

Helping Children Learn

Tammy: Sarah walks along the dusty road towards her home from school. She drags her feet in the dirt as she walks. Tears stain her pretty face. “I’m no good,” she thinks...everyone else in my class can do that work – why can’t I?” Other children run past her happily talking and laughing together...

Carol: Hello and welcome to *Women of Hope* – that special time we always look forward to sharing with you...

Now I wonder what’s wrong with Sarah. Why is she feeling so miserable as she walks home? And I wonder what her mother will say to her?

Tammy: When Sarah finally got home her mother, didn’t notice her sad face. “Sarah – you have jobs to do before dinner – please go and do them now!” Obediently, she set off to collect water from the well and feed the animals. She was only seven, but already she was feeling bad about herself...

Sarah’s thoughts told her, “You’re no good! Everyone else in your class can do that school-work, why can’t you? Sarah, you are useless and stupid! Now you have brought shame on your family by giving the teacher the wrong answer!”

“I don’t want to go to school tomorrow!” she decided.

Carol: Poor Sarah! What a sad story. I wonder what happened in her day to make her so sad. Surely not just getting one wrong answer!

Kim, you’re a teacher...thanks for coming today to talk to us. Tell us how this kind of situation can happen and what we can do about it.

Kim: It *is* a sad story, but that’s how many children feel after a day at school. Many children go home at the end of the day feeling sad because they’re having difficulty learning things at school. Often their teachers don’t realize as they can be very quiet students and hold their feelings in. Today, I thought we might talk about how we can help children like Sarah who are finding school difficult.

Carol: Great! Learning is so important... I always wanted my children to do their very best. But I can remember how difficult it was when I was at school to learn some things... like math. I would practice the exercises many times and still not get the right answer. I was just like Sarah, especially when I had a test in math. I didn’t want to go to school on those days.

Kim: You know...I often teach students who find learning difficult. Sometimes they find it hard to just sit still and listen. For others, there’s one subject that they can’t understand. It’s really important to remember that most children will have difficulty with their school-work at some stage.

Carol: So...if this happens so often, what can mothers do to help?

Kim: It’s really quite simple... Do you know that one of the easiest ways to help your child to be successful at school is to simply believe that learning is *important* for them!

Carol: Is that really true? It sounds *too* simple.

Kim: Yes, it *is* true... Your child will do a lot better at school if they *know* that you think learning is important. Did you notice in our story that Sarah’s mother didn’t *appear* to care about Sarah’s day at all? Maybe she did care – but did she show it when Sarah got home from school? No – you’re right –

she didn't did she! She didn't ask any questions about what Sarah had done at school that day. She was thinking about her list of things to that needed to be done before dinner.

Carol: I understand how her mother felt!

Kim: I do too! But showing you care about your child's day is important. If you're a mum who walks your child home from school, talk to your child as you walk together... Or if your child comes home on the bus you could talk as you prepare the meal. However you do it, it is *very* important that you talk to your children about what they did at school during the day. You could ask them: 'What did you like most about school today?' Or, 'Which story did you read today?' This shows your child that what they do at school is important to you. And when they tell you – ask another question – or show some interest in their answer.

Carol: My mother was always interested in what I did at school when I was a child. I loved telling her about the stories I'd written or the pictures I'd drawn. I think she was so interested because she didn't get to go to school when *she* was young. She couldn't help me with my homework, but she asked lots of questions.

Kim: What a great example she gave you... Another way to show your interest in your child's schooling is to make sure that they have time to do any home work or study that they have. You're showing that education is important by reminding them to do their homework. You can do simple things like, buying them new pencils or giving them space to store their school books. Always make sure that they have a suitable space for doing their homework too. This shows them that you think their learning is important.

Carol: It's a good feeling when someone cares about you and is interested in you.

Kim: It certainly is – it makes a big difference to how you feel about yourself doesn't it?

Carol: But how do we help our children when they just *cannot* understand something... like Sarah, in the story? She couldn't do her work...well she *thought* she couldn't!

Kim: Well...the first, and most important thing, is to make sure your child knows that you love them. They need to know and see that you love them all of the time, and not just when they're doing things well. Words of encouragement, spending time with them and hugs are great ways to demonstrate how much you care for them.

The next step is to help your child realize that getting answers wrong and not being able to understanding are a normal part of learning something new. Can you remember a time when you were learning something new, but you made lots of mistakes?

