

LIFE TOGETHER WHEN APART

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Richard: Hi, this is Messages of Hope and I'm Richard Fox. How do you make a relationship last? Even when you're forced to spend weeks apart. Today, we're speaking with Luke and Jo. Their relationship has been tested because Luke often travels away for work. Listen to Luke and Jo share what they've learned as a family and as a couple. Hear what they have learned about each other and how communication and a relationship with God can help. Luke and Jo have been married for over 20 years, but Luke's work can sometimes take him away from his family for weeks at a time. So there's oftentimes where it's just Jo and the four children at home. What's parenting like when Luke is away for work even weeks at a time?

Jo: I have to admit that I do struggle. The children do well with the connections through video chats, but I struggle emotionally to connect in that way. And so most often I just wait for him to return. And let him have it. No, I don't, but you do acknowledge that you have to take up a certain level of responsibility that I always thought was going to be a shared responsibility. It does get hard. We do actually have moments where it just, it would just help if I had one more responsible adult in the house that would be really helpful. But when I don't have that, there are sometimes when the children do step up but there are other times when you do see that there's a real need for their father to be there. So it's a journey and it is challenging. It's not easy, but in most situations we try and offer the things that they can hope into. So like, dad will be home and then we can do this. So the things that they can be looking forward to when dad returns, things that they wouldn't necessarily get to do with their mum.

Luke: When we couldn't really travel, we've been fortunate to have, four or five acres. So, we set the tent up in the middle of the paddocks out the front and, went out there and made a fire and have done all the camping sort of things and cooked out there. And it's just taking the kids out of their environment that they're normally in and putting them somewhere else which is good. But yeah, you adapt, you learn to adapt to your children so you can meet them where they're at.

Richard: You're listening to Messages of Hope. Coming up. We'll hear more from Luke and Jo about their relationship and how being apart for weeks impacts their relationship. I'm Richard Fox and you're listening to Messages of Hope. Being married can be challenging at the best of times, let alone when you're apart for weeks. Here's Luke and Jo sharing about their relationship. How has your relationship impacted by Luke going away for work?

Jo: It can be challenging and straining on a relationship. Luke and I have built an unusual lifestyle where we both appreciate each other's independence, but also acknowledge the value of what we mean to each other as well.

Luke: But there is that danger, I guess, if you don't learn to reconnect, not just with your children but to do that with your partner as well. And there's certainly times when, we've been challenged a little bit when you come home and, you know, you want to unload all what's happened in the last six weeks or something onto each other and you're not always in that space to be able to do that.

Jo: Yeah, certainly not easy. And it's not something that even now comes natural. You have to work at it. There have been times when we've really fallen to pieces, to that point where like more often me than you, because you're a pillar of strength. Um, but there are times when we actually experienced that real deep sense of brokenness and pain, and I can see Luke trying to figure out how to fix it, but then his response is quite surprising because he will actually say, well, shall we

pray about that? So our difficult circumstances when we are at our broken times, when we actually sit and pray together, we've actually learned how to pray together because of our difficult circumstances. It was awkward to start with, I have to admit, cause we're both actually quite introverted people by nature. And so to actually share that with each other, was quite, uncomfortable and strange to start with, but the more we did it, the more we connected, praying to God together and actually using words where we would actually sit there, either holding hands or, in a hug but actually praying to God out loud together.

Richard: You're listening to Messages of Hope. Coming up. You'll hear Luke and Jo share what has helped them and their relationship. Hi, I'm Richard Fox from Messages of Hope. Long distance relationships can be hard. For both the person working away and the person left. So what has helped your relationships through times when Luke has gone away?

