

# Mosquitoes / Recognising the Creator

**Tammy:** Do you know what is the most dangerous animal on earth? Is it the lion, so big and powerful? Or could it be the hippopotamus, which kills about thirty people in Africa every year? Or perhaps it's a snake with its deadly bite? Today on Women of Hope we'll be talking about the most deadly animal...and how you can avoid it.

Hello, it's great to be together again. I'm Tammy.

**Carol:** And I'm Carol. So did you work out which is the most dangerous animal on earth? We had some good guesses, but they were all wrong. What was your guess?

**Tammy:** I was a little surprised when I heard that the *mosquito* is probably the most deadly animal on our planet. Yes, you heard me correctly! A mosquito! That tiny little buzzing creature kills many many people each year. Today we want to talk about how mosquitoes can be so dangerous and how you can protect your family from them.

**Carol:** So why are these little creatures considered so dangerous? Well, imagine that you have a disease caused by very tiny bacteria... or viruses... or parasites... in your blood. When a mosquito bites you, it pricks your skin and sucks up some of your blood, with bacteria, viruses or parasites in it. Then imagine that mosquito buzzing its way to your friend across the table. It pricks her skin, and injects some of your blood - and those nasty germs - into your friend. What will they do there? They'll spread till there are millions of them, and your friend will get sick too.

**Tammy:** It doesn't need much blood to be carried across to another person. Just one of those tiny germs can spread and multiply and make them very sick. Many of the diseases that kill people are carried around by mosquitoes. Have you heard of yellow fever and dengue fever? And I'm sure you know about malaria. All of these diseases can kill people and they're carried around by mosquitoes. There are many other diseases, but these three are the most common.

**Carol:** Yes, yellow fever, dengue fever and malaria are common - and very nasty. Doctors think that mosquitoes give serious illnesses to about 700 million people each year around the world. That's twice the number of people in America! And each year two million people in the world die from mosquito related diseases. That's a huge number of people!

It's easy to think of mosquitoes as just annoying pests that give us a bite that itches, but for many people that bite has serious results. If you're feeling unwell, with fevers, nausea, or serious headaches, then please go and see a nurse or doctor. You may be suffering from a disease carried by a mosquito.

**Tammy:** Some people also have an *allergic* reaction to mosquito bites that might affect their breathing or cause swelling in their body. If this happens the person must see a doctor as soon as possible. Another problem with mosquito bites is that they can become infected. Lots of people, especially children, will scratch their bites until the skin is broken and starts to bleed. Any type of open sore like this can become infected if germs get into it. Try not to scratch your bites. Use ice or a clean damp cloth to ease the itching. If the skin has become broken, check these sores often to make sure they're not extremely sore or weeping pus. If these sores have become infected you might need to see a nurse or doctor for some help to make them heal correctly.

**Carol:** I once read that there could be more than three thousand different varieties of mosquito. Some of these suck the blood from humans, while others suck blood from animals. Female mosquitoes suck blood from humans or animals in order to help them produce eggs. They lay their eggs in still water. It can be salty or fresh water. The mosquitoes don't seem to mind. If this water is still for only five to fourteen days it will allow the eggs to mature. Eggs are usually laid in lakes, the edge of rivers and puddles. But they can also be found around your home in plant-pot holders or any container that has water in it.

**Tammy:** When I looked, I was surprised how many places there were around my home where water could be sitting. Think for a moment; how many containers do you have around your home that might have water sitting in them? ...Perhaps you have a water tank that only gets used for some months of the year and has a small amount of water in the bottom? Or maybe when it rains, there's a big puddle that always forms at the back of your garden near the fence? Do you have blocked drains or gutters? What about containers you have outside for animals to drink from? All of these could provide the water that mosquitos need to lay their eggs and produce more mosquitoes.

**Carol:** To protect your family, try to remove any still water from around your home so that mosquitoes cannot breed there. If you're not using the water tank, turn it upside down so no water can fall in, or put a tight lid or cover on it. You could get rid of the puddle at the back fence just by moving the dirt around a little to change the flow of the water. Maybe a few days after you have a big rain at your house, you could go out for a mosquito egg hunt and look to see where water is still sitting, so that you can remove these pools of water.

