

## Volunteer Training Session 4

# Chapter 4/Caring & Love

## ***Caring and Love***

“Love is not an affectionate feeling but a steadfast wish for the loved person’s ultimate good, as far as it can be obtained.”

-C. S. Lewis

Love is not true love until it has been expressed in tangible ways. The words “I love you” or “I care about you” can be said thousands of times but without actions to back them up, those words are hard to believe. Love is at its finest when it is spoken with affectionate words and shared with caring acts. This love is not natural. It is something we cannot “muster up” or hope to attain through study and practice. It is something that is deposited into us by God. Loving others well is actually God flowing through us for the purpose of others knowing and understanding Him.

*Luke 10:25-42 MSG*

**25** *Just then a religion scholar stood up with a question to test Jesus. “Teacher, what do I need to do to get eternal life?” He answered, “What’s written in God’s Law? How do you interpret it?”*

*He said, “That you love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and muscle and intelligence—and that you love your neighbor as well as you do yourself.”*

*“Good answer!” said Jesus. “Do it and you’ll live.”*

*Looking for a loophole, he asked, “And just how would you define ‘neighbor’?”*

**30** *Jesus answered by telling a story. “There was once a man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho. On the way he was attacked by robbers. They took his clothes, beat him up, and went off leaving him half-dead. Luckily, a priest was on his way down the same road, but when he saw him, he angled across to the other side. Then a Levite religious man showed up; he also avoided the injured man. A Samaritan traveling the road came on him. When he saw the man’s condition, his heart went out to him. He gave him first aid, disinfecting and bandaging his wounds. Then he lifted him onto his donkey, led him to an inn, and made him comfortable. In the morning he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, ‘Take good care of him. If it costs any more, put it on my bill—I’ll pay you on my way back.’*

**36** *“What do you think? Which of the three became a neighbor to the man attacked by robbers?” “The one who treated him kindly,” the religion scholar responded.*

*Jesus said, “Go and do the same.”*

Take a minute and think through all that the Samaritan did for the man in hard circumstances:

His heart went out to him when he saw him.

He gave him first aid.

He touched his wounds to care for them.

He took him somewhere to rest and heal.

He even paid for his care!

## **Self-Reflection**

What motivates you to care and serve others?

A good test to know if we are loving others well is what is said about us by them. While caring is part of love, it is not always love because it can come directly or indirectly from our own neediness. Have you ever been cared for by someone but not really loved as a result? Or have you ever cared for others simply because you had time on your hands? Or because you are lonely? Looking for identity in your caring?

Those are not bad reasons - but they may not produce the experience of love that the God intends the recipient to have. As we are His vessels looking to pour out His love, not just His care, we do need to check our motives and agenda. Love, on the other hand, has no agenda other than the well-being and wholeness of it's recipient.

### *1 Corinthians 13 MSG The Way of Love*

**13** *If I speak with human eloquence and angelic ecstasy but don't love, I'm nothing but the creaking of a rusty gate. If I speak God's Word with power, revealing all his mysteries and making everything plain as day, and if I have faith that says to a mountain, "Jump," and it jumps, but I don't love, I'm nothing.*

**3** *If I give everything I own to the poor and even go to the stake to be burned as a martyr, but I don't love, I've gotten nowhere. So, no matter what I say, what I believe, and what I do, I'm bankrupt without love. Love never gives up. Love cares more for others than for self. Love doesn't want what it doesn't have. Love doesn't strut, doesn't have a swelled head, doesn't force itself on others, isn't always "me first," doesn't fly off the handle, doesn't keep score of the sins of others, doesn't revel when others grovel, takes pleasure in the flowering of truth, puts up with anything, trusts God always, always looks for the best, never looks back, but keeps going to the end.*

**8** *Love never dies. Inspired speech will be over some day; praying in tongues will end; understanding will reach its limit. We know only a portion of the truth, and what we say about God is always incomplete. But when the Complete arrives, our incompletes will be canceled.*

**11** *When I was an infant at my mother's breast, I gurgled and cooed like any infant. When I grew up, I left those infant ways for good.*

**12** *We don't yet see things clearly. We're squinting in a fog, peering through a mist. But it won't be long before the weather clears and the sun shines bright! We'll see it all then, see it all as clearly as God sees us, knowing him directly just as he knows us!*

**13** *But for right now, until that completeness, we have three things to do to lead us toward that consummation: Trust steadily in God, hope unswervingly, love extravagantly. And the best of the three is love.*

We experience that life giving love when we understand the act of Jesus going to the cross for us - even before we were on this planet...the ultimate love! As we look to love and care well for our Clients - let's look to personify the love described by Paul; the love we experience from Father God, through Jesus Christ, by power of the Holy Spirit.

## ***Maintaining Proper Boundaries***

Not all your Volunteering will be long term. Most of your relationship with a Client will be short and simple interactions with care being shared with other Staff and Volunteers. However, it is always good to be prepared for those special caring relationships where you continue to play a main role. Below are some insights and expectations when you encounter such a relationship at RWC.

