

Mediation / Jesus' Ascension

Carol: Hello. Welcome to *Women of Hope*. I'm Carol, and I'm so glad we can be together again today. But just listen to these children arguing...

Maria: Give me back that ball Niko - I was playing with it.

Niko: But I've got it!

Maria: You always take the toys. It's not fair.

Niko: Oh, little cry-baby Maria wants her ball! Well, come and get it then!

Maria: I hate you Niko! Give it to me now! I'll tell my Mum.

Niko: Are you going to make me? No, you'll go and tell your Mummy, 'cos you're too scared to stand up for yourself. Cry-baby Maria, cry-baby...

Fran: Have you ever heard an argument like this? It's not only children who argue, and bully, and hurt each other. Adults do it... Countries do it... Maybe you do it, or maybe you have to live with it.

Tammy: Hello. It's Tammy here again, and Fran is here too. She's our counselor friend, and today we're going to talk about how to be a mediator. Welcome Fran.

Fran: Thanks Tammy, and hello to you too. What's a 'mediator'? It's a person who's in the middle, trying to help two people or two groups come together again. You could call them a peacemaker.

Carol: That sounds a good thing to be - to help bring peace instead of fighting and hurt feelings.

Fran: Let's go back to Maria and Niko; do you think they can sort out their quarrel themselves?

Carol: No, because Niko is bigger and he has the ball, and he likes to tease. Maria needs someone to stand up for her. I guess someone bigger than Niko could come and take the ball and give it to Maria.

Tammy: But that wouldn't make them friends again, would it? They need someone to help them work out a fair way to share the ball.

Fran: Adults often find themselves in situations where they can't see the way out of a quarrel. It happens in marriages and families, doesn't it...and in friendships...and in work relationships. So how can you help them to be friends again?

Carol: I guess they need to *want* to solve the problem, not just get their own way. And they need to trust you to be fair and to help them sort it out. So let's suppose they are willing to let you be a mediator - what rules would you make for talking through the problem?

Fran: It would be important that they treat each other with respect. That would mean no insulting talk, no calling each other names. They need to listen to each other without interrupting, and talk without shouting or threatening, or being rude. A mediator could ask them to agree to rules like this, and remind them if they break the rules.

Tammy: OK- the mediator sets the rules so they can talk safely. Then, I suppose the mediator has to be fair to both of them.

Fran: That's true - they can't be on one person's side...against the other. But they *do* need to protect the weaker person and make sure their opinion is properly heard. There's a good way to do this.

Imagine that a married couple, Carlos and Sylvia, are not getting on well - they argue every night when he comes home from work.

Sylvia complains that her husband isn't helping her enough. You ask the person with the complaint - that's Sylvia - to speak first, and Carlos needs to listen and then tell her what he heard in his own words. He doesn't have to agree with her, just show that he has listened to what she's saying...and understands how she's feeling. When she agrees that he has understood her, Carlos gets his turn to speak. He might have some complaints too! He says how he feels, and then Sylvia needs to do the same...put it in *her* own words.

Finally the mediator can put both their thoughts into plain words. This is sometimes called 'laundering the language' or 'washing the words'; putting the facts in simple words without the emotions...the blaming and hurtful words.

For example, you might say to them both, 'So, have I got this right? ...When Carlos comes in from work and sits down to listen to the radio, and he doesn't help carry in the firewood for cooking dinner, Sylvia thinks he doesn't realize how much work she has to do. She feels hurt and angry. But Carlos says he is tired after work and he needs to rest for a while. He feels *she* doesn't realize how hard *he* works. He feels depressed.

Tammy: OK- once they understand how each of them feels, what happens next?

Fran: Well, it depends. Sometimes one realizes he or she needs to apologize. Sometimes both of them do! Maybe Carlos, the husband, would say, 'I'm sorry, I didn't know you felt that way. I know you work very hard for us, and I want to help you - but not when I've just come home.'

Maybe Sylvia would say, 'I'm sorry, I do know you work hard all day, and I can see you want a rest when you get home. But that's when I really need help.'

Usually, once they understand each other, you can work together to say what the problem really is.

Tammy: Oh I see - the *problem* isn't *him* - or *her*. Would it be something like... *We* have a problem...we're both tired at the end of the day, the meal needs to be cooked, the children are hungry and grumpy, and we're both thinking of our own needs.

Carol: That's good - they stop blaming and say, '*we* have a problem - how can we solve it together?'

