

Coping with Fear / Learning to trust God

Carol: How do you feel today? Are you Happy with your life? Is everything fine? Or are you having one of those days when you feel anxious and fearful?

Carol: Welcome to Women of Hope, I'm Carol. And how do *you* feel today Tammy?

Tammy: Hi Carol. Today I'm feeling really well. There are those days that are filled with anxiety or fear because I know one of my adult children has something large coming up in their lives or a decision they need to make. As a mom I want to be able to jump in and take care of them. Because they're adults, I can't do that for them anymore.

Carol: We all feel afraid at times don't we? It's a natural feeling. And it *can* be a good thing. We want to teach our children to be afraid of some things – like walking on the road where it might not be safe. Or walking in the bush where there might be snakes. We want them to be afraid of *real* danger, so they'll learn to stay safe.

Tammy: That's very true Carol. But do we want them grow up feeling afraid of lots of things?

Carol: Oh no, but if they have no fear of anything, they could put themselves in danger. It's the same with us as adults isn't it? We could say we need to have a *healthy fear* of anything that might harm us.

Tammy: So when does fear become 'unhealthy'? I think it's when we're afraid most of the time, about many things.

Carol: You're exactly right. Have you ever asked someone what she fears most? Some people say snakes or spiders, or crossing a high bridge. But often we don't really want to tell others what we're most afraid of...they might think we're silly.

Tammy: I wonder what makes you most afraid? For some of us fear is part of everyday life. If you live in a place that's dangerous to your life, and the lives of your family, you have reason to be afraid. And your fear may help to protect you as you look for ways to stay safe. You may live in a war zone or a place where you can't walk freely on the streets. Perhaps you fear being attacked by soldiers, or being raped or being taken away, or your husband or children being taken away. Our hearts go out to you. We *cannot* understand how you feel, because we live in a place that's mostly safe. But, please know, we pray for you, that God will keep you safe.

Carol: You might have heard Dr Kerry talk to us about our health sometimes. Her mother, Lois, teaches English. She told us: 'Some women I taught had spent years in refugee camps or had walked hundreds of miles to escape from their war torn country. They told me that they felt very frightened all the time until they got far away from the situation. Other women I knew when I lived in another country were often afraid that they would not have food for the next meal to feed their many children. Or they were afraid that the monsoon would wash away their mud hut and they would have nowhere to live. Some women were afraid of their husband or father coming home drunk and that he would beat them up...or their children.'

These are very real reasons to be afraid.

Tammy: Lois had something happen to *her* that made her afraid too. This is what she told us: 'I had a very horrible experience a few years ago. I came home from work to find that my house had been broken into and lots of our things had been stolen. Our six sharp kitchen knives had been taken and placed all around the house, even under our pillows on our bed. Our very large carving knife had been stolen. Can you imagine the horrible feeling this gave us? That night I couldn't sleep, fearfully imagining that the robbers would come back.

We did everything we could to make the house safe again and we thanked God that none of us was hurt in the break in. We asked for God's protection over us during the night and in the days to come. For many months I still felt afraid every time I opened the door when I came home.'

Carol: I can understand why Lois felt afraid each time she came home. Maybe you've had something like that happen to you? Do you still feel afraid? It makes me wonder what Lois did to face her fear?

Tammy: Well, she told me: 'We can't stop it happening again, and I've learned to trust in God's care of us whatever happens.'" She said that she remembers a great sense of peace as they committed their home and themselves to the Lord. And now she no longer worries about it every day.

Carol: That reminds me of something our friend Ros told us about.

When Ros was a young child, her mother fell asleep when she was driving the car. The car ran off the road. Ros was very frightened, but no-one was really hurt. For many years she was afraid of a driver going to sleep... I mean really afraid! Then many years later, she was in a

car again when the driver went to sleep. The car ran off the road and crashed into the bank on the other side. Now, believe it or not, just over a year ago, her husband fell asleep while driving their car. The car flipped up-side-down and crashed down hard onto its roof. She said she was terrified that they would not be able to get out of the car. She said her heart was pumping so hard. But after a short while, they managed to open a window and were able to climb out.

