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SMASHING PLATES Part 2

Interview

Chris: My father was trained in the war in interrogation and torture, he executed me lots of times. One of the flashbacks that would come was being tortured in his workshop under the stairs and the sexual abuse that went on all the time.

Celia: I'm Celia Fielke and this is Messages of hope. On last week's program you heard part one of smashing plates. Chris's story of recovery from childhood abuse. Today in part two you'll hear some different aspects of her journey and discover the key ingredient that led to the freedom she now experiences.

Andy: Chris can you start out today by sharing how you felt about your life before the flashbacks started to happen?

Chris: As far as I can remember I thought I had a normal life. I was born in England and I migrated to Australia when I was 13. I came over with my father, my mother, my sister and we went to live in Elizabeth. We were the original '10 pound pom', the original boat people sort of thing and just had a normal life. I met Jeff and got married and had two beautiful girls and worked and did all the things that you normally do and I thought it was great. I got a good life like I was a happy person but looking back I know that I had my problems. I know I used to drink too much and I know that I smoked, I smoked way too much. And now looking back on it that was all trying to mask it and soothe it but to me I thought that was normal but it wasn't. Yeah.

Andy: And then in your 40s the flashbacks began. Can you tell us a bit about how that happened?

Chris: I had so much sickness in my body, you know ulcers and colds and pains and that Jeff will probably tell you that I would walk by and he'd say "what's the bruise on your arm?" I think they call it cellular memory from the abuse. It would come out, literally come out on my arms and my body. And the scars would come and things like that. That's the body physically remembering the abuse. So it happened. I didn't make any of this up, it really happened.

Jeff: It did, because one time I specifically remember sitting there and watching a bruise on Chris's arm appear. Wasn't touched, wasn't hit. Nothing. And Chris said "Oh my arm is hurting." I'd look at it and the bruise is starting to form, cellular memory or whatever you want to call it. It happens.

Chris: And that is because all this trauma was still in my body, in my mind, in my memory. It was eating me alive and I didn't know!

Andy: Did you have to go back and relive all the pain of your childhood in order to deal with it?

Chris: God in His mercy, I didn't have to revisit a lot of it because I don't think I would have survived. He is a total gentleman and will not go where you don't want him to go. So a lot of it went to the cross. And that just did amazing things in me. That Jesus loved me that much that he would take my trauma and would take the pain when most people have just ran and ran away from it. It's just too much for them to bear. It wasn't too much for Jesus to bear he took it. And that was a real pivotal time.

Andy: A lot of people would be afraid to revisit the past because of reliving the whole thing.

Chris: That's what all the drugs were for, was supposed to take it away but it's like putting a bandaid over a festering boil. It's not going to make it better. It's got to be cleansed and healed with the blood of Jesus before it can be dealt with. And in my experience you don't have to remember it. I know a lot of therapists that are out there, they make you go back and relive and I, well maybe in some cases it's warranted but I think in really severe abuse I think it's re-traumatizing. And I didn't have to do that. Praise God I didn't have to do that. It was a miracle, a slow miracle but a miracle.

Andy: Were there times when you felt it was all too hard and just wanted to give up?

Chris: Every day. Every day. Oh my goodness yes.

Andy: So what kept you going?

Chris: I didn't have anywhere else to go. And I had made that vow that I'm going all the way. I'm not compromising. It was a fire in me to do it and I know it wasn't mine but some days when you're just so depressed and just so whatever you can't describe what it is that keeps you going. But I know now that's what it was. It was the Holy Spirit.

Andy: What about you Jeff?

Jeff: That's probably another God thing. I sort of have always known from the time that I met Chris that I was here to be there for Chris. It's a strange thing to say but it just always felt like I'm here to help Chris through, to be there for her, to support her to love her, to be on the journey with her.

Andy: It's been over 15 years since the flashbacks first started happening. Do you still find the past is a debilitating thing at times?

Chris: It could be if I allowed the fear to be the controlling emotion. But I've come far enough along on the journey to not allow that to happen. And I trust Jesus enough to allow him to go into those places. What like I know now is to say come, like when I'm in a situation where an emotion will come up but it's not appropriate to what is happening. So like you're walking down the street and someone's walking the other side and you say "hello." And they ignore you. And then somewhere in you if you have any rejection issues you think "Oh what have I done." You know all these sort of things but probably nine times out of 10 they probably just didn't see you or hear you. OK. But when you've got all this rejection stuff in you, your brain goes to town. All the old triggers, the old hurts, they just get fired off. When something like that happens I've learnt to put my worship music on and lay down quietly. And I ask Jesus to come and tell me the truth and that peace that surpasses

all human understanding, that keeps your heart and mind in Christ Jesus takes away the fear because perfect love casts out fear. I've learnt to do that. Call it self meditation. Call it whatever you want. It works. Because that's what he's taught me to do. To be quiet with him and to allow him to be to be Lord over everything. Not let fear be Lord, let Jesus be Lord, not let anger be Lord, let Jesus be Lord. That's the difference that my life is now, that Jesus is Lord and he's not a bossy Lord. He's an awesome Lord.