**Tammy:** But maybe you need a pond for water for your animals, or watering your plants. Then you could put fish in it that eat mosquito eggs or the wrigglers that hatch. Don't kill other creatures that eat mosquitos, like spiders, dragonflies, ants and frogs. Chickens, ducks and other birds eat mosquitos too, so they can help keep them from breeding.

If you have rainwater barrels, cover them with a tight fitting lid, or put a teaspoon of household kerosene - not the kerosene used in motors - on top of the water so it forms a thin film. This will stop the mosquitoes breeding there.

So how else can we protect our families from mosquitos? Most mosquitoes feed at dawn and dusk, although some like to eat all day long. So you need to take extra care in the morning and evening to make sure you and your family members don't get bitten by these creatures. Wear clothing that covers your body, especially your legs and arms, to help to protect you. Loose clothing is better, as mosquitoes can bite through tight jeans or socks.

**Carol:** Do you know how mosquitoes find people to bite? They don't look for you, they smell you body odours. And did you know that mosquitoes like pretty perfume? A friend of mine who lived in Africa had to change her daily routine. She liked to bathe before her evening meal. As she bathed she would wash her hair, and put on deodorant and perfume, so that she felt clean in the cool of the evening. However, she found that she was constantly being bitten by mosquitoes. She believed this was because the smell of her soap, shampoo and perfume was calling out to all the mosquitoes around her house.

When she bathed later in the day, just before bed, she didn't get bitten so often. Do you get bitten by mosquitoes at a certain time of day or when you are doing one particular thing? Maybe a change to your routine would help to reduce these bites.

**Tammy:** Can you think how to keep mosquitoes out of your house as much as possible? You could close the doors and windows in the evening to keep them outside. Maybe you could put wire mesh screens over the windows of your house as this prevents the mosquitoes coming in. You could hang mosquito nets from the ceiling and cover your bed to protect you from bites as you sleep. These nets and screens must have no holes in them. Unfortunately, nets and screens cost money and it's not possible for everyone to have them. So if you can't afford these, then protect yourself and your family through the other methods we've talked about today.

**Carol:** You're with Women of Hope, and we're talking about how to protect ourselves from mosquitoes. I found out that you can make a mosquito repellent yourself. You can do this by making yourself smell bad to the mosquito!

**Tammy:** So what smells bad to a mosquito? Dead fish?

**Carol:** Apparently they don't like the smell of some plant oils, such as cinnamon, eucalyptus, citronella, geranium and the castor plant. If you can get one of those essential oils - cinnamon, eucalyptus, citronella, geranium or castor oil - you just put 1 spoonful in 10-20 spoonfuls of vegetable oil or baby oil. Rub it on exposed skin when mosquitos are about, and store it in a cool place.

**Tammy:** But with anything like this, try it out on a small area of skin first, to check it doesn't irritate your skin. You should never use essential oils without diluting them in a neutral oil.

**Carol:** And there are other plants mosquitoes don't like. What do people use where you live? If you look around gardens carefully in the evening, you might find places where there are no mosquitos. See if you can find a strong smelling plant nearby - that might be one you can use. I've read that they don't like cloves, or thyme, or celery. You could plant these natural repellent plants around your house.

**Tammy:** So lets start to protect our homes together!

**Carol:** Remember, don't give mosquitoes still water to breed in... Don't make yourself smell good to them... Don't let them get close enough to bite you.

**Tammy:** I think I can remember those three things! I'm sure mosquitoes have their place in the natural world, but I don't want them near me!

**Carol:** You're with us on Women of Hope. We've been talking about how to protect ourselves against the diseases that mosquitoes carry. I hope you found that helpful. Now our friend Fran has joined us with another story from God's word, the Bible. Welcome, Fran.

**Fran:** Hi, it's great to be with you all again.

**Tammy:** Fran's been telling us about what happened after Jesus was killed and God brought him back to life and he went back to heaven.

**Carol:** Yes, we heard about how God's Holy Spirit came to give power to Jesus' followers. They spread the message far beyond Israel, where Jesus had lived.

**Fran:** You might remember that one of their most bitter enemies had become a follower of Jesus. This man, Paul, travelled from city to city, explaining that Jesus was truly sent by God and that they could be saved from God's judgment by believing in Jesus. Now I'm going to tell you about one of Paul's adventures, from God's word the Bible.