Tammy: Oh Carol, I remember her telling us this story. To this day she still remembers the fear as it was happening...and having no power to do anything about it. I asked her what she did, and she said she called out to God to help them. And she was very thankful that she did – they were saved from being badly hurt. But it took her a long time to stop feeling afraid in the car – afraid that the driver might go to sleep again.

Carol: I was impressed by her words about her trust in God. She said “Now, we always stop for a rest if we’re tired. And we always pray that God will keep us safe. I know that I can trust God...but if it happens again it will be God’s decision whether he keeps me safe, or takes me home to heaven to be with him. So I have no need to be afraid.” That impressed me so much.

Tammy: Wow! I am so glad she has that firm trust in God’s control.

Carol: Welcome back to Women of Hope as we talk together today about fear and how it can affect us.

Tammy: I know that fear can really affect our physical body? Have you noticed that when you’re really afraid your heart starts pumping harder? And your mouth goes dry? You might feel hot and sweaty, restless and tense. Your breathing is fast.

Carol: Your heart pumps harder because your body produces the hormone *adrenaline* to prepare you to fight the danger, or to run away from it, or to hide. This is called ‘fight, flight or freeze’– to help us get out of a bad situation.

But if we’re anxious and fearful most of the time, and our body is constantly being pumped with adrenaline, it can be very harmful to our health. It’s exhausting!

Tammy: Fear is a natural emotion for humans. But sometimes our fears can be too strong or too constant, and we let them control our lives so we feel weak and powerless.

So what can we do about our fears? We can't just tell them to go away. But if we're always afraid and worrying this can make us very sad or sick. We can't bring joy or hope to ourselves, or our families. Everything seems gloomy.

Carol: Friend, if your heart is beating hard, and there is *no* danger right then, the first thing to do is to control your breathing. Slow it down, and breathe out properly. You can think of it as 'blowing away the fear'. Take a deep breath in through your nose – fill your lungs, and then slowly blow it out of your mouth and empty your lungs as much as you can. Do that a few times. That always helps to calm me a bit. Then settle yourself by choosing what you pay attention to. Think about something nice that's right there - maybe taste your cup of tea, or look carefully at a flower, or a picture. When you've stopped puffing and your heart has stopped pounding, then it's time to *think*.

Tammy: Here are three suggestions about thinking. Firstly – *identify the fear*. Ask: What am I afraid of? If you think about it, your fear is usually about losing something or someone. You might have a very real fear of losing your life. You might fear losing someone close to you. You might be afraid of losing your health, or losing your job, or losing face.

The second thing to think about is *facing the fear*. It's important to ask the question – is this fear of *real* danger. If so, then it's important for you to take whatever action you can to keep yourself or your loved ones safe.

So ask yourself the question: 'Is anything bad going to happen, or am I just imagining that it might?' What can I do to keep safe?

Carol: Then the third thing to do is to *find a way to let the fear go*. Many women find it really helps to share their fears with a good friend they really trust. And as you talk about your fear, you might find that others fear the same things, or that there is really nothing to be afraid of. That sometimes happens to me. When I openly speak about my fear or my trouble to someone – I find that it is not as big as I had made it in my own mind.

But if you have trouble facing your fears, maybe you could talk to your health care worker or the pastor at your church about it. Being part of a group where others have the same fears can give you strength. For example, in some countries there are support groups for family and friends of alcoholics – to teach you practical ways of dealing with the person's behaviour and your fear of the situation.

And finding a quiet place to sit and think calmly, away from your daily work and the busyness of life, can be helpful too. You can practise breathing slowly and relaxing. That's when I find it helps me to pray. And you might like to pray as you sit quietly.

Tammy: There's something I find really helpful if I start worrying – and feeling afraid. I think to myself – 'What's the worst thing that can happen?' And then I think – 'well if that happens what can I do about it?' If there's nothing I can do about it, then I need to try to let this fear go.

