

Sugar / Faithfulness

Nadia: Would you rather eat a chocolate cake or a salad sandwich? A bottle of cola or a glass of cold water? Do you think it matters which one you choose?

Carol: It's time to join our friends on Women of Hope. It's lovely to be together again. Hi, I'm Carol...

Tammy: ...and I'm Tammy. We're having a cup of tea with Nadia. She's a dietician; she's studied a lot about what foods we should eat to be healthy. Are you interested in food? I'm always interested, because I have to cook for my family and I want them to be healthy. We asked Nadia to talk to us today especially about sugar.

Nadia: Hello. I'm glad to be here with you. Let me tell you about Cara, a woman who came to visit my clinic. She had Type 2 diabetes and she needed to know what to eat to help her condition. When I asked her what she usually ate, she said a white bread sandwich with jam for breakfast and lunch. For her evening meal she often bought some fried food from a shop on the way home from work, as she was tired. On other nights she cooked meat with rice or potato. She had one or two sweet fizzy drinks most days of the week. She only ate small amounts of fresh fruits and vegetables; she said they were too expensive.

I told Cara she was eating lots of *carbohydrate* foods that break down really fast in her body, and give her body a quick burst of energy. It's sometimes called a *sugar rush*, because it feels a bit like taking a drug that acts very quickly. But the sugar rush wouldn't last long! I found that Cara wanted to eat again after an hour or so, so she had lots of snacks as well, things like sweet biscuits.

Tammy: Sounds like Cara liked sweet foods. I love them too!

Nadia: Most of us do and so did our ancestors! They would have looked for fruit, or honey, to get a sweet taste, and that took a lot of work. But these days sugar is common and cheap and everywhere, so we eat a lot more of it. And the more of it we eat, the more we crave. It can be like a drug addiction.

Sugar is bad for our teeth; I think most of us know that bacteria or germs in our mouths feed on the sugar, and make our teeth rot. And most of us know that too much sugar can make you fat. But I wonder if you know about sugar and diabetes?

Carol: I have a friend who has Type 2 Diabetes, and I notice she doesn't eat cakes or sweets when she visits. Can you explain about that Nadia?

Nadia: Yes, Type 2 Diabetes is a very common condition, in many countries of the world. It's different from Type 1 Diabetes, where the patient needs regular injections of insulin or they will go into a coma.

I'll try to explain what normally happens when we digest our food, so we can understand how this affects our body. The carbohydrate foods we eat, like cakes or bread, break down into sugars in our gut, and get carried around in the blood to the cells of the body. This *blood sugar* supplies energy to every cell in our body. However, if we have either type of diabetes, these blood sugar levels don't remain steady after we eat some types of carbohydrate foods. Foods that contain lots of processed sugar will make your blood sugar levels go very *high*. Your body will have a quick burst of energy. But then soon after this you can feel weak and tired because now you have very *little* sugar for the cells to use. It is a condition that people can have for many years without noticing bad symptoms.

Tammy: So why is it a problem?

Nadia: Well, there are serious long-term effects of having high blood sugar levels. It damages many parts of the body including the heart and kidneys, and reduces blood flow to your limbs. If it's not treated, people may have heart attacks, get kidney disease, or have eye problems. They can lose fingers, toes and legs. It's very dangerous for pregnant mothers and their babies too.

So how do we treat diabetes? Well there are 2 types of diabetes so we have different treatment for each. For type 1 diabetes, you usually need to have insulin injections,. Insulin is a chemical in your body that controls sugar in the blood, and some people can't make enough of it. But for both type 1 and 2 diabetes, the first step is making *good food choices*. We must choose foods that will help us keep our sugar levels steady. We can't completely avoid all foods with natural sugar - there are too many, but also we need them for energy and nutrients.

So what foods contain sugars? Most foods are broken down into sugars in the gut, but some kinds are much better for our bodies. These better foods give us energy that lasts longer because they break down slowly. Instead of making our blood sugar levels rise and fall, they keep our sugar levels fairly steady.

Tamm y: So what sort of carbohydrate foods should we eat?

Nadia: The best ones are those that break down slowly. These are usually less processed, and more natural, such as whole grains and seeds. They include rice, especially unpolished rice;... grainy bread, wholegrain cereals and pasta, oats... lentils and legumes,... milk and yoghurt... and fruits and vegetables. These foods are the best ones to eat as part of each meal. They will break down slowly so we don't have a sugar rush. They also keep us full for longer.

