

Snakebites / The Gospel

Carol: I don't know about you, but snakes absolutely scare me! How do you feel when you hear about or see a snake? Does it make you feel afraid as well? Are you fascinated by snakes – some a very beautiful aren't they? Well, today's big question is: Have you or someone you know ever been bitten by a snake?

Tammy: Hello, welcome to Women of Hope, I'm Tammy.

Carol: And I'm Carol. And yes, snakes are NOT one of my favorite things.

Tammy: Oh Carol, I can understand that, but on the opposite sides of things, I love snakes!

Carol: Oh, my goodness!

Tammy: I was raised with snakes and my mother actually worked in a serpentarium, a place that houses snakes and milks them for their venom. So, we grew up with pet snakes.

Carol: I'm speechless! Well, I expect we all certainly have different feelings. But the important thing is not how we *feel* about snakes, but what to *do* if we get *bitten* by one. And how we can avoid being bitten.

Tammy: Now Carol and I have friends who know a lot about snakes. We even have a friend who lived in India for many years and she knows a lot about snakes and snakebites. So today we'd like to share what we learned from her.

Carol: The first thing she talked about was the changes that people have made that mean there are more likely to be snakes in your area.

Firstly, as jungle gets cleared for farming, the habitat for snakes becomes less, so there are often more snakes closer to people.

Secondly, the crops that are grown in many areas, like rice and wheat, encourage the population of rats and frogs – both food for snakes. So if you grow crops close to villages you are more likely to have snakes living close to people.

Tammy: We humans produce a large amount of rubbish – and we often store food items in containers that rats can easily get into. Anywhere that there are more rats, there are likely to be more snakes.

Then we often have other rubbish lying around, like piles of bricks or old tyres. These may provide the perfect place for snakes to hide near where people live.

Different snake species live in different places but they mostly like to hide around places like piles of sticks, wood, bricks, pipes and in thick bushes.

Carol: Whether you like snakes or you're afraid of them, some of them are dangerous for people. Why?

Well of course, some have venom and when they bite the venom causes people to become very sick and sometimes to die.

Tammy: Lois told us that there are two main sorts of venom – the first is called *neurotoxic* – 'neuro' means nerves so this venom attacks the nerves and makes the person paralysed – eventually they're unable to breathe, and they will die.

Carol: The second one is called *haemotoxic* – ‘haemo’ means blood, so this venom stops the blood from clotting and the person might eventually bleed to death.

Some snakes have venom that causes skin and other body tissue to die and the venom from some snakes has a mixture of effects.

The mouths of snakes are also not very clean and have a lot of bacteria – so snakebites can often become infected too.

Tammy: Today on Women of Hope we’re learning some interesting things about snakes...and some very important things to know if we live where there are a lot of snakes.

Lois said that India is a country known for its snakes. Some snakes are not poisonous but some are very poisonous. Snakes often live quite close to where people live. India has many farms and people working the fields often see snakes...and many people get bitten and die. Snakes move around more in the wet season so that’s when there are more snakebites.

I wonder if you live where there are a lot of snakes? Even if there are not so many, it only takes one snake to bite you, so let’s talk about what to do if you, or someone else, is bitten by a snake.

Tammy: Lois said that venomous snakebites are not always painful and you may not see any marks. There may or may not be puncture marks or scratch marks. We certainly don’t always see two puncture marks as many people think. Venomous snakes have more than just two fangs in their mouth, they have other teeth both top & bottom as we do, there may be many scratch or puncture marks.

A venomous snake only needs to break the top layer of skin and leave a tiny bit of venom that you can’t even see, to be dangerous.

Any suspected snakebite must be treated with immediate First Aid

- put on a *pressure* bandage,
- *immobilize* the limb
- and transport them *to hospital* - **urgently!**

Carol: So here’s what to do:

First, quickly check that the snake is no longer around. Do not try to catch or kill a snake! It’s very dangerous.

Calm the person down and keep them as still as possible so that the venom does not move quickly through their body. Get them to lie down and reassure them. Use a mobile phone and call the emergency number if you can.