Carol: That's great advice, Tammy. I've found it very helpful to focus on God's presence being with me when I'm afraid. And one way to focus on God is to read his word – if you can. Or you can think about things that you've heard from God's word right here on Women of Hope.

After Jesus died on the cross, his followers were very afraid because of all the terrible things that had happened to him - their friend and teacher. But after he came back to life, Jesus, came to them and said, "Peace be with you." This helped Jesus' followers greatly and brought them comfort. Could they have peace in such uncertain times? Yes they could!

Tammy: Many times in different situations we read in the Bible that God sent an angel to someone with the message – "Don't be afraid!"

When Mary, the mother of Jesus was visited by the angel Gabriel, he said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God." (Luke 1:30) And just after Jesus was born, an angel visited some shepherds, as they were looking after their sheep. They were terrified, but the angel said, "Don't be afraid, I bring you good news of great joy." And he told them of Jesus' birth. Many times, Jesus told his followers not to be afraid. When he was telling them what would happen to him in the future, he said, "Don't let your hearts be troubled; or afraid. Remember what I told you. I am going away but I will come back to you again." He said, "I am leaving you with a gift – peace of mind and heart." (John 14:27) Jesus promises to be with *us* in the fearful times too and give us peace and hope.

There are many wonderful stories in the Bible about people who were afraid and how Jesus understood their fear and helped them to see who he really was. Listen as Carol reads us *this* story, and think about how it might help you when you're feeling fearful and anxious.

Carol: Jesus led a busy life when he lived here on earth. He often had a great crowd of people following him. They wanted him to heal them of their illnesses, or tell them stories about God's

kingdom and what it meant to belong to Jesus and follow him. One day he spoke to crowds of people from the boat that his disciples had pulled up close to the shore. The sun was beginning to set so after a long tiring day, Jesus said, "Let's cross to the other side of the lake." Maybe they needed some time alone without all the crowds of people.

Here's the true story from God's word, the Bible. (Mark 4:35-41 NLT) 'So they took Jesus in the boat and started out, leaving the crowds behind, although other boats followed. But soon a fierce storm came up. High waves were breaking into the boat and it began to fill with water.'

Tammy: Imagine how the disciples must have felt! Did they have a real reason to be afraid? What do *you* think? Have you ever been in a boat in a storm and the water is coming right into the boat? How did you feel? I imagine you would be very afraid – even afraid that you might lose your life!

Carol: Well, that must have been how the disciples felt because listen to what happened next...

'Jesus was sleeping in the back of the boat with his head on a cushion. The disciples woke him up, shouting, "Teacher, don't you care that we're going to drown?"

(CEV) Jesus got up and he ordered the wind and the waves to be quiet. The wind stopped and everything was calm.

Jesus turned to his disciples and asked them, "Why were you afraid? Don't you have any faith?"

Now they were more afraid than ever and said to each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him."

That's the end of the story from God's word.

Tammy: So why do you think they were *even more afraid* after he told the wind and the waves to be still?

Do you think it was because they saw his awesome power? Was it because they realised that he was more than just a man – that he was the son of God? And that He had power to do the impossible?

Carol: You know this is a wonderful picture to think about when we feel afraid. When we decide to trust Jesus and follow him, he promises to be with us in our storms. Even when we're afraid of dying, he can calm the storm in our hearts and bring us peace - the peace that he promised to his followers.

We don't know what you might be afraid of right now – but I would like to pray for you that you will find peace...and know that Jesus is with you. Would you like to join me?

Dear father, God, thank you for sending Jesus to our world – to show us who you are – to show us your power, and teach us about your peace. We thank you that he promised his followers peace, even in times when they were afraid. Please be with our dear sister right now, and give her peace in her heart. Help her to trust you, and to know that you will walk beside her in her pain and fear. We pray this in the mighty name of the Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Tammy: We have to go now, but we do look forward to next time. We would love to hear from you. You can write to us in care of this station or at TWR Women of Hope. The email address is twrwomenofhope@twr.org. That's twrwomenofhope@twr.org. Or if you have missed a program or want to hear one again visit our website at 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.

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