

Being a good friend / Jesus, our friend

Claire: I want to tell you about my friend Janet. We used to work together. She was my supervisor at work, but she was a great friend to me too. Let me tell you about what made Janet such a great friend.

Carol: Welcome to Women of Hope, I'm Carol. Tammy and I are so glad that we can be together today. We like to think that we are your friends – and that you are *our* friend too.

Tammy: ...and I'm so glad to be your friend – even though we can't see each other. But we can share lots of ideas and stories. Today we have Claire with us to share her story about her friend Janet – and why she was such a good friend to her. Welcome Claire...

Claire: Thanks Tammy. Hi Carol.

Hello my friend, it's really good to be with you again.

Carol: Claire is a Speech Pathologist and has shared some really good ideas with us at other times about how to communicate well with a person who has dementia.

Tammy: And she's also shared with us about communicating with a person who has had a stroke.

Claire: And a while ago we talked about helping you and your new baby get into a good routine at home. My little girl is growing up now and she's lots of fun. As well as being a mother and daughter, we're becoming good friends.

But let me tell you about Janet. One of the first things I noticed about Janet was that she wanted to get to know me and spend time with me.

Carol: That's a very simple idea isn't it? But when you think about it, a good friend learns a lot about you because they *do* spend time with you.

Claire: Yes, because they care about you.

Tammy: They get to know what you like and don't like. They know how you like to spend your time, and what's important to you. And they respect your opinion – even if you disagree!

Claire: We all see things differently don't we! Getting to know someone takes time. And that means spending time with them.

Janet was my supervisor at work, so naturally we spent time together doing our job. But we also ate lunch together and talked about what was happening in our lives apart from work.

Janet would often ask me what I did on the weekend, or what I planned to do when I got home from work each day. Over time she got to know about my family, my hobbies, and also things in my life that I was finding hard. She would ask questions about me to understand me better.

Carol: Now that's a really important one – even when you first meet someone. It's good to ask them about themselves...but be gentle – a little at a time.

Maybe there's a person in your life right now that you could spend more time with... to get to know them better? Maybe you could be a good friend to her.

Tammy: On Women of Hope today, Claire has come to talk with us about *making friends...and being* a friend.

Claire: I could tell that Janet cared about me, and what I had to say, because she really listened to me as we talked together.

Carol: Listening is so important. Often people are so busy thinking about what they are going to say next. But they don't really stop and listen.

Claire: Listening to what someone has to say, without interrupting them, shows the other person that their thoughts and opinions are important...and worth listening to.

Can you remember a time recently when someone listened carefully while you spoke to them? How did it make you feel? It helps us feel loved and valued by that person. I always felt like Janet cared about me because she listened carefully to me.

Sometimes I found my work difficult and I was not sure if I was doing my job well. Some days I even cried at work because it was so hard! But just at the right time, Janet would ask me what was wrong, and she would *find ways to help* me. Even though she was my supervisor and it would have been easier for her to give up on me, she often helped me with my work tasks, which made me feel less worried.

Tammy: I can imagine what a difference that would make! Do you know someone who needs your help? It may even be the same as Claire – someone who works with you – or for you – and they might not be sure that they're doing the job right.

Carol: Or it might be a neighbor. Maybe you could offer to do some cooking or housework for her? Or perhaps mind her children so she can have some peaceful time on her own?

Or maybe it might be more fun to do those things together with her – and perhaps have a laugh together! A good friend is *willing to help out* in whatever way is needed.

Claire: A good friend is *trustworthy* too. I could trust Janet not to share my problems with other people who didn't need to know. In fact she would speak well of me to other people. It's important to think carefully about what we say about other people, isn't it? A good friend will only speak well of their friend to others. They will support them rather than share private matters, or say mean things about them.

Tammy: The way we talk about others is very important isn't it? Next time you're speaking about someone with another person, stop and think about what you're saying. Would you want someone to say these things about you? Does it build your friend up, or knock her down in some way? A good friend can be trusted to speak well of another.

Claire: Sometimes I was late for meetings at work, or kept making the same mistakes. But Janet was able to see past my faults and still care for me. She would encourage me with the things I was good at, and she would help me with things I was not good at.

How could *you* be a good friend to someone right now? Maybe one of your friends needs you to encourage them and remind them of the things they're good at, rather than only noticing their weaknesses.

And actually, perhaps the things about your friend that *you* think are weaknesses may just be differences of opinion between you both. She may be quite happy with those things and think she is doing a good job!

God made us with different personalities – so enjoy those differences and learn from each other. And *forgive each other*.

If we don't forgive a friend for a past hurt, it only creates more hurt for us both. A good friend will encourage and forgive, even when it's not easy to forgive.

Carol: I think one of the hardest things to do as a good friend, is to tell them when they're doing something wrong, because you need to be truthful but in a loving way.

Claire: Yes, it *is* hard. And we need to be sure that it's not just our *opinion* that they're doing something wrong. We need to be sure that it will actually be helpful to tell them.

A good friend will tell their friend the truth, even when it might be hard to hear. But this really needs to be when the friendship is well developed. You've spent time together, you know each other and you trust each other. When you respect and value each other's opinion.

For example, once Janet told me the way I had spoken to another friend was unfair or unkind, I listened. I knew that she was telling me because she wanted me to be the best person I could be. I knew she would never say something like that just to make me feel sad, but so that I could change for the better.

And a good friend knows that they're not perfect either. They need *your* help and support just as much as you need *theirs*! To *have* a good friend, you must *be* a good friend!

Tammy: So even though Janet was your supervisor she let you know that she had struggles too?

Claire: Oh yes, Janet was willing to tell me about the difficulties in *her* life too – and that *she* needed support just like me!

