

Control-Loss of Control/God's Control

Tita: I'm a very organized person who likes to keep everything around me neat and tidy. I like planning ahead of time to know exactly what I need to do, where I need to be and when. If I have a task to do I like to start it as soon as I can to make sure that I'll have plenty of time to do it well...and finish on time.

Carol: Hello...and welcome to *Women of Hope*. It's so good to be back with you again isn't it Tammy?

Tammy: Oh yes – and I wonder what you're doing today as you listen. Are you busy doing an important task, or making everything neat and tidy like Tita? Or maybe you're taking this opportunity to sit down with a cup of tea and relax with us... I wonder!

Carol: I know many of us struggle to be like Tita, always neat and tidy and well organized. Perhaps you are one of those people. Even the most organized of people may struggle with keeping everything in order on occasion

Tammy: Maybe she's going to teach us *how* to be neat and tidy and organised...that's how *I'd* like to be! So – welcome Tita, it's good to have you here.

Tita: Hello Tammy...and Carol. And no – I haven't come to teach you how to be neat and tidy...but to share a little about what I've learned in my life about always wanting to be 'in control'! When I commit to do something I want to make sure that people can rely on me and know that I will do what I promise..

Carol: Okay Tita, tell us, were you always like this – or did your mother make you tidy up all the time?

Tita: No...she didn't have to! Perhaps just listening to this you may think that living like this is hard work...but being very tidy comes naturally for me. I have *always* been like that.

Can I tell you a little secret?

Carol: please do...

Tita: As a very young girl I was a bit different to most other children. I used to like keeping my bedroom tidy. I would make sure that after using things I'd put them back where they belonged. I made sure that my clothes were put away in the cupboard or my toys back in the shelves. I still remember how angry I used to get when my sisters would come and make a mess in my room or take my stuff and not put it back in its place!

Tammy: Wow – where can I find a daughter like that?

Tita: Well, as you can see even from my childhood days, trying to live a very organized life came naturally to me.

Tammy: And...are you *still* like that?

Tita: Let me tell you about it... As time went by I did as many women do and got married and before too long I became a mother. You can probably imagine what I'm going to say next!...

Yes...I wanted to organize my husband's life and my children's lives. I wanted to live in a very tidy house...all the time!

Ha, ha! ...If you have children I think you know that this is almost impossible, isn't it? I thought that I could plan our lives and know exactly what was going to happen every day, every week, every month and *if possible* every year. I have to confess that I thought this would be a very positive way to live...

Tammy: And...

Tita: Well...as you can imagine, I would plan things and then I'd have to *change* my plans because the children would get sick! Or I'd try to be on time but would be delayed because somebody was not ready on time.

As soon as I tidied up...yes of course, the children would make a mess somewhere else! I found this way of living *very tiring* and *frustrating*.

Let me tell you how I really felt.

Imagine 10 different pieces of string in front of you and they are lined up on the floor, one after the other with each piece of string perfectly straight. This is what I wanted everything in my life to look and feel like. Now imagine...those 10 pieces of string becoming tangled and knotted up and ending up in a big tight mess...

No matter how hard I tried to live an organized life, this is what happened. I could *not* keep everything in my life - and the lives of my children and husband - neat and straight and in perfect order. So...I felt anxious, frustrated, and often angry. My plans were not working!

Carol: Here today on *Women of Hope*, Tita is telling us how she always liked to have everything neat and tidy and in order. But as you can imagine - that's a hard thing to do when you have a family.

Tammy: It made her feel anxious, frustrated and angry! So Tita, what did you do about it?

Tita: Well...gradually I realised I wanted to live a very organized life. I have to admit...I wanted to be in CONTROL. As long as I felt I could control life, I felt safe. But of course the reality is...life is not always as we want it to be is it!

Carol: It never is ...so what did you do about it?

Tita: I had to learn some things about why I wanted to be in control all the time. And here are two of the things I've learned about CONTROL...

