

Preparing for baby / Bible is a light

Tammy: Maya was going to have a baby! It was due in two weeks. Maya's husband Eli was very pleased that he would be a father soon; but he was also anxious. He was longing for a child, but he knew some women were not the same after the birth and some of them had trouble during the birth. He hoped Maya would be alright!

Carol: Hello my friend and welcome to Women of Hope. I'm Carol. I'm happy that we can be together again today. Today, Tammy and I are going to tell you about Maya and her pregnancy, and how she prepared her body for the birth of her baby. Tammy, if Maya was due in two weeks, I can just imagine how big she was, and how she would waddle as she walked.

Tammy: (laugh) Yes, Maya walked very awkwardly. She also had difficulty holding onto her water. She had to go to the toilet so often to pass urine. It was hard for her to squat down and hard to get up again. But the older women in her village told her it was always like that. It is good to have people that have been through pregnancy to help you feel calm and understand what is happening, especially with your first birth.

Carol: Well, one of Maya's village friends, Abishi, told her to go to a health clinic where a trained nurse could help her. You see, Abishi's first baby had been born in the village, and it got stuck and died on its way out to the world. It tore her female parts when they finally got the poor little baby out dead and stiff. As a result Abishi leaked urine all the time and life was awful for her for a few years. Finally she stopped leaking urine after she had an operation. So Abishi wanted to help Maya, so the same thing didn't happen to her.

Tammy: The nurse at the clinic told Maya how to do exercises for the muscles between her legs that control the flow of urine. Once a day Maya had to stop the flow of urine, count to 10 and then let go again. The nurse told Maya it was important to practice tightening up these muscles and also relaxing them, doing this many times during the day. This would make the muscles strong and help her to control her urine. Also when giving birth she would know how to relax them properly to let the baby come out. Maya practiced tightening and relaxing the muscles while she was still pregnant to prevent what had happened to her friend, Abishi.

Carol: The nurse also taught Maya to breathe properly. She learned how to take slow breaths and relax as she let the breath out. This would help her to cope with pain in the early stages of labor. Maya learnt how to make small quick panting breaths to use when she would be having strong birth contractions, before it was time to push. And then she learnt how to take a big breath and let it out slowly while she pushed: she practiced that when she opened her bowels on the toilet.

Maya felt like she was training for a big marathon race!

At last a new little life entered the world. Ravi was beautiful and his mother and father were thrilled.

Tammy: It wasn't an easy birth, though. Maya was in labor for 16 hours and Ravi was quite a big baby. The midwife kept reminding her of how to breathe at each stage, and that helped. Maya was very tired after the work of delivering her baby.

Maya had a sleep. When she got up she felt that there was some blood still trickling out of her. The nurse told her that was normal. The uterus, the bag inside her where the baby grew, had to heal and shrink after the baby was born. Then Maya walked towards the toilet and felt some urine dribbling out. She was embarrassed! But the woman next to her laughed and said that happened to her too.

Maya remembered what she had learned. She must start doing those exercises again right away! It felt all so strange down between her legs. It was a bit raw and painful and weak. But every morning when she went to the toilet she practiced stopping the flow of urine and starting again. Even when she was resting, she tightened up the muscles, counted to 10 and relaxed them again.

Carol: Let's stop and talk about this. We call those exercises that Maya did 'pelvic floor exercises'. The muscles between our legs make up the bottom of the pelvis and they stop our insides from sagging or falling out. You can make them strong by tightening and then relaxing them, or pulling them up inside you, every time you think of it.

Tammy: Those are your *pelvic floor* exercises...and you need to make your *tummy* muscles strong too - you can do that by pulling in your tummy and holding it in for ten counts, without holding your breath. I was taught to do this ten times in a row, and I would do it whenever I sat down to feed the baby.

And you can make your back stronger by tightening your *buttock* muscles in the same way; tighten, hold and relax.

Carol: Imagine you have to hold everything in by holding your muscles tight! You'll get better with practice and your muscles will get stronger.

Remember that Maya had to practice this before the baby was born as well as afterwards. If you're a mother, did you do this? Maybe no one told you about it then, but you can practice it now, no matter how old you are, and it will help stop you leaking and also protect your back from getting hurt.