Andy: Chris you talked about surrendering to Jesus and that he wasn't a bossy Lord. Do you think some people are afraid to let Jesus in because they'll end up becoming a robot or a puppet or that God will ask them to do things that they don't really want to do?

Chris: Or he's going to send you off to Africa and marry someone ugly or something! Or something like that. But no he's not like that at all. He knows our needs before we even think them. He knows us. He made us. He made me. He made you, made everybody and sure he does get bossy. He really does. And he'll push you if you think you're in this nice little comfortable place and it's not a good place for you to be in. He'll push you until you come out of it but it's for your good. It's not to be a tyrant, not like my father. I mean it took me a long time to not transfer my father onto God, and Jeff, onto all authority figures, pastors, police. We had a policeman round here the other day and I didn't have the old fear come up. It was amazing. It was awesome. I thought "YES" a bit more freedom. You know normally I would have just about nearly melted. I would have been in a real bad state but nothing. It was great. That was another testimony to the deep healing. So.

Andy: Has it been an important thing to forgive the past and have you been able to do that?

Chris: Definitely, because you know I mean like my father is dead but the memory of what happened is still there and they're still playing and playing and playing in your memory around and around and around on the record player until forgiveness is released and then that stops it and God's grace and His love can come in and do his amazing work. It's an incredible gift of God and it took me a long time, I had lots and lots of anger. 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 y'know 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. But when God started to teach me about forgiveness, speak it out of my mouth even though I didn't feel it, the healing could start to happen. It wasn't an overnight thing. It was a process to go through. I choose to forgive that bastard sort of thing, you know. Obviously there was no feeling in there at all, I was just, right. But yeah but now I can say I forgive him. I learned that forgiveness is a gift to me because it sets you free. And if you're free then you can move on. And of course y'know the enemy will remind you "oh he did that to you." And you say "no I choose to forgive." It is a choice. We are given a choice, every day. We have the choice whether to hate or to love. And I think if anyone had the right to hold unforgiveness it was me but I did it for me, to forgive.

Andy: How would you encourage someone to take steps towards healing?

Chris: Well I would say to them what was said to me that it's not their fault. And they're not to blame in any way. What was done to them was wrong and it should never have happened. But it has happened. And I say to them don't let that become the final word. Let what Jesus has done and his great love for you be the final word. And the truth is yes, you have been abused. The truth is yes you have difficulties. The truth is yes that you have

pain, you have depression, you have this, you have that. They're the facts, yes but the truth is God's Word and God's word is more powerful than that. We're told to do the renewing of the mind. And I know that I did a lot of scripture memorizing and when the voice, I call it the voice of abuse, would come I would come against it with scripture. So this is the truth. You are the facts. This is the truth and I choose to believe the truth. Once again it wasn't an overnight thing but to stand on the rock of Jesus, to stand on his word that totally counteracts what has happened to you. It's now medical fact. They've taken pictures of the brain and there in the brain, I've got a book now it's called who switched off my brain by a South African doctor, Dr Caroline Leaf. She said there is a part of your brain that looks like a little forest that's got black trees in there and that's all the bad stuff or the bad memories. And by coming at it with the truth of God's word that will totally grow over the old stuff and a new memory will form. I didn't know that but that's what was happening in my brain. The power of God's word was totally coming over and taking away all the old stuff. So I would say to them that there is hope that you are not hopeless. No one is beyond the healing power of Jesus. They thought I was but I wasn't. 'They', being the psychiatrist and the doctors and most of our friends and family and everybody basically. Apart from Jeff, he stuck in and hung in there. He's a wonderful man. God gave him the strength to do that.

Andy: Jeff is there anything you'd like to say in summing up our conversation today?

Jeff: I'd just like to say that this is a journey. It's not a short term journey. It's a long journey. And if you want to help, have patience, pray for patience, pray for guidance and keep going. God will give you the strength, he will give you what you need. And in the end, it's happened here, and God will make it happen for you.

Andy: Thanks Chris and Jeff for being so willing to share your story with us today.

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