

## **Christian Leader Battles Hunger While Waging War on Obesity**

By MICHAEL BLUNK

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America has been described as the land of plenty; perhaps excessive would be a more appropriate descriptor. In nations such as Haiti, Angola, and Guatemala, malnutrition ranks among the leading causes of death. By



contrast, a typical drive-thru eatery's dollar menu offers Americans—even poor Americans—an assortment of fast food selections that exceed an impoverished Haitian's daily caloric intake for mere pocket change. While isolated instances of hunger exist in the states, there is no shortage of food within our borders. This is the land of plenty --- or excess. According to the Centers for Disease Control, seven out of ten Americans are overweight. Half of those are clinically obese. We are the land of plenty. And the abundance is killing us.

Wayside Christian Mission is Louisville's oldest and largest rescue mission. With over six hundred homeless women, men, and children in their nightly care, the mission serves well over two thousand meals daily. In their quest to see that no Louisvillian goes hungry, the mission's Samaritan Patrol volunteers deliver food and other life-

saving provisions to the many homeless camps scattered throughout the city. Statistically, deaths among the city's homeless population have dropped substantially after the Samaritan Patrol drivers took to the streets in 1989.

Since 1985, Rev. Tim Moseley has been at the mission's helm. In that time, he has battled hunger in Louisville, but Rev. Moseley has fought his own private war with food. Throughout his adult life, he has suffered from obesity. With an annual death toll of 300,000,<sup>i</sup> obesity is the number two preventable cause of death in America. The premature deaths of his father and brother were grim reminders of his own likely fate.



While in their mid-fifties, Rev. Moseley and his wife Nina, who serves as the mission's Chief Operating Officer, were blessed with a healthy baby boy who was born just days before the birth of their first grandchild. Left unchecked, he could not ignore an unsettling fear that

his poor state of health could result in his son growing up without a father. "It occurred to me that I might not live to see Jackson graduate from college." Besides the fear of leaving his son fatherless, Rev. Moseley considered other motivating factors in favor of a radical lifestyle change:

- **Feelings of lethargy coupled with a mounting disinterest in physical activities**
- **Sensitivity to obesity (made worse by the demands of frequent public appearances)**
- **A compelling desire to be a better witness and minister of our Lord Jesus Christ**
- **Sleeping difficulties**
- **High blood pressure and other mounting health risks**

In spite of his own frustrations and the repeated warnings from well-meaning family, friends, and even the mission's board of directors, he did not embark upon a positive

path to change until he came to understand that the cure was not to be found in faddish diets and personal resolve. “I couldn’t do this on my own. I prayed for months, even years, for help from above—a path, a way out—but I still couldn’t lose weight. Then, finally, an answer was given.” And the answer was surprisingly simple.

Like millions of others, Rev. Moseley had fallen prey to what is humorously referred to as SAD—the Standard American Diet consisting of fast food, fried foods, snack foods, overly processed foods, and sweets. Cheap, convenient, readily available, and addictive, the preferred fare of overweight Americans is big on fat, sugar, salt, and calories while lacking in vitamins, dietary fiber, and meaningful nutrients. A lifestyle hallmarked by thousands of empty calories coupled with endless hours behind a desk or in front of a television generally leads to weight gain, hypertension, diabetes, heart disease, and premature death.



God, who hears the prayers of His children, did not ignore Rev. Moseley’s pleas for deliverance; the pathway to health and freedom was found in a whole food, plant-based vegan diet combined with a daily regimen of strenuous physical exercise. In ten months, Rev. Moseley

dropped well over one hundred pounds through diet and exercise alone.

Rev. Moseley discovered the benefits of his new lifestyle were quick in coming. Almost immediately, he realized an increase in energy, an improvement in his sleep, and a gain in self-confidence. Even the acid indigestion that had made him a slave to Tums and Roloids disappeared. The renewed energy moved him to



shut off the TV and take up ballroom dancing, walking, and bicycling. Best of all, keeping up with his busy two year old was no longer a problem. "I went from a couch potato to an amateur athlete in less than a year." He also discovered the simple joy of buying clothes from somewhere other than a big and tall shop.

Jesus said we are to "count the cost" before launching a major campaign. True to God's word, Rev. Moseley's campaign to lose weight did not come without an exacting price. He gave up the comfort of an office chair for a treadmill desk. An errand often meant leaving the car in the drive in favor of a bicycle. Idle time cozying on a sofa was now spent lifting weights. To accomplish this dramatic weight loss, Rev. Moseley devoted two solid hours to exercise daily. As the demands of the mission routinely require twelve hour work days, finding time to exercise was no easy matter, but there could be no turning back.



