

## RECONCILING FAMILY CONFLICT

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**Richard:** Hi, this is Messages of Hope. And I'm Richard Fox. Have you ever struggled with conflict in your relationships? Even with the most loving relationship conflict is unavoidable and inevitable. So how do you work through conflict and be reconciled? Paul Kerber has worked in reconciliation for many years and has many insightful stories and learnings to help couples, families, and groups. Coming up, Paul will share some personal stories that may help you in your relationship with a spouse, parent, or child.  
So Paul, why have you been so interested in helping people with reconciliation?

**Paul:** There was a time when my daughter was quite young and she was outside. I went out of the house and as I turned the corner, I noticed that she had a texta and she was doing some fancy artwork on our very white caravan. And as I swung around the corner, I thought, oh, and then the thought came, this is an opportunity to work with the situation in order to bring her forgiveness rather than being judgemental and punishing.

**Richard:** I bet that wouldn't be the first thought that most parents would have had.

**Paul:** I must tell you, it's not always the first thought I have. So it was a real blessing to have that thought and to think opportunity and to have the focus of there is hope with forgiveness, for relationships.

**Richard:** How did you get to that point?

**Paul:** It's generated out of a love for the person. So that's my daughter, you know, that it's a person I love. And it's also generated out of thinking about who I am in the sight of God and how much he loves me. So, how does that kind of flow out into this situation?

**Richard:** Yeah so how'd you go with her?

**Paul:** Basically, I went over to where she was and I knelt down and I said what are you doing there? What's going on there and already a, you know, a face dropped. And then I said, what are you doing? Is that a good thing to do? Or is it not a good thing to do? And I could see the tears welling up in her eyes. And I said, well, if it's not a good thing, you know, there was no verbal response yet, but if it's not a good thing, how about you, you fix it. And she started frantically rubbing the texta with her forearm, and now the tears were really flowing. And I said, look, how about, you come with me and we headed into the laundry and I've got some methylated spirits and a white cloth, and we went back out to the caravan and I said, just watch and I put the methylated spirits on the cloth and I wiped over the texta and of course it came off and I could show her the black texta on the cloth. Instantly the relief on her face was just all over the place. And I said, this is really a picture of what Jesus has done for us. Yeah, we did wrong things and we fail, but he's taken that on himself and he did that and took it to the cross and therefore you're forgiven.

**Richard:** Wow. So what did that mean for your relationship?

**Paul:** Well, I said you are loved by your heavenly father and your earthly father loves you too. And you know what your heavenly father forgives you, your earthly father forgives you too.

**Richard:** And what did that mean for her?

**Paul:** Well, all of a sudden I had my young daughter on my lap, grabbing me around my neck hugging me, and we just hugged and hugged and hugged. And when we released from that hug, I let her go. She just headed off playing happy. It was a place where through that forgiveness, I didn't have to say "don't you ever do that again!" Because she knew in her mind now that, that wasn't a good thing to do, but what it meant for our relationship was trust. I trusted her, she trusted me, and it built our relationship. It helped build that trust.

**Richard:** You're listening to Messages of Hope. When we are first confronted with conflict, it's easy to get angry and want to punish the other person. However, there are ways it can lead to better outcomes. Like the story between Paul and his daughter. Coming up. We'll listen to Paul, share an embarrassing story between him and his wife. While he was setting up for a reconciliation training session. You're listening to Messages of Hope. Paul has led many sessions on reconciliation. But one day there was a valuable lesson he learned as he was preparing to lead a group.

**Paul:** I'd love to tell you a story about a journey of me and my wife. We were setting up for a workshop to teach. Reconciliation. We were in the school and I thought I've got to have things a certain way, and make sure that the place isn't cluttered. I thought, well, just the chairs we don't need we'll put them in another room. The upshot of it was that all of the team were there helping set up and I'd gone out to get something. I came back and I saw the chairs stacked. They'd gone along the side wall and I said, how about we just grab the chairs and put them in the other room. My wife says, no, they're okay. They're out of the road. That's okay. And I'm like, how about we just put them in the other room, you know, then they're out of the road. She said, no, they're fine there. Cut a long story short. I said, that's it. Isn't it. You always get your way. And I walked out. I was really great. Wasn't I? Here I am supposed to be teaching reconciliation and you know, this is, this is humanity at its best. Isn't it? So, uh, well maybe it's at it's worst.

