

Sarah's Story

Tammy: Do you have brothers or sisters, Susha?

Susha: Yes, I have two brothers and a sister.

Tammy: Do you like that?

Susha: Well, I have to share a lot... Sometimes they can tease me, but I'm glad I have them. There's always someone to play with and we can share the work. And I get my big sister's toys and clothes!

Tammy: And what about you Corey?

Corey: No, I don't have any brothers or sisters. That's ok - I get lots of time with my mum and dad, and I have a room of my own.

Tammy: Hi. This is *Women of Hope*, and I'm Tammy. Thanks for having us with you today.

Carol: And I'm Carol. It's good to be together again. Today we'll be talking about bringing up an only child. There are some good things about being an only child and some difficult things. We hope to find out all we can. And later on we will have a story from God's word about an only child who was very special.

Tammy: I read the other day that in many countries, many families decide to have only one child.

Carol: Did they tell you why that is?

Tammy: There are a few reasons. In some countries it has been government policy to keep the population down.

Then women who have careers often leave it till later to start their families, and then they may be too old to have a second child.

Some couples may decide they can't afford to bring up more children in the way they want to.

And of course, some mothers just don't get pregnant the second time, even though they want to; that can be hard.

Carol: Sometimes people say that an only child is often spoiled and selfish. They don't know how to get along with others. What do you think about that idea?

Tammy: That *can* happen. I've heard it called the 'Little Emperor' syndrome. The child is given everything they demand, and not disciplined properly, so they think they are the most important person in the world. But it doesn't have to be that way. Let's talk to Corey's mother, Amila, about hints to bring up an only child.

Carol: Welcome Amila. Was it your plan to only have one child?

Amila: No, I had health complications when COREY was born and I can't have any more children. But my husband and I feel very blessed to have him and we want to bring him up to be a good and happy person.

Tammy: Not a little emperor?

Amila: No! We try not to give him everything he wants...or to put all our hopes and ambitions onto him. It's tempting to push him to achieve a lot, and we do help him with his schoolwork when he needs it. But we try to let him go at his own pace, and not be too dependent on us.

Tammy: How do you teach him to share and to wait for things, when there are no other children to compete with him?

Amila: We ask ourselves: 'Will it be good for Corey to have this now, or to wait?' We encourage him to look forward to getting things later, and to save up for things he wants. Even with just the three of us, we still need to share and wait our turn at times, so we show by example how to consider each other's needs and feelings. And Corey has his jobs to do at home, because he needs to learn these things, and to share the work.

Tammy: Does Corey get lonely?

Amila: Maybe he does sometimes, but we make sure he often visits his cousins. He goes to a children's club too. We often invite other children to play at our house; we make sure it's fun, but they all have to play by the rules of the game. We started doing that when he was very small, so he's had to learn how to share and get on with other kids.

But I think he likes having time to himself too. I don't think it's good to plan every minute of his day. He needs to be able to find things to do on his own. He needs to try things and fail sometimes, and know that it's ok. When you only have one child, you tend to protect them too much. I've had to learn to let *him* learn from his mistakes sometimes. But I think he's doing ok. He's a bit grown-up for his age but he's still a happy kid, and he gets on well with other kids.

Carol: Amila, it is easy to see all of the hard work and care that you have taken to raise Corey! Thank you for sharing with us today. You know, whether we have one child or ten, we want them to be good...and happy, don't we?

Tammy: Have you ever wanted one thing more than any other thing in the whole world? Sometimes I make plans and I pray about something and I still don't see an answer. Has that ever happened to you? How did you feel?

Today we're going to listen to a true story. It's about a woman who felt just like that...discouraged, hopeless.

Carol: Oh I think you'll love this story. I do, because it gives me hope.

Tammy: Here on *Women of Hope* we've sometimes talked about a man named Abraham. He was famous as a man of faith. Thousands of years ago God called Abraham from his homeland and began to show him what God was like. Abraham lived as a wandering nomad. He had many herds and flocks and was very wealthy.

