

# Listening to our Children / A Mother of Purpose

***Girl:*** Mummy, guess what happened at school today...

***Mother:*** I don't know... Oh hi Susi, how did you get on yesterday at the doctor?

***Girl:*** Mummy, mummy, a boy pushed me off the swing and...

***Mother:*** Never mind dear... so what did the doctor say Susi?

***Girl:*** ...I had to go to the school nurse...

***Mother:*** Don't interrupt me, I'm talking to Susi...

**Tammy:** Welcome to *Women of Hope!* That conversation broke my heart.

**Carol:** Oh, Tammy, I felt the same way. Hi, I'm Carol. If you're a mother, or you take care of young children, stay with us as we talk today about listening to your children.

**Tammy:** Do you think this mother was listening to her daughter?... Do you think her daughter felt that her mother was listening?...

**Carol:** Let's start again and see if the mother is listening this time...

***Girl:*** Mummy, guess what happened at school today...

***Mother:*** I can't guess – what happened?

***Girl:*** Well, I was playing on the swing and a boy came up and pushed the swing and I fell off.

***Mother:*** Did you hurt yourself?

***Girl:*** Yes – I hurt my knee so I went to the teacher and told her. She sent me to the first aid room and the nurse put a bandaid on my knee.

***Mother:*** Does it feel better now?

***Girl:*** Yes and I went back to my classroom and the teacher asked if I was ok.

***Mother:*** That's good.

**Tammy:** Oh – does that sound better? Now do you think the daughter feels that what she has to say is important?

**Carol:** Think for a moment how different that little girl feels now? She would know that her mother cared about what happened to her.

**Tammy:** You know, if you're a mother, I want to tell you something...listening to your child – really listening, is one of the most important things you will ever do for him or her.

As you listened to those two conversations how did they make you feel?

Let's think for a moment how the little girl would feel in the first conversation. Would she feel that her mother cared about what happened to her? Would she feel important?

**Carol:** It's very easy to think that what our children want to tell you is not very important – and to pass it off for a conversation that we might think is much more important – like the mother did when she wanted to ask her friend Susi about her visit to the doctor.

I remember what it was like when my children were small. It was so easy to “tune out” to their conversation and to be thinking about other things I needed to get done. My daughter talked a lot when she was little – she wanted to tell me everything. She would chatter away and it was so easy to stop listening.

**Tammy:** Now let's think about the second conversation. How do you think the daughter felt this time?

**Carol:** I think she felt loved and cared for. The mother was interested and asked her daughter questions. First she asked: ‘What happened?’ And she listened to the answer, didn't she because next she asked: ‘Did it hurt?’ She gave her daughter a chance to say how she felt. And finally she asked her daughter: ‘Does it feel better now?’

**Tammy:** Today we're talking about one of the most important things you can do for your children – or the children you take care of – listen to them.

Do you remember how it felt last time you were telling a friend about something that happened to you and they turned away and started to talk to someone else? I think it happens to all of us at times.

**Carol:** But what a difference when your friend listened and asked you about what happened. You felt that they really cared didn't you! Well it's the same with our children!

As parents we often wonder how we can get our children to listen to us...especially as they get older. But It may surprise you to know that one of the best ways is to listen to *them*. Listening can be our greatest gift to our children. It not only makes them feel loved and important – but it teaches them how to behave as they grow up.

**Tammy:** But, being a good listener is not as simple as it sounds, is it? Often a small child's conversation is dull or tiring. As we listen, we should let them know that we understand their feelings. We might say something like, "It sounds like you were just a bit embarrassed by that." This will let them know that you care and help them to express how they really felt.

**Carol:** There are words for this kind of listening – it's called 'active listening'. The opposite is 'passive listening.' That's when we just listen and say nothing or don't respond at all. We may *hear* what they say, but we don't show them that we're interested.

Tammy and I have been talking about this together and we'd like to share some ideas to improve your listening skills with children of different ages:

When your child is a baby, you can repeat his first sounds...and smile. This will encourage him to try again – and we can even have a conversation using sounds and facial expressions.

**Tammy:** If your child is two or three years old, you can ask him questions. Phrases such as, "Tell me about that ..." and "What do you think?" will make a child feel needed and important. But, be sure you patiently answer *his* questions as well.

**Carol:** With four to six year old children, parents need to learn to recognize the child's feelings behind the words he says. Look at his face...and nod. It will encourage him to keep talking. Also, set up a time to talk when there won't be a lot of other distractions. Taking a walk together or taking time at bedtime to talk together will make him feel that what he has to say is important.

**Tammy:** As our children get older, they don't always want to talk with us about what they're doing or how they feel. You might try asking your child's advice on a subject he's interested in. Or at times you might write a little note letting them know that you care about how they feel.

If you listen to your children without judging or criticizing, they will be much more likely to want to talk to you. They learn they are worth your time and interest. And when you have important advice or suggestions for them, they are much more likely to listen to you too.

**Carol:** It's good to be with you on *Women of Hope*.

**Tammy:** So what about times of conflict with our children? It's not always easy to listen is it? Sometimes we just want to tell our children what we think or how we feel and we really don't want to listen to what *they* think or how *they* feel.

**Carol:** That reminds me of an incident in my own family. I was in secondary school and my parents had given me a time to be home. They did not want me out at night for my safety. I drove to the event, had a good time with my friends, but on the way home I ran out of gas. It was my father's car. I was not near a phone and we had no cell phones then. All I could do was wait for help. Once I got gas, I headed home. My father was so angry I was late, he met me at the door and would not allow me to speak. I was punished immediately and sent directly to my room. The next day, when my mom asked me if I understood why I was punished, I said, "does it really matter?" She was surprised I would talk to her that way, but instead of being angry she asked questions. When she found out what had happened – she went and talked to my father. My mother listened, my father didn't. It made a big difference.

