

Family communication / Wings

Tammy: No matter where we live or in what culture, we all want a strong and healthy relationship with our children. We all thrive when our family relationships are happy – mothers, fathers, grandparents, aunts, uncles and the children, all enjoying each other's company. But does this always happen? What do *you* think?

Carol: Welcome to Women of Hope, I'm Carol. Tammy and I are so happy to have our special friend Marli back again. The last time she was with us she said she would come back and talk to us about giving our children wings?

Tammy: I am trying to picture this in my mind! I've seen pictures of *angels* with wings. But I'm not sure how my children would look with wings!

Carol: Well you'll have to wait just a little while before you find out about these wings because we're going to talk first about those happy family relationships. And to do that we have another familiar guest today – Hello Ros.

Ros: Thanks Carol. It's really good to be together again!

Carol: If you've heard her over the years of listening to Women of Hope, you'll know that she has children and grandchildren and she's lived in a few different places. So, Ros how many children and grandchildren to you have?

Ros: Three children – all in their 40s now, and 7 grandchildren – with another coming very soon.

Tammy: Ros, Carol said you've lived in a few different places.

Ros: That's right Tammy. I grew up in Australia – in fact in the little state of Tasmania – right down south of the mainland of Australia. When I was married we lived for some years in Papua New Guinea. That was a completely different culture that took a little while to get used to.

And in recent years we've lived in Asia – in Singapore. And that was very different again.

When our children were quite young, we moved to New Zealand from northern Australia where it was very hot, and dry and it took a lot of work, and a lot of water to cultivate any plant. I'll never forget when we had just arrived and walked across lovely green grass full of little white daisies. Our son was just 6 years old and he asked: "Mummy can I walk on the flowers?" He was amazed that we would do such a thing!

And then they grow up don't they! He's now almost 44 – in fact, tomorrow, and *his* little ones now ask some fascinating questions that *he* loves to answer!

I believe that it can be difficult for mothers (and grandmothers) in any culture to watch their children (or grandchildren) grow up and leave home. However, in many parts of the world, children don't *leave* home. Many families live very close to one another or in the same home. For example, mothers-in-

law live with their daughters-in-law and daughters live with their parents. Sons bring home wives, and grandparents live with grandchildren.

Tammy: That's right, and no matter where in the world we live, we all want happy relationships in our families - with our parents and with our children, and grandchildren.

Carol: I don't know about you, but I think that talking to each other...and listening to each other are two of the main things that create good family relationships?

Ros: That's right. We call it 'communication' don't we. Communication must be two-way...one talking, one listening; then the other has a turn. I've heard parents, and grandparents, who don't seem to understand that it's not a one way conversation – where they tell the children what to do... and even sometimes what to think...and how to act.

Tammy: So we could say that one of the biggest difficulties in family relationships is *lack* of communication – or poor communication.

Ros: You're so right Tammy. Children don't talk openly with their parents and parents have trouble understanding their children. And that will often lead to a disagreement.

Do you ever disagree with a member of your family, like your mother, your father, your in-laws, your brother or sister? It's easy to disagree with a friend and still be friends with that person. But a disagreement with a family member tends to last longer and can cause long-term unhappiness. The problem can be a lot worse if that person lives in the same house with you.

When I got married I left my parents' home and within only a few days, moved to Papua New Guinea. There, and in many other countries, a lot of older children - either married or unmarried - are still living with their parents or their in-laws. I was very much alone in those first few years. Well, of course it was wonderful to be with my husband – but there were many times, especially when the babies came along that I would love to have had my mother and sister, and brothers living nearby.

There are some really good things about families living close to each other. Family members can help each other, and support each other. They can discuss their problems. It's easy to hide things from people you don't know very well – and pretend there are no problems. But with family, they know you so well and you can talk openly together.

Tammy: I hear from some of my friends that living with your mother-in-law is a challenge! One of them said that sometimes when she disciplines her son her mother-in-law interferes. Her mother-in-law takes sides with the grandson even if it's clear that he's done something wrong.