Fran: Right! Then you can start solving the problem. The mediator can ask each of them what would help *them*, and also what would help the *other* person. We talk about brainstorming - just coming up with lots of ideas, no matter how silly or impractical they might seem. A few funny ideas might get them laughing and take away some of the tension. If you were that wife, what would you suggest?

Tammy: Let's lock the children in the bedroom, dress up and go out together for a meal! (laughter)

Fran: I don't think that would be such a good idea would it!

Tammy: No of course not – but it might make them laugh.

Carol: Or maybe, 'Could you carry in some wood in the morning before work?'

Or: 'How about I cook early in the afternoon and feed the children before you come home?'

Tammy: Yes, then the husband might enjoy playing with the children when he gets home, if they're not so grumpy.

Carol: Or the children might play happily if they weren't hungry, and Carlos and Sylvia could sit down together for a few minutes, have a drink together and ask each other how their day has been.

Fran: Or they might come up with a completely different way to solve the problem. The main thing is, they're working *together* on their problem, not *blaming* each other or feeling misunderstood...

One way of solving problems is to think - what does each person really need? And what can each person offer to meet the other's need? They can negotiate then, to get both needs met.

Tammy: So can I sum up the job of a mediator? I think it's to make some fair rules so they can talk, then make sure they both understand how each other feels and what they need, and then to help them work together to find a solution that they can both accept.

Fran: You've got it Tammy! You don't have to be an expert to be a mediator, just a good friend to those who are stuck in their quarrel. So I hope you can be a good mediator in your home or your community. Jesus said, 'Blessed are the peacemakers' and that's so true.

Carol: We've been talking about mediating between people who are more or less equals. But there is another kind of mediation, where one person has done wrong, and needs someone to take their apology to the other and ask for mercy. Sometimes this happens in a court of law - a guilty person is convicted, and their lawyer asks the judge to show mercy for some good reason. The lawyer is acting as a mediator, bringing the judge and the guilty person together. After this music, we're going to hear about how Jesus is our mediator before God. So please stay with us, won't you?

Tammy: Welcome back to *Women of Hope*. (Comment on the song)
We've been talking with Fran about how to help people come together when they have a quarrel. Right now, Fran's going to tell us one of her lovely stories about the Lord Jesus Christ.

Fran: We often talk about the fact that Jesus died for us. And we talk about praying to Jesus. So you might wonder - how can you pray to a dead person? Today I want to talk about Jesus' life *now*.

Jesus really died. He was nailed to a wooden cross, pierced with a spear, and left to die. The Roman soldiers declared he was dead. They watched his body being put into a burial chamber - like a cave; they sealed it and set guards to watch it. Then, on the third day, some women saw him alive, and talked to him. The Roman guards were bribed to say that his body had been stolen under their noses. (Matt 28) Many people, up to 500 at one time, saw him, touched him, ate with him and talked with him over the next 40 days. He had been brought back to life by the direct action of God himself. Those who saw him were changed forever. They knew it was true and nothing would make them change their minds. (Acts 13:32)

Carol: That's wonderful. But people might wonder - what happened next? Because Jesus didn't stay around, did he?

Fran: Well, let's hear the story as it's written in the Bible, by a man named Luke. (Acts 1: 1-14)

It takes place forty days after Jesus was raised from death. Jesus met 11 close followers on the hill outside the city of Jerusalem. They asked him a question: 'Lord, are you going to restore the kingdom to Israel now? Is this the time?' You see, they had hoped all along that Jesus would defeat the Romans who occupied their country.

But Jesus replied, 'You don't need to know the time when things will happen. The Father, God, has decided - that's *his* business. But I will send the Holy Spirit of God, to each of you who

believes in me and then you'll receive God's power - power to be my witnesses in Jerusalem...in the districts of Judea and Samaria...and right to the ends of the earth.'

Those were his last words. As they stared in astonishment, they saw Jesus rise up towards the sky, and a cloud covered him. He had gone! They stood there, just gaping up at the sky. And then they noticed two men, strangers, standing nearby in shining white robes. The men said, 'Why are you standing there looking at the empty sky? This very same person, Jesus, who's been taken from you into heaven, will come again just as certainly as you saw him go.'

The 11 followers went back to their meeting place in Jerusalem. All their names are listed, because they made a pact together, including the women and Jesus' family. They agreed that they were in this for good. They would wait together and pray for God to act. That's the end of this part of the story - the last part of Jesus' life on earth.

Carol: It looks like Luke, the Bible writer, meant us to believe this all really happened. I mean, he gave the names of the 11 men who were there, and exactly when and where it happened. He's not telling a legend, or a made-up parable with a spiritual meaning. He believes it's true.

