

## Failure / God uses 'Failures'

### **Storyteller:**

Jeni came running into the house in tears, "Mum, mum, I failed my music exam. I'm no good...I can't do anything right!"

Mum stopped what she was doing and put her arms around Jeni to comfort her. "It's hard when you fail isn't it! I understand why you feel upset." And she dried Jeni's tears with her apron.

**Tammy:** Hi! I'm Tammy, and I'm so glad to be with you on Women of Hope today.

**Carol:** And I'm Carol. I'm happy to be with you too, my friend. Could you understand how Jeni felt? I could; I wasn't good at .... when I was young and it really bothered me.

**Tammy:** Let's listen to more of what Jeni's mother said to her?

**Storyteller:** "Jeni, do you really think that you can't do anything right? Didn't your teacher at school tell you last week that your drawing was the best in the class? Didn't she put it on the front wall for everyone to see?"

Jeni stopped crying and thought about it. She smiled, "Yes that made me feel really good."

"You know," said Jeni's mother, "you worked really hard at your music...and that's the important thing. You really practised a lot and did your best. But maybe music is not what you do best. You've always been good at drawing, since you were a very little girl – and now you're becoming a really good artist."

Jeni went to put her school bag away. She thought about what her mother had said. It made her feel much better. She thought about her music too. She hadn't been learning music for very long. She liked music and she knew that she would have to keep practising very hard to get better.

**Carol:** I wonder how you feel about it when you fail, or make mistakes?

**Tammy:** When I was a child, I didn't like to fail. I wanted to do well in everything. But as I got older I realised something very important. I learned that in life we sometimes *need* to fail. When we're learning new skills we often fail at first. No-one starts out knowing it all, we all have to learn how to do things, and every time we 'fail' we find out more about the skill that we're trying to learn.

**Carol:** Did you notice what Jeni's mother said to her about failing her music exam? ...She said she understood how Jeni felt. I'm sure she knew what it was like to fail at something too. We all do don't we!

**Tammy:** We do. Our minds and bodies take time, and many 'failures', before a skill becomes easy.

**Carol:** That's very true, I remember when I was very young and my mother began to teach me to knit. She sat me down in a little chair and showed me how to hold the wool and how to put the needles into just the right place. I tried and tried to get it right – but my fingers just would *not* seem to do the right thing. I got very frustrated and began to cry. What do you think *my* mother said?

She didn't say, "Oh never mind – don't cry – maybe you'll never learn how to knit."

**Tammy:** What *did* she say?

**Carol:** She was very patient and would pick up the dropped stitches and show me again how to do it. She encouraged me to keep trying. And when I managed to knit a little scarf, that had lots of funny shapes in it, she told me that I'd done a really good job. And I felt proud as I wore that scarf. I think I knew it wasn't perfect, but I was very happy that I'd managed to finish it myself.

You see my mother knew that it was more important for me to keep practising and finish it myself – even if she had to help me at times – so that I would want to try again next time.

**Tammy:** And Carol I've seen you wearing jumpers that you've knitted yourself – and they look beautiful.

**Carol:** It took many years to learn the skill of knitting, but my mother kept encouraging me and I kept making things and gradually they got better and better.

Now I love to knit. I've made lots of useful clothes for my children...and gifts for other people.

My mother taught me a very important lesson... It's really only a failure if you don't try again. 'Success is not about how often you fall down, or fail, but how often you get up and try again.' After this song, let's think a bit more about 'success'.

**Tammy:** On Women of Hope today we've been talking about failure. The opposite of failure is success. I wonder what comes to your mind when you think about failure and success. I'm sure you can think of times when you failed at something, and times when you succeeded and did well.

So what is success? I wonder if we should look at success in a different way. What do you think is the most important thing to succeed at in life?

I've thought about this a lot and I think the most important success in life is to become a better person. We all have to do things in our lives that aren't easy. That's when we learn a lot about our *character*. When things are not easy, do we keep trying? Do we give up?

Well, I've decided that *who I am* is much more important than what I can *do*...or what I'm good at.

We shouldn't judge ourselves, or others, by what mark they got in an exam, or how fast they ran, or how much money their business made. I would rather ask; how hard did they study? How much did they practise? Or did they work hard?

