

High Blood Pressure / Woman at Jesus' feet

Rachel: Calvin was nervous as the doctor pumped up the cuff around his arm. It got tighter and tighter, but the doctor smiled as she put the stethoscope ends into her ears, so Calvin relaxed a bit. Then the pressure went down again, and the doctor took it off his arm. She explained how it works...

Carol: Hello, there and welcome to Women of Hope, I'm Carol. Have you had your blood pressure checked lately?

Tammy: I have and it's a little high, so I'm on medication for it.

Hi, I'm Tammy. Today we're going to listen to Calvin's story. I wonder if he had high blood pressure? Thanks for coming to tell us this story RACHEL.

Rachel: Hello...

Tammy: So what did the doctor say?

Rachel: The doctor explained: "Every time your heart beats, it forces blood through your blood vessels to every part of your body. At every beat or push, the pressure against the walls of the blood vessels rises - that's normal. This cuff squeezes your arm until it's too tight for your heart to push blood through any more. Then I lower the pressure in the cuff until the blood flows through without any trouble again. That tells me the pressure of your blood against the sides of the vessels. There are two numbers – the pressure *of the beats*, and the pressure *between* beats, for example 120 on 80 or 140 on 90.

Calvin was listening carefully, and asked, "What is my blood pressure?"

The doctor answered, "Well, it's 145 on 92. That's too high for someone as young as you. High blood pressure is dangerous, so we must do something about it."

"Dangerous?" asked Calvin, surprised. "Why is it dangerous, doc?"

The doctor pointed to a picture on the wall that showed all the blood vessels in the body, flowing out from the heart and going up to the head and down to the ends of all the fingers and toes.

“Well,” she explained, “just imagine that all those blood vessels are like rubber hoses or pipes. Your heart pumps blood through them to every part of your body. And if the pressure inside is too high, the blood vessels can get weak spots that tear or burst, letting the blood out and causing damage to the tissue. A small leak in your brain is a *stroke*, and a big leak anywhere will kill you. High blood pressure can also damage your heart, kidneys and eyes.”

Carol: That’s why having your blood pressure checked is very important.

Tammy: It sure is. Let’s listen as RACHEL tells us some more things that the doctor told Calvin.

Rachel: “So why is my blood pressure high doctor? Have I done something to make it high?”

“You might have,” said the doctor...

“The most common reason is that it’s just the way you’re built or it’s in your family. Do your parents have high blood pressure?”

“My dad does,” said Calvin.

“The second most common cause of high blood pressure is stress. When we get angry, or have a fright, when we work hard, or we run, our heart pumps harder and our blood pressure goes up. But that’s normal and no problem because it’s only for a short time.

But - when we’re angry or anxious or under pressure for a long time that’s *not* good. Maybe there are big family problems, or financial worries, or too much responsibility at work. You can’t sleep well, you get angry quickly, and you might get headaches.”

“Ah!” said Calvin, “that might be the problem. It’s not my family, or finances, it’s at work. I was promoted to a new job and I’m not coping well. There’s too much to think about and a lot of responsibility...a lot of important decisions to make and people demanding things and getting mad at me. Yes, I *am* stressed a lot of the time.”

“That could be it, then,” said the doctor. “But another reason for high blood pressure is if a person is overweight and does not eat well. Too much processed food means too high sugar, salt and fats. These foods can make you put on weight. And drinking a lot of alcohol can do the same. But we all need some salt and some and fats. The best way to eat well is to have lots of fresh fruit, vegies and whole grains...and of course some meat, but without too much fat.”

“That sounds sensible. I like salty food, like chips.

“Hmmm,” said the doctor. “We’ve talked about stress, too much salt, sugar and fats...that can make you put on weight and raise your blood pressure. But there’s one more thing - exercise. Your job keeps you in the office, sitting at a desk. Are you getting enough exercise? Not having enough exercise and getting fat can definitely help to cause high blood pressure.”

“You’re right!” said Calvin, patting his rather large stomach. “I *have* put on a lot of weight recently. And I don’t do much exercise at all.”

The doctor took a sheet of paper and wrote Calvin’s name on it. Then she said, “OK, so what are you going to do to get your blood pressure back down?”

Carol: Wow, what would you say to your doctor if they asked you that same question? What can you do to get your blood pressure down? Maybe you know someone with high blood pressure. What would you tell them?

Carol: Here on Women of Hope we are thinking about what we can do to get our blood pressure down – or what we can say to help someone who has high blood pressure. Let’s listen as RACHEL, tells us what Calvin decided he could do.

Rachel: Calvin thought for a minute, then he answered, “Well, there’s stress,” he said, “I’ll have to talk with my boss about that and find different ways of doing things at work so that I can cope better.”

