

Love Languages: quality time

Tammy: How do *you* know if someone loves you?

Fran: My husband often tells me, 'You look beautiful.' I think that's funny, and sweet, because I'm not young, and I have plenty of wrinkles and white hairs.

Tammy: Yes, that's nice, but words are cheap! I *know* my son loves me because he asks how he can help me when he sees I'm tired.

Fran: From a teenage boy, that *is* a sign of love!

Carol: Well, I feel loved when my husband wants to spend time with me, taking a walk side by side in the evening.

Hello! I'm Carol, and this is Women of Hope. Tammy, Fran and I were just talking about the different ways we receive love.

Fran: Hello my friend, I'm Fran.

Tammy: And I'm Tammy. So Fran, what happens if a husband brings his wife flowers on her birthday, when what she really wanted was for him to finally fix the broken fence?

Fran: He would be showing love in *his* way, but you might not be as thrilled as he hoped!

Carol: Or maybe *you* show your love by cooking special meals, but in reality, your child would rather eat something simple and have time with you for cuddles.

Fran: You see, people have different ideas about how love is expressed, and sometimes we don't understand each other's way of sharing love. We call these different ways of showing love our *love languages*. We need all of them, but usually we especially like one or two of them, things that speak straight to our hearts. Sometimes we learn by how people showed love in our family...

Tammy: ...but even children in the same family have different personalities, and they can show love in quite different ways.

Fran: I agree Tammy. The different love languages are all good ways of showing love, just different. It really helps us to connect better if we understand the love language of those we love.

Gary Chapman wrote a best-selling book called 'The Five Love Languages' which explains these different ways of expressing love. We've mentioned some already - gifts... words of appreciation... helpful acts of service... what else?

Tammy: Cuddles, or physical touch generally...

Carol: and my favourite-- time together.

Fran: So let's talk about some of these love languages, and see if we can use them to connect better to people in our lives. Today I want us to focus on *quality time*.

Tammy: What do you think is the difference between ordinary time and *quality time*? I think *quality time* is when we give our full attention to someone. Do you love just being with friends, really listening, maybe sharing a meal, perhaps walking together? Does it make you feel special when someone gives you time? Then maybe your love language is quality time.

Fran: Are you always busy? For busy people, this is perhaps the hardest gift to give. When my grandson was small, he really wanted quality time. We would push his toy train around the floor. Often I was busy and wanted to prepare the meal, so I would just push the train a bit with my foot while I was peeling the vegetables. He would say, 'Nana, sit on your bottom!' That meant, spend time just being with me, and not thinking about dinner. I'm sorry now that I didn't give him more quality time, because children grow up so quickly.

Carol: Quality time often involves good conversation. That includes being a good listener. Who do you think is a good listener?

Tammy: Someone who keeps looking at me while I'm talking!

Carol: Yes, someone who pays close attention to me and doesn't attend to anything else while we're talking. They're not watching TV, or reading, or checking their phone.

Tammy: I think a good listener, listens to understand *feelings* not just to get *information*. They ask, 'What did he say? And what is he feeling right now?' Often you can tell how somebody's feeling by watching their body, not just hearing the words they say. If you see clenched fists, or trembling hands, or tears and eye movements, that give you clues about what they're feeling. Then you can ask a gentle question that invites them to talk about their feelings if they want to.

Fran: Do you know people who interrupt while you're talking? Sometimes you feel they're just waiting for you to take a breath so they can give their opinion. To be a good listener, don't interrupt with your own ideas till your friend has finished. Often we're ready to give advice, and then we get cross if they don't do what we suggest. My husband Bill used to be a bit like that, until one day our daughter Kate spoke up. She was a student at the time, and having trouble with her assignments. She said 'Daddy, I don't need you to solve my problems. I know

what I need to do. But I just need you to listen and understand why I'm stressed right now.'

Carol: And did he listen to *that*?

Fran: He did! He became a much better listener to his children, and to me. She's grown up now, and I notice he telephones her often, and he spends more time listening than talking.

Tammy: If you're married, perhaps one of you finds it hard to share and reveal your true feelings. Try starting a daily sharing time as a couple. During that time each of you could talk about three things that happened to you that day and how you feel about them.

Carol: Maybe... something that was really good... something that was difficult...

