

Longing for a Baby / Abraham's call

Tammy: Do you remember holding your first baby, Carol?

Carol: Tammy, it was the most incredible moment of my life. I was so happy and also so scared. What would I do with such a tiny, helpless person?

Tammy: A baby is an amazing and beautiful gift. I was talking to my friend Sarah the other day when she told me her story. I was nearly in tears. She has been married for a year but has not yet been able to have a baby. She just longs to hold her own baby in her arms. She finds she can't even look at women who are pregnant because of her sadness. The cries of a newborn baby send her running for a quiet spot where she can weep. An ancient songwriter wrote that "children are a blessing from the Lord" (Psalm 127:3). She feels she is missing out on that blessing.

Welcome to *Women of Hope* today. Carol and I are so happy to be with you again at your place. I hope we can sit with you for a while...

Carol: ...or keep working if you have to, while we keep you company. We started talking about infertility- not being able to have a baby. Maybe you have experienced this, or know someone who's going through it.

So Tammy, tell me about your friend. Has Sarah always wanted children?

Tammy: She had planned on having eight!

Carol: Eight!

Tammy: Now it looks like she cannot have any.

Carol: There are many women who cannot have children. Do you know if she has any friends in the same situation?

Tammy: I'm not sure, but it would be good for her to talk to someone who shares her experience... but she feels ashamed.

Carol: This is not her fault, and it's quite common. I think about one in every ten couples cannot have children?

Tammy: I think that's right. Sarah's husband thinks there's something wrong with her, so now there are some problems in their marriage.

Carol: Her fault? What if there is a problem with him? Sometimes there *is* a problem with the woman. But just as often there's a problem with the man. Sometimes there are problems with both the woman *and* the man that make it very hard for them to conceive a child. Sometimes no cause can be found. So...how long has she been trying to have a baby?

Tammy: For about one year. She's now going to the doctor. It's expensive, though as they both need tests.

Carol: Often a man might feel a bit threatened and think that testing him questions his manhood, but it is *very* important to test him...especially before a woman has tests that might include an operation! If there *is* a problem with him, it does not make him any less of a man. He is a much stronger man to love his woman enough to have a test before making her have any tests.

Tammy: Sarah is still young and so is he, so they have a much higher chance of having a baby. The chances become lower as people get older.

Carol: Yes, my doctor told me that as the woman gets older she does not produce as many eggs. Each year the number of eggs produced is smaller. Women who are near the change of life, stop making eggs. There can be problems with the baby forming, leading to miscarriage...the mother may lose the baby before it's formed enough to survive.

Tammy: If a woman's cycle does not come about every month, does that mean there's a problem?

Carol: It can mean her hormones are not working properly and she may not be making an egg each month. The doctor said that sometimes this can be due to sickness in her body, like from her thyroid. Or if she's too thin or too fat, her body may not even have a normal cycle. A simple blood test late in her cycle can tell if she has made an egg. And sometimes there can be problems that are passed down from our parents.

Tammy: I know that some women can make an egg, but then the sperm cannot travel to the egg... or the baby is not able to hold onto the womb properly. An ultrasound test looks at the shape of the womb, the tubes and the ovaries that produce the eggs.

Carol: Blocks in the tubes can be caused by an infection that spreads with sex. Condoms can usually stop the infection happening, but not always... Operations and infections can cause scars that will create a blockage.

Usually, these things are found by an operation where the doctor will look inside the lower part of the abdomen or pelvis.

Tammy: That sounds like lots of testing, and still sometimes nothing can be found! So I can see why the man should be tested first...it may save all this trouble.

Now Carol, this might sound strange, but I once heard someone say it is really important that people know exactly *how* to make babies!

Carol: So maybe ask a good friend or your sister or mother if you are not sure you are doing it right!

Tammy: I feel a bit like my friend's big sister at the moment. I am so concerned for her...but we did spend time praying together. We remembered many of the women in the Bible who were unable to have children. God heard their prayers and answered some of them with the gift of children, some even in their old age.

Carol: That's wonderful that you could pray with her. Did you ask her about anything else she's doing to help her conceive?

Tammy: We talked about her cycle and when she would be most fertile. Her cycle is usually about 28 days, and the best time is about one to two weeks after her bleeding stops.

Carol: It is also very important to be looking after yourself... and also that your man is careful, too. Eating well, especially fruit and vegetables, is good...and eat meat too if you can. I remember the doctor recommended taking a *folate supplement* the month before you want to become pregnant and for the first 3 months of pregnancy.

