

# Toothache / Communion

**Tammy:** I am so tired and my son is just exhausted.

**Carol:** Oh no, what happened?

**Tammy:** Well, a really bad toothache is what started about 2 weeks ago. It throbbed constantly until my son was just begging the dentist to pull it out.

**Carol:** Oh no! You have tell us all about it. Tammy, take your time. Relax and sip your tea and tell us everything. This is important and maybe some of our Women of Hope friends could be helped by what you went through.

**Tammy:** Well, I first noticed our son holding the side of his face and wincing like he was in pain. I thought he might have a headache so I encouraged him stop school and rest. But just before school on two weeks ago his face was swollen and very painful. So I gave him some medicine for the pain, and put clove oil on it, but he couldn't concentrate to do his school work.

**Carol:** And then. What did you do?

**Tammy:** Well, fortunately we were able to get him into the Dentist quickly. Our son was a little frightened, but his mouth and jaw hurt so badly that he didn't complain...he wanted help! He didn't care if the dentist pulled it out, so long as the pain stopped!

But after the Dentist looked at his teeth, he told us that, yes it was a bad tooth ache but it was complicated because he had an abscess in his tooth...so he had the infection and swelling...and it was important to get rid of that first. He said that if he pulled the tooth, the bacteria might get into his blood and it could cause infection in his heart.

**Carol:** Oh no! And that's dangerous.

**Tammy:** I know. Not exactly what a mother wants to hear. But he gave us an antibiotic medicine first to kill the bacteria that was causing the infection. And then he said that when there's no more infection, he would try to fix the decayed tooth that's causing all the trouble.

**Carol:** I have a little experience with this. I didn't have the pain that your son has but I did have a bad tooth. Did the Dentist explain what was causing all of the pain?

**Tammy:** He did. He was very helpful. He said that our son had a hole in the side of his tooth. The bacteria got inside and that was causing all the problems! He explained that almost all food contains some sugar, especially things like cake and sweets. And that sugar sticks to our teeth. If we don't clean our teeth after eating, those tiny germs or bacteria in our mouth start eating the sugar. They make an acid and after a while, the acid eats a hole right through the hard-white enamel to the soft inside of the tooth, where the nerve is. Then you really feel the pain!

**Carol:** Well that's another really good reason for us to brush our teeth, floss really well and be careful about the amount of sugar and sweets we eat. Sugar left in our mouth is a big enemy of our teeth.

**Tammy:** I think we all have the same battle. Often, if we are given the choice between some sweets or a good piece of fruit . . . well, we often choose the sweets, don't we. But sugar does not have to be the enemy. And we don't have to always skip sweets. We just need to be smart. Limit the sweets we eat and remember to brush, brush, brush.

**Carol:** Well, did the antibiotic work well for you? Did it help the pain?

**Tammy:** It did. The antibiotic medicine killed the bacteria, but he could still feel with his tongue that there was a hole in his tooth. The dentist looked carefully with a little mirror, and felt around with a little fine wire hook. He said, he thought he could save that tooth. He gave our son an injection in his gum - it stung for a minute but then his gum went completely numb, so didn't feel anything. The Dentist was so kind. He knew that our son was a little scared so he explained everything he was about to do. He used a tiny drill to get rid of the part of the tooth that was decayed. Then he put a special paste in the hole. It became hard and strong just like tooth enamel, so no more bacteria could get in there. This is called a filling.

**Carol:** I haven't had a bad toothache, but I have had that type of work done. And I've even had the injection. I was not crazy about the drill, but I honestly didn't feel anything. My face felt funny for a while because it is numb.

**Tammy:** I am so happy that we were able to get the tooth taken care of and that my son no longer has that awful pain. And I imagine he will remember to brush his teeth more often, and listen to me when I tell him to.

**Carol:** I bet so, too!

**Tammy:** Have you ever had fillings in your teeth? You know, in many places children hardly ever need fillings now, because they take fluoride. Fluoride is a substance that helps prevent tooth decay.

Some towns and cities put small amounts of fluoride in the water supply so everybody gets it. In other places schools give it to the children, or parents buy fluoride tablets. It's much cheaper and nicer than paying for dentists' bills later on, or losing all your teeth from decay! Maybe you could try to get fluoride for your family.

