

Conflict with Children/ Using your Influence

Carol: Can I ask you a question?... How do you handle it when your child decides to argue with you? Does that ever happen?

Tammy: Well, I sometimes feel frustrated! I might yell or raise my voice or become angry. (*Or whatever you do, Tammy!*) I usually try not to do that, but sometimes I do. I want my children to be nice and reasonable, but I'm not always like that myself! What about you, my friend?

Carol: Hello, we're glad you can be with us today on Women of Hope. Tammy, you gave us a very honest answer just then.

Tammy: ...Well, Carol, you and I both have children, and we love being mothers, don't we?

Carol: We sure do, but it has some difficult moments doesn't it? There are always going to be conflicts between parents and children. Children want their own way, and so do parents – and we parents usually think we know what's good for our children. All children have those 'difficult moments!' Toddlers *will* try to be independent, and they usually end up having a tantrum!

Tammy: And teenagers they want to be independent before they seem to be ready to make certain choices on their own. Today we're going to talk together about handling these conflicts, and how to use our influence in the best way. Whether you have children or not, you probably have influence in some child's life. So stay with us!

Carol: Well I guess the first general rule is, *expect* to have disagreements with your child. A little child does not always understand why it's important to go to bed at a certain time, or why he needs to help around the home or to do his school work. Many times, even with older children, that lack of understanding can lead to an argument.

Tammy: You know, sometimes it's best for parents to *avoid* arguments. Some things are not important enough to argue about. Or, if the parent or child is tired, it's better to talk about it later. Get

some rest first. That gives us time to cool down and speak more calmly. When the heat of the battle cools, then healing can start.

Carol: But, small children need you to deal with a situation quickly – because they will forget what the problem was if you leave it till later!

Tammy: I often find that it's good to give my child *time* to change his mind. He may need time to think about my words. So often I have tried to make my child obey me right away. Then he fights more than ever. Even when we need to stick to our decision, we should be gentle and respectful towards our children.

Be sure to treat your child *kindly*. Don't shout and say hurtful words that you can't take back! You need to be in control of yourself before you can control your child. If you are cruel, or if the child never knows when you'll get angry, he might be afraid of you, and he probably will have a hard time loving you or respecting you.

Carol: Remember, *you* are the adult, it's *your* job to think about what your child really needs. That's much more important than winning or losing the argument. Do they need discipline right now? Do they need to be protected from their own foolishness? It is important for *you* as the parent to use your power and authority to make good decisions for your children till they're old enough to make good decisions for themselves.

Maybe you need to think about the situation from their point of view? Whether your child is small, or a rebellious teenager, they need to receive respect. Some people think your children are your *property*, but they are individuals, made by God, and precious to him. So parents, we need to show them respect even when we're telling them what they must do. That means using polite words, not angry words and listening to what they have to say. We should use discipline to help them learn, not because we are annoyed.

Tammy: Our counsellor friend Fran told me that toddlers and teenagers have the same basic needs. They need to know they *belong* to the family, and to know that they will be safe there; at the same time, they need to be getting more independent and *separating* from the family in some ways.

Carol: That makes a lot of sense: a two-year-old is learning to run by himself, feed himself, and use the toilet. Think about it. What's his favourite sentence? 'I can do it myself!'

Tammy: And that's what the teenager is saying too - give me some space to try being more independent! They need that, so they can gradually become independent adults. We have to let them take some risks. Then, when our kids show they can be trusted more, we can give them more freedom and independence.

Carol: Toddlers and teenagers need *clear rules* so they know what is ok for them to do, and what will happen if they do the wrong thing. They become anxious when they don't know what the rules are. But they also need to know that even when they make mistakes, their parents will still love them. Always be ready to forgive them and tell them that you love them.

Tammy: Carol just said that kids need *clear rules* and *constant love*. I think that's true for every age. I need to know what's expected from me, and I need love and forgiveness. Don't you?

Carol: I know I do, and that's where God gives us a great example of how to be a good parent. He tells us clearly how we should behave, but even when we make mistakes, he forgives us and helps us to learn from our mistakes.

