

Bed bugs and other Irritations / God's peace

Carol: It was a cool morning, but the sun was up and the day would soon be hot. When Monica came early to the village bore to collect water, the other ladies commented that she looked very tired.

"I am!" she answered them. "I scratched all night! Look at my arms...bites all over from wretched bed bugs!"

The other women were very sympathetic. They had all had bed bugs before! They asked her how bed bugs had got into *her* house...

Tammy: Welcome – here we are together again on Women of Hope, I'm Tammy. And here's Carol...

Carol: Hello...I wonder if *you* know how Monica felt? Have you had problems with bed bugs in your house? Or maybe you've stayed somewhere and you didn't know there were bed bugs until the morning – when you found lumps on your arms and upper body. Were they very itchy?

Tammy: It's not nice to think of these little bugs crawling around in your bed with you at night is it?

Carol would you tell us more of the story about Monica?...

Carol: Sure...The other women knew that Monica kept her house very clean, and regularly put the mattresses, the pillows and the sheets in the sun. They had seen them outside her house.

"How did bed bugs get into *your* house?" they asked her.

She answered, "Last week, my children had some friends come to play and to sleep for a few nights...one of them must have had the bugs in her clothes. After I felt the itching, I checked, and I could see them in the seams of the mattresses. Then I found some in the cracks in the walls. Nasty little brown things! I could see them crawling around when I looked with a torch after dark."

While they waited for their buckets to fill, they talked about feeling the tiny beetle-like bugs crawling on them at night, and laughed at each other's experiences. One young girl with them asked Monica, "Can the bed bug bites make you sick, like mosquito bites can?"

"No," she answered, and moved forward to start her turn pumping at the bore. "They don't carry any diseases like some bugs do. They just suck our blood."

"Yuk!" said the young girl.

Monica went on, "They keep us awake, and if we scratch too much, we could make a wound on our skin. They make me look awful because I can't sleep!" Everyone laughed again, and then Monica added, "And now I'm going to be very busy getting rid of them!"

"What do you have to do?" asked the curious girl.

Monica explained, "Well, I have some insect poison in a spray can. It's very good, but quite expensive. I don't want to spray it in the house because I don't want it where I prepare food, or wash the dishes. So I'll bring all the furniture and mattresses and pillows outside...and the cushions and mats...to spray them. Then I'll leave them in the sun all day...the sun is also good at killing bugs!

I'll have to wash all the sheets and blankets, and sleeping clothes with lots of soap and leave them in the sun all day, too. And I will wash the beds and walls with soapy water."

Monica's friend Anita offered to come over to her house to help her move the mattresses and furniture and help her wash everything. It would be a big job to kill all the bed bugs. But it would be worth it so the family could sleep well again without bites and itching!

Tammy: They would be very relieved to have the bed bugs gone.

Carol: Oh yes – Monica worked very hard that morning, and she was very happy to have her friend Anita helping her and chatting as they sprayed and washed and hung things out.

By the end of the day, the insect spray, the soap and the sunshine had killed all the bed bugs that had been in the house...and in the mattress and bedding and furniture.

Tammy: I'm sure that now Monica would be careful to check regularly in the places that bed bugs like to live, so she could kill them quickly next time someone brought them into the house!

Thanks Carol for telling us Monica's story.

I've been doing a bit of research of my own to find out more about bed bugs. The young girl in the story asked a very sensible question about whether the bed bugs can make you sick like mosquitoes can.

Do you remember Monica's answer?

That's right – she said no they don't carry any diseases like some bugs do. They just suck your blood. They are not usually dangerous to humans...unless you are allergic to them. Then you would have to see your doctor or health care worker.

Carol: Of course it's not very nice to think of them crawling in your bed at night and sucking your blood! Tell us what you found out Tammy...what do they look like?

Tammy: Well, bed bugs are tiny insects, with no wings. They're oval in shape, about the size of an apple seed. They start off a rust brown and change to deeper brown after they've fed on a person's blood. They're small, but you can see them quite easily with a torch.

Unfortunately, bedbugs love human blood, although they'll feed on animals if necessary. But blood is their only food. They're attracted to body heat and the air humans breathe out, and this is how they find their hosts. They usually bite a person's shoulders and arms.

Carol: And once they're in your house do they stay and reproduce?

