

House or Home / Where Does God Live?

Carol: Welcome to *Women of Hope*, I'm Carol.

Tammy: I'm Tammy. And I hope all is well with you and your loved ones. How have you been Carol?

Carol: Tammy, I've been great. How about you?

Tammy: Very well thanks.

Carol: Would you like to hear a funny story I just heard?

Tammy: I'm always ready for a funny story.

Carol: I heard about a man who wanted to surprise his wife by painting the bedroom a nice color that she liked. He went to the shop and picked the color that he thought she would like, then went home and painted the bedroom. When the wife came home, he showed her his work. She laughed and laughed. The husband asked her what was wrong. She said to him "what color do you think it is?" He said "peach". "Nope" she said, "it's bright orange". He forgot he was color blind! So the two of them had to go back to the store to buy new paint together.

Tammy: That's very funny Carol (laughing).

Carol: Yes it is, and it started me thinking about houses and homes. The way our house looks and feels is very important to us isn't it?

Tammy: And the way our house is built is important to us too. But what we build it with and how it looks depends on where we live and what materials are available of course.

Carol: You know, all through the ages, we have chosen to live in some kind of shelter, whether that's in a cave, a house made of wood, stone or brick...with a roof of tin, hay or tiles. People like to live in houses, and if we don't have one, we either look around to see if we can build one or move in with someone who already lives in one.

Tammy: That's true. I guess houses protect us...from rain, and sun, and strong winds. Sometimes even from enemies. People often lock doors to stay safe at night and keep their things from being stolen if they are away.

Carol: Fences do that too. We like to build them as well, don't we?

Tammy: But, that's not quite the same is it?

Carol: Well, In some ways it is! People put their animals inside fenced yards sometimes so they can't wander away . . . And to keep them safe from other animals...and maybe thieves.

Tammy: Yes but fences are a bit different aren't they! They not only provide protection but they mark out the edge of your property.

Carol: I see what you mean! By putting a fence around a field, we say 'that's my field'. It tells me what belongs to me and what belongs to my neighbor.

Tammy: Yes. If we plant a crop inside our fence border it shows that the crop is ours, because we worked that field. And the crop in the next field belongs to another person. But there is a difference though between us, and the things we own.

Carol: I agree – but what do you mean by difference?

Tammy: Well, for our animals and our crops, safety and shelter are important but we human beings need much more than that. We don't *just* need a house; we need the place we live in to be a *home*.

Carol: Ahhh, You're absolutely right Tammy! A house is not necessarily a home, is it? You can live in a place that feels temporary, or uncomfortable, almost like it belongs to someone else. It will not have the feeling of "home!"

Tammy: And although shelter or usefulness are important, a home is much more than that isn't it?

Carol: I think we need to talk about what makes the difference between a *house* and a *home*?

Tammy: I think the most important thing is to feel we *belong* there and that we are *loved*.

Carol: You're listening to *Women of Hope* and Tammy just said that to make a house a home it's important for us to feel that we *belong* there and that we are *loved*.

I know what you mean, Tammy. Whenever we are back in the neighbourhood where we had our first home, we always drive by the house. Even though it has been sold and someone else lives there it will always feel like "our home" because we had our children there and we have fond memories of the people, the things that happened there. I have heard people say that they still feel like they belong in a house that has long since been sold, because they grew up in that place as their home and they have fond memories of the people who lived there, and the things that happened there.

Tammy: So if you move into a place that seems to you to be *just* a house, how do you make it a home?

Carol: Oh, so many things to think about! Let's see...it should be *welcoming* and make your family and your guests feel *comfortable* and at ease.

Tammy: But not welcoming for people who might be a *threat* to you or your family.

Carol: Of course not...we want everyone who lives there to feel *safe*.

Tammy: And to make a *home* you would put special things in special places if they're important to you...like photographs or your little treasures. You would display things that you like, and that make it beautiful to look at in some way.

Carol: Yes, I have a friend who makes gorgeous quilts and she has them all over her furniture so they can be used and admired.

Tammy: And I have a friend who loves gardening, so she has indoor pots with plants in them and always has fresh flowers in her home.

Carol: Our own style of beauty makes our house our home. So what do **you** do to make your house a home?

Tammy: You know, we should also be able to have privacy when we need it, for sleeping or study or just to be able to be quiet...and think. It's very important to many people, and hard to find if the house is small.

Carol: But we also need to have times when we do things together in our home, like eating together, praying together, working together. It's good to share special celebrations...play games. These are the things our children will look back on and remember as a fun part of their home – where they felt really loved.

