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OVERWHELMED

Conversation with Richard, Celia and Anna

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Anna: So, I'm wondering about the question in this unknown, in this overwhelm, in this what's next? What do I do today? That maybe Jesus is the next step to help us. What does it look like for Jesus to come to you in your lockdown?

Richard: This is Messages of hope with Richard, Celia, and Anna. Life can be crazy and chaotic at the best of times, even more so when we're in a pandemic. How do we live each day when the future is so uncertain?

Celia: I hate this whole continuing flux and unknownness. So, I feel like going, "Oh, enough already."

Richard: What I'm hearing is a whole era of uncertainty and they're going, "I don't know what to make a decision on. I don't know where to go. I don't know the next step. There is no silver bullet necessarily. I just need to get through today."

Celia: For me, it has actually put a spotlight on the fact that, Celia, you aren't in control and you can't keep planning for the future. You have to let it go and just go with plan B, C, and it's not as scary as I thought it would be, but it's still not easy.

Richard: Everything just seems too big and too complex. And it's almost like, "Where do you start?" So, I just kind of go, "Oh, dear God, where's the first step?"

Anna: There's an element that we can choose our next step in how we respond to not having a job for the next week because we're in lockdown or the next six months or whatever. So, I wonder if it's about being intentional for today. What does it look like to live with intention today?

Richard: People aren't necessarily after what are the five tips to do with today? Or anything like that. What they're actually after is the tipping point. What gives them the hope and the help to make that step? So, I reflected on the passage where Jesus had died and hadn't appeared yet. The disciples were locked in a room in fear and everything was too overwhelming. They didn't know where to go, what to do, then what happens? Jesus comes to them. And the first words he says is, "Peace be with you." It's not just a flippant, "How are you doing? It's all good, isn't it?" It's, "I'm giving you my peace, my wholeness, my wellbeing."

Anna: I think that's interesting, what you've just described, because clients ask me this all the time, it's all good to be here and get here, but how do you do that? So, I'm wondering about the question of, "If in this unknown, in this overwhelm, in this what's next, what do I do today that maybe Jesus is the next step to help us?" And I think that the story of the followers being locked in a room is really good for COVID because even in that space, Jesus can come. What does it look like for Jesus to come to you in your lockdown?

Richard: When the future is so uncertain, every day can seem overwhelming. The things we usually rely on don't work anymore. Is it possible that God could actually step in and give us the certainty we crave? How can that look?

To me, it's those family times of just sitting around and reading something about Jesus. It was actually quite encouraging and inspiring to hear of Jesus and his compassion for us, that he is the bread of life. And even though the people came to him looking for food to satisfy their bellies, he doesn't turn them away.

Celia: So, what it looks like for me, for Jesus to come, is to find that space to allow him to be there because very often we're go, go, go, go. We actually have to stop and make that space for him to be in our lives. Give yourself five minutes to say, "Okay, I'm just going to sit and meditate, reflect."

Anna: Yeah. If you don't know God, and you want to know how Jesus can come to you in the middle of lockdown, ask him. Say, "God, come to me. Jesus show up." And then just see what happens. You might not think anything has happened or someone might literally show up on your doorstep with something that you're like, "Oh, my gosh, how did you know I was out of toilet paper?" Or, "How did you know I was out of flour and I really wanted to bake a cake." So looking for the miracles, but further to that, looking for him in the ordinary as well. So one thing we did during the lockdown was on our group chat thing we just started a, "What are you grateful for today? What positive thing happened?" And for me the first day, literally, it was before the day even started, I posted. Because I was like, "I've just realised that the days are getting longer." It was like 6:50am and I could see outside instead of it being dark, like super superficial. But for me, I was just like, "This is so good. The first day of lockdown and I'm being encouraged that, Anna, warm weather is coming." It was just what I needed. I think sometimes just saying, "What worked well today?" Or, "Where did you actually see Jesus at work?"

Celia: I like that, where did you see God today? I love that. It can be a person, it can be an experience, it can be sitting here and the sun shining in my window and I'm starting to feel warm and I'm going, "Yeah. That could be God."

Anna: For people who don't know Jesus, it also could be a completely miraculous experience where they're like, "Oh my gosh, Jesus actually did come to me in lockdown when nobody else knew I prayed that prayer."

Celia: It does happen.

Anna: But that's the miracle of what happened when Jesus died and then he shows up. It was like, that could never consciously happen in our humanness. We never would have expected that to happen.

Celia: And I like the idea of look for the miracle. Believe that miracles can happen. And it doesn't have to be a "Oh, my gosh, I couldn't walk and now I can." But there are little miracles every day.

Richard: The thing I liked about what you were saying, because I've heard the gratitude stuff, I've heard the look for God stuff, but I've never really connected them like how you connected them. So it's not just about being thankful for something good, but it's actually who's behind that.

Celia: Yeah. That is God just reassuring me every day. He probably shows me thousands of ways that he loves me and I just take it for granted.

