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LETTING GO OF TOMORROW

Conversation with Richard, Celia and Jo

Richard: With the pandemic continuing to disrupt our lives, there's a sense of being worn out from the constant shifting of the goal posts, and the sheer exhaustion of dealing with all the change that brings. I'm Richard Fox from Messages of Hope. Today I'm talking with Celia and Jo about how we can live in this new normal. We're all feeling a little bit exhausted from the constant surprises that covid keeps on bringing us.

Celia: I'm tired of feeling tired. I know life is a bit like that, but I'm a real planner and I like to get my diary out and have it all structured and now I have to do it all in pencil because I'm constantly rubbing out and changing and it's exhausting.

Richard: It wears you down, doesn't it?

Celia: Yeah. There's enough in my head going on without having to think about plan B, plan C, plan D!

Jo: Yeah. I'm relating to what you're saying Celia. We're asked to come out of this with some sense of normal, like we can return to normal now, or there's a new normal. Well, what does that mean? This is the thing that I'm most frustrated with. I love relationships. I see a new baby and all I want to do is pick it up and cuddle it but am I allowed to?

Celia: It's almost like you have to second guess everything you do.

Jo: Absolutely. Yeah. It's not so much instinct anymore. It's about, "Okay so how are people going to react?" What are the requirements here? Am I supposed to wash my hands first? There's so many thought processes that you go through in your daily routine, let alone in your interactions with people.

Richard: Yeah, there's remoteness. There's distance of separation with people and that to me is tiring. I don't even know if I can even see my sister who lives in the UK. I don't know when that's going to happen.

Celia: It's different isn't it. The stuff that you can do so much on Zoom and Teams and on computers and stuff but that face to face, you must find that really difficult?

Richard: It is. They send a little video or a little Facebook chat but it's not the same as in person. It's really hard and difficult.

Celia: I get so excited when I see people face to face now because you can't do it all the time and you don't know whether that's going to be shut down or when the next time is so it's really precious.

Jo: And you do find yourself actually finding people that you haven't seen for like months because we've been in lockdown and you want to go up and hug them.

Celia: It's the natural reaction, isn't it.

Jo: Yeah and you've had particular people that just have a look of horror on their face, "Please don't touch me, please don't come near me, I'm afraid."

Richard: So how do we cope with not being able to see people or interact humanly like we used to. There's a grief and a sadness through that so who knows where we're going to go with this and where do we find hope to exist in maybe a new normal?

Celia: For me, at the moment, I just think this is crap, I'm sick of it!

Richard: My aunty and uncle feel the same. They live interstate and were trying to get over for my dad's 70th and there was another lockdown and they'd already been through a lockdown. So talking to them on the phone and hearing them, they were just defeated. They were over it, there was this air of surrender.

Celia: Well there's nothing you can do.

Richard: No, that's right.

Celia: What now? What is going to help me sit in this space because I don't know that there's anything I can do about it but what's going to help me?

Richard: How are you going Jo?

Jo: Well, I heard a podcast the other day and for me it was just that aha moment. This podcast was actually reflecting on a tool you can use to try and recalibrate. So you go on a walk and in that walk you're not thinking about what's going to happen next, the planning, the frustration. What you're doing is you're walking and you're concentrating on that walk. You're listening to the birds and you're tuning into the birds. You're listening to your foot with the crunch of your feet on the path. You're feeling and hearing your breathing and you might be thinking but it's really not that whole "what do I do next?" panic feeling. It's the tuning into the nothingness that gives you a sense of rest and peace. A sense of that mental stillness.

Celia: And have you found that has really helped you in that craziness.

Jo: There is a real distinct stillness in that, that I found so enlivening, so refreshing, so recalibrating. It's an unusual thing to be able to explain. You've got to do it. It's just something that you don't realize how much is going on in your head until you actually let it go.

Richard: Well, it's like God saying "Be still, be still and know that I am God." The picture that I have behind that or hidden behind that is a bit militaristic but it's like a soldier who's constantly having to make life and death decisions and live their life and then God coming along and saying "At ease soldier." So, I'm here to hold you through this, so whatever you're going through God is constant and he can give us that time and space. It's that surrendering, "Okay God, I'm not sure what's going on here or how to cope with this out of control feeling, this exhaustion, this fear but I just want to be here with you in this stillness."

Celia: We've been looking at how tired and exhausted we are with all of the things that COVID has thrown at us and how you know sometimes there's just nothing we can do and not being in control and not being able to do things. Now we're going to have a look at how God is actually with us in that space and how he can help us in that struggle.

Richard: Well, that reminds me of the story of Jesus in Gethsemane. A time in Jesus' life where he was about to go to the cross and be crucified and the fear and the exhaustion and the anguish that was over him at that time records that he was sweating drops of blood! I can't even imagine the level of exhaustion that he would've had.

Celia: Sometimes you just hear about him dying to save us but that was actually a real thing, pretty horrendous!

Richard: Oh the pain and the suffering to get to that point. The many hours and probably many days leading up to it and the hurt and the fear. Even wanting God his father to take this away from him but yet knowing where he's going, to this cross, speaks volumes.

Celia: It's actually nice to know that he understands what we're going through and he has always promised to be with us when we're in those sorts of spaces.

Richard: Well it makes it real for me to know that Jesus went through that. To go to that level or extent of pain and suffering to show and demonstrate the length that he's going to go to, that gives me hope. To know that there's someone who's gone before me, going with me through this, who's experienced this, who knows the way through this stuff, to say "I've got you."

Jo: It's interesting that you say I've got you because I've got this picture at home when my daughter went through surgery. She's sitting in the hospital bed with the gown on, all the tapes and the wires and everything like that and she's just sitting there with this sense of hopelessness and anguish. But the picture is of me holding her hand. Now I remember in that moment I couldn't do a thing for her. She had to go through this surgery to stay alive but I knew that the road ahead was going to be grief and pain and frustration. She couldn't understand what was going on at the time. She was the one who was actually in this great sense of hopelessness but the look in her eye looking at me, looking at my hand. All I could do was to give her that sense of reassurance, not that everything's going to be okay, not that you're not going to experience pain because she was. It was, I am here with you and that was the thing that her face said "Okay you're with me, I can do this." The one sense of comfort I could offer was that I was holding her hand.

Celia: And you were there.

Jo: And I was there. So the thing that really strikes me is picturing me being the one who's in the hospital bed and God is holding my hand. We so often feel like he has to deliver us or you know, why is God not here.

Celia: Why is he letting me go through this?

Jo: Yeah but it's not about that. The reassurance is knowing that he's there and that's powerful.

Richard: It is and that echoes through a lot of the promises he gives us, "Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I'll give you rest." There's the one about "Don't worry about tomorrow, let tomorrow worry about itself, each day has enough troubles of its own."

Celia: That's one thing I have to keep remembering. It's like, just deal with what you've got right now. Deal with today.

Richard: They are wonderful promises that God gives us to carry us through times like these.

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