

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR *Real Life*

166. What I'm Doing to Better My Health

You don't have to look too far to see how the subject of health is popping up everywhere. In the news, in conversations, on social media, and even in presidential campaigns this year. And let me tell you, I'm here for it. I want to shout, "It's about time!" We get one life to live on this earth, and God in His Word encourages us to take care of what He has given us, including our health. But how do we go about doing that? Well, in this week's episode, I'm sharing some of my health journey, what I've learned--and am learning-- and what I'm doing to better my health. I pray it inspires you to take a look at your own health, and that God will use my experiences to help another--maybe even you. Let's get into this episode.

Let's begin this episode with some alarming statistics. There's nothing like shocking ourselves right out of the gate, is there?

- 74% of American adults are dealing with overweight or obesity.
- Close to 40% of children have overweight or obesity.
- 52% of American adults have prediabetes or type 2 diabetes.
- 1 in 36 children are on the autism spectrum (up from 1 in 150 in the year 2000). This number is 1 in 22 in California.
- Nearly one in two Americans is predicted to get cancer in their lifetimes (41.6% chance). This is the first year America is estimated to have over 2 million new cases of cancer.
- Autoimmune diseases are rising rapidly, with some studies showing rates rising 3-12% annually.
- 20-25% of women are on an anti-depressant medication.
- Early onset dementia and Alzheimer's disease have tripled since 2013.

Shocking, right?

What in the world is going on with our health?

Friend, sadly we are a sick society of people, and these stats compiled from Dr. Casey Means clearly display this. If we don't do something about it now, these numbers are going to grow. They aren't going to magically decrease, unfortunately. These stats alarm me. I assume they do you, too.

Coming from someone who loves a good French fry (or a plate full) dipped in ranch dressing, and who can't resist a warm chocolate chip cookie for the life of me, I get how difficult it is to get motivated to better our health. I get it. Most celebrations and family gatherings are planned around food and drinks.

We love our food and we love to celebrate with it. Plus who likes to deny ourselves the pleasure of eating, and drinking, and relaxing instead of exercising? It's not easy making healthy changes, and our society makes it even harder. On top of this, the big food companies don't help us at all with the unhealthy ingredients they put in their food. We'll talk about that shortly. We are swimming upstream when we choose to make our health a priority.

But we can do this, friend. We *need* to do this. The people in our lives need us to do this. And who knows? Doing so not only benefits us, but it can impact those around us to do something similar for themselves. As an example of this, in the last month three people have reached out to me asking me what I'm doing to take care of myself without me saying anything to them in the first place. Now please know, I'm not bragging here. I'm just sharing that people take notice when we begin to make positive changes in our lives. They want to make changes, too.

Before I say anything else, I want to clarify, I'm not a doctor or a health professional.

I have no medical degree, so I'm not here today giving medical advice. But what I am here for today is to share my story, and to share what I'm doing to better my health. I'm simply a 50+ year-old woman who is trying to live the best life God has given me. I want to be as healthy as I can be five, ten, twenty years from now. And when my grandkids want me to pick them up or run with them outside or climb trees with them, then by golly, I want to be the grandma that can and will do all of that!

You may not agree with what I'm sharing today, and that's okay. Always check with your health professional before making changes to your healthcare.

What I have learned thus far on this health adventure has greatly impacted my quality of life, and I'm a big proponent of sharing our stories with one another so we can learn from each other. This episode isn't designed to make you or me feel better or worse about our health. It's not to cause feelings of shame or insecurity, nor do I want it to instill fear or panic. But I pray sharing some of my story and what I'm doing to better my health might make a difference in someone's life somewhere along the way. Maybe that's your life or maybe it isn't. But no matter, we'll still find hope and encouragement here today. And that's always a good thing.

What does God have to say about taking care of ourselves and our health?

Well, He doesn't mince His words.

1 Corinthians 3:16-17 in The Message paraphrase reads, "You realize, don't you, that you are the temple of God, and God himself is present in you? No one will get by with vandalizing God's temple, you can be sure of that. God's temple is sacred—and you, remember, *are* the temple."

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (NIV) says, "Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies."

Proverbs 23:20-21 (Voice) tells us, "Do not spend time with heavy wine drinkers or those who gorge themselves on meat.