Regardless of his working schedule, Rev. Moseley made time to bicycle, lift weights, and walk.

A proponent of Dr. John McDougall's low fat, whole food, plant-based vegan diet, Rev. Moseley readily admits his fondness for cheeseburgers, ice cream, fried foods, and pastries. Much like cigarette smokers breaking the habit, he experienced a measure of sadness and grief after saying good-bye to his favorite junk foods. "It wasn't easy," and with much of his current dietary intake consisting of steamed vegetables and whole grains, he good-naturedly laments, "I still miss White Castle hamburgers and French fries."

Friends and acquaintances, especially among those he has not recently seen, are often shocked by his remarkable weight loss. "Although my friends say I have lost enough, I want to achieve the ideal weight of about 148 pounds—a weight I have not seen since junior high!" But this is not his only goal. An enthusiastic biker, he plans

to bicycle the four hundred miles from Fairbanks, Alaska to the Arctic Ocean. He and his wife Nina are also planning to crisscross the country on a tandem bicycle.

As the CEO of Wayside Christian Mission, much of Rev. Moseley's work is with alcoholics, addicts, and the homeless. Substance abuse and extreme poverty often exacts a dreary toll on the well-being of its victims. Many of the mission's resident clients make poor dietary choices. Fresh fruits and leafy green salads offered in the mission's dining halls are often ignored. Physical inactivity and widespread tobacco usage further aggravate their existing health woes, but these problems have not escaped Rev. Moseley's attention. "I want to share the Gospel—the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and the gospel of whole foods and plant-based eating." Taking a holistic approach to recovery and restoration, he believes **the Christian walk and a healthy lifestyle are complimentary**. "My weight loss story has given me opportunities to share the ministry of Wayside Christian Mission with others." Indeed, many of the mission's clients have expressed an interest in following his lead based on healthy eating and routine exercise.



During the mission's Thanksgiving festivities, a volunteer who had not seen Rev. Moseley since the previous Thanksgiving remarked, "I couldn't believe it was really him! I told my friend, 'This can't be Tim Moseley! Tim Moseley is a fat guy and this man isn't fat!'" Another volunteer saddled with an excessive belt size asked for and received a photocopy of Rev. Moseley's dietary regimen.

Obesity is particularly evident among those living near or below the poverty line. An increasing number of children growing up in poor homes are plagued with diabetes, hypertension, and excessive body fat. Sadly, there are legions of inner city parents who are unaware of the health



risks posed by a steady diet of chicken nuggets, fries, and sugary sodas. Among his

many goals, Rev. Moseley wants to educate the community and bring about dietary changes among impoverished families. A community-wide workshop touting the benefits of a whole food plant based diet will be hosted at the mission's hotel.

Of course, change does not come easily. Americans are addicted to fast food. Rev. Mosley shares, "Let's face it, fast food tastes great, but we see food as fuel and not just for fun or to relieve boredom. We must learn to see convenience food as evil—yes, evil! This may sound a little strong, but eating hamburgers is much like smoking cigarettes. No one would give a child a pack of cigarettes, but we do much the same when feeding our children fast food burgers, fries, and sugary drinks. Food ignorance can lead to addictive eating habits that will eventually plague our children with a long list of deadly diseases. Extreme? Maybe I am, but this is what it takes after years of half measures. The secret to good health is doable and simple, but never easy. Diet pills and gastric bypass surgery is for those who want easy, but to those in search of a natural approach, whole foods and exercise have allowed me to be a better father, a more effective minister, and a happier child of God."

Rev. Moseley's dramatic weight loss has not gone unnoticed by the mission's resident clients and staff members. "He's a role model," explained Virginia Taylor, who oversees the mission's Sober Living Program. "He gives me hope." After two hip surgeries, Ms. Taylor's weight began a steady increase. The extra pounds further aggravated her ailing hip while draining her energy reserves. "I am sick and tired of feeling sick and tired and am ready to follow Rev. Moseley's lead and say good-bye to the extra weight once and for all. He's an inspiration. And if he can do it, I can do it."

A weekly nutritional class led by the University of Kentucky's Extension Office has become an ongoing component in the women's recovery program. Participants learn the dangers of fatty and sugary foods while



discovering the benefits of whole grains, leafy greens, and fresh fruits and vegetables. In the end, the mission's clients are taught to make healthy dietary choices for themselves and their children.

