



# THE HEALTH PROJECT

*Helping ministry leaders experience the fullness of health*

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IT STARTS WITH A SINGLE STEP

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*It was in April of 1997 that I woke up to the reality that I needed to change! I had let poor eating habits and a sedentary lifestyle become my normal existence. It was on that very morning I made a choice to eat better and to get my body moving. I have been on this journey for over twenty years and I am still learning. On this journey, I have experienced and changed how I see the link between my physical health and my spiritual growth. This transformation is something that I want to invite you to experience. It will change how you feel, how you live and how you lead.*

I want to encourage you to take one single step towards greater health! You will find this (often) neglected area of life to be a deep and spiritual adventure. This is not a program or quick fix solution to resolve all your unhealthy patterns. The Health Project is a life long journey of experiencing the fullness that comes from orienting your life around how God created you. Yes, eating real food, exercise and caring for creation are woven into how we were designed by God.

Furthermore, I believe your ministry of the Gospel suffers if you have a dualistic tendency (dare I say heretical?) separating your physical wellness of body and mind from your spiritual life. They are deeply intertwined and beautifully holistic.

And a final thought before jumping in. It doesn't matter how significant the challenge of the journey ahead of you may seem. You may be reasonably healthy (or at least you think you are) or you may suffer with chronic illness, disease, obesity or something that makes you believe you can't make progress. What matters is that you are willing to take one small incremental step AND to keep moving forward! If you are willing to do that, you are ready to start the transformation of you!

## Two truths that changed my life:

1. **God's Design.** God created us to eat real food, be active and to care for creation.

I think it is easy to make a theological argument for a healthy lifestyle. Until the last 100 years or so, refined foods (more accurately, "food like") products didn't exist and a sedentary lifestyle likely meant starvation. It was assumed that in order to survive, you would work the land and eat of its fruit. My goal is not to expound on what I think we

all can embrace to varying degrees. My clarity came when I understood more accurately, the simplicity of God's design. God and science are in complete agreement that your body functions best when you eat what is natural and whole combined with a daily routine of activity that gets you moving. My invitation to you, is to experience this for yourself, not as legal ritual, but as a joyful response to God's design and restoration of everything. God created and it was good. God formed us in His image, making us both image bearers and stewards of self and creation.

As you will learn through this guide and your own experience of the Health Project, your health is not just the "other side of the coin" to a long and fruitful ministry. Caring for yourself and creation is deeply imbedded in your spiritual growth and should not be viewed as a nice add on, *"after all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church"* Eph. 5:29.

2. **Accountability.** Your ability to make progress goes up exponentially when you journey together with others.

You already know you should eat healthy and exercise yet you still struggle to be consistent. There is so much confusion in the messages we receive about health and nutrition. The Health Project cuts away all the hype and develops a strategy that transforms discipline into habits. The foundation of the Health Project is not to give you knowledge but rather to experience change by journeying with others. In fact, you cannot be a part of the Health Project without the commitment to walk with others. Consistency, through transformed habits, is best realized by starting with God as the author of health AND not attempting this journey on our own.

### **Time for Action:**

1. Before you go any further, review these 2 truths. It is the foundation of the Health Project. Write them out in your own words (5 minutes).

*Understanding that health is God's design is important because...*

*Moving forward with accountability will help me because...*

2. Reflect on God's creation and your physical health. List as many things as you can from God's word and/or from your imagination about why caring for yourself and the things around you matter.

Why should I care for God's Creation?	Why should I care for myself physically?

Notes:

## So, what is the Health Project?

It is helping ministry leaders experience and grow in awareness and health by actively participating in three simple concepts. If you begin taking steps forward, it will literally change how you feel, the clarity of your mind and possibly even the longevity of your life. I suggest you think about your (future) grandchildren or what life may be like for you when you are much older. Committing to this lifelong process and taking small but important steps will impact the rest of your life including the effectiveness of your leadership and ministry.

