

Self-esteem / Jesus' View of Women

Carol: Here's a question: if you had the chance to decide your sex, would you *choose* to be female? Do you think it's a *privilege* to be a woman...or a *burden*?

Welcome to Women of Hope! I'm Carol, and today Tammy and I would like to chat with you about how we women value ourselves. We'll take a look at how we feel about what we're worth and why we often have a low opinion of who we are as women. It's also a good time to talk about how the Creator God thinks and feels about women!

Tammy: You know Carol, many women go through life feeling unhappy and miserable because they don't think they're worth much. They carry a lot of poor attitudes and beliefs about themselves.

Carol: If that's true, I wonder how you feel. Do you feel inadequate, fearful, and insecure at times even when you know you shouldn't? You're not alone thinking like this. Many women sometimes feel they can't do anything right, or they wish they'd never been born. In my own life, there have been times when I've simply felt that I don't quite measure up to some kind of standard. Isn't it painful to feel you're less valuable than others?

Tammy: Maybe you're familiar with the term Self-esteem. It simply means what we think and how we feel about *ourselves*. When we have healthy self-esteem and self-awareness, we respect and value ourselves, realizing who we truly are. This doesn't mean we are self-centered or proud, but it means we have a balanced and true picture of who we are.

Often, It's helpful to do some positive self-talk! For example, I know that I'm good at doing whatever needs to be done, when it needs to be done. That means that if a situation comes up and my time frame changes I can make adjustments to make sure that whatever project I'm working on starts and finishes at the right time. But I know that I need help with, believe it or not, and it's totally different, keeping things organized in my home. My husband does a great job of that. Me, I have trouble with it.

There are four people living in our house; sometimes there have been five people living in our house. Trying to keep up with five people doing five different things, and somebody wanting to get something done at one time, tends to get a little hectic and I need help with that. It doesn't mean that I'm perfect or better than others when I can make the adjustments that need to be made, but it does mean that I accept myself and I care for myself. If I constantly think I'm worthless or if you constantly think that you're worthless, we say you have low self-esteem.

Carol: We usually have opinions about ourselves, don't we? how we look, how clever we are, what we're good at, where we fit in our family and community. But are these opinions realistic? They can be exaggerated, or too harsh, or they can be balanced and true.

When you're realistic about yourself, and you know the strengths and weaknesses of your character, you're able to recognize that you are valuable, and you have something to give others. But when you feel inferior or inadequate, it will get in the way of achieving your goals, hopes and dreams.

Tammy: Often a person with low self-esteem won't take risks in case she might not do well. She doesn't join in conversations in case she might say something silly. She doesn't believe it when people praise her.

Carol: But another woman with low self-esteem might try *too hard* to impress, and then she will criticize others to make herself look better. Maybe you're like that. Or do you know someone like that? Both types of women are too focused on themselves, and not interested enough to reach out to others.

Tammy: So, how do we recognize feelings of low self-worth? Here are some questions for you to think about. Ready?

- If someone asks you to lead some project, or take on a new responsibility, do you feel afraid and say 'no'?
- Is it hard for you to accept praise and be generous towards others?
- Do you feel you need to impress others or have them think well of you?
- Are you very concerned with what others think of you?
- Do you avoid risks in case you might fail?
- Are you overly sensitive and get hurt easily?
- Do you ever *assume* people are thinking negative or bad things about you?
- Are you often critical and resentful?

If you answered 'yes' to most of these questions, you might want to think about what's really behind your feelings!

Carol: Many women suffer poor self-esteem because they were not shown love and acceptance as children. Sadly, many of us admit we've never heard our parents tell us they love us or are proud of us. We feel rejected and sad and that affects how we feel about ourselves. Women who

experience this kind of pain often see others as more attractive and more capable than they really are.

And then there are women who experienced sexual abuse or cruelty when they are young. Those women often feel ugly and worthless. They often feel used and unclean and reach womanhood with emotional scars. Their self-esteem has been twisted and damaged and they need a lot of love and patience to help them to heal.

Tammy: I know that many cultures value boys more than girls. A girl baby might not get the same love and care, or even as much food, as a boy. It's a terrible thing, but some women are forced to have an ultrasound when they're pregnant, and abort baby girls. Sometimes boys are educated and girls don't get that chance. Sometimes women don't get the same respect and opportunities as men. So in a culture like that, it's very hard to feel good about being a woman. What messages did you get about being a girl, as you grew up? Do you still believe them or can you question those messages now.