Carol: Everyone needs a friend to help each other and to share both the difficult times and the happy times together. Well we learned a lot about being a good friend, didn't we?

Tammy: We did. Such as if we want to be a friend with someone we need to *spend time together* – to get to know each other.

Claire: And we need to *respect their opinion* – even when we have a different opinion about something.

Carol: We need to be able to *trust each other too*, and know that we will only *say good things about each other...* things that build up the other person.

Tammy: And in any friendship there will always be misunderstandings. We need to be *ready to forgive* each other.

Claire: And being a good friend means *listening!* Really listening. Can you think of a way that you might be a better friend to someone this week?

Carol: You're with your Women of Hope friends today and we love being with you.

Claire: I want to tell you about another good friend of mine. His name is Jesus, and he is the son of God, the Father, the creator of the universe. Do you know much about Jesus? Perhaps he's already your friend. Or perhaps you haven't heard much about what a good friend he can be for you too.

Can I tell you about him and why he's such an amazing friend?

You can find out about Jesus from God's word, the Bible. The first half of the Bible, the Old Testament tells us, through writers who were inspired by God, how our sin – the wrong things we do – has separated us from God the father. And it tells us that he would send a savior, who would show us how to be friends with God again. And then in the second half of the Bible, the New Testament, we find out about Jesus' actual life on earth. We learn about his character, his purpose for coming, and how he helped so many people by healing them when they were sick, and forgiving their sins.

Let's listen to one story about Jesus from the Bible (from Luke 19:1-10 NIV):

Ros: *¹Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through the town. ²There was a man there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was very rich. ³He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. ⁴So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree by the side of the road, because Jesus was coming that way.*

⁵When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." ⁶So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

⁷All the people saw this and began to grumble, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner."

⁸But Zacchaeus stood up and said to Jesus, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount."

⁹Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man has shown himself to be a true son of Abraham. ¹⁰For the Son of Man came to seek and to save those who are lost."

Claire: What an encouraging story! Let me tell you why I love this story.

Zacchaeus was a tax collector. The people knew that tax collectors told lies about how much tax the people had to pay to the government. They cheated the people. They would demand more than the minimum amount so they could keep some for themselves. The people strongly disliked the tax collectors because of this.

Why do *you* think the people were so surprised that Jesus would want to stay at the house of a tax collector?

...that's right, because Jesus was the opposite character to a tax collector wasn't he! Jesus was honest and never cheated anybody out of anything. Jesus was caring and considerate of other people's feelings. And Jesus offered them his friendship without prejudice, even to a tax collector! Jesus called Zacchaeus by name, and told him that he wanted to come to his house. This would mean eating together, talking, and spending time together. In his heart, Jesus wanted to love everyone, and help make each one a better person.

But there were people who didn't like Jesus because he claimed that he was the son of God. For Jewish people that was blasphemy, punishable by death. Even though Jesus *really* was the son of God, the authorities did not believe him so they killed him.

Carol: You may have heard the true story of Jesus from the Bible. They put his body into a stone tomb. His followers were very sad. But after 3 days, God the Father brought Jesus back to life...proving that he was, in fact, the son of God!

When he went back up to heaven, he left us the Holy Spirit, who lives inside every person who believes in Jesus...who believes that he is the son of God, and can forgive us for the wrong things we've done.

Carol: So Jesus is alive today, in heaven with God the Father. He offers to forgive everyone who comes to him, so that we can become the children of God, the father. And he calls us his friends!

The Bible says (John 15:15) 'Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.' That 'someone' is Jesus – he calls us his friends if we come to him and ask him to forgive us for all the wrong things we've done. And he promises to be with us by the Holy Spirit, who lives inside every person who believes in Jesus.

Claire: Jesus is my friend. And like a good friend, he's always there for me. I can tell him my feelings and talk to him about what's happening in my life, the good and the bad. He doesn't think less of me or love me less when I tell him how I'm feeling.

I can ask him to help me with the things that I find difficult in my life. And I can tell Jesus that I'm sorry for things that I've done that were not the way I should behave... like if I've said something mean to

someone, or been selfish. Jesus has forgiven me for the wrong things I've done and he will keep forgiving me because he loves me.

In fact, because Jesus died, the things we have done wrong have been forgiven by God *completely*. Maybe you've done something in your life that you feel so guilty about that you can't forgive yourself. Well Jesus will forgive you if you ask him to. And then you can forgive yourself and start looking forward to a life without feeling guilty. You may need to talk to a friend at church, or a friend who also believes in Jesus, to help you learn how to forgive yourself. It's not always easy.

Jesus is an amazing friend because he is always listening. Jesus *wants* to know what's on my mind and what's bothering my heart. Jesus was deeply interested in Zacchaeus and his wellbeing, too. Do you remember what Jesus said to Zacchaeus? He said, "*Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today*". Jesus wanted to spend time with him and show him how to be a better person. But all Zacchaeus needed to do to be friends with Jesus, was to climb down the tree and meet with Jesus...and be forgiven. Would you like Jesus to be your friend too?

Carol: Perhaps you feel a little bit like the tax collector – maybe you're feeling left out of your community, or perhaps you've made some unwise decisions in your life, and you've hurt people.

Well, the good news is that Jesus still wants to be your friend! All you need to do is come to Jesus and let him forgive you and help you live your life to be the *best* you!

Tammy: We all want to have good friends. Remember to *have* a good friend, you must *be* a good friend. And good friends take the time for each other.

We would love to hear from you because we are your friends and we care about you. We would like to pray for you. You can contact us at this station or at Women of Hope. Our email address is 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. The address is TWRWomenofhope.org. Or if you can visit our Facebook page. We do hope you will be with us again. Have a great week filled with God's blessings.

Goodbye. God bless you.