

# Trash / Forgiving

**A:** Hello Gwen, welcome to our village. How are you getting on with your new house and garden?

**B:** The garden's going quite well, Naren, but we don't know what to do with all our trash! In the city we had trash collectors who took it all away in a truck, but in the village we have to deal with it all ourselves! We have piles of plastic bags, bottles, tin cans and things like that. We don't know what to do with it all. And it's the same for all the people here. There's rubbish all along the road. It's a mess, and the rats are really enjoying it! I know it's breeding germs that will make people sick! What can we do?

**Tammy:** Carol, it sounds like this small village is having trouble with their rubbish.

**Carol:** It does, and I know it is a concern because rubbish that is just left out can be a source of all kinds of problems.

**Tammy:** Hello my friend! This is Women of Hope, and today we are going to address the problem of rubbish.

**Carol:** Many cities and towns have trucks that pick up rubbish, and they often have ways of sorting it out. Some rubbish can be recycled.

**Tammy:** That means it can be used in some way and made into other things. It's really good to recycle paper, glass, plastics and metal. But if you don't have a recycling system, or a rubbish collection system, where you live, what can you do?

**Carol:** Let's think about how we can overcome most of those rubbish problems ourselves.

**Tammy:** Well, Carol, let's start small – like with our left-over food scraps. Maybe we can make soup or something from them. But if they're not suitable to eat, we can bury them in the garden and the worms will turn them into good soil.

**Carol:** Or we can make a compost heap for fruit and vegetable scraps, and garden rubbish. Now, we've talked about that before. An old rubbish bin makes a good compost container. You make some big holes in the bottom and bury it so that just a bit shows above the ground. Put your vegetable scraps and garden rubbish in there and put the lid on. When it's full, start filling another bin. By the time that's full, the rubbish in the first bin will have become very good fertiliser. Put it on the garden and then start filling the bin again. Worms and insects break down the plant rubbish and turn it into compost for the garden.

**Tammy:** You can bury tin cans too. They're OK because they will eventually rust and become part of the soil. You can use them for storing things and then when they're too old or have holes in them you can bury them. They're good for the soil.

**Carol:** And paper or cardboard will also break down in the soil.

**Tammy:** Yes, we do that. We sometimes tear up paper and dig it into the ground, or we spread bundles of wet paper on the ground between the plants. It helps to stop the weeds.

Of course you can burn paper too, if you have a fuel fire. I've seen people make fuel blocks from piles of old paper. You shred it or tear it up and then soak it in water for a few hours. Or soak it first then tear it up - either way is good. The wet paper becomes a bit like clay. You mash it up and shape it into blocks or flattened balls with your hands, squeezing the water out of it. Then you just need to leave it in the sun to dry. When they're really dry, you store the blocks and use them as fuel. Paper is made from wood so it's bit like burning wood.

**Carol:** That's a great idea - turning rubbish into free fuel for the fire. I'm sure the children would enjoy making those paper fuel blocks.

**Tammy:** But what about glass and plastic? They're our main problem. They don't break down if you bury them.

**Carol:** We all keep a few glass and plastic containers to store food or other things. But what if you have more than you need, and no-one else wants them?

**Tammy:** Some people use glass bottles to make walls. They will last a long time and when they are all stuck together with cement they can make a strong wall that looks good and lets the light in. You may be able to make one in your garden or even as part of your house.

**Carol:** That sounds like fun! But what can we do with plastic? Most types of plastic won't break down. You could fill plastic bottles with sand and use them to make walls, the same as glass bottles.

**Tammy:** You said plastic doesn't break down, so we must not let it get in the streams and rivers. It would be bad for the fish.

**Carol:** And it's even worse when it does break into small bits. The fish and turtles and other sea creatures eat it and die.

**Tammy:** So, what can we do with all our plastic bags and other plastic rubbish? It's not a good idea to burn them. When plastic is burned it gives off dangerous gases that can make us sick. Don't burn it! Try to re-use plastic containers for storing things.

But I think the best thing to do is to simply use less plastic and glass or anything else that you can't get rid of easily. Maybe you can take your own containers back to the market or store, instead of buying food in bottles and packets. Less packaging means less rubbish.

**Carol:** Now let's talk about something a bit more delicate - our own personal - human waste? I hope you're not too embarrassed to talk about that.

**Tammy:** What's the best way to deal with human waste, if you don't have a sewage system and you don't have much water?

