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SURVIVING TOUGH TIMES

Interview

Stephen: Oh I love an old comic strip, Hagar the horrible and obviously things have gone wrong. So he's standing at the cliff face and he's looking up to God and he says "Why me?" And then God comes back "Why not?"

Celia: When things are going wrong we often ask why me? How do you make sense when the tough times seem to just keep coming? This is messages of hope and I'm Celia Fielke. I recently got together with a few friends to talk about how they cope when life gets tough.

Tim: I just find the toughest things in life are when you're undergoing a big transition like you know going for job interviews and just being unsuccessful. I think there's a lot of pressure around that and there's a lot of kind of self reflection on "Am I doing the right thing, am I in the right place, am I good enough." That sort of thing, that's where I've struggled the most.

Simone: Tim's mother actually had a major stroke just before Christmas of last year and um and it was a tough year because after Tim's dad having part of his foot amputated and just constant bad health and my mother had breast cancer and a mastectomy. Oh it was just a real tough year last year and sometimes you say "God why are you doing this sort of stuff?"

Anna: I don't believe God makes bad things happen. I think sometimes that it's like our timing, his timing kind of thing. It's like why didn't he fix it quickly. Every now and then I feel like I hear from God that he says when I ask him "when is this going to happen?" He says soon. What the hell is soon?

Stephen: Oh I love an old comic strip, Hagar the horrible and obviously things have gone wrong. So he's standing at the cliff face and he's looking up to God and he says "Why me?" And then God comes back "Why not?" and I think you know sometimes stuff happens and we go "Do I really deserve this?" and the answer might be no but there's other times where I probably deserved a whole lot and I got away with it, dodged a bullet.

Tim: For me it's like these kind of experiences where you're out on your own, out of your depth and it's kind of like do we take enough chances and allow God to show us what he can actually do?

Celia: Sometimes when things are really tough, you're expecting the worst and then suddenly it all turns out ok. It makes you wonder if it's just a fluke or was someone looking out for you? Tim you've recently had an experience like that.

Tim: We were coming back from the Yorke Peninsula and we're towing a trailer and I actually said to the family "Can you hear that noise, it's a bit weird?" Next thing there's this tyre off the trailer going past us on the left hand side. So the trailer is kind of ground to a halt and we've pulled off the road. Our boys went off to find the tyre and they came back really happy that they found this other tyre. It was an identical tyre to ours but it had the whole hub on the tyre, so had five wheel nuts for us and it was everything delivered to us. And so there was this spare tyre that was literally two metres away from where ours landed and that was there for us to grab and we're just thinking "Wow", you know sometimes things happen last minute and we are just looked after really well.

Celia: Some people would say that's coincidence.

Stephen: You know you can say "yeah that's a coincidence" but if that tyre hadn't rocked up or if it had all been mutilated and they still were without a tyre, that's still an opportunity for God to show up. So in that instance you know it worked out and you look at that and you go well that was pretty cool and that was God. But if you didn't even find your tyre and you were stranded and stuck there for hours, you know, there's still been an opportunity for God to be at work. It wouldn't have changed the fact that that could have been a God incident or not.

Anna: For me all that stuff is like of course that's God. Why wouldn't it be? But that's because I have a faith, right. I already have a relationship with the creator of the universe. For someone who doesn't have that, they have their own, it's a coincidence or it's karma or it's fate. So I think the relationship thing is what changes how I see the world and how I view my outlook on God.

Celia: Some people talk about God as someone they know and turn to, like a really close friend - how would you describe that experience?

Tim: Some of my best friendships are longer term friendships and quite often my really good friendships develop out of a struggle that we've been through together, like at the same time. So it's almost like if you've gone through the mud together, you survive something, then you know your friendship can kind of stick and last. So sharing your vulnerabilities with a close friend, sharing your vulnerability before God, I think that's a time we often come to God is when we're up against it and maybe that's where prayer starts.

Celia: So for someone who doesn't really know where to start with developing a relationship with God or where to start in talking to God, or praying - how does that work?

Tim: I think prayer for me is a deliberate thought process of interacting with God and unlike meditation where you might kind of open yourself up to any kind of thought, I think it's a really conscious kind of interaction.

Anna: I've always thought about prayer as conversational. So it's not about getting the right answer or getting an answer. It's about what God is actually doing in me, in my character and the bigger picture.

Tim: My understanding of prayer is that it's what's in the heart that's really heard and genuine, you know, in front of God and that counts the most.

Jenny: I think prayer is traveling life's journey with God. There are times where I will be talking to him and there will be times of silence. I believe that I am talking to my creator and my savior and that I can only do that because God the Holy spirit is working inside of me.

Celia: So Jenny, that journeying with God sounds like a real relationship for you. How does that work in tough times?

Jenny: Relationships are very important in my life generally. Relationships with my family, with my friends and of course my relationship with God. I guess in tough times when like for example with my mum and her health. I'm grieving a changed relationship with my mum. It means that my relationships with my family are altered and the way I respond to friends or my work colleagues is just naturally effected and I guess then my relationship with God is effected too.

Life has its ups and downs and in those tough moments when it is too difficult to even talk to God because you are grieving or struggling, I believe that he carries us and understands that. All of those strong emotions are okay. So grief and anger and pain and joy are all okay.

Celia: So you'd even let your anger out at God?

Jenny: I say if you're feeling anger then tell God you're angry because for me one of the big things, relationship killers, I think is the silent treatment and closing in and...

Celia: How do you know he hears you?

Jenny: Well I don't know that he hears me but I believe that he hears me. I guess that's from you know reading the promises in his word. Reading the stories of his people in the Bible. They went through some horrible times and yeah God, you know, carried them through. It's easy in retrospect then to go "Oh yeah look he carried me there or look how he helped that person."

Tim: Yeah I think that the time you spend in that conversation, in the relationship with God, it gives you that time of self reflection of you know perhaps putting your mind in the right place to be open to trying something different or just appreciating that life's just not about yourself sometimes. We're only a small part of it and just to be a valued part of that I think is probably the important thing.

Stephen: Again it comes back to that relational thing with God. That it's not just "Okay here's my list of demands, can you meet them?" I've learnt to trust God. I've learnt to trust him so when I look at the circumstance like I know there's not a lot about this that makes sense. If I were you God, I would have boom, boom, boom you know? And I can say "This is what I would do" but I'm not God. And thank God I'm not because the place would be even worse than what it is but I trust him. And so I look at circumstances and think "Okay this has gone pear shaped-but regardless of how it turns out you're still going to be God and you're still going to be my God. It's that relationship."

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