

WoH 452

Sexual Assault/God's Justice

Tammy: Hello, Carol. It's lovely to all be together again and to be able to share a cup of tea and good conversation.

Carol: Hi, Tammy...hello Dr Kerryn. Thank you for joining us again today on *Women of Hope*. Dr Kerryn's going to talk about a difficult topic today. It's one that might be hard to talk about here...and hard for you to listen to.

Dr K: Hello Tammy and Carol and a special hello to *you*. It's good to be able to be here with you all. Yes, today's topic on sexual assault *is* difficult. But we *will* talk about it because it's important. We hope that if you or someone you love experiences sexual assault, you may be cared for with love and respect.

Tammy: We're going to talk about some of the myths, or false ideas, about sexual assault so we can understand it better.

Carol: Let's work together to try to find hope in this hard kind of suffering.

Carol: Dr Kerryn, what does sexual assault mean?

Dr K: Sexual assault is sexual contact that is unwanted or forced. It's sometimes called 'rape'. Usually it means sex between a man and woman, but it can be other things as well, like oral sex, anal sex or putting things into someone's private parts.

Tammy: Is it just young women who are sexually assaulted?

Dr K: Anybody can be sexually assaulted...young women, old women, little girls and boys, and men. Sadly, people of all ages - both females and males

can be assaulted. However, it's more common for women and girls to be sexually assaulted than men.

Tammy: So anyone can be affected. But who usually does the assaulting?

Dr K: Those who assault are usually men, but occasionally they are women. Most people who are assaulted know, and have trusted, the person who assaulted them – it's often a relative or friend or even a boyfriend or husband.

Carol: ...A husband?

Dr K: Some people think that within relationships like marriage, sex is a "right" but I disagree with this and I think the Bible does too. God has created sexual relations to be an expression of love. If anyone is forced into doing sexual things that they don't want to do, it is sexual assault. In many countries this is against the law, even between married couples.

Carol: What do you think *you* should do when you or someone you know is sexually assaulted? Would you know what to do?

...Dr Kerryn?

Dr K: If you're able to see a health care worker whom you trust, and if you feel safe to see them, go and do so. If not, talk to a close friend or relative or a woman at your church who you feel comfortable with. Many women feel ashamed or dirty about what's happened to them and don't want to tell anyone. But this is *not your shame*. This assault is the *fault* and the *shame* of the person who did this to you. You are *not to blame* for the other person's behavior.

Tammy: I agree. No one chooses this to happen to them. A woman may even be wearing clothing that excites a man, or have drunk too much alcohol...but this does *not mean that she is asking for sex* and especially sex from just *anyone*.

Carol: I would find it hard to have to talk to someone about a rape or assault experience, but it's important to *listen* and *not* to judge.

Dr K: A big myth is that a woman *asks* to be raped, that it's the woman's fault. If a man cannot control himself, is it the fault of the woman or of the man? What do you think?

Tammy: So Dr Kerryn, what will a health worker do when someone who's been sexually assaulted comes to them?

Dr K: There are 4 things to think about –

- treatment of any injuries,
- contraception,
- prevention of infection
- and an official examination for legal proof of an attack.

Carol: Sounds complicated!

Dr K: Shall we talk about these, one by one, and I'll explain what these words mean?

Carol: Yes, please do...

Dr K: Firstly – *treatment of injuries*. If a woman has been assaulted and beaten up, or badly injured, the first thing is to check for serious injuries... Can the woman talk? Is she breathing? Is her heart still beating? Check for these, if you know how.

Is the woman bleeding heavily anywhere? If so, use a bandage or cloth to cover the wound and put pressure on it – keep putting pressure on until it stops bleeding.

If the woman has fallen a long way or been thrown, she may have injured her neck or back. Take care not to move her, especially not her head and neck, until you have medical help. Moving her may damage her spinal cord.

Tammy: So check if she can talk...listen and feel for her breathing and pulse. Check for any bleeding and press on any wounds with an absorbent cloth if possible. Be careful of her neck.

Carol: If you have rubber gloves, wear them to stop her catching any infection from you...or you from her.

Dr K: That's a good idea, Carol...these are usually in any first aid kit.

The next thing to think about...

If you've been raped, is there a *risk of getting pregnant*? If you're on a reliable form of birth control, like the contraceptive pill, there's no need to worry. But if not, talk to your health care worker about emergency contraception. There are two methods that may be available – tablets, like Postinor (the morning after pill), or an intra-uterine device that's put inside the womb.

