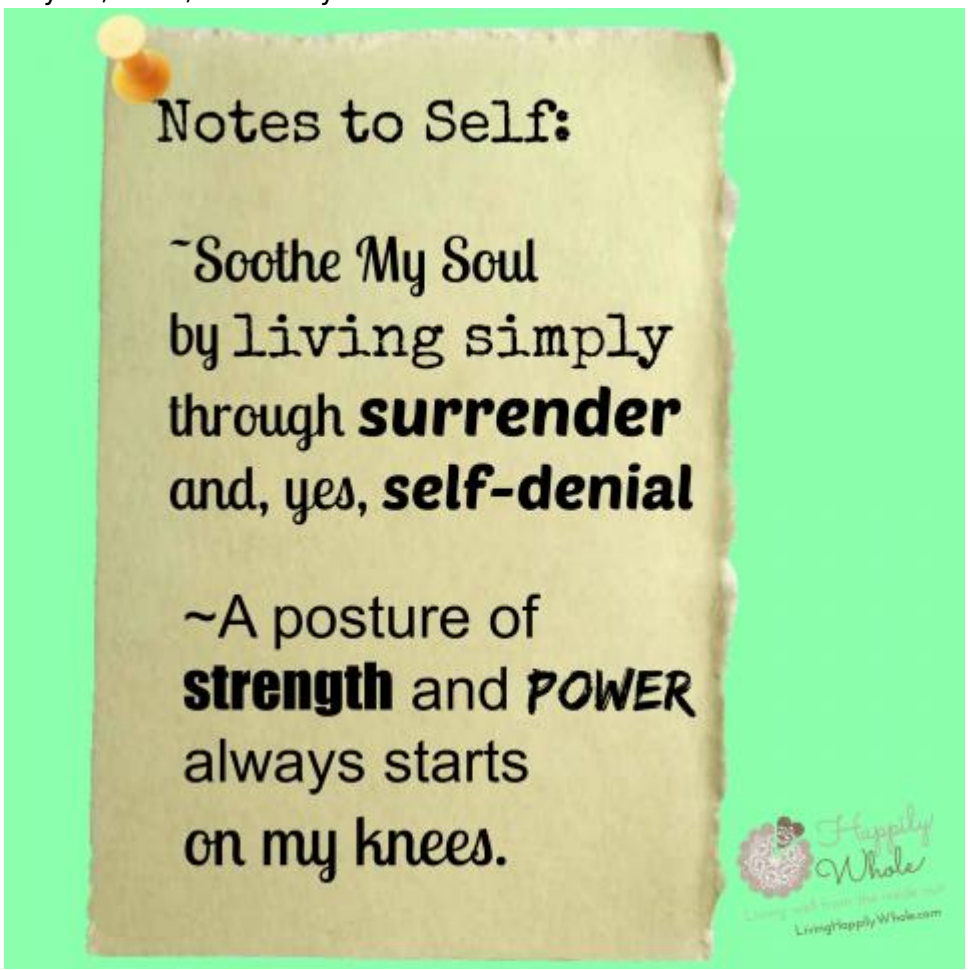
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Sweet Simplicity through Self-Denial

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We live in a complicated, 'stuff' driven world. More is better and accumulating only the best makes you better than the rest. Reaching social successes and possessing professional (or personal) power prove our worth. And image implicates us all along the way...

UH, I don't buy it. Sometimes simpler is far more satisfying. I think about a picnic on a perfect day in comparison to a four course meal it's impossible to enjoy because I spend all day in the kitchen and I'm still sweating when the guests arrive. Or how about that small, handcrafted gift or a handwritten note of encouragement compared to a complicated gadget worth monetarily more but mindfully much less? Or, ladies, think about your sense of simple accomplishment when you've conquered home organization verses climbing social ladders!

Yeah, while there's time and place for the complicated I suppose, living in simple appreciation of small things soothes our souls [1].

And that's true when it comes to living well, too. When we are able to say, 'no' to over indulging and remove excess from our lives and bodies, we actually make space for things that mean so much more. Look at me, for example. Remember how I told you I secretly love to eat in the evening [2]? Well, most of the time I am admittedly NOT hungry. But, I eat because it fills ***emotional space***. I use food to avoid the adrenaline dump from the day and, well, I simply love sweets so they are the victim.

This self-sabotaging tendency takes time and energy! I could be doing something FAR more productive like laundry, reading the book I've been eyeing up, reading the BIBLE or, ah hem…sleeping, seeing as I'm actually eating partially because I'm too tired to make a good choice! So, you see, *I'm making things more complicated for myself by falling into a trap of over-consumption,* a mentality I've adopted from a 'more is better' driven, societal mindset.

More importantly, my evening emotional eating ***robs me of the opportunity to choose HIM over myself***. The Bible tells us we're rewarded when we live close to Him and lean on His strength. But, temptation (aka Satan) creeps into our minds and homes any way that he can. He's right there tempting me knowing full well *I will feel the fullness of guilt and regret when I'm done*. So, while I want to see this eating as an innocent character flaw and overlook it because, 'what harm am I doing anyways?', I'm actually allowing dark forces into my life instead of accessing His strength.

Anytime we succumb to self-sabotage, engage in behaviors that hijack our health (mind, body or spiritual), cling to worldly remedies for our emotional issues or use over-indulgence to cover up the problem underneath, we COMPLICATE MATTERS more.

It's time to surrender [3]….and re-surrender…and re-surrender…and ask for His strength.

Oh, how I love these verses! Read them again and again. Post them on your bathroom mirror, display them on your dashboard. **Carve them into your mind by memorizing them because our human insufficiencies always need His strength!**

2 Corinthians 12: 9-10: *And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.*

That means we are to lean on Him for strength to surrender in the first place! Surrender comes with self-denial. Not only self-denial of food or whatever our stronghold is, but self-denial of the control we try to keep. He can only make us strong with His supernatural muscle power when we get on our knees.

Because kneeling before Him is a place of power! Only then can He give you the fullness of His grace and strengthen the areas where we're weak. When we withhold our weaknesses, gripping them

with desire to control, we complicate things more! ***He already has what we need to iron it all out.***

So, you see? Self-denial is something we can all work on, right? I've worked HARD at it in the evening. And I will tell you that denying my flesh has been one of the best ways I've been able to invite HIM into my life. (Here's more on my eating journey [4])

Maybe it seems silly, but just as God gave me wellness as a personal passion, *the world wanted it back*. So when I fall into the traps of using food to fill an emotional need, when I obsess over fitness [5] or make wellness my world, the space in my life for my Savior becomes smaller. But when I give my passions and gifts back to Him through self-denial and surrender, all the sudden I find simplicity!

And I've found beauty in simplicity.

So, let's simplify as we challenge ourselves to eat clean and live well! Let's open our hearts to a new kind of wellness, viewing it as a gift we relinquish into His strong hands.

How can you surrender yourself more deeply to Him in areas of wellness? What kinds of self-denial can lead to your true strength?

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