Carol: Here on Women of Hope we have been talking about our children and how we can best help them to learn and grow. I have a famous poem that I'd like to read to you. It's by Dr Dorothy Law Nolte. I think this poem is telling us something very important. Here's what it says:

If a child lives with criticism,
he learns to condemn.
If a child lives with hostility,
he learns to fight.
If a child lives with ridicule,
he learns to be shy.
If a child lives with shame,

he learns to feel guilty. But
If a child lives with tolerance,
he learns to be patient.
If a child lives with encouragement,
he learns confidence.
If a child lives with praise,
he learns to appreciate.
If a child lives with fairness,
he learns justice.
If a child lives with security,
he learns to have faith.
If a child lives with approval,
he learns to like himself.
If a child lives with acceptance and friendship,
He learns to find love in the world.

Tammy: What did you think of while Carol read that poem? Did it make you think about what you're giving your children - do you criticise, embarrass them, or frighten them? Or do you encourage and praise them...treat them fairly...accept them as they are? Do you think you might need to change some things? It reminded me to.... (any response Tammy?)

Carol: I wonder too - did you look back and think about what it was like for you when you were growing up? That was my immediate thought. Can you see how *you* were influenced by how things were in your home and your community? You know, you don't have to blame those who said and did harmful things. But you don't have to believe them, either. God wants to give you the love, the fairness and the acceptance that you need now.

Tammy: We are blessed to have so many good friends here on Women of Hope, and right now our friend Katherine is here to tell us another story from her long life as a mother and grandmother. Let's all listen together. Welcome Katherine.

Katherine: Thank you Tammy. One cold winter morning, Jane and her friend Susan were sharing coffee at Jane's kitchen table. Their little girls played with dolls in another room.

“ I just don't know what to say to Elizabeth these days,” Susan said.

“What's the matter? She seems to be such a sweet girl. She and Anna get along fine,” her friend responded.

“Oh, she's sweet enough with her friends, but she's always arguing with her brother. Sometimes they get into terrible fights.”

“Well,” Jane said, pouring coffee into their cups. “Brothers and sisters often argue.”

“But this happens almost every day. Elizabeth gets angry over little things like losing a hair ribbon, and she always blames poor Jonathan.”

Jane sat down beside her friend. “It's so easy to be cross with our children when they do something wrong. We worry about them, and sometimes our worry makes us feel like yelling at them.”

Susah laughed. “How did you know? I always seem to get into fights with them, and that doesn't help at all. I just want to help them grow up right.”

Jane reached out and took Susan's hand. “You know, sometimes the best thing we can do for our children is pray for them. Let's pray right now—for all our children,” she said.

As they were praying, the little girls wandered into the kitchen. They stopped when they heard their mothers talking to God about them.

Susan was saying, “Dear Lord Jesus, please help me to understand Elizabeth and help her get over these times of anger with her brother”.

Later that day, after Jonathan came home from school, Elizabeth wanted him to help her with a picture she was painting. He was busy with his homework and told her to wait for a few minutes.

She was angry, and said, “You never have time for me! I hate ...”

Then she remembered her mother's prayer. Quickly she went to the bedroom, sat in a corner, and prayed, "Dear Jesus, help me to get over this bad thing I feel when Jonathan doesn't do what I want. I'm sorry for making Mama sad," she said. Then she went back to the kitchen to work on her painting.

Her mother was busy preparing dinner. She looked over at Elizabeth: "I thought I heard you yelling at Jonathan a while ago. What happened?"

"Nothing," said Elizabeth, dipping her paintbrush in a bright orange colour for a pumpkin she was painting.

Susan walked over and put a hand on her daughter's shoulder. "What a beautiful picture," she said. "What made you decide not to fight with your brother?"

Elizabeth turned around. "I guess it was hearing you talking to God about me, this morning at Mrs Foster's house. I talked to God too, and he helped me not want to fight any more." She turned back to her picture, and didn't see the tears in her mother's eyes, or hear her whisper a prayer of thankfulness to God.

Carol: Thank you Katherine. That was a great story of how we can so easily influence of children – and of how God can so lovingly help us to make things right! I told you we have a lot of friends on WOH - But today we have a very special friend with us. Her name is Marli Spieker, and she is the amazing woman who first thought of starting Women of Hope.

Marli: God gave me the idea, Carol! I'm sure it was from him.

Carol: I'm sure it was too, Marli, because today there are Women of Hope all over the world, friends and sisters helping each other. Well, Marli, you have something special to share with us. And we are all excited to listen.

Marli: Hello my dear friend.

