

Chronic Pain/Temptation of Jesus

Stevie: I have been unwell for the last four years. I always feel tired, nauseated and a little light-headed, and I have difficulty concentrating. The doctors don't know what's wrong, or how to make me feel better. I have also had pain in my back, neck and shoulders for a long time...

Carol: Hello, welcome to *Women of Hope*, I'm Carol...how are you today? Do you feel healthy? Or do you have pain, or sickness like my friend Stevie? Maybe *you've* suffered pain or sickness for a long time. If so, you're not alone.

Tammy: Hi, I'm Tammy and I'm here too as usual...

Many people suffer from health problems. Some people have pain...most commonly in their back, neck, shoulders, joints, muscles and nerves. Some people live with headaches, earache, toothache or itchy or sore skin.

Carol: Some people always feel tired or unwell, or have breathing difficulties like asthma or emphysema. Some people always feel uncomfortable – they may be overweight, or even very underweight...constantly feel too cold...too hot...or dirty.

Tammy: Now, *you* might be feeling *really* healthy! If so, that's great! But you probably know someone who isn't feeling so great. As you listen today you might hear something helpful that you can share with them.

You may have heard from our friend Stevie before on *Women of Hope*...she has Cerebral Palsy and is also not well most of the time. Let's hear more of what Stevie said about her illness...

Stevie:

I try to stay positive, but it's not easy. Chronic pain and illness is so constant...it's *always* there. Sometimes I just want to escape from my body. I want to be able to

think clearly. I want to feel better. Even for one day - so I could have a break. If you have constant health problems, you might have felt like this too?

There are things I used to be able to do, which I can't do now. I've even become more isolated because I don't have as much energy to go out as I used to. And when I do go out, I don't have as much fun, because I don't feel good in my body. I get so frustrated and sad sometimes. Have you experienced this?

Tammy: Welcome back to *Women of Hope*...where today Stevie is talking with us about living with pain and discomfort. I wonder if you feel like she does?

Stevie: When I first got sick I felt frustrated and sad all the time. I kept thinking about what I *couldn't* do, and I forgot about the things I *could* do. I needed to look for things that I could still enjoy. Things like...thinking about God and talking to him...talking to my family and friends...sitting outside to feel the sunshine and the breeze...listening to music...reading a book. If you have constant health problems what things can you still enjoy? Doing things that you enjoy will help your heart...your feelings.

The feelings in our heart can make our bodies feel worse or better. Have you ever noticed that when you're stressed your body becomes tense? Tension in your body will make it feel worse won't it? So it's helpful to try not to be stressed.

Carol: That's a really good point that Stevie just made isn't it. So what causes stress? What do *you* think?...

Tammy: Uuuuhh...things like impatience...anger...holding a grudge against someone...

Carol: ...constantly trying to make things perfect...not dealing with problems.

Stevie: People are more stressed if they exaggerate how their body is feeling - they think it's worse than it *really* is. Or if they try to ignore how they feel, they can feel

more stressed. It's really better to allow yourself to be aware of the discomfort that you feel...but try to relax the muscles in that area of your body.

Tammy: Like – take time to sit quietly and relax, or lie down, shut your eyes and let your whole body relax...even for a short time.

Stevie: If a person has enough love and support from family and friends, it really helps. They can be honest about how their body feels...what they need...and what they're thinking and feeling.

Carol: That's good to know. It's hard knowing that someone you love is suffering, isn't it...and that you can't fix it. But we *can* make a difference just by loving them...supporting them...and listening to them.

Stevie: But on the other hand if a person believes they can't cope with their suffering, it makes them feel more stressed. But you know what helps me relax? God promises that he will never let us experience more than what we can cope with.

Tammy: ...and that's good to know too isn't it.

Stevie: We feel more stressed if we *think* that there's nothing we can do to help ourselves feel better. But there *are* things that we can do.

Carol: I'll be interested to hear what those things are, after we listen to this nice relaxing music and think about what we've just heard...

Carol: Welcome back to *Women of Hope*. Let's hear what Stevie suggests that might help reduce the stress of not feeling well...

Stevie: A good balance of healthy *eating*, *exercise* and *fun* will help your body, and your heart...or your *feelings* about not being well.

- Try to eat healthy food like whole grains nuts and seeds, fresh fruit and vegetables, lean meat and dairy foods like milk, cheese and yogurt.

- Do some exercise...and gently stretch the uncomfortable areas of your body.
- Eat and sleep at regular times.
- Have a massage if you can – that might help.
- Laughter *definitely* helps! So listening to something funny, or watching something funny and having a good laugh can help your feelings...especially if you have someone to laugh with!

