

New Beginnings / Creation

Carol: Hello my friend! It's Carol here. Tammy and I are so pleased to be with you again, on *Women of Hope*.

Tammy: And hello from me too. Hi Carol, how are you?

Carol: I'm doing well... Guess what? I just had some news about a young friend of mine – Anton.

Tammy: Good news, I hope...

Carol: Well, I'm not sure if it's good or not... He's been working in a shop for a couple of years. It was a steady job but there was not much chance of promotion at all, and he didn't like it much. So he has resigned from the job, which is rather a risk. He's started to study a short course in business, and then he hopes to start his own little shop, selling sweets that his sister makes. He thinks it will do well, because no-one else sells home made sweets in their village...

Tammy: ...and everyone will want them, especially at festival times! But I see what you mean. It's a big risk giving up a steady job... but then...he may do much better in the long run.

Carol: Yes, and he's looking forward to being his own boss, making decisions, working hard and building up the business.

Tammy: Whatever happens, it *is* a big turning point and a *new beginning*, and those are always very interesting times, I think. Challenging...a bit scary...and exciting...

Carol: This is *Women of Hope*, and we're thinking today about new beginnings. Welcome to you, and welcome to our friend Fran. Fran has dropped in to share with us from her experience as a counselor...

Fran: and my experience as a woman; I've had plenty of turning points...and new beginnings in my 60 years! Thank you for asking me Carol, I always enjoy being with you dear *Women of Hope*.

Carol: We were just talking about my young friend, Anton. His new beginning is something he has *chosen*, so I guess that makes it easier.

Fran: In some ways it does. But even when we make the changes, and even when they are ones we *want*, it's always good to do some looking back before we look forward.

Tammy: That's interesting...often people say you shouldn't look back, just move on.

Fran: Think about turning points in your own life. Were there things you lost as well as gained?

Tammy: Hmm...I'll think about that...

Fran: I think you can 'move on' too quickly, and not learn from the past, or value it. When I got married - nearly 40 years ago now - I was very excited and happy. I was marrying the man I loved, and I felt sure God intended us for each other. We were starting a new life together in a new town. But there were things that I would *lose* too...my *independence*...the good times with my *girlfriends*... I would miss the *close connections* with my parents and brothers...and the *freedom* of being a student. I would miss having my *own private space*. I would have to take on new duties - like

housekeeping - and be a real grown-up. I would have to think about my husband's needs, not just my own. I needed to be aware of those losses, to be prepared for the new life. I needed to say thank-you and goodbye, and think about how to relate to my family differently, as a married woman.

Carol: It was like that for me when I moved from one country to another, with our work with Trans World Radio. Even when I enjoyed the new place, there were things I missed. It was important to admit that, because it showed that I really valued the people I left behind. It's good to *look back*, be *grateful*, and *learn* from the past.

Fran: Are you at a turning point on life's journey? Is there something from the past to celebrate? ...Perhaps something to grieve about? ...Something to take with you into the next stage?

Once you have done that, it's time to look *forward*. Time to ask God for direction, set some new goals and work towards them. Let's talk about goals for a moment.

Carol: I guess Anton has a goal...to have a successful business.

Tammy: Lots of young people have a goal like that, but they don't always do something about it. Do *you* have dreams that you want to achieve, but you have no idea where to start?

Fran: We can have big dreams, like being happily married, or having a great job...or being healthy and strong...or becoming a great cook. But they stay just that - dreams...unless you turn them into the kind of goals that lead to action.

Carol: We could call them action plans. Anton's dream could have stayed a dream, but he worked out what steps he would need to take first. He knew he would need more skills to run his sweets business, so he asked people until he found out where he could do a course.

Fran: That's exactly it. Useful goals must break down the big dream into small steps. The steps need to be specific...to say *exactly* what we need to do next. They need to be *actions*, not thoughts or feelings. There is no point in wishing you could be happy; you would do better to think of something that *makes* you happy, and plan how to do it.

Tammy: Good idea: I'm going to plan to visit my best friend. That always cheers me up. Often we expect other people to make us happy, don't we?

Fran: We do, but then we feel helpless because we can't control what they do. Good goals are ones that *we* can set for *ourselves*, not wait for someone else to do it. For example, if my 'big dream' is to have a happy marriage, I need to set goals for what *I* can do to improve things, not just wait for my husband to change. If *I* don't change, probably nothing will change! He might not even know I'm not happy.

And my goal needs to be realistic - a challenge, certainly, but one that we have a good chance of doing. Imagine if I set a goal to run a marathon race next week- I'd be puffing, wobbling and red in the face before I got to the end of the street!... But I could plan to walk to the shop instead of taking the bus. If I did that at least twice a week, I would start getting stronger. And I would feel good about myself because I had taken the first step towards my dream of being fit.

I'm sure you have dreams and goals. Don't just day-dream. And don't just give up. Think about where to start to make a new beginning. Work on making changes - changes that *you* can do something about. We have a saying - the longest journey begins with the first step.

Carol: Do you ever think about the beginning? I mean the *real* beginning - how everything got started in the first place. Every culture has myths and stories. Science has its theories, such as that the universe of stars and planets started with a 'Big Bang' of energy. All these myths and stories tell us how things we see now were caused by other things, and that they too were caused by even earlier things...and so on. But none of them answer the question of what was the real, *first* cause. The Bible starts off simply by naming that first cause as God, and then showing us what God is like. No-one made God; God existed when there was no time, no space, no objects. He had no beginning and he will have no end. He is *eternal*.

