

Addictions/An Addict finds God

Voice A: “How are you?”

Voice B: “ I’m fine.”

Voice A: “Really? Are you okay?”

Voice B: “Of course I am. Everything’s fine thanks.”

Voice A: “Oooh...Okay.”

Tammy: Have you ever had a conversation with someone like that? You say “I’m fine” but it’s really far from the truth? I’m Tammy and welcome to *Women of Hope*.

Carol: I’m Carol and today we want to tell you Diane’s story. We asked her first to tell us a bit about herself. Tammy will tell you what she said:

Tammy: ‘I was born & raised in Queens, New York in a big Italian American family. There were often people coming in and out of our house, eating, laughing, making lots of noise...and really good memories! Anyone looking on would have said I had a good life. I lived in a decent house in a nice neighborhood.’

Carol: Now that *does* sound like a pretty good life doesn’t it? I’m sure in many ways it was...but hiding in the midst of all this ‘happiness’ Diane had a terrible secret. She was sexually abused for most of her childhood by her dad’s best friend. It started sometime when she was in primary school & it wasn’t until she was 14 that it stopped...when her family moved from Queens to Long Island.

As she grew up through her teenage and young adult life she kept the ‘secret’. She hid behind a mask of ‘everything’s fine!’. She tried to numb the pain, the shame and the guilt with alcohol.

As time passed, she added even more pain – she had several abortions and removed herself from friends and family. The alcohol no longer numbed her senses enough, and

she really didn't like the hang-overs and vomiting, so she reached out for something else.

Tammy will share some more of what Diane said:

Tammy: 'I was 15 when I smoked my first joint of marijuana. As I drifted off into the 'high' I remember thinking, "This is great! Everything really *is* fine!" But then as the high wore off, the reality hit hard. My circumstances didn't change - nothing was different. I actually felt worse than before. I kept using drugs. Up and down...feeling great...feeling horrible. Waking up each day, pretending... 'everything's fine'; hiding behind my mask, going to work and doing what I had to do. As the years changed so did the drugs...I used stronger and larger amounts. Hashish...angel dust...uppers and cocaine. The ups and downs of the crazy addiction cycle continued.'

Carol: It's good to be with you on *Women of Hope*. We want to continue Diane's story of how she became addicted to many different kinds of drugs.

Tammy: This must have been a very difficult time for Diane.

Carol: Yes, I'm sure it was – she was caught in the terrible cycle of ups and downs and taking stronger and stronger drugs... And she was lonely.

Tammy: I'm sure many people in her situation are *very* lonely!

Carol: Diane searched for love...in all the wrong places. She went from one guy to another hoping one of them would love her and treat her right. But it never worked out that way. She had one bad relationship after another – hoping that maybe '*this* man' would fill the emptiness inside her heart.

As all this was going on, Diane was also considered to be 'very successful'. She was working six days a week and making a good amount of money. But most people didn't know that one of her co-workers was also a drug dealer. He supplied all the cocaine she wanted, to keep her 'going'. Anyone looking at her saw a 'successful business woman'

because that was the mask she wore so well. They didn't see the real Diane, underneath the neat business clothes...crying out for help.

She had a good business reputation and a family that loved her. She didn't want these things to change, so she would put the mask back on...

Voice B: "I'm fine really! ...Everything's okay"!

Tammy: I wonder...have you ever worn that mask? ...Have you lived much of your life trying to meet everyone else's expectations while you yourself slowly died inside?

Carol: Have you ever stolen, hurt someone you loved or lied just to get drugs so you could get through the day? Have you ever woken up not remembering how you got there or what happened the night before?

Diane said she has - and she hated being so out of control.

Carol: She told us:

Tammy: 'I was stuck in the vicious cycle of addiction and didn't know how to get out. I longed to find someone or something to rescue me. I needed a hero...someone who would notice me...and see what was *really* going on in my life. Someone who would come to my rescue and tell me: "There *is* hope...there *is* a better way." '

Carol: But where could Diane find this hero?

Tammy: Welcome back to *Women of Hope*. This is a very sad story isn't it? And maybe you know just how Diane felt!

I've heard people say: 'Once an addict, always an addict. I wonder how true that is?'

Carol: Well Tammy, Diane said she didn't realize then how those simple words were forming her *identity* - the person she believed she was...how those words would affect her life. She believed them, so she continued in this way of life.

