

Caring for your Neighbor / The Good Samaritan

Carol: Hi Tammy! Oh, it's been such a rush. I'm glad I made it here on time.

Tammy: Hi Carol. Looks like you're out of breath. What happened?

Carol: My neighbor Jessie dropped by earlier. She had an appointment this morning. So... she wanted me to keep an eye on her two daughters for a little while. She got back just after I planned to leave!

Tammy: Do you have a problem taking care of them?

Carol: Oh no! They're adorable little girls. I enjoy having them over at my house so much. I look forward to those times.

Tammy: I suppose it brings back memories of when your children were little. How do you keep them occupied?

Carol: I tell them stories or they play with the dog. Sometimes they play around in the garden. And they love my little cakes.

Tammy: You're a good neighbor.

Carol: I brought *you* some little cakes by the way.

Tammy: They look good; can I try one now?

Carol: Sure. I see you have hot water so we can have a cup of tea as well.

Tammy: Welcome to *Women of Hope*, I'm Tammy. We're talking today about how we relate to our neighbors. What are *your* neighbors like? Are they warm and friendly? Or are they strangers to you? It's nice that you're on such good terms with your neighbors Carol.

Carol: Oh yes.

Tammy: Have Jessie and her family been your neighbors for long?

Carol: A little over two years now. Jessie is wonderful. We got on really well right from the beginning. We help each other out whenever we can. In fact, having lived across the road from them for this long, we are like an extended family now.

Tammy: That must be nice.

Carol: It is. We both help each other out – like this morning. I like to be a good neighbor. You know Tammy, as my family and I have traveled so much and lived in other countries, neighbors have been

an important part of our lives. In each of those places, we looked out for a good work place environment, a good school for children and a comfortable house. But it was often the neighbors who helped us settle in.

Tammy: Yes. I know what you mean. When you're in a new place it feels wonderful to have a neighbor call in and ask how you're doing. And when they offer information about the nearest market... good places to buy your clothes... or where the nearest doctor is in the new area, it's such a big help isn't it?

Carol: Oh yes. When a new neighbor moves into my street I usually try to greet them with a cake that I've baked.

Tammy: Like these little cakes?

Carol: Yes, and there's no better way to welcome them. It breaks the ice. It begins a friendship that could be really good for both of us. And I ask if there's anything they need. When people have to move they sometimes feel a bit insecure, not too sure about how they're going to settle in. A friendly welcome would make them feel so much better...knowing there's someone they can call on...for whatever reason.

Tammy: Oh, I agree... No-one wants to be on *bad* terms with their neighbor do they? It can make your life frustrating, day after day. On the other hand, if we take the time to be friendly and helpful, there'll be many benefits all round. The community will be friendlier... the neighborhood will be safer... and the whole area will be a nicer and more comfortable place to live.

Carol: ...Well, we've already talked about introducing ourselves... with or without a cake! And I'm sure if you have a new neighbor they would welcome this kind of information...like where to find the nearest bus stop and which day the garbage is collected.

Tammy: Carol, you said that it was often the neighbors that helped you settle in...did they give you this kind of information?

Carol: Yes...and it sure was helpful. It also made me feel that someone in this new place cared about our family. And like we said before, it started a new friendship. I know how it made *me* feel – so now I always try to do the same for new neighbors.

Carol: You're listening to *Women of Hope* and today we're talking about a topic that's close to all of us...neighbors!

Tammy: Once you get to know your neighbors, you'll probably find out what they do for a living and what their schedules are like. If they work nights, you would know that quiet *mornings* are important for them. If they have little children, then quiet *evenings* would be important for them. And they get to know *your* routine too. This way both families can be considerate to each other and try not to disturb each other.

Carol: Oh, that makes me think of my son. When he was in his teens we got him an electric guitar which of course made a lot of noise. I had to keep reminding him to play more quietly because I didn't want the neighbors to be disturbed.

Tammy: That must have been hard to do. And what about pets? If you have a dog, it's important to keep it from running into the neighbor's garden or barking all night.

Carol: Yes. And if you're having a party at home, it's a good idea to let your neighbors know, so they're prepared for any extra noise or music. Everyone has the right to enjoy life in their own way as long as they don't cause problems for people living nearby.