Jo: Learning that I can't rely on my husband to meet all of my needs. It's finding good friends, and good music and surrounding myself with other forms and things that can actually help me and sustain me. But also being attuned to the things that my husband can provide, and acknowledging that he is an important person in my life. Just having that understanding of not expecting so much from him. God has sustained me through a lot of times when I haven't had that personal connection with my husband. And it sounds quite strange to be able to explain. But it's more about having a belief in God who cares for me and knows my needs and somebody that I can come to. You know, I can't share what's happened in my day with my husband every single night, because he's just not there, but I can share it with God. And I know that he is a listening ear and it doesn't mean that my husband doesn't care. It just means that he's just not available at that time. So who else can I turn to and so, that's a mutual respect knowing that we both have that connection with God. We talk about marriage where you have the rope of the three strands where you have the husband and the wife and God, and the rope of three strands bound together is quite a strong bond. And so when we actually add God as an element in our marriage, he both strengthens and affirms us.

Luke: I've learned to be able to unload my burdens onto God and have confidence that he will guide me in whatever path he wants to better my life basically. Throughout sort of conversations when I'm away or pick up texts or something, and I know Joanne's going through a tough circumstance or whatever like that. That's the only way I can help my family basically when I am away so it's to put some sort of a prayer protection over them. It gives me some sort of comfort that God is looking out for them.

Richard: You're listening to Messages of Hope. Be inspired and encouraged by following Messages of Hope on Facebook, Instagram, And LinkedIn. Coming up, we'll hear more about something Luke and Jo discovered about each other and how that changed everything. I'm Richard Fox and you're listening to Messages of Hope. Jo, tell me what it's really like to have Luke come home after weeks.

Jo: It was kind of fun in the early years when he'd be gone for eight weeks at a time and he'd come back and it'd be like a new boyfriend every eight weeks. But it became tiring after a while and we realized that, you know, if you actually expect the fresh and new each time that you're going to get disappointed, so you hold onto the other things, the lasting things. Like when he puts aside his work commitments to spend time together.

Luke: We've learnt to appreciate the need to make time for us, to be able to, have that time. We try and make time to go away for one or two nights, often we assume what the other person's thinking too. That can be dangerous and just giving ourselves that opportunity to pray things verbally gives the opportunity, not only to hand it on to God, but it also gives our partner, insight into what we're actually thinking.

Jo: Communication's also a big thing and it's not so much even about praying as such, but it's more about just sharing how we're feeling. Like, this really sucks or I'm really hurting right now. Even the other day I said to Luke, look, I'm not feeling right here. I don't know what's going on. And it is still a process that sometimes all I need is just that comforting arm. And I think he didn't really know that that's what I needed. He thought I had to be fixed. Thought he had to fix it.

Luke: It was a complete solution.

Jo: Yeah, he's the fix-it man. He is responsible for fixing major projects. And so, you know, if he can't fix his wife, then what use is he. So his way of serving me is to take the children away. So I've actually got some time to myself, whereas what I was actually seeking more than anything was quality time, and he's just actually taken that away from me. So it's finding that balance of not making an assumption. He's not gonna know what I need and actually being able to articulate this is what I need. That's been the learning curve for me too because I want him to just know what to do. I don't want to have to tell him this is how you love me. But it does actually take communication to get to that point. I couldn't work out why he came home from work frustrated until I discovered that it was because, like, I could have had an amazing day with the kids. The house was completely trashed because we had lots of quality time together but the dishes weren't done and the house was a mess. So he walks in thinking the house is messy and the dishes aren't done, but he doesn't understand. Yeah. So it was little things like that. You just acknowledge that you have to work on it. His purpose and his need in his family unit is to just be present and be that strength and loving arm.

Luke: So yeah, the biggest thing, because often I just jump into jobs at home that needed to be done. Learn to put that aside and, realize that that's not actually the important thing to do. It's, actually to strengthen the relationship first. And then often things will be a lot better from that point on.

Richard: Hi, I'm Richard Fox and you've been listening to Messages of Hope. You can watch videos, listen to podcasts and read free booklets on relationships and many other challenges we face in life to discover that there is hope at messagesofhope.org.au. Go to messagesofhope.org.au to be inspired and encouraged. And you can also subscribe for free to this weekly program at messagesofhope.org.au. Or for a free booklet call 1800 353 350. Thank you for listening to Messages of Hope.

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