Folate is good to help the baby's brain and spine develop... Sometimes *iodine* is also needed, especially when there is none in the soil where you live...and it has not been added to the salt you use to cook with. It is also very important not to take things which can harm the eggs or sperm... or the new baby that's growing. For example, definitely don't smoke or take alcohol when you are trying to have a baby... or take drugs.

Tammy: Well – that's sensible advice for *anyone* at *any* time really! You're with *Women of Hope*, and Carol and I have been talking about ways of helping my friend who wants a baby. I feel sad for my friend, though. She may not be able to have her own children, even if she could afford to pay the medical costs of having tests.

Carol: And she would feel real grief, I'm sure. Losing a dream...something you expected would just happen...it's like a death in some ways...and you can suffer just as much. Yet other people may not realize how hard it is for Sarah, and she could feel very alone. Have *you* ever experienced this?

Tammy: Oh, yes.

Carol: If she has all these tests and she learns that there is no chance of having a baby, she will really need your support. You cannot solve her problem for her but you can be there – and listen. She will need time to really accept it before she moves on to something else. You are her friend, so perhaps you can let her cry with you, even let her be angry, and let her know you understand her sadness.

Tammy: Yes, I try to support her and understand her feelings, because she would really like to become a mother. She said she would like to foster a baby or, perhaps, even adopt one...and I know she would love that child just as much. But I don't think she should rush into adoption too quickly. It takes time to really accept that she cannot bear a child, and for that grief to settle. And another thing is that she's not sure whether her husband would accept someone else's baby.

Carol: It can be hard on the family, and they certainly need to agree about it. But I'm sure that after some time she will want to find ways of showing her caring, nurturing nature in some other way. What about some work with children?

Tammy: Yes, she wants to work in an orphanage sometime. But, it is too hard at the moment. We're praying that she can feel less bitter and sad about it all.

Carol: It can be very hard. She still has some chance, though.

Tammy: Yes – she and her husband are going to the doctor tomorrow, to both have their tests. Not a fun way to celebrate their first wedding anniversary!

Carol: I hope they find out why... If there is a clear reason, they may be able to have treatment.

Tammy: In the meantime, they are trying to be healthy with their food and exercise, and no alcohol or smoking. They are trying to follow her cycle, but it could take away some of the fun of intimacy, though!

Carol: Well, they are doing all they can, and we can pray that they are able to have a baby...or find some other way of loving and caring.

Tammy: You're with *Women of Hope*, and we've been talking about the problem of infertility. And that will come up again, so stay with us, won't you?

Carol: We've talked before about how God made the world... and that all tribes and nations descended from the first people God made. They grew in numbers and spread out, and they got some different ideas about God. They got confused about how to worship the true God and live right lives. Many groups began to worship idols... But God *loved* the world. He had not forgotten his promise...to make a way for us to come back to him. And so he began to fulfil that promise. Ros is going to tell us how that started.

Ros: Here is a true story from *very* ancient times. It's found in the first section of the Bible, called Genesis, chapters 12 to 21.

Long ago there lived a man named Abram. His family were nomadic cattle herders. Now God spoke to Abram and said 'Leave your country and your relatives, and go to a *place* that I will show you. I will give you many *descendants* and they will become a great nation. I will *bless* you...and make your name famous...so that all nations will be blessed through you.' ...So Abram took his wife Sarai, his nephew, his servants and his animals, and they set off. They had many adventures, and God did show him the fertile country he promised. Abram grew wealthy there.

Now let's think: what were the three things that God had promised Abram...things he would really want? Yes...land, fame and children. And wonderfully, God had begun to show Abram what God was truly like, and how to worship him. You would think Abram would be very happy. But...well, let's continue with the story from God's word...

You see, Abram and Sarai had a secret sorrow – they had no children. And they were getting old; he was 75 years old when he started travelling.

It was ten years later, when God spoke to Abram again. He said, 'Don't be afraid, Abram; I will shield you from danger and give you a great reward'. Abram answered very respectfully, but he had to ask the question that was on his heart. 'Sovereign Lord,' he said, 'what good will your reward be, if I have to leave it all to my head servant, since I have no son?'

Then God took him outside the tent and showed him the stars – millions of them, sparkling on a sky like black velvet. 'Can you count the stars?' he asked. 'Yet I promise...you will have as many descendants as the stars'.

