

Dealing with Fear / The Disciples Panic

Tammy: Have you ever been afraid? Not just anxious, but so scared your tummy is in knots, your mouth is dry and your heart pumping very fast? I think we all have felt like this at some time in our life. A young girl called Yuni found out what it was like to feel like this...she worked for a family I know well...

‘One bright sunny day, Yuni took the washing down to the small river...as she did most days. There she would sit on a floating raft, and wash the clothes. But this day something happened that would make her very afraid...

Tammy: Welcome to Women of Hope. I’m Tammy. How are you feeling today Carol?

Carol: I feel great Tammy, and I’m so pleased to be back here again to share this time together. But I really want to know what could make Yuni so afraid – on this bright sunny day!...

Tammy: Ok – let’s continue this true story...

‘Yuni was very happily humming to herself, sitting on the raft with her feet dangling in the water as she scrubbed the clothes. Suddenly she was filled with fear – she heard a bird whistling in the nearby grass. This little bird was happily making a nest to lay some eggs to hatch out her young. But to Yuni this was a terrifying sound. In her culture, when a person hears this bird’s song, it means that soon someone will die.

She left the clothes on the raft and ran as fast as she could up to the house. Her employer was shocked to see her so white and trembling.

Alarmed she asked: “What is the matter Yuni?”

Yuni told her about the bird’s song and that it meant that either she, or someone close to her, would soon die...

Carol: Let’s stop for a while and think about what it’s like to be really afraid. It’s not a nice feeling is it? What kinds of things can make us feel so afraid?

Tammy: Snakes! And earthquakes! And injections!

Carol: I guess anything that seems like a danger to you, or to someone you care about...

Tammy: Yes - and people are afraid of different things. I’m not scared of cows but my sister is. A cow nearly squashed her once and since then she won’t go near cows.

Carol: What are you afraid of, my friend?... Well, you are not the only one! Most of us have some fear of pain, illness, accidents or disasters. Mothers are usually afraid of their children being harmed - we have lots of energy when our children are in danger, don’t we?

Tammy: There are other fears that are not really about physical danger. Are you afraid of speaking to a group of people? My friend had to speak at a neighborhood meeting, and she knew exactly what she was going to say. But when it was time to go, she was shaking and her hands were sweating and her mouth was dry... so she could hardly speak. But she was alright once she started.

Carol: That's good. Very often we are afraid of what may happen...but usually it doesn't! So we just have to face our fear and do what is needed. I think a lot of us are afraid of failure, or being rejected. We often fear arguments, and being put to shame. Our bodies may not be in danger but our feeling of fear is just as strong.

Our bodies do strange things when are afraid, don't they? We said some already... knots in the stomach or feeling sick, feeling breathless, sweating, heart pumping hard, feeling very restless. What is the first thing you notice when you are scared?...

God made your body to respond to fear this way - we often call it the 'fight...flight...or freeze' response. It gets you ready to fight the danger... or run away - that's flight... or freeze - stay very still for safety. And this is very good when you are facing a real danger. Think about animals... they do that don't they! They will either fight the danger... run away from it - very fast ... or freeze and pretend they're not there.

Tammy: When I get a fright, I feel as if I can't breathe.

Carol: Yes, that's right. Actually our breathing becomes very quick and shallow. We keep breathing in and don't breathe out properly. And that makes our fear response worse. So the first thing to remember is to STOP and BREATHE. You can say in your head 'I am breathing in - wait - I am breathing out - wait'. Do that a few times and you will begin to feel better and be able to think about what you need to do next.

Tammy: Can we practice that? I think I need to learn it, so I will be able to remember it when I panic about something.

Carol: Yes, let's... Can you sit down for a moment, settle yourself, then I'll say it and we'll do it together. Here we go... 'I am breathing in - wait - I am breathing out - wait. I am breathing in - wait - I am breathing out - wait. I am breathing in - a nice deep breath - I am breathing out - wait'. As you breathe out, try to let go of the tightness in your body... let your shoulders drop and relax your hands.

Tammy: That felt good Carol... I'll try to remember that next time I need to calm my body down. Even when I don't feel afraid, but just feel tense because I'm worried or anxious, it would be good to stop for a few moments and do that wouldn't it?

Carol: Oh yes it really would - it could help you to relax and think clearly about what to do next.

