

Rape / We care

Carol: Welcome to *Women of Hope*. It's good to be together again. Hello Tammy my friend.

Tammy: Hi, Carol, and hello to you friend. Today we'll be sharing with you a very sensitive, difficult topic. We'll be talking about the subject of rape. Just in case you have young children present, you might not want them to listen. But if *you* can listen, you might find this is helpful for you, even though it might upset you.

Carol: Hello again, Friend. Today, we believe we should talk together as women about rape. We've heard some terrible stories recently, and in some places women and men are beginning to protest in public against rape. We agree!

Tammy: What is rape? In law, rape is the crime of forcing another person to submit to sex acts, especially sexual intercourse. That force could be actual physical force, or using a weapon. Or it might be through threats or using emotional control over a person with less power. For example, an employer might force a servant because she has no other way to earn a living and nowhere to live. I know it affects the victim very much - even more than robbery or a mugging.

Carol: Oh my, Yes, it goes far beyond the emotions that you would have if you were robbed or mugged. Rape affects you personally....deeplybecause it's a violation of your body, your emotions, and your sense of peace and safety. It attacks your sense of dignity and value...quite apart from the risk of getting pregnant or catching a disease.

Tammy: Victims of rape are often really damaged in their hearts and minds as well as their bodies. For example: they suffer sleep problems, mood swings, feelings of humiliation, and anger. It is very bad! And these effects can last for years.

Carol: Sadly, rape is quite common, so if it has happened to you, I want you to know that you are not alone. You are part of a large band of sisters who have been hurt in this way - and there are some brothers who have been hurt as well, because boys and men can be abused too.

Tammy: It's hard to know just *how* common rape is, and different countries report it in different ways. For example, many countries have laws that say that a husband who forces his wife to have sex with him is guilty of rape. But in other places that is considered his right, and the wife is treated as his property.

When God's word, the Bible, was written, wives were seen as property by most people, but the Bible says that husbands must live caringly with their wives, understanding their needs and showing them respect (1 Peter 3:7). I can't imagine a loving husband forcing his wife to have sex - that sounds like the opposite of love and respect.

Carol: It's also hard to know how common rape is because many women won't report rape. Often they believe their family honor will be lost. Sometimes rape victims say nothing, because they believe no-one will want to marry them now. And sometimes they don't report it because they will be blamed – nothing could be so wrong and farther from the truth. There are times when victims do not report rape because they've been threatened: "If you report this, you're going to get killed". Or just out of humiliation, they would rather not report it.

Tammy: There's a lot of fear.

Carol: A lot of fear. Like we said, a lot of self-blame, embarrassment, and humiliation to the victim. But I want to say this - it is *always* it is always the fault of the rapist, not the victim.

Tammy: Have you ever heard someone say that a woman deserved to be raped because of her clothes or her risky behavior? Now I personally believe we should dress modestly and be sensible about where we go and when, so we don't make it easy for attackers; but it is still *their* choice to attack, and *their* responsibility.

If someone steals a necklace from a shop window display, we don't say it was the fault of the necklace for being pretty, do we? We don't blame the shopkeeper for putting it on display! We blame the thief! And we blame the rapist, not the victim. So if rape has happened to you, dear sister, don't blame yourself. Do not think that you are 'dirty' because of someone else's bad choice. And don't think that this is the end of your life.

Carol: This is *Women of Hope*, and we're talking about the terrible issue of rape. I've just read a report in a newspaper, about Saraswati, a poor 13-year-old girl who wanted to study and get a good job. Her name was been changed in this story. Let me read it to you.

'Saraswati's mother has four children, and she is unemployed, widowed and illiterate. She told the reporter: "These people promised me that they would put Saraswati into a good school if she came and helped their family. They also got two new dresses stitched for her. I was very happy that my child would be spared the hard grind of poverty. I thought she would also be able to help me feed the three other children in the house. But look at what they have done to her. I will not send her anywhere now."

