

Love languages: touch and service / Good Samaritan

Carol: It seems that all the world loves to talk about love...

Tammy: ...and sing songs about love...

Carol: ...and make movies about love...

Fran: But how many people really *show* love? And how many people really *feel* loved?

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

Carol: And I'm Carol. Hello, my friend. How are you today? Do *you* feel loved today? Or have you *shown* love to someone today?

Tammy: We've been talking a lot lately about love languages - our special ways of showing love to others. We spoke about how we can show love to others by the *words* we use and by the *time* we spend together.

Carol: Have you been thinking about *your* favorite Love Language - the special way *you* like to give and receive love?

Well, we are so happy to have Fran with us again - hi, Fran.

Fran: Hi, I'm glad to be here, to join you again as we talk about love languages. *Physical touch* is today's love language. We all need to be touched. There's been a lot of research about the need for touch, and it's clear that animals and people grow and flourish much better when they have lots of physical contact.

Carol: I've read sad stories about orphanages where the babies were washed and fed but never cuddled, and because of that, many of them actually died. The babies needed to be touched and held as much as they needed food.

Tammy: Yes, I remember a story about a woman just known as Old Anna. An important doctor visited a children's hospital in Germany, quite a few years ago. It was very clean, and efficient, and all the children lay in their beds in clean white sheets. The nurses bustled around giving medicines and encouraging the children to eat. But the visiting doctor noticed an old woman shuffling along, with a baby clasped to her chest. She looked so out of place that he asked 'Who is that?' The director replied 'Oh that's Old Anna'. When we've tried everything and a baby still isn't thriving, we give it to Anna. She just holds the baby, for hours, and often it begins to get better right away'.

Fran: I'm not surprised to hear that. I know that many hospitals now encourage 'kangaroo care'.

Tammy: Now that sounds interesting! What's 'kangaroo care'? It must have something to do with those big hopping animals.

Fran: (laugh) Yes, a kangaroo is an Australian animal. The female has a pouch of soft skin on the front of her body. After her baby's born it crawls into this pouch and lives there, suckling its mother's milk. It's protected here until it's big enough to live outside. 'Kangaroo care' means carrying a tiny baby against the chest of the mother or another carer, skin touching skin. The baby is warm and feels secure; it can feel the heartbeat of the carer. Doctors have found that premature or sick babies often do much better when they're cared for in this way. It warms them up too, if they're cold; it's much better than wrapping them in lots of blankets. In many cultures, women carry their babies in a cloth, wrapped across the chest. In western countries babies are usually put in a cot or pram by themselves; but we're beginning to realise they're missing out by not being touched enough. Touch is so important for a baby to grow strong and feel safe and happy.

Carol: Well, It's not just babies that need touch. Children of all ages, and adults, need to have meaningful, safe touch every day, just as they need food and light. But for some people, this is the *main* way they know they're loved. Touch is their best love language.

Tammy: Do *you* get enough touch? In many cultures, elderly people, and those who live alone, might hardly ever be touched in a friendly way. We need to remember that. Grandmothers and Grandfathers need hugs! And men need touch too, even if they look like they're tough! Boys need hugs as much as girls.

Fran: Do you ever feel *hungry* for a hug? We say some people are very 'touchy-feely'; they love to be touched. I have to remind myself that touch is my husband's love language but it's not my main one. So I have to remember to hug, not just talk. He loves to have his head rubbed all over. I'm lucky, Bill often shows he loves me by giving me a great foot massage.

If touch is your favourite love language you probably like to pat a friend's shoulder, or hold their hand. You might hug a friend, or put your arm around them to show sympathy or support. Just make sure they want that first! Touch is a love language that people sometimes misunderstand and take the wrong way!

Tammy: Yes, and sometimes people take advantage of our need for touch, and do it to satisfy their own need for touch. I think you can feel it when this happens, and you should protect yourself from people who try to manipulate you, seduce you or abuse you, whoever they are, because that's not right.

Fran: We've talked before about the idea of *safe* touch. You might have had bad experiences of touch, when someone used touch to hurt you or abuse you. I understand if you're scared of touch now, and you pull away from physical contact. But you know, you won't heal that damage by shutting yourself away

from all touch. You really need safe, respectful, good touch to begin to heal, so you can open up yourself to receive love.

