

Keeping a Marriage Fresh / Love Languages

Tammy: I've heard it said that men have *one* kind of nature... women have *another* kind of nature... and marriage has a nature of its *own*! Some people would say that after a while it's the *nature* of marriage to grow stale, I wonder what they mean?

Carol: I guess they mean that marriages usually start well, with the couple being very happy in each other's company. But after a while they get very used to each other and maybe the pleasure they had together is gone.

Tammy: We have a guest with us today who experienced this. She found herself in a marriage that had lost its sparkle...she felt that she was living with a stranger. I wonder if you've ever felt like that?

Carol: I think many people come to that place in their marriage don't you Tammy?

Tammy: Yes, I'm sure they do...but she says she's now more in love with her husband than *ever*... and he's more in love with *her* than ever!

Carol: Wow...that sounds great...we'd better find out her secret...

Welcome to *Women of Hope*, I'm Carol. Sony, what was it like to find yourself in a relationship you thought was almost over?

Sony: Well, I didn't ever decide that it was over. I understand that God's plan for marriage is that it's for life. He said this right at the beginning, when he made man and woman and put them together.

If you've ever glued two pieces of paper together and let them dry...then tried to take them apart...you'll know that *both* of them get damaged. Divorce is like that because two people who enter a marriage become one unit...one person. And when they are pulled apart, just like the paper, they both get damaged.

I take my marriage vows very seriously, but I did think I had come to the end of my ability to change things. I couldn't do anything about it. I had to accept the fact that I was going to live with a stranger for the rest of my life.

Carol: Tell us more about that Sony.

Sony: Well, my husband would come home from work and *be* there, but he was always doing something *away* from me or the children...you know, like **watching television or working on the computer*. He would sit at the table and eat with us but there was no real conversation. I remember thinking, 'Who is this person? Is this the same man I married? We never do anything *together* any more. Sure, he brings home the money...and that's good. I feed him and clean his house and wash his clothing...and we sleep together occasionally...and that's it. The sparkle we used to have is gone!'

Carol: Why do you think it got that way?

Sondy: “We were both busy with different things. I was busy raising the children and looking after their needs and he was busy with his work and the pressure of having to provide for us.”

Carol: So tell us...how did that change for you?

Sondy: Well...when we were first married, I was given some advice...never let your husband see you without looking gorgeous...never let him see you do housework...put your husband first...always meet his needs in every way.

Well, I have to tell you that that doesn't make a happy marriage... It only makes a happy husband...for a short time...and a disappointed one when it stops! It doesn't allow for real life situations... I tried it and my husband was happy as long as I could keep it up.

Carol: Imagine never letting your husband see your hair messy, or see you do the housework. What *did* work for you then?

Sondy: You know what I did? I just decided to find *one* thing to love about him...one thing that I *really* liked.

Carol: And what was that?

Sondy: He has very nice neck muscles...

Carol: and *that* saved your marriage?

Sondy: No, but that was the *beginning* of turning it around.

Carol: What do you mean?

Sondy: I would compliment him on his lovely neck muscles as I stroked the back of his neck. Then I thought, ‘This is *one* thing...I'm sure I could find *others*...so I started looking. And sure enough, there was *plenty* to love.

Carol: Besides his neck muscles?

Sondy: Sure, like his kiss! And he was very thoughtful sometimes...and I liked the tender way he loved birds. And his back was like my Dad's...covered in freckles.

Carol: So you would compliment him on all these things?

Sondy: Yes...compliment him...and focus on the things I loved whenever I started thinking negatively. But that wasn't the end of it...just the beginning.

Carol: So where did you go from there?

Sondy: I came to realise that I had put him on a pedestal...I thought of him as perfect, and was a little afraid of him...but we had an incident that made him fall off the pedestal.

Carol: And that was good?

Sondy: For me...yes! I was going through a particularly hard time emotionally and I told him so. I asked him to please be supportive of me. But instead of support he answered very negatively, which made me see how human and imperfect he was (just like all of us!). He'd just done the exact opposite of what I had told him I needed.

So I sat down and wrote him a letter. I said that we may have been married 10 years... but in that time he hadn't taken the trouble to get to know me at all. I said that if he really wanted to know who he was married to maybe he should start listening to me properly...and get to know me...and understand who I was.

Carol: Wow...how did he take that?