Tammy: So what did you suggest Cara should eat?

Nadia: I encouraged her to change to grainy wholemeal bread for sandwiches. For dinner, she should make home cooked meals with some protein- such as meat or fish, lentils, eggs or cheese. Also include some rice, noodles or pasta and lots of vegetables; that's the best way to give the body long lasting steady energy.

She should avoid foods that break down quickly and give a sugar rush. I told Cara, 'Jam, honey, cake, sweets, biscuits and sweet drinks should be special treats, not everyday foods.' High-sugar foods are often more processed and have fewer nutrients left in them. Often they are cheap, easy to get, and already cooked, yet they are not great for our bodies. They're not good for children, who can get quite addicted to sugar if they develop a taste for it. Try to encourage your children to enjoy fresh fruits, nuts and milk products for a snack, or if they are really hungry, some whole grain bread!

Tammy: So it's not really kind to give kids sweet snacks! We don't want to make them sugar addicts, do we? Anyway, I find healthy snacks keep my hungry kids satisfied for a lot longer than a few sweet biscuits do, and I know they're better for them.

Nadia: Kids often want drinks like cola or lemonade, but they have many spoons of processed sugar in each cup. The best choice is not to drink it at all! Even fruit juice has a lot of natural sugar. Water is definitely the best choice. If you drink tea or coffee, do you put sugar in it? A lot of us eat a big pile of sugar every day in our drinks, without noticing it. Try adding a bit less sugar every few days, till you get used to enjoying your drinks without sugar.

Fruits and vegetables are also very important; eat lots of them everyday! Grow your own if you can. If some types of fresh vegetables are hard to get, try foods like dried lentils and legumes that are usually very cheap, satisfying and easy to cook.

Overall, the best way to get steady energy is to eat three meals each day, with two or three small snacks in between. Even if you don't have much food, try to space it out over the day rather than eat it all at once. Some good snacks are a piece of fruit or raw vegetable, a small scoop of yoghurt, or a handful of nuts or seeds.

Carol: These sound delicious too- I really like these natural foods better than the sweet sugary ones. You can get used to eating different foods and change your taste in food, over time, and I think we should be careful with our children, not to make them crave sweet foods.

Tammy: And I'm sure you *feel* better when you eat better food.

Nadia: You certainly do, Tammy. These are good food rules, whether you have diabetes or not, and you are much less likely to get diabetes if you eat good unprocessed food that is absorbed slowly and steadily.

Tammy: Wasn't that interesting? It sounds as though our mouth likes sugar but it's not really good for us. We have to train our mouths to like better food.

Carol: You know, Tammy, It's pretty much the same with life in general. We tend to like things that are fun and easy. We need to train ourselves to do the things that need hard work, and we have to keep trying when things are not so exciting. But, in the end, we achieve more valuable things that way..

Tammy: And that's true in relationships, too. It's hard work building a strong friendship or a strong marriage. Hanging on . . .continuing to work through the hard times and not giving up. Learning patience and respect, putting the other one first.

Carol: Did you know that when we fall in love we produce hormones that give us a 'high' feeling. It's even better than a sugar rush; it's very much like the effects of taking drugs like cocaine. Our bodies produce their own drugs; there is adrenaline, that makes us feel very alert and ready for action... dopamine that gives a rush of pleasure and energy... and serotonin, that keeps you feeling happy and thinking about your new love. Maybe you've had that feeling once or twice!

Tammy: Sounds like a dangerous mixture to me!

Carol: It can be! But God made us this way, and it's important, because it brings couples together and makes them feel very close to each other for a while. This is often true, whether a couple chooses each other or it's an arranged marriage. Being close gives couples a chance to get to know each other and form a strong bond, a strong commitment to each other. This commitment is like the good foods we heard about, and it will last much longer than the excitement or "sugar rush"!

The danger comes when we feel this rush of attraction for someone we shouldn't- and act on it. God meant for this rush to strengthen the marriage bond. But so often people want the 'sugar' of a new, exciting partner, more than the good food of a solid marriage.

Tammy: That reminds me of some words in God's word the Bible, in the Book of Proverbs (Ch 5). An old man is talking to his son, and giving him some good advice. Listen to what he says:

‘My son, pay attention to my wise words, so that you can learn good sense. A woman who is unfaithful to her husband might have lips that are sweet as honey, and words smoother than oil. But in the end she is bitter as bile, as sharp and dangerous as a two-edged blade... She doesn’t think about the way that brings life- her paths are crooked and lead to death. Don’t go there, my son!’

