

Conflict resolution / Sacrifices

Carol: Hello! This is *Women of Hope*. I'm Carol, and we're glad to be here with friends today. Whatever you're doing right now, I hope you can stay with us and chat for a while.

Tammy: And hello from me - I'm Tammy. Carol, did you hear that terrible noise in the street as we came in?

Carol: I did...I think it was the neighbors arguing about whose children had made the mess in the street. They were making quite a noise!

Tammy: I hate conflict. It scares me. Even hearing other people argue makes me feel bad.

Carol: What do you mean by *conflict*? Do you just mean when you don't agree with someone?

Tammy: I guess it's more like arguments, fights, bad feelings, bad words, nasty looks: or going silent and not talking. All those things that mean something is not right between two people.

Carol: I know what you mean. We can't avoid them in life, can we!

Tammy: No we can't...so, let's share some ideas about how to fix things when there is conflict and disagreement.

Carol: Well it depends on what you mean by 'fix things'. Do you mean 'get your own way'?

Tammy: Yes I think sometimes it means that we want to get our own way. But I think the *real* meaning of fixing it is to 'be friends again'.

Carol: You know, I believe we would have a lot less conflict and unhappiness if we learned to use two words... 'I'm sorry'. We often look for excuses and try to blame someone else, when we should just admit our mistake and say I'm sorry.

And there are three *more* words that are very important... 'I forgive you'. Forgiveness isn't making excuses, or saying it didn't matter. It's deciding to put the conflict behind you and not make the other person suffer. Learning to say these two things will help to sort out the conflicts in any relationship.

Tammy: I think we all need to practice saying "I'm sorry" and forgiving, because we all make mistakes and hurt each other, don't we? Even when we love each other.

Carol: That is so true! Often, we realize it's partly our fault, but we try to get out of it by shouting or even hitting. That may stop the argument for the moment, but it will never fix the relationship.

Tammy: No, it would only make it worse... we need to *want* to fix the conflict.

You're with *Women of Hope*, and I'm Tammy. We've been talking about how to fix conflict in our relationships. We said that it's important to say "I'm sorry" when you're wrong, and to forgive when someone has done the wrong thing to you.

I think sometimes we have to choose what is most important to us in *this* conflict situation. Sometimes we are so busy trying to get a practical problem sorted out, that we don't pay attention to building a relationship.

Carol: You're right. I just thought of an example too. Once I bought a bag of rice and it was full of weevils. You should have seen them wriggling away. I got such a shock. I tied that bag up very quickly! I took it straight back to the shop and asked for a new one. I think the shopkeeper knew it was not good when he sold it to me, because he brought it from behind the counter, not from the shelf. I didn't want to be rude to the shopkeeper, but really, I was only interested in getting my clean rice...I didn't need to be best friends him.

Tammy: So how did you do it?

Carol: I asked to speak to the person in charge, and I showed him the rice and my receipt (chit). I told him I often bought food there, and I was disappointed that his shop would sell such poor rice. I said that I expected him to give me a new bag.

Tammy: Wow, you made it very clear to him didn't you! What happened?

Carol: Oh, He wasn't happy! And he made excuses. He said that it must have gotten wet in storage. But he gave me a new bag in the end, because I just kept saying firmly that the product was no good.

Tammy: OK...so the most important thing was to get what you wanted - the good rice you paid for.

Carol: That's right. And next, I suppose, I wanted to feel that I was polite and respectful. I didn't want to walk away feeling ashamed because I was rude or unfair to him, even if I had my good rice.

Tammy: Ok, so sometimes you are trying to get your 'rights', and it's important to act fairly in the conflict. But what if you disagree with someone *close* to you? That can be harder! Then it becomes more important for you to keep the *relationship* safe and good... But does that mean you have to just give in and do what the other person wants, just to keep the peace?

Carol: What do *you* think? If you always gave in, would it make a good relationship in the long term? Is it a good friendship - or a good marriage - if one partner always gets their own way?

Tammy: It's not, really is it? Because it wouldn't be fair or equal. And there wouldn't be much respect for each other, would there?

Carol: So, what *should* you do?

Tammy: let's think about that...Carol, we're friends, but suppose you and I disagreed about – let's see...who should make the tea each week. Suppose I think you are lazy and always expect me to go and make the tea!

