

Self Care / Rest in Jesus

Tammy: We women often care for other people, don't we?

Carol: We do...

Tammy: We may care for a husband...children...parents who are growing old...

Carol: We may care for someone who's sick...or has a disability...or someone who's going through a hard time.

Tammy: But there's one person we often forget to care for...

Carol: Welcome to *Women of Hope*. Tammy said there's one person we forget to care for. Who do you think that might be?

Tammy: This person is with you everyday...every moment of your life. Can you think who it is? Yes, it's *you!*

Carol: Of course! We women are often so busy taking care of all those around us that we forget to take care of ourselves!

Tammy: I can just hear you saying... 'But I'm too busy...I don't have time to care for myself.' You may think that the needs of the people you care for are much more important than your own. You might think it's selfish to care for yourself.

But you know, *you* are just as valuable as anybody else. When God created you he thought about every last detail...how you would look, and what kind of personality you would have. You are very precious to him. He cares for you, and he would like you to care for yourself.

Carol: You've probably heard us talk about Jesus, God's son, here on *Women of Hope*. We'll talk more about him later. When Jesus lived here on earth he said something very interesting and very important. He said: 'I came so that everyone would have life, and life to the fullest.' (John 10:10, CEV) Did you know that? Jesus wants you, and me, to have 'life to the fullest'. Wow...that's a special thought. You know, you can't live life to the fullest if you don't care about yourself...or take care of yourself...can you?

Tammy: That makes sense. We can't expect to live life to the fullest if we treat ourselves badly. We can't expect to live life to the fullest if we don't take care of ourselves. Do you know...when you care for yourself well, you're actually more able to do the things you need to do...like taking care of your family and other people.

Carol: Tell us how that works Tammy?

Tammy: Well...we are like - kettles...

Carol: ...kettles?

Tammy: Yes, kettles. A kettle has a hole at the top, for the water to go into. Then we can boil that water for a cup of tea. ...Hey we often have cups of tea here on *Women of Hope* don't we!

Carol: We do indeed...maybe we should put the kettle on now and have a cup of tea as we talk together.

Tammy: While Carol puts the kettle on, let's think about what a kettle looks like. Yours might look different from mine, but there's one thing that will be the same. All kettles have some kind of spout, so the boiled water can be poured out of the kettle into a cup. Now, what happens when the kettle's empty? ...Can we pour water into a cup?

Carol: Ah...no...not unless it's a magic kettle!

Tammy: ... and a magic kettle would only be in a story wouldn't it!
Of course, we can only use the kettle to fill the cup if the kettle has water in it. And you know, we are a bit like that. Let's talk about it...

Carol: Here on *Women of Hope* we're talking about taking care of ourselves. And Tammy just said that we are a bit like kettles. I hope I don't look like a kettle! Please explain Tammy!!

Tammy: Well...a kettle can only be used to pour water into a cup if someone fills it up. And you know we're like that - we all need to be filled up so that we can 'pour out', or give, into other people's lives...into their cups. Yes – we do actually need to take in water for our physical body so that we can keep strong. Well in the same way we need to be filled up in our emotions and our feelings of self if we want to be able to give to others. We need the emotional strength to keep pouring out and caring for others Does that make sense to you?

Carol: It certainly makes sense to me! If nobody cares for us, we run out of strength. We become empty...and we can't care for others well. But if we care for ourselves, and we let others care for us, we can continue to care for those around us who need our help. So what things are going to empty us and take away our strength?

Tammy: Stress! That's probably the big one. When we're stressed, our body produces chemicals that help us to be quick and alert so that we can deal with the stress. The longer we are stressed, the longer these chemicals are pumped around our body. And if this happens for too long, our body gets very tired and we're not even able to think clearly. Have you ever been so tired that you couldn't think clearly? When this happens, you may feel isolated or emotionally numb. You may feel exhausted from feeling lots of strong emotions. The chemicals can also damage our bodies if they are pumped around it for too long. They will eventually make us sick.