Try to take notice of what makes you feel worse or better. Talk to your doctor or health care worker, and tell them exactly what you're experiencing. Some illnesses can affect a person's mind. So if you feel sad ... or anxious ... or guilty most of the time it's really important to tell your doctor or health care worker about it.

Tammy: Stevie said before that relaxing helps you to feel less stressed. I wonder how it's best to do that? Let's hear again from Stevie...

Stevie: Would you like me to tell you how you could do some relaxation?

- Sit or lie in a relaxed and comfortable position. Breathe deeply and regularly. Tense your toes while you count to ten then relax them and count to twenty. Then do the same for your ankles.
- Gradually work up through each area of your body, from your calves, all the way up to your face. Don't forget your thighs, buttocks, stomach, back, chest, shoulders, arms, hands, neck, mouth and eyes.
- As you let go of the tension in your muscles, think about letting go of the tension, or stress, that is in your heart.
- Continue to breathe regularly throughout the relaxation.

If you find that tensing and relaxing makes you feel worse, then it may be best not to do it.

If you are often in pain you can try applying heat to soothe it. You might like to have a hot bath or shower. I like to put a heat pack or hot water bottle on the places of my body that are uncomfortable. Mmmm ... it feels lovely. If you don't have a heat pack or hot water bottle you can make a cloth bag, fill it with grain, and heat it in a microwave oven for a few minutes. But don't let it become hot to touch or it could

catch fire. Or you could heat stones, tiles or bricks in a fire and wrap them up in soft cloths...or fill a plastic drink bottle with hot water.

But don't apply heat to an area of your body that is red, and swollen. Instead put ice or something cold on it if you can.

Carol: Stevie said that if you often feel unwell, try to take notice of what makes you feel better or worse. That's a really good idea isn't it...

Tammy: ...and then you can avoid the things that make it worse and do more of the things that help you feel better. And you can tell your health care worker what makes your pain better or worse so they can find ways of helping you too.

Here's a lovely song about...

Carol: How encouraging to hear those words that said...

Welcome back to *Women of Hope* where we've been talking about living with constant pain and discomfort.

Tammy: Living with illness can be like walking in the desert. The desert is a harsh place. It's hard to find food and water – or a comfortable place to rest.

Carol: It's a lonely and scary place...

You know, the Bible tells us that Jesus, God's son, walked through the desert. I want to tell you the story of what happened to him. He'd grown up in a town called Nazareth, and now he was a young man. This story, from God's word, happened before Jesus taught and healed many people. Here's the story from the Bible.

(Luke 4:1-13, adapted from the Good News Translation)

Jesus was baptised as a sign that he was fully available to God. At that time, God assured him that he was indeed his beloved son. Straight after that he was led by God's Spirit into the desert, where he was tempted by the devil, a powerful spirit who is God's enemy, for forty days. In all that time he ate nothing, so that he was very

hungry. The devil said to him, "If you are God's son, order this stone to turn into bread."

But Jesus answered, "God's word says, 'No-one can live only on food.'"

Then the devil took him up to a high place and quickly showed him all the kingdoms of the world. "I will give you all this power and all this wealth," the devil told him. "It has all been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I choose. Just *worship* me...and you can have it all."

Jesus answered, "God's word says, 'Worship the Lord your God and serve only him!'

" Then the devil took him to Jerusalem and set him on the highest point of the Temple, and said to him, "If you are God's son, jump off. For God's word says, 'God will tell his angels to take good care of you.' It also says, 'They will catch you in their arms so that you will not hurt your feet on the stones.' "

But Jesus answered, "God's word also says, 'Don't try to test the Lord your God.' "

After the devil had finished tempting Jesus in every way, he left him for a while.

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

(Brief story music)

...This must have been a very hard time for Jesus, as he walked through the desert. It may have been hard for Jesus to find comfortable places to sit. He may have had cuts and bruises from the sharp rocks, and he may have had to constantly watch out for wild animals. He must have been *starving* ... and weak, having not eaten for forty days. And he was alone, with no-one to share his difficult journey.

Tammy: Wasn't the devil clever...and sneaky? He tempted Jesus when he was hungry, weak and alone.

Carol: I'm sure Jesus would have thought about just how good the devil's suggestions sounded before he rejected them. How did the devil tempt Jesus, do you remember?

Tammy: Well firstly he said, "If you are God's son, order this stone to turn into bread.'