Sondy: He read the letter and actually came and apologised – and that began a *long* conversation. Many years later the conversation is still going on...we are still talking to each other. And you see, I also realised that I had done the very same thing. I had not taken the trouble to get to know him properly either.

Carol: Yes, these things usually work both ways don't they! Do you still have moments when you feel he isn't listening?

Sondy: Of course! We both do it... There are moments when I'm thinking of other things and not really listening... And there are times I just shut off and don't tell him what's going on...and that's not always helpful is it?

Carol: No...it takes two to communicate. So how is it for you both now?

Sondy: We're growing closer to each other each day!

Carol: On *Women of Hope* today we have Sondy, who's telling us how she worked on improving her marriage relationship. Sondy, as well as finding things about your husband that you loved...and telling him so...what else helped you?

Sondy: Well Carol, I read a book that talked about 5 love languages. When people speak different languages they can't really understand each other can they? It's the same when people speak different *love* languages...they can't really understand each other.

Carol: What *are* these love languages? Tell us more.

Sondy: Love languages are the way we express our love for each other. We might do it with: *gifts* – giving and receiving of gifts... *quality time* – good times spent with each other... *affirmation* – that's

telling each other what a good job you're each doing and saying nice things about each other... *physical touch*... and *service* – doing things to help each other.

Carol: Let me see if I can remember those...giving *gifts*...*quality time* spent with each other...*affirmation*...saying nice things...uh – what's next? ...That's right, *physical touch*...and *service* – *doing things to help each other*. Did I remember them all?

Sondy: Yes – you didn't miss any...

Carol: So how do these love languages affect your relationship?

Sondy: If, for example, *my* love language is *affirmation* and my husband never says anything nice to me or about me, I don't feel loved. Instead he might rub my back and give me little presents because *physical touch* and *gift giving* are *his* love languages. He *thinks* he's expressing his love...and he *is*, in *his* love language...but *I* may still feel unloved.

Carol: I see...so if *my* love language is *service* and my husband's love language is *quality time*, I may cook and clean and make my husband's favourite cake and bring him cups of tea, but *he* doesn't feel loved. He wants me to spend time with him...just sitting, talking...doing things together. If I'm always too busy working and cooking, he thinks that I love housework but I don't love *him*.

Sondy: That's right.

Carol: So how do you find out the other person's love language?

Sondy: The way I did it was to do things in the 5 different ways and look for the things that really made him happy. I've told him about *my* love language too...and he *does* try to say nice things to me, but he's a man of few words.

And now that I understand *his* love language I know that when he gives me gifts or hugs he's telling me he loves me.

Carol: Do you only use *his* love language and not the others?

Sondy: No...I can't *help* telling him nice things, because *affirmation* is MY love language.

And it's good to practice the others too, for *other* people in your life, like your parents or your children or friends. I think the important thing is to go out of your way to make sure they get the message that they are loved.

Carol: It's very interesting isn't it? ...I wonder if *you* know just by listening what *your* love language is? Remember what they are? *Gifts*... *affirmation* - saying nice things... *quality time* spent with each other...*touch*... and *service* - doing things for the other person.

Sondy: And in a marriage – or in any relationship – there are *three* things that we should *never* do: *Never* criticise your partner in front of someone else – always deal with those issues privately. *Never*

share details of your intimate moments with a friend – that is private stuff for the couple only! And *never* make *special* friends with a person of the opposite gender...that can be the start of trouble.

Carol: Thank you *very* much for sharing your *secret* with us Sony. Before we go is there anything you'd like to add?

Sondy: Yes, two little things...no three...

The first is... find things that you can *do* together so that you regularly spend quality time with each other.

The second is that if you do *everything* together, you actually need a little time with other people so you can talk to each other about *different* things.

And the third is...men and women are different from one another - as we all know - and yet they complement each other in so many ways.

God's word tells us this: 'At the beginning, the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let no-one separate." (Matthew 9:4-6)

So...if you *do* have a happy marriage, it's one of the most fulfilling things there is. It's worth working at!

Carol: Thank you Sony. And I agree!

Sondy: You're very welcome.

Carol: Did you notice that Sony didn't even *think* about ending her marriage? ...Because she understood that *God* created man and woman and put them together in marriage. His best plan is for marriage to last for your *whole* life.

We should try to be like God; he never stops loving us, and being faithful to us...even when we are not being very loving or faithful to him.

