

Pastor's Corner – 2-22-2020 – Something I Learned This Week

I always enjoy it when I learn something new. Especially if that something new leads me to a paradigm shift. Ok, perhaps I exaggerate a bit. I don't *always* enjoy paradigm shifting revelations. In fact, quite often that kind of thing is painful. When your paradigm shifts you are forced to look at the world through new lenses because the old ones simply aren't adequate anymore. Sometimes you have to completely toss out your old way of seeing things and replace it with the new perspective and this can be very painful.

At any rate, I learned something new this past week that nudged my paradigm a little bit and I was grateful for it. I'd like to share a few thoughts about this experience that you (my dear reader) might find interesting.

It all began when I came across a Hungarian medical group that is treating patients with rather severe diseases with a unique dietary approach. They have published case studies treating people with various cancers, autoimmune disorders, obesity related diseases, and even type 1 diabetes. Their approach is to have patients move to way of eating that they call the Paleo-Ketogenic Diet (PKD). I'm not endorsing this way of eating but it's important for me to explain it so you understand the paradigm shifting experience that I'll talk about later.

So, the PKD is a diet that is at least 70% from animal products. Up to 30% can come from above-ground leafy vegetables and fruit (though those are not considered necessary). It excludes nuts, oils, seeds, starchy vegetables, grains, legumes, and dairy. Once you pull everything away all that's really left is animal protein, animal fat, animal organs, eggs, and a few fruits and veggies. Yeah, it's pretty restrictive. It's basically a super effective elimination diet and they find that by removing all these possible dietary irritants that they can manage quite an array of illnesses.

One of the most amazing results they have had is in treating patients who are recently diagnosed with type 1 diabetes. For those who might not know, type 1 diabetes is believed to be an auto-immune disease where your body attacks the cells in your pancreas that produce insulin. Since their bodies can no longer make insulin, patients with type 1 diabetes have to inject it to keep their blood sugar in check. What this research group has found is that if they take someone who has recently been diagnosed with type 1 and put them on this PKD they can effectively halt the auto-immune process and stabilize the cell destruction in the pancreas. So long as these patients never go off the diet, the auto-immune condition won't progress and they will retain what insulin production they have left. Essentially, they have shown that this PKD can stop the underlying auto-immune condition if it's caught quickly enough and preserve some beta cell function.

Ok, so this is a pretty big deal. The 1 published case study I read only had 1-year results so time will tell if this is truly a long-term solution, but still. Very interesting. Halting the disease process for type 1 diabetes simply doesn't happen.

Now, that little discovery wasn't the paradigm shifting bit of learning. But it did start me on the journey. Later I came across a podcast on YouTube that was a friendly debate between one physician who advocates a "nose to tail carnivore" diet (very similar to the PKD) and two vegan individuals who also happen to be type 1 diabetics.

The vegan guys have both adopted an almost exclusively fruit based low-fat diet. Even though this turns out to be a very high carbohydrate way of eating, they have great blood sugar control and take only small amounts of insulin to manage their diabetes.

So here we have two totally different approaches to managing type 1 diabetes. One with a very high-fat, low-carbohydrate diet and one that is very low-fat, high-carbohydrate. Both approaches seem to have positive benefits, yet they are totally opposite from each other.

Here's where my paradigm shift came in. First, I find it fascinating that opposite approaches to nutrition can both have positive results. So often we are led to believe that there's only one way of

eating things and that's my way. Typically, the low-carb people say that a high-carb diet will give you metabolic disorder and that will kill you. The low-fat people tell you that all that fat will clog your arteries and that's what will kill you. Then the two sides argue back and forth. In the end everyone ends up fighting about their differences instead of focusing in on the places where they agree.

And it's amazing on how much agreement they actually have. Eat real food, avoid sugar and processed grains, and don't eat a diet that is both high-fat AND high-carbs. It seems there's a pretty strong consensus that if people follow these rules that their health will improve. But, folks would rather argue about differences than seek to find common ground.

My true paradigm shift came as I watched the debate between the carnivore and the vegans. Usually this match up is like the WWE – full of angry showmanship. But this conversation was cordial, collegial, and respectful. Though the two sides disagreed on a great number of things they were able to discuss their position without belittling the other side. There was no trash talking or heated accusations. Each side admitted where their knowledge ran out and they were careful not to over-state the data that supported their position. It was quite amazing to watch actually.

So, here's my paradigm shift. You can totally, fundamentally, and absolutely disagree with someone and still treat them with human decency. You can debate people who have strongly held convictions that are diametrically opposite of yours and not get angry. It's possible to disagree and still be agreeable.

Ok, so maybe that's not really a paradigm shift. We all know that it's possible to treat our opponents with respect. But it's just not something that we often see being put into practice. Just look at the political rhetoric floating around these days. Battle lines have been drawn and the war has begun.

Unfortunately, when we move away from dialogue and into full scale war everybody loses, and we stop seeking the truth. So, let's all take a deep breath and do our best to be diplomatic and kind when we interact with people who disagree with us. Maybe even be willing to learn something from the opposite side. Whether it's in person, on social media, or whatever – be agreeable when you disagree.

Happy Sabbath
Pastor Tyler