**Tammy:** Being a mother is not always easy is it? I believe that many women struggle with some part of being a mother. Encouraging our children and helping them to feel good about themselves is really important. But how do we do that?

We've invited Doreen to share a story of her own and some thoughts with us about being a *mother of purpose*.

**Doreen:** Thank you for inviting me. Years ago, when I was traveling in a taxi in the Philippines with my 5 year old son, I noticed that the driver was going very slowly and carefully in the midst of the busy streets. It did not seem to disturb him that the traffic was disorganized. Other vehicles overtook him and blared their horns impatiently at him. But he just drove steadily on. I was curious to see that his behavior was different from them and I asked him, "Why don't you drive like the other drivers?" He replied, "Maybe when your son grows up, God make him President of your country. So I must take care - no accident."

Isn't that a beautiful thought?

**Tammy:** Yes, that is beautiful. Not only that your son may be president one day, but that this man, who did not even know your son, was so careful to look after him. He wanted to protect your son.

**Doreen:** This taxi driver had a vision. How about you, Mom?

Do you give your son a vision for his life?

Do you give your daughter a sense of purpose in her life?

Do you give your children a picture of what they can grow up to be, so they will know their worth and their value in life?

God says in his word, 'I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.' (Jeremiah 29:11)

Every child is a gift from God to you. Even if you did not plan to have a baby, but you found that you were pregnant, that child was *not an accident*. Even if your child has a physical disability, a mental handicap, a learning disorder or any kind of disadvantage, God allowed it to happen. It was not because God was angry with you and wanted to punish you. He allowed it to happen because God is a God of love. He wants to turn your burden into a blessing.

**Carol:** God also says in his word, 'I will not forget you. See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands.' (Isaiah 49:16) and in another part he says, 'Before I formed you in your mother's womb, I knew you...' (Jeremiah 1:5) What a wonderful thought, isn't it, that God knows everything; that he is in charge of everything, and he has plans for each one of us.

**Doreen:** That's right and he would like you, Mum, to be a special part of his plan for each one of his children.

God has called you as a mother to teach your children...to train them...to discipline them...to love them...to encourage them and to enjoy them. When you do that, your children will know how much they are worth...how strong they can be...and how they might discover the purpose and plans God has for them.

But sometimes, it's sad when we, mothers, try to pass on our own ambition, and our own plans to our children. And then we wonder why, when our children grow up to be materialistic, selfish, self-centered or impatient. We wonder why they don't show love, care and compassion for others.

**Tammy:** Maybe we told them that they had to study hard and do well in school so that they could be a doctor, a lawyer, or a banker and earn a lot of money. Then they could buy a big house and a big car before they're 30 years old.

**Doreen:** Maybe we told our children that when they were old enough, they would have to take care of their parents who had sacrificed so much for them, saved money for them, looked after them for so long!

We mothers have a great influence on our children. Are we being good mothers? Or have we lost our sense of purpose as a mother?

We know it takes much love and sacrifice, time and energy. But just how many times do we feel frustrated, hopeless and helpless, discouraged and disappointed with ourselves because we feel we are not good mothers?

Maybe you feel there have been times when you've messed up your child's life. You may have lost your temper or hurt your children with your words or actions. You may have criticized them, ignored them, or demanded perfection from them. You may have even shown favoritism to one child, making the other feel rejected and left out, not valuable or special. You may have made your children think that they're a bother and not a blessing to you.

I want you to know, Mom, that when God made you a mother, he called you to be a *faithful* mother and not a *perfect* one. When you think of your weaknesses and the many times you have failed to be a good mother, I would like you to picture God holding a comb in his hand. Just like your hair that often has knots and tangles in the morning, God is combing out each weakness, each difficult time you have had with your children, each angry moment, each ugly thing that has happened in your life.

You know, God is such a loving God. He says in his word, 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins.' (1John 1:9) Would you like to confess to God all the knots and tangles in your life as a mother?

We cannot change the past, but God loves you with an everlasting love. He wants to help you rise and shine as a *mother with a purpose*. Do you want God's help? Why don't you pray this prayer with me?

*Dear Father God, I thank you that I am a mother. But sometimes, I'm not a good mother. I need you to help me love my children...to be patient with them...to encourage them and to show them that you have a special plan in their life. Forgive me for my past mistakes and fill me with your hope. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.*

Time is short. The years fly by so quickly. Your children will be teenagers; your teenagers will be adults soon. Do you spend time with your children? Your time with them is *NOW*, for children *won't* wait.

**Carol:** Well, my friend, its been good to be together again today. And I want to say thank you, Doreen.

**Doreen:** You're welcome.

**Carol:** If you're a mother, remember what Doreen said to us today – that 'when God made you a mother, he called you to be a *faithful* mother and not a *perfect* one'. We all struggle with the task of being a mother. But God is faithful and he will hear you as you ask him to help you. Remember to listen to your children just as you would like others to listen to you.

**Tammy:** We have to go now, but we would love to hear from you. You can write to us in care of this station or at Women of Hope.... The email address is: [TWRWomenofHope@twr.org](mailto:TWRWomenofHope@twr.org). That's [TWRWomenofHope@twr.org](mailto:TWRWomenofHope@twr.org). Or if you've missed a program or want to hear one again, go to our website at [TWRWomenofHope.org](http://TWRWomenofHope.org). Or visit our Facebook page!

Goodbye and God bless you as you listen to your children. Have a great week.

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