Carol: There are so many reasons that affect our sense of self-worth. Maybe you were deprived as a child; maybe you were ridiculed or bullied at school, or dominated by parents, teachers, husbands, employers, relatives and friends. Perhaps you were rejected, hurt and afraid. My friend, as you listen, do you feel like we are talking about you? Or maybe you know someone who has poor self-esteem. We want you to know that it's not too late to have a better view of who you are, despite what has happened in the past. You don't have to believe those people anymore!

Tammy: Where does good self-esteem come from? First, they come from knowing that someone else loves you and values you. And even if no-one in your life shows you love, I want to tell you that God made you the person you are, and he loves you so much. Never say, 'No-body loves me!' Does someone love you? Enjoy being loved by your family, your friends, even your pets! They must see something good in you.

Second, self-esteem often comes from things that other people tell us. Do you brush away compliments? Instead, *listen* to the nice things that your family or friends tell you. It might be something nice about your appearance, or your work, or something kind or clever that you did. Accept these words- they're like food for your self-esteem. They encourage you to try even harder. Thirdly, reflect on the good things about yourself. Look in the mirror and find one thing you like, and work to improve what you can. If you respect yourself, you take care of your appearance, and others will respect you more.

Carol: Each day, try and think of something you did well, and congratulate yourself, and try to do even better. Stop saying 'I can't and start saying 'I'll try.' It's a boost for your self-esteem when you make good changes and improve yourself. Do something each day for yourself and for someone else, and let yourself feel happy about that.

We need to notice and value the things that we do well, and our good points. We need to look again at the messages we have heard about our value. I think we also need to think about how we live. If you live according to your beliefs and standards, you respect yourself. If you constantly tell lies, or are lazy or dishonest or immoral, it's pretty hard to like yourself. So try to do what is right, and you will feel better about yourself.

Friend, we value you, you're important to us, and to God.

Tammy: We've been talking a bit about how our society treats women. Now I want to ask: how do you think our Lord, Jesus Christ, saw women? He lived at a time when women had a very low place in society, but he treated them with great respect.

Jesus was God's Son and God's promised savior. He came to live and to die and then to send his message to the whole world. He wanted all of his followers, women as well as men, to be part of his mission. We read about the 12 men who were specially called to follow Jesus, but there were women in his company as well and they also learned all that Jesus taught.

Carol: Did you ever stop and think that the first person who saw that Jesus was raised from the dead was a woman? Her name was Mary Magdalene, and she had a powerful message of hope for the world.

Tammy and I read right through the Gospel of Luke, which is in the Holy Bible. It tells about Jesus' life on earth. We counted 24 times where Jesus met a woman, talked about a woman, or mentioned a woman in a parable.

Tammy: And every time, women were presented in a positive way. Whenever he met with women, Jesus was accepting, sensitive, and affirming.

Carol: Why do we say that Jesus was accepting?

He accepted the gifts of loving service and gentleness that women offered Him. Women ministered to Jesus in unique ways. Mary and Martha's house was a quiet place where Jesus retreated from the crowds (Luke 10:38—42). When Jesus travelled the roads with his followers, the women were the practical ones- they looked after their daily needs as well as learning.

Tammy: Jesus was a man who knew who he was as a man. He was never threatened by the tenderness of a woman. Luke wrote about a woman who came into a feast. She knelt, wept over Jesus' feet, bathing them with her tears, and then anointed them with perfume before drying them with her hair (Luke 7:36-50). This was her act of repentance. Jesus allowed her to do this. He wasn't at all disgusted or embarrassed. He welcomed her.

It makes me feel so good to know that, even if nobody else accepts me as I am, Jesus does!

Carol: He was not only accepting, he was sensitive. He knew the social and religious handicaps facing women, and He lifted those burdens. He was compassionate and caring.

Tammy: Here's a story that shows how Jesus understood the expectations on women. It's from God's word the Bible.

