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MUMS YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE PERFECT

Interview with Celia Fielke and Ali Hoopman

- Ali:** I think the world kind of tells you, you've got to have it all together all of the time, and that's just not real.
- Celia Fielke:** This is Messages of Hope and I'm Celia Fielke. Today I'm chatting with my friend and fellow mother of three, Ally Hoopman, about the highs and lows of being a mum.
- Celia Fielke:** As mothers, we often feel like we're not doing a very good job and that everyone else seems to have it all under control. Today, we're exploring what it means to be a mum, looking at some of our favourite parts, and maybe not so favourite parts of being a mum.
- Celia Fielke:** Ali, what do you like best about being a mum?
- Ali:** I love creating memories and when I think about my own childhood and what my mum did, I think about the memories that I'm trying to build up in our own children and build their character and grow them in a number of ways. So for me, I guess, love family trips and outings, and I always seem to be the family photographer who builds the photo album, because the photo album takes you back to creating those memories.
- Ali:** I even got into making YouTube clips so I could put it online and-
- Celia Fielke:** I know, I'm so impressed.
- Ali:** not worry about it and they can look at it whenever they want to.
- Celia Fielke:** I guess what I really loved back when the kids were little, I used to love the evenings. You know, when they were fed and bathed and you kind of had done all the really hard stuff, and we were just sitting on the couch, and I remember getting the books out. That was our thing. It was bed, bath, books, and banana. It was all these B's. We would sit and read these books together, and it was just beautiful because they'd huddle in close, and it was that wind down time. And I just remember that. I've got 3 teenagers now, and it's probably actually only in about the last eighteen months that I've actually stopped reading aloud with-
- Ali:** That's amazing.
- Celia Fielke:** The youngest two. I know. It's really amazing. But we try now and do things like maybe have a Sunday night movie all together to try and reconnect, because you're all in different places, and trying to have that time together again.
- Ali:** Do you notice how we have to plan to have time together as families these days? And often the mum is crucial in what that is going to look like. She kind of pulls everyone together.
- Celia Fielke:** Absolutely.
- Ali:** And our mums do it now, like pull our siblings together for family events, Sunday roast, those types of things. Christmas, Easter, who's meeting for Auntie such and such's birthday, and those types of things. So mums are integral to that.

Celia Fielke: But sometimes the planning that you do in your head doesn't always actually come out how it's meant to. And coming up we're going to have a look at what happens when things don't actually go to plan.

Celia Fielke: You're listening to Messages of Hope and I'm Celia Fielke. My guest Ali and I are talking about being a mum. How do we get through those times when we just feel like we're not doing a very good job? When things seem to be really hard and that family harmony is nowhere to be seen.

Celia Fielke: Ali have you ever had a time like that when things just didn't go to plan?

Ali: I do remember a Mother's Day a number of years ago where I had this grandiose plan and it was gonna be oh so wonderful. You see all the ads leading up on to TV, Mother's Day, you're jumping around in your fluffy, new pyjamas, and all that sort of stuff. Okay we're gonna have a great Mother's Day together, happy feel good time. We'll go on a bush walk. And we hadn't been to this place before, so I thought, great views, scenery, blah blah blah. Someone must have recommended it. So I thought a vision of what it was gonna look like. That's not what happened on the day.

Celia Fielke: What happened?

Ali: It didn't go according to the dress rehearsal that I had in my head at all. I don't know which kid was in a bad mood, but it seemed to infect the whole family. And I remember at one point, we got to this point and there was a lovely, lovely view over the Barossa and my husband said, "Right, I don't care how angry and upset you all are, and that you don't wanna be here, we're still having a family photo and this is about Mother's Day, and you will all be in the photo, and you will all look at the camera, and you will all smile." So, I don't know where that photo's gone, whether that's been buried somewhere. Yeah I don't know what went so bad about that day. So what, it doesn't matter in the big scheme of it.

Celia Fielke: I know what you say because I'm the one that plans things and what you're saying before mothers do a lot of that planning. And I planned, it was the trip of a lifetime for us and I planned this holiday and I'd been planning all year for it. And I can vividly remember being in one of the international airports and my son had just, I don't know what, it was probably something fairly minor, and I screwed up his boarding pass. And said, "That's it, you're staying here, the rest of us are getting on the plane". And I've just lost it, and they're looking at me in shock, as mum's just lost it again.

Ali: Just trying to fathom what's going to happen next.