Paul and his friend Barnabas came to the town of Lystra. Actually, they were there because they had to run away from some people who hated their message and wanted to kill them. But straight away they started talking about Jesus. Paul noticed a man sitting in the crowd who seemed to be listening very closely. He saw that this man was lame. In fact, he was born with a disability and he had never been able to walk. Paul could see that this man believed his message. So Paul looked straight at him and said loudly, 'Stand up straight on your feet!' The man jumped up and started walking around. Wow!

**Carol:** Fran? We've heard other stories like this, haven't we, where God gave his followers the power to heal people, like Jesus did. I'm thinking that these healings would have made other people really take notice of their message.

**Fran:** Yes, I'm sure you're right. If you saw a miracle like this, you *would* pay attention, wouldn't you? Well, that's what happened here in Lystra. You should hear what happened next!

The Bible tells us that when the crowds saw the lame man walking, they started shouting out in their own language, 'The gods have become like men and have come down to us!' They said that Barnabas must be the Greek god Zeus, and they thought Paul was the god Hermes, the spokesman of the Greek gods. There was a temple to Zeus just outside the town, and the priest of Zeus brought flowers, and bulls to sacrifice in worship to Paul and Barnabas.

When Barnabas and Paul realized what was happening, they were horrified. They rushed into the middle of the crowd, shouting to them to stop. 'Why are you doing this? We're only humans like you! We're here to tell you good news, to turn away from these worthless ceremonies. You should worship the true and living God, who made heaven, earth, the sea and everything that lives. He has always shown he exists by the good things he does: *he* gives you rain and crops that grow; *he* gives you food and makes you happy. It's *his* power that heals people.' Even though they said this, they had a hard time stopping the crowd from making a sacrifice to them. But some believed their message about Jesus.

But it wasn't long before their enemies caught up with them. These enemies talked to the crowd too, and many of the people turned against Paul and Barnabas. They threw big rocks at Paul and dumped him outside the town, thinking he was dead. But some people had believed his message, and they gathered around him. Then Paul got up and was able to get to safety. But the next day Paul and Barnabas moved on to the next town. They weren't going to stop talking about Jesus!

That's the end of this part of the story from God's word. (Acts 14:8-20)

**Tammy:** Paul and Barnabas sure had dangerous, exciting lives, didn't they! One day they were chased, the next day they were worshipped as gods, then they were almost killed.

**Carol:** But everywhere they went, *some* people believed in Jesus. God wanted all sorts of people to hear that he loved them and had sent Jesus to save them from their sinful ways. He still does!

**Fran:** He does! He always wanted people to see that he loved them. What did Paul say to the people of Lystra?

**Carol:** That God really lives...

**Tammy:** ..and he has shown himself by the good things he does, like sending rain to make the crops grow and provide food.

**Fran:** So people all over the world can see that God really does exist. They might call him by different names, but in every time and culture people have understood that there is a creator. Later Paul wrote these words: 'Ever since God created the world, we have been able to 'see', or understand, his qualities that are *invisible*, his eternal power and divine nature; we can see them in the things he has made. So people have no excuse if they don't honour and thank him.' (Rom 1:20-21 GNT) And since Jesus came, we know a lot more about what God is like. Paul said this: 'God has overlooked the past times when people didn't know him, but now he commands all people everywhere to turn from their evil ways' (Acts 17:30 GNT). *Jesus* has shown us what God is like, how much he loves us. And when we put our faith in Jesus, God forgives our sins and helps us to live new lives in God's way. Then we can really honour and thank him. We can have a real relationship with God.

**Carol:** Maybe you're like those people at Lystra. You look at the world around you and you know that there must be a God; but you don't know how to *know* him and *worship* him. Let me encourage you - the God who made the universe *wants* you to know him! He loves you and he wants to forgive you and be friends with you.

Why don't you try to find out all you can about Jesus? Pay attention to what you hear on Women of Hope. If you can read a Bible, that's a great place to start learning about Jesus. Or you might know someone who follows Jesus, and you can talk to them. Pray to God and ask him to show you the truth. He will hear that prayer.

**Tammy:** Every day we ask God to help *you* to understand more about him, so that you will be happy and hopeful when you trust in him. We would love to help you to understand more. If you write to us we'll pray for you and try to answer your questions.

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

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