Next, if possible, *apply a wide crepe bandage over the bite site* – to 10cm either side of the bite. If a bandage is not available, tear towels, sheets, or clothes into strips for a bandage. Wrap firmly but not so tightly it will cut off the blood flow.

Immobilize the bitten limb with a splint, stick, or rolled up newspaper or cardboard. You should bandage or tie the splint to the limb. All joints of the bitten limb need to be totally immobilized so it can’t move at all. So if the bite is on the lower leg, immobilize the foot and the knee as well. The idea is to slow down the blood flow so the poison doesn’t move around the body.

And transport the person as quickly as possible to hospital. If possible bring the transport to the person so they don’t have to walk. Call an ambulance, or call someone with a car or truck that can transport the person to hospital.

Tammy: Now here are some ‘**do not**s’ – things people sometimes used to do in the past:

Do not wash the bite site. A doctor can use a sample from the bite site to help identify the venom and give the correct anti venom.

Do not give food or drink - especially alcohol. Small sips of water are ok if it takes a long time to get the person to hospital.

Do not cut or suck the bite. If you suck the bite, the venom might affect you... and cutting it may cause other unwanted medical problems.

Do not apply or use a tourniquet. A tourniquet can cause injuries to nerves, tendons, ligaments, arteries and veins in the limb.

And do not stop at the local healer’s; just get the person to hospital as quickly as possible.

Carol: On Women of Hope today we’re learning about snakes and snakebites. We asked Lois about the best ways to prevent snakebites. She had lots of good ideas.

Look – where you are going. Look where your hands are going, look where your feet are going. Don’t put your hands into places you can’t see into.

Carry a stick ahead of you when you walk, this can often give the snake a chance to get out of your way before you stand on it. Also you can use a stick to poke or disturb a pile of sticks or a bundle of grass before you pick them up with your hands.

Tammy: *Wear shoes...*and if you’re going to be walking in long grass or in the bush wear long pants tucked into your socks.

Use a torch if you’re walking around at night, even near the house. Snakes like to lie on warm paths.

We talked before about rats being a snake’s favourite food. So *keep snakes away by keeping rats away.* Keep food items in solid containers. Clean up food scraps and put them in a pit some distance away from your house.

Keep the area around your house clean.

Sleep on beds off the ground if you can. And a well tucked in mosquito net will help to keep snakes away.

Carol: So can you remember what to do if someone is bitten? Three important things: *pressure / immobilise / transport* to hospital as quickly as possible. Keep the person calm and still and reassure them.

Tammy: And do not apply a tourniquet. Do not cut and suck the bite or wash it. Do not give food and drink. And do not stop at the local healer but get to the hospital quickly.

Carol: Here on Women of Hope, we're always talking about the God of the Bible, aren't we? The one true God, and his son, Jesus Christ. We often share with you little parts and stories that are in the Bible. Well, those little parts and stories are part of one big story. A very big and special story...which the whole Bible, God’s true Word tells us. Today we’d love to share that true story with you.

Tammy: This true story starts even before the world existed. In the beginning, there was God. Nothing else existed. God created the earth, the planets, the sun and the moon. He created the entire universe. God created the oceans, the lands...every kind of plant and animal. And he blessed all these things, and delighted in them. The Bible says that ‘God saw that it was good.’ (Genesis 1:25 NLT)

Carol: God made a perfect world. It was more beautiful...more wonderful...more glorious than you or I could ever imagine.

God created the most beautiful garden called the Garden of Eden. In it were beautiful trees that produced delicious fruit. In the middle of the garden God planted the tree of life, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God created the first human being, and he breathed life into him, and called him Adam. Then God created a woman to be Adam's companion. Adam called her Eve. God told Adam that he could freely eat the fruits from every tree in the garden, except from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and if he ate from that tree he would surely die.

Tammy: Now let's just think about who God is...and what he's like. We can see from what we've just talked about that God is powerful and creative. In fact God is *all-powerful*. God is also perfectly good and pure. And he is infinitely loving...his love never ends and has no boundaries! In the Bible there are many Psalms that people have written to praise God. One small part of one of those psalms says, "Your love, Lord, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies." (Psalms 36:5 NIV)

Carol: God gave Adam and Eve a wonderful life in a beautiful garden. They had a very close relationship with him. He gave them a life of love and happiness. They knew no pain. Yet despite everything that God had given to them, they were tempted to do what God had told them *not* to do...to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. They wanted to do whatever *they* wanted to do rather than what God had *planned* for them to do. They ate from that tree of knowledge of good and evil. They disobeyed God, just like we all do.

