

Aging well / Jesus enters Jerusalem

Fran: My mother is 97 years old. She's frail, but she's well, and content. But her mother died in her 40s, quite suddenly. And then there was my mother-in-law, who lived her last few years confined in her bed, and she didn't know anyone or remember anything. Her old age was very sad.

Tammy: Well, my grandmother on my mother's side died early also. She passed away giving birth to my aunt. And then my mother passed away expectantly about 10 or 11 years ago. My grandmother on my father's side, now she lived into her old age. And in the last 5 to 10 years of her life she did lose some of her mental capacity. She didn't remember things as well as she used to, but she did live a long, healthy life.

Carol: That's great. My mom was able to live on her own until she fell. Once she broke her hip and found walking to be difficult, that changed everything. She had to live with someone. Her mind is ok and she enjoys being with family, but I know that leaving her home and giving up her independence was a very hard thing for her. You know, we don't know what's ahead for us, do we? But is there anything we can do to improve our lives as we get older?

Tammy: Hello my friend, and welcome to Women of Hope. Hi Carol!

Carol: Hi Tammy, It's good to be together again. And Fran, it is always good to see you, my dear.

Fran: Hello. We've been talking about the different ways people go through old age, and we thought we'd share some important things about *healthy aging*. What can we do to improve the lives of our older family members and our own lives too?

Carol: There's a lot we can do, but let's remember that there's a lot that we can't control at all. We might get sick or have an accident, like my mom did, at any age, so we remember that our lives are in God's hands.

Tammy: That's so true. But doctors have learned a lot that can help us to do our part in looking after our bodies and our minds. Exercise, for example. One of the very best things we can do is to have regular physical exercise whether you like it or not.

Fran: That's right. Even at 97 my mother does some exercise every day, walking with her walking frame and doing leg and arm exercises in her chair. Exercise helps to keep our hearts strong if we work hard enough to make our hearts beat faster. We should do it for at least half an hour a day if we can. It's also very good for our blood pressure, and breathing, and keeps our muscles working well.

Carol: Our bones start to get weaker once we are over 40, and we're more likely to break our bones as we get older. But if we exercise regularly, our bones stay strong for longer, especially if we make our bones carry weight. When you walk you carry weight on your legs, and you can lift weights with your arms, gradually lifting more and more. It helps your joints. If we don't move much, our joints will get stiff and sore.

Fran: And then it's even harder to exercise! Did you know that weight-bearing exercises like walking and lifting are good to prevent depression in older people? It's true! Especially if you walk or exercise *outside*, so you get some sunshine on your skin. But don't get sunburnt! So many old people don't have enough Vitamin D because they stay inside all the time.

Carol: And exercise helps us not to put on too much weight, or get too thin; and to keep our muscles working.

Tammy: An older person might think, I'm too old to start exercising now. But you are never too old, and whenever you start, you will be helping your body. If you've been

sick, or haven't exercised for a while, you might just start very gently and work up slowly. You should ask your health worker what exercise you should do. Any exercise is better than none. And it will help you to sleep better at night.

Fran: Carol, what exercise do you think you could do as you get older?

Carol: I walk with my husband every day already and that helps to keep us healthy. I hope I can continue to do that.

Fran: When I turned 55 I realized I needed to exercise or I wouldn't be able to do the things I wanted to as I got older. Mostly I swim or do exercises in the water, because the water cushions the impact and I don't hurt myself.

Tammy: Let's think about what we eat. You might not need *so much* food as you get older but you still need to eat a *balanced* diet, with fresh vegetables and fruit and some protein foods like meats, eggs, legumes or milk foods. You might need to cut it into small pieces or mash it up if your teeth aren't so good.

Carol: And it's still just as important to keep clean and to have clean water and food.

Fran: Some older people become depressed because they get lonely. Our relationships are still important as we age - maybe even more important once we stop going out to work. If you have older relatives, do you visit them, and take them out to where they can mix with other people? Many old people live with their families and that stops them getting lonely. Maybe *you* need to plan how you can get out more and enjoy the company of others.

Carol: You know having a pet can be really good company too, especially for somebody who's lonely. And that dog or pet will be a great reason to go outside for a walk!

Tammy: Music can be a great pleasure for older people. Maybe you could get a radio or find some other way for your older relatives to listen to their favorite music, and to hear the news.

We all need to keep our brains active, so once people stop going to work, they could read more, and do puzzles or mind games, or find out more about something they've always been interested in. Some older people start painting or doing other kinds of art, or make a garden. Groups of older people can get together to play board games or to talk. What games do you play where you live?

