

Living Amongst Floods

Interview with Charmaine

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Richard: Hi, I'm Richard Fox and welcome to *Messages of hope*. Charmaine and her husband were trapped in the New South Wales floods looking after their livestock. Charmaine shares her story of how they survived through it all. Living through a disaster, like a flood or a bushfire can be frightening, depressing, and devastating. Many people have been impacted by floods. Some multiple times. Roads, bridges, houses and even townships have been washed away in floods. So, how do you make sense of a crisis like this and how do you survive through it all? Charmaine is sharing her experiences from the new south Wales floods. Charmaine. How have you been affected by the floods?

Charmaine: We've had flooding go through a creek in our farm or through our farm which has stopped us using some of our property. And we have also recently been isolated from our shopping centre so that we weren't able to go shopping for about five days.

Richard: So, what does it meant for you to be caught in the floods?

Charmaine: For us to be caught in the floods, the biggest thing was that we couldn't leave and go to our places of employment which we have as well as we run a farm. Our farm didn't go completely underwater. But we weren't able to go to our other employment.

Richard: What did that mean for you?

Charmaine: Well, we were stuck on our farm, basically, my husband and I together. Which was okay, but I think the fact that I knew I couldn't go to town or other places affected me a bit. And I was a bit anxious, and I know I got a bit tense. So, I had to really consciously think about it wasn't his fault that I couldn't go anywhere or that he was there with me all the time.

Richard: Charmaine, you were cutoff, so you couldn't get out. How did you and your husband get along and work through what you had to with the animals and the farm?

Charmaine: Well, we were able to work on our farm. It just made it very muddy. Whenever we were working with our animals, it was just muddy underfoot, cos it was a lot of rain. The creek rising stopped us. There was still work to be done. Calves needed to be weaned and we could work with them. The biggest effect was that we couldn't go anywhere. And yeah, we got a bit tense with each other, and we had to remember that we had to be kind to each other because we were a bit tense. We both spent a bit of time in prayer and that helped to calm us. We knew that God was there with us and that we were safe. We just needed to be patient with what we were doing. Working on the farm was good cos we could go and work in separate areas. Give us a bit of time away from each other. We had to remember that God was with us and that we were safe and that he would keep us safe and that we could rely on him.

Richard: Charmaine as we speak, what is currently happening with the floods?

Charmaine: The creek is rising again. We don't expect it to flood as bad and that will be as isolated, but the rain at the moment keeps coming. So, our property is still going to continue to be wet. We still won't be able to get across the creek to the other part of our farm. Challenges are still there.

Richard: So, how is that going to affect you?

Charmaine: Well, it is because we are having more cattle on agistment, which we have to pay for. So that's a cost that we wouldn't necessarily have. But the bigger cost is that neither of us are getting our employment wages because a lot of the rain is affecting how much we can work in our jobs away from our farm.

Richard: So, is that adding another level of pressure?

Charmaine: It is, it's starting to add a bit of pressure because normally we sell cattle every couple of months to have a farm income and supplement that with our job income. But at the moment, our farm income is all that we are able to rely on and it's not happening as often as we would like it to happen.

Richard: There can be many different types of pressures when going through a crisis. Finances could be one of them. Caring for each other, emotionally, financially, physically, mentally, and spiritually through times like these is important. When you wake up in the morning and you see the water there and you know, you're going to be cut off for the day. You've got things to do and many different pressures. How do you approach the day? What gives you hope and the drive to keep going?

Charmaine: One of the things that we are fortunate with is that my husband and I, we both have a strong faith in God and that he is in charge, and he has control of the weather. Whether our cattle are doing well or whatever. God is in control. So actually, when I get up and look out my front door at the moment, I have the most beautiful vista. It's like we have river frontage or a lakeside view. The creek that goes through our place is probably 200 meters wide. What we can see, it's not very deep. It's probably only six feet deep, so we actually have a beautiful view when we get up and actually seeing that view helps me to think well. Things are challenging, but things are still good. We still have grass for the animals to eat. We do still have income, albeit it's less than what we would like it to be. And for us personally at this stage, we can still see the beauty of where God has put us.

Richard: What would you say to encourage people who are going through tough times? Like the floods. What would you share with them to help them get through the day ahead?

Charmaine: I know it sounds a bit trite, but God is in control and he does have a plan for us. We may not see where the plan or what the plan is and where he's leading us, but he wants good in our lives and I know it can be tough. Going through these challenges, whether it's a flood or a fire or even any other sort of financial stress. But when we let God lead us where he wants us to go, we receive incredible blessings. That's something I've learned, not just from this flood, but from many years of challenges in my life up to this point.

Richard: God is with us through the crisis times in our lives. Sometimes it may be difficult to see him there. But God is always available for us to cry out to and ask for help. He's always listening and caring about you. We see this, when we say Jesus Christ on the cross and the

suffering he went through for us. He knows what suffering is and is here to carry you through. And bring you his peace, love and hope. Charmaine. What does your future look like from here going forward?

Charmaine: My husband and I we're trying to see where God wants us to be. Five years ago, we moved to a place where we felt God was calling us to be. So, we feel confident that we are where we are supposed to be geographically. And he's revealing what he wants us to be doing, step by step, in our lives, our livelihood and in our church life.

Richard: So, what does the next couple of days or next week look like for you on the farm with all the floods coming?

Charmaine: We'll probably be moving cattle around again depending on where the water in the creek is, if it's high, well, we still can't use those paddocks. Some more cattle may go onto agistment. I'm raising calves. In a good season, our property can look a lot of cattle. But in the drier seasons, it struggles to look after the cattle. So we try to only keep a smaller number of breeding cattle so when it turns dry, we'll be able to sell the calves that I'm raising and still have income on that rather than selling our breeding stock.

Richard: What would you share with your husband now to encourage each other, to get through?

Charmaine: I know that he worries about finances a lot which even though I'm probably more in charge of where the money goes I'm not as worried by the finances. I trust that God has the plan and over our 30 years together God has always provided for us. So probably the one thing that I would say is that God has always provided for us throughout our life together, and I trust that God will continue to provide for us. Sorry I get emotional when I talk about things. That's just the way I am. That's how God has made me.

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