Firstly...having control over your life is not a *bad* thing in itself. If we don't make any plans, and we don't care about what happens and when, then all around us would be chaos! Actually, it would be irresponsible not to have *some* control over the lives of our children, our house, our time, our work and the activities we do. But we have to learn to be flexible...to give a little. Having *some* control but being *flexible* leads to a balanced life.

Secondly...nobody has total control over life. Have you had to change your plans because all of a sudden you got very sick...or you lost your job? Or perhaps you started having serious relationship problems with your husband, or one of your children? Perhaps when you least expected it you were told you would have to move from where you were living... Everyone has unexpected things happen in their lives.

Tammy: I'm sure we all know what that's like...

Carol: If our feelings of security - of being safe, are based on having control over all our circumstances we will be in trouble. Whether we like it or not...when we least expect it our circumstances change and we face un-expected challenges.

Tita: So what I've been learning to do is try to take a more relaxed approach to life.

Tammy: How did you do that Tita?

Tita: Well...there were two things I learned to do.

First I realised that I must take responsibility for *my own* actions. But when it comes to *other* people I have to let go...and allow them to do things the way *they* want to, instead of trying to organize life for them. After all who am I to think that I know it all and that my decisions are the best for everybody?

And second...when I face situations that are clearly beyond my control, instead of panicking, I have learned to take a deep breath...think carefully...and decide what is the best thing to do? Have you heard the saying: "If life gives you lemons...make lemonade". Well I am learning to make lemonade even when I don't feel like it!

Carol: Ooh I love lemonade! You squeeze the bitter juice of a lemon, add some cool water and a little sugar – and mmm – it's so refreshing to drink – especially on a hot day.

Tammy: So what you're actually doing is turning something bitter into something sweet and refreshing. What a great thing to remember.

Tita: Could it be that right now you're thinking, "Ah...but that's not realistic because often things that happen to people are bad, very hurtful and damaging and are beyond their control... Don't tell me that something good can be done then?"...

Carol: That's a great point – Maybe that's how you are feeling right now. Let's talk about more about that after this song...

Tammy: You're with us on *Women of Hope*. Maybe you're asking that question: 'How can something good come out of the bad things that are happening in my life right now?'

Tita: Yes, there may be things that you're facing that you really don't like...that have hurt you and you feel you have no control over. For example you may not like the way your parents treated you. Your upbringing was not a happy, healthy one and you were badly hurt by this. I agree that you can't change that...but today I have good news for all of us.

When we're facing things that we can't control, we don't have to struggle with them alone. If we do, we end up with our emotions tied up in knots like my example of the pieces of string. And believe me...it's not easy living life when your emotions are in a mess...tied up in knots.

Maybe this is you today... Maybe you're struggling, carrying the weight of trying to be in control of everything in your life. Maybe you're feeling fearful and frustrated because you can't control your circumstances. I want to share some very powerful words with you from God's word, the Bible. One day Jesus said to his followers: "Come to me all of you who are tired and have heavy loads, and I will give you *rest*. Accept my teachings and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in spirit, and you will find rest for your lives. The teaching that I ask you to accept is *easy*; the load I give you to carry is *light*" (Matt 11:28-30 NCV).

So what does this mean to you and me today? Jesus is telling us that we need to learn from him. This is why we come and share things with you from God's word here on *Women of Hope*.

God clearly teaches us in his word, that we are not meant to carry the load of trying to control our lives. Here are some more powerful and comforting words. God says to us: "I know the plans that I have for you, they are to benefit you not to harm you, to give you hope and a future" (Jeremiah 29:11 NIV).

If you have ever made plans to do something and things did not go well, you would agree with me that we, human beings don't always get it right. God knows this and this is why he wants us to do an exchange, or a swap with him...we give him control over our lives...and he will lead us to those amazing plans he has for each of us... plans for our good...to give us hope and a future! He sent his son, Jesus to take the punishment we deserve for the wrong things we do. He offers us new life in Jesus. And who could ask for a better person to share the circumstances of your life with, than Jesus, the son of God? I needed to give him control and talk to him about everything.