Carol: Some communities have public libraries where people go to look at magazines, newspapers or read. Book clubs meet there and often the library will organize events. Look around the community where your older relative lives. Maybe there are activities – free activities – they can participate in.

Fran: My mother always helped people. Now she often says that she can't help people any more. Do you ever feel like that? We all need to feel that we can do something valuable that makes a difference. If a retired person is well enough, there will be plenty to do in the community - volunteer work, or helping families who need it, or working for some cause that you care about. Many grandparents take care of grandchildren, and that can be a special time for them and the children. Older people have learned a lot through life so they can teach younger ones.

Carol: It can also be a time to take up a hobby, something you've always wanted to do. When I finish working I'm looking forward to organizing all of our family pictures. It will be a sweet time of remembering good times together and a chance to put the pictures into memory books that I can hand down to our children.

Fran: That sounds good. Now this is what I tell my mother: even if you can't get out of your chair or your bed some days, you can still pray for us. That's a great help! It's so good for children to know that their grandmother or great-grandmother or grandfather prays to God for them every day!

Tammy: Of course we won't always be well. As we get older there are more things that go wrong. We sort of wear out. Our hearts and our joints are not so strong. We're more likely to get diabetes and cancer. But many of those things can be treated, so don't say, 'It's just old age.' And don't put off going to the doctor. We need to look after those medical problems, with the help of our doctor or health worker. Often a simple treatment can make a real difference. Your health worker is your friend as you get older!

Carol: Sometimes it's best for older people to live with their families, but that isn't always right or possible. Sometimes they want to stay independent, and their families need to help them to do that. The older person might need help to get about, like a walking frame or wheel chair. The family might need to help them with shopping, or cooking, or cleaning. Make sure their home is safe. You might need to build a ramp to their door and replace the steps, or maybe put up railings for them to hold on to, both inside and outside.

Tammy: That's a great idea. Look around and think what *you* would need if you were a bit slow and unsteady on your feet. Make sure they can prepare their food safely, or else take them meals. But also just visit to keep them company and enjoy having them around.

Fran: I was just thinking how my children helped me to use a computer and a mobile phone. There are so many changes taking place now, even little villages are getting traffic lights and setting up internet cafes. Perhaps you need to help your older members to use some of this new technology. It might help them to stay safe and to keep in touch with family and friends.

Carol: Probably their grandchildren will be able to teach them better than even their children!

Tammy: Oh, I'm sure!

Fran: You know, I think as we get older it really helps to have a positive attitude. If you pay attention to the things that are good, and be grateful, that keeps you feeling good. And it makes other people want to be with you. Make sure the things that you *read* are good and encouraging. Make sure you spend time with people who are thankful and are not always complaining. And if you know God, you have a wonderful reason to hope. You know you are safe in his hands now, and when you die you will be safe in heaven with God. That's something really exciting to look forward to!

Tammy: We've been talking about how to grow old in a positive way. I'm Tammy, and Carol and Fran are here too. Now Fran's going to tell you a story from God's word, the Bible. She is telling us about the things that happened just before the Lord Jesus Christ was crucified.

Fran: Hello again. This story happened about a week before Jesus was killed and then came back to life. Jesus led his small group of followers up from the plains towards the mountain city of Jerusalem, the capital city, where the great temple was. Jesus warned his friends that he would die, to save the world. He had powerful enemies in Jerusalem. But also there were many people there who expected Jesus to bring in God's kingdom (Luke 19: 11) by defeating the Romans who occupied their country. This is the story from God's word about how Jesus entered Jerusalem.

Jesus and his friends reached the pass at the Mount of Olives. They could see the city at last. Jesus called two of his followers and said, 'Go to the village ahead. As you enter it, you will find a colt, the foal of a donkey, tied up alongside its mother. No one has ever ridden it. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you what you're doing, tell him, 'The Master needs it'.

They did what Jesus told them, and brought the young donkey to Jesus. They threw their cloaks over its back, and helped Jesus to get on it. As he rode along, people recognized him. A crowd gathered, mainly people who believed Jesus was God's promised Savior. Some put their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the

palm trees and spread them on the road, like a carpet. Some shouted out, 'Praise God! God bless him who comes in the name of the Lord! God bless the coming kingdom of King David our father. Praise God!' (Mark 11:9-10, TEV)

It was quite a big crowd - soon the whole city heard about it. Some of the religious leaders said to Jesus, 'Teacher, tell your followers to be quiet!' Jesus answered, 'I tell you, if they keep quiet, the stones themselves will start shouting.' (Luke 19:40 TEV)

When Jesus came closer to the city, he wept tears, and said, 'If only you knew today what is needed for peace! But now you cannot see it! The time will come when your enemies will surround you and destroy your city completely, because you did not recognize the time when God came to save you!' (Luke 19:41-44)

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

Carol: It must have been very exciting for Jesus' friends - at last people were welcoming Jesus. Can you imagine it? It sounds as though Jesus had arranged for that young donkey to be there, it wasn't just coincidence. No-one had ridden it before, yet it let Jesus ride it through a crowd, as though it wasn't afraid while Jesus was in charge.