For both the drunk and the glutton will end up broke, sleeping life away, and clothed in rags."

God cares about how we care for ourselves. Our health matters.

My intentional adventure to better my health began four years ago.

Four years ago, I decided to take my health into my own hands and make some changes. I didn't want to become another statistic like the ones we just discussed, and the reality that I wasn't getting any younger impacted that decision to intentionally take action.

During the summer of 2020, I thought I was pretty healthy. But healthy is an unmeasurable term, isn't it? Think about it for a moment. What you think is healthy and what I think is healthy may be two different things. What my family doctor might think is healthy might be different than what a functional doctor thinks is healthy. (We'll get to that in a few moments.) So, what is considered healthy? The number on the scale? The number of calories you consume or don't consume? Is it based on the number of minutes you exercise in a day? Or are you healthy if you aren't ill? What exactly is "healthy"?

Dictionary.com defines healthy as, "possessing or enjoying good health or a sound and vigorous mentality." Still, "healthy" is not measurable. What do you consider "healthy"?

At that point in time, I exercised regularly, which I have for many years. That's just something I do because I feel better when I am active. It's something I guess I have done since my high school years. Not every day, mind you, but on a regular basis I do.

Also four years ago, if you would have asked me if I ate healthy, I would have said yes. I would have guessed that I was eating healthy, but I really didn't know. I based my eating on what "health experts" said to eat. But each "expert" had their own opinion of what was best. I tried many of the diets out there through the years. It can be quite confusing and confounding, can't it? Trying to figure out what's the foods we should and shouldn't eat?

My scale indicated I didn't have a weight problem (I think I inherited my mom's genes in that area), and my annual checkups with my family doctor were, thankfully, uneventful. But do you remember what was going on the summer of 2020? I wanted to avoid the virus that was sweeping through the world. I wanted to do all I could to avoid dying from it. Because the death toll was filling the headlines, and again, I didn't want to be another statistic. It's something what fear can do to a person. That fear was a big motivator to take care of myself unlike ever before.

I remember, however, that something inside of me felt off, despite what my doctor and the scale said. I knew something wasn't right. Maybe I looked healthy, but was I really? I had no idea where to turn or what to do first. So, I prayed. I asked God to help me with my health and to reveal to me what was going on inside of my body. After all, He knew. He created me, and no one knows my body better than Him.

God can use whatever or whoever He wants to teach us.

Bound and determined to follow God and His health plan for my life, I stayed open to His leading. I don't remember exactly how I came across this Chicago chiropractor on Instagram, but somehow Dr. Brad Campbell appeared on my feed one day. *Bingo. Thank you, God.* What Dr. Campbell said made sense to me. For the first time, maybe ever, in my life, I heard a health professional talk about all-over health--mind, body, spirit--and how it's all connected. I didn't 100% agree with everything he said, but I soon realized I wasn't as healthy as thought. My inclinations of something being off was right.

In one of Dr. Campbell's posts, he talked about a woman with the title of "The Food Babe" on Instagram, and he referenced her mission was to help people eat more naturally and to avoid harmful ingredients in food. So I followed her and began soaking in all she had to say. Her real name is Vani Hari, and she has completely transformed my eating habits. Through her Instagram posts she taught me how to read food labels, what to look for in food and what to avoid. There's not a food in our pantry today that I haven't read the ingredients list on the back and have approved of it based off what I've learned from her. Bless my husband, Bill's heart when we go grocery shopping together. He patiently waits as I read the ingredient list on every item before it goes into our cart!

It was then I also began to buy organic food if at all possible.

Bill expanded our garden last year to grow the majority of the vegetables we eat--organically. We no longer cook or use any kind of vegetable oil or seed oil because of how harmful they are to our bodies. I also learned of the website Environmental Working Group that is designed to help us make informed decisions about living healthy in our environments. Their product search is amazing! I've found out many of the products I use (or I used to use) have harmful chemicals in them! No thank you!

The more I learned from The Food Babe and from Dr. Campbell, the more I wanted to become one of Dr. Campbell's patients! But driving to Chicago to do so wasn't going to be an option. He does offer a membership where he offers more hands-on care, but I haven't spent the money for that.

