

# Superstitions / God is Trustworthy

**Tammy:** Hello – here we are with you again on Women of Hope, I'm Tammy.

**Carol:** And I'm Carol...we're looking forward to our time together.

We have a friend, Denise, with us today. You may have heard her voice before. Welcome Denise.

**Denise:** Hello, it's very good to be with you again... We have some true stories from around the world to share with you today. As we share these, think about what they have in common...what there might be that's the same or similar in each one: Do you want to start Tammy?

**Tammy:** Sure...

An athlete always wears a certain pair of shorts under his team uniform thinking it will help him play better.

**Carol:** Someone dreams of a snake and believes that the perfect person they're waiting for is coming soon.

**Tammy:** On New Year's Eve at exactly midnight people throw a big bucket of water outside a window or door to empty the bad things of the old year, and make a fresh start in the new year.

**Carol:** As a happy new year wish, a child receives envelopes with money inside from relatives and friends. All the envelopes are red...and will bring good luck.

**Tammy:** A parent is careful not to cut their child's hair until they grow up, believing the long hair will mean they will be strong.

**Denise:** Thanks Tammy, and Carol.

Did you notice what these things have in common?

...Yes – they seem to all be about having *good luck* by doing some special thing... If a person follows a certain belief, or custom, then good luck will come to them.

Okay. Now, here are some more stories. Think about what *these* have in common...

**Carol:** The sun, earth and moon line up for a lunar eclipse, or "blood" moon, and all the local businesses shut down because they're afraid of bad luck.

**Tammy:** You go into an elevator at a hotel and notice there isn't any floor number 13...because some people think that number can bring bad luck. Or sometimes number 4 because it sounds too much like the word *death* in the local language.

**Carol:** A person is afraid to have their photograph taken as they think it will steal their soul.

**Tammy:** There's a parade. The route is crowded with people...except near the cemetery.

**Carol:** A person breaks a mirror and is afraid of what bad things might happen to them.

**Denise:** Did you notice what these stories all have in common? They were also about *superstition* or luck, weren't they? But, did you notice the difference?

...That's right...these are all examples of things that are supposed to bring *bad luck*, rather than good luck. How do you feel about these? Do you believe you have to be careful what you do and how you do it to avoid bad luck...or to bring good luck?

In many different cultures, there are superstitions about: dreams, numbers, colors, pregnancy, death and many other things. These are all part of our everyday life – we can't avoid them. For example, we go to sleep and we might dream but we don't have control over that dream.

And what about death? Can we stop that? Certainly not! People die every day...people we know and love, and people we don't know. But we have no control over it most of the time, do we? Let's talk about this some more after this song...

**Carol:** We're talking today about *superstitions* - *good luck and bad luck*...and how these might affect our lives.

**Denise:** It's normal for us to be afraid of some things...to be afraid of the unknown...afraid of certain things that we have no control over.

But, what if we knew that there was someone who would always be by our side to help us no matter what happened? We'll talk more about this a little later.

**Tammy:** You might be thinking...but there really are spirits in this world that bring bad luck...that we need to watch out for, and be afraid of!

**Denise:** In some places, it's a custom for an infant to wear a red or a black string around his wrist or ankle to keep away bad spirits. Will this help? Can this really protect the child?

Am I saying that there are no such things as bad spirits? It's true that there are some bad spirits in this world...but by believing in these bad spirits and doing the things that we believe they want us to do, we allow them to have power over us.

Let me tell you something that happened several years ago... My children were playing outside with friends and they moved a stone. Their friends were very scared and they told my children that they would get pinched and may get very sick because of the ancestor spirits that lived there. They told them that they had not asked the ancestor's permission to go there. They told my children to apologize to the spirits, but my children didn't believe in those spirits. They knew they should only speak to the one, true God and so they would not apologize. And guess what? Nothing bad happened to them.

**Carol:** Maybe there are things that you *would not* do...or things that you *have to* do to make the spirits happy, or to protect yourself from being harmed by the spirits...or to keep you and your family safe. How do you feel about these things?