One of these should be used as soon as possible after the rape to provide the best protection against pregnancy. However, they can be useful for up to 72 hours afterwards. Postinor will usually cause a period-like bleed a few days after taking it, and then your next period should be about a month later...but it does not work every single time. So, if your period is late, you may be pregnant and should be tested by your health care worker. This is the same with the intra-uterine device.

Tammy: A pregnancy from rape is a very difficult thing to cope with. It's important to discuss your future care with your health care worker.

Carol: This might be a good time to talk about planning for the future to stop unwanted pregnancies.

Dr K: The next important thing is *protection against infections* that can be spread by sex. Your health care worker will know what infections are common where you live, and what tests and treatments to offer you.

With my patients, I usually think about the risk of infections in the bladder and pelvis – like Chlamydia, Gonorrhoea, and Trichomonas. Then I check for infections in the blood – like HIV, Syphilis and Hepatitis B. Usually the health worker would take a urine sample, a vaginal sample and a blood sample. They may repeat this at a later time - say a month later and 3 months later, to make sure there's no infection.

Tammy: Do you need to have a physical examination by the health care worker?

Dr K: It's always best if the health worker can examine you properly, treat any injuries and take the right samples. But if you're too embarrassed, they can let you take the vaginal sample yourself with a clean swab.

They may give you treatment to prevent catching any diseases, but that depends on where you are...so speak to your health worker.

Tammy: So this treatment is given to stop any diseases forming? That sounds better than finding an infection after it's developed.

Dr K: It sounds like a good idea, but it's complicated and there can be side effects, so get good advice.

Tammy: So what about the last one – *having an official examination for legal proof of an attack?*

Dr K: Often these are done by specially trained doctors or nurses, who are linked with the police. This usually means that the person looks all over you and writes down what injuries they see. They might take the clothes you were wearing to use as evidence of any injuries and possible DNA samples. These can be looked at in a laboratory to show who did the attack. The results can be used in court to convict the offender.

If you choose to have this examination, it's best not to wash or change your clothes before being examined. Everything may be used as evidence of the attack and that can confirm your story and identify the person who did it. Do take a good friend or family member with you to support you as you have examinations and make your complaint to the police. Take clean clothes with you to put on afterwards.

Tammy: Well, we agreed that any sexual attack is very wrong, no matter who's involved, and it's *not the fault of the victim*. Dr Kerry has told us about giving first aid, and getting proper medical advice about possible pregnancy or infections...

Carol: ... and how to provide medical evidence that could lead to the attacker being caught and convicted of their crime. But as well as these medical and legal things, the person who's been attacked needs a lot of loving care and support after such an awful thing.

Dr K: That's right. Tell them that you believe them; it's not their fault; that you don't think they are dirty or shameful, and that you will try to help them. Sexual assault is a terrible thing for anyone to go through, but it's even worse if you have no-one to talk to.

Tammy: Welcome back to *Women of Hope*. Fran's just joined us. We've been talking about the difficult subject of sexual assault. How do you feel when you hear stories of people being abused like that?

Carol: Sad... maybe anxious...

Fran: ...and angry! Any kind of abuse is wrong - we've talked about this before, haven't we? And sexual assault or abuse is especially awful. How do you think God feels about it? God's prophets wrote that he is very angry with those who use their power to hurt and exploit others – using them in wrong ways.

It's the same, whether it's sexual assault...bullying...beating...stopping people getting just treatment from the law...cheating people of fair pay... God hates it all. (e.g. Amos 2:6, 4:1-2).

Tammy: Fran's been telling us stories about David, who was one of the first kings of ancient Israel. David made mistakes, but he understood that God is just, and wants *people* to be just, and to *never* exploit those who are weak.

Fran: In fact, David had hope *because* he knew that God was fair and just, even when it didn't look like he was. Let me tell you a story from God's word, the Bible.

There was a time in David's life when he was called an outlaw. He hadn't rebelled or broken the law. No; but the king, Saul, had got it into his head that David was his enemy. Saul kept trying to kill David, and he assaulted him more than once by throwing a spear at him. The people around knew that Saul's hatred was wrong. In fact, one of the priests spoke up to King Saul, 'David is the most faithful officer you have! He's your own son-in-law, captain of your bodyguard, and highly respected by everyone in the royal court.' (1 Sam 22:14) But Saul was so angry he killed that priest right away.

So David had to keep moving all the time, with his band of followers. They lived in caves sometimes, or camped in the desert. During this time, David wrote poems that were prayers to God, asking God to rescue him. We can still read them in the Bible. Marvin, would you please read us David's words from Psalm number 7 (GNB)?

