

Daily stress / God's word on stress

June: The children are fighting *again*; two of them want to play with the same toy. I need to begin preparing the evening meal. The house is a complete mess. A neighbor is knocking at the door needing another favor...and the day has only just begun.

Tammy: Here we are together again on *Women of Hope*, I'm Tammy. Does this sound familiar to you? It does to me...

Carol: ...and me. Hi I'm Carol... Welcome June and thanks for coming today to share your experiences as a mother...and to give us some ideas of what we can do about the stress that we *all* face in our daily lives.

June: It's great to be here with you – thanks for inviting me.

Do you sometimes feel that you have more tasks to complete than you can manage in one day? You feel yourself becoming impatient, even angry, with your family.

Tammy: I think every mother must feel this way sometimes.

June: And you may even feel angry and frustrated with your friends, and neighbors.

To add to the frustration, you've been feeling really tired. Sometimes your head aches...and sometimes you even forget to do important things.

If these things sound familiar, then it's very likely that you've been under too much pressure, or stress, for far too long.

Carol: On *Women of Hope* today we have June with us to talk about stress...the stress that we women face most days.

June: Each day there are many tasks that simply *must* be done in your daily work and in your home...preparing food and cooking meals and there's always cleaning. If you're a mother – or you take care of a family...planning the family schedule. We can easily feel overwhelmed by our responsibilities.

And on top of this there may be conflicts in the family...arguing and fighting...or someone may be ill.

Tammy: As you listen today, I wonder if you're thinking – *that's me*. That's how *I* feel. You may also have a job away from home where there are a lot of pressures...and you feel worn out and discouraged...or sad!

June: Many women feel that they're not able to provide what their loved ones need all the time, whether they have a big family or a small family. And they don't have *any* time left over to take good care of their own needs...their own physical and emotional health.

In many cultures a person is thought to be lazy if they don't get lots of work done every day. And rest and relaxation are for the privileged few and those who are wealthy...not a necessary part of life. This is a real problem because our human bodies were not designed to be constantly active from sunrise until the late evening hours. Rest is a human need, and not just a luxury.

Carol: You know June, that's so important – I think I'd like to repeat what you just said – our bodies were not designed to be active from the early morning to the late evening. *We all need rest* – it's something our human bodies *need*. It's *not* just a luxury.

June: That's so right Carol. The uncomfortable result of staying too busy for too long is what medical doctors call *stress*. And too much stress is dangerous for our health. It can even lead to serious illness. So today we're going to talk together about how we can take good care of our bodies and how we can manage our time and energy well.

Tammy: I'm ready to hear about this...are you? Stay with us...

June: A good place to start is to look at all the tasks that need to be done in the day and decide which ones are important and really need to be completed first, like preparing meals and doing the washing. These are the tasks that cannot wait...they need to be taken care of right away.

After you decide what jobs you cannot put off until a later time, then decide which you need to do first and get started.

I always find it helps me to write a list of the tasks for the day. The most important tasks can be placed at the top of the list. The less important tasks can go toward the bottom. And if at the

end of the day there are still tasks to be done, they can be moved to the next day. I love crossing off tasks as I do them – then I know I’m getting the important things done! And of course it’s always good to allow a little extra time for things that might interrupt you throughout the day.

Carol: I love having a list – then I can see what I need to do and I don’t have to keep thinking – *now what do I still need to get done today?* Sometimes when I write a list I cheat...I write in a couple of things that I’ve already completed and cross them off straight away, (laughing) then I can see what I’ve already done! It encourages me.

June: Another way to manage stress is – guess what? – to ask for help! We women often think we have to complete all our day’s work on our own. There might be some jobs that family members can do for us. If you have older children you might give one the task of taking out the garbage each day before they go to school. Or if you’re very busy and a friend or neighbor offers to help, you might say, “That would be wonderful. Maybe we could work together.” Another day they might need *your* help at a very busy time.

Tammy: Sometimes we hold a short family meeting at the beginning of the day – or maybe the night before – so we can talk about ways to help each other...and ways to avoid arguments about who should be doing what.