You know, we often feel afraid because of how we think about what is happening. As we said before, we are afraid of what may happen. Our thoughts and beliefs are very powerful. We

expect bad things to happen so we get ready... like your sister with the cow. Or we think people are planning to hurt us. Perhaps you believe that the world is very dangerous, so you want to be able to see your children at all times. You can spend a lot of time worrying about things that may never happen.

So the next thing you should ask is, "Is there really a danger?" If there is, of course you will do what you need to keep safe. You will run and rescue your child who is in danger. You will try to use your money wisely to avoid poverty.

But often we need to ask, 'Is the reason for my fear true?... Am I afraid now because of something that happened a long time ago?... Am I afraid now because I think something may happen in the future? Am I afraid because of a belief that may not be really true?' ... I wonder if Yuni's fear was like that? What do you think?

Tammy: I think it was. That belief - the one about the bird meaning death - was something she had heard from people in her village. No-one knew where it came from. It was just something people said.

Carol: Every culture has beliefs like that. I remember when I was a child, the women would say 'Bad luck comes in threes' so you would be anxious and expect something bad to happen soon. Another one was: 'Don't put up an umbrella in the house, it's bad luck'

Tammy: Maybe someone did it once and knocked over a jug!

Carol: I know that many people are afraid of spirits or the evil eye. They have ideas about how to keep them away. Things like charms and amulets, or magic words to say or rituals to do. But when you think about them, often there is no good reason to do these things. They are often just customs that keep people living in fear. Are there beliefs like that in your community?... Do you live by them? Do you let them make you afraid?

We should ask, "Why do I believe that? Is it really true? Will I let that old belief keep me afraid? Where will I put my trust?" Let's listen to a song that talks about our need to Trust the Lord.

Carol: You're listening to Women of Hope and we're talking about Fear. So Tammy, what did happen to Yuni that day when she was so afraid?

Tammy: Her employer was a lady who believed in the God of the Bible. She tried to calm Yuni down and to reassure her. She understood Yuni's fear, as many people in her culture had shown the same kind of fear at times. The lady showed Yuni something from God's word that said: "Don't be afraid, for I am with you.... for I am your God...I will ... help you." (Isaiah 41:10 – parts of the verse)

Yuni knew that her employer believed in a very powerful God. Some people from her village had believed in this God. They had told her that she didn't need to be afraid.

I wonder if you have ever felt afraid like Yuni did? Have you Carol?

Carol: I remember playing a game with my brothers and sisters when I was small. One person would cover their eyes and the rest of us would hide. One time, I crawled into a box. It seemed like a good hiding place at the time. But when I tried to get back out I couldn't. The top was stuck. I called and called for someone to come and help me. My big sister finally found me, but even today, I don't like small dark places. I still have a fear of being trapped.

Tammy: There are many real things that can make us feel afraid too. Have you ever been in a very bad storm? Were you afraid?

Marj has come today to tell us a story from God's word, the Bible about some people who were very afraid. Welcome Marj

Marj: Thanks Tammy. Jesus and his followers were on a lake called The Sea of Galilee where huge storms can suddenly come and whip up the water. The men he was with were big and strong and probably used to rowing in rough water, but this day they would have a journey across the lake that they would never forget.

Let me tell you the story from the Bible (Luke 8:22-25 & Mark 4:35-41):

One evening, after Jesus had been teaching the people all day he said to his followers, "Let's cross over to the other side of the lake." So they got into the boat and started out leaving the crowds behind.

Jesus was tired, so he lay down in the back of the boat and soon fell asleep. While he was sleeping, a fierce storm developed. The waves got bigger and smashed into the side of the boat and began to fill the boat with water. The men were terrified because of the fierce wind, and raging waves that threatened to swamp them.

But then they remembered Jesus, sleeping peacefully in the boat. They shook him and woke him up. They shouted above the noise of the raging wind: "Teacher, don't you even care that we're going to drown?"

As Jesus' followers watched, he stood up and spoke strongly to the wind and the raging waves. He said to them, "Be still." All of a sudden, the storm stopped and everything was calm and peaceful.

Then he asked his followers, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith in me? Do you still not trust me?"

They were absolutely amazed and filled with awe. They said to one another, "Who is this man, that even the wind and waves obey him?!"

That's the end of the story from God's word.

How would you have felt if you had been in that boat? Yes – I would have been afraid too. I'm not surprised that they panicked and thought they were going to drown. We can imagine that

their stomachs were in knots and that they felt sick with fear...just like Tammy talked about before. I can imagine how their hearts were pumping extra fast as they panicked. They probably knew that storms had sunk many boats on that lake. So their fear was very real wasn't it!