Marvin: O Lord, my God, I come to you for protection;
rescue me and save me from all who chase after me,
or else like a lion they will carry me off
where no one can save me,
and there they will tear me to pieces.

O Lord, my God, if I have done wrong to anyone,

if I have betrayed my friend
or done violence to my enemy without cause
if I have done any of these things
then let my enemies chase after me and catch me,
let them cut me down and kill me
and leave me lifeless on the ground!

Fran: Let's stop there for a moment. Who did David turn to for help? ...Yes, to God. He knew that God is just, and God could see what was happening. ...And what was he saying to God?

Carol: I think he was saying that he didn't deserve to be chased and threatened with death, because he had *not* been disloyal at all.

Fran: So he wasn't asking for special treatment. He was being unfairly treated and he asked for justice! Let's hear the next bit.

Marvin: Rise in your anger, O Lord!
Stand up against the fury of my enemies;
rouse yourself and help me!
Justice is what you demand...

You are the judge of all people.
Judge in my favor, O Lord;
you know that I am innocent.

Fran: So David knew God hated the unfair way that he was being treated. He *expected* God to rescue him and show that he hadn't done the things that Saul was saying he did. Let me tell you about a time when God *did* rescue him. (I Sam 23:21-28)

While David was running away from Saul, some men betrayed David; they told Saul where David was hiding, out in the wild desert country. David and his men were running along one side of a hill, and Saul and his soldiers were

closing in on them. The soldiers were about to capture them; but just then a messenger arrived with a message for Saul: 'Come back at once, we're being invaded!' So Saul turned around and went to fight the invaders. David knew that God had rescued him again.

David had several opportunities to kill Saul, or get back at him (I Sam 24, 26) but he didn't. He did all he could to keep himself safe, and look after his family and friends, but he refused to hurt the king. He said, 'The Lord will judge, and decide which of us is wrong.' (I Sam 24:15) And not long afterwards Saul died in battle and David became king. God had shown who was right.

Carol: I think if we're being abused or treated unfairly we might feel very sad and anxious...yes, and angry! Do you feel like that? And we might feel that God isn't doing anything about it. We want justice, and we want it now!

Fran: But I want to tell you that God *does* care, and we can be *sure* that he will bring justice in the end. ...And he knows both sides of every story. Remember David said. 'The Lord will judge, and decide which of us is wrong.'

Tammy: So should we try to stop *injustice*? What do you think?

Carol: Well, God's prophets often spoke about this, The Lord said, 'Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like a stream that never dries up'. The Bible is very clear that God wants us to *do* what is fair and just (Micah 6:8). He also wants us to fight for justice when we can (Ps 83:1-4). We should speak up and tell the truth about bad things that are happening, whether we are being hurt - or someone we know is being hurt. But when we fight for justice, we should do it to protect precious people who can't protect themselves. We shouldn't fight just because we want revenge.

Fran: Thanks Carol, I think that's an important difference. When we're fighting to get revenge, we can easily do things that are unfair or unjust. Our motives

are important. In that Psalm we heard, David wrote (Ps 7:9)

You are a righteous God

and judge our thoughts and desires.

David also noticed something interesting about how God sometimes brings justice. Listen to this part...

Marvin: See how wicked people think up evil;

they plan trouble and tell lies.

But in the traps they set for others,

they themselves get caught.

So they are punished by their own evil

and are hurt by their own violence.

I thank the Lord for his justice;

I sing praises to the Lord, the Most High.

Tammy: Have you seen that? So often people who set out to hurt *others*, finish up being hurt by their *own* actions.

Fran: God's word tells us that one day everyone will have to explain to God what they've done, and God will know what was right and wrong. He is fair and just ...and holy.

But you know, when we come before God, we realize that not one of us is really good. We must ask God for his mercy and forgiveness. I'm so grateful that God loves us and offers us his mercy...because Jesus, his holy Son, took the punishment for all the wrong things we've done, so that *we* wouldn't have to be punished. When we put our trust in *him*, he makes our hearts clean and gives us a new start. And if *we* are treated badly we can trust him to help us through those hard times and to eventually bring justice.

Carol: I'd like to pray for you now.

Dear God, we praise you that you are holy, fair and just. We trust you to bring justice in our lives where things seem unfair. I pray for my sisters who have

been assaulted, abused or treated badly, and I ask you to give them comfort, and show them your great love and compassion.

I pray this in Jesus' name, Amen.

Tammy: We need to go now, but we'd love to hear from you. You can contact us at... Goodbye from all of your friends on *Women of Hope*, and God bless you.

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