Carol: Oh that's easy! Especially when I'm cooking. I try a new recipe and it doesn't taste very good. I often have to try it two or three times for it to work well.

Kim: That happens to me too! As adults we know that it's difficult to learn something new, but we must try to let our children know that we understand. I'm sure Sarah's mother would have understood how sad she felt about answering the question incorrectly!

Carol: Definitely! All of us have experienced the feeling of not doing something right? Haven't we?

Kim: I think so. But it always feels good when someone else says they understand. I always feel better when I know that other people have had the same problems as me. It feels good to know that we're not alone in our hard times.

Carol: So if your child has had a bad day, first you need to show them your love. Then you can let them know you understand that learning is hard and it's normal to find school hard... But how do you help them improve in any weak area?

Kim: Well, let's use your example Carol. You said that when you were young you found math hard to learn.

Carol: Yes.

Kim: So let's pretend your child is having trouble with math. One way you can help is to go and talk to your child's teacher and ask *them* for advice. They should be able to give you some ways to help. The problem could be as simple as your child not doing their homework. The teacher might also have some books that they can lend you so that your child can practice some of the work at home. The teacher may also explain to you the method for doing that particular kind of math so that you can go through it with your child at home when there is time to help them. A time when they are not under pressure to get it right at school.

Carol: So, you could ask the teacher for help! Good idea...I'm sure the teacher would be happy to help. Any more suggestions?

Kim: Actually, yes! Another way to help your child learn is to find someone *e/se* who can help them. Sometimes a child needs some extra help from someone, who is not their teacher, to understand their lessons well. Think about who you know that is good at math. Who do you know Carol that could help with math?

Carol: My older brother! He was better at math than me. He would help me with my homework when I was young. And he actually helped my children sometimes when they were in school.

Kim: What a great example! A member of the family, such as an aunt or uncle, older children or even a neighbor are good suggestions. This person could spend some time with your child and help them learn this information.

But, remember that your child is already feeling bad about not understanding this work. So you don't want them to feel bad about needing extra help too. They may feel discouraged if they have to do *lots* more of the very work they don't enjoy and find hard! So...it's *very* important that you try to make this extra study a fun time of learning.

Carol: These are great suggestions. I often used to feel helpless when my child was having trouble at school. And because I didn't always know the information, I felt like I couldn't help them. It's good to be reminded that there are other people who can help too.

Here on *Women of Hope* we're talking about helping our children learn – especially if they're having problems in some area at school.

Kim: Worrying about our children is common for mothers... It's natural to be concerned that they are doing well in their school work.

Carol: Yes I'm sure every mother spends some time worrying about her children and how they are doing at school. But if you are a person who worries a lot about things, be careful not to put your worries onto your child.

Kim: Yes – that's very important. Your child will quickly pick up that *you* are worried and may feel worse than they felt already!

Carol: When I first got married I worried about being the *perfect* wife and trying to cook like my mother in law. I wanted to make my husband proud of me. Did you feel like that?

Kim: I did! I think most newly married women feel like that – but of course our mothers-in-law have had a lot more experience than us – and there’s no way we can cook like them to start with is there!

Carol: No way!

Kim: I also worried about money and trying not to spend too much so that we could buy everything that we needed.

Carol: Yes, I think most of us understand how you felt!

Kim: But you know, during that time I heard some words from the Bible that helped me stop worrying. Can I tell you about them?

Carol: Yes, we’d like that!

Kim: These words were said by a man called Jesus. He is God’s Son and when he was on earth as a man, he spent a lot of his time teaching people about God.

On this day, Jesus was talking to a big crowd of people: men, women and children. Some of the people were friends of Jesus. Others were just curious to hear him speak, as he was getting pretty famous in the land and lots of people were talking about him.

Jesus liked to teach people wherever he was... so on this day, he was outside... on top of a hill. I like to imagine the crowd spread out around him, sitting in the shade of the trees. Maybe there were some wild flowers here and there, and a few goats grazing on the grass nearby. Some birds may have been flying down to feed on the grass seeds.

Carol: It sounds like it was a pleasant place... So what did Jesus actually say?

Kim: Well... what he said is written down in God’s Word, the Bible. Let me read it to you... (Matthew 6:25-34)

“... I tell you, do not *worry* about your everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn’t life more than food, and your body more than clothing?”

Look at the birds. They don’t plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren’t you far more valuable to him than they are? Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?

Let’s stop for a moment and think about that question... No matter what my situation is – if I don’t have enough food, or clothes for the family; or if my child is not doing well at school... can I help the situation by worrying about it? What do you think?