### Nutrition

**Refined**

towards

**Whole**

### Exercise

**Idle**

towards

**Active**

### Creation

**Consumer**

towards

**Steward**

## The Power of Incremental Steps

In June of 2017, Cathi and I decided to see how far we could walk in a single day before growing tired and quitting. We made it 50 kilometers! We talked, prayed together and spent time in silence. We had no idea how far we would be able to go, it just happened one step at a time. With the Health Project, if you trust the process, you will enjoy many new milestones in your own personal health.

Discipline is hard UNTIL it becomes a habit. Most of our lives are lived from engrained habits, good or bad. I think it is better for you to commit to one thing until it becomes a newly formed habit before taking another step instead of tackling five things and getting overwhelmed. You will be stunned when you realize how far you can go on a journey by taking one step at a time. Compare that to your last attempt you made at a radical change only to fall back to the way things were. You will appreciate this step by step approach to changing habits, one at a time.

In the Health Project, you will set specific lifestyle changes and hold it for 100 days until it becomes your new normal. That is a minimum of three lifestyle changes in a year. If you live for 30 more years that is a lot of potential transformational habits!

The three concepts that follow are all laid on the principle of taking one incremental step at a time.

## Nutrition - Eat Real Food

I used to think food was anything I consumed. I was wrong. There is food (natural, whole, grown, lean) and there is “food like” (processed, refined, packaged). I had to reorient myself away from the cultural lie that refined “food like” products would bring me happiness and nourish my body. Although, to be fair, there is much satisfaction from eating great baking or sugary/salty junk food, but it only lasts for a couple of minutes. Once I embraced the abundance that flows from real food it brought simplicity and awareness to a food strategy. You don’t have to be perfect at eating real food, but by taking one step at a time, you will gain higher levels of health.

Many diseases and illness can be reduced or eliminated by eating more whole foods and reducing our intake of refined foods or “food like” products. You don’t have to become a Vegan, go on a Dr. Bernstein diet (incredibly unhealthy), join Weight Watchers, eat

Paleo, fruitarian, vegetarian or any other food fad. Each fad diet may have good principles, most of which I have experimented with, but our goal is to engrain lifelong habits that transform. The great news is you don't have to be perfect, you will never need to count calories, which can be stressful, and you decide the steps you want to take.

**Note:** Research is showing strong evidence that many cancers, type 2 diabetes, heart conditions, stroke, anxiety, depression and even the common cold can be reduced, even eliminated through eating real food and being active.

## Exercise - Get Active

I remember the first few weeks after my epiphany 20 years ago. I started running as my activity of choice. It was brutal. I had a hard time getting to the end of my neighbourhood and back. Eventually, as previously stated, the discipline became habit (easy). It went from being hard to do to being an engrained habit that was second nature. I am not advocating that you become a runner but I am suggesting you find a few trusted activities that you can do consistently.

Incorporating exercise into your daily routine combined with modest improvements in eating real food will make a significant difference to how you feel and how you live. This is where the real payoff is. You do not have to join a gym, be an athlete, become a runner or wake up at 5:00am. Choosing from hundreds of activities, preferably ones that can be fused into your current routine is always a good place to start.

**Note:** It has only been in recent history where humans didn't have to sweat and "work the land" in order to survive. For thousands of years it was assumed that you would eat real food and be active. For some reason, we have mistakenly come to believe that our comfort and personal enjoyment are more important than self discipline and denial. I would suggest that there is joy in both ends of this spectrum. Get active!

## Creation – Becoming Stewards

I am starting to feel so puffed up now that I compost food waste. I have so much to learn in this regard but have recently begun to focus more intentionally on caring about creation, or more accurately, the Creator's handiwork (it makes it more personal). God has entrusted the beauty of this world to us. Maybe we can't stop global warming but

we can reduce our use of packaging, increase composting, and have a keen sensitivity to our actions. There is so much we can do by simply taking one step at a time. If anyone should be a conservationist it should be the one who has relationship with the Creator.

So, there you have it. These are the three concepts of the Health Project. Are you ready to develop your strategy?

**Time for Action:**

1. To this point in your life, identify the ways in which you have practiced each of these three concepts. Be thorough. You will build on this later.

