

Freedom from Struggles

Tammy: Carol, have you ever smoked?

Carol: Oh Tammy, it seems so silly now, but yes, when I was young. I saw so many people smoking – My parents didn't smoke. My grandfather smoked even some of my friends, so I wanted to try it.

Tammy: I think a lot of people have started smoking that way. When they're young; they think it will make them look grown-up. But then they get caught in the habit. Easy to start, hard to stop!

Carol: Hello, and welcome to Women of Hope. I'm Carol, and it's good to be with you today.

Tammy: I'm Tammy, and we were just talking about the health effects of smoking cigarettes. Carol, what do you say we just keep talking about this with our friends.

Carol: Great idea. What started us talking about this was your friend Rosaria.

Tammy: That's right. She has twin boys, Jimmy and Joe. They're three years old. You can imagine what a handful they are! They bounce around with energy and fun. They love to tumble around getting dirty. The more mud, the better!

Carol: Typical little boys! Boys have so much energy and always know how to have fun! They'll be kicking a ball, racing each other or climbing up trees! I wish I had that much energy!

Tammy: But they weren't always so healthy. They were born very prematurely – before they were fully developed – so they had a long stay in hospital in the intensive care unit. Their little lungs took a long time to develop and strengthen. They were so tiny that they fit in the palm of their Dad's hand. It really is a miracle that they survived.

The doctor said that one of the main reasons why Rosaria's babies were born so premature was that she smoked. The chemicals in the cigarettes damaged her placenta...that's the part that carries oxygen and nutrients to the baby. A mother who smokes has a much greater risk of having a baby

with a low birth weight. And Low birth weight can often be the cause of sudden infant death, or a stillbirth - the baby dying at birth, or before.

Carol: I read that mothers who smoke are 50% more likely to have a stillborn baby compared to mothers who do not smoke. That's a huge risk, enough to make anyone want to give up smoking before they get pregnant.

Tammy: Fortunately, Jimmy and Joe are doing well now. However, they have struggled with some delays in their learning because they were born so early, and they are still small for their age. It's been a tough time for the whole family.

They also both have quite severe asthma. Rosaria was telling me that they had a real scare last month...Joe had to be taken to hospital because he was so breathless and wheezy. The doctor asked Rosaria if she was still smoking. He said that it was really affecting the boys' health and that she had to stop.

That was the turning point. Rosaria decided that she couldn't risk the boys' health just because she liked to smoke. She decided to quit smoking. She set a date, got rid of all her cigarettes and just stopped.

Carol: That's great. But I know that quitting so quickly is hard, and some people find it easier to cut down gradually.

Tammy: It was hard. It's been quite a challenge so far but all of us...friends and family have been encouraging her as she quits.

Carol: If you're thinking of quitting smoking, we really encourage you to go for it! Why don't you set a date and tell your friends and family so they can support you. Even better, if you have a friend who's a smoker, why don't you try and quit together? That's a great way to motivate and encourage each other. We also have a few tips to help you stop.

Tammy: We've been reminding Rosaria of some of the benefits of quitting smoking - these will encourage you too. Here they are: The main one is that she's doing the best thing for her children. When you smoke, everyone around you breathes in the smoke from your cigarette. This is called *passive smoking*. This can be very bad for a child's health...or anyone else who breathes it in. They

can even breathe in the harmful chemicals from the clothes of someone who smokes. So even smoking outside the house is not enough. The only thing that really helps them is to stop!

Carol: It's really serious to think how smoking can harm a child. Our daughter Katie had asthma, and she used to take the train to school. The carriages were full of people smoking, and she could hardly breathe. Her chest would get very tight, and she would push her way to the door to try to breathe in some of the fresh air that came in as the train moved. Sometimes she was quite frightened as she struggled to catch her breath.

And passive smoking can actually *cause* asthma. It also increases the risk of ear infections and hearing problems for children. So when you stop smoking you're doing a wonderful thing for your children.

Tammy: Rosaria is not finding it easy to stop, even though she knows it will help her little boys. In the first few days we had to find ways to distract her because she desperately wanted a cigarette. This is because the nicotine in cigarettes is addictive- it's just like any drug of addiction. It causes the brain to feel relaxed with each puff. So when she stopped, she felt nervous, anxious, irritable and restless. She found it hard to concentrate. So we went for walks, listened to the radio, chatted- all to distract her. She also bought some gum to chew to give her something to do when she had cravings- you might find this helpful too. Even now, after a month she finds that she gets cravings if she's bored or stressed, because this is when she used to smoke.

