this is the show for women who want to improve their spiritual and physical health.

In this episode, we'll be talking about how diets are based on the world's wisdom, hype and a lot of great marketing to sell a book or concept to the desperate masses. In this interview, we discuss how God's way can be more profitable and long lasting.



This week we're going to be talking with Laurie Graves. Laurie is the author of *Fit For Freedom: Healing for Your Body, Mind and Soul*. She's a NASM certified personal trainer who works with contestants and former contestants from NBC's *The Biggest Loser* and ABC's *Extreme Weight Loss*. Her passion is leading spiritually based fitness and wellness classes. She has taught hundreds of people how to live healthier, happier lives and is gifted in teaching effective ways to maintain a healthy lifestyle through meditation, prayer, movement, and nutrition based on the teachings of Jesus. You can learn more about Laurie at www.lauriegraves.com. Welcome Laurie.

Laurie

Hi, good morning. How are you today?

Kimberley

I am wonderful. Laurie, I understand that 11 years ago you lost 90 pounds. Wow. What has been your success in keeping it off all this time?

Laurie

You know I struggled with my weight really from the time I was 11 years old. As I grew into adulthood, I had battles and cycles of weight loss, anorexia, bulimia but towards the end—before I really gave it to the Lord—I was struggling with depression and suicidal thoughts. I was 90 pounds overweight. I had a lot of fear about my future. I was 37, I had been living in Europe, I came back to live in the United States, I had a two-month old baby, I was facing some heavy circumstances in my marriage. And all of these circumstances, they had such a hold on me. And I had tried everything to lose weight.

But I had never invited God into the process. I really thought that it was all up to me. I didn't even consider that the Father would care about this aspect of my life. I did struggle to lose weight. I fought and I strived for it. And I did lose that 90 pounds. But it wasn't until I got close to the end of my weight loss journey that I finally got quiet enough to hear that my Father wanted to lift this heavy burden off of me. And He wanted to give me peace. He wanted me to love my body.

And He gave me a scripture to stand on during this time as I was receiving this revelation from Him. It's in Matthew 11:28, and it says, "Come unto me all you who labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me. For I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." And that's really what I needed. I needed rest for my soul because in the dieting and weight loss process my whole life I had never had any peace and I had always had a heavy yoke and a heavy burden on myself.

Kimberley

Wow, that's beautiful. Matthew 11:28. Rest for my soul. My journey is very similar to yours when I discovered that God was interested in everything, even losing weight. That fascinated me.

So why do you think Christian women buy into all the hype of new diet fads and tend to follow the world's way of trying to lose weight?

Laurie

Well it all sounds really appealing, doesn't it? You can lose weight in 30 days, you can have great abs in one week, all these different things that sound very appealing. And whether we want to admit it or not I believe we have set up some high places and altars to idols in our heart. And when we look at the TV stars and we look at magazine covers, we love and crave the same things that the world is seeking—youth, we want perky breasts, we want a beautiful body, we want legs that go for miles—we want all the things that the world is seeking and the diets are based on the world's wisdom. They're based on deception. The air brushing techniques (I'm sure everybody is familiar with that now) how they can take a model who is very average and turn her into a superstar in just a couple of minutes using graphics and all that. So what we've done is we've bought into this lie. We've traded our true identity that's supposed to be hidden in Christ for this counterfeit. We've traded in our glorious truth for a lie. And we crave what the world has to offer instead of receiving this peace that we're told that we can have. We give up the thought that we were created beautifully and that we were created in God's image for this lie that the world wants to buy.

Kimberley

So how can we get back to the truth?

Laurie

The only way that I have found to get back to the truth is to rediscover who we are in Christ. And there's really only one way to discover who you are in Christ and that's by spending time with the Father, in His Word, through prayer, and to really seeking Him.

Matthew 7:7-11, there's a beautiful picture laid out that we have a good Father and He wants us to ask, seek and knock. I think that we are always running to whatever's popular to lose weight but forget to run to the Father and ask Him how He would like this process to look for us. We're always grasping for what the world has to say. As Christian women how much more profitable would it be for us to run to the Book, God's Word, and see what He has to say. Because He has plenty to say about food, self-control, weight loss. All the things that we need the mind of Christ on.

Kimberley

Yes, He's definitely a good Father.

Laurie

He is.

Kimberley

Now you were taught a simple way of praying before meals to involve God to speak before you eat, would you share that with us?

Laurie

Yeah, I'd be happy to. It was really something that came straight from the Father. I was leading this wellness class at our church. It followed a month-long sermon series that we had on fitness and wellness. I had about 175 participants that I was leading at the church. I was just asking the Lord, there's so many different ways to approach food and I have knowledge from Your Word, and I have from the processes that I've gone through, and I have books that I can study. But would You give me something that would revolutionize the way that we approach our eating during this 12-week time.