Nutrition	Exercise	Care for Creation

Notes:

## Your Health Project journey begins now!

To this point, what you have read has only served as foundational work. The next step is to develop your practical and personal strategy that you will use to walk with your accountability group. If you don't buy into the concepts outlined above you likely shouldn't participate in the Health Project. Many people cannot make the leap to embrace a healthy lifestyle. They see it as nothing more than a nice little add on, and only if inclined in those peculiar ways. I want to be completely clear. I believe that a healthy lifestyle, even though I live it out imperfectly, is a response of obedience. God created us with the longing to care for self and creation. You will grow to see that this is true once the cultural and marketing mud has been cleared from your eyes.

Also, just like we can grow and develop in obedience to the leading of the Holy Spirit in our spiritual disciplines and character, so too we can follow the impulses of the Holy Spirit when it comes to our health. Simply put, our starting point must be rooted in God's design and not the cultural lie of diets, fads and body image.

In my experience, there is a simple process to follow that leads to immediate action and permanent lifestyle changes. It is not the only way to develop healthy patterns and practices but it will be effective. Also, I don't want to mislead you into thinking that something simple may not cut very deep into things that have held you back in the past. My encouragement to you is to trust the process and trust your group. Roll up your sleeves. Here we go.

***Action item:*** Print off appendix 1 titled ***"100 Day Challenge – Game plan worksheet"*** and begin to fill in your responses below on the game plan sheet as you go through each step.

## Step 1 Decide

Take the time you need to think through and pray about your decision to improve your health. If you are not convinced that this is how God designed you to have a full and vital life in order to live out your calling, then take your time before you proceed. I am willing to soften this statement a little to say that you must at least be convinced enough to take one action step. Also, if you are not willing to be accountable to a small group of like-minded individuals, you are not ready to move forward. These two foundational truths will give you a starting point that will get you off on the right foot. It is not about a diet fad, weight loss, body image or guilt. It is trusting in the abundance of God's provision and trusting that He knew how to create you to be optimally healthy.

### Respond to the following:

*What has stopped you from developing a health plan for your life in the past?*

*What successes and failures have you experienced in trying to be healthy?*

*If you have failed in the past, what happened?*

*What is your motivation to get healthy? (Illnesses, disease, medications, mobility, new awareness...)*

**Action item:** *Write the date you decided to start the Health Project on your worksheet.*

## Step 2 Group Up

Have you ever tried a fad diet (South Beach, Paleo, Vegan and on and on...) in the past, only to give up after a week? Have you signed up for a gym membership and then regretted it because your spending money on something you're not committed to doing? I believe the single greatest mistake we make is to try and do things in isolation. We put far too much confidence in our own abilities to be successful. The Health Project is only helpful if you let others help you. I have found the optimal size of an accountability group to be 2-4 likeminded friends. A fun enhancement to this would be to have a large group of people from your church or community start at the same time and then have a few groups working alongside each other. If you cannot find someone to join you, who will also fully participate in the Health Project, then the next best way to take this step is to find someone who will be aware of your game plan and meet with you once per week to see how it is going.

**Action item:** Write the name(s) of the people in your group on your worksheet.

## Step 3 Define Your Goals

Now it is time to develop a plan. And remember, this is not a program. Many programs have been written and they typically don't work for the long haul. You could argue that they work, but usually only for a period of time. There is a big difference between joining a fad or changing your lifestyle. For example, if you follow any paid program that esteems a certain body type (abs, beach body, buns of steel etc.) or makes you follow a certain food pattern (juicing, paleo, vegan etc.), you will follow along until you realize you don't have and will never have a beach body. Remember, your core belief (starting point) is God's design, not cultural expectations or fads. Body image, counting calories or weight loss are unrealistic targets. If our goal is how we look, then it becomes all about us. If we go back to God's design, that He created us to eat well and be active, then it's all about Him!

If you go back to the foundational truths, you will remember that we already know most of what we need to be doing. There are certainly many insights about nutrition and exercise that have been helpful to me along the way, but you can start your journey by simple, incremental steps, with no further knowledge or input.

If you get stuck, I am happy to help you develop your plan and will provide any resources or information that will help you make a solid action plan.