**Tammy:** Now there are some superstitions that seem to be opposite to each other... For example, some people think a black cat will bring good luck, and other people think it will bring bad luck. Can it really bring good luck for one person and bad luck for another? Can a number or color be lucky in one place but unlucky in another place at the same time? What do you think? What kinds of things do you think will bring good luck or bad luck?

**Carol:** Who can you believe? You want to do the right thing. You want to keep your family safe and healthy. Maybe one person is saying you should do one thing and someone else is saying you should do something opposite. This can all be very confusing!

**Denise:** Of course we all want to do the best we can for the health and well-being of our family. But, if we're stuck in superstitions and so we're not able to live our lives freely, is that the best for our family?

What is it that our children need most of all? Yes, of course, they need our love and care. If we spend all our time worrying about whether we have done something that might bring bad luck...or we are constantly trying to do things that will bring good luck, we might miss out on happy times with our family.

**Tammy:** Sometimes we might just be afraid of things that are never likely to happen...like *what if I'm not very good at my new job?* Or *what if my husband gets sick and he can't work to support the family?* How much time we can waste when we worry about things like that! I heard someone say: "fears are lies you tell yourself"

**Denise:** It's true that sometimes we have good reason to be afraid. There may be some real danger and we need to find out how we can keep our self or our family safe. But staying stuck in our fears keeps us in a sort of prison or slavery. We can't live our lives freely *today* because of our fear of *tomorrow*. Don't let fear of tomorrow rob you of today!

Remember we said earlier that we would tell you about someone who will always be by our side to help us no matter what happens? ...We'll do that after this song.

**Carol:** Welcome back to Women of Hope, where we love to talk about how we can find hope in our lives every day. But life can be hard sometimes and even scary. Who do we turn to when things around us seem dark and frightening?

Usually if we don't trust a person, it's because they have shown us that they don't deserve our trust. Has someone failed you or let you down? You trusted them to do something and they didn't? The next time they say they'll do something, you don't believe them...of course!

**Tammy:** And in the same way, if we don't know a person well enough it's hard to trust them. They have to prove that we can trust them first. We really can't trust someone we don't know.

But did you know that there *is* someone we can *always* trust? He will *always* be there for us. ...Yes, that person is God...the one true God, who created the world and he created you...and he loves you.

**Denise:** Now you might be asking, 'Who is God?' ...'Can I really trust him?' ...'Is he loving enough to want to help me?' ...'Is he always faithful, or does he change?'

Here are some special words that God himself spoke through one of his prophets. He said, "I am the Lord, and I do not change." (Malachi 3:6)

We also read in God's word: 'God is not human, that he should lie, not a human being that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not keep his promise?'

**Carol:** Well of course the answer is 'no.' God always keeps his promises.

**Denise:** And God not only keeps his promises but he is all-powerful! One of the names of the God of the Bible is *Almighty God*. This means he possesses *all power*. There is *nothing and no one* more powerful.

Let's talk about what the God of the Bible is like so we can see if we *should* trust him.

We read in the Bible that long ago, God used Moses and his brother, Aaron, to lead his chosen people, the Israelites. God gave Moses and Aaron power to demonstrate how great he is. They were

ordinary men but when they were filled with God's power they could do great things. They even performed miracles.

One time God wanted Moses to show God's power to the Pharaoh, the leader in Egypt. God told Moses to throw down his staff or stick in front of the leader and God would make the staff turn into a snake. After that, the Pharaoh gathered his own magicians to do the same trick. They did it. But do you know what happened? The snake from Moses and Aaron swallowed up the magicians' snakes! They would have been surprised!

God used Moses and Aaron to continue to perform many miracles like this.

The people began to ask, "Who among the gods is like you?" (Ex. 15:11) The answer, of course, is "*no one.*"

**Carol:** Even today, God is working all over the world in very powerful ways. Here's just one example: One of our listeners was very sick with epilepsy. She visited witch doctors...and medical doctors, but nothing helped. She was sick for more than 25 years. She could not walk and had to be pushed in a wheelbarrow...and her marriage was broken. Some Project Hannah team members visited her and prayed for her. She learned how God's son, Jesus gave his life for her and she accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior. Not only did God heal her spiritually, but he also gave her physical healing as well. She started walking again! And then God began to heal her marriage as well.