Tammy: Sony's husband had to learn to use *her* love language. And *she* had to learn *his*. But did you know that God speaks *your* love language fluently? We can see this clearly in the life of Jesus. In the Bible we see him speaking *words of affirmation*...he said encouraging things to many people. He gave *gifts*...such as food. He often used *touch*...gently touching children and outcasts – like people with leprosy. He *served* people by washing their feet. And he spent *special time* with people who were not usually welcomed.

Did you know that the whole Bible is a love letter from God to you? I love to read words like, 'I have loved you with an everlasting love...with loving-kindness I have drawn you to me.' (Jer 31:3).

Another favorite is, 'For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you.'

I want to tell you a very *old* story from God's holy book, the Bible, where we see Jesus using words of *affirmation* (John 15:9-11, 13-16).

Jesus was very aware of how much his Father, God, loved him. He always called God his Father. This wasn't how the people of his time thought about God. And Jesus was always obedient to God's commands. Here is the story:

'The night before he was killed, Jesus was having a special ceremonial meal with his friends. Now they looked up to him as more than a teacher; they believed he was the promised Holy One of God. Yet he said, "Just like the Father has loved me, so I have loved you... Live in my love. Follow my ways, just as I live in my Father's love and follow his ways... I have said this because I want your lives to be full of my joy." He added, "I don't think of you as servants; a servant doesn't know what his master is doing. No, you are my friends'." And then he said something amazing: "No-one has greater love than the one who lays down his life for his friends." For that was what he was going to do the very next day.'

And that is the end of this part of the story from John Chapter 15, in God's word.

Let's see what we can remember... What were Jesus and his followers doing? Can you remember? ...That's right, they were having a special meal together. And do you remember what Jesus told them?

I'm sure you remember Carol.

Carol: Yes...he told them that he loved *them* as much as God his father loved *him*. He said they were his *friends*.

Tammy: And he said he would show his love in a special way.

Carol: Yes...he said he was going to *die* for them. You can't show love more clearly than *that*, can you?

Tammy: No you can't! And I wonder how his followers felt when he called them his loved friends?

Carol: I think they would have felt very humble... and special... *I* would have...and my heart would be full of love for him.

Tammy: My friend, when you think of God, do you think of yourself as God's *friend*... or his *servant*... or *even* his *enemy*... or as just a stranger?

Do you know that God *knows* you and loves you personally? Let's hear those words again, 'I have loved *you* with an everlasting love, with loving-kindness I have drawn you to *me*.' (Jer 31:3)

Carol: You're listening to *Women of Hope* and our time together today is coming to an end.

Tammy: Oh...is it that time already?

Carol: It is...but before we go I'd like to share a letter with you from a listener to our *Women of Hope* program. This lady is from Cambodia and she told us how Jesus has changed her life. This is what she said:

'I am the one who was always sick, always weak, and couldn't do anything. However I needed to earn money to support my family. After I accepted Jesus Christ into my life I knew that a blessing had arrived for me. He treats me so well. ...He healed me! So I can say God is so good in my life.'

Tammy: How wonderful. Jesus showed this lady his love and she accepted it. She understood that Jesus died so that she could have *true life*. Remember what Carol said? ...He died for us...he couldn't show more love than that could he?

Carol: And she goes on to say: 'My faith is not strong, but the *Women of Hope* program is building up my faith in God more and more every day. However, my neighbors give me difficulties in my life. They call me bad names. Without God I might want to get back at them, but God is righteous...he changed my life to be humble.'

Tammy: That's what God *does* when we accept his love in our lives isn't it? He helps us to become more like him. And he can help us to show love to *other* people in whatever way is best for them.

Carol: Friend, would you like to accept Jesus' special love for you today? He's waiting for you to come to him and ask him to forgive you for the things you've done wrong...and to ask him to come into your life. He will give you a new life...just like our listener...so that you can show *his* love to others.

You can pray along with me if you would like to...

Dear Jesus, thank you for showing your special love for me when you died in my place. I'm sorry for the things I have done wrong...things that have hurt others. Please forgive me and come into my life today. Please make my life new, and help me to show your love to others.

I pray this in your strong name...Jesus. Amen

Tammy: If you would like to write to us and tell us *your* story we would love to hear it. Or if you would like us to pray for you, you can contact us at TWRWomenofHope@twr.org. If you want to hear a program again, visit our website at TWRWomenofHope.org. Or visit our Facebook page! Until we get together again soon...goodbye