Tammy: That's impossible to fit into your head, isn't it Carol! God is beyond our understanding.

Carol: Well...I suppose we would expect that. The God who made everything would have to be more complex and wonderful than we could really take in.

Now the first words in the Bible say simply 'In the beginning God...' They don't argue about whether God exists, but they do tell us what he did and what he is like. I'd like to share this first story with you.

Tammy: Please do that Carol. I've heard this story many times but every time I am amazed and touched.

Carol: Well, here is the account from the very beginning of the Bible. If you can, stop and close your eyes and imagine - nothing! ...And then try to see it all come into being as I tell you the story.

'In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth - the whole universe. Planet earth was empty, chaotic and shapeless, and the raging waters were wrapped in total darkness. But God's powerful Spirit was moving and breathing over the water.

Then God spoke. 'Let there be light', he said, and light appeared, making Day and Night. God saw that this was good.

Then day by day, God spoke the world into being, separating the waters, making dry land, - that was good - making plants of all kinds - they were good.

God told the sun, stars and moon to appear in the sky. Good! said God.

He ordered the waters to swarm with sea creatures, and the air to be filled with birds. God saw how good this was, too.

Then he said 'Let the earth produce land animals'; this too was good. So God told all his creatures to have babies, to increase in number and fill the earth, the seas and the skies.

'And now', said God, 'let us make human beings. They will be like us in many ways, and they will rule this world I have made. So God made humans, male and female. He said 'This is *very* good.'

And so the whole universe was created by God's word. Then God stopped working.'

That is the end of the first story in God's word. (Genesis Ch 1)

Tammy: What a simple and wonderful story it is! First of all, nothing but God. Then step by step, by his powerful word, he brings everything into being. Night and day, land and sea and sky. Plants, fish, birds and animals of such enormous variety and beauty. And then - us! Or at least, the first humans. And I really like the fact that at every stage God saw that what he had made was *good*. He was like a master craftsman, making a world that was beautiful and that worked perfectly. He set the earth on its axis so the seasons would happen regularly, and climates would develop, and he made the right plants and animals for each place on the planet.

Carol: It's impossible to take in how enormous the universe is. Our planet is just like a speck of sand in a huge desert, in comparison to the universe that scientists can see with telescopes... And every year they find better ways of looking into space, and there is always more to find. Yet God chose this place to create beings to love, and who could love him.

Tammy: Doesn't it make you feel very small, *and very important*, all at the same time!

Carol: I think mostly it makes me want to bow down and worship this wonderful God.

There is an ancient poem in the Bible, in Psalm 19, that says:

'The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky shows his handiwork

Each day announces his glory to the following day;

Each night repeats it to the next night.

They don't use words or sounds, yet their message goes out clearly to all the world.

And is heard to the ends of the earth.' (Ps 19:1-4)

Later in the Bible the writer says that ever since God created the universe, his qualities that we can't see with our eyes, both his eternal power and his divine nature, have been clearly shown. So we have no excuse not to honour and worship him.(Rom 1:18-21)

Here's something for you to think about... Did you notice that God said 'Let *us* make human beings'? Do you remember that God's *Spirit* was moving over the waters? Did you notice that God created everything by his *word*?

After Jesus had lived on earth and gone back to heaven, one of his closest followers, John, wrote about his life. He was inspired by God's Holy Spirit as he wrote these words. They remind me very much of the words we heard earlier.

Tammy: Can I read it to you?

'Before the world was created, the *Word* already existed. He was with God and he was the same as God in every way. From the very beginning the *Word* was with God. Through *him* God made all things: not one thing in all creation was made without him. The *Word* was the source of life, and this life brought light to mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has never put it out.' (John 1:1-5)

Carol: Who do you think John was writing about?...

Tammy: Just a little later (v14) John wrote, 'So the Word became human and lived here on earth with us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness.'

So who do *you* think he was writing about? ...Yes, it was Jesus.

Carol: Yes – Jesus was there at the beginning of time, long before he came to earth as a baby. I'll leave you to think about what all that means.

The time seems to have gone quickly today and it's almost time for us to go.

Tammy: Before we go I would like to share a letter that came from India - from a listener to our *Women of Hope* program. She says this:

'I am a regular listener of your program *Women of Hope*. Through your program the Word of God is a great source of strength for my life. I am very thankful to you because through your program I could learn many good things and it inspires me to know more about God's Word. Please pray for me and my family.'

Carol: Thank you for sharing that Tammy...

We *will* pray for your family and for the Word of God to keep touching your life.

Tammy: And my friend, I would like to pray with *you too* as we finish our time together. We heard today that the Word of God is not only what's written in the Bible, but that Jesus is the living Word. He was there when the world was created...and he spoke everything into being. Then he became human and lived among us. God's word tells us that he took the punishment for our sins. He can be your source of strength for each day just as our listener said. Let's speak to him now...would you like to join me?...

God, thank you for creating this beautiful world and for creating us to be like you... Thank you too for Jesus, the living Word who became human and lived among us... We thank you that because he was full of unfailing love and faithfulness he died to take away our sin... Please help our listener to grow in her understanding of who you are. Help her to trust you to give her strength each day too. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen

Carol: Amen. I'm looking forward to our next time together. And we'll talk some more about God's creation. Bye for now.

Tammy: Goodbye and God bless you.

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