**Denise:** What a wonderful true story.

The Bible speaks about those who trust in Jesus Christ, just like our listener who was sick. It says: "Dear friends, you belong to God and have already won your fight with those who are against Christ because there is someone in your hearts who is stronger than any evil teacher in this wicked world." (1 John 4:4 NLT) Jesus Christ is the one in our hearts who is stronger than any evil person or power.

Instead of letting the powers in this world control us and make us afraid, we should trust in the One who is all-powerful...God, the Creator of this world. He created us, so he knows everything about us. He even knows what we are afraid of...and he wants to help us to not be afraid. He does not promise that we won't have difficult times or frightening situations, but he promises he will walk through the hard and scary times with us. He will *not* leave us alone.

God's love is so powerful...nothing can separate us from it. God's word says: 'I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow--not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love.' (Romans 8:38 NLT)

How wonderful to know that! If we have put our trust in Jesus, we do not even have to be afraid of death. We will go to live forever with him after we die.

**Tammy:** And when we *are* afraid, we can ask God to protect us. Have you ever used an umbrella to stay dry? I'm sure you have. Or do you sometimes use an umbrella to protect you from the hot sun? We could look at God's protection like a sort of umbrella too. In his word he says: 'The Lord stands beside you as your protective shade...the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord keeps you from all harm and watches over your life.' (Psalm 121 v 5&7 NLT) We must stay under that umbrella to be safe under his care. When we disobey his instructions, we move away from his protection. How do we know what his instructions are? Well, God was kind enough to write down his instructions for us...his rules for living, in his word, the Bible. We often talk about those here on Women of Hope.

**Denise:** That's right Tammy. The Bible speaks against using the powers of this world...witchcraft and fortune telling. There's a reason for that. Just as children need warnings and protection, God also warns us, his children. When we believe in these things we're trusting in something that is not worthy of our trust. These superstitions and beliefs can lead us in the wrong way and cause harm to us. God's word says: 'Don't let anyone capture you with empty philosophies and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from the spiritual powers of this world, rather than from Christ.' (Colossians 2:8 NLT)

**Tammy:** Have you ever heard someone say: "I've got your back?" – This means "I am watching out for you." Well, God is watching out for those of us who trust in him, even when we don't realize we're in danger! He is holding that umbrella of protection over us and we need to come close and stand under it with him!

**Carol:** Another great thing about having God with us is that he never changes. Do we change? ...Oh yes, we humans can change from one day to the next. One day I may be feeling good and kind towards those around me. Another day, for some reason, I am not very nice to be with! That's the way people are. We change from day to day, depending on what is going on. And as women our emotions can change very easily. What happens in our day can affect how we feel, and sometimes how we behave.

But God is not that way. He is *always the same*. He *doesn't change* in his character...or in his promises, and so we can *always* trust him.

**Denise:** That is so true! We know he'll always be there for us. God does not change his mind, saying one thing and doing another. 'He is the same yesterday, today and forever.' (Heb. 13:8) This same God that helped his people, through Moses and his brother Aaron, is the same one who helps us today. He'll help us tomorrow...and next week...and next year... We can be sure he will *always* be there...his promises are sure!

**Tammy:** We only need to trust him and stay under that umbrella of protection by obeying his word, the Bible. And you can hear more of God's word, here on Women of Hope each time we're together.

Denise would you like to pray for our friend...

**Denise:** I would. Perhaps you would like to pray this prayer with me...

*Father God, thank you for creating this world...and for creating me...and loving me... Thank you for your protection... Help me to stay close to you and to trust you every day...more and more... In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*

**Carol:** Well our time together has come to an end. But we would love to hear what God is doing for you.

**Denise:** Goodbye my friend, and remember you can trust the Almighty God because he is more powerful than anyone or anything in this world.

**Tammy:** Goodbye and God bless you.

