

Education for Girls / Mary at the Feet of Jesus

Lois: Do you have any daughters? ...I wonder how you and your family felt when you gave birth to your baby girl? ...Was it a sad time or a happy time? ...Did you worry about how you would provide for her and what her future would be like? ...What dreams and hopes did you have for her? ...Maybe you wanted something better for her than you've had in *your* life...

Tammy: Welcome to Women of Hope I'm Tammy and you just heard Lois asking some questions. Welcome Lois...

Lois: Thank you.

Carol: And I'm Carol. Lois you've been doing some research about education for women and girls...

Lois: Yes I have Carol and I've found out some interesting things. Two-thirds of the illiterate people in the world are women. Today, there are many millions of girls missing out on going to school. It seems a waste of their potential...a waste for families...and for society...and for the whole world.

Carol: We are very privileged to live in a country where girls and boys have equal opportunity to go to school...and on to college or university.

Lois: We certainly are... I have two grown up daughters and four grand daughters. I have a son and a grandson too. I came from a family of 2 daughters and no sons. My parents might have wanted a son, but they never grumbled about "only" having daughters. They loved us, valued us and educated us. You can see that there are a lot of girls in my family!

Tammy: There are! Carol and I both have grown up daughters too – and sons. And we're *very* grateful that they've all had the opportunity to be educated.

Lois: Yes. My husband is a doctor and one of our daughters followed *her father*. You might have heard our daughter, Dr Kerryn talk about health issues here on Women of Hope. The other daughter followed *me* and is a teacher.

We all hope that our grand daughters will have the same or even better education opportunities...then they can help to make our society - and the wider world - a better place to live in and enjoy.

Carol: Lois, you said you're a teacher.

Lois: I am...I was inspired by many wonderful women teachers...so I decided that's what I wanted to do too. I've enjoyed seeing many students' lives change through having a good education and getting a good job.

Tammy: But education doesn't *just* bring good jobs does it? It also brings a sense of *fulfilment* and *feeling valued*...and contributing something worthwhile to your family and your society.

Lois: Absolutely! But it hasn't always been like that in my country...in the past many women had to fight for education, and for the right to be a valued part of their community. In many countries today girls are still not valued and they don't have the same opportunities for education as boys. Often they only have two or three years at school then they have to look after younger children...do chores around the home...or fetch the day's water.

Tammy: I wonder how it is in *your* country? Do girls have the same opportunity as boys to go to school? Or do they have to leave school early so they can help with the family work, or get married at an early age. Let's talk some more about this after we listen to this music...

Carol: Thanks for coming today Lois. Tell us a little more about the research you've been doing on education for women and girls...

Lois: Sure. The United Nations has said: "Educated girls have healthier families, earn more income and contribute to national growth. Everyone benefits." An educated woman is more able to negotiate within her family. (*UNFPA, 2013*)

Tammy: I expect this means that she will also be much more likely to help in making decisions in the home, than a woman who is not educated.

Lois: Oh yes, for example she may have the confidence to talk with her husband about the amount of money he spends on drinking or gambling... because she knows that these things take money away from the family and their education.

Carol: And an educated woman may be able to work at a job outside the home so that there's more money to spend on what the family needs...on food and clothes, and health.

Lois: But one of the most lasting changes education can bring to a girl is *dignity and self-confidence*.

In one developing country, some women from a small village told of the deep sense of shame that they used to feel every time they were asked to sign a document in public. Before they were taught to read and write, an official would have to take a thumbprint for a signature. The ink on their thumb would last for days...showing that they could not read and write. Now, these women can sign documents themselves...and they do so with pride.

Tammy: What a difference for those women. I wonder how it is for you, in your country? What opportunities do you have for your own education – and for your daughters?

Carol: Maybe you could get together with others in your community and talk about this...what opportunities there might be to learn skills that could lead to a job or a small business. Or maybe someone who can read and write might be able to teach a small group of girls...or women.

Don't be too embarrassed to admit you can't read, take pride in learning.

