

Finding our True Identity

Alex: I'm so happy I saw you, Kate! He asked me to marry him. So ...what do I do? I mean, I *love* him... I really do, but ... will we make each other happy ... forever? I don't know what to do!

Kate: Oh, wow! Alex, that's so exciting! Greg is a **good** man. I can see that he really loves you a lot and I know your parents are happy with him. I realize it hasn't always been easy for either of you, but no relationship is perfect. Alex, you love him...what is it exactly that you're worried about?

Carol: Welcome to Women of Hope!. Hey, this sounds like an interesting conversation – doesn't it, Tammy!

Tammy: It sure does, Carol - a love match - but Alex says she's not sure...Perhaps we should just keep listening and find out what she is worried about...

Alex: Well... I don't know exactly. I always imagined my engagement to be so... well... so perfect. Remember when we were little girls and we would talk about what we wanted our weddings to look like? I've been longing to get married for so long and now that it's here, it just doesn't seem like what I'd imagined.

Kate: Alex, we've grown up together. You're my cousin and best friend. You're beautiful, so fun and smart...you've always had men interested in you.

But you don't seem to be satisfied with any of them. Honestly, I wonder if maybe you're looking for something perfect in your relationship with Greg that you're just not going to find. Are you putting all your hopes for happiness on this one relationship?

Alex: Well it's easy for *you* to say that. You've been happily married to Matt, the *perfect* man, for two years now and you've got a baby on the way. Do you even remember what it's *like* to be single?

Kate: Oh yes, Alex, of *course* I do. You're right...I *am* happily married. But I also remember that my first year of marriage was really hard because I thought it was up to Matt to make me happy. It could have been much easier. You see I didn't realize that my opinion about myself depended on my relationship with Matt –how *he* viewed me; how happy *he* made me; and whether I thought I was a good enough wife for him.

I love Matt and you're right, he *is* a wonderful man...but he's far from perfect...and so am *I*. The longer I'm married to Matt, the more I think that marriage seems to be about making me *a better*

person, rather than making me happy all the time.

Tammy: I am so glad we listened in a bit more to this conversation between Alex and Kate!

I am wondering what Kate meant when she said that the first year could have been easier... that her identity – her sense of who she was – depended on her relationship with Matt?

Carol: Well, she went on to say that she was concerned about ‘how *he* viewed her; how happy *he* made her; and whether she thought she was a good enough wife for him’ didn’t she...

I wonder if *you* understand how she felt? How do *you* feel about *your identity*?

Tammy: Maybe we can discuss what we mean when we talk about our identity.

Carol: Good idea. Now how can I describe it? ...your identity is who you are. Your name, what kind of person you are, what family you belong to, what work you do. It means how you describe yourself... I could say that my name is Carol... that I’m married to Curt, I’m a mother, a friendly person, and I work for TWR. But the most important part of who I am is that I belong to God; he made me and he loves me.

Tammy: We also talk about *self-esteem* – that’s what *value* you see in yourself. Maybe it depends partly on how you’ve been treated as you’ve grown up. Did your parents show you that they thought you were special, that you were able to do things well and that you were important to them? Do you feel that you’re valuable to your friends and family ...that they love what they see in you? Do you try to do a good job, and be a good person now, so you can respect yourself?

Carol: Maybe you’ve grown up feeling that you’re not important to anyone. That you’re not worth very much – you are not very valuable. Perhaps you’ve been treated very badly and this has made you feel that you don’t matter.

Let’s listen to a bit more of the conversation between Alex and Kate. I want to know what Kate meant when she said, “*my marriage seems to be about making me a better person, more than making me happy all the time.*”

Alex: What do you mean? Matt adores you. What could he possibly do wrong?!

Kate: Oh, Alex... you know it was like a fairy-tale how we met and got married. Matt is a great husband...but he's human! I know I do things just about every day that disappoint him. And yet he stays with me because we made a promise to choose to love one another each day. You see, Alex, I had to learn the hard lesson that no matter how good a husband Matt is to me, he can't meet *all my needs*. And I can't meet all *his* needs either!

Alex: What do you mean? I don't get it. Growing up we always talked about how great it was going to be to be married...

Kate: You're right... We had dreams of how great it would be to get married and have someone to love us for the rest of our lives. When I met Matt I felt like finally I met the one who could *really* understand me.

