

# Hand-washing / Giving God our Hands

**Child's voice:** Happy birthday to you, happy birthday to you, happy birthday somebody, happy birthday to you...Happy birthday to you...

**Mother's voice:** Suzy – what are you doing? And whose birthday is it?...

**Child:** No-one's! ...Well it's probably *someone's* birthday...

**Mother:** So why are you singing happy birthday?

**Child:** My teacher told us to...

**Mother:** ...who for?

**Child:** Just while we wash our hands...

**Mother:** ...oh – now I understand! Well you'd better keep singing...

**Child:** Happy birthday to you, happy birthday to you...

**Tammy:** Welcome to Women of Hope, I'm Tammy

**Carol:** And I'm Carol. And I know what Suzy was doing. My daughter was told the same thing many years ago. When you wash your hands, sing Happy Birthday through two times as you're washing. That way you'll be sure to wash all the germs off.

**Tammy:** Yes, I've heard the same. But of course you can sing any short song you like. So, The Happy birthday song two times helps you to know just how long you need to wash your hands for.

**Carol:** Yes – we've talked about washing hands before haven't we? And we probably will again some time later. Why?...

**Tammy:** ... because proper hand washing can save lives! It's the most important thing we can do to keep ourselves and our family from getting sick.

**Carol:** Washing you hands properly can prevent passing on serious diseases – and common, every day sickness. Sometimes we think we just can't avoid getting sick. And that's true, but if we are careful about washing our hands it will make a big difference.

**Tammy:** We might understand how important it is – but if our children or other members of the family don't – then the diseases will still get passed on.

Let's think about our hands and what they do...

We do *everything* with out hands don't we! Do you remember, when Ros came and talked a while ago about keeping our kitchen clean? Her daughter in law is a health inspector – so she inspects kitchens in cafes and restaurants and places where people prepare food to be sold to the public. Do

you remember how she talked about keeping cooking surfaces clean? And of course she talked about how important it is to keep our hands clean as well – and wash them in between touching raw food and cooked food.

**Carol:** But today we want to talk about the things we all do – every day, and *how* and *when* we need to wash our hands.

Think for a moment about all the things *you* do with *your* hands each day...

**Tammy:** Do you have a baby, or small children? Then you would have to change the baby's diaper, or nappy, often. And you might help your children keep their noses clean. And I'm sure you often hold your children's hands.

And we all eat!

**Carol:** Yes – of course you do – but do you always think about what your hands have been touching before you prepare the food?

And what about your children? You only have to watch a child playing for a short time and you can see how many things they touch that are not clean – the dirt on the ground, the floor, a ball that's been rolling on the ground, a toy that's been on the floor and played with by lots of other children. They'll play games where they hold hands with others. They might be playing with animals – or the family pet.

**Tammy:** So when it's time for them to come and eat the food that you've prepared – and you washed your hands carefully before you prepared it – do you remind them that they must wash *their* hands first? Imagine the germs that would be on their hands – that would get onto the food, then into their mouths. And once those germs are inside them, in their warm moist stomach, they will multiply very quickly. And before long your child will be telling you that they have a tummy ache. And then they will start running to the toilet with diahorrea. Or maybe start vomiting.

**Carol:** You see it's not just dirt that they have on their hands, it's germs that are passed on from other people who are sick. They might be germs that will cause diarrhea, or a cold, or the flu, or dysentery – or some other disease that will make them become very sick...or maybe even die.

If someone they've been playing with has a cold, or an eye infection, or some other sickness, it can be passed on very quickly to others if they don't wash their hands.

**Tammy:** On Women of Hope today, we're talking about how important it is to wash our hands – and to wash them properly.

Why was Suzy singing Happy birthday – twice – as she washed her hands?

When we wash our hands, we need to use soap and clean water – and not just dip them into the water quickly, but keep them in the soap and water for long enough to wash the germs off.

**Carol:** We all have different places to wash our hands don't we? Some of us have bathrooms with a sink and hot and cold running water, Some of us have a sink with just cold water. And some of us

may not have running water at all. We might have to carry our water to our homes in a bucket. Whatever you have in your home, the most important thing is the clean water.

