

# Smoking / Priorities

**Tammy:** Carol, did you smell those wonderful spices on your way in? Someone is getting ready to make a delicious meal.

**Carol:** Oh I know! It was making me hungry!

Hello! Welcome to Women of Hope. I'm Carol and of course, Tammy is here with me. Smells can really affect us, can't they? Tell me, what's your favorite smell?

**Tammy:** I love the smell of cookies backing, but onions make me cry! Do you have any smells that you don't like? What we breathe in can make such a difference to our body. It makes us remember things, it can make us hungry, make us feel sick and can even effect our nose, our throat or our lungs.

**Carol:** The perfect example of this is Cigarette smoke. It can make us remember the smell of someone we loved who smoked. It can make someone feel relaxed, if they always smoked at break time.

**Tammy:** But for some of us it can make us feel sick – I really hate the smell of stale smoke.

**Carol:** And all of us can become unwell from cigarette smoke – whether we are smoking the cigarette or someone next to us is smoking, or even if the smell is just on their clothes.

**Tammy:** Let's talk today about some ways that smoke effects those around us and then think about some tips for those who are trying to stop smoking.

**Carol:** Tammy, you remember my neighbor Margie? She's trying to stop smoking at the moment.

**Tammy:** Sure: she's pregnant again, isn't she?

**Carol:** That's right: it's her second child and she's 7 months pregnant.

**Tammy:** What made her decide to stop?

**Carol:** She sees that smoking is really affecting her whole family and it costs so much! She has decided it's really time to stop.

**Tammy:** That's true! Cigarettes do take up precious money that could be spent on others things.

**Carol:** She said that she figures that if she stopped smoking for a whole year and saved the money, she would be able to buy a new bicycle.

**Tammy:** But is that the only reason?

**Carol:** Sadly, no! She told me... her doctor said she really must stop smoking because her baby isn't growing properly inside her.

**Tammy:** Hmm, Margie does look a bit smaller than 7 months' along. You know, the part of the womb that connects between the mother and baby is called the placenta, and it supplies all the things the baby needs to grow. When you smoke it stops the blood flowing properly into the placenta. So smoking can really affect the baby growing.

**Carol:** My midwife friend told me that the placenta of a woman who smokes is very different than a woman who does not smoke. The blood vessels are harder and narrower and smaller. And this means the baby is small too because it doesn't get all that it needs to grow.

**Tammy:** I've heard people say that they don't mind a small baby as it comes out more easily.

**Carol:** That may be true for some women, but a baby that is small because it isn't able to grow, is much more of a problem! The baby of a woman who smokes is much more likely to be born early... to die during birth... or have breathing problems when it's born. A healthy baby is much easier to care for.

**Tammy:** Smoking early in pregnancy makes the mother more likely to have morning sickness.

**Carol:** And if her body is healthier, she can cope with the birth more easily.

**Tammy:** Well, that sounds like lots of good reasons to stop smoking!

**Carol:** Yes, but it is very hard for lots of people.

**Tammy:** Does she have any other reason to stop?

**Carol:** Well, her son, Jack, is 2, and he keeps getting sick. Her doctor said that the smoke is affecting him.

**Tammy:** I was afraid of that. Children are more likely to get sick if there's smoke in the home. Even if parents only smoke outside, the smoke carries in with them through their clothes. My grandfather (or name someone significant who smoked) always smelled of his cigar smoke, even though he only smoked outside.

**Carol:** The smoke can make children have lots of problems. Poor Jack has had another ear infection. And the doctor said he might have hearing problems if he gets many more.

**Tammy:** He hasn't had any chest infections or asthma yet?

**Carol:** No, not yet – but you're right. Smoking around children can cause asthma or breathing problems and can make them get chest infections.

**Tammy:** It can also increase the risk of cot death – that's when a baby suddenly dies in its sleep with no clear reason.

**Carol:** So with a sick 2 year old, a small baby not growing inside her and the birth coming up soon, it's a great idea for Margie to stop smoking.

**Tammy:** Oh and don't forget a new bicycle!

**Carol:** So I was talking with Margie about some ways to stop.

**Tammy:** What tips do you have?

**Carol:** Well, I guess the first thing is that we need to recognize that it can be hard! But even if she just cuts back or stops until the baby is born, that's a great achievement. Sometimes it takes a few times to succeed and stop completely, especially if you have been smoking a long time!