Tammy: ...or something you're proud of for the day.

Fran: My boss always gathers us together at the end of the day and asks each person 'What worked well for you today?' That has really helped us to communicate as a team. Maybe you could ask a friend a question like that.

Tammy: Friends and family don't always have a lot to talk about, but it's still important to spend time *doing things* together, making good memories to share.

Fran: Do you do things together just for fun, in your family? Maybe have a picnic, or play games together, or cook together for a special occasion? Doing things together that you enjoy makes great memories.

Tammy: What if you don't enjoy the same things? You can give them some of your time as a *gift*, by joining in with what they want to do. Let's think: has one of

your friends or family been asking you to do something with them? Maybe you've been putting it off because you're busy, or you don't really love doing what they like to do. But could you give them your time as a gift, to show your love for them? How do you think they would feel?

Fran: Loved! I like to eat dinner in the garden on summer nights. My husband would prefer for us to eat indoors, but sometimes he gives me the gift of quality time to spend together among the flowers. I appreciate that so much!

Carol: Can I tell you about how quality time changed a relationship? My son always loved being with people. All he needed was to spend time with friends or even just be in the same room with us and play on the floor. When he was in his teen years, I taught him at home because we moved so often. I was not only his mom, I was now his teacher and the "headmaster" of our little school. This put such a strain on our relationship. Day after day, he would sit at his desk in his room feeling that I was being unfair. As I worked around the house and checked in on him I would pray for him. I asked God to help me to know what to do. One evening, as I talked with my husband, I realised 'He's angry because he's feeling shut out - working all alone!'

The next day, during our first lesson in Advanced Algebra, we read the assignment together. Instead of leaving him to do the problems, I stayed there and said, "you do the first 3 and I will do the last 3 and see who finishes first!" He thought I was teasing, but when I took a pencil and began to work, he quickly started on his assignment. That day, we began a gentle competition. He would do his assignment and come to me with a particularly hard problem and say, "Try this one, Mom!" From then on I allowed him to do his school work wherever I was. He needed to have time with me - to feel we were in this together - and it made a huge difference in the way he worked and even learned. And it took the tension away from our relationship, because I was speaking *his* love language.

Fran: God gave you wisdom, Carol! Our lives today are very busy. It takes effort to find the time to spend with your loved ones. You might have to plan, rather than hope it will just happen. Can you see that quality time together is like an investment; putting time into your relationship now, so it will be strong and lasting. Why not invest in showing your love today to someone in your family or to a friend?

Tammy: Hi! Here on Women of Hope, we've been talking about giving the gift of quality time. Did you get any new ideas? I did! But did you ever think that *God* uses this love language?

You know, our Lord, Jesus Christ, spent lots of time just being with people. He went to parties, you know! He even spent time with people who weren't really respectable. Some of the religious leaders didn't like that; they asked his followers, 'Why does your master eat with tax collectors and sinners?' But Jesus wanted to show God's love, so that these 'sinners' would have a chance to change (Matt 9:10-11). We can't be a good influence on people if we won't spend any time with them!

Carol: In God's word the Bible, we read that Jesus said to his close friends, 'I have chosen you to *be with me*'. His followers were called just to *be with him*, before anything else. It shows me how much Jesus valued this gift of quality time.

Fran: You know, there were times when Jesus was very busy, just like we can be. Often he was surrounded by people wanting him to help them. He healed sick people, and he taught crowds of people about how to live in God's way. I'm sure that he was very tired by the end of the day. But when he was worn out, he needed quality time - with his Father, the true and living God. The Bible tells how Jesus often went off by himself to pray to God (Matt 14: 23). Sometimes he got

up early in the morning, even before it was light, and went to a lonely place to have that special time alone with God (Mark 1:35).

Carol: Do you ever do that? In your busy life, you might have to give up sleep sometimes to spend quality time in prayer to God. I think if Jesus needed it, we must need it even more, don't you?

Fran: I'd like to tell you a favourite story of mine, from God's word the Bible. You might have heard it before, but it's worth hearing again. (Luke 10:38-41)

There was a family who Jesus loved to visit; two sisters named Martha and Mary, and their brother Lazarus. One day Jesus and his followers came to Bethany, the village outside Jerusalem where they lived. Martha welcomed them as a hostess, and started doing lots of work to make them welcome and comfortable. I suppose she made a special meal.