**Carol:** And it's really important to be honest with our growing children. We need to let them see that *we* can fail or make mistakes sometimes too. They need to learn when they're young that it's normal to 'fail', and that we still love them and will support them when they fail. We need to help them to see that if they try again...and again...they can often turn their failure into a success!

**Tammy:** And if we can help our growing children understand this, they'll grow in character, and this will help them in their adult life. When they fail or make mistakes as adults, they won't give up on life, but they'll find a way to succeed. If people don't sometimes fail and feel disappointed as they're growing up they're likely to struggle to deal with failure when they're adults.

**Carol:** As we develop our interests and our skills we're sure to find that there are some things we're good at and some that might be best left to others to do. For example a person who's good at using their brain, might not be good at using their hands. They might get good marks in everything they study at school or university, but they might not be able to fix things that get broken. Those jobs might be done better by a person who has good practical skills...who loves to make things. Every kind of skill is important.

**Tammy:** Remember what Jeni's mother said to her? Music might not be what she does best, but she's becoming a very good artist.

Is it a good idea to try to try to protect our children so that they won't fail at things and won't get upset? What do *you* think?

I think it's important to allow them to learn from their failures and mistakes. In fact one way we can help our children learn about success and failure is through playing games. There are games we can play with them at home (like board games) where only one person wins – so the others have to learn to cope with not being the winner.

When someone does better than you, how do you feel? How do you act towards them? Can you be happy for them?

**Carol:** Of course, sports are a very good way for children to learn that they might win sometimes and lose sometimes. Sports provide good opportunities to learn to be happy for the team that wins – even though they're disappointed that their team didn't win. This is a very useful skill to take into their adult life. It can really help a person to develop something we call 'resilience' – that's the ability to keep going, or recover when they come across a difficult situation.

**Tammy:** It's important for us *all* to develop resilience. We all need to know how to work through failure and mistakes and not give up.

**Tammy:** Welcome back to Women of Hope. Let me ask you a question: do you think God can use you to do great things...to help other people and bless them? To show people God's love and tell them about him? To make a difference in the world?

You might be thinking 'No...God can't use me. He can't use me because of... this reason, or that reason.'

Did you know that people in the Bible were not perfect? God's word is full of stories about people who made mistakes, or were weak, or had bad things happen to them. But God *used* people like this to do good things.

Today we're going to hear about Adam and Eve, the first two people who ever lived. So get ready to listen as Carol tells us the first story in the Bible. (Gen 1-3)

**Carol:** In the beginning, there was God. Nothing else existed. God created the earth, the planets, the sun and the moon. He created the whole universe. God created the oceans, the lands...every kind of plant and animal. And he blessed all these things, and saw that they were all good...and he was delighted with everything that he made.

God had made a perfect world. It was more beautiful...more wonderful...more glorious than we could ever imagine.

God created the most beautiful garden called the Garden of Eden. In it were beautiful trees that produced delicious fruit. In the middle of the garden God planted two special trees - the tree of life, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Then God created the first human beings, Adam and his wife Eve. God told Adam that he was free to eat the fruits from every tree in the garden, except from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If he ate from that tree he would surely die.

The serpent was the most clever and sneaky animal that God had created. The serpent tempted Eve to eat fruit from this special tree. He said, 'Did God *really* say that? You won't die if you eat that fruit - you'll become like God himself!' And you know what? She *did* eat fruit from that tree. And she gave some to Adam, and he ate it too. They ate, knowing that they were disobeying God.

So God cursed the serpent. He told Eve that it would be painful to give birth to children. And he told Adam that from then on, it would take hard work and pain to get food from the plants and trees that grew from the ground. He drove Adam and Eve out of that beautiful, wonderful garden. They would never be able to return.

After that, they lived away from the beautiful garden. They had to work hard and suffer pain to get food to eat. Then Adam and Eve had many children and grandchildren and great grandchildren...many descendants.

But God also made a promise - that one of Eve's descendants would finally defeat the serpent, who is really Satan, the ancient spiritual enemy of God and people (Rev 12:9). This is the first prophecy about Jesus - that's another part of the story!

