

Life Balance / Our Relationship with God

Tammy: Do you ever feel exhausted? Do you feel that *work* takes up so much of your energy that you can do nothing else? You might ask yourself, 'Isn't there more to life than working all day long?' Maybe you feel unhappy and have no energy. I know- I've felt like that too! What can we do to start feeling better?

Carol: Hello! I'm Carol, and Tammy and I are here again with Women of Hope. I hope you have time to stop for a minute now- but if you can't, try and listen while you work. Today we have a friend with us that going to help us with some ideas on how we can look after ourselves and organize our time better. Lois it is good to have you here today.

Lois: Hi Carol. Thanks for inviting me over today.

Carol: Do you ever feel so exhausted because you've been working so hard... working for so long without a break... that you feel you can't keep going for another minute? Maybe you feel physically sick and weary from all your hard work.

Tammy: What sort of work takes up your time? Maybe you spend long hours in the fields at planting time or harvest. Or perhaps you have a market stall, or work in a shop or a business, or you teach school. Do you have two or three jobs just to bring in enough money? Maybe you have to work night shifts; that can make it hard to have time with family and friends. And of course your job is on top of the work you do in the house and looking after the children or other family members. Does your husband help at all in the home or with the children? Often they don't, do they? Women do carry a heavy burden and it's sometimes hard to find any time just for yourself, to refresh your body and spirit.

Carol: Perhaps you're so busy that you worry at night, or can't get to sleep, or you wake up way too early. All the time you're thinking about all the work you have to do the next day. Are you like many women who are too busy to eat well... you haven't got time to spend with family or friends, or you don't have time just to be alone. I know that this can make your health suffer. And your marriage and family relationships suffer as well. No wonder it seems that life is out of balance.

Lois: And friendships suffer. When a friend asks how you are, do you often reply, “Oh very busy!” or “Very tired!”? How does your friend feel then? Maybe she feels that you’re too busy to spend time with her; so after a while she feels she shouldn’t bother you. So then you feel alone and friendless, and maybe feel depressed.

Tammy: Sometimes we say we need a *healthy balance* for work and the rest of life. If you’re giving *out* lots of energy in your work, you need to balance that with things that *give* you energy. I’m sure you know that sleep is important... and regular exercise... and eating healthy food. But we need to balance our *time* too! It’s important for you to have time alone to nurture yourself – take care of yourself – and have time with family and friends. So how can you do this and still work at your job?

It would be good to think of some practical ways of balancing your time. Have you talked about this with your husband, or other adults that you live with? Make the time to discuss how you feel and how he can help you to get things back into balance. This affects him and the family too, so it’s important. Try to set aside time to talk away from the children.

Carol: Of course the children can also do things for the family, even younger ones. Could you give them tasks to organise their things for school, so that everyone is ready to leave the house in the morning? Doing this in the evening before bedtime will make it a routine. Children can do household chores too, like preparing vegetables, cleaning, sweeping – it teaches them important skills and they learn to take responsibility. Your husband might be happy to do some household jobs too! You won’t know unless you ask him. It might make him feel more part of the family unit and take pride in supporting his wife and children so that he has a happy wife and family.

Tammy: Maybe you work all the time in the home, caring for your family, looking after little babies and young children, or older relatives, 24 hours a day. You can feel overwhelmed by all the work you have to do, and get no time for yourself and your interests. Perhaps you have a child who has a disability or an illness and they need constant care.

Lois: When my son was very young he suffered badly from asthma and many nights I was up all night by his bed watching over him in case he couldn’t breathe. It was hard to keep going the next day. I became utterly exhausted and I felt very depressed. My husband worked long hours at the hospital and he was often away overnight on night duty. My family was far away so there was no relief or support at all. I feel grateful as I remember some wonderful friends from my church who knew

about my situation. Together we formed a support group for each other. Once a week we met in someone's home, sharing a cup of tea or coffee and something to eat while our children played. We discussed a book we had read or a Bible story we had heard, and we prayed for each other. We also worked out a plan to look after each other's children for 2 or 3 hours a week, so we could get little breaks. I felt like this saved my life! Friends from those days are friends for life!