Let’s keep reading...

“And why worry about your clothing? Look at the flowers in the field and how they grow. They don’t work or make their clothing. And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith?

So don’t worry about these things, saying, ‘What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?’ These things dominate the thoughts of some people but God in heaven already knows all your needs... So don’t *worry* about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today’s trouble is enough for today.”

Carol: Thanks for reading that to us Kim.

Here on *Women of Hope* we've been talking about worry. So can we help any situation by being anxious and worrying about it? We can't can we? What encouraging words we have just heard! Jesus is telling his followers not to worry and to trust that God will care of their needs.

Tammy: Yes he is. I like it that Jesus talks about such everyday worries, like food and clothing. I worry about those things sometimes...don't you?

Jesus is showing how pointless worry is. All it does is make us anxious and emotional. It doesn't fix the situations we're facing.

Carol: That's true. When I worry I feel like my worries grow bigger and bigger. And you know, worry is not good for our health. It can stop you sleeping. I'm sure we all know what it's like to lie awake because we're worrying about something. Does that happen to you too?

Kim: ...Yes – I'm sure it happens to all of us. I like to remember the example Jesus gives of the birds to help me in those times. Let's think about birds for a minute. What use are they in the world?

Carol: Well, some are used for food... but mostly they sing, eat, fly, and lay eggs that produce baby birds. They are pretty but not very useful. Isn't it interesting that Jesus uses them as an example?

Kim: Let me explain the point Jesus is trying to make. Most birds don't do anything special, but God looks after their needs *because they were created by Him* and He cares for them. God doesn't care for them because they DO anything special. God looks after their needs because HE made them.

Carol: You might be thinking, 'That is a nice picture of God, but how does it relate to me?'

Kim: If you are thinking that - it's a good question. Remember, Jesus explained that God views people as being so much more valuable to Him than the birds. So, in just the same way that God cares for the birds...because he made them... He also cares for you. You too have been created by God's creation and he loves you.

Carol: But, what about when we *are* in need – and maybe we don't have enough food to eat? Does that mean that God doesn't love us?

Kim: There will always be difficulties in this world...because this world is not perfect. But have you ever helped the situation by worrying about things? God *does* love you – no matter what your need is. And he wants you to ask him to help you and to trust him to provide for you.

Now - here's one more thing that Jesus said to the crowd: "So don't worry about *tomorrow*, for tomorrow will bring its *own* worries. Today's trouble is enough for today." Do you often worry about tomorrow's problems? ...I sometimes do... I worry about things like how we will have enough money to pay for our child's wedding? Or even what will I do if my husband dies?

These are very *real* worries aren't they? But you know, these are worries about things that *might* happen. If we tried, I'm sure we could make up a whole list of things that *might* happen, or *might* go wrong. But will that make any difference to what is actually going to happen?

No – that's right – *none at all!* Jesus is telling us here to keep our focus on *today*. Doing this has helped me to reduce my worrying. And you know what? It gives me room in my mind to think about *other* people and *their* needs. When I am worrying, I find it difficult to really care for those around me. I don't notice someone's sad face or see how quiet my friend is being. When I trust God with tomorrow's worries and just think about how to live today, then I am able to find ways to help a friend

in need or encourage my children. My worries seem to become smaller as I begin to notice the needs of other people.

Carol: Thanks Kim – it's really encouraging for us to think about what Jesus said – can we make any difference to anything in our life by worrying? Well – I guess we can in a way...we can make a situation worse... The worry just makes the problem seem to get bigger and bigger until we feel like giving up. So – let's take what Jesus told us to do and not worry about tomorrow – but trust him to provide what we need.

And now, when you look at the birds remember Jesus' words. What were they?

Tammy: He said, 'They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren't *you* far more valuable to him than they are?'

Carol: And when you see a beautiful flower, remember what he said, 'if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will *certainly* care for you.'

Tammy: Just before we go I would like to share something from one of our listeners. She said: '*We praise the Lord for Women of Hope. Before...we didn't know how to solve our problems - relationships with our children. But now we know that in Jesus we can find a solution for everything.*'

I hope these words might encourage you to ask Jesus to help you too. We would love to hear from you. If you want to contact us, write to us at TWR Women of Hope. Our email address is TWRWomenofHope@TWR.org. Or visit our website at TWRWomenofHope.org. Or visit our Facebook page.

We do hope you will be with us again. Have a great week.

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