Tammy: Abishi talked to Maya before the birth about breast-feeding. She insisted that breast milk was the safest, and specially designed for babies. She said, 'As soon as the baby is born, let it suck on your breasts.'

"But I won't have any milk, will I?" asked Maya. "No, but you will have a little thick yellow milk called colostrum that is very important nutrition for the baby. And sucking will help get the milk started...and it will help the placenta to come out in one piece. You'll feel your uterus tighten up when the baby sucks." So Maya followed Abishi's advice, and she felt very close to little Ravi as he sucked. It was a beautiful moment.

Carol: And the next day Maya's breasts felt tender and she could see a little bit of that special first milk, called colostrum. The nurse told Maya she should breast-feed the baby from the beginning so the baby would be a strong boy.

At first Maya thought Abishi might be old fashioned. She had heard that a new powdered milk had come to their village. She thought that if she used bottled milk, she could leave her baby with her mother-in-law and go to work like some of the other young mothers. She thought she might feel important if she went into the shops and spent Eli's money buying the bottle and the powdered milk.

But the midwife told her that she would need to sterilize water to mix the powder or the baby would get sick. She would always have to wash and sterilize the bottles very carefully as well, and make sure the flies did not get to the milk. And she would have to work out the right amount of powder for the size of the baby. Breast milk was so easy and so cheap.

Tammy: So Maya started to learn about breast-feeding. By feeding her baby she grew to know little Ravi well, all his beautiful smiles and his little chuckle. She knew how to settle him when he cried, and she loved him dearly. Soon her baby knew her smell and sound so he would settle better. He knew the rhythm of her life and when to be quiet and how to sit with her when she had to wait. They would be a beautiful pair, friends as well as mother and son. Ravi would be strong to fight diseases, as all her strength flowed to him in the milk. His teeth would be strong and white and not rotted by the thin milk with sugar that some mothers gave their babies. She decided that this was the way she should make her baby strong. And Eli loved to see his beautiful wife and son together.

Carol: Sometimes it's difficult at first to breastfeed a baby. Sometimes the baby is sleepy...or the milk is slow to start...or the mother is sore if she's had a difficult labor. But all the medical studies show us that 'breast is best'. Breast-fed babies are less likely to get sick, or develop asthma or diabetes when they're older. Babies can digest breast milk more easily than cow's milk powders.

So if you're wondering how to feed your baby, I encourage you to do your best to breast-feed. But if you can't, be grateful that there are good milk powders that are available...and follow the instructions carefully.

We've just been talking about breast-feeding. Food is very important to us, isn't it? But we need more than food for our bodies, we need food for our minds and our souls. Jesus himself said, "A person can't live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." What do *you* think he meant? How does God speak to us?

Tammy: God can communicate with us through nature, and things that happen, and through other people. The most important way he spoke to us was through his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. But Jesus went back to heaven long ago, so how does God speak to us today?

...Yes, he gave us a book - a very special book, called the Bible. Have you noticed how often we tell you stories from the Bible, or tell you what the Bible teaches us about something?

Carol: You might wonder: "Why do these Women of Hope *always* look for what the Bible says about any problem?" Perhaps you wonder why we don't say to ask your parents for advice, or perhaps look up the computer or go to the library. Why go to a Book that's *thousands of years* old? What could it possibly know about the problems of a *modern* woman?

Well, we still worry about life. We grieve over death. We want love and attention. We *long* for comfort and peace, and we struggle with relationships. We long to know God and to know how we should live. In our modern world, we have many wonderful things and we've learnt so much. And of course we sometimes ask our parents for advice. But *we still* have the problems and struggles that our ancestors had, thousands of years ago.

The Bible is where I go for help with these things. I believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God. God used over 40 human authors to write the Bible, over hundreds of years, in several countries and using three languages. Yet I believe that the Bible was "God-breathed". That means the Bible's message came directly from God. And I have seen the effect it has when women or men read it and believe it. The message of the Bible really changes their lives.

Tammy: The Bible itself says: "All Scripture is inspired by God, and is useful for teaching the truth, rebuking error, correcting faults and giving instruction for right living". (2 Timothy 3: 16, GNB) When I *do* go to my parents for advice, they advise me well; however, they can't see into the future. They can't know what I will face tomorrow. Only the God who created the universe knows all about me and what I need. Parents, professionals, and advisors have only a limited, *human* way of looking at things.

