

# Letters of ENCOURAGEMENT

God Loves You  No Matter What

November 10, 2021  
A Note from Pastor April

**Dear Friends,**

When I was pregnant with my younger son, Marcus, I was diagnosed with gestational diabetes. It wasn't a huge surprise, knowing that both my mother and grandmother had experienced the same thing. But it meant a huge change in lifestyle.

Certain foods were off limits.

I took my blood sugar four times a day to ensure I was in the healthy range.

I ate smaller meals more often. More vegetables. Lean proteins. Less sugar.



From the beginning of the diagnosis, I was all in. After all, this was my child's future health! I charted my numbers each day and paid close attention to how my body was responding to each different meal. I was learning something new every single day.

As weeks went by, I began to settle into some new rhythms. I found that certain foods not only helped my blood sugar stay in the right space, but they also made my body feel great. I was surprised at how much energy I had even in my third trimester.

I was starting to be attentive not only to what food my body needed, but also to its need for movement, rest, and connection.

**The food had been the original focus, but I soon realized that my body had been giving me all kinds of information over the years that I hadn't been well tuned into.**

I can't remember the exact circumstances surrounding this, but I know that a few weeks before Marcus was born, I had a real "A-ha!" kind of moment.

***I've been willing to change my habits for the health of my baby. Why am I not also willing to do this for myself?***

Like most people I know, I have always had a complicated relationship with food. Food, especially food like sweets and salty snacks, has always been a source of comfort.

As an active, growing kid who was on the skinnier side, I ate a lot. I was always encouraged to eat more. I probably still hold the record for the number of pieces of pizza eaten by someone on the girls' cross-country team, with a whopping seventeen.

Into my twenties and early thirties, my eating habits hadn't changed. My body started giving me all kinds of signals that things were not well: stomach problems, lethargy, weight gain, and even a couple of cases where I broke out in hives after eating something. I would try a "flash diet," here and there, but nothing seemed to stick.

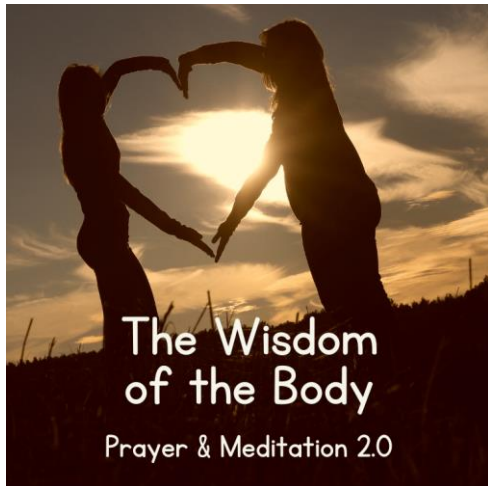
I had a lot of shame about the way my body no longer looked or behaved as it once had when I was younger.

**I realized in those final weeks of pregnancy that I was finally feeling healthy and good in my own body. I couldn't remember when or if I had ever felt that way.**

It wasn't about the weight scale (because I was pretty big by that point!). It wasn't about how I looked or how slim I was. I realized how good it felt to give my body the things that it truly needed. Post-pregnancy, I knew I wanted this kind of healthy future for my son, but I wanted it for me as well.



This Sunday, we will continue talking about **The Good Gift of our Bodies** and how it connects with this complicated relationship we have with food. I'll share a bit more about my own journey of building the practices in my life that honor my good body and the place where it is now.



I'll share some of the amazing things I've been learning in the prayer and meditation class I'm co-teaching with Jenny Pitcher called **The Wisdom of the Body** (select Wednesday nights at 6pm). We're focusing on mindful and prayerful ways that eating can become a practice that begins to help us tune in closer with our body, and how we can respond with more compassion. You are welcome to stop in anytime (Sanctuary building, room 306/308, details at <https://hilliardumc.org/grow/adults/learning-opportunities/>).

Our topics for the next three classes are as follows:

**TODAY** — Wednesday, November 10, 6pm — **SAVOR & ENJOY**: We will focus on the practice of JOY and how we can slow down and savor the gifts of eating and being present in our bodies.

**Special Classes for the Holidays** — December 1 & December 15, 6pm — **STRESS & our COMPASSIONATE RESPONSE**: We'll talk about the physiology of what is happening in our body as stress is activated, how this connects with food, and how to respond with compassion and grace.

**This topic is a hard one and is often filled with lots of shame and lists of dos/don'ts.** I hope that this week's conversation will help all of us to lean into this part of our journey with our bodies with more grace and curiosity.

We'll also be celebrating the sacrament of Holy Communion as a part of that work.

I look forward to the chance to be together!



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