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FRREDOM FROM SHAME

Round The Table Conversation

“I remember being late for school and having everyone in the class looking at you as you came in to class late feeling so ashamed that you were arriving late for school. It's something I still carry with me now.”

I'm Richard Fox and this is Messages of Hope. Do you ever feel ashamed? It's an awful feeling. Sometimes the affects of shame can stick with us even from childhood. Today I'm talking with Celia Fielke and Noel Due about shame. Why do we feel ashamed, and what can we do about it?

Richard: We've all been embarrassed at some point in our lives. Sometimes it affects us so deeply that it sticks with us and can pop up when we least expect it. Recently Noel moved back to where he grew up as a kid and the memories came flooding back.

Noel: I tell you just recently I was cleaning out something in one of the back sheds of the house we've bought, and there was a particular can of oil in there, and the last time I used that sort of oil was when I was cleaning my air rifle when I was a boy of about 10 or 12. Suddenly all the memories came back. Including the day that me and a mate found an abandoned house, which we thought was derelict and shot out all the light bulbs for target practice. In fact, it was a house that was owned by people and was due to be rented. When I discovered that I felt so ashamed. I've not told anyone until now, so I've confessed to you publicly.

Richard: Talking about childhood, I remember being late for school was one of the most shameful things, walking in, being late and having everyone in the class looking at you as you came in to class feeling so ashamed that you were arriving late for school. It's something I still carry now, if I'm late into a room or I walk into a room of people and I'm the only one coming in, I feel very ashamed and very embarrassed or exposed.

Celia: It's that feeling isn't it that you can just feel it coming up from here, you never forget that feeling, do you?

Richard: No, no.

Noel: It's a childhood thing you've carried through to adult life, isn't it?

Richard: Yes it is. Shame is often kept hidden and we try to deal with it within ourselves. It's not surprising, that's the very nature of shame but sometimes it comes out into the open and affects those around us too.

Celia: That's a bit like my parenting I guess. I probably shouldn't say how ashamed I am of my parenting.

Noel: I've confessed.

Celia: I was shouting at my son the other day, as I do, but I was really aware, "Can you close the windows?" because I didn't want the neighbours to hear me shouting. You know how the neighbours hear everything or at least I perceive they do? Afterwards I remembered thinking, "That's exactly what my mother used to do," and I swore I'd never be my mother. It's that fear of it doesn't matter what happens inside your walls, but you don't let the neighbours hear what's going on. You keep your own dirty laundry inside the house. There I was doing the same thing, I'll shout at you but only if the windows are all closed.

Richard: There's a lot of perception involved isn't there?

Celia: Yeah there is.

Richard: Of how people are going to perceive you.

Celia: Yeah, and that has been ingrained in me I guess from my childhood too, about that perception of that facade you present to the outside world.

Noel: It is an interesting thing isn't it, that we always feel we've got an audience somewhere?

Celia: That's probably quite relevant to the kids with the social media stuff nowadays. The fact that on Facebook they've got all their posts of what they're doing, how they're feeling, how many friends they've got on there. Whether they're liked or not.

Richard: Yeah, or disliked.

Celia: Or disliked yes, or defriended.

Richard: Absolutely. Defriended yeah. The whole shame of having no friends or no one liking you.

Celia: Yeah, so it's very much in your face about what

people think of you, isn't it?

Richard: Yeah, particularly because it stays up on the internet too, so it's there for anyone to see.

Celia: You can't escape from it.

Noel: It's even more subtle than that I reckon. I reckon it's not just what you think of me, it's what do I think of myself if you have this opinion of me? In other words, we get our own view of ourselves according to the audience we're listening to.

Richard: So it's not the fear of what other people can perceive of us, but it's being ashamed of what we think other people are thinking of us?

Noel: Yeah, it's very very subtle isn't it?

Celia: Yeah.

Noel: It's very, very, very subtle.

Celia: Yeah.

Noel: The common denominator is that we've got this audience that we feel that we have to perform before or feel exposed in front of.

How have you dealt with embarrassing moments from your past? Your story could help someone else. Please share it with us on our Facebook page, Messages of Hope.

Richard: We've been talking about how our perception of what others think can lock us into a deep feeling of shame. But there is good news, it all depends on the audience we're listening to.

Noel: It's interesting as a Christian pastor I've found that people often feel that God is their audience. In some ways He is, He's the biggest and most important.

Richard: Yeah he's always around us.

Noel: Yeah, He's the biggest and most important audience, but they respond or react to God as children. We think when we're children we can hide stuff from our parents. You think that by keeping the windows closed you can hide stuff.

Celia: Yeah, He's probably actually already in that room, inside the closed doors isn't He or the closed windows?

Noel: That's right, that's right. God's the audience but it's not a condemning audience.

Celia: What do you mean?

Noel: Again, speaking as a Christian pastor, and from my own experience I'd have to say the most beautiful thing is to realize that Jesus knows us and sees us, and knows us from our conception all the way through and is not ashamed. He's not ashamed of the stuff ups we've made. He's not ashamed of the mistakes. He's not ashamed. In a beautiful verse in the Bible He says, "He's not ashamed to call us His brothers and sisters." Whereas often if we've had a family member who's disappointed us or brought shame to the family, we cut them off.

Richard: Yeah, even though He sees all that shame, and sees what we do, and what we've done, and what we think, He still calls us his brother and sister.

Celia: It's really different isn't it?

Richard: He loves us.

Celia: Compared to our fear of what everybody else thinks of us. We can know that there's nothing to fear, yeah?

Noel: That you can be exposed before God, spiritually naked before God and don't have to fear that he's going to condemn you because of that, but that's the very place-

Richard: Or cut you off or-

Noel: Yeah that's the very place that He comes to you.

Richard: Yeah.

Noel: He comes in a very beautiful, sympathetic way because He himself was naked and exposed on the cross.

Richard: That's where I take heart. There's God himself in Jesus on that cross being shamed for all the world to see.

Celia: But He understands, I guess that's the big thing, that He understands our shame. He knows that, he understands what it's like, but he's there, and accepting us.

Noel: Yeah it's beautiful that Jesus will never unfriend me from His Facebook wall.

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