

Family influence/ Jesus, a Real Person

Tammy: Hello, my friend! Welcome to *Women of Hope*. Hello Carol. I like your hair today. Very pretty!

Carol: Thanks Tammy. Do you know, I had the strangest experience this morning. I looked in the mirror, and for a moment I thought my mother looked back at me!

Tammy: Oh, I know what you mean. We often look more and more like our parents as we get older. And isn't it strange looking at your child and seeing your sister or your husband? Today, we are going to talk about families and how they affect us. It might help us understand ourselves better, and maybe help us to pass on the good parts of our family heritage.

I enjoy listening to the older members of our family tell stories about when they were children, and about their parents and grandparents? Hasn't the world changed a lot in a couple of generations?

Carol: You know, all that history is part of who *you* are. Your family has a history; even if it's not written in books, it's written in *you*. There are patterns in families- like ways of raising children, for example, or family beliefs and values.

Tammy: The sort of jobs you do are often passed on...are your family farmers, or tradesmen and women, or medical workers or something else?

Carol: And there could be abilities that are strong in your family - are you musical, or good at math, or artistic, or inventive and practical? My family tends to be very musical. We all learned to play instruments and for many years as I was growing up – we sang together as a family.

Tammy: We teach *skills* to the next generation too, don't we? How to cook, perhaps, or fix things, sew, or grow plants. My father was a gardener, and he taught me how to prune trees and bushes - to cut off the old and dead wood by cutting cleanly at an angle above a healthy bud that is facing in the direction I want the tree to grow. He told me to prune in the coldest time of the year when the plant is not growing fast. I think of him every time I prune my rose bushes, and I feel proud that I have carried on his skill.

Carol: The most obvious thing we inherit from our parents is our body. Do you look like your mother or grandmother- do you have her eyes or hair? We each develop from a single cell that carries the genes from both our parents. That's g-e-n-e-s, by the way, not the blue jeans we wear! The genes determine everything about the new baby's body- will this child be tall, or have curly hair, big feet, or a turned-up nose?

Tammy: It's not just our appearance. We can inherit some diseases. You may have heard of hemophilia, which stops blood from clotting properly. It was common in the royal families of Europe because they used to marry their relatives. If you marry close relatives, especially if this happens

over several generations, there is more chance that your children will inherit diseases. My doctor was telling me that we can inherit a *tendency* towards some diseases. When you have a medical check-up the doctor usually asks if there is any family history of heart disease, diabetes, epilepsy or eye conditions... Some cancers, such as breast cancer, and some mental illnesses seem to be strong in some families. Don't feel that you are destined to get the disease- often it can be prevented. It's good to know if there are such problems in your family, because it helps you to take care of yourself and get regularly checked so any problem can be treated quickly.

Carol: I've noticed that in some families most of the members are overweight. I wonder...is obesity inherited?

Tammy: Well, you can inherit some problems that make it more likely, but more often it's the family's eating patterns that are the cause. That's passed on by example, not in the genes! If you come from a family with weight problems, you need to take special responsibility for your own eating and exercise, and what you feed your children.

Carol: I was thinking that we get a lot of our opinions and attitudes from our family. Sometimes we are told things are good or bad, and often we just learn these attitudes from the way people act. Do you just *accept* what you were told? Or maybe you just *reject* it because it comes from the family...some people feel they need to rebel. Or do you *consider* those attitudes, really *think* about them for yourself? Then you can decide what you want to keep from your family, and what you want to change.

Tammy: That sounds a wise way to do it. Because family traditions are not always good - for example, alcoholics often have a number of other alcoholics in their families. Violent parents often were treated violently themselves and learned that way of behaving to children- and so the suffering goes on.

