

The Tongue / Hurt or Heal

Carol: Hi Tammy... I'm sorry for being a few minutes late, but I had to go and help Cathy, my neighbor.

Tammy: Oh, that's ok Carol, you're not really late! But what happened...is she alright?

Carol: Well yes, she is but her little boy is not. She was so upset, that I decided to spend some time with her this morning to try and help her calm down.

Tammy: Mmm... it sounds serious!

Carol: Oh! not really...but as you know, this is her first child and she has to learn so many things as he's growing up.

Tammy: Ah...! Don't we all? But... Is he ok? What's wrong...what happened to him?

Welcome to *Women of Hope*...time for us to spend together. I'm Tammy...Carol...tell us, what happened to your neighbor's son.

Carol: It was a simple, little accident that happens to most children when they're learning to walk. He tripped, fell down and bit his tongue. When she saw all that blood she panicked!

Tammy: Ah yes...I remember once when I bit my tongue...I was amazed at how much my tongue bled. But not only that...for a few days I was so aware of my tongue...it felt big...and sore in my mouth! It's amazing how a simple bite becomes such a big thing!

Carol: Well, yes and poor Cathy. She was so scared and didn't know what to do – so she squeezed his tongue with a clean cloth until the bleeding stopped. She didn't want to hurt him anymore, so she decided not to clean his teeth for the next few days. She fed him only soft food, you know like soup or pureed vegetables, and milk from his bottle.

Tammy: But that seems all good, so why would she be so upset?

Carol: Well, because he hasn't improved. He's been crying all the time...he won't eat, won't drink out of his bottle and won't even suck his pacifier! And remember the cute way he was starting to speak? Little words like da,da, mama. He's not even talking at all now.

Tammy: Mmm... that doesn't sound too good! Poor Cathy! I can understand now why she's so upset. She must be feeling that it's all her fault! ...That maybe she didn't do the right thing.

Carol: Oh yes! She *is* blaming herself ...she keeps saying: "I'm a stupid mother... my poor baby must hate me..." But I told her it was an accident. I suggested that she should go and see her doctor. Of course, that's what she was planning to do.

Tammy: Yes, that sounds like a good idea now.

Carol: Welcome back to *Women of Hope*. Today we want to talk about the importance of the tongue and how to take care of it. Tita, our dentist friend, is here with us...

Tita: Hi girls. I'm glad to be here. Yes, it would be the best thing for Cathy to take her son to the doctor. It sounds like the wound on his tongue has become infected and he'll need some medicine to make it better. But Carol, do tell you friend Cathy that it's not her fault. She did what she thought was the right thing.

Carol: Yes I'll do that the first chance I get.

Tita: Many people think that the most important part of our mouth is our teeth...but we don't understand how important our tongue is.

Tammy: You know, the only time I have ever paid much attention to my tongue was that time when I bit it. It was awful to be so aware of a little part of my body that I didn't usually take notice of!

Tita: Of course...and do you know why? Did you know that the tongue is one of the organs of your body that you use the most...even when you're sleeping?

Tammy: Do you mean we talk in our sleep?

Tita: Well you *might* – but that's not what I mean!

There are many things we use our tongue for apart from talking... When you chew, it helps move food from one side of your mouth to the other so that your teeth can cut and crunch the food. While this is happening, our tongue allows us to taste different flavors: salty, sweet, bitter and sour.

Carol: Mm... so I must have a tongue that loves sweet taste: I love chocolate!

Tita: But that's not all Carol... if we did not have a tongue we could not swallow. Our tongue pushes our food backwards so that it can go down our throat into our stomach. Our tongues never rest! ...even at night. We all swallow saliva throughout the night!

Carol: Ah! That explains why the baby doesn't want to eat...it must be painful to use his tongue when it's swollen and has a cut! And babies use their tongues a lot to suck from their mother's breast – or from their bottle – don't they?

Tita: Yes, the tongue has many nerves and many blood vessels. This is why biting the tongue makes it very sore...and it bleeds a lot.

Tammy: But why is he in such pain after a few days, shouldn't he be better by now?

Tita: Yes – he should be. Your friend, Cathy, thought that she was doing the right thing – not cleaning his teeth so it wouldn't hurt him, but in fact that's the main problem now.

