

For Broadcast:

RECONCILING RELATIONSHIP CONFLICT

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Richard: Hi, I'm Richard Fox from Messages of Hope. Reconciling your relationships can be one of the hardest things to do. And it can even seem impossible. Paul Kerber has worked with people to reconcile their relationships for many years. Despite some of the most difficult scenarios to reconcile. Paul shares that there is hope for your relationships.

Paul: I did have a situation once where I boarded the plane and sat down, had some initial chit chat with the lady alongside me and she said, well, what do you do? And I said, well, I help people work through conflict and she just boldly said, we need to talk. Okay, we'll talk. And our conversation revolved around her sharing her experience. She was leaving her husband. She had hopped on a plane and she was heading away from her home, her husband, and sadly, she said, "look, I'm not sure I'm doing the right thing to leave him". So we got talking and she was looking for guidance, but what she didn't really think about was that there was a time where she had to look at her own inner voice, you know, what was going on in her heart. And to be able to look at that from the side of being, 'is my decision-making actually good or not' and I was there to simply give her questions that helped to look at those things. I could sense clarity, as the conversation went, you could tell by her demeanour and the relief from her facial expression.

Richard: What questions specifically did you notice that really helped her?

Paul: So questions about what are you wanting and, what is it about your husband that is causing you to think about leaving and what does this mean for you and your daughter? And what does it mean for the whole family relationship, your wider family? I think the key question though, is what is she really wanting? She was toying up with being a young mum, but then having some pursuits that she wanted to follow and they didn't match up.

Richard: Were there any aha moments for her?

Paul: Yes. One of the responses about her husband and she was like, well, um, in reality he's actually a good husband. He's trying to do the right things by our family. And so there was an appreciation for him. One of the key things in relationships is affirming things that you hold together. And that often doesn't happen when we're heading in a direction that's causing difficulty in the relationship. And then being able to ask her some questions like what would you ask your husband that you're in this position now? How are you going to re-engage with him, knowing that you've left? How are you going to re-engage? You're gonna have to have a conversation somewhere. What are the questions you might ask in that situation?

Richard: So how did she look when she left?

Paul: Well, it's interesting because she was very, peaceful. When I first met her, she was energetic and wasn't in a phase where she could even work with a child on her lap on the plane. And she went to a place of being in control of herself. The power of forgiveness is amazing and, when people operate in a relationship that is difficult, when they've got the right motive to work through it, it gives them hope to go forward.

Richard: So have there been any stories or experiences you think oh, this could seem impossible?

Paul: There was one situation where a gentlemen came to me, his marriage had broken down. He had children and the relationship wasn't going well. So even just working out the practical things that needed to be done for the children, always brought tension that led to frustration and anger. The thing he said that really moved me was he said, "is there anything I can do?" And you could sense a person who was at rock bottom and yet, looking for hope. And I simply said, let's have a chat. The most important thing was to let him talk. I talk about the lift, and our lift is full. You've got to let the people get out of the lift before you can get anything in.

Richard: Listening to someone, it's something we overlook.

Paul: Yeah.

Richard: We often think we have to fix something.

Richard: Reconciling relationships at times can seem impossible. But listening is a great place to start.

Paul: The starting point was very much about what had happened in the journey of the relationship with his wife and in that conversation, a lot of the blame was placed on her. I would say probably 99.9%

Richard: In his eyes.

Paul: That's often the starting point that a person has. He felt that, she hadn't treated him fairly. She hadn't really been there for him, there were arguments. It wasn't just the situation that needed to be worked through. It was now deepened into a behaviour breakdown in the relationship. Not being able to even communicate well and have respect. And the starting point was to help him see how he'd been behaving.

Richard: How did you go with that?

Paul: Well, it's a really difficult place to go and I've found one thing really helpful is, not try and do the work, not try and fix the problem so I actually asked him to read a passage of scripture .

Richard: What did you get him to read?

Paul: Ephesians chapter four. It talks about, quarrelling, arguing, the passage right at the end verse 32 concludes with how to be kind and compassionate to one another forgiving one another as God in Christ has forgiven you.

Richard: How did he take that?

Paul: I asked him to go away and just read through the text and answer a couple of questions. Do you think this text applies to your situation? If so, how? If not, why not?

Richard: Good questions.

Paul: And then I also gave him a gospel verse to read from first Peter 2:24. And I said, when you read that, the question to answer is what has God done for you?

Richard: And what was that verse?

Paul: Jesus has taken our sin on himself and by his blood, we have been cleansed, made clean. So that he could draw on that word of forgiveness from God to look at his situation.

Richard: It wasn't all about making him think, this is what you've done wrong. The reconciliation journey for him was also to see the hope of forgiveness.

Paul: Absolutely. I find it difficult to look at what I do wrong any time.

Richard: Yes. No one likes getting told off.

Paul: Exactly. And so, if I can draw on what God has done for me through the forgiveness that is there in Jesus, then I can look at that in a different light. I can look at it with hope that there's something that's greater. And I can also look at that place where Jesus took that wrongdoing, whether it was wrongdoing I did or wrongdoing the other person did, he's taken it for us.

Richard: Yeah.

Paul: So that helps me look at myself differently and look at the other person differently and have hope that God can do something in this situation.

Richard: This is Messages of Hope. It's not easy overcoming conflict and reconciling a relationship. Paul has been sharing a story about a husband he counselled.

Richard: Did he come back to you with any thoughts or reflections?

Paul: He came back to me, I just asked, how did you go with the task? And I was absolutely taken aback. Because he was able to self-assess what I couldn't do, God could, and he could see what was motivating it, it was really, really deep. He's pouring out his failure. The reality of that was crushing. I shared with him that Jesus has taken all of that on himself to the cross and you don't now see it on yourself. Whenever that comes up into your mind, you see where Jesus has taken it. And you're forgiven and you're dearly loved by God and you are clothed in the righteousness of Jesus.

Richard: That's pretty special.

Paul: And he really felt free to be able to confess to his wife who he'd separated from, his side of what led the relationship to break down. It changed everything. It allowed him to work with her in deciding what to do with the children. It changed his demeanour of working with her in the conversation. He was much more at peace. He was operating more from a position of listening to what their side of the story was.

Richard: This is Messages of Hope. Sometimes relationship reconciliation may not work out as you thought. But there is still hope separated.

Paul: Still separated. Sometimes the consequences of things that are our failures result in that, but his words were really telling.

Paul: And that it's really given him peace. It's changed his life. It's changed him in a way that, as he said, if I would have known these things earlier, I'd think I'd still be married.

Richard: Wow.

Paul: But he's been able to move forward with his life in that situation with his ex-wife, with his children, a great role model for his children. You can see a chain has been broken. That was a bad chain. And now there's a hope for the next generation of learning and doing because of his life living this out.

Richard: So what are some of those things and that he lives by now rather than what he used to?

Paul: The first thing is he's drawing on his forgiveness. He's so appreciative of being forgiven by God. And he's so appreciative of that forgiveness, giving him hope for a way forward. So, that in itself really has linked to him starting his own life again, from that point, into close relationships again for him to explore that.

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