

Receiving Help/ You are a Gift

Carol: We women often help other people don't we? We might help children to learn something, or help people at work. We might cook a meal for the family, or help our husbands ...or listen to a friend who's upset, or help an elderly relative. There are many woman who help others so easily and naturally. But sometimes we find it hard to let others help *us*. Do *you* find it hard to *ask* for help? Hello my friend! I'm Carol, and you're with Women of Hope. Did *you* receive help from someone today?

What about you Tammy: is it easy for you to ask someone to help you?

Tammy: Oh, Carol, I have often been in situations where I've needed help or needed someone to step in. I used to feel awkward, but as I've gotten older I learned that help from someone else is a blessing! I can't everything all by myself.

Carol: I've often told you about my friend Stevie. She has something she wants to share with us today. I can understand Stevie easily, but you might have difficulty, so Tammy's going to read what Stevie wrote down for us.

Tammy: It's Stevie here. I'm glad to share some words and thoughts with you again. You might remember me... and that I have a disability called cerebral palsy. So I don't have complete control of my muscles and the movements of my body. I need a walking frame to help me walk, and my speech is slow, and a little bit hard to understand. I can think well though. I hope you can tell that by the words that I've written down. I want to talk especially to *you* if you have a disability and you need people to help you.

You've probably already guessed that because I have a disability, I sometimes need help. Actually, I'm pretty independent. I can do most things for myself. But yes, I do need help with some things. In fact, my mum *helps* me so that I can be *independent*. Are you wondering what I mean by that? Well...my mum makes my lunches, and puts drinks in cups, and my breakfast in a bowl each day before she goes to work. Then during the day I can get my own food and drinks out whenever I want them. And my family built a ramp to the door so I can get in and out of the house by myself without having to use steps. I have a plastic handle attached to the door key so I can turn it myself. My cup has a strong plastic straw so I can drink without spilling my coffee. My spoon is bent so I can get it into my mouth more easily. These are simple things but they make a big difference to me. See, sometimes it's good to help people so that they can help themselves and be independent.

If you have a disability, what might help *you* to be more independent? A rail and a plastic chair in the bathroom could allow you to shower, and use the toilet without help. Maybe a rubber mat on the floor would stop you slipping. Bigger or different shaped handles on doors could help you to open and close them more easily. Is there enough space for you to get around the house? You might need things to be put in lower places, so you can reach them. Or you may need more light in your house or workplace so you can see better. Someone might be able to smooth the paths that you use. And could someone make sure you can slip your jewelry on and off easily? That's a little thing but important to a woman!

Maybe you could talk with others about what things could be done to help you to be more independent. Be creative!

Tammy continues: I'm 29 years old, and I still need help with things like preparing food, making a cup of coffee, cutting my fingernails, putting on and taking off some of my jewelry, writing things down when I'm not at my computer where I can type things, and using some types of plugs. I can't drive a car, so I often need my family and friends to take me in their car. And sometimes I drop things, and I need someone to pick them up for me.

I used to feel bad because I always need help from people. I used to think that I was a burden on my family and friends. But then someone told me that I'm not a burden, I'm a blessing. God can use me to bring good things into the lives of my family and friends. At first, I found that really hard to believe. But I knew that it must be true. Have you ever found it hard to *believe* something that you *know* is true? Maybe you find it hard to believe that God really loves you...or that you are precious and special. I had to learn that I was not a burden, I was a blessing. God made me so I could worship him and make the lives of others richer and better. So every time I started thinking that I was a burden, or I felt bad because I needed to ask for something, I told myself, "I am *not* a burden, I am a blessing!" And slowly, slowly, over time, as I kept telling myself the truth instead of a lie, I started to *really* believe the truth – that I *am* a blessing, and not a burden. And that I wanted to *act* like a blessing! If you're struggling to believe a truth, tell yourself that truth every time you doubt it. Then maybe, in time you'll start to *really* believe it...just like I learned to do.