Carol: Wow – so you're saying that stress for a very short time can help us to do things for a short while, but if it goes on for a long time it can make us sick.

Tammy: It can sure empty our kettle!

Carol: I can see how caring for yourself helps you to care for others better. So how can we care for ourselves?

Tammy: Well...firstly eating healthy food and bathing to keep our selves clean. And it's important to get enough exercise and sleep. Those are physical ways we can take care of ourselves. But there are also ways we can take care of our emotional and mental health.

Carol: Here on *Women of Hope* today we're talking about taking care of ourselves...in the same way we would fill up a kettle with water – so that we can pour out, or give, into other people's lives. We have to keep pouring water in, so that we have something to pour out!

Tammy: That's right.

Carol: So we've talked about taking care of ourselves physically, but how about mentally and emotionally?

Tammy: Well...it might sound a bit strange but we really need to get to know ourselves...who we are...to know what stresses, or upsets us, and what helps us to feel relaxed and happy.

Carol: Can you tell us how to do this Tammy?

Tammy: To do this we need to take notice of how we are feeling, and thinking...to work out what's going on inside ourselves. Stop for a moment, and think about how you're feeling now. Do you feel happy...calm...excited...upset...anxious...or maybe something else?

What do you think might be making you feel that way? If it's too hard to think about, just relax, breathe deeply...and think about something nice. How does your body feel? Is it relaxed? Or are there some parts that are tense? You can relax now and just keep listening...

Carol: I feel happy right now to be with Tammy and you again on *Women of Hope*. I hope it makes you feel happy to be with us too.

Tammy: Sometimes I realise I feel sad, but I don't know why. So I think about what's happened in my life in the past few days and I can usually work out why I'm sad. Have you ever felt like that? You know, *your feelings are important*. They let you know how you're doing. It's actually much better to get to know what our real feelings are than to ignore them, or hide them. And then you can encourage yourself!

Carol: That's interesting Tammy. We've heard a few times now from my friend Stevie. Stevie has told me: 'When I'm sad, I often say to myself, "You're okay Stevie. You're okay." And it makes me feel much better.' It helps Stevie to keep going.

Did you know that God accepts you, and enjoys you just as you are? When you make mistakes, and you ask for his forgiveness, he forgives you very quickly. He loves you so much. You can encourage yourself by reminding yourself that God loves you, enjoys you and forgives you. He wants you to love and accept yourself too...and to forgive yourself when you've done something wrong. And he wants you to enjoy yourself too...to enjoy being you! Now, that might be really hard, and it may take a long time for you to be able to do those things. But if you ask God to help you, he surely will. Your feelings are important to God. He knows and understands how you feel, even better than you do!

Tammy: That's very true. And when you listen to what's happening in your heart, you may become aware of certain things that you need. You may need to share your thoughts and feelings with someone you trust... You may need to ask someone for help... There may be something about your relationship with someone that's upsetting you, and so you might need to talk to them about it. You know, if you're honest with them, in a gentle way, that relationship could grow even more special.

Carol: God has made us all different hasn't he? Different things upset us, or make us feel stressed...or make us feel empty and sad. And different things soothe us, encourage us...and fill us up. It's good to know what things stress us, and what things nurture, or encourage us.

Tammy: Different things can make us feel stressed. If things don't work out the way you had hoped, you can feel frustrated and even angry. You can feel pressured or stressed by what others expect of you. Or you can feel stressed because you have so many things that you have to get done. Experiencing conflict...or violence...or even change can cause you stress. Change can be especially stressful if it involves you losing something, or someone, that has been special to you.

There are physical things that can cause you stress, like illness or pain, or too much physical activity.

What makes *you* feel upset, or stressed? If you know what things make you stressed, upset, or tired, you can try to make changes to avoid these situations. And when those things *do* happen remember to take time to take care of yourself.

Sometimes taking care of yourself means avoiding a stressful situation...or if you can't avoid it, trying not to think about it. Or maybe trying to think about it in a more positive way.