Tammy: As the mother, or the main care-giver in the home we want to help create *harmony* - where people who know one another well are able to celebrate each other's differences and contribute to each other's well-being. Every time my family gets together, we know so many little things about each other – we each have our favorite things...and *no one* else would sit in my husband's chair!
*Everyone knows I prefer a dessert spoon to eat soup with and my husband prefers a soup spoon, so the person who sets the table for dinner knows what to put there for each of us. There are certain types of music we wouldn't play in the house if another member of the family finds that type of music annoying, and so on. We respect each other's differences.

Carol: Yes! It is important to have Harmony! It doesn't *feel* like a home when people are fighting and arguing, does it? That's why learning to forgive each other is so important. It gives us a chance to start over. If we have upset someone, we can fix the situation easily if we apologize. Of course apologizing does *not* mean making an excuse for what you've done – it's not about making *yourself* feel better for having done wrong – it's about soothing the feelings of *the one who's been hurt*. This makes the way clear for the happy relationship to be restored.

And if someone has hurt *you*, it's also important to forgive the person who hurt you, whether they are sorry or not. If we don't forgive them we'll just go on feeling badly towards them and we'll miss out on

the opportunity to continue a warm relationship with them. The other person may not even be aware that they have hurt us, so it's not necessary to wait for an apology that might never come!

Tammy: You're absolutely right Carol! That's something we constantly have to do so that we can keep the harmony in our home.

Carol: Yes...harmony really makes a house into a home!

Tammy, earlier you mentioned eating together – our cultural food is very special to us isn't it? The things your mother cooked when you grew up – they definitely helps us to feel at "home!"

Tammy: Yes, as women, our decorating, cleaning and cooking certainly makes a big difference to how people feel whether they live with us or are just visiting.

Carol: Oh yes! We all love a clean house don't we – even if it's hard work sometimes to keep it that way.

Tammy: Do you like going to sacred or holy places? ...Tell me: where do you think God lives? ...In a land above the clouds? ...In a temple or shrine? ...In a statue or an image? ...In a river or tree, a rock or the sea? ...Do you think God lives in certain holy people? Ros is here with us again to answer the question: 'Where does God live?' Welcome, Ros.

Ros: Thanks Tammy, it's really good to be here with you. This is an important question, and people answer it in different ways. We're going to see what the Bible tells us.

We've been hearing stories from the history of the Israelite people. God, the creator of the world, had made a special agreement with them. He had rescued them from being slaves and...do you remember? ...he was leading them across the desert to a country he had promised to give them. He had chosen to show them what he is like, so they could show the world.

Here is another true story from this time, which is written in God's word, the Bible. (Taken from Exodus Ch 34-40)

So... there the Israelites were, thousands of people traveling slowly through the desert. God gave them rules to live by, through Moses their leader. God also gave Moses some detailed plans for a very special, very large tent, like a temple that could be folded up and moved. It was called 'the tent of the Lord's presence'. It was very beautiful, made of finely woven cloth and goatskins, dyed in wonderful colors and embroidered in gold and precious stones.

In the centre of this tent, they were to keep some special items from their history. One of the most important was a copy of their law – the Ten Commandments, written on stone slabs. God had given Moses these rules to live by as part of his agreement, or covenant, with them. They were kept in a 'covenant box' with a gold lid. And there were bronze wash basins and gold candlesticks and places to bring their offerings. Even the tent poles had silver settings.

It was a huge job to build it, but the people willingly gave their gold and jewels to make it beautiful. They gave perfumes and spices, cloth, leather and oil...everything that was needed. There were craftsmen, carpenters, goldsmiths, and women who wove material and dyed it, others who sewed and embroidered with great skill. It was a great honor to be chosen to work on the tent.

Finally it was completed, built exactly as God had explained it to Moses. All the details had some meaning. And on the day when it was all finished and set up, the tent was filled with a dazzling light, to show the people that this was a special place for the worship of God.

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

Tammy: Wow, that must have been amazing. Their own tents were pretty ordinary, but as they followed God's pattern they made this incredibly beautiful place for worshipping him.

Carol: And then God showed he was truly among them, by filling it with light, representing his presence. That must have really encouraged them.

Ros: But you know, there was one thing that seemed to be missing...this movable temple had no idol, no statue, no painting - nothing to represent God. It was the only temple in the world of that time that had *nothing in it* to worship!

Why do *you* think that was?

Carol: Well, I remember when God gave the Ten Commandments; one of them was that they were not to make any idol or image, even to represent God.

Tammy: That's right: because God can't really be pictured in any form that we can see or touch. God is much greater than anything we could *imagine*.