God had made a binding promise to Abraham, saying, 'I will give you many descendants, and they will become a great nation...and through you I will bless all the nations' (Gen 12:1-3). Remember that promise!

But years passed and Abraham and his wife Sarah had no children. Children are precious everywhere, and for these people they were also important because they were needed to help with the work. Sons were especially important to pass on the family name and inherit the family wealth. They were seen as a sign of God's blessing. If a woman didn't have a child, some thought God had rejected her. So, can you imagine how Sarah felt?...

Abraham worried that his chief servant would inherit his riches. That was the custom when there was no son. But God promised him that a son of *his own*, a son of Sarah, would inherit everything he owned. Abraham was 75 years old when God repeated his promise to him. (Genesis Chap 15)

Carol's going to tell us from God's Word what happened to Abraham...and Sarah after that (Gen Chap 18).

Carol: More years passed and Abraham and Sarah *still* didn't have any children. Sarah was already long past the age for having children, and Abraham was nearly 100 years old! And then God showed himself again to Abraham. This is how it happened...

One day Abraham was sitting at the entrance to his tent. When he looked up he noticed 3 men standing nearby. Immediately he ran to meet them and welcomed them, showing them much respect by bowing low to the ground. Abraham said to them, "Rest in the shade of this tree while water is brought to wash your feet. And since you've honored your servant with this visit, let me prepare some food for you. Then you'll be refreshed before you continue on your journey."

"Alright," they replied, "Do as you have said."

So Abraham ran back to the tent and said to Sarah, "Hurry! Make some bread."

Then Abraham prepared a very good meal for his guests, and served it to them himself.

"Where is Sarah your wife?" the visitors asked.

"She's inside the tent." Abraham said.

Then one of the men said, "I will return to you about this time next year, and your wife, Sarah, *will* have a son!"

Sarah was behind him, at the door of the tent, listening to this conversation. She laughed silently to herself, thinking she couldn't possibly have a baby.

Then the visitor said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh? Why did she say, 'Can an old woman like me have a baby?' Is anything too hard for God? I will return about this time next year, and Sarah will have a son."

Sarah was afraid, and said, "I didn't laugh." But the visitor said, "You did laugh."

God kept his word and did for Sarah exactly what he had promised. She became pregnant, and gave birth to a son in her old age. This happened at just the time God said it would.

Tammy: And that's the end of today's true story from God's Word. After the music we'll remember it together. Then you will be able to think about it, and maybe tell it to someone else.

Carol: We just heard the Bible story about how God made a promise to Abraham and Sarah...to give them a son in their old age.

Isn't it great how God often does the most unexpected thing? Do you know any woman who has become pregnant when she was very, very old?

Tammy: I don't know anyone like that. And some of us might not be too pleased (laugh). But Sarah was! OK, let's remember the story together.

Carol: Well first God showed himself to Abraham while he was sitting outside his tent and he saw three visitors standing nearby. You might wonder who they were: they were clearly sent from God bring God's message to Abraham and Sarah.

Tammy: And Abraham welcomed them very respectfully and with great hospitality.

Carol: The message from God was special... the visitor said, "I will return to you about this time next year, and your wife, Sarah, will have a son!"

But how did Sarah react? It's not surprising that she laughed to herself and wondered, 'How could an old woman like me have a baby?'" She said she didn't laugh, but God knew what she was thinking, didn't he?

Tammy: Then the visitor said, "Is anything too hard for God? I will return next year, and Sarah will have a son." And it happened, just at the time God said it would!

Carol: I wonder what it was like for Sarah to hear that she was going to have a baby even though she was very old! How do you think she felt? How do you think *you* would feel if *you* were Sarah?...

Tammy: I think I would have laughed like she did - then felt shocked.

Carol: Well...maybe she wasn't completely surprised...after all, God had told them more than once that he would give them many descendants. When God has clearly made a promise to us, we shouldn't be surprised when he keeps his promise.