When I gave total control of my life to Jesus, I began finding peace because I now know that I don't have to have all the answers, I don't need to work everything out by myself. God has them all worked out for me...and will lead me in the right direction if I let him do that.

Here's one more promise from God: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek (or look for) his will in all you do, and he will direct your path" (Proverbs 3:5-6 NLT). He will lead you in the best way for you.

Tita: Now what about those horrible, hurtful, things that people have to go through that are beyond their control? ...Persecution, wars, abuse, exploitation, rejection, neglect and much more?

Well, remember the saying, "If life gives you lemons...make lemonade?" In the Bible Paul, a follower of Jesus talks about this in different words. He says: "We know that in everything God works for the good of those who love him" (Rom 8:28 NCV).

Paul experienced enormous hardship and suffering...he was persecuted, beaten up, abused, mocked, ridiculed. Surely he must have felt that these experiences were beyond his control and did not like them at all.

But when he learned who God was, Paul gave total control of his life to God. Paul knew that no matter how terrible his circumstances were, God was able to bring good out of them. Sometimes his suffering even meant good for other people. Because of Paul's devotion to God, many, many people learned who the true God was. And even today we can learn about God from what Paul said, in God's word. Paul said: "If God is for us who can ever be against us?" (Rom 8:31 NLT)

Carol: Thank you Tita for sharing God's words with us today. Yes we learn as we read his word, that God made us, he loves us and there is hope if we give him control of our lives.

If you are experiencing, a very painful and hard situation right now... you may feel that there's nothing you can do about it. Yes, you're right, you can't change the past, and you may not be able to change your current circumstances...but the pain you suffer now does not have to control or affect the rest of your life. With God on your side you can "make lemonade".

As you allow him to have control of your life he will heal your emotions and will give you strength and help you to overcome the hurt. You can learn to live your life differently...in a positive and constructive way.

Tammy: What circumstances are you facing? Are you feeling that life is totally out of control? If this is your situation let me ask you: have you invited Jesus into your life? Would you like to do that now? If you would, you can pray this prayer with me...

Father God, thank you for loving me so much that you sent your son Jesus to take the punishment for the wrong things that I've done. I want to give you control of my life today. I believe that you want the best for my life and you can give me hope and a future. Thank you. In the name of your son, Jesus Christ. Amen

Carol: If you prayed that prayer with Tammy today, you might like to write to us and tell us about it. We are here to be your friends. We would love to hear from you.

Tammy: Before we go today we want to read a few letters that we received from some people in prison. What a hard life – people in prison have no control over their circumstances but each one of them has found new life in that terrible place.

First, Carol will read a letter from the warden in charge of this prison:

Carol: The Warden writes: ‘When the PH members started the ministry in the prison I was in charge of, I didn't believe anything or anyone could change those criminals. But now, I have seen and testify that God's Word and prayers are powerful and truly change people. I admire the courage and persistence of the ladies to invest in people we thought were hopeless. Your ministry is making a difference in the prisoners' lives’

Tammy: An inmate writes: ‘I was in prison for using drugs and practicing evil deeds. After I met Jesus and accepted him as my Saviour my life changed completely for the better. God is powerful!’

Carol: Another person wrote: ‘I accepted the Lord, Jesus when I was in jail. Through Bible studies and prayer I recognized that God wants us to live a life of freedom that glorifies him.

Tammy: ‘My life was a misery. I misused my freedom by walking in the wrong paths, drinking, stealing, and prostituting myself. What I called freedom was prison and now in prison I've found *true* freedom and salvation. Now I'm a happy man! I ask the Project Hannah team to pray for my family and also preach the Gospel of salvation to them, so that they experience the new life I found in Christ.’

Carol: And the last one: ‘I never thought the handcuffs would give me the opportunity to set free my soul. My life in prison has become abundant and endless. Halleluia!’

Tammy: Yes halleluia – we praise God with you all that you have found new life in Jesus Christ too.

Carol: It's time for us to go now – but do come back and join us next time on Women of Hope, where we learn that we can have hope in Jesus Christ. Good bye – God bless you.