Celia Fielke: Oh no. It's just those times where you know things just fall apart.

Ali: Sometimes we just get it wrong Cel's.

Celia Fielke: And whenever I get particularly frustrated with one or another of my children, I try to remember and tell myself that actually God has chosen me to be a mother to this child. And there's a reason I am their mother. And there's something that I can give them. There is a reason for this. It's not an accident.

Ali: It's not an accident.

Celia Fielke: There are times when you find our kids really frustrating, but there are other times when it's about us and we feel like we're not doing anything well. Coming up, we'll look at the guilt that we feel. It can be so overwhelming that we sometimes lose sight of what's really important.

Celia Fielke: You're listening to Messages of Hope. We're talking about what it's like to be a mum.

Celia Fielke: Ali, sometimes it feels like being a mother seems to come with a fair dose of guilt. You just feel like you're not quite doing things well enough or if you just worked a little harder, if you're the perfect mother, if I could cook, that would help.

Ali: Or you miss something big in their lives. And I remember one of our kids was struggling with learning needs and I had no idea and he got to year five before I thought I've really got to address this. I just thought maybe learning is harder for him, and then we realised that he had an auditory processing issue and that needed to be addressed. And how could I not have picked this up?

Celia Fielke: Was he child number three?

Ali: Two.

Celia Fielke: Oh, two. Okay, Ali, you're a bad mother. No.

Ali: So I carried a lot of guilt for a while. It took me a while to let go of that and move into, well what's a strategy. Now we know. Thank goodness we know. Let's work together to work on it. But yeah, you get those guilt things.

Celia Fielke: It's really hard, isn't it? We kind of judge ourselves pretty harshly. And I know I've been a working mum most of my motherhood and sometimes that's mostly just part-time. But that feeling of "I should be at work more" and "I should be getting that done" and giving 100 percent that I used to. And then I'm at home and I get home and I think, "oh, I'm just not doing that very well, I haven't gotten tonight's tea ready, I have got no idea what we're gonna eat, haven't been to the shop", and it is just that feeling of I'm not doing anything well.

Ali: Yes.

Celia Fielke: Not anything. And-

Ali: You know, I think the world kind of tells you you've gotta have it all together all of the time. And that's just not real.

Celia Fielke: I think that's right. There's a lot of stuff bombarding you with the perfect family. Those perfect images you have in your head. And the reality is so different.

Ali: It is.

Celia Fielke: So Ali, how do we get past that? How do we let go of that guilt and just be happy with what we are and what we do?

Ali: It's hard because sometimes you even go into the zone of, well Celia's have you ever had those thoughts where, "What would life be like if I wasn't a mum"? If I didn't have these-

Celia Fielke: All the time.

Ali: Three blessings. Because sometimes they don't feel like blessings.

Celia Fielke: Think about, I might have time to read a book, I might have a clean house, and you do, then that's something else to feel guilty about. The fact that you're even having those thoughts. But it's so true because that life you had before you had children seemed fairly uncomplicated, but the other part of it is, I think about what blessings I've had having these children. I mean, we have, they've given me so much. They've grown me as a person as well, but it's just the love. I've never experienced the love before that I have for my children.

Ali: That's right. It's incredible.

Celia Fielke: It's a different type of love. Different to the love I have for my husband. It's a fierce love and I sometimes think about, it's given me a really great insight into the love that God has for us. Because he is our father and I think if I love my children this much...

Ali: And he tells us he loves them even more -.

Celia Fielke: I know.

Ali: Each of us, and we're a child too, we're a child of His as well.

Celia Fielke: And that blows me away.

Ali: He gives us the ultimate example of what parenthood is. It is unconditional. It is never ending. It is the open arms when you've made a mistake and come back to me because I'm safe. I'm God. I love you no matter what. And as parents, when we stuff up, we can go back to him just the way our kids come and connect with us.

Celia Fielke: You've been listening to Messages of Hope. For more encouragement in your role as a mum, go to messagesofhope.org.au. where you can order a free booklet about finding the fun in parenting.

Celia Fielke: God has given you the gift of being a mum and he can give you the strength and joy you need.

Celia Fielke: For your free booklet on finding the fun in parenting, go to messagesofhope.org.au or call 1-800-353-350, that's 1-800-353-350.

Celia Fielke: I'm Celia Fielke from Messages of Hope, a part of the Lutheran church where loves come to life. I hope you can join us again next week for another message of hope. Real hope to cope with life's challenges.

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