But dietary changes alone are not enough. A local ministry serving joggers and cyclists provides running shoes and one-on-one coaching to the mission's resident clients interested in walking, jogging, and running. Recently, a group from the Sober Living Program participated in their first 5 K run. One enthusiastic client exclaimed, "The experience was exhilarating! People clapped and cheered as I crossed the finish line! I feel like a winner!"

The mission's bicycle ministry has committed to providing resident clients with bicycles. A group of local bicycling enthusiasts recondition donated and abandoned bicycles. Once these bicycles are in like-new condition, resident clients can purchase a bicycle of their



choice for a nominal cost. For those who do not wish to purchase a bicycle, free loaner bikes are available. Protective gear and riding instructions are also a part of the program and Rev. Moseley recently assigned a staff member to head up a bicycling group for those who want to burn excessive calories while peddling along downtown Louisville's "bicycle friendly" streets.

It is worth noting that Wayside Christian Mission operates a twelve-story hotel in downtown Louisville. Women and men in the mission's recovery program are the primary staff at Hotel Louisville. This fully functioning hotel offers reasonably priced lodging for travelers and tourists visiting the city's bustling business district; the hotel also provides safe and comfortable transitional housing to more than one hundred homeless women and children. Hotel Louisville's popular WayCool Café now offers healthy vegan options such as steamed vegetables and black bean patties. To



encourage healthier choices among employees, Rev. Moseley offers full time and part time staff persons a tasty vegan luncheon for a mere \$2.50. One staff member was overheard saying, "It is almost like being paid to eat healthy! Count me in. I need to drop some pounds and, besides, the black bean burger is really quite good."

Additionally, the hotel's two exercise rooms are open to the mission's clients and employees without charge. Rev. Moseley believes that anyone who wants to make a healthy lifestyle change should have the mission's full support.



The mission's chaplain has become an enthusiastic supporter of Rev. Moseley's weight loss regimen. "I once lost fifty pounds by counting carbs, but I felt terrible and eventually regained every pound I had lost. This plan works. I lost eleven pounds during my first three weeks and this is only the beginning. My energy reserves are up and bicycling is my newfound love. I haven't ridden a bike since I was a kid and had forgotten how much fun a bicycle can be."

He admits there is a spiritual dimension behind his desire to lose weight. "The Bible teaches that we are to be good stewards of all that God has given us. In truth, my body is on loan from God and it is high time I take care of the one and only body He has given me. I am committed to making this lifestyle change and am asking God to give me the wisdom and personal motivation to see this through. I cannot deny an occasional longing for pizza and cheeseburgers, but why should I be a slave to my belly when the Bible says we can do all things through Christ Jesus?"



Ten months ago, obesity was the proverbial Sword of Damocles dangling precariously over his health and wellbeing. Lethargy, high blood pressure, personal sensitivity, and the ongoing risks of excessive weight, physical inactivity, and poor dietary

choices made him a prime candidate for an early grave. With the responsibilities of a young son and a growing ministry, too much was at stake. He cried out to God for help and God graciously responded.

Today, Rev. Moseley is trim, energetic, and garnering a lot of attention from overweight acquaintances eager to know his secret. But this is no secret. Rev. Moseley is quick in giving God the credit for his remarkable transformation and he is further convinced that an all or nothing commitment to healthy eating coupled with strenuous physical activity is proof positive that dramatic weight loss is not an impossible dream.

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<sup>i</sup> Deaths Due to Obesity

<http://www.wvdhhr.org/bph/oehp/obesity/mortality.htm>

The results of two extensive studies examining obesity-attributable deaths in the United States were published in 1999. Allison, Fontaine, and Manson et al., reporting in the Journal of the American Medical Society, used data from a number of prospective cohort studies, including the Alameda Community Health Study, the Framingham Heart Study, the Tecumseh Community Health Study, the American Cancer Society's Cancer Prevention Study I, the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey I Epidemiologic Follow-up Study, and the Nurses' Health Study, to estimate the number of deaths attributable to obesity in the United States on an annual basis (66). Their initial analyses, which examined deaths occurring among persons aged 18 and older in 1991, were adjusted only for age, sex, and smoking status. The weight categories used were overweight (BMI of 25-29.9), obese (BMI of 30-35), and severely obese (BMI >35).

Using data on all eligible subjects from all six studies, Allison et al. estimated that 280,184 obesity-attributable deaths occurred in the U.S. annually. When risk ratios calculated for nonsmokers and never-smokers were applied to the entire population (assuming these ratios to produce the best estimate for all subjects, regardless of smoking status, i.e., that obesity would exert the same deleterious effects across all smoking categories), **the mean estimate for deaths due to obesity was 324,940.**