Tammy: Why Tita?

Tita: Well...we all have many different types of bacteria - little germs - that live in our mouths. Some are there to help make the food we chew soft, so we can swallow it, but others are 'bad bacteria'. When we are a bit sick, or our body's defenses are low, the bad bacteria can start causing infections.

Carol: So, when Cathy didn't clean her son's teeth – because she knew it would hurt his tongue, it actually made the problem worse!

Tita: Yes, that's it! When the bad bacteria start to eat the left-over bits of food, they produce substances that irritate the wound in the tongue even more! If you cut or bite your tongue – or your child bites his tongue like Cathy's son did – here are some things to remember to help it get better quickly:

- keep it as clean as possible by rinsing the mouth with warm salty water. Salt is good for helping to kill the bad germs.

- make sure the teeth and tongue are cleaned *every day after every meal!* ...with a soft toothbrush if you can.

But if you don't have a toothbrush, use a clean cloth. Just rub it over your teeth from top to bottom on the top teeth, and from bottom to top on your bottom teeth. To clean your tongue, scrape your top teeth gently over you tongue from back to front several times, being careful not to scrape too hard on the cut, or bite. Or with a young child, wipe their tongue gently with the cloth too.

When you've removed all the build up of food on your teeth and tongue, swish clean water around your mouth and through your teeth.

Tammy: Thanks, Tita for telling us how to take care of our teeth...and especially our tongue. It's a very important organ for chewing...swallowing...tasting our food and of course for speaking. We all need to clean it and take care of it every day.

Carol: And I'm going to go and see my friend Cathy and tell her that of course she's not a bad mother! She did what she thought was best.

So *Tita*, our tongue can be dangerous? ...Tell us what you mean by that?

Tita: Let me explain what I mean...

In God's word, the Bible, a very wise man, King Solomon, said: "Those who love to talk will experience the consequences, for the tongue can kill or nourish life". (Prov 18:21 NLT)

In other words, the things we say to ourselves, or to others, have power. They can help us or they can hurt us...or others.

Tammy: So you mean that Cathy is not helping herself because she's telling herself that she's a bad mother...and that she's stupid?

Tita: That's exactly right Tammy. If she keeps on telling herself these things, she'll start believing her own words...and she'll believe that she *is* stupid. And if we believe something about ourselves we might start doing those things. So the next time something happens to her son, she'll blame herself again...and think it's her fault.

Carol: Ah...yes...just the same as when someone else says bad things about you. I still remember my friend when I was at school... She was the youngest in the class and sometimes she took longer than other people to finish her work. The teacher would get impatient and shout at her: "Hurry up you stupid, slow turtle". My friend used to get so upset that she would feel very nervous and cry and be even slower with her work!

But the following year, she had a teacher who was nicer to her. She would tell her: "Don't worry, take your time, I'm sure your work will be wonderful". You know something...? This girl became much faster...she was able to keep up with everyone else...and she became much more confident!

Tita: Thanks Carol, that's a great example of what God's Word says isn't it? What we say can damage another person emotionally or it can help build them up. Often we

don't even think about what we say...

I was a good example of that. I have 2 sisters and one brother, and when we were young we used to say horrible things to one another...like most children do. Mum didn't like this and so she used to say: "If you don't have something nice to say to one another...bite your tongue and say nothing."

Tammy: Aha! That makes sense now! The tongue is used for speaking so if we can't use it for good, it would be better if we bit our tongue! (laughing) As we heard just before, when you have a sore tongue you don't speak much. Ah...this is why people sometimes say: "I was so angry...I had to 'bite my tongue' so I would not say something bad."

Tita: Can I tell you something else Tammy? I have to admit that for many years in my life I struggled with my tongue. I would get into trouble for saying nasty things to people. I wanted to stop doing this but it was too hard and I often felt very discouraged. I just could *not* control my tongue!

