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## SMASHING PLATES Part 1

### *Interview*

**Chris:** I thought the anger in me would blow up a building. After I realized that what was done to me was so wrong. This anger just woah! I used to break things, like get a whole lot of plates and smash them and drive a whole lot of balls on the driving range and just nothing would, you know it just would not take this anger away. It was eating me alive.

**Celia:** I'm Celia Fielke and this is Messages Of Hope. Have you ever felt like smashing something? It might have been out of frustration or anger or feeling helpless about a situation or what someone had done to you. Overcoming these feelings might seem impossible, especially if they're the result of abuse. Stay with us as Andy Voigt interviews today's guests who will share their story of healing from childhood abuse.

**Andy:** Thanks for joining us today Chris and Jeff. Chris could you start by giving us a sense of what you experienced as a child.

**Chris:** My father was trained in the war in interrogation and torture. And when he came back from the war I can see now he was a very very sick man. And he did some terrible terrible things. He was an electrician. He electrocuted me lots of times in his workshop under the stairs. That was one of the flashbacks that would come was being tortured in his workshop under the stairs. And the sexual abuse that went on for, all the time until... he committed suicide when I was 15.

**Andy:** It's hard to take all that in. And yet you went on to live for many years without that even being part of your conscious thought. How do you explain that?

**Chris:** They tell me it's a bit like in the sea you've got this big beach ball and you're trying to keep it under water trying to keep it down. And that takes an incredible amount of energy to try and keep that down. I always wondered why I was really dumb at school and had a lot of trouble with maths and things like that. It was because all this energy with what was going on at home, I couldn't function at school. I was always in a remedial class. But I am discovering now that I'm not really as dumb as I thought I was. And so when that beach ball burst out of the water that's when all the memories came. So it really is quite inevitable that all these things will come because you can only keep it down for so long.

**Andy:** Can you tell us what led to the memories coming back after such a long time.

**Chris:** As far as I can remember I had a normal life and then I think late forties my late late 40s something really terrible happened to one of my daughters and the shock of it I started to go into depression and then I can remember the flashbacks started to happen. I didn't know what was happening I just thought I was just so totally losing it. And I think over a four year period of time I spent about three years in the psychiatric hospital and some of that

time was being strapped down. I was just totally psychotic and they just didn't know what to do with me. And the shock treatment that they gave me didn't take away the memories. The trauma and the horror was still there.

**Jeff:** It took a long time, probably two years for them to realise that Chris was reliving the past. This was about trauma not about depression like they thought.

**Chris:** Part of the abuse I was burnt. I would wake up screaming from burning. They didn't recognize that that could be suppressed in my mind and held down for so long from childhood.

**Andy:** Jeff how did you cope with everything that was going on?

**Jeff:** Somehow with God's help I got through. It was horrendous. Really scary because I had no help for me either. I searched and searched everywhere and through that time I was sort of in nowhere land. I'll be honest I nearly left Chris but some reason, probably God saying "no you're not getting away Jeff, you got to stay here for a while." I stayed.

**Andy:** When did things begin to change?

**Jeff:** That time this freethinker actually challenged Chris and said, "well, you're at the fork in the road here. You can either go home and die or you can get better."

**Chris:** That psychiatrist sending me home giving me the ultimatum, I guess that set a fire off in me and I chose to fight back.

**Andy:** And what happened then?

**Chris:** Well God stepped in big time. I mean he was there all the time but I'd like to say that I instantly got better but I didn't. I really got worse because the light hit the darkness and then the clean out started. I can't take you step by step because I can't really remember it but I know that God put lots of people in my life, bible studies, you know incident after incident after incident that would deal with a certain problem that needed to be fixed you might say, like unforgiveness or anger or whatever needed to be addressed in me God arranged for it to happen. I don't know how but it happened. I didn't really have a lot of help from the church because they didn't understand. But there have been a few counsellors and a few friends that have walked the walk with me.

**Andy:** What would you say has been a key part of your healing?

**Chris:** When you've been through trauma as severe as I had I was a very very fragmented person and didn't know that I was. And so part of my healing has been identifying those fragments. And in my case it was personalities, actual personalities and part of my healing was molding of those personalities back into me so that were really very vital for Jesus to come in and heal those tortured parts and to heal them and put them back. And that was done through prayer. So yeah. God's done a mighty work in me.