Ros: And I have lived closely with my daughter in law – and that can be hard too when they use very different parenting skills than you used with *your* children. Many times I just had to keep my mouth closed, and do what I could to help.

And communication is more than just words isn't it. Do you think it's possible to disagree respectfully with another person?

I believe we can disagree without offending the other person. But to do this we need to be aware of several things; the expression on our face; our body language and our tone of voice. The words we

choose, and when we say those words, can make a difference. Sometimes we need to wait until things calm down.

We also need to listen carefully to what the other person is saying and try to understand their point of view. It's important to think before we speak. Can we take our words back once we've said them?

Carol: Now that I'm an adult looking back at my past, I see a family tradition that's planted deep within me...respect. Being respectful to your elders is very important in many cultures.

In some cultures it doesn't matter how others treat you – but those who are older than you expect your respect.

Ros: So if you are the older person, it's good to remember that if we want the respect of the younger ones, we should speak to them kindly. I believe all human beings are created equal. That's a good reason to respect each other. It doesn't matter how old we are or where we're from...or whether we're a man or a woman, we should show respect to others – and especially to our family members.

Tammy: You may have heard the saying 'Do to others what you would want them to do to you'. That's easy to say - but not always easy to practice!

Ros: My respect for my parents increased a lot when my first child was born. Then I could see more clearly why my parents did things that I didn't like when I was young. It was for my good. I wrote several letters to my parents telling them how thankful I was for the things they had done for me. Maybe this is something *you* can do too if you live away from your parents.

Tammy: If you live close to your parents, you can visit them or invite them to your home and tell them how much you appreciate what they've done for you.

Ros: If you live with parents in-law, you can help with the cooking, or invite them to your part of the house for tea. Ask your mother or your mother-in-law to teach you how to cook your husband's favorite food. Find ways to express your love and respect for your family members. You can change the way a person feels about themselves as you tell them how important they are to you.

Carol: So let's work on our relationships together. Express your love and respect and take time to listen and understand. And we can pray for each other as we make this our goal.

Tammy: A little while ago, our friend Marli came to talk about giving our children roots. Roots of love, discipline and security to grow into respectable and dependable young adults. Well, today Marli is back as she promised, to talk about wings. Welcome Marli.

Marli: Thank you. Hello my friend. Let's continue to talk about the joy of giving gifts to our children. Remember we talked about this last time I was with you? A good mother gives two things to her child; she gives roots and wings.

Trees need roots to stand firm when the storm comes. I remember when a typhoon hit our city. The winds were so powerful that a big tree, just in front of our house fell down. Such a beautiful tree, but when the storm came, boom! Down it went! Afterwards I was surprised to see how short the roots were. Such a big tree with such short roots. No wonder it came down.

A good mother gives roots of love, discipline, security, honesty, faith in God, and a happy home full of love and respect to her children. We all go through storms in our lives - disaster, sickness, death of a loved one or divorce. When these storms come, children who've been given roots of a strong character and faith in God will stand firm. They won't fall down like trees. You see, you give roots to a child by your example. They will do what they see mom and dad doing.

Now how do you give wings to your children? That's the difficult part for most of us. It's complicated and it can cost us quite a lot. I remember a dear friend saying, "We raise children for others, not for ourselves." She is so right. Our children are just lent to us for a few years and then off they go to build their own families and to live their own lives.

Here's how we give our children wings. Let me explain it to you with a picture we find in God's word, the Bible. In Deuteronomy (Ch 32 v 11) we read about the eagle. A mother eagle teaches her little ones to fly...just as the Lord, God teaches us. We know that the eagle is one of the strongest of all the birds. It lives up high on the mountain tops. Eagles can fly very high and soar on the wind – using the wind to carry them a long way. Let me read this to you, 'The Lord is like an eagle that stirs up its nest, and hovers over its young, it spreads its wings to catch them and carries them high up.'