**Carol:** This is a common problem in many parts of the world today.

**Tammy:** Well, it's OK to just bury it each day, so long as you dig fairly deep holes, and cover it with a good layer of soil each time. It will be eaten up by the little creatures in the soil, such as bacteria, fungi and worms. And when it's broken down it will be good for your field or garden. This is much cleaner and safer than just using a field or garden as a toilet, and it's better for the soil too.

**Carol:** One of the most valuable things that a community can do to improve their health is to work together to build toilets or latrines. There are many different types of toilets. It depends on the type of soil, and how much water there is. If your town or village doesn't have a good toilet system, talk to your village leaders, or to other women, and find out what would suit your situation the best. And whatever you decide together, remember it needs to be built in a place where waste cannot get into any wells or rivers.

**Tammy:** And do ask them to make it easy for women, disabled people, and old people to use.

**Carol:** It's so important to keep our homes and streets clean. Rubbish provides food and shelter for rats, snakes, mosquitos, bacteria and all kinds of other pests! And they can spread diseases. A clean home is a healthy home. . . . A clean village is a healthy village.

**Tammy:** Let's remember some of these important facts: it's important to make less rubbish in the first place. Try to buy things that don't have lots of packaging. Packaging wastes a lot of resources and just makes rubbish.

**Carol:** Recycle paper, glass and metal if you can. Try to find other uses for packaging like boxes and jars.

**Tammy:** Some rubbish will rot down in time. Bury it or make compost from food scraps and garden rubbish.

**Carol:** And this is most important: do anything you can to get a safe, clean toilet.

**Tammy:** I hope you've got some good ideas today about getting rid of rubbish. Now let's listen to this song, and then we have a story from Kate. It's about how we can get rid of some of the rubbish that builds up in our own lives and hearts.

Today we want to share a story from our friend Kate.

We've told you about Kate before. She left her home and country to work in a place across the world, to help the people rebuild their country after a long time of war.

**Carol:** One day Kate was drinking tea with a young woman; we'll call her Nazira. Nazira told Kate her story: her father was killed in street violence, her step-father beat her, then when she was 13 years old she was forced to marry a violent older man. Now she was a widow with three tiny children, and she was very poor. Nazira told Kate her story with dry eyes, her voice flat. Kate listened, her chest tight with grief, thinking 'No, this is not the will of God! No, God created us to know love, and joy, and peace. But what can I say? What gift can I give Nazira?'

Then Kate thought of her own life. She took a deep breath and said to Nazira, 'I had a step-father who beat me too. I hated him. I didn't grow up with faith in God, but when I was in my 20's I believed in Jesus Christ. I realized that God loved me. I confessed the wrong things I'd done and thought, and God forgave me. I found sweet freedom because I knew God forgave me.'

Nazira was puzzled. She thought that everybody was born belonging to a religion, but Kate told her she needed to believe in her own mind and heart. Nazira understood that there was a God who created the world, but she didn't understand that God could *forgive* her sins. Not ignore them or punish them, but actually forgive them!

Well that's when Kate explained: 'When God forgives us, he looks directly at our sin. He sees it. We confess it; we agree that we see it too. Then God takes our sin away and puts it on Jesus Christ. We don't have to be punished, because Jesus was punished for us, when he died on the cross. Then Kate went on: 'After I received God's forgiveness, I learned that I needed to forgive too. I thought about my stepfather.'

This was so strange to Nazira. 'How can I explain it?' thought Kate. Then she said, 'Our spirits, our hearts are like deep wells. The water is sweet, and we draw the water we need. But as we live, bad things happen. Each time someone does something bad to us, it's like they're throwing a rock into our well. Every day we drop our bucket into the well, to draw up the water. But one day we find we can't reach the water. There are too many rocks in the well. We have to clean out the well.'

Nazira understood this idea; she drew water every day from a well. She knew that a well can get choked up with dirt and rocks and rubbish, and someone has to go down and clean out the well. And she knew the rocks that had been thrown into her heart. Kate continued, 'Every time someone hurts us, it's like another rock in our well. If we leave the rocks we won't be able to get water. We must go down into the well, and pick up each rock, and put it in the bucket. We must lift the rocks out and throw them aside. It's hard work, isn't it? It takes time, and tears.'

One day I remembered a time when my stepfather beat me with a leather belt, and I was very afraid. I felt angry again as I remembered, and I asked God to punish him, hurt him. Instead God asked me to forgive him. At last I could say, 'Dear God, I forgive him for beating me. It was very wrong, and I was afraid, but I forgive him. I ask you to forgive him too.'