Maintaining proper boundaries can be a confusing process in any loving and caring relationship. We remember that:

- A boundary is a line that signals personal space.
- Hurting people tend to ignore boundaries.
- If a Volunteer does not set good boundaries, boundaries will not be set.
- The purpose of a boundary is safety, rest and renewal.
- Boundaries are to be lovingly communicated and kindly enforced.
- Volunteers need to know how to be flexible in their boundaries.
- Boundaries should expand as we grow in the Lord.

Pastor Chuck Swindoll shares a good word picture of boundaries: *"Make sure your love has limits. Love is like a river; a river that flows and is a thing of beauty. Creatures of nature find delight in floating upon it and drawing water from it. Cities are built around it. But let that river leave it's banks and flood - destruction and disease will happen. People will be driven from their homes and sickness is carried into destruction. The banks along the river of love are truth, righteousness, and discernment. The standard of God's truth, the Scriptures, have to be applied with discernment or the river will flood, and destruction will occur."*

Another word picture comes from the book of Galatians:

*Galatians 6:2-5 NIV*

**2** *Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves.*

**4** *Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else,*

**5** *for each one should carry their own load.*

Drs. Henry Cloud and John Townsend explain the concepts of “burden” and “load” in their book *Boundaries: When to Say Yes and When to Say No to Take Control of Your Life*. Below is an excerpt from Chapter 2 for us consider and discuss:

*“We are responsible **to** others and **for** ourselves. “Carry each other’s burdens” says Galatians 6:2 “And in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” This verse shows our responsibility to one another. Many times others have “burdens” that are too big to bear. They do not have enough strength, resources, or knowledge to carry the load and they need help. Denying ourselves to do for others what they cannot do for themselves is showing the sacrificial love of Christ. This is what Christ did for us. He did what we could not do for ourselves; He saved us. This is being responsible “to”. On the other hand, verse 5 says that “each one should carry his own load”. Everyone has responsibilities that only he or she can carry. These things are our own particular “load” that we need to take daily responsibility for and work out. No one can do certain things **for** us. We have to take ownership of certain aspects of life that are our own “load”.*

*The Greek words for burden and load give us insight into the meaning of these texts. The Greek word for **burden (phortion)** means “excessive burdens”, or burdens so heavy that they weigh us down. These burdens are like boulders. They can crush us. We shouldn’t be expected to carry a burden by ourselves! It would break our backs. We need help with boulders - those times of crisis and tragedy in our lives. In contrast, the Greek word for **load (fortono)** means “cargo” or “the burden of daily toll”. This word describes the everyday things we all need to do. These loads are like knapsacks. Knapsacks make it possible to carry. We are to carry our own. We are expected to deal with our own feelings, attitudes, behaviors as well as the responsibilities God has given each one of us, even as it takes effort. Problems arise when people act as if their “burdens” are daily loads and refuse help - or as if their “daily loads” are boulders that they shouldn’t have to carry. The results of these two instances are perpetual pain or irresponsibility.*

So, we have some good information to help us understand what to do in the following scenarios that can be part of volunteering. Take a minute and think through what setting healthy boundaries might look like in each situation.

- Your Client calls late at night to talk through a small matter that is not an emergency.
- Your Client continues to go over and over the same complaints/concerns without taking any action.
- Your Client is angry with you because you are not solving her problem.
- Your Client is angry because you set a boundary.
- Your Client has a new life crisis that is the consequence of their own behavior.
- Your Client has a new life crisis that was unexpected and outside of their ability to control.
- Your Client has a response that is out of proportion to the event. (Example: She has had a fender bender accident but is overly anxious and demanding of your care and attention.)

Boundaries need to be established and spoken as much as possible. Thinking through ahead of time what is important to you in the helper relationship is a good thing. It is also good to know and understand what is helpful to your Client. Good discussion about this relationship, along with good goals for each make for a great outcome for all!

### ***Self-Reflection/Our Motivation***

Spend some time in prayer before going through this next part. Ask God to show you where your motivation for caring really lies. Ask Him to show you how you share and keep boundaries with those closest to you. Then, take some time to really reflect and journal on the questions below.

- How do I usually feel when I see someone suffering?
- How do I feel when it is someone that I do not know?
- Do I, like the Religious Scholar in Matthew 10, look for “loopholes” when it comes to caring for someone? For my neighbors?
- Where do my boundaries lie when it comes to caring?
- What is my motivation for caring? Is it from a form of neediness? Is it prompted by God’s love?
- What are some hurts that I need to be healed before I can care well?
- What are some caring skills I need to learn?
- Where do I need to set better boundaries when I care for someone?
- Where do I need to expand some boundaries to care better for someone because I have grown in God?
- Am I taking time to go before God to be still and listen before I try to care for anyone?
- What do I gain when I still and listen?
- What do others gain from me when I am still and listen?
- “Love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and muscle and intelligence—and that you love your neighbor as well as you do yourself.” Matt 10:27. Am I doing just that?