If you have too many things to do, or people expect too much of you...think about it and ask yourself 'do I *really* have to do *all* of those things?...or 'do I *really* have to please that person'.

Carol: And you can ask God about it too! God does give us things to do. But he never gives us more than we can manage...or so many things to do that we are busy *all* the time. He created us and he knows that we need physical rest, and we need emotional and mental rest as well. So anytime you want, you can ask God whether he wants you to do something or not.

Sometimes it's good to say 'no' to someone who wants you to do something because you know there's a limit to what you can do. And sometimes, when you know there's too much to do you need to ask others for help.

Tammy: And if you just can't avoid stress...or when you begin to feel a bit empty, do something that makes you feel better and fills you up...so that your 'kettle' doesn't become completely empty. Remember if there's no water in your kettle, you can't pour it out – to help others can you?

So think about this...what do you enjoy doing? What things calm you, or make you happy. What things fill you up?

Carol: I *love* listening to my favourite music...or sitting outside in the sunshine. I love to read a good book. You might enjoy drawing or going for a walk...or working in the garden. I often pray when I'm working in the garden or walking...do you? Think about the things that make you calm and relaxed and plan to do those things.

Tammy: We all enjoy doing different things at different times...Here are some questions to help you to start thinking about what might fill *you* up:

- Do you feel better when you've spent time on your own...or with other people...or maybe with animals?
- Do you enjoy being inside or outside?
- Do you like doing something energetic...or something relaxing?

Carol: Those are interesting questions to think about.

Tammy: Well here are some more...

- Do you prefer it to be quiet, or noisy...dark, or bright?
- Do you enjoy doing things that make you think a lot...or do you like taking a break from thinking?
- Do you like to *plan* fun things to do, or just do them when you feel like it? Of course we all have things we *have* to do that may not be fun – but it's good to have some fun times in between.

Carol: I love to sometimes do spontaneous things – that's without any planning. Like deciding at the last minute to go and have a picnic, or go to the beach.

Tammy: My family loves it when we make those spontaneous decisions to do something fun.

Here are a few more questions to think about... Are there particular things that you enjoy seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting or feeling? Can you have those things in your home...or in your workplace? Maybe you can carry one of those things around with you in your bag or your pocket.

Carol: That's an interesting idea. I love the smell of roses. I can't carry one with me but I always stop to smell one if I'm walking by a garden with roses.

Tammy: You can learn to live a balanced life...doing things you enjoy, the things that you need to do that are maybe not so much fun as well as caring for others. When life is balanced you can care for others with more energy and a positive attitude.

Do you remember what Carol said at the beginning about Jesus? She told us that Jesus said: 'I came so that everyone would have life, and life to the fullest.' Would you like to hear something else Jesus said when he lived on this earth? Carol can you read it to us?

Carol: I'd love to. I'm reading from God's true word, the Bible. 'Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light." (Matthew 11:28-30 NLT).'

What a beautiful promise. Jesus promises *all* of us that if we are weary and burdened we can come to him. Perhaps you are burdened because you're doing too many things. Or you may be burdened by feelings of guilt. You might be burdened by trying to please God - by obeying lots of rules.

Are you weary and burdened? If so, you can come to Jesus and talk to him. His arms are wide open for you. Try to find a nice, quiet place, where you can talk to him and be aware of him. He is right there with you...even if you don't feel him there. You can ask him to help you to understand how much he loves you, forgives you and accepts you. That's why he says that his *yoke is easy*. You may have seen oxen that are yoked together...one helps the other. That's just what Jesus wants to do for you...walk beside you and help carry your load.

His burden is light because you don't have to struggle to please him...he is already pleased with you. He gave his life for you – that's how much he cares about you. Let's say thank you to him now... (Carol prays)

Tammy: My prayer for you today is that you will find rest with Jesus, knowing that he loves you and delights in you, just as you are. And that he will help you to care for yourself. Goodbye and enjoy your day!

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