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## FINDING CONNECTION

### *Interview with Nancy*

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**Celia:** This is Messages of Hope and I'm Celia Fielke. There are times when the pieces of our life just don't seem to be fitting together as they should. Today I'm talking with Nancy a wife, mother and police officer. From the outside she seems like she has it all together and is managing the juggle that can so often bring us crashing to our knees. However, the pressures of managing family and working life had her feeling overwhelmed and alone and she had lost that sense of purpose somewhere along the line.

**Celia:** So you had a fantastic job. You're married, a couple of kids. Everything should be great, but yet you weren't feeling great at that time were you?

**Nancy:** No, I wasn't. You know, you get tied up in life decisions, you're trying to figure out “what am I going to do?” I was having a family. I had Isabella and then went back to work and then, you know, you get pregnant again, you have another child, so you're just caught up in life and then the wheels are starting to fall off.

**Celia:** Because it's hard, two kids, juggling work and family.

**Nancy:** Oh, exactly. And I'm shift work so I'm thinking like, who's gonna look after my kids today? You know, I'm trying to set up structures so that their life is fairly stable. So you're juggling all of that, and I was just starting to feel like I'm lacking any connection with people other than who I worked with.

**Celia:** Why do you think that was?

**Nancy:** What I probably feared, being a police officer, was starting to happen in terms of, you start to think that people don't understand you, don't understand what you do. So you tend to only gravitate to people that do understand what you do and you end up separating yourself because it's difficult. One day you're dealing with something that's really terrible and hard - people being assaulted or families having arguments or traffic accidents. And then you're going to go and have a conversation about something that seems completely superfluous, but it's a normal conversation you know, about coffee or about taking kids to netball or something like that. And so you're moving in between these two spaces, which are completely different.

**Celia:** That must be so hard.

**Nancy:** It is really difficult to change gears so you just end up withdrawing.

**Celia:** Was that affecting connection with family as well? Did you find yourself withdrawing there too?

**Nancy:** Yeah, I think I did. I remember being just irritable, and angry, like I'd get angry really, really quickly, which is bad when you've got young kids, you know, and they would have done the smallest thing. But you just have this frustration that just comes out and you feel terrible for it. It's like, "Why aren't you getting ready in the morning? Why aren't you doing it?" You know? It just starts the day in such a bad way.

**Celia:** How do you feel about yourself then?

**Nancy:** And then you feel really terrible, so I'm the worst mother in the world! I keep yelling at my children and then it just keeps perpetuating. So you're just feeling a little bit trapped. They're the people that I want to spend time with, but I was just like, I just need five minutes, because you know, you just don't want to have to respond to people.

**Celia:** Nancy - I'm interested - what actually drew you to police work in the first place?

**Nancy:** Darren (Nancy's husband) was in the police and we had quite a few police friends. And so I don't know if he suggested or one of his other colleagues suggested to me, "Why don't you do policing? And I went, "uh, possibly... Maybe..."

**Celia:** What were your reservations?

**Nancy:** I grew up in a small community. I was quite naive about how other people live. I like seeing the best in people. I like being optimistic about life. So if you take on a position like being in the police force, you do see the worst of people. You see the worst of what can happen. So there was a lot of prayer during that time, of whether I wanted to do it or not. Was I willing to take that step? Because my life wouldn't be the same again. And the way I saw things wouldn't be the same again.

**Celia:** So what convinced you in the end?

**Nancy:** One day I went to church and I remember the sermon preaching on using your talents, and it just spoke to me. I can't remember exactly what the service was about specifically, but I was just going, God is speaking to me today. I'd never felt anything like it before. And I went, Wow, this is actually what God wants me to do!

**Celia:** And so, how has that worked out for you? Is Policing what you thought it would be?

**Nancy:** All days aren't the same. And there's some days, like day shifts, that I really struggle to get out of bed because I'm not a morning person. But the fact is that when I turn up to work, I don't actually know what's going to happen. So, you know, it could be where not much happens, but it could be something that's really, really exciting and challenges the way you think and decisions that you make. So working through something with a family or with a victim and achieving something that's really good - there's some excitement in that.

**Celia:** I would think as a police officer that you would probably be faced with some confronting things. Have there been tough times?