And good neighbors usually look for opportunities to work together and to socialize. Say for example, you're planning to raise money, maybe for your local school, there's no better team member than a neighbor. The best part of being on friendly terms with neighbors is that when you have them over for tea, or offer to babysit their kids or pets while they're away, they'll do the same for you.

Tammy: Yes, the relationship is helpful to you both and it's a good idea to keep in touch with your neighbor regularly isn't it?

Carol: Yes, it certainly is. But of course you don't want to 'live in each other's pockets' as some people say. It's not good to be *always* at your neighbor's house. But if you hear of any threat to your neighborhood, like a fire, let them know in case they haven't heard about it already...and they can be prepared.

Also be aware of your surroundings as well as theirs. It may be wise to keep your eye on anyone you don't know who might be acting suspiciously around your neighbor's property.

Tammy: I always ask my neighbors to keep an eye on my home if I am going away. And they do the same for me.

Carol: That's a great idea, and if you have an elderly neighbor, they may need you to look after them and help them sometimes.

Tammy: And I wonder if I can mention this: It's very important...if you have people living near you who might be experiencing domestic violence or abuse, you may need to help. Talk to the person who you think this is happening to and ask if they want you to report it to the authorities so that they can come and help with the situation. If we don't report it, the person being abused may not be helped?

Carol: That's right. Really good neighbors watch out for each other. They ask each other for advice, and offer to help, especially on matters that affect the larger neighborhood. They respect each other's boundaries but are quick to help in a crisis. Great neighbors make for great neighborhoods and it is *well* worth the effort.

Tammy: It sure is.

It's been good to talk about how we can be good neighbors hasn't it? Maybe it will help us to think of *new* ways to get to know our neighbors better.

Carol: Think about this for a moment. Many of us live in places that are different from those we were raised in, don't we? Being away from friends and family can be quite hard, and even scary sometimes. So, good neighbors may help to take the place of a person's extended family. And you know something? When we are caring, they will be caring in return... and we might even end up with a whole street of caring families!

Tammy: Hey...wouldn't that be wonderful?

Now according to the Bible, the word of God, a *neighbor* is not just someone who lives near you.

Jesus, the son of God, often spoke to people in parables. A parable is a story about something we already know about to help us to understand a new truth. This day, Jesus had something to say about neighbors. Let's listen to what happened from God's word (Luke 10: 25-37).

'One day an expert in religious law stood up to test Jesus by asking him this question: "Teacher, what should I do so I can go to Heaven and live forever?"

Jesus replied, "What is written in the Bible? What do you think?" The man answered, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your strength, and love your neighbor as yourself."

"That's right!" Jesus said. "Do this and you will live forever in Heaven." But the man wanted to know more...hoping that Jesus would tell him he was doing the right thing. So he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

Jesus replied with this parable: There once was a Jewish man walking along a road. He was traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho, a full day or two of walking.

Suddenly a group of bandits attacked him. They took all his belongings and tore off most of his clothes. Then they beat him up very badly, and left him lying, bleeding on the side of the road.

By chance a priest was walking down the same path and noticed the man lying on the side of the road. Do you know what he did? He crossed the road and walked on the other side and acted like he didn't see the man.

Some time later another man called a Levite, a temple assistant, was walking down the road. And you know what he did? He walked a little closer and looked at the man, but then kept walking without helping him at all.'

Let's stop here and think about this. You might be thinking that maybe the man lying by the side of the road looked like he was resting, that's why the priest and the Levite didn't stop to help. But no, according to the story it was easy to tell he was badly hurt. The man was bleeding, had most of his clothes ripped off him, and he was bruised and hardly breathing. You would think that these two men, who knew about right living, would be concerned about a person who'd been so badly hurt.

But Jesus went on to tell us about *another* man who came walking by. He was a Samaritan...a man of mixed race from the northern province. Now in those days the Samaritans were looked on as people who were not very good. In fact the word Jesus used was something like, *despised*...hated by the Jews. And of course the man who was dying on the road was a Jew. So what do you think the Samaritan did? You'd think he would walk by and maybe even laugh at the man.