**Action item:** Work through the steps of the **100 Day Challenge** (below). Once you are clear on 1-3 goals, add it to your worksheet.

## 100 Day Challenge

This is your guide to selecting one to three ways of getting started.

Join me and others in this experience that could reshape, redefine and invigorate your life. What we eat, how we exercise and how we care for creation, shape who we are and how we live. Our purposeful lives can be broken down into the many decisions we make every day. The 100 Day Challenge brings accountability and fun to the goals you commit to.

Here is how it works:

1. Commit to 1-3 areas of focus that you want to change into a habit.
2. Tell your group what you plan to do.
3. Track your progress.
4. Share your progress.
5. Repeat

That's it! Commit, tell, track, and share.

My motivation for the 100 Day Challenge is twofold. First, each of us can make progress in becoming healthier people. Second, what we decide to do may inspire someone else in our lives, creating a ripple effect. Join me! If you change, and that impacts just one other person, it's worth it.

The 100 Day Challenge will take a lot of courage, commitment and focus. This kind of challenge has to start deep within you. If you desire change and you have someone to walk this journey with you, it will happen. However, nobody but you can motivate you to take a single step towards greater health.

Next steps before you start:

1. Look at the list of goal ideas (below) and circle ones that resonate with you. Add your own ideas to the list.
2. Refine and/or rewrite your list. Expand your thinking to include your whole self, not just exercise or nutrition.
3. Take time to reflect on what you have decided and discuss it with the person you will ask to hold you accountable.
4. Make a final list and submit it to your group.

## **Goal Ideas** (feel free to add to my list...it is very short)

### **Nutrition**

Eliminate an item (soda, coffee, pastries, pasta)  
Eliminate a category (refined sugar, white flour, dairy)  
Try a new food fad (vegan, paleo, vegetarian, fruitarian)  
Don't eat after 8:00pm  
Have a nutritious breakfast  
Your ideas...

### **Exercise**

30 minutes of any movement per day (cycle, swim, walk, run)  
100 push ups a day (can be done a few at a time)  
Run 30km per week  
Run 30 minutes per day  
Join a group (CrossFit, yoga, health club)  
Walk 10,000 steps  
Your ideas...

### **Creation**

Stop using plastic water bottles  
Buy products that use less packaging  
Unclutter your life (minimalist)  
Recycle  
Compost  
Walk/Bike to work  
Your ideas...

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### **Other goal ideas to consider...**

Say something encouraging to someone  
Doing something nice for a stranger  
Write a thank you note  
Go to bed at 9:00pm  
Read for 30 minutes a day  
Restrict social media time  
15 minutes of reflection/ journaling about your day  
Your ideas...

## Define Your Goals (1-3 goals)

### Example:

#### Goal 1 – Eat Clean (healthy)

No refined sugar

No refined flour

Eat whole foods

Don't eat after 8:45pm

If I have a perfect day I get one handful of dark chocolate covered almonds at night

If I have a perfect week I get cheese nachos on Saturday night

#### Goal 2 – Read, Reflect and Journal for 30 minutes

Spiritual reading

Journal about daily accomplishments, attitudes, behaviours

Silence

#### Goal 3 – Strength/Stretch for 30 minutes

Choose any movement other than cycling or running. For example:

Strength training

Push-ups

Yoga

Foam Roller

## Sample 100 Day Plan and Journal

Day	Eat Clean*	Reflect/Journal 30 Min**	Strength/Stretch 30 Min***
1	Had a piece of cake. 8 out of 10	Yes.	Yoga
2	Nailed it! 10/10	Yes.	Weights, Foam Roller
3	Nailed it! 10/10	Yes.	Stretch, Foam Roller

\*No refined sugar or flour. Whole foods, whole grains, don't eat after 8:45pm

\*\*Write one page. Insights, reflections on readings.

\*\*\*Any movement other than cycling or running.

## Step 4 Begin the 100 Day Challenge

A few things to keep in mind when you are starting out on your challenge. First, it doesn't have to be 100 days. It doesn't have to look like my sample plan. It doesn't have to be tracked or journaled in this way. However, it does have to be clear, concise and done in a group. So why did I pick 100 days? Besides being a nice round number, research demonstrates that we need at least 2, if not 3 months to go from discipline (which is hard) to habit (which is automatic). You could improvise and create a 2-week challenge or any variation your group can think of.