Lois: And here's an idea...if your children start learning to read at school, look at their books with them, and encourage them to point to the letters as they say them, and then the words as they read - you can learn at the same time.

If you *can* read, is there a library where you can borrow books? Do people in your community have books or magazines they might lend you? If you have access to a computer, or a smart phone, do anything you can to learn how to use it...it will open up a world of new knowledge.

Tammy: If you have free time, are there courses you could study to learn new skills? Many older students do very well at study. And if you have some education, can you share it with someone else? Teach them information or skills. Encourage your children and grandchildren to study and learn alongside them.

Lois: Those are good ideas. We all care about our children and their future don't we? Sit down together and talk about what you might be able to do to help each other and your daughters. It's always good to share ideas.

And if you can, talk to the people who make decisions in your community and ask them what *they* can do to help your daughters become educated, or learn skills that will help them in the future.

Sometimes it's the practical things in village life that have an effect on girls' education. For example, if there's a good water supply, and a well or a pump then it's more likely that girls will go to school for longer...they don't have to spend hours each day fetching water for the family.

Carol: Why are we so concerned about girls being educated? ...We know it can make a big difference, to the girl, to the family, to the village and to the whole community...and eventually to the country.

Lois: Talk to people in *your* community and find out how *you* can get help...and how *they* can get help. There are many organizations that can help to bring change for the good of your community.

Tammy: Thank you Lois. As we said before, educating a girl goes far beyond learning to read and write. Educated women are also more likely to educate their *own* children.

After we listen to this music, we will share a story about a very brave girl who cares a lot about education for girls...so much so that she almost lost her life.

Carol: We want to tell you the true story of a girl called Malala. You may have heard of her. She's written a book telling us about her life, her country and her fight to get all girls in her country, and around the world, to have an education. The book is called: *I am Malala*.

One day, when Malala was 15 yrs old, she was coming home as usual from school on the bus... but this day turned out to be very different from what anyone expected.

Some young men rushed onto the narrow road and held up the bus. One young man, with a gun, got into the bus and shouted, "Where's Malala?" When he found her he shot her. The bullet went straight into her face and down through her neck. Some other girls were shot and very badly injured too.

Tammy: What a terrible shock...and why did this happen? Let me tell you more about Malala...

She was the first born in the family with two younger brothers. She grew up in a beautiful, peaceful place until an organization began to take control...to terrorize the local people and destroy their schools and villages. Life became very difficult and dangerous for the people there. Many were already very poor but now their lives became worse as fighting broke out right in the middle of their villages.

People were afraid and kept quiet, but this young girl, Malala, when she was only 11 years old, spoke up for a girl's right to education. She was threatened and told to keep quiet. But Malala was very brave and kept speaking out. She wanted all girls in her country, and around the world, to be able to have a better life through education.

On that terrible day four years later, when she was shot, Malala survived, but she spent many months in hospital and still suffers from the effects of her injuries. Many people prayed for her recovery and for safety for her family. Many surgeons helped her free of charge, and saved her life. Sadly, she and her family had to move away from their home country because of death threats against them. They love their country and want to return to work there again one day.

Carol: But that's not the end of the story. They tried to silence Malala's voice in her own country, but now her voice has become louder and spread throughout the world.

When she was 16 yrs old, she spoke at the United Nations to represent many girls living in poverty across the world. In her speech she said something we can all remember: "One child, one teacher, one pen and one book can change the world."

In her book, Malala wrote: I just want to see 'peace in every home, every street, every village, every country – this is my dream. Education for every boy and every girl in the world...' (*I am Malala* p265)

Tammy: I hope you've enjoyed hearing about this inspiring young woman and the book she's written. I do hope and pray that in your part of the world your girls can get a chance to be educated...that our future will be brighter because our girls were given the opportunity they all

deserve.

The United Nations Children's Fund, called UNICEF, said: Women who are more educated 'tend to be healthier, work and earn more income, have fewer children, and provide better health care and education to their children. Girls' education literally saves millions of lives.'

Lois: Not everyone can speak up like Malala, but starting in your own family, your own village and your own community can make a difference.