Two months ago, her daughter Saraswati was raped twice in the house where she worked as a domestic help by the 72-year-old house-owner and an 18-year-old male servant. A family friend of this man had brought Saraswati from her village, promising the mother that she would be sent to school, and given food and shelter. In return Saraswati did some housework for his daughter-in-law, who was pregnant.

But within two months, she started facing the lusty eyes of the house-owner. Saraswati said that he would come to the place where she slept and touch her when she was asleep. He would even grab her when she worked alone in a room. When she complained to his daughter-in-law, she was beaten up and told to keep quiet.

Saraswati said: “They did not even allow me to call home ... I was beaten up and threatened. One day, I was taken in a car, and they told me that the male servant who raped me would marry me after I turned 18. I refused it. They beat me up again and threatened to kill me, so I said yes,” she said. But the brave girl managed to call up her mother one day and asked her to take her home.

The two men are now in prison. A medical examination proved that it was a case of rape, the police said. But Saraswati and her mother do not want to stay in the town to see justice done. Her mother said: “I have four children to take care of. How can I stay here? We want to forget about it. Our family honor has been lost ... We don’t want anyone to know about it. Now I just hope I can find a husband for Saraswati.”

Now Saraswati wants to put the past behind her. The sparkling eyes have turned dull and the smile disappears when anyone talks about the incident. But Saraswati is strong in her wish to study and make a good future for herself.’ (Adapted from The Hindu, Feb 3 2013)

Tammy: What a sad story. It shows very clearly how a girl with little power can be raped, and not be able to defend herself against two strong men. But she did some things well.

Carol: I agree, Tammy. Let’s talk about them.

Tammy: Well, she stood up to them even though she had little power. She refused to be forced into a marriage based on rape, and she told someone as soon as she could. Then she and her mother complained to the police.

Carol: And the newspaper said she had a medical examination. That’s very important if you have been raped. The medical staff can collect evidence that can help to identify the rapist and bring him to justice. The police say that if you have been raped, don’t shower or change your clothes, until you have seen the police or told a doctor about it, so they can see the evidence. Also the medical staff can check for injuries and treat them if needed, and give medicine to protect against infections. And a victim should always tell the police as soon as possible. Rape is a serious crime in the eyes of the law and in every religion. A woman or girl should take someone with her to support her, as police don’t always handle these things well.

Tammy: If you’ve been raped, I would encourage you to talk to someone you trust, who will believe you and support you to get help. Maybe you could go to a church and ask for help. Perhaps there is a special hospital or police unit for rape victims, or a support group for victims, in your area. You might be able to find them in the telephone book or through a community center or the internet.

It can be very hard to speak up about these things, and you might not think it is worth the risk, but when brave women speak up and say it’s not acceptable, the secret about how bad rape is, is broken and slowly attitudes change in the community.

Carol: What would you do if your friend or sister or daughter told you she had been raped? I'm sure you'd be horrified, but would you comfort her and support her? Would you listen and let her tell you her story, would you believe her and tell her it's not her fault? Would you help her to find justice and support in the family and the community? Sisters, we need to help each other.

Tammy: Maybe you think you can't do anything to change the way things are. But there are ways for you to speak out against violence like this. Do you have sons, or brothers, or other boys that you can influence? We should help our boys understand that rape is a very serious crime, a sin – a shameful thing to do. We can teach them to treat all women the way they want their mothers and sisters to be treated. Tell them it's not manly to abuse women; strong men, good men, want to protect women.

Tammy: Welcome back. Here at *Women of Hope* we often talk and pray together about the problems and abuse that many women suffer. Our friend Stevie has put into words what we all feel about you, and I'd like to read it to you. She wrote:

When hard things happen in my life, it helps me to know that people care about me and what I'm experiencing. Their love strengthens and comforts me. If others care for you, does that help you to cope with difficulties? I hope you have love in your life to comfort and strengthen you. There may be many people who care for you, or just a few. Sadly, there are some people who feel very lonely... without anyone that they can really talk to and share their heart with.