Ros: That's true. Later in God's word, we read these words:

"The Most High God does not live in houses built by men: as the prophet says, 'Heaven is my throne, says the Lord, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house would you build for me? ...Didn't I make all these things?'" (Acts 7:48-50 GNB)

Tammy: I'm sure he didn't mean that God has feet big enough to rest on our planet earth.

Ros: No...I think he was saying that they shouldn't think God could be pinned down to any one spot. He can't be kept in one place - there is nowhere in the whole universe where God is *not* present. He is everywhere and he is greater than we can *possibly* imagine.

Tammy: This is *Women of Hope*, and we're talking about the question, 'Where does God live?'

Ros: I'd like to read you one of the psalms, or poems, written about 3000 years ago by one of the Israelite kings. It goes like this:

God, where could I go to escape from you?
Where could I get away from your presence?
If I went up to heaven, you would be there:
If I lay down in the world of the dead, you would be there.
If I flew away beyond the east
Or lived in the farthest place in the west,
You would be there to lead me, you would be there to help me.
I could ask the darkness to hide me, or the light around me to turn into night,
But even darkness is not dark for you, and the night is as bright as the day.
(Ps 139:7-12, GNB)

Tammy: So we can't say that God lives only in a particular holy place, or a particular country.

Carol: I like that ...it's so good...it means we can worship him anywhere, at any time. We don't have to make a pilgrimage, or be in a church or temple...we can pray to him at *any* time, and he hears us. As that psalm said, he is wherever we are, in order to guide and help us - because he loves us so much.

Ros: We can't say *where* he lives. But you know, we can say *who* he lives *with*.

Tammy: That's an interesting thought. Who *does* he live with? What do *you* think?...

Ros: Let me tell you what God's word says.

'The Lord says... I am the high and holy God, who lives forever. I live in a high and holy place, but I also live with people who are humble and repentant, so that I can restore their confidence and hope.'
(Isaiah 57:15 GNB)

What do you think is that 'high and holy place?'... Yes, it *is* the whole universe, but it's more than that. It is really saying how completely *different* God's life is... high and holy compared with our small and sinful lives. Yet this amazing God says he will live with you, if you are humble and really sorry for the wrong things you do, and turn to him for forgiveness.

Carol: I still find that so amazing: that God, who created everything that exists, wants to live with me!

Ros: Yes, and he says he wants to build up your confidence...not confidence in yourself, but in God. If he is living *with* you and *in* you, you can face the world with confidence, can't you?

Carol: You know, my life was really changed, when I started to follow Jesus Christ, God's son. He has given me real hope for the future. He promised to never leave me or abandon me. That does give me great comfort and confidence. Why should I be afraid when God is with me? (Hebrews 13:5-6)

Ros: So in a way, God does have a temple to live in...the people who love and follow him, who have put their faith in Jesus. One of Jesus' followers wrote
' For we are the temple of the living God! As God himself has said,

“I will make my home with my people, and live among them.” (2 Corinthians 6:16 GNB)

So, God is everywhere, but he is especially at home in people who trust and obey him. Do you want him to be always with you?

Tammy: Ros, thank you for telling us about the beautiful tent of the Lord’s presence. Yes, it must have been wonderful, but it is even more wonderful that he wants to live with us, to give us a future and hope.

Just before we finish today, Fran would like to share a story with us about a friend of hers and how she made her house into a home...

Fran: I have a friend who used to live in a draughty shed with her two little children, after her drunken husband had left them. She felt hopeless and it was all she could do to feed her family. The shed was dirty and leaked, and they slept on the floor. There was no joy in that shed, believe me. But she heard people talk about Jesus, and she was interested - a friend who cared for her? She believed in Jesus and asked him to be her Savior and her master.

She felt that her life had some purpose now, and she started to clean up the shed. She found boards and nailed them over the holes. When she found flowers on the roadside she would pick them and put them in a jar. She started to wash and hang up their clothes, and keep herself and the children clean. She put the pictures from an old calendar on the bare wooden walls.

She started to go to a prayer meeting, and some of her new friends helped her with some old blankets and curtains. And she began to play with her boys and sing to them her new songs about Jesus. They still lived in a shed, but it had become a happy home. She was a new woman - and after some time her boss saw what a strong and smart woman she was, and gave her a better job. Now she has managed to send her boys to school, and they have a small, clean, bright house to live in.

Every day she thanks God for her house that is truly a home.

Tammy: Thank you Fran.

If you have any questions about the things we’ve talked about, you can write to us in care of this station or at *Women of Hope*. The email address is: TWRWomenofHope.org. And don’t forget you can visit our website at TWRWomenofHope.org. Or visit our Facebook page.

We would love to hear from you about anything. We do hope you will be with us again. Have a great week filled with God’s blessings.