Carol: Did you notice the devil began by questioning who Jesus was? He said 'If you are God's son...' The devil knew who he was...he was just trying to make Jesus doubt himself.

Tammy: Jesus would have been so hungry it must have been very tempting! So what was wrong with Jesus ordering that stone to turn into bread to eat? What do you think?

Carol: ...Well, he trusted God, his father, to provide him with all he needed. He didn't trust the devil! So what did Jesus say? Do you remember?...
Yes, he quoted a truth from God's word ... 'No-one can live only on food.'

Tammy: Then the devil said that if Jesus would worship him, he would give Jesus all the kingdoms and wealth of the world.

Carol: Now that *would* have been tempting for Jesus. If he accepted this offer from the devil, he wouldn't have to suffer the agony of dying on the cross...to take the punishment that all people deserve for the wrong things that they do. You know, the devil was lying. He has limited power over the earth. He can't give kingdoms to anyone!

But again, Jesus replied with a truth from God's word. "Worship the Lord your God and serve only him!"

Tammy: And do you remember the next thing the devil said to Jesus? ...Yes, he said, "If you are God's son, throw yourself down from here. For God's word says, 'God will order his angels to take good care of you....and protect you...'"

Carol: Did you hear that? The devil was questioning who Jesus was *again!* He tried to trick Jesus by saying that God's word meant something different to what it *actually* meant. Was Jesus' response any different?

No. He quoted a truth from God's word again... 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'

And then the devil left Jesus.

Tammy: On *Women of Hope*, we've just heard the story from God's word, about Jesus being tempted by the devil in the desert.

So many times, over many years, you may have asked God to heal your body ... but he hasn't. You may not have even felt God close to you for a long time. And you wonder why. You wonder...'Am I really loved by God? ... Or am I rejected by him ... Am I useless, now that I can't do what I used to be able to do? ... or am I just being lazy? ... Is it my fault that I'm suffering?

Carol: When you're feeling unwell and weak, the devil can try to make you doubt who you really are. That's what he did to Jesus isn't it...and how did Jesus respond? ...Yes, he quoted truths from God's word.

Tammy: So, who *are* you? Who am *I*? What does God say in his true word about you and me? Listen to these wonderful truths from God's word about you...

Carol: God *loves* you *dearly*. (John 16:27).

Tammy: He will not fail you or abandon you. (Joshua 1:5)

Carol: You are forgiven and free from all guilt when you say sorry to God for the wrong things that you've done, and you truly mean it. (1 John 1:9)

Tammy: God has a special purpose for you. (1 Corinthians 12:7)

Carol: You are invited by Jesus to rest when you're feeling weak. (Matthew 11:28)

Tammy: What wonderful truths! They are just *some* of the truths we can remind ourselves of when the devil tries to tempt us to doubt who we are. Let's hear them again...

Carol: God loves us dearly. He will *never* abandon us. He has a special purpose for *each* of us.

If we say sorry to God for the wrong things we've done, and truly mean it, he will forgive us and we will be free from all guilt. And Jesus invites us to rest when we feel weak.

Tammy: Since we are invited to rest, we don't have to feel guilty or lazy if our bodies stop us from doing things. It's not what we *do* that makes us worth something...it's who we *are*! God is wonderful, and what he makes is wonderful. And he made *you!* ...*exactly* how he wanted you to be. Did you know that you are a blessing to others when you're just being yourself? God made you to be that way.

Tammy: What a beautiful song...it says that...

Carol: We've heard a lot from God's word, the Bible, today. And here's something else I want to share with you... (Hebrews 4: 15, 16 NLT)

God's word says, 'Jesus understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same temptations we do, yet he did not sin. So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it.' ...Wow!!

If you're tempted to doubt who you are, Jesus understands what you're going through, because he's been tempted too. When we ask him to help us to resist temptation he *surely* will.

And did you know that *you* can help *others* because you've been through pain or illness? You can encourage them, because you understand. And you can pray for others who are sick and in pain.

Tammy: You know Carol, I'd like to do that right now for those who are sick and in pain. Let's pray for them shall we?

Father God, thank you for the story we've heard today about how Jesus was tempted by the devil when he was tired and weak and hungry. We thank you that he found strength in your word. Please help those today who are unwell and have been

unwell for a long time. Please send someone to encourage and help them. May they know that you love them, that they are very valuable to you...and that there is hope! Thank you for loving us so much that you sent Jesus to give his life for us. Help us to trust you every day.

We ask this in the name of your son, Jesus. Amen

Carol: Thank you Tammy... And thank *you* for being with us today. Do join us again soon. Goodbye and God bless you.

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