I instead began a search for a local functional or holistic doctor. And I found one! My first appointment with her was in January of 2023. I soon found out why I felt as if something was off in my body. My adrenals were out of whack! No wonder I was waking up between 3 and 5 a.m. most mornings as my cortisol levels were way too high in the mornings. No other doctor in my life had ever tested for such a thing. Blood work indicated my iron was extremely low, and my thyroid and glucose numbers weren't so great. We're still working on balancing everything out.

She also taught me what supplements might be helpful and which ones wouldn't be. Brands and quality of supplements matter. How much to take and when to take them also matters. But it's always best to get our vitamins and minerals from real food whenever possible. I'm learning so much!

Fast forward to today.

These changes I'm making isn't just for my physical health, but for my health in its entirety--emotional, mental, and spiritual, too. Because it's all connected. How I take care of me physically affects my emotions, my brain, and my spiritual life. You can't separate them. When one fails or falters, it affects

them all. For example, if I feed my body with junk and don't exercise, that affects how I act, it affects my thoughts, and it also impacts how I connect with God.

I mention in my book, *Right Now Matters*, how we get one brain for our lifetime. We can't just go to the store and purchase a new one. Someone close to me has recently suffered a cognitive decline. Learning all I can about that, the foods we eat and how active we are can play a big role in the health of our mind. It all matters!

I'm still seeing my functional doctor every 4-5 months for monitoring. That won't last forever, but for now, it's helpful. The latest tool I'm using is a continuous glucose monitor for a couple months to find out what spikes my blood sugar and what I can do about it to lessen the spike. I had no idea about any of this prior to working with her! I'm learning so much about how my body works and how to best take care of it.

So to summarize, here's what I'm doing to better my health.

I'm exercising every day but one, alternating weight training and pilates and cardio. My focus is to get 10,000 steps in daily. That's a challenge!

I eat when I'm hungry and I fast when God leads me to. I'll still have some fries every now and then, but now I know what to do afterwards to thwart a blood sugar spike. I choose organic foods when possible and read every food label I can. I won't ingest ingredients that disrupt my health.

Drinking ten glasses of water daily is my focus, but most days I struggle with that.

My sleep is better, and I try to get at least seven hours each night. I try to go to bed and get up at the same time every day. That's easier said than done, though.

I don't want my health to become an idol in my life, so I'm consistently guarding against that. I just want it to remain something important in the background of my life. For it to be a new way of living, not something I always have to focus on, if that makes sense.

I'm also slowly incorporating non-toxic products into our home, like cleaners, personal care items, laundry soap and things like that. It all takes time and it's okay that I'm doing it slowly.

I continue to monitor my progress with my health professional. It feels good to have someone in my corner supporting me and the changes I am making. I'm seeing progress and I feel better than I have in years.

This new way of life has indeed been an adventure, and I certainly don't do it all perfectly. Bottom line, I just want to honor God by taking care of what He has given me. We each get one chance to live this life, and I am here for it. Not for my sake necessarily, but for His and to impact the world around me for Him.

I pray this episode encourages you in your own adventure of health.

I'll link the professionals I mentioned in the show notes. Again, I don't always agree with everything they post or say, but God has certainly used them in my life for good. If you are desiring to make some positive health changes in your life, and if you aren't sure where to begin, I understand. That's where I

was four years ago. I suggest pray about it and ask God to show you where to begin and what changes He would like you to make. He'll show you. He won't make you guess. And don't be surprised if she shows in you ways you don't expect.

If you found encouragement in this episode, would you please leave a rating or review. That will truly bless me. Be sure to subscribe so you never miss an episode.

Thank you for allowing me to share some of my health journey with you. The thing is, the journey isn't over. It continues on until the day we're called home. I'm cheering you in in your health today. God bless you!

Links in this episode:

[Casey Means, MD](#), Newsletter #25: American Health is Getting Destroyed (and is simple to improve)

[1 Corinthians 3:16-17](#) (MSG)

[1 Corinthians 6:19-20](#) (NIV)

[Proverbs 23:20-21](#) (Voice)

[Dr. Bradley Campbell](#) (Instagram)

[The Food Babe](#) (Instagram)

[Environmental Working Group](#)

[The Teggatz Clinic](#)

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