So the truth is, that even if you need lots of help, you can be a blessing and make other people's lives richer. In fact some people *love* to help others. But unfortunately, some people might not be so happy to help. They might be tired, or grumpy, or just not able to help. You might be able to wait until you can ask someone else to help you. Or you might have to ask someone to help you when they don't feel like doing it. It just means that they're not perfect and things in this world are not perfect. They have their own problems, they struggle, ...just like everyone else does. Sometimes if they help you, it *might* make their life more difficult at that time, and that means they have to choose how to respond. They can learn and grow through that. But remember, that's their choice, not yours.

I realized that I can bring good things into my friends' lives...and then I began to feel like my friendships were more even and equal. You see, I used to feel like my friends were always giving to me, and that I wasn't giving enough back to them. But the truth is, I *do* give back to them and contribute to their lives. Our relationships are about so much more than what *I* need. We talk together, laugh together, share our joys and struggles, support each other and pray for each other. The things that I need help with are just a little part of our friendships. The people that I love, love me too, and so they don't mind helping me.

Carol: Can I interrupt? I must say I've learned a lot from being friends with Stevie. I've learnt from the way she trusts in God. I've learned to be more patient, to accept that it's ok to go slowly, to value just having time together, to not always be doing things. It's helped me to accept my own weakness in other areas. We all are weak or disabled in some ways, but we have things we're really good at too. So Stevie has blessed me.

Tammy: Stevie went on: I think it's important to consider what other people need, as well as what I need. Sometimes I don't ask someone for help because I know they're having a difficult time, or they're really busy or tired. They might have other things they need to do, or they're not well. Sometimes I let them know that I need help, but that I'm happy to wait for a time that is convenient for them – even if it's a few days...or longer. It's good if there are several people in your life who you can ask for help. Then you can ask different people at different times...when you know it would be more convenient for them. Of course sometimes you might need to ask for urgent help from the one person you trust the most. Try not to rely on one person all the time, because though you may be a special

part of their lives, there are other people and important things in their lives too. And they need to take care of themselves too.

When you need help, can I encourage you to ask for it? Let people know what kind of help you need. If people try to help when you don't need help, you can gently let them know that you would rather do those things for yourself.

Carol: That's something I've learned from Stevie: to ask whether she needs help, rather than think I know what she needs. She will ask me if she needs me to do anything! I don't always get it right, but she's patient with me. Let's listen to this song, and then we'll hear more from Stevie.

We've been talking about times when we need help from others. Tammy, can you read some more from our friend Stevie?

Tammy: Sure. Stevie wrote: I'm so grateful for when people help me in big ways and little ways. I think being grateful helps me to keep happy. Sometimes people try to help me in ways that are *unhelpful*. They might try to help me with something that I don't need help with...or misunderstand what I'm asking for. But I appreciate that they're just trying to help... so I'm usually thankful that they want to be kind. God's Word, the Bible says, "Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love." (Ephesians 4:2 New Living Translation). They need to be patient with me, and I need to be patient with them!

Sometimes I have to tell them how to help me, but I think it's important to tell them kindly, because they were being kind to me. And I always thank them, even if they make a mistake while they're trying to help. Sometimes I don't tell them so that they don't feel bad.

I helped someone a lot, over many years...just by listening to her, and talking to her about her problems. We talked most days, sending messages to each other on our computers. Most days I gave her some of my time and some of my energy. But she always thought I wasn't doing enough for her. Can you imagine how I felt? Hurt, angry, and unappreciated.

Every bit of help someone gives us is a gift and I think we should accept it as a gift. If we're not grateful, but angry because they're not doing even more for us, that can hurt them very much.

Carol: Here on Women of Hope, Tammy's been reading us some words from Stevie, who has a disability called cerebral palsy. Let's hear what else she wrote.