If you were to ask me, 'what is life?', I would say: 'Life is a gift....too bad it is so short!' The other day my husband and I celebrated our 46th wedding anniversary. 46 years went by just like a dream! We like to remember our years together every once in a while. The joys and the tears. Memories...they are our most precious treasure. The human mind is fascinating, isn't it? It's a gift God has given us. We can think, and remember things that happened years ago. We can work things out and plan ahead: these things make us different from the animals. This is part of what it means when the Bible tells us we are made in God's image. Well, when God created the first man and woman, Adam and his wife Eve, God's word the Bible tells us that He gave them great wisdom.

Can you imagine naming all the plants, all the animals?....They were very intelligent people! And Eve had a special ability; the power to *influence*. I think every woman born after her has also received this precious gift of *influence*. We women are good at persuading! God has chosen us women to be the first ones to mould and shape our children's lives. Just think...most children spend the first five years of their life under the care of a woman and she influences the sort of people they become. Those are the years when the child's character is taking shape. A philosopher called Paschal said so well, 'The hand that rocks the cradle, rules the world.' We women have a tremendous responsibility to leave a positive and good influence on those lives that we touch, especially our children.

So we do have influence: but how will we use it? We can be a good or bad influence. Isn't this a scary thought? I wonder...what kind of influence we are having on the people around us? Let's look into human history now...

Have you heard the first story in the Bible, about how God made the heavens and the earth, and all the plants and animals? And last of all he made the first man Adam, and Eve, his wife. He gave them a beautiful garden to grow their food.

But Satan, the enemy of God and of people, came in the form of a snake. You know...when Satan came to the garden of Eden, he spoke straight to Eve's mind. He questioned whether God was really good. He put the seed of doubt in the woman's mind. I think he knew she could persuade her husband to disobey God and eat the only fruit God had said they must not eat. Eve used the power of

influence very successfully, because Adam also ate the fruit. They disobeyed God willingly and deliberately. So sin came into the world. God said to Satan: 'I will make you and the woman enemies, and your descendents will be enemies always'. (Genesis 3:15)

Since that tragic day, there has been a war raging between women and Satan, the enemy of our souls. For centuries, women have suffered terribly all over the world. Today, most of the refugees of the world are women and children. Women suffer, not only when they have their babies, but as they raise their children; as they try to survive, to keep their homes and families. Some are locked away in their own homes, while others are sold as slaves. In some places baby girls are killed, while baby boys are celebrated... Can you see how Satan attacks us?

Satan still attacks women's minds - and men's! The Bible says, however, that Satan's power over our souls is *broken* because sin has been defeated. When Jesus Christ died instead of us, Jesus defeated Satan! The Bible says that there is a spiritual battle within our souls and minds. God can help us to win.

My dear friend, every time your mind is filled with thoughts of anger... revenge... jealousy... bitterness, hate...or when you cannot take your mind off worries and fear...there is a powerful thing you can do. You can take control by saying aloud: 'I refuse to keep thinking like this.' Next, you can pray. Ask God to help you to be free, in the name of Jesus. Ask him to fill your mind with His presence. He will do it, because He promised this in His Word: 'You will look for Me and you will find me, when you seek for Me with all your heart.' If you have a Bible, read it, listen to it. Remember the things you hear on Women of Hope: fill your mind with God's good words. In the Bible Paul, the apostle, said that 'we are to take every thought under control to make it obey Jesus Christ.' (2 Cor 10:5) Whenever a thought comes to your mind, you have to check it, to see if it would please God, and if it agrees with the Word of God. So, next time you are alone and you get this awful thought about your neighbor, or some person who has done something wrong to you, and it makes you angry or upset, you can quickly turn to God and pray.

And that is what we're going to do right now. Will you pray with me?

'Dear God, thank you for our minds and the wonderful gift that we have, to be able to influence others. Lord, help us to use this gift wisely; to build up others, to encourage others, to love our children and those we are in contact with. I pray in the name of Jesus who defeated the enemy, Satan. Amen.'

Tammy: Marli, thank you for those words. I have to do many things each day, things that take my time and attention. But I believe my most important job is to influence my children. Do I give them a good example? How do I treat them? These will affect how they grow, how they think about themselves. It will influence how they treat other people, and how they think about God. I pray to God to help me be wise in the way I influence my children, my husband, and my friends. I hope you can pray that too, my friend.

Carol: Our time is over for now. We would you love to have you contact us to share something about your life, or ask a question. We do hope you will be with us again. Until then, have a great week filled with God's blessings.

Marli: Goodbye, and God bless you.

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