The doctor added, “Yes, or perhaps there are people you can give more responsibility to. Or ask your boss to teach you some things, instead of struggling to figure them out yourself.

What else?”

“Well, there’s eating too much processed food – too much salt, sugar and fats, so I’ll be more careful and eat lots more vegetables and fruits and whole grains.”

“Good!” said the doctor. “What else?”

“Hmmm...I must lose some weight and get more exercise. But it’s so hot, and I don’t want to get all sweaty!”

The doctor frowned at him. “Sweaty or dead? You chose!”

Calvin nodded... “I understand, Doc. Some of my neighbors play volleyball in the afternoons, and the market is close, so I could walk instead of driving!”

“You’re right,” said the doctor, “when you play sport or go for a long walk, you’ll find that your stress disappears, too! Will you do these things, Calvin?” the doctor asked.

Calvin nodded, “I sure will!”

“Good, now I want to see you again in two months to see how you’re doing. If you don’t do these things your blood pressure will go even higher, then I’ll have to give you special pills to reduce it, and you’ll have to take them for the rest of your life.

“OK, Doc, I’ll do everything you’ve told me to. I have a beautiful wife and two wonderful children, so I want to be healthy for a long time, yet! Thank you!”

Rachel: Two months later, Calvin came back to the doctor for his checkup. He was very proud that he'd lost 7 kilograms. "I've been taking my children to the park and playing ball with them."

"That's excellent exercise," said the doctor, "running all over the park after the ball!"

"I get very sweaty, but I don't care because it's fun", said Calvin. "And the children love me spending time with them.

My wife's been happy to help me avoid oil and salt and sugar.

And I talked to my boss – he's taught me a lot of things to make my work easier...and I've shared my responsibilities around, so we're working better as a team. I'm very happy at work now."

"That's excellent!" said the doctor. "Now, let's see what your blood pressure is."

She pumped up the cuff until it was very tight. As she let it down, she smiled, "Well, you *have* done a good job! It's 120 on 75...perfect. But don't think that now you can forget everything that you've learned! You must keep doing those good things for the rest of your life!"

Calvin laughed. "Oh, I will! My children are happy that I'm playing and running with them, my wife's happy that I'm not so fat, my boss is happy that we're working better together, and I feel much healthier and more energetic! Thank you for your help, Doc!"

Tammy: Thank you RACHEL for sharing Calvin's story with us...he certainly did all the right things didn't he?

Let's just remind ourselves of the things that can cause high blood pressure...

Too much salt, sugar and fats in our food; not enough exercise – so we put on weight – making it worse.

Carol: Well eating good, healthy food and getting more exercise sounds like a good idea. They say that a 20 minute walk, at a good steady pace each day, or at least 3

times a week, is a really good start. And it will help us to reduce the most common cause of hypertension!

Tammy: You know, I have another way of reducing stress that's very pleasant. I like to spend time singing or praying or listening to music.

Carol: It's good to be together on Women of Hope. Ros has come to visit with us again today. Welcome Ros.

Ros: Hi Carol, and Tammy, thanks for inviting me again...and hello to *you*.

Tammy: You like music too don't you Ros?

Ros: Oh yes, I must say that music & singing has always been the best way for me to feel relaxed and to take any stress away. And as I sing along with the words, my thoughts go to other things – and I forget what was going round in my mind and perhaps worrying me.

Are you working as you listen, or sitting in a nice comfy chair? Or maybe you're even taking time out to have a cup of tea or a cool drink while you listen. What do you do to reduce the stress in your life?

Carol: We all have stress of some kind don't we! Maybe in our work...maybe in our family situation...or in some other way that we find hard to talk about.

Ros: I agree Carol. I want to share a story with you today from God's word, the Bible, about a woman who was probably very stressed...and she may have found it hard to talk about it to others, but she found a wonderful way to deal with her stress.

This story happened during the time that Jesus lived on this earth. Jesus often visited people and ate with them. Sometimes they were people who many called 'sinners' – people who did things that were against the law at the time – like cheating people, taking more money than they were supposed to from people – for taxes. Of course they kept the extra themselves.

Then sometimes he ate with the people who thought they were the 'good' ones. They kept all the Jewish laws and criticized or persecuted those who didn't keep the laws.

So I expect many people could not quite work out where Jesus fitted into their society. Yes, he was born a Jew, and yet he seemed to often do and say things that puzzled them and didn't fit their understanding of the Jewish law.

Many people had become his followers...they saw the amazing miracles he performed – healing people and even raising people from the dead. They were sure that this power came from God.