And as I sought the Lord for an answer to this question about two weeks later when I was walking with the Lord, I heard this and what He said to me was when you sit down pray this, "Lord, will You be glorified in this choice?" and then pray, "Lord, will You be glorified in this portion?"

I started thinking about these two questions and I started implementing it in my own life and I shared that with the class and that has been one thing that has really brought a lot of self-control and temperance to individuals that I work with. Because when you can be humble to say, "Lord are You really going to be glorified in what I'm going to choose here?". Particularly if you're going to be at a restaurant. "And Lord will you be glorified in this portion that I'm about to eat?" A lot of times at restaurants we're served 30-40% more than what is a normal portion. Particularly here in the United States. So I got to thinking and meditating and asking God more about this and I started thinking, what if

we could slide off half of those fries to the side and we could tithe them towards our future health. What if we could cut the hamburger in half and say, "Lord I'm going to practice self-control and restraint here and I want to offer half of this to You as a tithe for my future health. For my longevity. For my mental health. I want to give this to You because I know I don't need this much because I heard from You that the portion was too large."

We've been given freedom through Christ's death, burial and resurrection. But Galatians 5:13 tells us not to use that freedom as an occasion to serve our flesh. We haven't been given grace to just live widely without restraint but there's going to be times when we're not in control of what we're being served and in order to not walk in fear about what we're being served, or in order to not be offensive to our host, we are going to have to ask the Lord what is appropriate for me to eat in this situation.

Kimberley

I've never thought about it that way to tithe a portion of my food to my future health. I really like that because you are keeping God in the forefront and that will glorify Him in your choices and in your portions.

Laurie

And Jesus taught us so much about the seed and the harvest, and we can find such occurrences in that realm of nature. So when we think about, okay we don't want to get into the mindset where a hamburger is bad or pizza is bad, and we approach eating and all those things with fear. Let's just practice self-control and eat them occasionally in a portion that's going to be glorifying to God and we know that we don't need the rest so we can let that go and say, Lord I know You'll increase me. I know You'll increase my health, my longevity because I'm willing to give this over to You.

Kimberley

Do you think that self control and temperance have a longer lasting effect on weight loss than the quick fix diets that we see on TV and in magazines and books?

Laurie

I believe that the Word of God works. When we apply it. When we choose to be dedicated to what the Lord says about certain topics. I discovered this verse sort of randomly one day and I thought wow what a beautiful picture of how the Lord wants to be involved in the way that we eat. It's found in Hosea 4:11 and it says that "He wraps us with cords of loving kindness and He draws us to Himself. He removes the heavy yoke off our shoulders and He feeds us with His hand." To me that's such a gentle picture of how the Lord would like us to trust Him for instruction and care in our wellness journey. That He really wants to take care of us.

A lot of times when I had been on diets in the past, or the world's way of fasting I felt very heavy, I felt very condemned. I felt shame if I went off a little bit here or there. But the Lord wants to remove that heavy yoke and shame from us. This isn't to discount that there isn't good information available through books and things like that, but if I could just submit to you that when you choose those things as your guide verses getting the Father involved and asking Him what might be missing or what you need to add to your diet, you could be bypassing the healing that you need in your spirit, soul, and body. And just be

losing a few pounds temporarily. So we have a choice where we can see God's wisdom and really get a true freedom that will come when we exercise self-control and temperance by saying no to our flesh or we can grasp onto these quick fixes that we see and just lose the few pounds. For me, I came to the decision that I wanted a true healing. I wanted a true healing in my life and I didn't want to continue to obsess and be in bondage to losing weight. I wanted to experience God's freedom walking on a path towards wellness that I know will take me to the very end of my life. It's not something that's temporal for me. I want to continue walking in health according to God's plan for me. All of my days.

Kimberley

Where do we get the power to walk in self control and temperance?

Laurie

Well we talked about how diets can be restrictive and they can lead to bondage and self-condemnation. I believe that the better plan from God is self-control. And we have to receive that from the Father. Self-control is a gift but in order to develop proficiency we have to begin learning to say no to our flesh and then walking in the power that the Holy Spirit has given us.

The Greek meaning of self-control is "Possessing power, strong. Having mastery or possession of." That's what I want. I want mastery over my impulses. I want to be strong and possess power. When temptation comes knocking on my door I want to be able to be strong enough in the Lord and the power of His might and walk in the power of the Holy Spirit that I can say no.