Let's find out from the story Jesus told: 'As soon as the Samaritan saw the man he went over to him and felt deep pity and compassion for him. He knelt beside the man, put bandages on his sores and poured oil and wine (which were quite expensive) on the sores to prevent them from getting worse. Then he lifted the man onto his own donkey and took him to an inn, like a hotel, where he stayed to take care of him.

The next day the Samaritan took out enough money to pay for the man to be taken care of at the inn until he was well enough to leave. He said, "If his bill runs higher than this, I'll pay the difference the next time I'm here."

After Jesus finished the parable he asked, "Which of the three men do you think was a neighbor to the man who was left beaten on the side of the road?"

The man who asked him the question at the beginning replied, "The one who had compassion and helped him." Jesus told him, "Go and do the same."

That's the end of the story from God's word, the Bible.

Carol: Jesus made it very clear in the story who our neighbor is didn't he? It is *everybody* in need – no matter what their social standing is...or their color, or race. Jesus himself was a Jew. He was talking to fellow Jews and showing them their bigotry...but we all have our prejudices against certain groups.

Tammy: Yes that's right. And they are just as much in need of compassion as anyone else. There are so many people in need - those we come across everyday, around our homes, on the streets or at our workplaces. I wonder if we see them – or do we look the other way?

Carol: Each of their needs is different. And God wants us to show them compassion...like the Samaritan did...even though he did not know the man.

Tammy: I ask myself, what would I have done in that same situation? Maybe I wouldn't like to get involved. Maybe I would have ignored him too.

Carol: Me too...especially if I didn't know the person. I may have run to find someone else to help – maybe I wouldn't want to get my hands, or clothes dirty. It's not always easy to reach out to those in need. It means that you have to go out of your way.

Tammy: Yes it does.

Carol: Why do you think the Samaritan helped the man?

Tammy: When I have read this story I have thought he must have been a person who really cared about other people. He showed real compassion for the dying man, even though he didn't know him. And he wasn't going to get anything out of it for himself was he? In fact he was very happy to spend his own money to help him. I wonder if the man who was hurt, a Jew, would have done the same for the Samaritan if it had been him who was hurt.

Carol: I wonder? And it wouldn't have been easy, or convenient, for him to stop and help. He was travelling, remember? He would have been delayed going to Jericho or wherever he was going. But still, the Samaritan was kind and patient. He showed compassion and he spent his energy, time and money.

Tammy: He did – and we don't all have money that we can use to help others. But there are many simple ways that we can help others. Giving food to a hungry person is one way...there may be hungry people on the streets begging for food near where you live.

Carol: Yes. And we may be able to help an elderly person cross the road...or spend time with the lonely...we can simply listen to them. We can visit sick people or visit those in a prison. There are so many ways that we can help if we just look around us...we will see the need.

Tammy: And if we have little extras at home, we can give things like food... clothing... toys and so on. We may have to go out of our way...a little. But it can help make a difference in someone's life if we show compassion.

Carol: Yes. When Jesus came down to earth all those years ago, he showed a lot of compassion to those in need. He healed the lame, the blind and the sick. And he never seemed to be in a hurry...he spent time with people.

Tammy: Many times in God's word, the Bible, we read that 'The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love.' (Psalm 145:8)

And we also find these words: 'Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.'

Would you like to pray with me now? Let's ask God to help us show compassion to those around us, and to help us to be good neighbors.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the compassion you have always shown to us. Help us to be compassionate like you. Help us to love and care for others. Help us to look around and see other people's distress. Help us to be aware of their needs...and want to help them. Give us strength and courage to act when the need arises. May we cheerfully give what we have to give. Amen.

Carol: You're with *Women of Hope* and we've enjoyed talking with you today about taking care of our neighbors.

Tammy: Maybe we can think this week of a person near us who needs compassion? What stops us from being compassionate? Can we find ways to help? I do hope so!

Carol: If you have anything you would like to share with us, perhaps something that's happened in your life, do write to us at TWRWomenofHope@TWR.org. Our website address is TWRWomenofHope.org. Or you can visit our Facebook page.

Tammy: Yes, please do, we would love to hear from you. Meanwhile, until we meet together again, you take care.

Carol: Yes, and remember...our neighbor is anyone around us who is in need. God bless you as you reach out to your neighbor. Goodbye.

Tammy: Bye.

© Copyright Trans World Radio 2009