**Tammy:** And it takes a while. A new habit, like NOT smoking, takes about 8 weeks to set in.

**Carol:** That's right. We talked about her taking some concrete steps like setting a date for her to start – that's tomorrow. She's going to get rid of all the cigarettes in the house tomorrow morning.

**Tammy:** Wow that is a big first step. Has Margie got anyone to help her?

**Carol:** Well, that's just it - Her husband smokes, too. But he has also decided that it's time to stop. So they are going to do it together. He heard that smoking can cause cancer in the lungs, mouth, throat and bladder. And one of his uncles is a smoker. He now has emphysema, which means lung problems. His uncle can hardly leave the house without being short of breath. And then he heard that his boss at work had a heart attack and that he was a heavy smoker.

**Tammy:** Smoking can sure cause a lot of health problems. It is good that they have each other's help.

**Carol:** He will find it hard, because lots of his friends smoke. And often the smell is so tempting for someone who has smoked. But he's going to ask them not to offer him smokes and if he asks for one to not give it to him!

**Tammy:** It's good to be realistic that there are things that they will miss.

**Carol:** Yes, it is! There may be enjoyable things about smoking. But Margie has thought hard about all the reasons to stop. When she is tempted to smoke she will count these five things on her five fingers – the money... her baby... her son... her own health... and her husband's health. A nice way to remember!

**Tammy:** And she can do something else when she feels like she wants a cigarette – like have a cup of tea, or eat a peppermint.

**Carol:** We talked about that very thing! We were hoping the smell and taste will make her forget the cigarette. And Margie said that she would walk around to my house – to distract herself from the idea of smoking and do something healthy.

**Tammy:** So, Carol, your tips are –

- 1 Find someone to help you,
- 2 Tell your friends and family,
- 3 Set a date and get rid of all the cigarettes,

- 4 Think about the things you will miss and have a plan of what you will do instead – like have a cup of tea, a mint or chew some gum.
- 5 Remember the reasons why you want to stop
- 6 Do something to distract yourself if you feel like smoking, like visit a friend

**Carol:** And if you do have a cigarette, don't let that discourage you. You can always stop again! Even if you only cut back or stop for a short time, you're doing your body and your family some good.

**Tammy:** You know what I think might be fun? When Margie stops smoking she'll be able to smell and taste food better – I think we might need to cook her a nice spicy meal to take around to celebrate!

**Carol:** We're here on Women of Hope, and we've been talking about how we could give up smoking.

Our friend Naomi is here again. She's written a book about some of the experiences she has had in her life. And she has been sharing those stories with us. So, Naomi, what are you going to tell us about today?

**Naomi:** This story is about something that happened in Australia, but it starts and finishes in Nepal. When we first went to Nepal we made a list of things we would never do. We decided we would never have a pet animal, as they seemed to us a great waste of money. We decided we would never send our children to a private school. The last thing on the list was to never make big changes to our house. It seemed to us that our friends in Australia thought too much about improving their houses, while we were living in Nepal trying to fix problems caused by poverty. We decided that we didn't want to do something that took so much time and money and energy. But a few years later we were living in Australia and yes, we were making our house better. We built a big wooden deck on to the back of our house. Our boys loved it; they would run up and down with their little toy trucks. I loved it as well. For me, it was a great place to dream. It was up high over a big gully, with a wonderful view. The deck had been finished for only two weeks. I don't think we'd even had a barbeque on it yet, when we heard that a bushfire was heading towards us. There are always bushfires in Australia in the summer. That year the bushfires had been very bad in our area. We were told to be ready to leave our house very quickly. So we had packed all our photos and special things into the car, ready to leave if we needed to.

The radio said a big fire was heading towards our house. The sky had turned dark red with ash and smoke. We could even see the flames on the hill near us. Our eyes never left the horizon, watching for a sign to tell us to get in the car and go.

The fire had travelled through the next town. Eight houses were burnt down and more were damaged. Our friends from church, Lance and Cecily, lost everything. A wall of flames hit the side of their house, which caught fire. Lance and Cecily were trapped in their house for ten minutes until the fire passed by. Then they escaped out the front door, with only the clothes they were wearing. By the time they got to their front gate, their whole house was on fire.

They were in shock. They had been so close to death. But they were thankful that they were still alive. They couldn't stop talking about it. They were sad about losing their house and their things, but they were so thankful to be alive. The fire had destroyed a collection of musical instruments that they had been collecting for thirty years. Lance lost his 49 chess sets he had collected. Cecily lost some craft that she had made and a quilt that she had sewed.