A great verse that kind of substantiates this thinking is 1 Peter 1:3-4 and it says, "According to His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness." So to me that includes the dieting and wellness process. "Through the knowledge of Him that has called us to glory and virtue whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises that ye might be partakers of the divine nature having escaped the corruption that is in the world through love." And what that verse means to me is there's going to be all kinds of corruption to truths that are in God's word. There are always going to be twists and lies put on things, natural ways that we should live in the world according to God's plan. So if we can turn from that corruption, God has given us a way of escape. He's given us this divine power, He's given us everything that pertains to life and godliness through the knowledge of Him, he's talking about Christ, that has called us to glory and virtue. So if we can rest in that fact that we've been called to glory and virtue I know that we can find the power through the Holy Spirit, to walk in self-control and temperance and then we can escape the corruption that's in the world that tries to entice us through lust.

Kimberley

Beautiful. We're going to move on to the BEEP round. Laurie will give quick tips on the four disciplines of Bible study, eating healthy, exercise, and prayer or BEEP. So what do you have for us for a quick tip for Bible study?

Laurie

Here's one thing that I've heard a lot of people teach and say, and that is you must do your Bible reading first thing in the morning. And I'd like to give the women who are listening some freedom out there.

Because sometimes that doesn't always work out. And a lot of times condemnation can come to us when we think, well I didn't get it done in the morning it's not going to count for anything if I haven't done it first thing. I believe that God honours the Word anytime that we make time to sit down and invest in what He has to say to us. And that investment can be made morning, noon, or night. He will always bless any time that you spend with Him.

Kimberley

And your quick tip for eating healthy?

Laurie

Eating healthy, let's see. I promise you that God wants to be involved in your health and wellness. If you begin to move away from the world's wisdom and begin to ask God what your diet should look like I promise you that He will speak to you and He will lead you on the path that you should go. And take a little bit of time to just sit down with a journal and a pen and your Bible and ask the Lord what your eating plan should look like. I promise that He'll answer you.

Kimberley

And your quick tip for exercise?

Laurie

You have to do it. You have to do it. If you have a pair of tennis shoes that's all you need. You can walk in front of the TV during your favourite program. I have women who've lost over 100 pounds just walking in front of the TV during a program that they liked. You can walk when you're on vacation, you can walk the stairs in your home if you need more intense cardio. And if you just started with 5 minutes each week and then you added 5 minutes more to your time, in 12 weeks you could be up to walking a full hour. To me, that's incredible.

If you have issues with your back, hip, knees, and ankles then go to the pool and walk in the buoyancy of the water in the shallow end. I also have many women that I worked with who started just being faithful to get movement. Clarity of mind has come, depression and anxiety has left, and their body has grown stronger just by doing this simple act of walking.

Kimberley

And your quick tip for prayer?

Laurie

Well I'll tie exercise into prayer because I believe that we can really hit two things at one time. I'm a firm believer in prayer walking. I go to a nature trail nearby my home at least 3 to 4 times a week and I combine my exercise time with prayer for my family, my community, my church, and others in my life who I know are struggling. That is such a powerful time where you can become more connected to the Father and actually spend time with Him giving prayers for others and then also receiving from Him as He speaks to you while you're walking through nature. It can be so powerful to combine the two.

Kimberley

You just hit on my number one favourite thing to do, the prayer walk.

Laurie

Yes, I love it.

Kimberley

Now I understand that you have a gift for our listeners. Can you tell us about that?

Laurie

I do. I have a website that has a whole host of things that can help you get started or dig a little deeper into some of the things that we talked about today. There's a healthy eating guide. There's printable resources that you can study as an individual or group. There's Spiritual Strengthening tools and Positive Changes Guide. There's a shopping list in there. And you can find that at <http://faithandfitness.net/freedom>. I believe that link will be on the Show Notes so if you didn't catch it already you can find it there.

Kimberley

Yes, definitely. Faithandfitness.net/freedom. It will be in the Show Notes, yes. Thanks again to Laurie Graves for her expert advice and thank you for joining us today.

This interview has been brought to you by the [Food for Thought e-course—expert advice on healthy eating and simple strategies to study the Bible](#). You can discover more about this online course and other health programs at www.kimberleypayne.com.

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This has been the Health Matters Podcast, believing that prayer & Bible study are to the spirit what exercise and healthy eating are to the body.

Blessings on your journey to health.

About Kimberley Payne

Kimberley Payne is the host of the *Health Matters – Healthy Spirit Healthy Body* podcast. She is author of *Fit for Faith – a 7-week program to improve spiritual and physical health* and is a motivational speaker offering workshops and online courses based on her book. She hopes to inspire women to live happier, healthier lives that glorify God. She is happily married and lives with her husband in a village east of Toronto, Canada where she hikes and bikes. Visit her website at www.kimberleypayne.com