Ros: I'm Ros and I want to tell you a story from God's word, the Bible.

When Jesus lived here on the earth he taught many people as he travelled to different towns. Often he taught whole crowds of people out in the open – where they followed him.

Sometimes he taught the men in the local synagogue or temple. In those days it was not usual for the women to be involved in learning about intellectual things or religious practices. But there are many stories in the Bible about Jesus talking with women about these important issues. Let me tell you one...

There was one town that Jesus visited often, and one family home that he visited often too – the home of Mary and Martha and their brother Lazarus. You may have heard stories about these friends of Jesus. One day Jesus and his special followers, the disciples, were invited by Martha to visit with them. Let me read to you what happened from God's word, the Bible:

'Martha welcomed Jesus into her home. Her sister Mary sat at the Lord's feet, listening to what he taught. But Martha was distracted by the big dinner she was preparing. She came to Jesus and said, "Lord, doesn't it seem unfair to you that my sister just sits here while I do all the work? Tell her to come and help me."

But the Lord, Jesus, said to her, "My dear Martha, you are worried and upset over all these details! There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it and it will not be taken away from her." (Luke 10: 38 – 42)

That was a very short story from God's word, but it's a story that tells us a lot of things. Firstly it tells us that Martha was generous. She wanted to take care of Jesus and his followers and give them a special meal...a big dinner. This was very important to her and she was working hard.

I think she would naturally have expected Mary to help. I think Mary would normally have helped her sister when they had guests. But something happened on this visit that was different.

What was Mary doing? ...Yes, she was sitting at Jesus' feet listening to what he taught. I wonder what he was teaching that day? Would you love to have been there with Mary at Jesus' feet listening? I would.

And here's another question. Was Martha rude to come to Jesus and tell him how she felt? Let's remind ourselves what she said... "Lord, doesn't it seem unfair to you that my sister just sits here while I do all the work...?"

What do you think about this? She was obviously upset, and Jesus could see that because he said to her, "My *dear Martha*, you are worried and upset over all these details."

I wonder how that made Martha feel? Can you think of a time when you went to someone to tell them how you felt about something and they turned around and said something like, "Oh don't be silly, you don't have to be upset...it's ok."

Well, for you, it was *not ok*, and you had to tell them about it *again* – and why you were upset...to try to make them *understand*.

But if they had said to you, "Oh I can see that you're upset about this..." How did that make you

feel? Well, immediately you began to feel better, because the person had recognised your feelings.

That's what Jesus did for Martha. Firstly he recognized her feelings.

And did Jesus then do what Martha asked him to do – to tell Mary to come and help her? No – let's listen to his calm, gentle words to Martha about her sister Mary: He said, "There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it, and it will not be taken away from her."

What had Mary discovered? ...She had discovered the 'teaching of Jesus'. She was bathing her heart and her mind in the words that were coming from Jesus' mouth. We don't know what Jesus was teaching about that day. But we *do* know that he was telling Martha that it was not only *ok* for Mary to be involved in learning from him, but for her...at that moment...it was the 'one thing worth being concerned about.'

Do you think Jesus' words made Martha feel better? ...I do. I think Martha learned something very important that day too. She did exactly the right thing to come to Jesus and tell him how she was feeling. Did you hear those first words to her? '*My dear Martha...*' Do those words make you feel that Jesus cared about her? I think so.

Carol: I expect Martha went back to her work feeling different don't you? She was the one preparing the meal and I'm sure she knew that it would be appreciated when it was finished and ready. But she was happy now that she realised her sister was not just being thoughtless, but doing something that was *right for her* at that moment. I believe that the words of Jesus that day would have soothed Martha's heart.

Tammy: Do you need Jesus to soothe your heart today? Are you feeling cheated, or wrongly treated by someone? You can tell Jesus about it. You may be surprised at his response to you.

Carol: That's all we have time for today. We hope that you can learn more about Jesus as you keep listening to Women of Hope. We would love to hear from you – with your story, or any questions.

Goodbye and God bless you as you learn from him.

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