Carol: And maybe I think that you *should*, because you are younger!

Tammy: The most important step is to *talk about it*, and really listen to each other. Find out what the other person wants, and why it's important to them. Let them know you've understood them.

Carol: Let's act out this story about the tea. Let's pretend you're angry with me...

Tammy: Ok, lets do that, and see what might happen. Here we go. Carol, I am fed up with always being the one to make the tea. Why don't you ever do it? What do you think I am? Your servant?

Carol: Oh... What?!? I didn't realize you would get so upset because you think I don't make the tea often enough.

Tammy: That's right - I *am* upset! Why don't you do your share?

Carol: Tammy, I'm sorry. I thought you *liked* making the tea. I thought you liked the chance to get away from your desk...so I've just got into the habit of letting you do it. I was wondering why you were not so friendly to me lately.

Tammy: Oh. So...you didn't realize that the tea-making was a problem to me... And you are feeling hurt by my...coldness. '

Carol: That was Good... that shows we understand each other now. But we still would need to work out who will make the tea! We should talk about possible solutions...how we can fix the problem...

Tammy: ...because at least we agree on one thing - we both want to drink tea! OK...lets go back to the acting. So maybe we could take turns, or ...

Carol: ...maybe it would help you if I made sure I said thank you...so that you know I don't just *expect* you to make it...

Tammy: ...or if you just thought to offer to do it sometimes - or brought cake to have with it! I really don't mind making the tea, I just didn't like feeling you were expecting me to make it *all* the time.

Carol: Now - That was just pretending...acting. But it shows some important points: - We need to listen well without interrupting, until you really understand how the other person feels, and why...

Tammy: - and then to show that you *do* understand, by putting their thoughts and feelings into your own words. Did you notice Carol did that when I said I was fed up? She said, 'Oh... I didn't realize you would get so upset.

Carol: And, it was good not to attack back...that would only have started an argument.

Tammy: It was good to listen to each other and not try to decide who was right or wrong.

Carol: Sometimes you have to think about it a bit yourself, and try to work out some reasons that the other person might have for what they're doing.

Tammy: And also, think about what *you* are doing that keeps the conflict going. It might surprise you! In the story we acted, I was surprised that *my* coldness was hurting Carol - I thought it was all *her* fault.

Carol: ...Another good thing was to find what we *did* agree about...and to work out *together* how we could fix it to meet *both* our needs. We sometimes call that a 'win-win solution'...that means – both people win! That's important...to realize that you're on the same side, working together to fix the things that might hurt your relationship.

Tammy: And when something makes you angry I think it's good to wait a bit sometimes, take a few deep breaths, until you're calm. Then you can think about it, instead of saying the first, angry thing that pops into your head. Because you can't take words back!

Carol: I sometimes wish I could, don't you?

When we were children my mother used to quote that Bible verse Be 'Quick to listen...slow to speak...slow to become angry' (James 1:19).

Tammy: That would save a lot of conflict. Let's try to learn it together. How did it start Carol?

Carol: Quick to listen...

Tammy: ...slow to speak...

Carol: ...and slow to become angry.

Tammy: That's good! Because it's easy to *not* listen...to say the first thing you think of, and to become angry without really thinking.

Let's think about this, and when we come back we're going to hear about what *God* did when there was conflict between him and the people he loved. It's a surprising story.

You're listening to *Women of Hope*. We've been talking about how to fix conflicts, and now Ros is here to tell us how God made a way for us to be friends again with him. Let's listen to the story from God's word, the Bible.

Ros: I wonder if you were with us when we heard that ancient story from the Bible, about how God rescued his people from being slaves. He led them away from Egypt into the desert, and he gave them his good rules to help them live right and good lives.

Carol: Yes, and we heard how they failed to keep those rules. They failed really badly; like we all seem to do!

Ros: Well, I'd like you to imagine you are an Israelite woman in that crowd. You are leaving Egypt where you used to be a slave, and you're making your way towards the land God had promised to give to your people. Imagine living with your family in a tent, moving every now and then, looking for food and water in the desert, trying to teach your children, trying to keep things clean, and make friends as you travel. You're just learning about what's right and wrong in *God's* eyes. You make lots of mistakes...sometimes because you are not sure what *is* right. Sometimes you do wrong things without meaning to. And sometimes, well, you know what is right, but you just do the wrong thing anyway!