The Bible was written over a period of 15 hundred years, but it has a consistent message...it doesn't change. From beginning to end, it shows us the damage that happens when we turn away from God, and it shows us how God has always loved us and called us back to himself. The whole of the Bible points to our Lord Jesus Christ. He showed us what God was like. The Bible tells us how we can get right with God when we put our faith in Jesus.

There are more than 300 *predictions* in the Bible, about people and places that have come true, though they were often written hundreds of years before they happened. The Bible has survived the test of time. How many things in life can you depend on to stay the same? Everything in life changes, doesn't it?

Carol: Do you know of anything that is completely dependable and never changes? One of God's prophets wrote: 'The grass withers, and the flowers fade, but the Word of our God stands *forever*.' (Isaiah 40:8) What was "right" and "wrong" according to the Bible thousands of years ago has stayed the same. What was "good" and "bad" for our bodies and our minds also remains the same. People's opinions come and go; philosophers will change their views through the years; and today people often say that you can do anything that satisfies you, so long as you don't hurt someone else.

But, I want *truth... unchangeable truth* to guide me in life. One of the Bible writers wrote: 'God's Word is a Lamp to guide my feet and a Light on my path.' (Psalm 119:105) We all need help to guide and direct our lives. I choose to look for this wisdom in God's written word, the Bible, and that makes all the difference to my life.

Tammy: Carol just mentioned some words from a Psalm, or poem, about God's word being like a light to guide our way in life. We'd like to read you some more from that Psalm...number 119. It's an amazing poem. The writer must have worked it out very carefully, because each section has 8 verses, and each of those verses starts with the same letter of the Hebrew alphabet. So it starts with the first letter, aleph, and goes through the whole alphabet. God gave this writer many wonderful thoughts about Gods' law, the words that God gave to his people to guide their lives. So let's read a few.

Carol: OK. He wrote: 'Happy are those who live according to the law of the Lord. I *delight* in following your commands.' (v1,14)

Tammy: 'I keep your words hidden in my heart, so that I will not sin against you.' (v11) 'Open my eyes so that I can see the wonderful truths in your law.' (v18)

Carol: 'Help me to understand your law, and I will meditate on your wonderful teachings.' (v27)

Tammy: ‘I compose songs about your commands. In the night I remember you Lord, and I think about your law.’ (v54-55) ‘Because of your constant love, be good to me so that I may obey your laws.’ (v88)

Carol: We could go on for another hour- this is the longest chapter in the whole Bible. But I think you can see how this writer feels about God’s word.

Tammy: Yes- he absolutely loves it! He thinks about it day and night, he feels full of joy that God gave his word; he wants to understand it so he can follow it and live the best life. He thinks how good God is to give him this gift. I wonder, do you feel like that about God’s word? That it’s a *gift*, a great treasure?

Carol: Can you remember those words from Psalm 119? ‘God’s Word is a Lamp to guide my feet and a Light on my path.’

The Bible gives light about the really big questions of life. It helps us to understand that we’re sinful, and that God loves us and wants to forgive us. It tells us how to live good moral lives. It seems like a *lighthouse*, showing us all the safe way to go.

Tammy: But sometimes the Bible seems like a small lantern or a *candle* that you could carry in your hand on a dark night. It only gives you a little light; just enough to see the very *next* step. Maybe you feel like you’re in the dark in your life just now. In those times God asks us to have faith, and just do the *next* thing that he has shown us to do. If you listen to his word, or read it in the Bible, and follow it, you can trust God to show you the next step to take. He doesn’t want to leave you in the dark!

Carol: My friend, the Bible does help and encourage you! And it helps you to grow as a believer. In another part of the Bible, the writer tells us “like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of God’s word that you may grow.” Tammy and I encourage you to read God’s word and become strong in your faith. And then write and tell us how the Word of God helped you. You can contact us in care of this station or at Women of Hope....

Tammy: The email address is TWRWomenofHope@twr.org. That’s TWRWomenofHope@twr.org.

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

Carol: So now you know why we Women of Hope are always talking about the Bible as God’s word! I hope you learn to love it... to learn it... and to live by it. It will shine light on your path in life.