

Tantrums / Jonah's Tantrum

Tammy: Rita was shopping and she had her little girl, Jodie, with her. They were ready to pay when the trouble all started. Jodie asked for some sweets.

'Not today dear,' said Rita. 'You can have some tomorrow when your cousins come to visit.'

'Sweeties now!' yelled Jodie.

'No,' said Rita, 'Tomorrow is your sweets day.'

The next thing you know, Jodie was lying down on the floor, kicking her legs and shouting, 'Now! Want sweeties!' And she went on and on, kicking and yelling.

Everyone was looking at them and Rita felt so embarrassed. She didn't know what to do.

Carol: Have you ever seen a young child having a tantrum? Maybe they screamed and cried and threw themselves about, and they didn't listen to what anyone said. How did that make you feel? We're going to be talking about tantrums today so, if you have time, why don't you sit down for a while and join us.

Hello, I'm Carol and Tammy's here with me too. This is Women of Hope and we're really happy to be with you today. I hope you don't feel like that child we just heard! Today we're going to talk about tantrums. I'm a mother so I know how upsetting it can be when your child has a tantrum.

Tammy: I agree. I can remember one of my children having some very loud, noisy tantrums. Like Rita, in the story we just heard, I felt very embarrassed and helpless when my child had a tantrum when we were out somewhere.

Carol: Friend, if you're a mother of a young child or toddler, your child will probably have a tantrum sometime. Maybe he already has. Children like to get what they want right away and sometimes when they don't get it, they react by having a tantrum.

When a toddler has a tantrum it's like an explosion of anger. They might rush around wildly or might fling themselves on the floor, kicking and screaming. Sometimes children even hurt themselves, or scream until they make themselves sick, or can't breathe properly. Children often have tantrums from a very young age.

Tammy: Many two-year-old toddlers have tantrums. Often they're frustrated because they're too small or weak to do something they're trying to do; or maybe an adult has stopped them doing something or having something they want. They don't have words to explain their feelings, so they

express them very clearly and loudly by kicking or screaming!

Carol: Children are more likely to have a tantrum if they're hungry, or stressed, or if they're tired. Sometimes doing too many things in a day, without quiet times in between can result in a tantrum.

Tammy: Tantrums can be very upsetting for everyone. Let's talk about some ways a mother can prevent her child having a tantrum.

Carol: Well, there are some things that can help. But remember that you can't always prevent every tantrum. Pay attention. If you can see your child getting distressed, you can sometimes distract them with another activity. Play a quiet game with them, or give them something different to play with. Maybe you could take them for a little walk. And sometimes it's a good idea to give them something to eat.

Tammy: Yes, I've heard that young children are more likely to have a tantrum if they're hungry. So, try to notice the things that seem to lead to tantrums in your child. Certain situations – shopping, visiting or mealtimes – might make them stressed. So try not to go shopping or visiting when your child is tired. Perhaps wait to go out until after he or she has had a nap. And make sure you feed your child regularly or when they want food.

Carol: Give them something to eat before you go out, or take food with you. And keep your shopping trips or visits short. When visiting friends let them know about when you are leaving. Tantrums sometimes happen at meal times so try to keep meal times simple and pleasant. Try not to have a battle with your toddler about food and eating. Remember that a healthy toddler will know when he has eaten enough.

Tammy: No matter what you do, your child might still have a tantrum sometimes. Most children aged from 18 months to 3 years old do. But the tantrums usually stop as the children get older. So, remember that this sort of behaviour won't last forever.

That's good to hear, isn't it! Children usually grow out of tantrums as they learn better ways to show their feelings. But when a child is in the middle of a tantrum there are some things his mother can do right then.

Carol: Yes, there are. Some children rush around, or kick, and hit when they have a tantrum. It's important to stop a child who's having a tantrum from hurting themselves. Sometimes just holding

them firmly calms them down. But some children can't bear to be held when they are having a tantrum. So it's best to remove anything they might break and make sure they don't hurt themselves.

Tammy: I have known some children to hold their breath until they turn blue! That can be scary.

Carol: Well, it may be scary, but you don't need to worry because even if they stop breathing they won't really harm themselves. Their body will automatically start them breathing again. The most important thing you can do is to stay calm - or **pretend** to be calm even if you don't feel calm. If it's scary for you, it's even more scary for them, to be out of control or not able to breathe. If you get angry, it'll be harder for both of you. Keep your voice calm and level, and speak slowly. Pick them up, and put them in a safe place, if necessary.