Tammy: They do. Each mature female can lay up to 5 eggs each day. The creamy white eggs are about the size of two grains of salt, and they hatch in one to two weeks. The newly hatched eggs, or nymphs, are lighter in color and turn brown as they grow. It takes about five weeks for bed bug nymphs to grow to adult bugs.

Carol: Can you feel bed bugs bite you?

Tammy: Not usually...their actual bite is painless! But it's the after-effects of the bites that are usually the problem: Some people don't react to the bites at all. But for others the bites become itchy and swell into red raised areas.

Carol: Poor Monica certainly felt them didn't she – she said she couldn't sleep because she'd been scratching all night!

So Tammy what did you find out about how to treat these bites?

Tammy: It's most important to resist the urge to scratch...as this is how the bite might become infected. And scratching will not get rid of the problem.

You should wash the bites with clean soapy water to reduce the risk of infection.

If you have some calamine lotion or an aesthetic cream use these to treat the itching. But if not, an icepack on the area will help to relieve the itch and the swelling. Or you can hold that part under cold running water.

Carol: And if the bite becomes infected, you should go to the doctor or medical clinic for treatment.

Tammy: On Women of Hope today we've been talking about those annoying little creatures – bed bugs!

Carol: Do you remember what Monica did to get rid of them?

Yes...she took the bed and mattress outside and sprayed them with some insect spray. She also washed all the bed-clothes – the sheets and blankets – and put them out in the sun. It's good to do this on a hot day if you can.

If you don't have any spray you can wrap the mattress in pieces of dark plastic and leave it in the sun. Bed bugs can't survive if it's too hot. If you don't have plastic just leave the mattress in the sun for as long as you can on a hot day.

Make sure you wash all clothing that might be affected and hang it in the sun too. And put any cushions and other furniture out in the sun.

And Tammy did you find out how you can stop them getting into your home – or onto your bed?

Tammy: You can try to avoid getting bed bugs in your home, by keeping it very clean. And be careful about any second hand items such as bedding, furniture or luggage that's brought into your home. Check them carefully for any insects. They often hide in the furniture or luggage...in cracks or along the seams of the fabric.

And if you're staying somewhere you think there might be bugs, here's a good idea to keep them off the bed...once you're sure there are none on the bed. Put double sided sticky tape on the floor around the bed! The bugs will get stuck to the tape!

Or you can put a little bowl of water under each leg of the bed so the bed bugs will not be able to climb up the legs of the bed.

Carol: That's a clever idea.

Tammy: But make sure the bed covers do not slide down and touch the floor...that would be an easy way for them to climb up onto the bed!

Carol: When my children were growing up we had a funny little saying when they were going to bed. 'Goodnight, sleep tight, hope the bed bugs don't bite!' (both laughing)

Marj is visiting with us today to tell us her story about bed bugs. Welcome Marj.

Marj: Thank you.

Carol: Did you have that little saying in your home too?

Marj: Yes we did! But we kept it going... 'if they do, get a shoe and bash them til they're black and blue!' (all laughing)

When our family lived in a tropical country, my husband would sometimes sleep in villages. He would often come home with large, extremely itchy, purple bites around his tummy. It took a while for us to realize that they were bed bug bites. It always meant at least a couple of uncomfortable days of trying not to scratch the bites, before they disappeared. He found the bites very irritating!

Carol: So there wasn't much he could do about it...

Marj: No, but a friend of ours also had problems when she slept in the village. She learned to always take a mosquito net, a torch and some special powder to keep the bugs away. She said that she would shine her torch around the base of the net just before going to sleep and usually the hem of the net would be completely dark with bed bugs. She enjoyed spreading the powder around so she would not get bitten.

Tammy: That sounds like a good idea – a torch, a mosquito net and some bed bug powder if you can get it. We asked Marj to share a short story with us from God's word today about...bed bugs??

Marj: ...well not quite!! In the Bible, there's a story of two people who were annoyed or irritated with each other. Rather like bed bug bites that itch and become very irritating. I'm sure we've all experienced this kind of irritation!

This story is about two women who did not get on well with one another. I'm sure they would be most embarrassed if they knew that their problem would be known by people 2,000 years later. Their names were Euodia and Syntyche.