Matt *does* know me better than anyone, but even after that first year of marriage I felt that he didn't *really* understand me. He would do something that hurt my feelings (most of the time he didn't mean to)...or else I would feel like he just couldn't love me in the way that I wanted to be loved.

Alex: Really? I always thought you had the ideal marriage.

Kate: Don't get me wrong Alex, we have a very strong marriage, but I finally discovered that Matt and I are two people...wrestling with our own struggles. I had to learn that I couldn't depend on Matt to make me happy and feel good about myself.

Carol: We have been listening in to a conversation between Alex and her cousin and close friend, Kate.

Did you have dreams of how it would be when you got married? I wonder if your dreams have been shattered.

Tammy: Or maybe you too are happily married but you often feel hurt or misunderstood. Maybe you sometimes wonder if you really *did* marry the right person. Do you wonder why there are times when you just can't seem to get on with your husband?

Carol: Perhaps you're in a very unhappy marriage and you're trying to work out what went wrong.

Let's continue to listen to Alex and Kate as they talk about this...

Alex: Kate, you said you couldn't depend on Matt to make you happy and feel good about yourself. What do you mean?

Kate: Well, I try really hard to show Matt that I love him. I mean...for example, you know me well... I have a quick tongue... I can make unkind remarks sometimes before thinking how they might hurt other people's feelings...

Alex: *Yeah I do!*

Kate: Well, *thanks Alex!* (they both giggle) Anyway, I try not to say things that might upset Matt, but they still seem to slip out anyway... I'm getting better with time... I'm learning... but still at times I do or say things that make him feel bad.

Alex: Yeah... I mean I see that in my relationship with Greg too. I know he loves me and I love him deeply, and yet sometimes he just doesn't make me happy. And I know that there are plenty of times when *I* don't make *him* happy!

Kate: Well, that was the first lesson I had to learn... in the end, Matt can never be the source of my happiness or how I feel about myself. Let me tell you what a wise older woman said one day...

She told me that you and I are created in the image of God and that is what makes us valuable – just because he created us specially...to be like him in some ways.

Let me read something to you from God's word, the Bible, that this woman shared with me. It comes from the middle of my Bible – the Psalms...chapter 139: (parts of v13 – 18) The writer says this to God: 'You made all the delicate inner parts of my body and put me together in my mother's womb... You saw me before I was born... How precious are your thoughts about me O God. No-one can count them...they are more than the grains of sand. And when I wake in the morning you are still with me!'

And Alex, I realized when I heard this, that there isn't a hair on my head that God doesn't know and love. I began to understand how much the Creator of the universe really loves me. God values me: that means I'm worth a lot. Then I realized I could take off some of the pressure that I was putting on Matt to make me feel valued.

Think about that Alex... The same God who created the world, created us and loves us...and he wants to be in a close, intimate relationship with us.

The more I thought about this whole idea, the more I became full of God's love and didn't look to Matt so much to make me happy.

Alex: So do you ever feel unhappy in your relationship with Matt still?

Kate: Of course! Because we have such a close relationship, Matt can still have a huge effect on how I feel, and if I have a good day or not. But the difference now is that it's my relationship with *God* that makes me feel *really* safe, and ok with myself.

Alex: That sounds great Kate, but how do we *really* have a relationship with God when we're down here...and well, he's God ...up there!

Kate: I've learned so much through reading the Bible. I'm so glad my wise friend told me about God – the one true God.

You see, I've learned that God is perfect. Then near the beginning of the Bible it tells us about the first man, Adam, and his wife Eve. God created them to have a perfect relationship with him. But they disobeyed God – and so sin entered the world through Adam and Eve. Our relationship with God was broken.

Alex: You know, I don't feel close to God, and I wonder why...

Kate: Well the Bible tells us we are all *sinners*...far from God. We can't meet God's holy standards. In a way, we became his enemies.

But you see, God wanted to make a way for us to come back into that special relationship with him. He sent his own son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to Earth. It's as if Jesus paid the penalty God required, for my sin and your sin when he died on the cross. He did this to repair our broken relationship with God.

We were originally created to live in harmony with our creator God and with each other. But sin has ruined everything. That's why no matter how hard Matt or I try to treat each other perfectly, we will never be able to fully satisfy each other completely. You see it's not so much that we *do* bad things...but it's the fact that we each have a sinful heart. That makes us selfish and we just can't always treat each other right.