Carol: Do you blame your ancestors or your family for the way you are? Well, they certainly influence you; but is that the only thing? Sometimes scientists argue about whether we are mostly shaped by *nature*- that means how we are born- or by *nurture*- that is, our family and surroundings as we grow up. Nature or nurture: both of them are very important, aren't they? They influence you a lot. But you know, you make *choices* and you can make *changes*. You can learn what is good from your family, and also from other places. We hope you learn some good ideas from *Women of Hope*! Never forget - you have choices, you are able to think for yourself and decide what is right. Your choices will shape you, just as much as your genes and your family heritage.

Tammy: Our choices about food and exercise certainly shape us! And they shape our kids. We need to think about what inheritance we are leaving to the next generation. Whether you are a mother, grandmother, aunt or friend, you are shaping young ones who listen and watch and copy. I think we need to be careful what we pass on to them. Let me ask you; what is the most important family value or tradition that you want to pass on? And is there one thing from your family that you DON'T want to pass on? Well, let's think about how to put that into practice this week.

Carol: Good idea Tammy.

Tammy: We've been talking about the way our families have shaped who we are now. Our friend Fran is with us again, and she's going to talk about Jesus and his ancestors.

Fran: Thanks Tammy, it's good to be with you all. While you were talking I was thinking about my family inheritance...not much money, but some wonderful examples. My mother is 93 and she still sets me a great example in lots of ways. She's a great-grandmother - a real ancestor!

Now, did you ever think that Jesus *had* ancestors? You might have wondered sometimes, 'Was Jesus a real live person, or a character from a myth or legend or made-up stories?' Today we want to talk about what we can know from the Bible and other writings.

Tammy: I see there are four accounts of the life of Jesus in the Bible. Three were written by people who knew Jesus personally: their names were Matthew, Mark and John. The other one was by Dr Luke, and he had talked to many men and women who *had* been there.

Fran: That's right Tammy; Matthew, Mark, Luke and John all tell us they are reporting what really happened, from his birth until he died and then was raised to life again. These men said that there were still many eye-witnesses alive when they wrote, people who could confirm that they were telling the truth. So, they would be careful to write the real facts.

Sometimes when there has been an accident or a robbery, the police talk to different witnesses, who often report different things that they noticed, even though they are all telling the truth. Well, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are a bit like that. Their four stories highlight different things, even when they are describing the same event. They sound like four witnesses of Jesus' life; they noticed different things, or thought different things were important, but basically, they agreed on what happened.

Carol: Can you tell us exactly when Jesus was born?

Fran: Well, in the Bible, Luke wrote that Jesus was born during the reign of the great Roman emperor Augustus. He gives the name of the governor of the region. Later he tells us Pilate was governor and Herod was king at the time Jesus was killed. These names can be found in the records of the Roman Empire, so scholars can work out pretty closely when Jesus was born. It was probably in the year 4 BC, according to the dating system used now in most of the world.

Carol: That makes it a bit more than 2000 years ago. It's in real, recorded time, not back in pre-historic times.

Fran: Oh yes. The Roman Empire ruled all around the Mediterranean Sea, and they kept lots of written records that still exist. Jesus was mentioned by a few other writers in the first hundred years after his death. They were Roman and Jewish men who had heard of him and his followers but were not Christians themselves. And of course, there are letters and writings by other followers; some of them are in the Bible but there are many others.

The Bible also tells us *where* he lived, and these other writers agree that he lived in the Roman province of Palestine, which is now the country of Israel. It tells us the town that his family came from,

Nazareth, and the town where he was born, Bethlehem, and then the city where he was killed, Jerusalem. All these places are still known today; you could go there.

Tammy: So, we know *when* Jesus lived, and *where* he lived. Now let's talk about his family.

Fran: Is it important to you to know who your ancestors were? Many cultures, all over the world, keep records of their family lines, and some learn them off by heart.

Carol: Yes - I read that the Maori people of New Zealand were expected to recite all their ancestors, back to when they first arrived in New Zealand, hundreds of years earlier.

Fran: I can't recite my ancestors, but I have papers where their names are all written down, going back for a few hundred years. They were born in different countries- England and the Netherlands, Sri Lanka and Australia. We call it our family tree. Is it like that in your family? Do you know your family tree? Are you proud of your ancestors? Maybe you are - or maybe not - some of us have things in our families that we don't like to talk about. Well, you are not responsible for what your ancestors did!