Sometimes we find that our children give us that physical closeness, don't we? Little children just seem to love cuddles, and there are lots of good reasons to touch each other as we care for their daily needs. Some people find it's a great help to pat their pet animals. Maybe you would like your husband to hug you more, or maybe you have a mother, or sisters or women friends who can help you feel loved by putting an arm around your shoulder or giving you a hug. Who is there in your life who can give you safe touch?

Carol: But, first, do they *even know* you need more touch? Maybe sometime you could talk about what you need with a close friend. And it's also a good time to ask what *they* might need from *you*, to feel that you really care for them. Who could you talk to safely about this? Who would understand?

Fran: We've often talked before about our Lord Jesus Christ. He lived on earth long ago and he showed us what God is like. We can't see God, the creator of the universe, because he is Spirit. But people did see Jesus, and touched him, and those true stories have come down to us in God's word, the Bible. Now Jesus was always wise and careful in the way he touched people. There was never any scandal or wrong behaviour. He had women friends and followers and he treated all women with great respect. But he did touch people, and there are lovely stories in the Bible about how he touched people with terrible skin diseases like leprosy, and healed them. He touched a blind man and made him see. He put his hands on little children to bless them. As I read those stories I can picture myself there, and almost feel his touch. That comforts me and makes me remember that Jesus loves me as much as he loved them. And he loves you very much too.

Tammy: Hi - we're here on Women of Hope. Have you been thinking about what your favourite Love Language is? Is it caring *words*? Is it spending *time* together? Or is it showing love by *touching* in safe, gentle, caring ways?

Carol: Now let's talk about another love language – this one is called *acts of service*; doing things to help someone else. Do you like someone to help you with a task you need to do? Not everybody does; sometimes we think we'd rather do it ourselves, the way we like. But I notice that when we're busy, or tired, or sick, we really appreciate a helping hand. And I think it's always nicer to do a job together, side by side.

Fran: If your love language is helping, you might think that words don't mean very much, and actions are what count. I've heard a woman say, 'Oh, my husband says he loves me, but it's just talk, he never helps me at home. I'd rather he fixed the gate than try to charm me with smooth words.'

Tammy: And I've heard a husband say, 'My wife is a truly loving person. She helps my mother now that she's old and takes her a meal every day.'

Carol: If helping is your special way of showing love, I expect that you look for practical ways that you can help others. I think it's important to ask yourself 'What do they really need?' Think about what would be most helpful today. And maybe ask them what help they would like- you might be surprised what they say.

Fran: The Lord Jesus certainly showed his love for people by serving them - he constantly helped people. He helped people by healing them. He provided food for hungry crowds. There's one story where he cooked breakfast for his friends.

Carol: Yes, and he even washed their dusty feet, which was a very lowly job. He was willing to do quite humble tasks, though he was their leader and master, and he taught them to do that for each other.

Fran: Today I'd like to tell you a very famous story that Jesus told. It's written in God's word, the Bible. (Luke 10)

One day a teacher of the holy law came to Jesus with a question. He was actually trying to trick Jesus into saying something that would get him into trouble. He asked 'Teacher, what must I do to receive eternal life?' Jesus answered, 'What do the scriptures say? What do you think they mean?' The man knew the answer- it was written in their Law. He answered, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind'; and the second part is 'Love your neighbour as you love yourself.'"

'You're right' said Jesus. 'Do this and you will live.'

But the teacher asked another question; 'Who is my neighbour?'

So Jesus told a story. Listen and think about what he meant.

Jesus said: "There was once a man who was going down the mountain road from Jerusalem to Jericho. Robbers attacked him; they stripped him and beat him, leaving him half dead. It so happened that a priest was going down that road; but when he saw the bleeding man he walked on by on the other side of the road. Then a Levite, a Law expert, came along. He looked at the wounded man but he too walked on by.

But another man was riding along the road; he was a Samaritan, not one of our people at all. When he saw the wounded man his heart was filled with compassion. He went over to him, washed and dressed his wounds, and lifted him onto his own donkey. He took him to an inn where he could hire a room, and took care of him. The next day he gave money to the innkeeper. 'Take care of him' he said, and when I come back I'll pay you whatever you spend on him."