You know, here at *Women of Hope* we care about you very much. We think about you, and pray for you. Now, we may not know your name, or what you look like, what you've done, or what your life is like. But we do know that there are many, many women who listen to *Women of Hope*, and every single one of them is precious...very, very precious, And that includes you my friend. And because you're precious we care for you.

Every woman is precious, but not every woman knows she's precious. Many women are not treated like they are precious. Many women are treated badly by others...or harmed. They can be harmed in a number of ways. They can be harmed emotionally with words...when others say nasty things about them. They can be harmed physically...when somebody hits them, or hurts their body in some way. They can be harmed sexually...when they are tricked, pressured or forced to have sex with somebody else. They can be neglected, or abused, or made to work too hard; they can be harmed in so many ways.

Maybe somebody has harmed you in some way. If you've been harmed, it's very wrong that that has happened to you, and we're sad that it has. Maybe there are other hard things that have happened in your life. Life may have been very difficult and painful for you. Maybe it still is. We want you to know that *we care* about the pain in your heart. We may not know your story, but we do care for you...and pray for you; that's why we're here, on *Women of Hope*. You know, there are many people who work together to keep *Women of Hope* going. And why do we do it? Because we care about you. And we want to share with you the hope that we have...so that you might have that same hope too.

I work with an organization in Australia that helps people all around the world with disabilities. I get to meet lots of people who are working to help people in other countries. There are people in many parts of the world, who care about what is happening in your country or area, or even in your own life. People who may not know you, are praying for all those who are in your situation. Did you know that every day, around the world, people are praying for anyone who is suffering? Thousands of women, and men too, in many countries and languages, pray to God especially about the needs of suffering women. This prayer movement is the thing that makes Women of Hope so strong. We pray for everyone, because everyone is precious.

So, it may help you to know that we care about you, and pray for you. Yes, somebody out there cares for *you* and prays for *you*. We hope that might comfort you. But we have something even more special to tell you. Someone who is far more special cares for you. We mentioned hope before. This 'someone' is the one we put our hope in. If you've been listening to Women of Hope before, you can probably guess who it is (laughs).

Yes, of course, it's God, the creator of the universe, and our heavenly Father. God loves you so very much. His love is so much greater than the love that people can have for each other. He knows everything about you. And he knows the things that have happened in your life, and how they've affected you. In fact, he knows so much more than you do about the way different things have affected you. Amazing isn't it?

God cares about you, and the things that have happened to you. If somebody has harmed you, we want you to know that God never wanted that to happen. Every person is special to God. He loves them dearly. So he doesn't want them to be harmed by another person. When you see somebody you love hurting, you hurt for them, don't you? You feel their pain. You have compassion for them. God's Word, the Bible, says that God is full of compassion (Psalm 116:5). When you hurt, he hurts for you. He feels your pain. He has compassion for you.

God, who cares for you and loves you so much, is always there for you. I read these words in the Bible, God's word, written to those who love and follow him. It says, "God has said 'I will never leave you: I will never abandon you.' Let us be bold then, and say 'The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid.'" (Hebrews 13:5-6). So that means, that the one who cares for you and loves you the most, is always there for you to talk to. You can just share your heart with him, without having to use any special words. You can ask him to give you the strength and comfort you need to face whatever you're facing, and he will gladly give it to you.

I love just talking to God about whatever is happening in my life. Knowing that he loves me so much gives me strength and comfort. I hope you find comfort and strength in knowing that he loves you so much.

Carol: Tammy just read the words that our friend Stevie wrote on behalf of all your friends at *Women of Hope*. We follow the Lord Jesus Christ, who has shown us what God is like. We want to share his love with you, so you can have hope too.

Tammy: If you follow Jesus too, you might want to join the thousands of women around the world who are praying to God each day for other women.

Carol: Remember, dear sisters, reach out to one another and take care. We do hope you will be with us again. Have a great week filled with God's blessings.
Good bye, and God bless you.

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