**Andy:** Chris as you are beginning to put the pieces of your life back together were there things that people did that were just not helpful?

**Chris:** Um trying to fix it but in the end you can't fix it.

**Andy:** In what ways were they trying to fix it?

**Chris:** Trying to give solutions, you know “go and see this doctor or go and have this therapy done” or just trying to find a way to make it stop. And that's not really very helpful.

**Jeff:** And also “get over it.”

**Chris:** It all happened back then what's the matter with you?

**Jeff:** Get over it does not help.

**Chris:** I can remember I probably would have been the first one who wanted to get over it in a big hurry.

**Andy:** Where did you eventually find support?

**Chris:** I can't say that I sought it out because one of the symptoms of the abuse is to isolate. You have voices in your head saying you know you're not worthy you don't deserve. And one of the results of rejection and isolation is to do the thing that you don't want to do. And that means you isolate yourself and you withdraw. And what you need the most is people. It's the weirdest thing.

**Jeff:** I think you could say that for the first say five, six, seven years there was no support group, none whatsoever.

**Chris:** And we lost friends.

**Jeff:** We lost family.

**Chris:** Lost everything.

**Jeff:** They couldn't handle us. They didn't know what to do with us. So they sort of drifted away.

**Chris:** But God would not let up. He kept putting things in my path. And it just felt right to just flow into that thing for the time. So it was God. Yeah.

**Andy:** What would you say to people who have a friend or family member dealing with trauma?

**Chris:** I would say for them to look after themselves. For sure because if they try to take on the pain and take on the hurt they could get swamped and get worn out really really quickly. So I would say to them you need to have your boundaries. But you need to be there when the person is going through depression and whatever. You never know how they're going to be. One day they could be angry one day they could be sleeping all day. They need someone there. Just keep coming back. A person who suffered from rejection and hurt they need to know that you are not going away and you will come back.

**Jeff:** If the person wants to cry, cry with them. If they want to sit on the floor and rock sit on the floor and rock them. They want to go out on the back step and smash some plates do it with them. It's that support that they need. It's not the judgment “Oh you shouldn't be smashing plates.” You can buy another plate. It doesn't matter. But be there and support

them, love them and show them that you will be there and you won't judge them. You can go hand in hand.

**Chris:** And pray for them. Yes that's the most important thing you can do. Sometimes I think people think "oh I've done what I can do now I'll pray." I reckon that should be the first thing you do because then God can move.

**Andy:** Some people would say where was God when all the abuse was happening?

**Chris:** I had to ask. I asked that many many times and in one of the prayer times he told me where he was. That he was there and he was taking the blows and he was taking the abuse. Getting a bit teary about it. He made us with free will and he wants us to come to him because we want to come to him not because he's made us come to him. We're free to have choice. We're free to do whatever we do and man has made some terrible choices and other people suffer from that. That's not God's fault. That's so not God's fault. And he showed me that he was there and the day that I went to the cross with him he took it all away. I mean he'd done that on Calvary two thousand years ago but I didn't, there's parts of me that didn't know that. But that day I knew it and like wherever there's child prostitution all these terrible terrible things are going on in the world He's there. And he's taking it he's taking it into that body that went to the cross and he weeps. He weeps.

God so longs for people not to do that to other people but we have free choice. We have free will and I didn't want that stuff to happen to me, I don't want this to happen to anybody but it happened. By Jesus dying for me and loving me the way he loves me he made a way for it to be transformed. And I know that he made it into something amazing. He's turning that terrible time around and making it so that I can help other people because you know the Bible tells us that we comfort with the comfort that we have been given and what I've been through gives me the right to speak up. Sometimes people need tough love because sometimes you can get stuck in a place when you know, you get stuck in the past and you think people owe you a right to look after you and my behaviour is because of the abuse and I would say "no that is not the case." God wants you to come to a better place. He loves you, he loves you too much to leave you where you are. He wants you to come into a really good place. But you have to stop feeling sorry for yourself and get on with it. I can say "get on with it" because I've been through it and I've had many years of that. But it's not it's not so much getting on with it but it's getting on with Jesus.

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