Carol: If you're trying to give up, smoking, remember, you need a distraction so go for a walk, turn on the radio and start project or do a chore, call a friend. And try to see your health adviser for medication, which can help you give up.

Tammy: The other main reason that Rosaria is giving up smoking is because it damages her own health. Did you know that cigarettes contain more than 4000 chemicals? 4000! Some of these chemicals cause cancer, and some are poisonous chemicals that cause heart attacks, lung disease and strokes.

Carol : You might think- I've smoked all my life, it's not worth stopping now. I saw a poster on a wall that said 'Every cigarette you *don't* smoke is doing you good.'

Or you might say to yourself, 'I've tried to give up before and it was too hard.' There's another poster that says 'Never give up giving up'. You might have to try more than once, but it gets easier.

Tammy: Yes, even a short time after quitting, the body begins to repair itself. For example after only 12 hours without smoking, the level of carbon monoxide in your blood, which is a harmful gas produced by cigarettes, returns to normal. So your blood is even healthier. And here is a very interesting fact, did you know that after about 3 days without smoking your meals begin to taste better and smells become sharper.

Carol: Think about what you are doing to your body! So, now that she's stopped smoking, when will Rosaria's general health get better?

Tammy: After one month Rosaria told me she is beginning to see the real benefits. We know that chemicals from cigarettes clog up the arteries and cause blood pressure to increase. But after even this short time, her blood pressure has returned to normal and her blood circulation is beginning to improve. After 2 months there will be less risk of a heart attack.

And she is looking forward to the changes to her lungs. Within a year of stopping, she will breathe better and cough less, and the risk of a heart attack will be half that of someone who continues to smoke.

You might already know that smoking causes lung cancer. It also increases the risk of almost every type of cancer including cancer of the mouth, throat, bladder, kidneys, pancreas, stomach and blood. This is because the cancer-causing poisons in tobacco smoke are taken everywhere that blood flows in the body. The good news is that after 5 years of quitting, the risks of stroke, cancer and heart disease are much less.

Carol: And there's another really important benefit - think how much money you could save by not smoking! If you're a smoker maybe you could think of something special to save up for, using your cigarette money.

Tammy: And think how much better your breath will smell! I don't like kissing a smoker- their breath really smells horrible to me. I grew up in a family of smokers, so I know...and it kept me from smoking. I can't bear the smell!

Carol: We hope that Rosaria's story has been inspiring for you if you smoke. It's not an easy habit to give up because it's so addictive. But remember how much harm smoking causes, and the great benefits of quitting. If you have children or you're pregnant and you smoke, we would especially like to encourage you to stop. Or if you have a friend who smokes, you can tell them what you've learned today – and encourage them to quit.

Tammy: Let's remind ourselves of those tips for quitting.

First, find someone to help you. Tell your friends and family, and ask them to support you.

Carol: Then set a date to start. If you're going to stop at once, rather than cut down gradually, that's the date you get rid of all the cigarettes.

Tammy: Before you start, think about the damage you will cause to yourself and others and think about what you could do instead – like chew some gum. What would *you* choose instead of smoking?

Carol: And when it gets hard, remember the reasons why you want to stop. Write them down – keep them where you will see them. And be ready to do something to distract yourself if you feel like smoking.

Tammy: And remember, never give up giving up! You'll get there!

Carol: Welcome back to Women of Hope. Today we've been talking about smoking, and how it's so hard to give up. If you've smoked, or had any other addiction, you'll understand this. You'll know that the temptation to pick up another cigarette is so strong... it's very difficult to resist.

Tammy: Maybe you don't smoke...or struggle with any other addiction. But have you ever done something wrong, and then decided that you'll never do that thing again? But before long, you've found yourself doing it again. Think about it for a minute. Maybe it's saying nasty words in anger...or leaving something until later, instead of doing it now...or judging somebody so quickly. You decide you won't do it again, but soon enough, you've done it again. We've all found ourselves doing that. Today we want to talk about this problem, and see what God says about it.

Carol: In God's Word, the Bible, we read about a man named Paul, who was a devoted follower of God's Son, Jesus Christ. He travelled from town to town, telling everyone about Jesus. But Paul knew very well about this struggle in the heart.

God inspired Paul to write some of the Bible, God's holy book. Let me read to you a small part of what he wrote from Romans Chapter 7. Paul said, 'The trouble is not with God's law, it's with me, for I am all too human. It's as though I was sold as a slave to sin. I don't really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do what I hate... And I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my *sinful* nature. I want to do what is right, but I can't. I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway (Romans 7:14-19 New Living Translation).