Tammy: Remember what the visitor said: 'Is anything too hard for God?' That was a gentle challenge for Sarah, and it challenges me too. Because the story shows the answer, doesn't it? Sarah's age...and Abraham's age did not stop God from fulfilling his promise to them. No matter how old we are, or what difficulties we face, God can still work in our lives to bring about his good purposes. How about you my friend? What do you think about this?

Carol: God has the power to do anything. After all - He is the great creator of all things and nothing can defeat his plans.

He had a plan for Abraham and Sarah. In fact he had *big* plans for them. He planned to make a great nation from them and to be a blessing to all the nations through them.

And do you know how that blessing came about? ...Through their great descendant, the Lord Jesus Christ. But you know, he has a *plan* for each of *our* lives too.

Tammy: Here, on *Women of Hope*, we're remembering together the story we've heard today about Abraham and Sarah. This story tells me that we can completely trust God's Word. God told Abraham he would have a son within a year - and he did. What he says comes true. But God doesn't force us to believe.

Carol: That's a good point Tammy. God wants us to have faith, to really believe Him and the promises he gives us in his word, the Bible. As we listen to God's stories, have you noticed that he loves to do what seems impossible? He puts people in situations where they *have* to look to him for help...there seems to be no other way!

Tammy: Yes, I see what you mean. Sarah and Abraham couldn't have a baby without God's help. *Their* choice was whether to believe it was possible or not.

Sometimes we think if we wish for something hard enough, it will happen. Let's think about God's promises for a moment. He gave special, personal promises to some people. But you know, I think God's *best* promises are for *all* who follow him.

Carol: Can you give us an example Tammy?

Tammy: Well...God told Abraham and Sarah something special just for them...that they would have a baby within a year. He doesn't promise a baby to every woman. But he does promise all of us that he will *love us and forgive us*. He promises to *be with each of us and help us* with whatever we're going through. He promises to *listen carefully to our prayers* and answer in the way that is best for us.

Carol: And I am so thankful for that. I'm so glad our God cares about the things we need...just like he cared about Abraham and Sarah.

Tammy: I think Sarah had probably given up hope of ever having her own child, don't you? It's so hard to wait for something we want so badly isn't it!

But I guess God had a reason to keep her waiting... It certainly taught her, and Abraham to trust him.

Tammy: Is there something that you're waiting for, and it's hard to wait? God understands that, and if he keeps you waiting, or even if he says no to whatever you want, he will have a good reason.

Carol: So, friend, what do you think you will do differently now that you have heard this story? That's the hard part, isn't it? It's nice to hear a good story but how should my life be changed by it? God's word is meant to change us.

This story reminds me that I need to always have faith in God. Even when something doesn't seem to make sense to me, I need to trust God that whatever he does will be the best for me.

Tammy: I'm sure there was a lot that Abraham and Sarah learned during that waiting period. They certainly learned that God always keeps his promises, but that he does things in his own time. We're always in a hurry, aren't we?

Carol: That's so hard Tammy. And it's something we've struggled with too - and God did help us through. So this is something for all of us to think about isn't it? We need to trust God with the difficult things in our lives. He can help us...he can do what seems impossible...he can give us strength to cope with whatever comes along.

Tammy: You know, I have been worrying about our financial situation lately. The money never seems to be enough. Sometimes we don't have enough for all the bills. But God promised that he would supply everything we need, though not always everything we want.

The story we've heard today reminds me that I shouldn't give up and lose hope when I've been praying about something for a long, long time. God cares for me.

Carol: Did you notice that God didn't punish Sarah when she laughed...and even when she said she didn't laugh? He was so patient with her because he understood her feelings and her situation.

Tammy: And he understands your feelings, and your situation. He knows your fears, your hurt and your disappointments. No one completely understands everything about you and me...except God.

Carol: That is so comforting. Wow, this story really helps us know God better, doesn't it? Would you like to know more? Or maybe you have a story of how God has helped you! You can write to us in care of this station or at Women of Hope. We do hope you will be with us again. Have a great week filled with God's blessings.