Two and a half years later, Lance and Cecily came to visit us in Nepal. We talked about that time in our lives. They had built their house again. But losing your house and your possessions changes you. It changed them. While we talked, we were busy making nineteen jars of plum jam and storing them up in the cupboard. We talked together about 'storing up' things. Lance doesn't collect chess sets anymore. Cecily has a strange feeling in her chest when she makes too many jars of pickles. Their son Roger often reminds them of what they learned through that fire. He looks at them and says, "Barns."

Barns might seem like a strange word to use as a reminder, but Roger was reminding them of a story in the Bible. This is a story that Jesus, God's Son told when he lived on earth. Jesus started by saying 'Watch out and guard yourselves from every kind of greed; because your true life is not made up of the things you own, no matter how rich you may be.'

Then Jesus told them this parable:

'There was once a rich man who had land which bore good crops. He began to think to himself, 'I don't have a place to keep all my crops. What can I do? I will pull down my barns and build bigger ones, where I will store the grain and all my other goods. Then I will say to myself, Lucky man! You have all the good things you need for many years. Make yourself comfortable, eat, drink, and enjoy yourself.'

But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night you will have to give up your life; then who will get all these things you have kept for yourself?'

And Jesus concluded, 'This is how it is with those who pile up money for themselves but are not rich in God's sight.'

**Tammy:** We've heard this story before, haven't we? This rich man wanted to keep his good things for himself. He didn't want to depend on God or anyone else, and he didn't want to share. He just wanted to have money and enjoy it. But his full barns weren't any use to him when he died. So, Naomi, what did you learn in that time when the bushfires came?

**Naomi:** Well, we realized that there are lots of things in our lives to distract us and take our time and attention. We want to make our homes safe and comfortable. The way we make our homes beautiful is different depending on where we live, but we all do it. We surround ourselves with colors and things and call it 'home.' There's nothing wrong with that. The colors and things have meaning, they're comfortable and lovely. They bring in the beauty of the world around us, the beauty God gave us to enjoy. And we do enjoy it.

We've broken nearly all those rules we made when we first went to Nepal. But we've realized that it wasn't the rules that were important... it was the **reason** we made them that was important. When we made those rules we didn't want anything to trap us. We didn't want to get so involved in anything that would distract us from God. We wanted to spend our time and energy doing what God really wanted us to do on this earth. It's not bad to have good schools, or pets or to fix our houses, but we saw that our friends were distracted by them and we didn't want to lose sight of the things that are really important to God.

**Carol:** We **can** enjoy the beautiful world around us and follow God at the same time. The hard part is to know when those nice things are trapping us.... taking our attention away from what is most important.

**Naomi:** That's right. Sometimes, in the busy days improving our house, we did feel trapped. But on other days it felt rewarding and fun. We felt that we could give it all up if we had to.

For all of us, it's hard to remember that everything around us will pass away. These things are not eternal, they don't last forever. The rich man in Jesus' story also forgot this. His harvest was so big one year that he pulled down his barns and built bigger ones. Then he thought he would be okay. He thought all his worries were over. But he died that night. And Jesus told the crowd that this is a lesson for anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich in God's eyes.

Let's try to make sure that our lives are rich in God's way. Let's watch our hearts to make sure we're spending our time on what is important. Let's ask God to show us when we are being trapped or distracted by the things around us. The fire made us look at our hearts and think about what was really important. When we were being distracted by things around us, God reminded us that *He* was our reason for living.

**Tammy:** Thank you for that story Naomi. It makes us think about what is really important in our lives. What distracts me from putting God first? What distracts you?

**Carol:** I think we're really rich if we have love in our lives and if we can do things to help others and make our world a better place, especially if we're trusting God and living the way he wants us to live. We're rich if we know we will spend eternity with God in heaven. I think I need to watch out for the nice things that take up too much of my thoughts and time.

**Tammy:** So I hope we'll all put God first, as we make decisions this week. I pray that your week is happy and safe and you know God's presence in your life each day.

**Carol:** We need to go now. If you would like to contact us we'd love to hear from you. You can write to us in care of this station or at TWR Women of Hope.... The address:  
TWRWomenofHope.org.

We do hope you will be with us again. Have a great week filled with God's blessings.

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