

Learning to Let Christ Be His Coach

By Beverly Lewis

Photos courtesy of James Thompson

Strength, fitness, and optimum health haven't always been defining words for JT. It's hard to picture a lonely, shy, puny kid when you talk with the friendly, muscular owner of Evolve with JT. The underweight, socially awkward teen turned his pain into gain over the years when his frustration provoked him to change.

James Thompson, who answers to JT, or "coach", answered to no one but himself for many years. Self-reliance was ingrained when his parents divorced during his childhood. Although his family was fractured, JT's grandfather, a farmer

in Central Georgia, gave the boy a moral compass. JT accepted Christ as His Savior at the age of 14 in a small country church. It took years for him to realize the life-changing impact of that decision.

The journey to becoming a sports nutritionist and fitness professional began when JT worked in his first career as a firefighter/EMT. His small size made him unable to perform his duties with proficiency, so he committed to gaining weight and building strength. That journey took him back to college and into the gym. As his physique changed, he had the desire to coach those who wanted to change their lives

through physical conditioning and dietary changes.

Tampa, Florida became home to JT as he married and opened a gym. His career continued to grow, and two sons expanded his family. Invited to work as a trainer on the hit show, "The Biggest Loser," he gained national recognition. To accommodate the increasing demand for his expertise, he started teaching boot camps with tremendous success.

His faith in God served as an anchor for his moral choices, but he didn't have a real relationship with Christ. For years, he longed for the benefits of knowing God, but didn't want to relinquish control of his

life. He also worried that being outspoken about being a Christian would negatively impact his business. In his words, he wanted all the benefits of knowing God but on his own terms.

He feels certain the truths in the Bible provided the boundaries that kept him from so much of the immorality common to an industry saturated with vanity and lust. He knew what it meant to be a Christian living his own way with an assurance of salvation. What he didn't know was the joy of staying in daily communication with a Father who loves him as His child, and wants to give abundant life, wisdom, and supernatural peace and provision for the here and now.

It was JT's dark years that landed him in Panama City. First, he suffered a catastrophic injury when he broke both legs. Next, his first wife took off in the night and he and his two young sons didn't see her for years. Then his grandfather, who had been like a father to him, died. On

top of that, while helping him move back to Georgia, JT's best friend died suddenly.

As he prayed and sought direction for his life, he got a call from a friend in Panama City who suggested he move to the Emerald Coast. Soon after, he and his boys began building their lives in Bay County.

JT's many degrees and certifications uniquely qualified him, and he joined the staff at Nation's Best Family Practice as a Clinical Nutritionist. In that role, he helps people with disease conditions ranging from diabetes, high blood pressure, hormone imbalances, thyroid conditions, digestive disorders, and many other health challenges.

In addition, he continued to work as a personal trainer. He married Bethany, and they were baptized, together, in the Gulf on a sparkling Sunday afternoon. JT talks about that as a profound experience, drawing their family into a deeper relationship with God.

JT describes a simple, yet memorable moment that shifted his entire life as he prayed on the floor of his office. He had been ill for several months, suffering from severe headaches, respiratory and digestive distress – for the first time in his life facing a health challenge out of his control. As he called out to God, he experienced God's presence and healing touch in a remarkable way, and a promise was made.

The definition of the word "evolve" provides an apt description for JT's journey, both physically and spiritually. The dictionary defines evolve as "to develop or cause to develop gradually."

JT thrives on seeing the transformation in people's lives as they realize the benefits of optimum health. The testimonies told by his clients include stories of weight loss, restored vitality and a better life. He coaches Team Evolve – a group that includes couples and entire families. Fifty-five members of this team completed the Spartan Race in Georgia in the fall.

Bethany Thompson is fully partnered with JT in life as well as in business. They openly proclaim Jesus as the source of their strength. Contrary to JT's previous concern about how that would affect business, the response has been encouraging. JT fully attributes the peace and happiness that define his life to being in relationship with the living God. He'll tell you that Jesus is the Bread of Life, and the Living Water of the Word will satisfy you completely. That's a no-gimmick diet available to all – at no cost – for your best life yet.

For more information, visit evolwewithjt.com.



JT trains his wife before competing in the Lakeland Spartan Race last December.



James Thompson "JT," and Bay County Sheriff Tommy Ford after the Nashville Spartan Race last September.