Tammy: You're right Carol - because Luke was one of those early followers who risked everything to tell the world about Jesus who had been raised from the dead.

Fran: Let's see what we can remember together - this is one of the most important stories and we need to get it right. Why were these 11 men so sure Jesus was alive again?

Carol: because they saw Jesus alive...with their own eyes!

Tammy: Yes, and so did many other people they knew - men and women. They *touch*ed him, saw him *eating* and *drinking*. He spent 40 days teaching them. They had lived with Jesus for up to three years, so they couldn't have been tricked - it really was the same person.

Fran: Then they asked whether it was time for their country to be liberated...

Tammy: ...and Jesus said it wasn't for them to know. But he *did* make them a promise - do *you* remember?...

Carol: He was going to send them God's Holy Spirit. This wasn't the first time he made this promise - he told them before he died that he would send the Holy Spirit to comfort them after he left.

Fran: That's right. But this time he told them another purpose of the Holy Spirit - to give them power to be true witnesses to him.

Tammy: I guess they would *need super-human* power, if they were to spread this extraordinary message. It was going to be hard! Because that was what Jesus said, wasn't it - to start at Jerusalem, where they were, then take it to the nearby districts, then to the *whole world*.

Fran: And then he left them! How did he go?... Yes, they saw him rise upward, and then a cloud covered him and he was gone. But what does it all mean? Is Jesus somewhere in the air above the clouds, or in space? Let's talk about it together after this music...

Carol: I think it had to happen that way...watching him go...so they would know he was *alive*, but not in *this* world any longer.

Tammy: I think you're right Carol. They didn't go looking for him, but they were quite sure he was still alive.

Fran: But don't imagine that Jesus floated away on the cloud, or a spaceship carried him away. Jesus isn't living on another planet somewhere - he's living a completely different kind of life than this one, a kind of life we can't even imagine. His followers wrote about him being in heaven, the eternal dwelling place of God. And God is pure spirit.

Tammy: It's true...we can't really imagine the life of Jesus now. But God showed us some things through the Bible writers, his prophets. Can I read some of them to you?

Fran: Sure Tammy. Let's listen carefully.

Tammy: The Bible says, 'Jesus has gone into heaven itself, where he now appears on our behalf in the presence of God' (Heb 9:24)

Carol: So what is Jesus *doing* in heaven?... He's speaking to God the Father on our behalf. Jesus is telling God that he's taken the punishment for every bad thing we've done, and he's asking God to forgive us. It's like Jesus is our *mediator* in the court room of heaven. And of course God forgives us; it's what he *wants* to do because he *loves* us so much.

Fran: That's a great thought, isn't it? And what else does the Bible say Tammy?

Tammy: It says 'God...raised Christ from death and gave him a place at his right side in the heavenly world. Christ rules there above all heavenly rulers, authorities, powers and lords'. (Eph 1:19-21 GNB)

Jesus, the one who came down, is the same one who went up, above and beyond the heavens, to fill the whole universe with his presence.' (Eph 4:10 GNB)

Fran: That's so wonderful - Jesus is now ruling the whole universe alongside his Father God. Together they created it all, and now they rule over all other spiritual beings, as well as over the earth. And Jesus is our friend and savior! Imagine - the king of the universe knows *you*, he *loves* you, he's there on *your behalf*, if you put your trust in him! Does that make you want to worship him?

Carol: A little while back we heard something that Jesus said to his followers - that he was going away to prepare a place for them in heaven. (Jn 14:2) And he promised to come back. Do you remember what those men in shining white said after Jesus disappeared in the cloud?

Tammy: Oh yes: that Jesus himself would come back in the same way. And that's our reason for hope, isn't it - Jesus promised to come back one day, and then everyone will see who he really is...our risen Lord!

Carol: You've been listening to *Women of Hope*. Isn't it good to know that Jesus has made a way for you to be *friends* with God...how amazing! And now, whatever you've done...whatever has been done to you, you can talk to Jesus about it as you pray to him. Maybe you would like to do that this week.

Tammy: And maybe you'd like to tell *someone else* this story about how Jesus came back from death...

Fran: Yes, and how he went back to heaven, to rule the universe and - this is even more special - to speak to God on *our* behalf.

Carol: It's time for us to go - so goodbye till next time.

Fran: Goodbye my friend.

Tammy: Don't forget, you can contact us... Goodbye now, and God bless you.

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