So, I had some things to do and I came back, put something else in the room and I had to go back to my office. And I remember on the way, going, you had this inner conversation, Paul, you know what you've done? Haven't you? Yeah. You know what you get to do don't you, I don't want to do that. I don't want to say I was wrong. I don't want to say I embarrassed you. I don't want to say that I shamed you and shame is a huge thing. And so I was drawing on heavenly Father, what have you done for me in your Son, Jesus. How am I in your eyes because of Him. I'm forgiven, so I'm free, You've already forgiven me for what I've just done but I need this reconciliation in this relationship and these relationships with other people who also witnessed and heard what I said, and it was only drawing on that, that took me back into that room and, led into a confession with my wife and said, look, I need to say something to you. And this is what I've done. This is what I've said.

**Richard:** Is that in front of everyone else?

**Paul:** Thankfully, everyone was still there. And that gave an opportunity to connect with all the people who had been affected by this.

**Richard:** I can imagine you're walking into that space that would have been daunting.

**Paul:** Absolutely. Absolutely. Here I am the great example of a failure and it was a challenge and that's why drawing on what God has done for me and how he sees me in Jesus, how he's forgiven me. That's what could hold me to go forward. gave me the courage, gave me the encouragement, gave me the hope. And it was the hope of that. If I do this, there may be forgiveness and healing. And so in the process of my confession now, even confess that I said things that weren't even true. I know that this has affected your relationships with these other people here. I didn't even get to ask for her to forgive me and to bring me God's forgiveness. Do you know why before I could finish my confession, uh, still get a bit emotional. She came over and brought me that forgiveness. Just hugged me. And it was so healing to think in that place of my shaming myself, that she could bring me healing. When I'd done that to her. That's the power of forgiveness. And for those others then to say that what I'd done it also affected them. I asked for their forgiveness and their willingness to forgive it healed the relationships and it brought the trust back into the relationship to build on that trust that had just started again, and that we could go forward together.

**Richard:** Just shows we're all in need of it aren't we. We're need of forgiveness.

**Paul:** Yep. And we have a loving God who lavishes. Yeah. And wants to lavish us with it and for it to be a power at work, not only in our relationship with him, but also in our relationship then with each other.

**Richard:** Yeah. And those moments like that, what a powerful witness, and you probably taught and shared reconciliation with those people in their room through that one moment better than you could've lectured them.

**Paul:** Yeah, exactly. Yep. Yep. Just wonderful to have this gift of forgiveness that we can have together and to bring it in a world that is really thirsting for it and in need of it.

**Richard:** Absolutely.

**Paul:** And to know it's there for you, know, for people to know it's there for them.

**Richard:** You're listening to Messages of Hope. Dealing with conflict and working towards reconciliation. Can be difficult and can make you feel vulnerable. But taking the first step and owning up to what we've contributed to the situation and confessing that can lead to amazing results.

Feel free to follow messages of hope on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube for more inspiration and hope for your relationship.

Paul a teacher in reconciliation, has been sharing his personal stories about how to work through conflict in family situations. Paul, what would you say is important for us to focus on in our relationships?

**Paul:** We focus, tend to focus more on expectations and failed expectations, some form of, you know, what's required. So a form of law and very little of our conversation with each other is affirming one another in the forgiveness that is for all people in Jesus. We need to focus more on forgiveness that he brings. You know, he died for all people and he carried the sin of all people to that cross. And it's drawing on that for ourselves. And so, in our conversation with each other, you know, for sometimes that no reason at all, I appreciate when my wife comes to me and says, Paul, I just want you to hear that you're a forgiven dearly loved child of God.

**Richard:** Do you say it back?

**Paul:** Well, I do, but I've got to be mindful of the context, because if I say, you know, Karen, you are a dearly loved forgiven child of God. She'll say, what have I done wrong? So I might have to say preface it and say, I'm saying this is absolutely the only reason that you get to hear how much God loves you. It's not about you've done something wrong. But this is what Jesus has done and you are totally forgiven and dearly loved by God.

**Richard:** So, really the key is to really reflect on our own situation and our own motives. And take stock of those and then hear those words of forgiveness that we are loved, dearly loved forgiven.

**Paul:** Yes.

**Richard:** And then that is a love then that we can share with others. And it's not a manipulation for our own benefit, but simply for the other. And then in that space, God works. Through that space and could probably do more than we ever imagined.

**Paul:** absolutely drawing on that forgiveness that you have from God. And then that freeing you to live with that as a gift, you know, we receive it as a gift and then this is a gift we have for each other. And even if the relationship is in a difficult place, working in that space, drawing on that forgiveness is a place where we are led through peacefully. Yeah. With an inner peace to do this for the sake of the other person too, for their wellbeing.

**Richard:** 'Cos we love them.

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