Tammy: You can hear that Paul was having a struggle here, can't you? And he wasn't just talking about himself, he was talking about the way we all are, by nature. God's law had shown him his faults, but it hadn't given him the power to change his sinful nature. He said he was like a *slave* to sin. Can you imagine a slave? A man or woman, held against their will, chained up, forced to do what their owner wants. Life is miserable, and there's no hope for the future. That's what Paul said he was like, in his natural, sinful self. Because he knew God's law, he felt guilty, but he couldn't set himself free. No wonder he wrote: 'What a miserable man! Who could rescue me?'

Carol: In this part of the Bible, Paul described his *sinful nature*. That's the part of us that automatically wants to do wrong...to be selfish, and to rebel against God. You know, we all have a sinful nature.

Do you see that in yourself? A part of you that wants to do right... and a part that does the wrong thing? No matter how much you want to do good things, you still do, say and think wrong things. Do you feel like a slave sometimes?

We call these wrong things sin. And you know, by ourselves we *can't* stop sinning, no matter how much we want to. So that means we're guilty. The Bible says that the result of sin is death (Romans 6:23). What does 'death' mean? Well, You know, God is the source of all life. He is life itself. But our sin separates us from God. God is good and holy; he can't stand sin. So sin stops us from being able to have a relationship with him, the giver of all life. Without Him, We face *eternal death*.

So Paul asked a question; a question we all ask. 'Who will set me free from this slavery to sin and death?' (Romans 7:24) And immediately he gave us the answer: he wrote 'Thanks be to God- it is through Jesus Christ our Lord!' (v25)

Carol: Welcome back to Women of Hope. We've been talking about how we're like slaves, controlled by the bad part of our human nature.

You see, God knew we couldn't get rid of sin from our lives. He knew that we couldn't stop sinning. He knew we couldn't save ourselves from being guilty, and deserving punishment. And He knew we couldn't find our own way to have a relationship with God or set ourselves free.

So God sent his son, Jesus Christ, to the earth. Jesus was born and lived on this earth as a child. He grew into a man. He never sinned...not once. He was innocent. But he chose to die on a cross, so that he could take the punishment that we deserved. This was so that we wouldn't have to be punished. So God offers to forgive us for our sins. We don't have to be separated from him, instead we can have *eternal life* and live with him in heaven forever. All we have to do is ask him to forgive us, and invite *him* to be master of our lives. He surely will forgive us and set us free.

Tammy: Let me read you what Paul wrote next. 'So now those who belong to Jesus Christ are not condemned at all. And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit of God has set you free from the power of sin that leads to death' (Romans 8:1-2). Paul means that now we're *free* to be God's *willing servants* instead of being *slaves to sin*,

There's an old story about Abraham Lincoln, who was the President of the United States long ago. He worked hard to stop slavery. He saw a young woman being sold in a slave market, and he was filled with pity. So he kept bidding \$1 more than each bidder, until he bought her. He told her, 'You're free now- you can go.' But she was so thankful, she told him, 'No, I want to be with you and work for you for the rest of my life!'

Carol: Yes! That's exactly what it's like for us!

Tammy: Set free from the power of sin! Isn't that wonderful! But does this mean that we never do anything wrong again? No, we still have that old nature, those old habits.

Carol: Paul said that he really wanted to do what was right, but he didn't always do it.

Does this happen with you? It certainly does with me.

But God can change us now, from the inside. He begins to give us a loving heart like his. His Holy Spirit reminds us and helps us to choose the right way. God has broken the power of that old nature,

and he has given us a new nature that *loves* to do what is right. The more we listen to God's Holy Spirit, and obey him, the stronger our new nature grows. We're not slaves to sin any more!

Tammy: That's great news, isn't it! It gives us real hope. I've found that's true in my life when I asked Jesus to be my savior and my master; he has made such a difference. (Maybe give a brief personal example of a change.)

Carol: We've talked about some big things today, haven't we? If you would like to know more about all this, please contact us. We'll be happy to explain more. You can reach us in care of this station or at Women of Hope.... The address: TWRWomenofHope@twr.org. That's TWRWomenofHope@twr.org.

Tammy: If you have missed a program or would even like to hear one again you can do that on our website TWRWomenofHope.org that's TWRWomenofHope.org. or by visiting us on our Facebook page.

Carol: We do hope you will be with us again. Have a great week filled with God's blessings. Goodbye for now, my friend... ... and God bless you.

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