Tammy: Your identity – who *you* see yourself to be – is an important part of who you are and how you live your life isn't it!

Carol: That's right. You see, if you *believe* you're an addict then you will continue to struggle with addictions. You may stop using drugs and switch to something else, but at the *very centre* of your being, your mind tells you over and over that you are *still* an addict. And if you're an 'addict', then you can't do much to change, can you?

Tammy: So it's like...if I *call* you an addict it's like I put a *label* on you that says what you are. And if you accept that label as who you are - *your identity* - then how will you ever *NOT* be an addict?

I wonder if this is how *you see yourself*?

Carol: Well...there's something I want to tell you that can change this way of thinking...

Do you know, God's word says that he has '*plans to prosper you and not to harm you*'? (Jeremiah 29:11) If you believe this, you believe that God lovingly created you as a man or a woman with a *purpose*...then your *identity* changes...you know that you were *created by God and loved by God*.

Tammy: So then you can work on getting rid of all the *labels* others may have placed on you...

Carol: ...or labels you may have put on yourself like Diane did when she said, "I'm an addict and there's nothing I can do about it."

Tammy: Do you see the difference? You can say to yourself: "I'm not a *victim*, or an *addict*, or *useless*. Those words may describe the way I'm *acting* but they do NOT describe *who I am*. I am a *human being, created in the very image of God*. I am highly valued and loved by God no matter what I've done or what has happened to me."

Carol: Now what about you? What are some of the labels you may have accepted about yourself? ...Fearful? ...Lazy? ...Weak? ...Useless? ...A criminal?

Can you see now how those labels may have affected the way you act?

For a long time, Diane believed the LIE that she would be an addict all her life...that there was no hero to rescue her. It wasn't until she accepted *The Truth* and learned that '*the Truth could set her free*' (1 John 8:32)...that she *became* free. ...Free to live the way she was created to live. Not as a victim, an addict, or an alcoholic, but as a mighty woman of God. Let's hear more of Diane's story after this song...

Tammy: Welcome back to *Women of Hope*. We asked Diane to tell us how she overcame her addiction to cocaine and other drugs, and how she came to know the true God. Carol will continue to tell us her story...

Carol: Diane gave birth to her second living child, a baby boy, and seven weeks later he became very sick. He stopped breathing one night and they rushed him to hospital. The doctors put him into an oxygen tent and told Diane and her husband that he was 'not good'. His cough progressively got worse and he was choking. He was diagnosed with *whooping cough* and *pneumonia*.

Here she was living in America...in a middle-class suburban neighborhood. She felt that this should not be happening, but she quickly found out that disease knows no boundaries. And that no matter how much money you have, disease can still take a life.

Tammy: Isn't it hard to watch as your children suffer? You feel so helpless. You'll do anything to help but sometimes, there's nothing more you can do.

Carol: Diane had lost 2 children in miscarriages and couldn't bear the thought of losing another child.

The nurse taught her how to flip her tiny baby onto her lap with his head down between her knees and to pound his back to release the phlegm and then suction his nose and mouth.

Tammy will tell us what Diane said about this time in hospital...

Tammy: 'At times like this all you can do is try to survive. I was still recovering from the caesarean delivery of my baby and my body was reacting to the withdrawals of tobacco smoke, alcohol and drugs. I would normally fill my life with these things to avoid dealing

with painful reality. And I didn't even have my work to keep me occupied! You see, I'd been using lots of alcohol and drugs to get through each day, but I was *not* a typical 'addict'. I had a family that loved me, and a successful career!

Then one night, when I felt totally exhausted, the doctor told us that Alex probably wouldn't make it through the night. He said that babies his age usually do not survive in his condition. This was the 'last straw'! I could not take any more!

Could it be? Was it true? I had a thousand questions...yet no one to answer any of them. I had not left the hospital since the day we'd arrived 2 months earlier and I was not about to leave now. Once again, I stood over the clear plastic oxygen tent looking at my baby and rubbing his tiny hand through the plastic glove. There he was with his tiny chest rising and falling, rising and falling...struggling to breathe. He seemed so small, even though when he was born, he was the biggest baby in the nursery. The tubes...machines...the horrible spasms of coughing... The medical staff did all they could.

I had nowhere to turn for help. I realized I had no control over whether he lived or died. I felt so helpless...so alone.'