**Tammy:** That true story from God's Word has some happy parts and sad parts doesn't it? Let's remember together what happened in the story.

**Carol:** Well, in the beginning there was God. Nothing else existed. God created the whole world...the whole universe, and it was good.

God created the beautiful, fertile Garden of Eden, and God planted two special trees in the middle of the garden. What were they called?

**Tammy:** The tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. What did he create next? The first human being. God breathed life into him, and called him Adam. He then created a woman to be a companion for Adam, and Adam called her...? That's right, Eve.

**Carol:** And which tree did God warn Adam not to eat from?

**Tammy:** The tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God said that if they ate from *that* tree they would surely die.

**Carol:** So what happened next?

**Tammy:** Well the serpent tempted Eve to eat from that special tree. The serpent was really Satan, the enemy of God and people.

**Carol:** Did you notice how the serpent put a question in Eve's mind...whether God was good and truthful? He told lies about God's character. Satan still tempts us like that...telling us that God is mean and doesn't want us to enjoy life. That is such a lie! God loves us and knows what's really best for us.

**Tammy:** Yes, and Satan made Eve want something that wasn't good for her. I think he still uses that trick today, don't you? Do you ever wish for something that you know isn't good for you?

**Carol:** So then Eve actually decided to eat that fruit *and* she gave some to Adam. They both ate, *knowing* they were rebelling against God.

So what did God do about this?

**Tammy:** He punished the serpent. He said that because Adam and Eve disobeyed God, childbirth would be painful for Eve, and Adam would have to work hard now to get food from the plants and trees growing from the ground. And they were locked out of that beautiful Garden of Eden...for ever.

**Carol:** Yes that's right. So Adam and Eve lived in a place where pain was part of life. But that wasn't the end. They had many, many descendants!

**Carol:** What did *you* think of that story? I wonder.

**Tammy:** Imagine how hurt God must have felt when Adam and Eve disobeyed him? He *loved* them so much. He *gave* them so much.

**Carol:** That was actually the first time God had ever felt hurt and pain. Before then, there was no pain in the world at all. Now there was pain in God's heart and there was pain in the world. Even today, thousands of years later, there's still pain in the world, and in our lives.

**Tammy:** Adam and Eve made a very big mistake didn't they?

**Carol:** Yes they did. And we make the same mistake every time we disobey God... They suffered then, and we still suffer today. This whole world is damaged because we have rebelled against God. But do you know what else began at that time?... People! There are so many people in the world today, aren't there? ... Billions of them.

**Tammy:** Including you and me! Wow! That's such a great thing to happen.

**Carol:** Do *you* think it happened because Adam and Eve were such great people?

**Tammy:** No. Surely not. They made such a mess of things. I think it's because of God that all these people are alive. It was always God's plan to create many, many people, who would all be descendants of Adam and Eve.

**Carol:** God didn't change his mind when Adam and Eve had hurt him so much. He didn't give up, or choose to create some other people to begin the human race. Being the first two people was a great honour ...an honour, which Adam and Eve

didn't deserve. God carried out his plan. And he also planned a way to defeat Satan and restore the world. He planned a way back to him for everyone. Jesus Christ, who is Eve's descendant and also God's son, was going to come and die to take the punishment for our disobedience.

Adam and Eve are the ancestors of every person who ever lived and that wasn't because of anything they did, it was because of what God chose to do through them.

**Tammy:** Do you feel as though God could never love you, because you've done wrong things...or perhaps because you haven't done anything special? Well my friend, God loves you and can use you to do great things...to show his love to other people. Whatever you've done, or haven't done, doesn't affect the fact that God can use you. God is able to use you because of who *he* is. He is great, and powerful...clever...creative and loving. Whoever you are, whatever you've done, God *can* use *you* to share his love with others. And he *wants* to use you because he loves you...and he loves those who are around you.

**Carol:** It's about time for us to go. Thank you for having us today. Maybe you'll want to ask God how he can use you today, to make your world a better place.

**Tammy:** We'd love to hear from you about your life, and if you have any questions we'll try to answer them. You can contact us....

**Carol:** Goodbye from your friends on Women of Hope. God bless you, my friend.