

## Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> January 2025

'You've got too much sugar in your diet,' said the nutritionist.

My heart sank a little. Sure, I have a sweet tooth but everything in moderation and all that. Besides, I'm easily getting my '5-a-day' in terms of fruit and veg and what's wrong with muesli anyway?!

The truth is that both Mrs F and I needed to have reality defined before we could make any changes to how we eat and what we eat and when we eat it. We're both on the same page with this and (as a Christmas present to each other) want to have a nutritional food plan that doesn't just last for January (where we can tick it off as having done the resolution thing) but rather have something that is sustainable and enjoyable. We don't eat badly but it turns out we've not been eating smartly either.

So, here we are sat down with the expert... scanning an eye over the minutiae of all that's high in protein and the need to be keen on broad beans plus the carbos that help the turbos! Learning about pre and probiotics and the optics of breadsticks and cucumber helping to avoid late afternoon slumber then discovering an early morning water with lemon helps to detox before I've even put on my socks! Poetry in motion.

Meanwhile...where was my red line??

'How much chocolate can I have?' I asked (with the force of one who had already decided that 'my chocolate, my rules' would apply). 'Dark or Milk?' she asked. 'Dark' I replied. 'Good' she said. This was a positive start... 'but' ..she continued ( I groaned inwardly) 'you can only have two pieces a day'. I wanted to ask what amounted to a 'piece' but thought better of it on the basis that half a bar probably did not constitute one piece. Discretion is the better part of valour.

90 minutes later though, I was feeling very optimistic about the plan ahead. It turns out that there's a lot of food I can eat, I just need to do it in the right order and get a better balance. It's only Day 1 but I'm hopeful for a change that's sustainable.

Next to the half-drunk water bottle on my desk sits a note stating, 'plan a lent series on a spiritual MOT'. What does that mean?

In mechanical terms, it's about making sure that the body is fit for service and has an annual health check to shine a light on what needs repaired or renewed, checking the emissions and changing the oil and filters for a better and safer way of life.

In essence it parallels the nutrition plan in looking to cut out what's unhealthy and take on board more of what's gonna help me as a follower of Jesus. That doesn't mean putting on a monk's habit and retreating to be a hermit. It's about God having more space in my life so that He's not squeezed to the edges.

January is the month where many of us will take an internal health check and look ourselves in the mirror and asks what needs to change.

Having social media on my phone is fine but it becomes unhealthy when I start doom scrolling which is depressing in itself. These are 'emissions' which are leaving a trail of smoke in their wake. There needs to be less of that but more then of what?

It's about bookending each day by 'starting the engine' with God and 'switching it off' when the head hits the pillow and trusting God to help me through whatever trials and successes will emerge that day.

It's a nutrition plan which constantly needs reviewed – not just annually - with the help of God the Mechanic but it will only get inspected when we are willing to allow God to do that. It's all too easy to get complacent and think all is fine even when the warning signs are there and wise friends point out unhealthy habits. This is the challenge for me.

I want and need that accountability to check in regularly so that I can ask myself the question 'am I truly reflecting the God I say I serve' or is the perception of my life one of a body producing plumes of smoke from a clapped-out motor!

The words of Paul in Hebrews are a helpful reminder of what should be in terms of health and focus:

*Do you see what this means—all these pioneers who blazed the way, all these veterans cheering us on? It means we'd better get on with it. Strip down, start running—and never quit! No extra spiritual fat, no parasitic sins. Keep your eyes on Jesus, who both began and finished this race we're in. Study how he did it. Because he never lost sight of where he was headed—that exhilarating finish in and with God—he could put up with anything along the way: Cross, shame, whatever. And now he's there, in the place of honour, right alongside God. When you find yourselves flagging in your faith, go over that story again, item by item, that long litany of hostility he ploughed through. That will shoot adrenaline into your souls!*

It's all very well to have the enthusiasm of a 'Day 1 plan' but there needs to be determination to see it through. I'm a lifelong learner and every day is new day of hope, challenge and opportunity. I can't do it on my own, I need God's presence to keep me going and, even when I get it wrong and have a 'bad diet day' which is often, He doesn't give up on me... or indeed any of us who ask for His help.

Now, where did I put the chocolate?!