June: Tammy I’m glad you told us that...I was going to suggest that idea. Maybe, while we listen to this music, you can think about what you already do – or what you might do – so that you can get through all the tasks of the day.

June: Here’s something we women are often not very good at...relaxing!

Tammy: What’s that? Oh yes – I remember – taking some time out! (all laughing)

June: I’m sure some of us can’t quite remember what it’s like to take time out. But it’s a very good way to reduce stress. Even if you can only stop for a few minutes and do something that you enjoy, it can make a big difference to your day. Here are some ideas...

You could sing a song, listen to some music, or take a short walk. You could stop by and visit a close friend. You may be able to sit down for a short while and listen to a favorite radio program - like *Women of Hope* – (laughing). If you have a garden, you could take a few moments to pick some flowers for the table at home.

Tammy: Some women like to take a short nap, or stop for a few moments and pray. You may even be able to occasionally set aside a family day off – a *no-work* day, where everyone gets to relax and enjoy each other’s company for the *whole* day...or even half a day. You could pack a meal and go to the park or the beach. We love to have a family day out once in a while – it helps us to relax, but it also gives us time to talk to each other.

Carol: On a clear night I love to relax for a short while, go outside and look to see how many stars have come out to light up the sky. My children used to love to do this with me when they were young.

Tammy: We’re together on *Women of Hope* and we have June with us. We’ve been talking about the stress that we women face every day...especially when we have a family to care for. Let’s see if we can remember those things we just talked about that can help relieve our stress.

Carol: Write a list of the things that we need to do for the day – that’s one of my favourites. And if you need to, ask one of your grown up kids to help you write the list.

Tammy: Ask for help – we often don’t think to do that do we? We think we have to do it all ourselves. You might have a meeting with the family sometimes to work out who can help with certain tasks.

Carol: And we can find ways to relax – even if it’s only for a short while during the day. Do you remember now what relaxing is Tammy? (laughing)

Tammy: Yes – sing a song, listen to some music, take a little walk, visit a friend – anything to make my body and mind relax for a little while!

Carol: (laughing) Good remembering Tammy! You could take a short nap, or a few moments to pray. And you could even take a day, or a few hours, out with your family once in a while.

June: It’s almost impossible to avoid feeling stressed sometimes isn’t it? What kinds of things make you feel stressed?

Life can be very difficult at times. Maybe a loved one is very ill or dies. Maybe the family has to move to another home or community. Maybe your husband is out of work...there are not enough jobs available to provide food, clothing and shelter. During these times stress becomes a daily part of life and it’s even *more* important to find ways to handle the pressure.

No matter how hard life becomes, it gets even worse when we don't take good care of our bodies...and minds!

When times are very hard, a good way to help with the stress is to talk with someone about what's happening in your life...someone who will listen and offer kind words of support. Be careful about who you choose to share with...maybe a trusted friend or a close family member...not someone who might be critical of you or who might even be glad of your unhappy circumstances. This would make your stress worse and increase the pressure on your body and mind. Find a friend or family member who will encourage you and maybe even get you to smile a bit.

Carol: It's amazing what a smile can do to relax your face first – then your heart, as you feel better. And others will see your smile and enjoy being with you. You can help them to relax too. It's good for our children to see us smile as we talk with them, rather than frowning and looking cross. Try it next time you're asking one of your children to do something. You might be surprised!

June: Life does come with many activities, struggles and pressures. If we understand how it affects our bodies and minds it helps us to learn how to manage our time and tasks...and reduces our stress.

Having a plan for at least *some* rest and relaxation is a good way to enjoy life and to be more kind and loving to our family members, our friends and neighbors...and to ourselves.

Carol: Well – I hope you feel more relaxed after that song – I do (and add anything appropriate). It's amazing how much stress can make our lives harder isn't it?