Tears ran silently over Nazira's cheeks. She looked away, and then she looked back at Kate. 'You did that?' she asked, 'You really, did that?' 'Yes,' said Kate. "And every time I thought of something else he had done to me, I prayed to God again and forgave him. When I forgave him, my heart became lighter. The anger left me, the pain began to heal. The water in the well of my heart became sweet.'

Nazira's tears fell, and she wiped them with the corner of her scarf. She poured another cup of tea, and they drank quietly together. When it was time for Nazira to go, she touched Kate's face and said softly, 'Thank you, thank you.'

Kate told me, 'I would love to know what that precious woman did with my words. I prayed that somehow she would find the strength to go down onto her well, pull up the bitter rocks, throw them over the wall, and laugh again, really laugh.'

**Tammy:** That story touched my heart. We're all on a journey, and every time we hear and understand a teaching of Jesus, he invites us to come out from some dark part of our lives, and come into his light and truth. Jesus invites us to walk with him, learn from him how to really forgive. He'll show us how to find healing, love, joy and peace, the things our souls really need.

**Carol:** We really need to think about how to forgive, don't we? Sometimes we think we should be the judges and decide the punishment. I've learned through the years that only God can really be the judge, and I can trust him to be just and fair. And I've learned that I need to be forgiven too.

It's a heavy thing to hate someone, isn't it? It's like rocks in the heart. You hate someone, and you become bitter and afraid. It paralyzes you, stops you moving on in your life. The bitterness burns you, and everyone around you. God made us to love, to laugh and dance, but it's hard to dance when our hearts are full of rocks.

**Tammy:** Sometimes we just decide to stop thinking about something that hurt us. We think if we ignore it, it won't hurt any more. Maybe with time we'll forget it. Is that really *forgiving*? Maybe it's *pretending*. When we forgive, we look at evil and say, 'I forgive that evil act'. We let go of the wish to punish, to hurt. We leave the person in God's hands. We throw another rock out of our heart.

**Carol:** When the Lord Jesus was here on earth, 2000 years ago, he gave wonderful teaching. I'd like to read some words he spoke to his followers. They're written down in the Holy Bible, God's words to us.

Listen to what Jesus said: 'You have heard the saying, "Love your friends, hate your enemies." But I tell you something different: love your enemies and pray for those who hurt you, so that you may live like the children of your Father in heaven. Think about it; he makes his sun to shine on bad and good people alike, and gives rain to those who do good and those who do evil.' (Matt 5:43-45)

**Tammy:** That's a hard teaching in some ways, isn't it? Sometimes we would rather stay angry; we think it's not *fair* to forgive. Like Carol said, we need to trust *God* to make things right in the end. But Jesus knew what happens if we hate. People throw rocks, and we throw rocks back, thinking it's our job to make things fair. And in the end everyone is bleeding, and hurting, and it's still not fair.

**Carol:** Jesus also said that God is merciful to us. He gives us what we need for life, and he gives us time to say we're sorry and turn to him. We receive forgiveness, so we can begin to forgive

others too. We don't *forget* what happened. If you have decided to forgive someone, you might still sometimes think about what happened, and the old bitter thoughts might start again, but God has told us what we can do. Each time we can remember that we *have* forgiven, and we can ask God to bless them, not curse them. (Romans 12:14) And that will set *our* hearts free.

**Tammy:** Jesus also *showed* us how to forgive. He had enemies, people who hated him and were afraid of his message. At last these enemies arrested him and condemned him to die. They beat Jesus and nailed him to a wooden cross to die. While he was dying, Jesus prayed 'Father, forgive them, they don't know what they are doing.' (Luke 23:34)

**Carol:** Jesus didn't defend himself; because he was doing the job that he came to do. But God showed who was right; he raised Jesus from the dead, and then took him back to heaven to rule the universe with him. Friend, we can trust God to do what is right.

These are hard things to think about, aren't they? Whenever I face those hard things, I like to pray. Won't you pray with us?

**Tammy:** Father, God, We pray today that you will help us all to forgive others just as you have so freely forgiven us. You showed us how much You love us by sending your Son to take our punishment. And we trust you to show us how to love and forgive others when we ask you. Help us to remove the rocks from our heart and set our hearts free. And we pray this in the name of your Son Jesus. Amen.

**Carol:** Well, we need to go now. Thank you for being with us today. If you prayed this prayer with us or you have questions about anything we talked about today, we would love to hear from you. Goodbye my friend. God bless you and your family.

Kate's story adapted with permission from 'In the Land of Blue Burqas' by Kate McCord; Moody Publishers, Chicago, 2012.

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