But what about Mary? Mary was just sitting at Jesus' feet, as close as she could get, so she could listen to what he was saying. Martha became distracted and upset about all the work she had to do, and she went to Jesus and said, 'Master, don't you care that my sister has left me to do all the work? Tell her to come and help me!'

Tammy: Let's think about that for a moment. Most of us women will be thinking 'Yes, that's right! Mary should help her sister! What will people say if they don't have a special meal for these visitors? What if the house is untidy?- they'll be embarrassed in front of their guests. Wouldn't they want to put on their best for such an honoured guest? Mary should be in the kitchen, chopping up vegetables for dinner, not sitting down with the menfolk!'

Carol: Yes, I can understand Martha. But I *wonder* ...if Jesus really *wanted* a fancy dinner. He and his followers mostly lived on the roads, eating whatever

people gave them, often sleeping outside. They didn't need special food. Let's hear what Jesus said.

Fran: So Mary was sitting listening to Jesus, and Martha was rushing around, upset and complaining. Jesus spoke gently to her. He knew this dear woman well, and he loved her and her family. 'Martha, Martha', he said. 'You're always worried and upset over so many things. But there is only one thing that's really needed. Mary has chosen the better thing, and that won't be taken away from her.'

That's the end of the story from God's word. Were you surprised by Jesus's response? What do you think he meant about the 'one thing that was really needed'?

Carol: I think it was something about hearing what *he* had to say. The words of Jesus are the most valuable thing we could ever hear, because they tell us about how much God loves us, and how to be put right with God, and how to live as people who belong to the living God.

Fran: Yes, I'm sure that's part of it. But maybe, as well as learning from Jesus, Mary just loved him and wanted to be near him, enjoying his presence. She wasn't the centre of attention, he was, and she was happy to be there. Mary certainly had quality time as her love language, and Jesus really appreciated that. But... sometimes I feel sorry for Martha, all the same. I think she had a different love language - acts of service...

Tammy: ...and I'm sure Jesus valued that too. He sounded sorry for her, not cross at her.

Fran: I guess I'm more like Martha than Mary. I often do things for people, and for God. And I'm afraid sometimes I do them to impress others, not just to please

God. But I would really like to be more like Mary, spending time just being with my master Jesus and enjoying his love for me.

Tammy: How do you think we could do that, Fran? Because I think we all need to have a heart like Mary's.

Fran: I think I need to put aside time to *talk* to him in prayer, telling him what's really on my heart. It's good for me to put those thoughts and feelings into words, and to know he has heard and understood.

And I need to *listen* to his words as I read or hear the Bible, and to think slowly about what I hear from God's word. I need to listen for his voice through the beautiful world he made, and through music, and art, and through the love I receive from people around me. God speaks in so many ways, but I need to make time to enjoy them, and to notice: hey, God's telling me he loves me!

Tammy: You know, singing is one way I enjoy quality time with God. There are so many beautiful songs that help me to express my love for him.

Carol: Yes, and there are some songs I listen to, and they help me to feel his love for me, like the one that you sang for us the other day, Tammy. Why don't you sing that for us now?

Tammy: Sings "I Love You, Lord."

Fran: There's a beautiful song in the Bible, in the book of Psalms. The writer thinks about God being in his temple, and so that's where he wants to be. Let me read part of it before we go.

'How I love your temple, Lord Almighty!

How I want to be there!

I long to be in the Lord's presence!
With my whole heart I sing for joy to the living God.
Even the sparrows have built a nest,
and the swallows make a home for their babies
near the place where we worship,
Lord Almighty, my king and my God' (Psalm 84:1-3)

Carol: Can you imagine the little sparrows, getting as close to God as they can! You know, we can choose to spend quality time with God too. If we do, we'll hear him say 'I love you.'

Tammy: We love spending time with you too, but we need to go now. We would be so happy 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 want to hear one again visit our website TWRWomenofHope.org or visit our Facebook page.

Fran: Goodbye now, and I hope that you will have many wonderful times with those you love,

Carol: ... and with God who loves *you*. Goodbye! And have a great week filled with God's blessings.

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Acknowledgements to 'The five love languages' by Gary Chapman (Northfield Publishing, Chicago, 1995)