Tammy: Perhaps this is something you could do too. Talk to your friends and see how you can help each other so you all get some time away from constant work.

Lois: When I was a young woman, I lived in India, as we went there to work for a few years. I was shocked to learn how our young servant woman worked from 4 o'clock in the morning preparing her family's food for the day. She did the housework, washed the family's clothes and got her three children ready for school, all before she came to work in my house at 8 o'clock. She was constantly tired...she didn't have time to eat properly, and never had any time for herself. No time or money for education or hobbies or just relaxing –chatting with friends, enjoying play times with her baby or exploring nature. She was very happy when I said she must have a coffee break after one hour's work at my house. I gave her a rug to lie down on and take a nap so that she could rest and get her energy back and eat something nutritious. This helped her a lot and she had more energy. It made her work and life balance better and she seemed much happier.

Tammy: And I'm sure she worked well for you then. Good bosses understand that their workers need times of rest, and they work better if they're not slaving all the time. Maybe *you* can talk to your boss about your work conditions. Or do you stay longer at work than you really need to? Sometimes we have to decide what to give up, in order to make time for rest and refreshment.

Carol: So what can you do to get a better balance in your life? As busy as you are, it is good to take time to think about life. If you are someone who likes writing things down you could think about your daily routine and plan how you could make changes. Plan out each day and each week. Make sure you get time for exercise, and time to think and to pray. Maybe you can use the time when you're traveling or walking to work or to the market. Or you might plan things more so that you can go for a walk with a friend or sit down when you listen to your radio program. Even little breaks in your day will help to restore your balance.

Tammy: Yes, they don't have to take long. You can spend some time enjoying the beautiful world God made; that restores you. It doesn't take me long to stop and look at the sunrise or sunset, or a flower or tree. Then I take a deep breath, and let go of the tension I'm holding in my body. I relax and feel grateful for a moment, and that gives me energy to go on.

Lois: Did you know that even God rested? At the beginning of the Bible we read about the creation of the world. There was a lot of work to be done and the Bible says that on the 7th day God rested. That's a wonderful reminder for us; it gives us the freedom to also take rest, to wonder, dream, create and get life back into balance!

Tammy: We've just been talking about the balance in our daily lives. We use up energy, and we need to restore energy. It's like a bank account in a way- we have to put something in to be able to draw something out. But let me ask you - do you think your relationship with God is like that? Do we have to put in good actions to balance our bad actions?

Carol: I heard one woman say, 'I gave some money to the children's charity- I hope God noticed, I need some good points.' Sometimes I hear people joke about what happens when they die. They might say, 'I hope I'm in credit when the angels do my accounts. I hope I have enough good points.' It's as though they have a feeling that they will have to give an account of themselves to God, but they often think they'll be ok to go to heaven because they're not murderers or criminals.

Tammy: It seems that people all over the world have some idea that their actions will be judged. In ancient Egypt, over 5000 years ago, people believed that after death their heart was weighed in a balance against a feather from the goddess who represented the order of the universe. I've seen pictures they painted of the weighing scales and the demon waiting to eat them if they failed.

Carol: Today, some people think they will come back in a different form, according to how well they lived. Some say their actions are weighed in a balance, or written in a ledger, to see whether the good ones are more than the bad ones. Others say you must cross a narrow bridge to heaven, which you can't get across unless you have enough merit, or credit. It's like a good act earns you credit, a bad action takes the credit away.

What do you think about this? Are you hoping you can earn enough credit? Do you worry in case you can't? Could we *ever* have enough credit to buy our way to heaven?

Carol: Let me tell you a story about Kate, a woman who left her job in America to set up an aid organization in a far country that was badly damaged by wars.

One day Kate visited her neighbours. They drank tea and ate nuts and sweets, and the husband asked Kate what would happen when she died. He explained that they believed that they would need to earn much merit or credit in God's sight to be able to cross the narrow bridge to heaven. They could earn credit through keeping all their religious rules and practices. The judge would be strict and they could never know whether they would have enough credit to pass the test.