Alex: So you're telling me that Greg is never really going to make me happy?

Kate: Well, I don't know what to tell you about your relationship with Greg, Alex. I'm just telling you what I've learned...that we will never be fully satisfied – in even the best kind of relationship – if we don't first come to understand that we were created to be friends with God through Jesus Christ. Until we understand who we really are...in God's eyes!

Alex: I think I get what you're saying now Kate. You're saying that before I decide if I should marry

Greg, maybe I need to look first at where I find my own value. I have a lot to think about... I mean, why would God worry about me anyway?

Kate: I feel the same way... why would God send his only son to die for me when he knows my deepest, darkest secrets? But that is why *his* love seems so much more powerful than any relationship in the world... God *really* knows my heart and yet he loves me all the same.

Tammy: On Women of Hope today I hope you've enjoyed listening in with us to the conversation between Kate and her friend Alex. Kate gave Alex some really important things to think about didn't she?

Alex really wants to be sure that Greg is the right person for her to marry. It sounds like he's very suitable and that they get on very well, and her parents approve.

Carol: But Kate is right, Alex needs to think first about who she is and what makes her feel valuable.

As an individual person we do not need a husband, or children to be fulfilled and complete as a woman. Many women are happy to remain single...and they know that they are valuable.

Tammy: Kate learned that she could not depend on her husband to make her feel valuable. I'm sure he does make her feel happy much of the time...he does good things for her and takes care of her, and will take care of the baby that they will have soon. But it's important for Alex to learn – as Kate did – that her *real value* comes from knowing that *God made her and he loves her*.

We hope that you can come to understand this too.

Carol: Wasn't it good to hear those special words from the Bible about how God made us and loves us. Let's read them again: God's word says:

'You made all the delicate inner parts of my body and put me together in my mother's womb... You saw me before I was born... How precious are your thoughts about me O God.'

Isn't it amazing that the God, who created the whole world, was right there when you were in your mother's womb – in fact *he* created you there! He had a special purpose in mind when he created you. He loved you from the start. He will always love you – and he will be with you. Do you remember the last part that said: 'And when I wake in the morning you are still with me'?

Let's pray to God now and say thank you to him...

Thank you father, God for creating us so beautifully, and for promising to be with us. You value us

and we can depend on you to give us hope, every day. Thank you for sending your son, Jesus Christ to give his life to bring us back into a right relationship with you – the one you created for us in the first place. Help us to find our value in you each day. Amen

Tammy: Before we finish today I'd like to share a letter that a listener to Women of Hope sent recently. This lady found out about Jesus too – and it changed her life. This is what she said:

I belong to a family that are not Christians. But I am excited to tell you that my husband and I have received Jesus as our Saviour and Lord. And we both listen to your radio program. This program is so powerful that not only has my life changed ever since I started listening but my whole family has seen a dramatic change. I have discovered so many spiritual truths and principles for living through this program.

My husband is a rickshaw puller and I am working as a domestic help. Our marriage went through a crisis when I discovered that he was involved with another woman. I was so broken and without hope, shattered beyond words. It was at that time, I started listening to the Women of Hope program and I was so encouraged by the word of God they shared. It gave me hope, and I know that God is with me. I started praying hard for my husband and for my marriage. Praise God – he answered my prayer and my husband cut all ties with the other woman. Today, he is a dedicated husband and father and I thank the Lord for this miracle. I am ever grateful to this program... It is my heart's desire that my whole family would come to know who Jesus is...

Tammy: Thank you for sharing your story with us. We're so happy that you too found *your identity* in Jesus. We will pray with you for your family.

Carol: It's time for us to say goodbye. We are always thankful when we hear from you. If you would like to share *your* story or just contact us with any questions. You can write to us in care of this station or at Women of Hope.... The address: TWRWomenofHope@twr.org. That's TWRWomenofHope@twr.org.

Tammy: If you have missed a program or would even like to hear one again you can do that on our website TWRWomenofHope.org that's TWRWomenofHope.org. or by visiting us on our Facebook page.

Carol: Remember, your true value is in your relationship with God. God bless you as you ask him for help in all your relationships.

Have a great week filled with God's blessings.

Tammy: Goodbye

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