**Tammy:** So here's a simple way to remember the *best* way to wash our hands. We have 5 fingers – one step for each finger:

1. *Wet your hands* – with clean, running water, if you can, and apply soap...any soap will do.
2. *Rub your hands together* to make a lather. Be sure to rub the soap around the backs of your hands and between your fingers and under your nails.
3. *Continue rubbing for about 20 seconds* – and as Suzy knows, that's about as long as the Happy birthday song – twice.
4. *Rinse the soap off* – rinse well, including the backs of your hands.
5. *Dry your hands* with a clean towel, or paper towel, or let the air dry them (but don't wipe them on your clothes – or you will put germs back onto them again).

**Carol:** Tammy, you mentioned our fingernails – if you have a little brush and can scrub under your finger nails that's a good idea. And cut your nails, and your children's nails, regularly.

Now, *when* should we wash our hands? We've talked about *some* times – but let's see if we can think of *all* the times we need to wash our hands...

- before, during and after preparing food
- before eating food
- after using the toilet – or changing a baby's nappy

**Tammy:** And then there are animals...

- after touching an animal or animal waste
- after handling pet food, or other animal food
- and after handling garbage

**Carol:** And some other important ones...

- after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing
- before and after caring for someone who's sick
- before and after treating a cut or wound.
- After you have handled money – think of all the people who have touched that money.

**Tammy:** Have you ever thought about how many germs there would be on door handles? And on other things people use all the time – like the telephone, a computer keyboard, a broom handle, tap handles, a shopping trolley handle. And if you drive a car – the steering wheel. When did you last clean the steering wheel of your car? Or the handles of your bicycle?

And what about your broom handle? You wash your hands, after preparing your food, then you sweep the floor – oh dear the germs on the broom jump straight back onto your hands. That's why it's important to always wash our hands before we eat.

**Carol:** I haven't thought about cleaning my broom handle – but that's a very good thought Tammy!

So as well as washing our hands it's important to keep other things wiped clean regularly.

**Tammy:** Our bodies are amazing and they can deal with some germs. They get used to a certain amount of germs – but we do need to remember that washing our hands properly can make a very big difference to our own health – and our family members' health.

**Carol:** We take our hands for granted don't we? We often don't think too much about how amazing they are, and how many things they do every day. But of course, if you have hands that have been damaged, or affected by illness, you would be very aware of your hands – and maybe how hard it is to do normal everyday things. We feel for you if you have difficulty using your hands. We hope you have someone else's hands to help you along .

**Tammy:** We have Marli with us again today on Women of Hope. She has hands that have done many things to help us create Project Hannah prayer all around the world...and Women of Hope radio programs. But of course it's her heart that has made her hands do these things. Isn't that right Marli?...welcome...

**Marli:** Thank you...yes that's true! Hello Tammy, and Carol...and hello to *you* my friend...it's good to be with you.

**Carol:** Your heart for women has made your hands do many interesting things and go to many interesting places. And your hands have been placed around many women as you've prayed together. We're grateful to God for what he's put in your heart and what he has helped your hands to do.

**Marli:** Thank you Carol. Today I was thinking...what would I do without my hands? They've been busy for many years – well all my life – doing all kinds of things, and they never complain. Isn't that fascinating? Do your hands complain? Well – maybe they do if you have pain in your hands.

Our hands are so wonderfully made, aren't they? Think about it. They can hold things, they hold our children and grandchildren and with them we can touch and feel the love of our loved ones. We can also play instruments and make music for the soul. Hands can heal, treat wounds, and give medicine to the sick. Some people who cannot see with their eyes, can read with their fingers. They have clever hands.

However, hands can also hurt. Some hands can kill, destroy the innocence of a child or deeply wound someone's body and soul. Today I want to talk to you about giving our hands to God.