Did you notice what they said to Jesus? Yes, they said, "Don't you care that we're going to drown?" Do you think Jesus cared? Do you sometimes feel as if God doesn't care about how you feel?

All that the followers of Jesus had to do was cry out to him...and he took control didn't he? That is what we can do too. We can cry out to him. He knows what we are facing...he cares alright...and he is the one who can change what is happening... calm the storm in our hearts and rescue us.

I wonder how his followers felt when he said to them, "Do you still have no faith in me?" They had been his friends for quite a while hadn't they? I expect they had seen him do many amazing miracles. Perhaps he meant they should have trusted that he would save them from this danger. They hadn't thought about that at the time – maybe because their fear took over. They must have felt silly and maybe a bit ashamed afterwards.

It's very easy to let our fear take over and stop us thinking clearly isn't it? But God is always there to hear you cry out to him. He made you, he loves you, and he has the power to help you. So when you are afraid of something, especially if it is out of your control, ask God for help. Tell him you are afraid. He will understand your fear. You are not alone. Have courage and hope... Trust God...he will help you.

But you know there's something really important for me to say here. God has not promised to keep us from life's storms, but He will keep us through them. We often learn very important things in hard times don't we!

To finish, I want to read you some beautiful words from the Psalms in God's word. (Psalm 57:1-3): "Have mercy on me, O God...! I look to you for protection. I will hide beneath the shadow of your wings until this violent storm is past. I cry out to God Most High... He will send help from heaven to save me, rescuing me from those who are out to get me. My God will send forth his unfailing love and faithfulness."

Carol: Thank you Marj. It's good to know that God is there and we can trust him. He will hear us; he understands our fears and he is ready to help us.

Tammy: It's time for us to find out what happened to Yuni – and how her story ended. Do you think she kept being afraid? Or did she learn, like Jesus' friends did that God is powerful and would take away her fears?

Carol: I wonder if she was able to keep going to do the washing at the river? Or was she too afraid to ever go back?

Tammy: ‘After Yuni’s employer showed her what God said in his word, the Bible, and prayed with her, she calmed down. Do you remember those words? Here they are again: “Don’t be afraid, for I am with you... for I am your God... I will help you.” (Isaiah 41:10)

The next time she heard the same bird call, she felt a little bit afraid, but she remembered what her employer had told her, and she remembered too that nothing had happened last time; no-one had died!’

Soon after this, Yuni’s employer said to her: “Yuni, I suggest you learn these words from the Bible...and when you are afraid, say or even shout them loudly.” Yuni learned to do this and found comfort in her times of fear. She taught her some more words that gave her great comfort. They said: “God has said, I will never leave you. I will never forsake you. So we say with confidence, The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid.” (Heb 13:5b, 6a)

Yuni came to love these words from the Bible – and others that her employer showed her. She often read aloud the words her employer had shown her, which were mostly from the Psalms in the Bible. She also learned them, and remembered them. Here’s another one: (Psalm 56:3) ‘When I am afraid, I will trust in you: In God whose word I praise. In God I trust; I will not be afraid.’

Some of the people in her village had learned a song that they seemed to like to sing at times when they might have been afraid. She decided to sing it any time she was afraid... not only of the bird, but of anything. Yuni learned to trust God. She learned how to handle her fear, and go down to wash the clothes in the river again.’

Tammy: We’ve heard a lot about fear today haven’t we. It’s something we all face at one time or another.

Carol: Stop and think – is the reason for your fear true? Or are you just afraid of something you think might happen.

Tammy: And what did Carol say to do? That’s right...stop, and remember to breathe... in - wait - out - wait... that will help you to calm down and decide what you really need to do.

Tammy: Most of all, remember that you can trust God. He cares about your fear and he is ready to help you. If you want to contact us, or you want to know more about how God can help you contact through email at... Hannah@twr.org. That’s Hannah@twr.org. Don’t forget you can also visit our website at projecthannah.org. That’s projecthannah.org. I hope we’ll hear from you. Have a great week filled with God’s blessings.

Carol: Remember too that God has not promised to keep us from life’s storms, but He will keep us through them. That’s all we have time for today. But we’ll be back again soon.
Good bye.

Tammy: Bye.

© Copyright Trans World Radio 2009