Fran: Well, what about Jesus' ancestors? The New Testament is the part of the Bible that tells about Jesus and his followers. It starts like this: (Matt 1:1-2, GNB)

'This is a list of the ancestors of Jesus Christ, a descendant of David, who was a descendant of Abraham. From Abraham to King David, the following ancestors are listed: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob....' And so it goes on to list 42 generations. There is another list that goes back even further. (Luke 3) You see, the Jewish people did keep very good records of their families.

We read about many of these ancestors in parts of the Bible that were written much earlier - the section we call the Old Testament. Jesus knew who his ancestors were...some of them were kings, some of them were common folk, some were people of different races and colors. The list includes women as well as men. God had promised these people, such as Abraham and King David, that he would use their descendant to bless and save the whole world. God kept his promise when he sent Jesus.

Carol: The early followers of Jesus had no doubt that he was a real, flesh and blood human being. We mentioned John before; well, he wrote, 'We have heard him, seen him, and touched him with our own hands.' (1 John 1:1)

Fran: Yet they also were sure that Jesus was more than just an ordinary man.

Let me tell you a story from God's true word, the Bible. Jesus and his followers had been traveling, walking the dusty roads from village to village, town to town, teaching about God's kingdom and healing the sick. These followers had seen some absolutely marvelous things. Now here is the story. (Matt 16: 13-17)

As they were walking along, chatting, Jesus asked them, 'Who are the people saying that I am?' 'Oh,' one said, 'some say that you are John the Baptizer, who the king executed, come back to life.'

Another said, 'I've heard them say you could be the prophet Elijah.'

'Yes, or one of the other prophets raised to life again.'

But then Jesus asked a more direct question: 'Who do *you* say that I am?'

Hmm... I guess they looked at each other, till Peter spoke up. Peter, who was so often the leader, quick to speak his mind. He blurted it out; 'You are the Messiah. You are the Son of the living God!' Then Jesus said 'You are right, Peter. You didn't work this out for yourself; God has shown this to you.'

Tammy: Let's think about this story. Who did people say Jesus was? I would expect people to say Jesus was a great teacher...or that he performed miracles...

Carol: And maybe that's why they linked him to John the Baptizer, who had been a famous preacher, or to Elijah, who had done miracles long before. But that was a very bold thing for Peter to say, wasn't it? Remember - he called Jesus the Messiah? Do you know what the word 'Messiah' means?

Tammy: It means the same as 'Christ' - *Messiah* and *Christ* both mean the Anointed One, the person appointed by God, the Savior who God had promised long ago to send into the world. The people were all looking and hoping that he would come to rescue them from the Romans who had conquered them.

Fran: And then, what else did Peter say? He said, 'You are the Son of the living God'. This was going even further - he recognized that Jesus was much more than a good man, or a prophet; he was truly divine. Well, that's something for you to really think about, isn't it? Because Jesus' question still hangs in the air: 'Who do *you* say that I am?'

Carol: Who is Jesus? We will be hearing more stories about Jesus on *Women of Hope*, true stories that will help you make up your mind about who Jesus really is, and what he is like, and why so many people still want to follow him. *We* really believe this: that Jesus lives today, that he values you, he loves you, and he wants to bring hope to you.

Tammy: So, we hope you can be with us each week on *Women of Hope*, as we share together - things that are important in our daily lives, and things that are important for our souls. Goodbye till next week.

Fran: And I'll look forward to joining you sometimes, to tell these stories of Jesus. They are stories that have brought hope and love into my life, and I love to share them with *you*, my friend. Goodbye for now.

Tammy: You can contact us, care of this station...we love to hear from you. You can email us. The address is: TWRWomenofHope@twr.org. And don't forget you can visit our website: TWRWomenofHope.org. Or visit our Facebook page. Have a good week, full of God's blessings!