So this story, from God's true word (taken from Luke 7:36 – 50) starts when one of the Pharisees – the ones who loved to keep the law – asked Jesus to have dinner with him. His name was Simon. Maybe he wanted to talk about some issues of the law with Jesus, or maybe he was curious to know more about him. We don't know. Now there would have been a few other people there too, and they would have been reclining, or resting at the table – probably on long couches, so that their feet were resting on the couch.

There was a lady who the Bible just calls, 'a certain immoral woman,' who heard that Jesus was eating at this Pharisee's home. She came to his home and brought with her a beautiful alabaster jar – usually white and probably decorated – filled with expensive perfume. She was obviously a troubled woman because she knelt behind Jesus, at his feet, and she was crying. Her tears fell onto Jesus' feet and she wiped them off with her long hair. Then she kissed Jesus' feet and opened the jar of perfume and rubbed this perfume onto his feet.

Now let's stop the story here for a minute. I've often thought about this story and wondered what would happen in my culture if someone did this. It would be very unusual and possibly very embarrassing to the one who was having his feet kissed and wiped with her hair – and rubbed with perfume.

Carol: Yes Ros, in my culture it would be the same. I wonder about your culture? It's probably not something that a woman would do when a group of men were gathered together for a meal would she?

Tammy: And they were probably discussing all kinds of important things to do with the law, or the traditions of the day. It might not have been the place for a woman to come and show such emotion.

Ros: No – but this woman didn't seem to be concerned about the others in the room. As we said before, she was obviously upset about something in her life. I think she must have heard about Jesus and that he could forgive people. I think her tears may have been ones of sorrow for what was happening in her life.

Now something happened next in this story that tells us that those in the room knew who this woman was. Just how they knew her we don't know, but let's go on with the story from God's word and find out what happened next...

(v39) When the Pharisee who had invited Jesus saw what was happening, he said *to himself*, "If this man were a prophet, he would know what kind of woman is touching him. She's a sinner!"

Now as Simon was thinking these things, Jesus turned to him and answered his thoughts! He said, "Simon, I have something to say to you."

"Go ahead Teacher", Simon replied.

Now I want to stop the story again here for a moment... Did you notice that God's word said, 'Jesus answered his thoughts'? He knew what Simon was thinking. And there may have been others in the room thinking similar things. But I expect Simon didn't realize Jesus knew what he was thinking. And because he was the host, he probably thought Jesus was going to ask him an important question that might make him look wise and knowledgeable. So he happily replied, 'Go ahead Teacher.'

But I'm sure he was very surprised and probably embarrassed when he heard what Jesus had to say. Shall we keep going with the story?

Tammy: Yes, please do Ros...

Ros: Jesus told Simon a story about two people who owed money – one 500 pieces of silver and the other 50 pieces but neither could repay the money. So the lender kindly cancelled the debts. He asked Simon, which of the two would have loved the lender the most after that.

Simon confidently answered, “I suppose the one who had owed the larger debt.”

“That’s right,” Jesus said. Then he turned to the woman and said to Simon, “Look at this woman kneeling here. When I entered your home you didn’t offer me water to wash the dust from my feet, but she has washed them with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You didn’t greet me with a kiss, but from the time I first came in she has not stopped kissing my feet. You neglected the courtesy of olive oil to anoint my head, but she has anointed my feet with rare perfume.

I tell you, her sins – and they are many – have been forgiven, so she has shown me much love. But a person who is forgiven little shows only a little love.”

Then Jesus said to the woman, “Your sins are forgiven.”

The men at the table said among themselves, “Who is this man that he goes around forgiving sins?”

But Jesus taking no notice this time said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you, go in peace.”

Tammy: Do you think the woman was still crying? I don't think so. I can imagine the smile on her face as she left that room, and the lovely perfume that she left behind.

Ros: The Bible doesn’t tell us what happened after that, but I would think the men would have had a long talk about what Jesus said after he left too, don’t you?

You see they didn’t understand that another time Jesus had said, “My father has trusted me with everything. No-one truly knows the father except the son...”(Matt 11.27) And he went on to say, “Come to me all of you who are weary and carry

heavy burdens and I will give you rest.” You see, Jesus has the authority from his father, God to offer forgiveness, and rest for our souls. And he’ll give us his peace in our hearts, just like this woman, when we bring our sorrow and our stresses to Jesus in prayer. He will always listen.

Carol, as we finish today would you please pray for our friend...

Carol: Sure... Father God, thank you for your son Jesus, for his heart of compassion to those who are suffering and troubled. Please forgive us for the things we have done that we know are wrong, and give us peace. In the name of Jesus. Amen

Tammy: We would love to hear from you. You can contact us at... this station or at Women of Hope.... The address: TWRwomenofhope@twr.org