Tammy: I said before that you're a blessing, you bring something unique to the people around you... Even if you need lots of help you can still bless others. Carol's a blessing... Tammy's a blessing... I'm a blessing too! And there is a reason why I say this. You see God, the one true God, the Father, created you. He had you in his mind long, long before the world began. He loves you very much. And one reason he created you was to be a *gift* to those around you.

God knew everything that you would be...your personality, likes, dislikes, your talents and strengths, and even your weaknesses...everything that you are. And he loves you! He placed you in the world, and so you can enjoy all the things that he's created...sunshine, rain, food, colors, tastes, relationships, and many other things. They're all gifts, aren't they? And he placed other people around you for you to enjoy: he also placed you where you are, so that you can bring joy to others! Do you believe that? You are God's gift to the world...to those around you. You can be a blessing! Even if you can't *do* much, you can be a blessing to others. Sometimes it's just by being yourself. You might feel like you can't give back to those who help you so much...but you *can*...just by being you.

Carol: It's interesting that Stevie said that. I wonder if she was thinking about Andy. Our friend Flo had a child with a severe disability. The only thing Andy could ever do was smile, and Flo had to do everything for him. Yet Flo says that he was a great blessing to their family and she learnt a lot about God and about love from her precious son in the few years that he lived. Her other children also learned how to be gentle and patient as they cared for their brother. They loved him dearly and they still say that little Andy was God's gift to them.

Tammy: It's so good to know that you're valuable, just because God made you. I think we also need to *use* whatever gifts and abilities God has given us, to bless others. We need to think about how we respond to people who help us. I know Stevie does that - she blesses others by who she is *and* by what she does and how she does it.

Carol: Stevie's been telling us that each of us is valuable. God's Word, the Bible, says that too.

Paul was one of the first leaders of the Christian church. He went about preaching and telling people about Jesus. God sent his son Jesus to show us what God is like...and to teach us how to live...and to give his life to bring us back to God. Many people believed in Jesus and they formed groups that were the beginning of the church. Some of these believers were Jewish, many were from other countries. There were men and women, old people and young people, rich and poor; some healthy, clever people and some with disabilities. You can imagine - they would not always get along with each other! Some thought they were special, or *their* gifts and talents were most important to the church; others thought they didn't have *anything* to contribute.

So Paul wrote to them and said that God has given spiritual gifts to all his followers. He said that all God's followers need each other. They need each other just the same way that all the different parts of a human body depend on each other. Listen to what he wrote; these words are in the Bible today.

'There are different ways of serving, but we are all serving the same Lord. There are different abilities... but the same God gives ability to everyone for their particular service. The presence of the Holy Spirit of God is shown in some way in each person, *for the good of all.*' (1 Cor 12:5-7)
'If the whole body were an eye, how would you hear? Or if your whole body were an ear, how would you smell anything?... The eye can never say to the hand, "I don't need you." The head can't say to the feet, "I don't need you."' (1 Corinthians 12:17-21 New Living Translation).

Paul also wrote that we should use our different gifts with our whole heart, and with love. That's because God gave them to us out of *his* love. (Rom 12:6-13)

Tammy: So Stevie went on to say: You know, every single part of a body has its own job to do. Every part of the body is *really* needed. The Bible says that God's followers all *really* need each other, and God has given each one of us a unique role to play. You see, God has given each of us our own personality, talents and gifts, so we can bless his other followers, and bless the world. So we all need each other. If one person was missing, we would all miss the blessing that they could be. If *you* were missing, those around you would miss out.

God has made you just the way you are. He loves you, delights in you and has given you as a gift to the world, and to those around you. No matter what you can or can't do, or how much help you need, you certainly can be a great blessing to others.

Carol: And you know, *you* bless and encourage us, especially when you pray for us or write to us. We would love to hear about your life, and pray for you too.

Tammy: Goodbye my friend. I pray that God will bless you, and make you a blessing to those around you.

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