Carol: One day Jesus visited his follower Peter at his house, and Peter's mother-in-law was sick. In the Middle East, even if a woman of the house is sick, she gets up to take care of a male guest. Jesus, of course, was not an ordinary guest. He was a rabbi, a teacher of God's law. He had the right to walk into the house, sit down, and ask, "Where's my food?" But He didn't. Jesus didn't demand anything. Instead, He went first to Peter's mother-in-law and laid His hands on her and healed her. He wouldn't let her serve him until he had served her. (Mark 1:29)

Tammy: You know, Carol, that's a lesson for us all. We need to let Jesus heal our souls before we try to serve him. We need to come to him every day in prayer, and confess our sins, and receive his forgiveness. Then we're ready to serve him in the world.

Carol: Let me tell you another beautiful story from God's word the Bible.

It was the Sabbath, the holy day, and Jesus was teaching about God in the house of worship at Capernaum.

A woman was there who had been crippled by an evil spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all. When Jesus saw her, he called her forward and said to her, "Woman, you are set free from your disability." Then he put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God.

The religious leaders were upset because Jesus healed on the holy day, when they were not supposed to do any work.

Jesus said, "You hypocrites! On the Sabbath day, don't you untie your ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water? Satan has kept this woman, a daughter of Abraham, bound for eighteen long years; shouldn't she be set free on the Sabbath day?"

When he said this, all his opponents were silenced, but the people were delighted with all the wonderful things he was doing.

That's the end of this story from God's word.

Tammy: You might not realize at first how unusual this was. Jesus broke some of the rules of his culture. First, He called this woman forward from the place of the women (the back of the room) to the place of the men (the front of the room). He interrupted the teaching of the Word of God—the most sacred time in Jewish life—to help a woman!

Second, Jesus shocked the people by speaking to her, a woman he didn't know. And then he put his hands on her. In Jesus' day some religious Pharisees were so strict in their observance of the Law they would not even look at a woman. If they sensed that a woman was going to cross their path, they would close their eyes tightly and walk straight ahead. Sometimes they would smack into a wall or fall over an ox cart and get bruised! But Jesus laid His hands on a woman in order to heal her.

And then, Jesus affirmed her worth in society. These men in the synagogue were probably thinking, what is she doing in here? Jesus knew their hearts. His words and actions said "This woman is worth far more than any animal you have. This woman is not an animal; she is a 'daughter of Abraham' "By saying this, he restored her rightful position as a member of God's chosen people, part of the community of faith.

Carol: This event is especially important because Jesus willingly risked His life for the sake of a woman. He silenced His opponents by being kind, sensitive and merciful to a woman. It made him some enemies, and in the end these enemies took his life.

You know, Jesus never humiliated or put down a woman. From the earliest days of His life with his mother Mary, to the time He ascended into heaven, Jesus lifted up and affirmed women. He praised them for their faith. (Matthew 9:22. 15:29) He taught women individually (John 4) and alongside of men, as equals, respecting that they could understand and learn as well as men. He told several stories where a woman is a good example of faith and hard work. I'm sure women listening in the crowd would have smiled to themselves!

Tammy: So we can see in the Bible that Jesus really valued women and took big risks in his culture to show that He accepted, affirmed, healed, forgave and taught them. One time, he stopped some men who were about to kill a woman for adultery. He said they could go ahead if they had never sinned, and of course, they couldn't say that. So Jesus really rescued that woman and told her not to sin any more. He gave her back her life and her dignity. (John 8)

Jesus cared for those women, and he cares for you and me just as much. Jesus is the same today for you and for me. Loving, caring, compassionate, healer and master, but even more, he is our savior! Wouldn't you want to follow a savior and master like this?

Carol: My friend, as you listen today, I hope that you're encouraged to follow Jesus. God loves you so much. He sent Jesus just for you, and you have just heard that he loves and accepts you, and has compassion for you. I hope you have decided to follow Jesus from now on.

Tammy: If you made that decision or if you have questions, you can write to us in care of this station or at TWR Women of Hope.... The email address is TWRWomenofHope@twr.org. That's TWRWomenofHope@twr.org.

Carol: Maybe you have missed a program or would even like to hear one again. You can do that on our website TWRWomenofHope.org. That's TWRWomenofHope.org. or by visit us on our Facebook page. Remember: You're precious to the Lord

Tammy: and to us! Goodbye and God bless you!

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