Tammy: Oh yes, I've been feeling some of the signs of stress that we've just been talking about on *Women of Hope*, and I often forget to slow down, and find ways to rest and relax. After a short time, I start to feel very bad, even sad sometimes. When I'm under too much pressure, and have too many things to do, it's hard to sleep at night; even though I feel so tired.

June: I know what you mean; it's easy to forget that we're not like machines; we're human beings! And it's good to think about how we can take better care of our physical and emotional health. One of the ways I do this is by reading God's word, the Bible. Do you know that God's

word tells us why we feel so awful when we don't take time to rest? The Bible even talks about the importance of enjoying life - and *all* that God has provided for us!

Tammy: Now that *is* good news... God telling us to rest and enjoy life! So June tell us what God's word says about stress.

June: In the first book of the Bible it says: 'So the creation of the heavens and the earth and everything in them was completed. On the *seventh* day God had finished his work of creation, so he *rested* from all his work. (Gen. 2:1-2 NLT)

Now you might be thinking, 'Wait a minute, God rested? Does that mean that sometimes God feels tired and needs to rest?' Oh no, God is *never* tired; but he was setting a pattern for us to follow. A pattern of work and then rest. So in God's law for his people, he told *them* to rest on each seventh day. He knew what they needed. One of the ways that God shows his love is by teaching us how to take good care of our *bodies*.

Tammy: When I hear you talk about God's love, I wonder if one of the reasons that we get so tired is because God wants us to remember to *listen to him*! He wants me to rest in my *mind* as I trust him to care for me.

June: That's a good way to explain it Tammy! Listen to this from God's word, the Bible: 'Have you never heard? Have you never understood? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of all the earth. He never grows weak or weary. No one can measure the depths of his understanding. He gives power to the weak, and strength to the powerless. Even youths will become weak and tired, and young men will fall in exhaustion. But those who trust in the Lord will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.'" (Isaiah 40:28-31 NLT)

If you choose to listen to God and do what he tells you to do, you will find the strength and guidance that you need to make good choices each day. Trusting in the Lord includes spending time with him, praying – asking him to help you and make you strong. Remember how we talked about ways to help with stress?

Carol: Oh yes, we can look at what needs to be done, and choose the tasks that are most important and cannot wait. And we can make time to do the things that we enjoy the most; like taking care of the garden, or singing a song. I also like to go for walks.

June: Yes, that's one of my favorite things to do too. Walking always gives me the chance to talk to God...and to thank him for the beautiful things he's created all around me – the sunlight, the clouds, the birds and even the rain if it's a rainy day. Finding things to thank God for seems to always make me feel so much better.

I also thank God for his word, the Bible, because it reminds me that God loves us so much. He says that we should regularly take time to rest so that we don't run out of strength and forget about how much he cares about us.

One of my favorite stories in the Bible tells of the time when God's Son, Jesus taught his followers about the importance of rest. Here it is...

One day Jesus told his followers to go out and work hard teaching others about the love of God. They traveled to many places, teaching God's word, helping the sick and the poor and setting people free from oppression of every kind – just as Jesus had taught them to do. When they returned they were excited to tell the Lord about all the work they had done. They worked so hard that they did *not* have time to eat! Jesus listened to each one of them, but instead of giving them more things to do, he said, "Come aside by your selves to a quiet place and rest a while." (from Mark 6:7-12, 30-32)

Carol: Jesus didn't just give them *more* work to do, he told them to rest! Doesn't that tell us something wonderful about God?

Tammy: Yes, Jesus listened to all that they wanted to share; but Jesus knew that what his followers needed most on that day was rest.

God knows that your life can be hard...this is why he says to rest and enjoy all the good things that he's already provided.

June: As we finish today let me give you some good words to remember from God's word: 'Those who trust in the Lord will find new strength.' (Isaiah 40:31 NLT)

If you and I remember to do what God's word says, and trust him; then he will give us his strength and wisdom so that we can make good choices.

Carol: That's all we have time for today. We'll look forward to our next time together...so remember to take a little time out and rest...

Tammy: ...and trust God each day to help you. You can contact us at...

Goodbye.

June and Carol: Goodbye.

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