Why would God want my hands? What can I do for Him with my hands? Is He interested in my hands at all? Yes, He is. You see, hands are symbols of service. God is interested in our service for others and for Him. Jesus, the Son of God, came to serve and to give His life. The Bible speaks about it in Mark chapter 10 (v45) where Jesus said about himself: "The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many." Here are two characteristics of Jesus' life – serving others and giving of himself. God wants us to be like Jesus and serve our families, our friends, and our country.

Many, many women in the world are overworked. In some countries, women do most of the farming work as well as all the house chores and raising their children. You might be one of these women, working 10,12 or 14 hours a day, every day. As women, our lives are lives of service. Whether we like it or not, we have to serve. As daughters, professionals, wives and mothers we spend our lives serving and looking after our family and taking care of our household and our jobs.

From the moment a mother conceives a baby she starts serving that baby with her body, blood and soul. Later on she might stay home all day long with her children. She feeds them keeps them clean, teaches them and takes them to school and to the doctor. Serving the family is often the main part of a woman's life.

But today I want us to think about two different attitudes as we serve. There are women who serve because they know they *have* to. They hate what they do and it shows in the way they treat others. They are angry, ready to burst at any moment and scream and slap their children. If they work outside of their homes they cheat their boss and do their work slowly. What a terrible way to spend life. It takes so much energy to fight against life this way, doesn't it?

And then, there's the other kind of woman. She serves with energy and joy - not only with her hands but also with her heart. She loves what she does. She loves her children and her husband and she does not resent the fact that there is so much to do. Women like this have a healthy attitude and life is easier for them, because they do not spend all their energy fighting their way through it.

This makes me think of my dear mother...who is gone now. What a servant she was! At 82 years old she would still get upset when we did not let her help or do what she wanted to do around the house.

She was happiest when she was serving. I thank God for what my mother taught me about serving others, but most of all I thank God for what she taught me about serving God. She reminds me of the woman of Proverbs 31...whom the Bible says 'extends a helping hand to the poor and opens her arms to the needy.' (v20) Her hands are busy making clothing and other things for her home. In other words she has "happy hands" and she's always ready to do what needs to be done. Is this what you're like? Is it what I'm like? I wonder!

Every time we serve others we can be serving God. In God's word, we read a letter Paul wrote to the new Christians at Colossae. (3:23) We read: 'Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord rather than human masters.' (NLT) Here we have it! God wants the happy service of both our *hands* and our *hearts*. He is the one who wants to help us overcome those negative feelings, that bad attitude, and laziness - whatever it is that's stopping us from living a life of service and giving of ourselves in love and gladness to Him.

My friend, are you overworked and tired of serving and giving to others? Maybe today you need to come to Jesus and pour your heart out. Tell him all about it and ask him to help you. Jesus said, "Come to me and I will give you rest." God has promised that His joy can be your strength for today – and give you hope for tomorrow.

Let's pray together...

*Oh, dear God, I thank you for giving us our hands and so many opportunities to serve others and to serve You. Help us to serve with a joyful attitude in our hearts. I bring you my dear friend, so that you can give her Your rest, Your joy and Your strength. Thank you God for listening to our prayers. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

**Carol:** God' word tells us that we need to have clean hands and a pure heart to serve others – so that we can serve God. But sometimes it's hard to be loving and serving others when they've hurt you or misunderstood you in some way isn't it? Only God can give us the strength to do that – and real joy in serving him.

**Tammy:** I want to read a letter from a Women of Hope listener in Santiago, Cuba.

She says:

Dear sisters, I feel joyous and thankful in our Lord that I am able to write to you because I can hear your programs. They are a great blessing. You always have words of nourishment, of love, of graciousness and of mercy. Thank you for teaching about the unconditional love of God for His people. When we learn that God loves us it makes us feel important to Him and others; it shows us He cares.

It is helpful that we learn through the programs to live a purposeful life. Thanks to you we can learn many useful and beautiful things; of love that makes us helpful and kind people. May God continue to bless you as light, salt and ambassadors of His Heavenly Kingdom.

Every Sunday I listen to your programs. Sometimes my radio has loud static but I can always understand the message. Sometimes I cannot go to church, but through the radio waves we can be together. May God bless and keep you always.

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