But one day I when was reading the word of God, I realized that the problem with the tongue is not something new. People in ancient times struggled with it too. On one occasion a man called James (Jesus' brother) was talking to a group of people. They must have been struggling with the tongue problem too because this is what James said to them: "This is scary, you can tame a tiger, but you can't tame the tongue - it's never been done. The tongue runs wild. With our tongues we bless God our Father; with the same tongues we curse the very men and women he made in his image. Curses and blessings out of the same mouth!" (James 3: 7-10 The Message)

Carol: Wow – have you ever thought of your tongue as a wild tiger! But that's a good picture of how we can hurt other people by saying nasty things. I'm sure everyone finds it difficult really – to control their tongue. Do you...? I know I do sometimes.

Tita: But thank goodness we don't have to try to do this all on our own. I was so excited when many years ago I heard about Jesus, and how he could help me. I learned that I could have a personal relationship with him, so I invited him into my life. I started experiencing his power to help me with things that were impossible for me! I confessed to him that I had a 'tongue problem'. He began to help me. And even now, many years later, he's still helping me...all the time...*not* to say the wrong thing!

Tammy: How does this happen Tita?

Tita: Well, when I'm about to say something nasty, I can sense him telling me to take a deep breath...and *think* before I speak. I get excited because if I obey that 'small voice' I *am* able to stop...think...and *not* say something bad. ...Or change, and say something *good* instead.

But, of course, I don't *always* get it right. Sometimes I still make mistakes and use my tongue badly. But when I realize what I've said and that it's hurt the other person, I tell them I'm sorry. That won't take back what I said, but it will help the other person to *feel* better...and to know that I didn't really *mean* it. ...I was not thinking before I spoke. And Jesus knows that it takes a long time to make this change in my life. As long as I immediately confess to Jesus when I fail, he forgives me and I can move on. And he is always there to help me. I can honestly say that I have much better control of my tongue now!

Carol: Thank you Tita. It's so good to know that we can always ask Jesus to help us...in any situation.

Tita: You're welcome. It's been good to be here with you today.

Carol: Here on *Women of Hope today we've been talking about controlling our tongue.* God's word says: "The tongue has the power of life and death and those who love it will eat its fruit" (Prov 18:21 NIV). If you're having trouble controlling your tongue, like most of us do, remember that the *only* one who has the power to help you is Jesus. Don't struggle on your own anymore!

Tammy: We'd like to read you a letter from one of our listeners in Cambodia about how she learned to use kind words. This is what she said...

'I am 39 years old and I have 3 children...Before I listened to the *Women of Hope* program, I was a bad mother because when I got angry with my children I always hit them and said bad things. But after I listened to the program, and learned about Jesus, I changed. I learned to be patient and I told myself, "You should talk to the children in soft words". Honestly, the program really helps me. I like to listen so much. When I go anywhere, I always bring the radio with me. One request, Please add more time in the program because it is very short for me.'

Carol: My friend, I'm so glad you enjoy listening to our program and that you've learned to talk to your children in 'soft words'. We all need to do that don't we! God bless you as you keep depending on Jesus to help you speak in this way to your children.

We've enjoyed being with you today on *Women of Hope*. Before we finish, we have a new friend here to tell us something about praying...talking to God. Welcome Monette

Monette: Thank you Carol, and hello to you...

How do you feel about praying? What *is* praying? Let me ask you - how do you feel when a little child is just learning to talk? When he can say some things clearly but often you can't understand his words. Or when he can't find the words at all and just shows you by pointing, or by a hug, or tears. I guess you don't mind the mixed-up words and mistakes, because you love your child and want to hear him, or her...you love it when they talk to you.

Do you feel like that little child when you talk to God? Maybe you feel that you don't know the right words to say. But I want to say - prayer is simply a heart-felt conversation - talking *with* God and *to* God. You don't need special religious words. God is our Father and he loves us. He wants to listen to us, as we speak from our hearts...to him.

The best way to learn to pray is...to pray! We don't need to understand all about something to use it do we? I don't understand how the radio works - but I use it because I really want to share my heart with you. If you really want to share your heart with God, he will listen, no matter how you mumble or stumble as you try to find the right words. So - you can start talking to God right now. He understands every word you say...and those you can't say.

(Based on *Prayer; talking with God*. Stonecroft Ministries, 2006. Used with permission)

Tammy: Thank you Monette. Remember you can contact us if you want to know more about how Jesus can help you to share your kind words with others...so they will have good medicine.

Carol: Good bye from both of us – and God's blessings on you during this coming week.

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