Fran: Then Jesus asked the teacher of the Law, 'What do you think? Which one of these three acted like a neighbour towards the man who was attacked by robbers?'

The teacher replied, 'The one who was kind to him'.

Jesus replied 'You go, then, and do the same.'

Carol: That's such a great story. And the law teacher asked a really good question. ... 'What must I do to receive eternal life?'

Tammy: A good question, but I don't think he was asking it sincerely, do you? He was trying to trick Jesus.

Fran: Then Jesus asked him what God's law said: who was he to love?

Carol: Well, as a law teacher, he must have known he was meant to love God totally, and to love his neighbour as much as himself. But he didn't like that answer much, did he?

Fran: No. He knew this was too hard for him to achieve, and he wanted to find an excuse. So he asked Jesus, 'Who is my neighbour?' He meant, 'Who do I have to help?' I guess there were people he liked to help, and others that he didn't want to help at all. Often we like to help our family or close friends, but not strangers or foreigners, and certainly not people whom we see as our enemies.

Tammy: Jesus didn't exactly answer his question, did he? Instead he told him a story about a traveller on a lonely road.

Carol: A traveller who was attached, beaten and robbed.

Tammy: And who would come walking by first but a priest and then . . . a law expert.

Fran: You would expect them to help, wouldn't you? They knew God's law very well. But they didn't help. Jesus didn't say why they ignored the traveller, but I guess the law teacher might have been feeling uncomfortable about the story by this time. So, who did help the wounded man?

Tammy: It was a Samaritan- that's why this story is called The Good Samaritan. Samaria was the next country, and the two countries didn't like each other. The Jews really looked down on the Samaritans. But this Samaritan man stopped and helped.

Carol: And he really went out of his way to help, didn't he? He cared for the traveller's wounds, he took him to a safe house, and he *paid* all the expenses. Today, when we call someone a Good Samaritan, we mean they do more than expected to help someone.

Fran: So Jesus didn't give a direct answer to that question, did he? He made the law teacher give his own answer- that the foreigner who helped in a practical way was the one who showed love and acted as a good neighbour.

Carol: And that was the point of Jesus' story: you show love by giving practical help to any person that you meet who needs help. It's clear that Jesus wants us to follow this Samaritan's example, because what did he say to the law teacher? 'You go, and do the same.'

Fran: The Bible doesn't say what the teacher did next. I think he didn't know what to say, because he didn't want to admit that he couldn't keep God's law properly, and he didn't want to ask God to forgive him and help him to love like God does.

Tammy: Well, this makes me think. I wonder how I could show love in practical ways this week? Maybe I could cook someone a meal who's not feeling well .

Carol: Friend, what could *you* do this week to show your love in a practical way? Is there someone in your family who could do with some help? Is there someone who is *not* part of your family or your group, but who needs your help? Could you be a 'Good Samaritan ' for them? Imagine how happy they would be to receive love from someone they never expected to help them.

Tammy: Actually, that sounds like it would be fun, to give someone a lovely surprise! I'd like to try that!

Carol: I've got a suggestion. Why don't we pray to God and ask him to show us who *he* wants us to help this week. There are a lot people with many different needs around us and we can't help them all, but we can start with someone nearby, and make a difference for them.

Fran: Great idea Carol. Let's pray together now, and if you agree with this prayer and want to pray it too, just tell God that it's your prayer too.

Lord God, our loving Father in heaven, we thank you that you have showed us love in so many ways. We would like to be more like you, and show your love to people around us. We ask you today to give us loving hearts like yours, and then to guide us about how we can show your love to others. We pray for good ideas, and to know whom you want us to help this week. And Lord, when others help us, please help us to accept it gratefully.

We pray this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

Tammy: Have you got any ideas already? I think you'll enjoy finding ways to help those who need it. And I think God will smile to see you showing his love to those around you.

We have to go now, but we look forward to next time. We'd love to hear from you. You can write to us in care of this station or at TWR Women of Hope.... The email address is TWRWomenofHope@twr.org.

That's TWRWomenofHope@twr.org.

Or if you missed a program or would like to hear one again visit our website TWRWomenofHope.org or visit our Facebook page.

Carol: Remember, be thinking about ways you can help those in need.

We do hope you will be with us again. Have a great week filled with God's blessings.

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