When the little eaglets grow, the nest is not big enough for all of them. So the mother eagle starts bringing twigs and little stones and placing them in the nest. The nest becomes uncomfortable for the birds. You see, what she wants to do is to teach them to fly. That's what they were born for...to fly and to fly high! She wants to give them the whole of the skies, instead of the little circle of the nest. So she disturbs their comfort. Of course they don't like it, but eventually they get the message and perch on the edge of their nest.

Then, when they jump out of the nest into the air, the mother eagle flies spreading her powerful wings underneath them. What a beautiful picture! And she keeps flying there until they learn to explore the highest mountain and the deepest valley on their own. She knows that the best thing she can do for her growing babies is to make them fly. They were made to do exactly that; to fly!

Now do you see the picture? A good mother gives wings to her children. You see when the time comes it's time to let our children go and live their lives, learning to trust God. Oh, that's very difficult for most of us. Our children get married and we want to keep telling them what to do. We mothers know how to do that, don't we? How they should raise their children or how they should spend their money. It can be very difficult for mothers to give their sons away and to let them live with their wives. Some mothers continue treating them as if they were still teenagers, or worse...like little boys that cannot live without their mothers. We love our children so much and we think we know best. We may do, but the problem is that instead of helping our children we make them dependent and insecure, unable to make their own decisions.

In God's word it tells us (Genesis 2.18-24) that God has made men and women for each other, to help each other and be companions. The Bible says that's why, when a man marries, he will leave his father or mother and be united with his wife and they will become one flesh. So when a son marries, his first responsibility is to his wife – not to his mother.

As Ros said earlier, in many cultures, children live with their parents until they get married and sometimes after they get married. I think it's beautiful when this happens in a harmonious way. As

long as we keep loving and respecting each other, harmony will be there. And if we're in this situation with our son then we must respect his relationship with his wife and not interfere.

Now, how do we give these wings to our children? First of all we need to realize that this is a *process*. It cannot happen all at once. We cannot tell our children, "Ok, it's time for you to be independent. Take this pair of wings and fly."

No, it doesn't work that way. It takes years of training, of teaching them, of giving them the roots we talked about. How do we give them wings? Well, one feather at a time. That means that little by little we have to train our children when they are young to make one choice and one decision at a time. We need to teach them to be responsible, to take their responsibilities at school and at home seriously. We need to encourage them to take responsibility when they choose their friends especially as they mature into teenagers. As they grow they will receive more and more responsibility, so they will learn how to make their own wise decisions and how to lead their own lives. And this is the hard part – watching them make their own decisions and not interfering. If we interfere and stop them from making mistakes they will never learn. Have you heard anyone say, 'you learn by your mistakes'? We have to allow our children to learn and grow that one feather at a time...and we have to learn to trust God to take care of them.

Another important thing is what we call 'the law of cause and effect'. Every *action* brings about a *reaction*. Wrong behaviour has consequences, and good behaviour has rewards. We need to teach them gently that they must take the consequences of those wrong actions – so that they can learn how to become responsible for themselves.

I always told my children the more responsible they are, the more freedom they will be able to enjoy. I always made sure my kids knew that if they did what was right they would be rewarded with more freedom. That's how they learned what was good for them.

A good mother gives *roots* and *wings* to her children. Roots to help them stand through the storms of life, and wings so that they can fly high wherever God leads them in life.

I want to pray with you today. I know it's not easy to let our children go and to let God lead them. So let's pray together. You can join me if you want to.

Lord God Almighty, how we need Your help...

We need Your wisdom and grace... to lead these children You've given to us...

To lead them in the right direction... on the right path...

Help us Lord... Teach us to let go... and to let You guide our children's lives...

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ we pray. Amen

Carol: Well, Marli...and Ros have shared a lot about relationships today. They can take hard work...but the results are oh so important for happy and loving homes. So let's work on our relationships together. Remember, Express your love and respect and take time to listen and understand.

Tammy: And let's remember to give our children roots so they can stand firm when the storms of life come.

And to give them wings so they can become independent and fly high.

Carol: We would love to hear from you – Tell us what you learned from *your* parents. Or anything that you would like to share with us, or ask us.

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

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