Richard: So, when things are so overwhelming, it can be easy to miss the good stuff. Coming up, we're going to talk about some intentional things that we can do to help us feel connected with God and with each other. You're listening to Messages of hope. When you're feeling out of sorts and overwhelmed, what are the little things that you can do that help? Anna, what can you do?

Anna: I'm a routine person, so for me, a little thing is keeping my routine the same. So literally, breakfast every morning, cup of tea, shower, and I spend some time with God and just kind of connect and get grounded for the day. Other times, it's like, well, in the evening I've had a really big day and I just want a piece of cake.

Celia: A little treat, yeah.

Anna: Yeah, a treat.

Richard: Reflecting on what you're saying there. There's a bit of a routine, but it's also places. So there's a place for that and a place for this and a place....

Celia: What do you mean?

Richard: Kind of like don't mess the areas. So, it's obviously the bedroom's for sleeping, there's a bathroom, the bathroom stuff happens there and then you go down and then there's a kitchen.

Anna: Food.

Celia: Don't eat breakfast at your desk.

Richard: Yeah, So, it helps my mind in the space. And then office is office. So that way I know when I walk in there, that's my next step to do or the walk out of there, then it's, all right, switch it off.

Anna: Another thing for me is exercise. Even if it's just walking around the block.

Celia: Or around your backyard.

Anna: Yeah, it doesn't have to be a big workout.

Richard: Fresh air. I went out the back of the other day with the dog and he was happy to sit in the sun. So, I'm just going to stay out here for a little bit too.

Celia: And allowing yourself to have that permission to actually sit and enjoy the sunshine.

Anna: And they're moments that we see the miracles that we were talking about. Like you're sitting in the sun and actually just being like, "Wow, the sun's actually shining, that's great."

Richard: Smell the roses.

Anna: Yeah.

Richard: Change of scenery can change your mindset.

Anna: Yeah.

Celia: Being grateful for those moments, being grateful for the fact that, yes, that is God in my life. Putting those two things together. Yeah.

Anna: So, what about connecting with others? Where does that sit, do you reckon, for you guys in relation to it being helpful little things each day to stay motivated, stay present, whatever?

Celia: It's really important actually. And sometimes I've actually forgotten to make those intentional things to connect with people. I've forgotten to phone mum and it would be like three or four days and I, "Oh, I actually haven't spoken to mum."

Richard: I think that's probably the hardest thing with these uncertain times is the disconnectedness. I know in myself, there's an introvertedness about me so I'm happy to be in my own space. But then often, there's the extroverted part where I want to hear or speak to someone. Normally that would happen in my routine day. So you might bump into someone in the office or the street or wherever it might be and you're having just a normal conversation. Those normal conversations don't seem to happen when you're disconnected. So normally, you're ringing or speaking to someone because you've got a need or a want, but then to actually have just a conversation, "How are you going?" It seems a little bit weird to start with, to call someone to ask, "How are you going?" But then-

Celia: You see that in the incidentals don't you? In day to dayness, which you were just saying we don't do. We're not having those incidental moments.

Richard: That's right. And when I first did it, it was this weirdness at the other end because they'd, "Oh, so you just call to say hi?" I said, "Yeah. I was just not checking how you going?" And it was weird because then a week later that person that I rang, they rang me and asked, "How you going?"

Celia: Oh, that's nice.

Richard: Yeah, I think it just feeds us and helps us. And I'm a strong believer that God works in moments. He puts moments on our hearts and our minds. It might just be a name or a memory of someone. And I think there are moments where I think that God prompts us to contact. We might not realize until we've actually spoken to them then go, "Oh, that's why I needed to speak with them." Or even it might be for their benefit, our benefit, it's trying to be intentional in that space.

Anna: And courageous to actually do that because it does feel a bit weird when you're used to just naturally bumping into people or whatever. So for you, Richard, you rang that friend and was like, "Hey, how are you going?" And that actually would have given him courage and encouragement to reciprocate. He may, or she may not have actually thought about doing that before. And that then creates connection, which is awesome.

Richard: And it's also coming up with those different ways that might be unique to us. And it might be through a social media post or through an email, or it might be through a handwritten letter even to connect.

Celia: And thinking about people other than yourself actually brings a lot of fulfillment to you. And maybe we're so focused on, "How can I get through this?" But that thinking of others is a really important part. God is part of that bringing us together. He wants us to be connected and in relationship. So, I reckon those prompts that we can listen to, that we make space for to connect with people, is going to make it easier.

Richard: Yeah. And when we take that step with God, with the other, it's pleasantly not surprising that they're in a similar situation to us.

Celia: We're all in this together. Oh, if I hear that again!

Richard: You've been listening to Messages of hope. For more about finding hope when things are overwhelming, go to messagesofhope.org.au, where you'll find free videos, podcasts, and articles to encourage you. Or for a free booklet call 1800 353 350. I'm Richard Fox. I hope you can join us again next week for another message of hope.

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