Tammy: And if you can, it **is** a good idea to ignore what your child is doing until they stop - unless they are really doing something dangerous. You don't want them to think that a tantrum is a good way to get your full attention.

Carol: Once a temper tantrum is in full swing, it's too late to try to talk your child into calming down, or to distract them. They won't be in the mood to listen. And don't try to argue with them during a tantrum. They can't think clearly when they are like this.

And don't give in and let them do what wasn't allowed *before* the tantrum. For example, if your child wanted to go outside and you had said 'no', don't let them go out after the tantrum. Stick to what you said and still say 'no'. If you let them go out after the tantrum, you will simply be 'rewarding' the tantrum – or teaching them that the tantrum will get them what they want. And they will keep doing it.

Tammy: We mothers have to control *ourselves* sometimes too, don't we? But it pays off in the end. Many mothers try to do all the right things but their child still has a lot of tantrums. Don't be too tough on yourself.

Carol: Remember that all children have tantrums. A child does not deliberately have tantrums to upset you. They are just little and frustrated. But tantrums can become a bad habit. So it is worth the work. Remember it takes time for your child to change. As they grow up a bit you can teach them how to point, or use words, so they have a better way to tell you what they need. Show your child by good example; stay in control of yourself when *you are* frustrated or angry.

Tammy: Friend, remember that nobody is ever a perfect mother or father. There is no such person. And it's OK to make mistakes. Most of all it's really important to let your young child know that even though you're the boss, you love him or her very much.

Carol: We've been talking about children's temper tantrums. But you know, adults have tantrums sometimes too! We might not lie on the floor and kick, or turn blue- at least I hope you don't ! But sometimes we lose control of ourselves. And when adults lose control they can be cruel and violent and that's *really scary* for everyone. Today's Bible story is about a man who lost his temper- with God!

Tammy: I wonder if you remember the story of Jonah that we heard a while ago on Women of Hope. I'll just go over the story quickly in case you missed it. It's a story from the first part of the Bible, God's holy book.

Jonah was a prophet. God told him to go to a big city called Ninevah and tell them to stop being so wicked and cruel. Ninevah was far away from the nation of Israel where Jonah lived. Jonah didn't want to take God's message to the Ninevites, he didn't like them, so he decided to go in a different direction, in a ship.

A huge storm came while the ship was at sea and in the end Jonah was thrown overboard into the sea so the others' lives could be saved.

A big fish swallowed Jonah and spat him out on a beach. And then Jonah decided to obey God and go to Ninevah and tell them God's message.

Carol: Wow! That certainly was the short version of the story! But we wanted time to hear the next part of the story.

Tammy: Well, Let's hear the beginning of it from God's word, the Bible. Here's what happened next.

Carol:

Jonah obeyed the LORD and went to Nineveh. The city and district was so big that it took three days just to walk around it. After walking for a day, Jonah warned the people, 'Forty days from now, Nineveh will be destroyed!'

They believed God's message and set a time when they would go without food and drink. Then everyone in the city, no matter who they were, dressed in rough sackcloth. These were signs that

they were very sorry.

When the king of Nineveh heard what was happening, he also dressed in sackcloth; he left the royal palace and sat in dust. Then he and his officials sent out an order:

'None of you or your animals may eat or drink a thing. Each of you must wear sackcloth, and you must even put sackcloth on your animals.

You must also pray to the LORD God with all your heart and stop being sinful and cruel. Maybe God will change his mind and have mercy on us, so we won't be destroyed.'

When God saw that the people had stopped doing evil things, he had pity and did not destroy them as he had planned. (Jonah 3:3-10, CEV)

Tammy: Well, you'd think Jonah would be pleased. He had done what God told him to do, and the people had listened to what he said. And they were sorry for doing such wicked things.

They showed they were sorry in their traditional way – by dressing in rough clothing and sitting in the dust. And they didn't eat or drink – they fasted. But this was most important; they stopped doing those bad things and they prayed to God.

When God saw that they were really sorry and that they had changed their behaviour, he forgave them. He didn't destroy their city after all. He treated them with mercy and kindness.

Carol: But Jonah *wasn't* happy! He was really upset and angry. And his behaviour was like a tantrum.