Paul, the follower of Jesus, travelled to many places telling people about Jesus and encouraging them in their faith. He had just encouraged his followers to stay true to their faith in Jesus. He must have known that these two women had disagreed with each other about something important. This is what he wrote to them: (Philippians 4:2 Good News Bible) "Euodia and Syntyche, please, I beg you, try to agree as sisters in the Lord."

And he wrote to another partner who had worked closely with him... (v3) "You, too, my faithful partner, I want you to help these women: for they have worked hard with me to spread the Good News (Gospel) together with Clement and all my other fellow workers, whose names are in God's book of the living." He went on to say: (v4) "Always be full of joy in the Lord – I say it again – rejoice! Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do."

It's sometimes hard to get on well with some people isn't it? Something about them irritates or annoys us. For example, someone who always thinks that their ideas are the best. Or maybe someone has an annoying habit – or they don't work as hard as they should on shared projects, like working in the communal garden...or fishing. Or perhaps a family member leaves their clothes all over the floor.

Small irritations can grow into big problems and cause a lot of unhappiness... unfortunately not just for us, but for those around us – our family and friends. There's a saying, '*From little things, big things grow,*' and that is so true. If we let these irritations go on and don't try to talk them over we will break our relationship or friendship. That "itch" will just go on and on untreated! It's just the same as

scratching the bite from the bed bug - it becomes more itchy, then bleeds and finally becomes infected...and is much harder to treat. The *irritation* in our relationship becomes bigger and bigger and more difficult to sort out.

God wants us to work at being at peace with all people. It makes him sad when we have arguments and strife with each other.

Perhaps we need to hear what Paul wrote next about how to cope with difficult situations. He said: (v5) “Show a gentle attitude toward everyone...”

And he went on to say, (v6) “Don’t worry about anything; instead pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. (v7) Then because you belong to Christ Jesus, God will bless you with peace that no one can completely understand. And this peace will control the way you think and feel.”

Isn’t it so much better to live in peace and harmony with others, rather than having arguments and strife? Maybe we could stop and ask God to help us do this. Carol would you like to pray for us all?

Carol: I’d love to... *Father, God, thank you for your promise that you will bless us with peace if we bring our problems and strife to you. Help us to remember to always show a gentle attitude to others. Help us to stop worrying, but instead to pray to you about everything. Thank you for your peace that you will put in our hearts. We pray this in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen*

Tammy: On Women of Hope today we've heard the story of Monica and the bed bugs that got into her house when her children’s friends came to stay. Bed bugs can cause a lot of irritation – their bites become itchy, and if we scratch them they might become infected. So it’s important to get rid of these nasty little bugs from our homes.

Carol: We’ve learned too that in just the same way we have to cope with other irritating things in our lives. Something in a friendship might for some reason become irritating and we need to deal with it. Marj shared a story from God’s word – Paul, God’s follower begged these two women to stop their disagreements and learn to work together as sisters in the Lord. He also asked their fellow worker to help them to agree with each other.

She shared some special words from the Bible - “Show a gentle attitude toward everyone...” “Don’t worry about anything; instead pray about everything... Then because you belong to Christ Jesus, God will bless you with peace... And this peace will control the way you think and feel.”

Tammy: Before we finish today we’d like to share a part of a letter from a lady who listens to Women of Hope. She is 45 years old and has lived in a certain village for a long time with her whole family. She had to move to a new shelter and found it difficult. She faced lots of new issues like career, food and communication with other people. This is what she said:

“I accepted Jesus about two years ago, and I never miss an opportunity to worship Him. I am a widow with ten children, three have died and seven are married. Nowadays, I sell porridge rice to support my family. I noticed that since I gave my life to Jesus I feel peace and have food every day; it’s different from before I believed in Him. Today, I just learned a new lesson from the women’s team who visited us: good communication. When I listened to today’s lesson, I found out that I lack good communication with myself, my neighbors and God. So, I want to start to change my attitude. I also learned about keeping good moral values by not gossiping and by showing others about Jesus... Thank you so much for the extra lesson; it’s a part of my life and I’m going to grow more in Jesus Christ.

Carol: Thank you dear listener for sharing part of you life with us – so we can learn from you.

It's time for us to go now. If you would like to share your story with us, or ask any questions, you can contact us at TWR Women of Hope.

Goodbye and God bless you as you learn to give those irritations in your life to God each day.

Tammy: Goodbye.

© Copyright Trans World Radio 2013