When they disobeyed God, sin, or wrongdoing, entered the world. Sin is the wrong things we do, think or say. And with sin, other bad things came into the world. People felt guilty and ashamed. God's perfect world was broken. And now we see that a lot of things are broken in this world, don't we? Our relationships with other people are broken...we feel broken inside ourselves...and our relationship with God is broken. Do you feel that in your life?

Tammy: Adam and Eve could no longer enjoy a perfect, loving relationship with God, in that beautiful, garden. God sent them away from the garden, and said that from then on, humans would have hard work and pain as they grew crops and as women had children.

Since God is perfect and pure, he cannot stand sin...and people are afraid of God, who is so holy. So the relationship between God and people was broken. And people continued to suffer in all kinds of ways. Is there suffering in your life?

But God loved the people he created so, so much. He wanted to make a way to repair his relationship with them. God showed people some things about himself through the natural world, and he made known what he was like to certain people. He called Abraham and his descendants to worship him, and to learn about him, and to show other nations about God. And God promised to send his special savior as a descendant of Abraham, and a descendant of David, the King of Israel. Time after time God showed his love and grace to these people, and time after time they turned away from him. You will find all these stories in the Bible. But God was faithful to his promises, because he still wanted to have that loving relationship with us.

Carol: So at last God sent his son Jesus Christ to the earth, about 2000 years ago. Jesus was born a human being, a boy...a child, who grew up to be a man. He taught people about God...what he's like, and how people can follow him. And Jesus *showed* everyone what God, the Father is like. That's because Jesus was also God, coming as a man. Jesus lived a perfect life. He never sinned...never did anything wrong.

But there was a much more important reason why Jesus came to the earth to live as a man. You see; Jesus came to die. He died in a cruel, painful way, so that he could pay for all the sins in the world. He chose to take the punishment for all this sin. Jesus never sinned, so he didn't deserve to be punished. *We* deserve to be punished. Because every person sins...does wrong. And we all

do, think and say *lots* of wrong things, don't we? So Jesus took the punishment that we deserved. He did this so that God wouldn't have to punish us. He took away the consequences of sin that separated us from God. This means that God can forgive us and we can repair our relationship with him.

Tammy: But that wasn't the end for Jesus. Three days after he died on the cross, Jesus came back to life. The Bible says that God's power 'raised Jesus Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in heaven.' (Ephesians 1:19, 20 NLT)

If we want to have a relationship with God, we need to believe that Jesus Christ died to take away the punishment for our sins. We just need to ask God to forgive us for our sins.

God wants to forgive us, and to have a relationship with us. To have a relationship with him is to love him and to get to know him. We get to know him through reading or listening to his Word, the Bible...and by spending time praying...just talking to him. You can learn more about him as you listen with us here on Women of Hope. And to have a relationship with him also means to follow him, to be like him...and to show his love to others.

Carol: When we begin to follow God...asking for his forgiveness...he gives us his spirit...the Holy Spirit...to live with us...live inside of us...to guide us, strengthen us and comfort us. The Holy Spirit, will help you to resist sin and to become more like God. If you follow Jesus, you can be sure that the spirit lives within you and he is helping you.

He gives us something else too...when we follow him. He gives us Eternal Life. That means that when we ask God to forgive us, and we begin to follow him, our relationship with him will last forever. We will live on with him forever.

One day he will make everything new. He will restore...or heal, everything that is broken. There won't be any more suffering. The Bible says, 'there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain.' (Revelation 21:4 NLT) He will make each one of us new...we won't sin anymore. There will be no more sin...anywhere. Those who love him will enjoy being with him, and each other, forever.

Tammy: We've enjoyed being with you today. We hope you've enjoyed being with us. And we'd love to hear from you. So goodbye until next time...

Carol: Goodbye and God bless you.

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