**Nancy:** Probably one of the toughest ones was taking an identification statement from a family whose two year old child had just died and my son was about same age. So to go

into that and actually see them holding the child, as if he's not dead, he's just sleeping. And to actually do that with a family was incredibly difficult and hard. But, by the same token, important for me to do it.

**Celia:** Why was it important?

**Nancy:** I just felt that in those moments, these people are struggling so much with life and the frailty of that and why is this happening - and the coronial process is a difficult process, and I feel incredibly honored to be doing that for them. And to show that kindness, sympathy, understanding, and help through that time. I feel that's a blessing that God has given me to be able to be in these people's lives at that time and show that empathy for them.

**Celia:** So how did your policing work contribute to you feeling overwhelmed?

**Nancy:** I felt great responsibility trying to fix people's problems. Trying to find solutions for problems, which you know, through not maybe their fault or other people's fault had been created. And I think the most frustrating thing is when they haven't created the problem themselves, but you also can't find a reasonable solution for them. You're trying really, really hard.

**Celia:** So did you feel helpless?

**Nancy:** Helpless, like really, really helpless. What am I supposed to do? How am I going to fix this for them? You know, I'm going back to the same place a few times and nothing is changing. As much as we offer solutions, nothing is changing and it's just frustrating and just this weight of expectation to fix these problems, which I actually had no answers for.

**Celia:** So Nancy, you couldn't keep carrying that sense of responsibility weighing on you. What changed for you? Or what did you do differently?

**Nancy:** We have the cafe that's attached to our church. So I went and worked in our cafe and volunteered a few shifts and it was fun and I made coffee and it was good. And then the ladies there had a retreat, which they ran called "Women of Worth," so WOW retreat. So I went, "Oh, that looks interesting. Darren's off that weekend. He can look after the kids and let me just do something different." So off I go on this retreat. I am just so exhausted and I'm so stuck. I had a prayer session with these two beautiful women that prayed with me and their connection with God was just incredible. It was like this massive, massive relief that God could come along and just cut through everything that I was feeling. All that lack of connection. I felt relieved. I never felt anything like it in my life. And it was just truly incredible. And these beautifully gifted women are saying to me, "This is what God wants you to do. You've just forgotten that you're supposed to take him with you to help you do this job."

**Celia:** You don't have to do it on your own.

**Nancy:** Exactly. And that's what I felt like I was doing. I couldn't figure out how it fitted together. I couldn't see what good God would do in my work life. Even though God had called me to do it, I just had this feeling - church is all lovely dovey, everybody loves each other - how do I even meld those two together? And to have Jesus come along and go, "I've put you there for a reason. Do the best that you can. The rest is up to me."

**Celia:** So how did this change your life, back in the "real" world, after the retreat?

**Nancy:** Actually my whole life changed to tell you the truth. I didn't get as angry, especially at home. I'm not saying things don't frustrate me but I just find that I have more patience and will look at things differently, "Okay well what's a better way of doing this?" And I'm not saying that always happens, but if I do have a short fuse and I am starting to get angry quickly, I'm like, "Okay, what is actually behind this? Is this because I'm tired? Is this because the kids are tired? Is this because I'm actually not spending the time myself with God, just to sit and pray and re-make that connection again?" Because that's probably a trigger for me. If I'm starting to feel like that, that means that I'm not spending the time that I need to just reset.

**Celia:** So if you're feeling connected with God. You're able to connect with others.

**Nancy:** Yeah. Totally. My connection to God is a massive impact on my life. I've always had a belief. I've always had a faith in God. It's the connection that's changed. You know, God's put me there for a reason, just to do my best to talk, to speak. And then leave the rest up to him. Once I leave it's not my responsibility to keep on fixing these people's problems. And that's what I was feeling. God does love me. He wants the best for me. And to go back to that and start again.

**Celia:** I was going to say that I guess by the way you behave, you're showing Christ's love in your job.

**Nancy:** Yeah. it's about the way you show your faith in your actions and what you do. Showing Christ's love, Christ's empathy, Christ's patience, Christ's acceptance and respect. And it's not just in my work, it's with everything. Trying to show and reveal those fruits of the spirit to the people around me.

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