Carol: What good advice! This wise father is warning his son not to go for the honey-sweet girl who is not faithful to her husband. She’s going to get him into big trouble!

Tammy: The father has some more advice. He says ‘Drink water from your own well, running water from your own spring. May your fountain be blessed, may you be happy with the wife you married when you were young.... May you be captivated by her love. Why be captivated, my son, by an adulteress? ... What a man does is in full view of God and he can see everything. A man like this will die because he does not control himself, when he goes off the right path because he is so foolish.’

Carol: Wow - That’s good advice for a young man. Don’t go looking for pleasure with just anyone who will give it to you; wait, get married to a good and faithful woman, and you stay faithful to her. You might have to work hard for your family, and force yourself to say “No!” when you are tempted to chase another woman. You will need to learn to understand and respect your wife, and find out what she really needs. That takes time and you have to work at it. But that’s the way to build a strong and beautiful marriage and family. Try to make your wife happy, and you’ll be happy too. You know, the Bible says in another place, ‘Husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies’ (Eph 5:25).

Tammy: I don’t want to be that honey-pot sort of woman. Do you? We need to be careful how we dress, and how we talk and act, so that we don’t make the wrong men interested in us. I have some good friends who are men, but I want to keep all the sweetness of my love for my husband, especially my physical love.

Carol: The Bible has words for women too. It’s written, ‘Wives, be respectful to your husbands too, as you would be to the Lord. (Eph 5: 22)

What does that look like in daily life? Well, you try to do things that please your husband. You really look at him, and pay attention. You often put his *needs* before your own *wants*. When you disagree, you talk respectfully. You share your thoughts and feelings, and listen well. You really try to understand your husband and make him happy.

Tammy: We women need to say *we are sorry* sometimes, and also be ready to *forgive* our husbands when they ask for it. Our marriage must be more important than just enjoying ourselves, and certainly more important than the sugary thrills of another man’s attention.

Carol: Why do *you* think God says that we should be faithful wives and husbands? ... Well, God knows what’s good for you! For a start, it’s good for our communities. We need to have strong families for children to grow up safely. When a family breaks up because someone is NOT faithful, it’s awful for everyone, especially the children.

But it’s more than that. *God* is faithful. That’s God’s character. That means he is true to us, he cares about us, he does what is good for us. God doesn’t throw us away when we make mistakes but he forgives us and shows us how to do better. He faithfully keeps his promises to us.

In the Bible God is sometimes compared to a husband, and his people, his followers, are called his wife. Sometimes God’s people have been unfaithful to the God who made heaven and earth, the true God who loves and cares for them. How do *you* think we can be unfaithful to God?...

Maybe by worshipping idols or spirits, or by doing bad things that go against God... or just by putting other things before our love for God.

Tammy: Sometimes we want the thrills and excitement of doing something bad, and that always gets us into trouble. Have you learned that?

Carol: Long ago Jeremiah, one of God's prophets, wrote in the Bible about the Israelites, the nation God had specially called to know him (Jer 3). Jeremiah said that they had behaved like an unfaithful wife, and God was angry. But God gave Jeremiah this message for the people. " 'Return, unfaithful Israel' declares the Lord. 'I will frown on you no longer, for I am merciful. I will not be angry forever. But you need to admit you have done wrong, and rebelled against the Lord your God... Return, unfaithful people' declares the Lord, 'For I am your husband.' "

Did you know that, that's still how God treats us. When we go off the right path, he invites us back. Just confess what you have done, and ask him to give you a new start. He'll forgive you, because he loves you, he's promised to be faithful to you. It's wonderful to have this loving relationship with God.

Tammy: And it's wonderful to have faithful relationships with our friends and families. If you're married, how could you make your marriage stronger this week? Don't day-dream about another man, work on being happy with the husband you have.

And whether you're married or not, enjoy God's love for you, and be faithful to him, because he will always be faithful to you.

Carol: Well, it's time to say goodbye. And Tammy, I think I am going to go home and cook my husband's favorite meal for dinner tonight!

Tammy: My husband is cooking tonight, so I'm going to go home and tell him I'm thankful!

Carol: As always, we would love to hear from you. Tell us your story or just write and let us know you are there. We would love to hear from you. You can write to us in care of this station or at TWR Women of Hope.... The address: TWRWomenofHope.org

We do hope you will be with us again. Have a great week filled with God's blessings