Kate understood them. She agreed, 'Yes, I believe that God will judge us. He sees all our actions, and he sees our hearts. I believe God is always just. God's word, the Holy Bible, says, 'Everyone must die once, and after that be judged by God' (Hebrews 9:27) It also says, 'All of us have sinned, and we fall short of God's glorious standard.' (Romans 3:23) I know *I'm* not good enough to cross that bridge to heaven. I would have to be *perfect* to meet God's standard! God knows we will never *earn* enough credit to get to heaven.

Kate continued, 'Here's the thing. I don't have to be good enough to get to heaven by my *own* goodness. God knew that I would never be good enough, but he still loved me. He loves all of us, and he wants us to come to heaven. So he sent Jesus to help us.'

Kate took the blue glass bowl filled with sweets from the table. 'This bowl is like Jesus, she said. His bowl is filled with righteousness, with goodness. He did no bad actions, only good ones. He is full of credit in God's sight.' Then she took a red bowl, with just a few shells left from the nuts. 'This is like me, she said. I have no righteousness, no credit, compared with God; he is completely holy, and that is his standard.' Kate's friends looked at the bowls, and nodded. They knew what she meant. So Kate went on.

'Then God gave me faith to believe in Jesus. When that happened, it's like he picked me up.' She picked up her red bowl and put it on top of the blue bowl of sweets that stood for Jesus. 'When it's time, Jesus will carry me to heaven on his righteousness, his credit. When God judges me, he will not look at my bad actions because Jesus took care of them. God will welcome me into heaven. This is the will of God.' Kate smiled. 'This is what I believe.' And she slid the two bowls across the table, her empty nut bowl carried by the blue Jesus bowl.

The neighbours looked at the bowls and looked at Kate. At last the grey-bearded father said, 'You have a beautiful God.'

Tammy: What do you think about that story? It reminds me of some words in the Bible that say, 'If anyone is *in Jesus Christ*, they are a new being: the old has gone, the new has come.' (2 Cor 5:17) When you put your trust in Jesus and make him your master, God gives you a new life. It's not because you worked for it, it's because of Jesus. When Jesus died, it's like he wiped out the debt we owed to God. We could never pay that debt, but Jesus did. To receive that new life, that gift, we just need to confess our sin, admit we need God's forgiveness, and thank God for his grace and kindness.

Carol: You might think, 'That's good, I'd love a new start, but I'll mess it up again. Soon I'll be back in debt to God.' But here's the wonderful thing- we can *keep coming back* to God and asking him to forgive us. The Bible promises, 'If we confess our sins, we can always trust God to do what is right and forgive our sins.' (1 John 1:9)

Tammy: That doesn't mean we should take God's kindness for granted and just go on sinning (Romans 6:1-2). After that new start, each time we recognise that we have done wrong, and ask God to forgive us, our conscience is touched. We learn what God wants. We get more sensitive to right and wrong, and we want to do what is right, to please God who has done so much for us. When we put our trust *in Jesus* we want to be *like Jesus*.

Carol: There was a world-famous French acrobat named Jean François Blondin. People called him The Great Blondin. In 1859 he was the first man to walk on a tightrope above the Niagara Falls, a *huge* waterfall between Canada and the United States of America. The rope was 1300 feet long, or about 400 meters. He did this many times, in front of big crowds. One day Blondin asked who would climb on his back and let him carry them across the falls as he walked on this rope. No-one wanted to- they believed he could do it, but didn't want to risk their life. Finally one man agreed. He was Blondin's manager, Harry Colcord. He was so sure that he could trust Blondin that he got onto his back, and let Blondin carry him safely across Niagara Falls. You see, others said they believed, but Harry Colcord acted on his faith.

That is a picture of what it means to put your trust in Jesus. We trust him entirely to carry us to heaven on his strength, his credit. We don't depend on any other way, but we fully trust that God will accept us because Jesus has dealt with our sins. Are you ready to put all your trust in Jesus?

Tammy: That's a big decision to make, isn't it? Our prayer is that you will trust Jesus today. If you have questions, or you have made that decision, we would love to hear from you. You can contact us at in care of this station or at TWR Women of Hope. The address: TWRWomenofHope@twr.org. That's TWRWomenofHope@twr.org.

If 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 visiting us on our Facebook page.

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

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