**Carol:** Often we take our teeth for granted, but we really do need to take care of our teeth if we want to keep them for a long time. The outer layer of the teeth is called the enamel and it's the hardest substance in our body, but it can still break. If you chew on very hard things, the enamel can crack. Sometimes the whole tooth can break. So be careful with hard foods - and make sure there aren't any little stones in your rice or other foods. Don't bite a bottle cap to loosen it.

**Tammy:** *Smoking* is bad for the mouth too. You probably know that tobacco stains are very easy to see but difficult to remove. Smoking can also cause gum disease, and it greatly increases the risk of cancer of the mouth. Healing after surgery is also slower, and smokers are more likely to get infection after tooth extractions. Another good reason not to smoke!

**Carol:** My dentist explained that there are different types of dental pain. A *sharp* pain in the tooth usually means it comes from the *inside* of the tooth. The nerve in the tooth can only sense pain, the tooth cannot tell the difference between cold or hot or sour. A sharp pain can mean that there is tooth decay. If you have gums that pull back from the teeth, you may be more sensitive, especially to cold drinks or to tooth brushing. Your teeth may be reminding you that it is time to visit your dentist.

A dull pain is more like a persistent ache that does not go away in a few seconds. This is often due to a *gum* problem or a shaky tooth. Oddly enough, if you bite down on the tooth that hurts, this dull ache may feel better for a while. Sometimes a dead tooth with an infection can also cause a dull pain.

**Tammy:** Most adults remember when their back teeth came through the gum. Many people call these wisdom teeth...they usually come at about 20 years old. They often cause pain too and sometimes they need to be removed.

Sometimes a toothache isn't caused by the teeth at all. Some people get pain in the back teeth about one or two weeks after a blocked nose. This is caused by *sinusitis* - an infection in the cheek bones. This type of toothache will go away when the sinusitis clears. Sometimes older people get pain because of poor posture over many years. The muscles in the front of the neck get tight and pull down on the jaw.

Whatever the cause of the toothache, *do not* wait until you cannot sleep at night before going to the dentist. It's always easier to treat a small problem than a big one! And it's even better to prevent some

of these problems by not eating sugary food, cleaning your teeth regularly...at least twice a day...taking fluoride if you can, and generally looking after your teeth. You want them to last all your life!

**Carol:** Have you ever been into a Christian church or seen a group of Jesus followers meeting together? I wonder, did you see them pray and then eat small pieces of bread together, and take a mouthful of wine or juice? You might have wondered what they were doing.

**Tammy:** Almost all churches have some custom of sharing wine and bread. This is different from one church tradition to another but there are some things that they all have that are the same.

**Carol:** And this is the worship service. It's called by different names – the Lord's Supper, Communion, Holy Communion, or the Eucharist. Some churches have this service every week, on Sundays and sometimes at another time during the week, while others hold it less often. Sometimes it's even held in a person's home if that person is sick and not able to come to the church service.

**Tammy:** In some churches the wine is served in small glasses – one for each person. Others put the wine in one single cup and pass it around. Some churches only serve fruit juice, not wine that's alcoholic. Sometimes only a priest drinks the wine. The bread is sometimes shared from one loaf and this could be a yeast loaf. In other places they use flat, un-risen bread that's broken into small individual pieces. I have been to some churches that used plain crackers from the local shop.

**Carol:** Another difference is the way it's served. In some churches, the people come and kneel at the front and the minister or the priest hands them the bread and the wine. In some other places, the people hand around the bread first, then the wine.

**Tammy:** I don't think these differences in custom are the most important thing, because the *meaning* is basically the same. Some of these things are just traditions that a church has followed for a long time.

**Carol:** So where did this idea come from? This practice might seem strange to many people who come into the Christian faith. Let me tell you the background. You can read about it in the Bible, in the Old Testament book of Exodus.

Long ago when the Jewish people were slaves in Egypt, God acted for them in a very clear way to free them and punish those who enslaved them. He said he would lead them to a new land of their own that he had promised for them. God told the Jewish slaves to kill a lamb, roast it and eat it together, in family groups. They had to put the blood of this lamb around the top and the sides of their doors. This was to show the angel of death that this was a house belonging to God's people, so the

judging angel would *pass over* this place. They also had to have some bread ready for their journey. Since they didn't have time to put yeast in it and let it rise, they made flat bread. For thousands of years, the story has been celebrated by Jewish people in the annual festival of Passover. They eat flat bread and share four cups of wine, which stand for the four ways in which God rescued them.