Tammy: Yes, he didn't like the way God was showing his love to a people who had been mean and cruel to Jonah's own country of Israel. This is what he said as he prayed to God:

'You are a kind and merciful God, and you are very patient. You always show love, and you don't like to punish anyone, even foreigners. I knew you would change your mind!

Now let me die! I'd be better off dead.' (Jonah 3:2a-3, CEV)

Carol: It was very like a tantrum wasn't it? He was cross with God for not doing things the way he, Jonah, thought he should. Jonah wanted the people of Ninevah to be punished. He didn't like God forgiving them and giving them a second chance. He was so angry that he said he'd rather be dead!

Tammy: Well, God didn't let him get away with that selfish attitude. God said to him:

'What right do you have to be angry?'

But Jonah kept going with his tantrum. He left the city and made himself a shelter from the sun. Then he just sat there under it, waiting to see what would happen to Ninevah. He was not in a

happy mood! He was sulking.

God wanted to teach Jonah an important lesson. Let's find out what happened next from God's word, the Bible.

Carol: While Jonah was sitting outside the city, sulking, God made a plant, a vine, to grow very quickly. It grew up and over where Jonah was so that it shaded him from the very hot sun. And that made Jonah happy.

But next morning God sent a worm to chew on the plant. It chewed it so much that the plant shrivelled up. It died. It was hot and God sent a really hot, scorching wind. Jonah felt as if he was going to faint. And he was angry! Jonah shouted, "I wish I were dead!"

But the LORD asked, "Jonah, do you have the right to be angry about the vine?"

"Yes, I do," he answered, "and I'm angry enough to die."

Then God spoke to Jonah: 'You feel sorry for that plant, the vine, that just grew up one night and died the next day. And you didn't even plant it or look after it. Well, think about this.

In this great city of Ninevah there are more than 120, 000 people. And they don't know about me and how I want them to live. And there are a lot of animals and cattle there too. Now they are far more important than the plant, aren't they? Don't you think that I, the God of the whole earth, should care for them too.'

Tammy: What an outburst from Jonah! He was angry and he was probably yelling at God.

Well, God used the vine to help Jonah understand that he, God, should care for the people of Ninevah. He was telling Jonah that those people were all important to him and even the animals mattered. Jonah was being very selfish in his attitude.

Carol: Friend, sometimes we can be like Jonah. We don't want good things to happen to people we don't like very much. We want other people to be punished for bad things they do and sometimes we don't like to think of God forgiving them.

Tammy: Have you ever hoped something bad would happen to someone? Have you felt upset when someone, who did something bad, says they are sorry and are forgiven?

God wants all people in the world to turn from their bad behaviours and tell him they are sorry. And he promises to forgive anyone at all who does that. It's not up to us to say who deserves to be forgiven. God says that he will forgive anyone. That's how loving and kind God is.

Carol: My friend, maybe you are having trouble forgiving someone even though you know God will forgive them. God can help you with this. He can help you to forgive that person even though you

don't feel like forgiving them. You just need to ask God to help you. And he will. Would you like to pray a prayer about this? I'll say the words of a prayer and you can say it in your heart to God, if you really mean it. Ready?

Dear God, our loving Father,

I am having trouble forgiving someone and I know that you want me to show love and forgive them. Please help me to do this. I know I can do it with your help. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Tammy: Or maybe you are like one of the people in Ninevah, who were not living the way God wanted them to live. Maybe you think God would not forgive you. But, my friend, he will. He has promised to forgive anyone who is truly sorry for their sins and honestly wants to change. That is why God sent his Son, Jesus, to die, taking the punishment we should have had. He wants us to turn to him and ask him to forgive us and give us a new start with him as our leader.

You might like to pray this prayer, as I say the words:

Dear God, our loving Father,

I know now that you will forgive me for the bad things I have done. I am sorry and I want to change to live your way, with your help. Please forgive me for my sins and be the leader of my life. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Carol: If you prayed one of those prayers, you can be sure that God has heard it. I think the story of Jonah shows us that God *really wants* to forgive you, wherever you live, whatever you've done. And he wants to give you a new start, like he gave Jonah.

If you have questions about making that "new start" or just want to know more about what you have heard today, You can write to us in care of this station or visit our website TWRWomenofHope.org.

Goodbye, my friend. We loved being with you and we'll pray for you. Have a great week, filled with God's blessings.

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