Carol: That sounds like me - does it sound like you too?...

Ros: You *know* your people had an agreement with God. But your people keep *disobeying* - for example, they made a golden calf idol and worshipped it.

Carol: Yes - And that was right after God had told them not to have any idols, because he is the only true God.

Ros: That's right. So what are you to do? *You* do wrong things, your *people* disobey God. And God is absolutely holy and perfect. How can you *dare* come before him? How would you feel? Hmm...?

So, God has to show you a *way*. Every year the High Priest must offer *perfect* animals as a sacrifice to God. He needs to confess his own sins and the sins of the people and ask God, in his mercy, to forgive them. The animals would die instead of them.

And any time *you* realized you had disobeyed God, and were filled with shame, you could bring an offering too. It would be your way of saying to God 'I'm sorry. I'm not good enough to come into your presence by myself. I deserve your punishment. Will you accept this offering instead of me?'

It didn't have to be a big expensive offering - perhaps just a handful of flour if you were very poor - but it represented *you*. And if you did this sincerely, really being sorry and wanting to change, God *would* accept you, in his love and mercy. You could go back to your tent feeling happy that God had forgiven you.

Carol: That would have seemed like really good news! I think I would have felt much better. But I noticed you said, 'if you did this *sincerely*...'. I guess you could have brought the best animals without feeling sorry, or wanting to change.

Ros: That's true...because later on God said something about that through his prophets. (Amos 5, Hosea 6) He said that he hated even the *smell* of their offerings when they didn't mean it, when they planned to keep right on being cruel, exploiting the poor... having wrong sex... secretly keeping idols... and ignoring his rules for right living.

People sometimes thought they could just bribe God, but they didn't really want to please him and obey him. They boasted about their big offerings but they didn't care about how they lived. God wasn't impressed!

The prophet Micah (6:6) asked 'Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams? Should I even offer him my own child? *No*; he has shown you what is good - to do justice...love mercy....walk humbly with your God.'

Tammy: When you stop and think about it - I can't imagine that God *needed* lots of dead animals.

Ros: What do *you* think? ... No, of course he didn't! He said through one of his prophets, 'If I felt hungry, do you think I would ask *you* for something to eat?' God does not need to eat, and he made *everything*, so he doesn't *need* anything we could give him. But there's something he *does* want. He wants to see that we are sorry and realize our mistakes. Because then he can be close to us, he can help us and show us how to live the best life.

Tammy: Do you think the sacrifices actually *took away* the wrong-doing?

Ros: Well, the Bible says that it isn't possible for the blood of animals to *take away* sin (Heb 10:4). They were a symbol, a picture of the way God was going to *really* take them away...the way he always planned to do it.

You see, Jesus, God's Son, came and lived a perfect life on earth. He was the perfect sacrifice - he could *really* take our place because he did not deserve to be punished for any sins of his own. And he was willing to do this, because he loved us so much.

Now *you* can come to God like that Israelite woman. *You* can say too 'I'm not good enough to come near to you; but please forgive me, please accept the offering that Jesus made instead of me.' God *always* accepts Jesus' sacrifice. He says that the penalty has been fully paid, forever. We can have our guilt and shame taken away. We can feel washed clean. No need for sacrifices now!

Carol: But I think *we* have to be *sincere* too, just like she was. Just saying the *words* doesn't mean much if we're not truly sorry, if we don't really *want* God to change us and help us live the right sort of life.

Ros: That's right. But if you *are* sincere about asking God to forgive you, he *definitely* will. Listen to this promise in God's word; 'If we confess our sins to God, he will keep his promise and do what is right; he will forgive our sins and purify us (make us clean) from all our wrongdoing' (1 John 1:9, GNB).

Carol: Isn't that amazing??? So what have we learned today about God?...

Tammy: I think we saw that God always made a way so that people could come back to him - and he still wants us to be friends with him. I'm so glad about that!

That brings us to the end of our time together today. Thank you for listening to *Women of Hope*. We would love to hear from you any time - you can write to us, Carol, Tammy, or Ros, at *Women of Hope*, care of this radio station and you can also email us.

Carol: We're glad we could some time with you today. Goodbye and have a great week filled with God's blessings.

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