**Tammy:** But that's not all! When the Lord Jesus Christ lived on earth, he gave this celebration a new meaning, a greater meaning. Before he went to die on the cross, he shared this Jewish Passover meal with his followers, who were like his family. You can read about this in the Bible too. Jesus told them clearly that he was going to die as a sacrifice for them. He asked them to share bread and wine when they met together. This was to remember the sacrifice he made for them, and for us all, and how he rescued us from God's judgment. From then on this was to be what the wine meant - it represented Jesus' blood. It was not just to remind them of the lambs that were sacrificed in Egypt. The bread that they broke together, Jesus told them, was to remind them of his body that was crucified – killed by being nailed on a cross. That was all quite a shock for his followers! This happened just as Jesus said. And then he rose again; he was greater than death.

**Carol:** In the Bible (1 Cor. 11) one of the leaders explained why we should do the same thing as those followers of Jesus did. Let me read some of it.

It says: 'When Jesus had given thanks, he broke the piece of bread and said, 'This is my body which is for you; do this in memory of me.' In the same way after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new agreement sealed with my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in memory of me.'"

So if we believe in Jesus we are to take the wine and bread to remember the death of Jesus and to remember that he died for us too. That is the most important idea behind the practice of the communion, to remind us often of Jesus' sacrifice of his own self. It becomes a kind of spiritual food and drink to feed us in our spirits (John 6:55-56).

**Tammy:** The bread and the wine are symbols, signs, of Jesus' body and blood to help us focus on what really happened when he died on the cross. They lead our thoughts to God's truth. When we share communion together it's like we *act out* the story of how Jesus died for us, so other people can see it. The Bible says, 'Whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death, until he comes back again' (1 Cor 11:26).

The bread and wine remind us that God has forgiven our sins. Jesus died for us and because he was the perfect sacrifice and the son of God, that is enough. God will forgive us at any time when we come and confess our sins to him.

**Carol:** Another reason Christians have a communion service is to show everyone around them that they belong to God and are his children. It says in the Bible that when we eat the bread and drink the wine, we show people that we are part of God's family who are all around the world. We are part of a huge community of Jesus' followers. Imagine how many other believers there are taking communion...taking the bread and wine together all over the world! Now the Bible also tells us to take this bread and wine carefully; in the right frame of mind. In fact, the Bible tells us to "examine ourselves." This means we should look into our lives and hearts and do a good cleaning. Ask Jesus to help us by bringing to our mind ways that we have lived or things we have done or said that have not been pleasing him. Then bring anything to Jesus that we find that is wrong. Ask him to forgive us and help us to live right. And if we have anything wrong between us and another person, we should go and make it right. We shouldn't take communion carelessly, or just as a habit, or to try and trick anyone into thinking we are part of God's worldwide family. (1 Cor 11: 27-29) We must worship Jesus with respect and love, and be considerate of each other because we are united in Jesus Christ.

**Tammy:** So, Christians take communion; firstly because it tells us again of the way God protected his special people when the angel of death passed over them. Then it gives us some symbols to tell us of Jesus' death on the cross for us. This celebration also reminds us of who our Lord Jesus is and what he did by dying for us. Lastly, it tells everyone around us that we are part of God's family all around the world. It's a sign to tell other people that Jesus is now our Savior and Lord.

**Carol:** If you trust Jesus and follow him, I hope you're able to meet with other believers and share communion. Even if you can't meet with others, you can still make a special time to remember what Jesus did for you, and to worship him in your heart. He will be there with you in spirit.

**Tammy:** If you have any questions about all of the things we have talked about today, you can write to us in care of this station or at Women of Hope. The address: [twrwomenofhope@twr.org](mailto:twrwomenofhope@twr.org) That's [twrwomenofhope@twr.org](mailto:twrwomenofhope@twr.org) Or if you have missed a program or you want to hear it again you can do that on our website [twrwomenofhope.org](http://twrwomenofhope.org) or visit our Facebook page.

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