And then the Bible says something very important: 'Abram put his *trust in God*, and because of this *God was pleased* with him and accepted him.' (Genesis 15:6)

God went on to make a binding agreement with Abram and his descendants. He would be *their* God, he would bless them and provide for them...and they would be *his* people, and learn to worship and obey him. (Gen 18:19) As a sign of this God changed his name to Abraham, which means something like 'ancestor of nations'.

Sarai couldn't help laughing when she heard this prophecy! What, an old woman having a baby! And you know, Abraham was 100 years old when finally Sarai had that promised baby. But God's promise *did* come true...from Abraham came millions of people, and many nations, especially the peoples of the Middle East.

Tammy: So God fulfilled the promise to give him *land* and *descendants*. Was he famous too?

Ros: Well yes, he was a well-known leader who mixed with kings and chiefs, and defeated attackers. Of course he is still very famous... Jews, Muslims and Christians *all* look back to him with great respect.

Tammy: I was thinking about the part of the promise where God said – what was it?... 'all nations would be blessed' through him. Even if he was well known in his part of the world, that's not *all* nations...

Ros: No...but one day, one of his descendants would come, and he would be the one who would bring a blessing to *all nations*.

Tammy: Yes...Jesus came from that family line, and he came to be the saviour of the whole world! So through Abraham all nations *were* blessed!

Ros: That's right. God had that all planned from the beginning, to gradually teach his people about himself and prepare them for the coming of Jesus. But it all started with Abraham. God so wanted to call him back to himself...Abraham heard God's voice and obeyed.

Tammy: How did God speak to him?

Ros: The story doesn't actually say... Maybe a voice, or a dream? ...Later on, God sent special messengers to him. But listen...God still speaks...he wants to call us too! He speaks to us in different ways...how do *you* think he does this?

Carol: I often hear God speak to me through his word the Bible...

Tammy: ...and there is the voice of our conscience, telling us what is right.

Carol: ...Sometimes God speaks through other people who know him...

Ros: ...and maybe through your friends on the radio! The question is: are we interested in hearing him? Are we like Abraham, ready to put our trust in God, ready to wait for *his* time to fulfil his promises? Remember what pleased God? Yes, it was the fact that Abraham *trusted* him. Abraham made plenty of mistakes, but he learned *one* thing really well...to *trust* God...and *do* what he told him.

Tammy: That's a good thing for us to remember too. God made you, he loves you and he calls you today. Are you listening? Keep your ears open this week for what God is saying to you.

Carol: Before we finish today on *Women of Hope*, here's a letter from one of our listeners. She was unable to have the baby she wanted, but she learned to listen to God's voice and trust in him. Let's listen to her story....

Tammy: 'From my childhood, my life was so happy and I thought I had everything. When I was 19 years old, I married the man I loved and soon after, I gave birth to a baby boy. We were so happy. We both had dreams for a girl. But later I gave a birth to another baby boy. My husband showed his disapproval. I became so sad. So, again we planned to have a baby girl, but 5 years went by and I did not conceive. When we went to the doctor he told me I could not give birth to another baby. I became sad and depressed. My husband did not show me any love. He ignored me. One day, a lady told me about *Women of Hope*. She told me that through this program, I would be comforted and come close to Jesus. She gave me a program guide and prayed for me. I just put it aside. One day, my heart told me to turn on the radio... The program was totally related to me...it was about adoption. I was totally shocked. I learned that in the Bible God says (Jeremiah 29:11 NIV), "For I know the plans I have for you. Plans to prosper you, not to harm you, to give you a future and a hope." Feel it or not, believe it or not, you are linked to the big, eternal plan of God. He loves and cares for you so much."

These words touched my heart... I came to know that some child had a great need for me. I wanted to adopt a girl child and give a bright future and hope to her... I talked to my husband. At first, he did not agree. I prayed and prayed and God answered...he agreed to adopt a girl.

We got a baby whom passers by found in the bushes where her mother had left her. My eyes filled with tears.

Now, I thank God for not giving me my own baby girl because the girl whom we adopted wants us and need us...

Carol: What a wonderful story. God had a purpose in this woman not having her own baby girl. Now this little girl has a bright hope and a loving future. Thank you listener for sharing this story with us.

Tammy: If you have any questions or would like to tell us your story, you're welcome to write to us, *Women of Hope*, care of this station, and we will try to answer. Or you can also email us. Our email address is TWRWomenofHope@TWR.org. You can also visit our website: TWRWomenofHope.org. Or visit our Facebook page. Have a good week!