Tammy: And then a crowd gathered, people who recognized Jesus and hoped that he was God's promised Messiah, the one who would save them. And suddenly it turned into a procession, as though they were welcoming a king, with people waving branches, going ahead and following behind. They were all excited!

Fran: I'm sure it reminded the people of a prophecy in their holy scriptures, which we call the Old Testament of the Bible. This was written long before it happened. I'll read it to you, from the prophecy of Zechariah. He wrote: 'Shout for joy, you people of Jerusalem! Look, your king is coming to you! He comes triumphant and victorious, but humble and riding on a donkey - on a colt, the foal of a donkey.' (Zech 9:9 TEV)

In those days a king who had won a battle would lead a procession riding a war-horse, but a man coming in peace would ride a donkey. They might have remembered that their famous king David rode a donkey, not a horse. So it seems that these people thought Jesus was David's descendant, the king that God had promised.

Carol: And remember they shouted, 'Praise God! God bless him who comes in the name of the Lord! Those words come right out of the Old Testament, from Psalm 118. So it's clear they thought God was doing something special. No wonder they were excited!

Fran: And Jesus *accepted* these words of praise. He *was* their Messiah, coming in the name of the Lord God. In fact, when the religious leaders complained, he said the people were right, and if the people didn't praise God at his coming, even the stones would have to shout out.

Jesus knew he was the promised king; but he also knew that his kingdom would not come through fighting or through political action. He came humbly, ready to serve and to die. He would be king over the *hearts* and *minds* of women and men who believed in him. He would defeat Satan by *dying*. He would win our hearts by loving us so much he would die for us. One day everyone would worship him; but not yet.

Tammy: No, not yet. Not all the people welcomed Jesus, did they? Probably most of them wanted things to stay quiet and calm. They didn't want to give the Roman soldiers any excuse to start beating people. Maybe they had given up hope, and thought they would just work with the Romans and make some money. Those religious leaders didn't want any trouble from a wandering preacher. So Jesus knew this welcome didn't mean too much. That's why he cried tears as he looked out over Jerusalem.

Fran: Jesus didn't cry for himself, did he? He cried for this city and the people there, whom he loved. Remember what he said? 'If only you knew today what is needed for peace.'

They needed to recognize him, trust him, and accept him as their Lord. That's what we need to do, to have peace. But Jesus knew they wouldn't accept him, and he cried. Jesus could see that they couldn't trust the Romans to give them a safe life. His words were true; about 40 years after this, the Roman armies surrounded Jerusalem and completely destroyed it, and killed most of the people there.

Carol: But the Roman Empire fell; it's been gone for hundreds of years. And all over the world today, millions of people love and follow the Lord Jesus Christ. He came humbly; he didn't fight; but he won our *hearts* through his love, as he died to save us from our sins. He won our *minds* by teaching us and setting an example for us to follow. Today, you could you say, 'Blessed is Jesus, who comes in the name of the Lord'. Could you say, 'The Lord Jesus Christ is my king, I will follow him in the way of peace'?

Tammy: People often think they win in life by being tough, or violent, or using force to get their way. They might get their way for the moment, but that's not the way to live healthy, loving lives, and in the long run, it doesn't make happy families or communities. Look at the way of Jesus; he knew who he was, but he won by thinking of others, by being humble, and by giving his life.

Fran: The Bible says that one day *everyone* will kneel before Jesus, and say that he is Lord, and give glory to God the Father (Phil 2:10-11). Let's do that in our lives now, and let's try to live in the way of Jesus our king.

Tammy: We have to go now, but we do look forward to next time. We would love to hear from you.

Carol: I hope you've enjoyed our time together, and you've heard something that will help you in your life.

Tammy: Maybe you'd like to contact us and tell us about your life, or ask us to pray for you. You can write to us in care of this station or at Women of Hope. The email address is womenofhope@twr.org. That's womenofhope@twr.org.

Or if you have missed a program or would even like to hear one again visit our website twrwomenofhope.org. or visit our Facebook page.

We do hope you will be with us again. Have a great week filled with God's blessings.

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