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A long time ago I was a member of a weight loss program. I paid my hard-earned money to enroll in it. I bought their cookbooks and the ingredients to make various recipes. I even committed to weekly weigh-ins and consultations that were close to an hour’s drive away because that was the closest facility to where I lived. I enlisted the help of my family. I had a support system in place. I had plans for a variety of exercises and activities. Everything was set to go, and so began my journey. I remember having a bit of success the very first week- I lost 3 lbs! The staff commended me. Cohorts encouraged me. I felt like the ball was moving- ever so slowly, but it was moving. Week 2 went by. I stopped by for my weigh-in. I had gained 2 lbs. I was told it was “muscle”, that these things happen, and that it was part of the process. And so life went on and my week 3 weigh-in approached. I got “too busy” to check in. I called. “Yes, all was fine, just over-whelmed with work and classes. I’d stop by next week.” Week 4- I’m disappointed at another weigh-in. Hardly any loss at all. Week after week, I usually stopped in, stood on the scales, met with the counselor and discussed the journey. Far too often there was little to no success. I deemed the program to be a scam. I blamed my over-scheduled life for my failure. And like most things that are hard for us, I quit. More money wasted. More time lost. Greater self-loathing. But when I look back at this experience, now I can see why I failed. My work load didn’t change. (I was working 3 jobs.) Even though I had *plans* and *good intentions* of working out, I never really committed to them or did them with regularity. I “couldn’t” (more like “didn’t”) prioritize the time for exercise. Even though I had the cookbooks and ingredients at home, I still stopped for fast food far too often. Again, I didn’t place enough value on myself to take the time to cook at home and/or plan accordingly for times when I’d be on the road at mealtimes. In reality, I ate pretty much what I wanted when I wanted, yet when I went to weigh-in I’d be confused as to why I hadn’t lost weight. I thwarted my own success. And I made excuses for doing so.

We do this same thing with growing our faith. We own a Bible. We display a crucifix in our home. Some of us even have a fish symbol stuck on the back of our car. But we don’t live our faith on a daily basis. We get too busy to pray each morning. We’re in such a rush and are so overwhelmed by getting each family member to their respective activities each evening that we no longer gather as a family for a meal, much less remember to say grace before eating. We somehow prioritize a life of busyness over a life of simplicity, focus, and peace. We may attend weekly Mass (the weigh-in) but then are disappointed by our lack of growth. We feel our boredom while there, our anger at being guilted into fulfilling an obligation, the disconnect between what is preached and the world in which we live. Like all things that are good for us, they are hard. They take self-discipline. They take sacrifice. They cause us to move out of our comfort zones and demand a reprioritization of our lives. If we aren’t willing to make significant changes, we are doomed to continue to live a life very similar to what we have been. God calls us to continually grow closer to Him, to become more like Jesus each day, to live our faith boldly. I don’t know about you, but I know how it feels to let myself down. I can’t imagine purposely disappointing God.

I was enrolled in this Catholic “program” by my baptism. I am grateful for having a lifetime membership. Regardless of how many times I have given up on the action steps, attempted to argue my way past the theology, and cringed at my own failings, God’s mercy abounds and He welcomes us back time and time again. Recommit yourself to God. Reprioritize your life. Make the hard choices to prune the deadwood of your life and to take on new challenges that will cause you to grow in Christ. And if part of this new agenda for your life includes attending Faith Formation to learn more about Catholicism, to discover ways to better live your faith, to connect with other like-minded folks who are also on this journey, then I’ll plan to see you on Sundays in Fellowship Hall right after the 11 am Mass. You are always welcome to join us!

Blessings,

 Julie Gould

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