Carol: Diane wanted to go home and be with her 3-year-old daughter Jacqui, who was staying with her husband and parents but how could she leave Alex? What if he died while she was gone? She would never forgive herself. Her mind was flooded with thoughts, lost hope, memories of her own abusive childhood, and finally it all became too much. She fell to her knees on the hospital floor and cried out to a God she *didn't even know*. Oh she knew God existed... He was 'up in heaven' somewhere and she was there with Alex dying. She was sure that this was her punishment for all the years she had rebelled...using alcohol, drugs, having had several abortions, and not praying or going to church!

Tammy will you tell us what Diane said?

Tammy: ‘On my knees, I cried out to God and said something like, “Oh God do you hear me?! If you are real, take Alex’s life and take my life too. I don’t want to live through this. I’m not fit to be a mother! I can’t do this anymore. Please forgive me.”

I began to groan from the depths of my heart. I was at the lowest point I could be...I was a wreck. I just wanted to die. I continued to talk to God as if he *really was listening*. Now, lying on the hospital floor with tears streaming down my face, I felt an incredible peace come over me. It was like a blanket covering me – a strange ‘interruption’ in the midst of such sorrow – something I had never known before. And suddenly, gently, my sorrow lifted and I knew...I just knew, that Alex would be fine and so would I. I curled up into a fetal position under this ‘blanket of peace’ on the floor and fell asleep. I slept peacefully for the first time since we’d arrived two months before.

Early the next morning, I woke up to the voices of doctors and nurses in our room. They were looking at the most recent x-ray of Alex. There was a lot of confusion and quarrelling amongst the staff as they compared x-rays from two days before with x-rays that had been taken that morning. The doctors were dumbfounded...they could not believe what they saw! “Are you sure these are the right x-rays? These show that his pneumonia is gone!” More doctors came into the room to check again.

“What’s going on?” I yelled out.

A sweet nurse gently said to me: “Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! Jesus has healed your son!”

The nurses and doctors were now talking loudly over her.

Was I dreaming? Could it have been a miracle? Did God really hear my cry for help and heal my son? And what was that amazing peace that caused me to rest so soundly?

Alex was released from hospital three days later. I thought back to my prayer and that moment of “peace” where nothing else mattered. Alex had in fact been healed and was going to live a long, long life!’

Carol: Have you ever gone through a season where you feel as though everything is going wrong and you feel like giving up because the battle seems too strong? Have you ever felt like there was *no way out* of your circumstances? Do you feel like that now, like Diane did? Life is just *too hard*?

Tammy: If that's you...DON'T GIVE UP!!! There *is* a God who loves you so much. He loves you so much he sent his own Son, Jesus Christ, to die for you so that you would be forgiven and have eternal life. He sent his own Son, Jesus Christ, to overcome the evil in this world. And there is a *lot* of evil. Just look around you... sickness... violence... abuse... addictions... poverty... death. *None* of this is what God wants. *None* of this is what God *intended* for his people. God is good. God is full of love...and forgiveness...and grace...and peace...and justice. Evil steals and destroys.

Carol: God created you and me to have a full and joyful life! As a matter of fact, he created you to be a *temple* for his very own Holy Spirit to come and live in. All you have to do is ask him to forgive you and he will come and live inside you. Your circumstances may not change overnight, but I can *guarantee* you'll have a peace in your heart that you've never known before...peace that is *beyond your understanding*.

Tammy: Diane said: 'Jesus saved my life! He saved my son's life. I am a new creation. And you can be too. God's word, the Bible says:

"The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles. The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit."

(Psalm 34:17-18)

I hope that you will come to know Jesus too. In your time of need, call *his name* until he answers you. He will *not* let you down!

Tammy: I wonder if Diane's story has touched your heart today like it touched mine when I heard it?

It's almost time for us to go now. You can contact us at...we'd love to hear from you and hear *your* story.

Before we go would you like to pray for our listener Carol?

Carol: Sure...

Father God, creator of heaven and earth, we thank you that you created each of us. We thank you for your love and forgiveness in Jesus Christ. We pray for our friend – for the one who is caught in a cycle of addiction. We pray that she will find you and be released from this addiction. Please show her that you love her, that she is of great value to you and that you want her to have hope...and a future.

We pray this in the name of your son, Jesus Christ, Amen

Tammy: Thanks Carol. We'll look forward to being with you again soon.

Goodbye.

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