Second, depending on how aggressive you made your challenge will determine how your first week goes. I remember going 100% with no dairy, no refined sugar, no refined flour and no whole grains of any kind. Day 4-6 were the toughest, with my body getting rid of toxins, going through withdrawals and generally feeling tired and cranky. Week one is especially important to get your group onside.

Third, ensure your group agrees to a pattern of regular meetings. If you are not in the same city, meet online.

## Step 5 Become a Student of Health

Becoming a student of how to eat better, exercise, focus on the environment and our spiritual growth takes a commitment to be open to learning. First, I would suggest that you read, watch documentaries and talk to others who are committed to health. Second, be cautious about giving advice. Let's say you went extreme on your challenge and cut all refined sugar and flour. I guarantee that within 2 weeks you are going to feel better, think more clearly, feel more productive and have more energy. Your afternoon "tired" lows will be gone and you will have something to give your family in the evening. Now that your invincible and you have "seen the light" you are going to tell people about your experience. Be cautious. Most people will simply think you are judging them and that you have lost your mind. After you have completed a few challenges then maybe be open to talking about AND only when invited to. Until then, limit it to only those who come to you to ask questions.

### Resources:

Just because I recommend it, doesn't mean I believe 100% of it. These are good to great resources and can contribute to your journey. However, I strongly recommend that you purchase the Complete Plate cookbook. She is local and did a lot of hard work in putting together variety and health without setting "good" and "bad" food limits. This should be in everyone's kitchen!

### Books:

The Complete Plate by Lauren Klukas <https://www.thecompleteplate.com/>  
In Defense of Food by Michael Pollen (a little political but foundational)  
Wheat Belly by William Davis (some questionable "facts"; lots of recipes)

### Documentaries:

Forks over knives  
In Defense of Food  
Fat, sick and nearly dead  
Fat, sick and nearly dead Pt. 2  
Food Choices

## Step 6 Reflect and Start Again

As you come close to the end of your challenge, begin discussing as a group what your next step is. There is always a next step. Always. Lifestyle changes are long term and continually in need of refinement.



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Please send me any plans, insights or question.

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## Appendix 1

# 100 Day Challenge

## *A journey of Transformation*

### Game Plan Worksheet

My commitment date: I decided to start the Health Project on \_\_\_\_\_

Our Group: \_\_\_\_\_

Define your goal(s):

Goal 1

Goal 2

Goal 3

Day	Goal 1	Goal 2	Goal 3
1			
2			

## Appendix 2

# 21 Day Reset

## *Cleaning out the system*

### *Whole Food Plant Based (WFPB) Diet*

This “reset” is possibly the highest level of challenge I can think of in the Health Project. It takes a lot of determination and focus to go through the withdrawals, potential headaches, sluggishness and lows your body may feel as you reorient it to healthy and whole nutrition. You will be surprised at how addictive refined food is and the amount of toxins your body will be eliminating. Science shows that refined sugar and flour have similar addictive properties as heroin or crack cocaine. Consider this the next time you look into a pastry showcase and part of your brain ignites with strong messages of “must have”, “I deserve it” or “this will make me feel better”! The 21 Day Reset will be a struggle. It is worth trying but it is not for everyone, nor does it need to be a part of your experience of the Health Project.

Do a little of your own research. There are a variety of ways to explain what is included or not included in a WFPB diet. One helpful article is following the [whole-food-plant-based-diet-guide](#) provide by Dr. T. Colin Campbell.

For our purposes, if it’s whole food, it is in, if it’s processed, it is out.

Please use something like the following in order to compare and learn from each other at the end of the “reset”.

Name:

Date Started:

What modifications did you make for your WFPB experience?
How did you feel after Day 1, 2, 4, 7, 14, 21?
What did you learn through the process?
What will you continue doing after 21 days?
What will you stop doing after 21 days?
What positive benefits did you experience?
What negative experiences did you encounter?