

New Beginnings

Discussion with Tania, Richard and Clare

Tania: Today on *Messages of hope*, I'm chatting to Richard and Clare about their experiences of new beginnings. Richard was the *Messages of Hope* presenter before I was. However, he recently moved to being a pastor in a church in Adelaide. And Clare came to Australia from the UK. Since then, she's experienced lots of new and different challenges that comes from being a mum and navigating work and family life.

So, Clare, I'm interested to know, what do you think of when you hear the term, new beginnings?

Clare: When I hear new beginnings, I think managing expectations. And I think that's really just from my experience of having many new beginnings over the last three years of moving country, starting a new job after having a career break. I've got four kids, so it's been very busy. And just adapting to many, many changes. I think originally, when I would think of a change, new beginnings is that excitement, but then I didn't really plan for the managing expectations of things that maybe didn't go too well.

Tania: Can you share an example of that?

Clare: When you're Googling back in the UK and you see photos of Australia, pretty much it's hot all year round, everyone's really tanned, and that was kind of the picture I had when I moved over to Australia. But actually, no, it's very different; you do have seasons, it does get cold, and also, you can't go to the beach every day, as, as much as that would be really nice. So I think for me, yeah, it is managing expectations.

Tania: When I think of the term new beginnings, I think that it can be a large thing, like Clare, you moving country - it's a huge new beginning. But it can also be those small little things like, if I stuff up one day, if I say some inappropriate things to my spouse or my children and I regret that, well of course I say sorry. Each day is a new beginning, blessed by God that I can have a look at the situation with fresh eyes.

Clare: I think it is daily, even just getting my kids ready in the morning. Yesterday, my youngest daughter was really tricky wanting to leave the house and I got really cross with her. And after I dropped all the kids off, I had that moment of, 'oh, I just feel awful that we did that.' And then when I picked them up, I then spoke to them and said, 'look, I'm really sorry, but I need your help.' And we had this really nice conversation. And then, like you said, Tania, that new beginning was the next day of me going, 'okay well, it's a fresh start again.' And I try and remember that.

So, I think that daily occurrence is really true, Tania, with the new beginning.

Tania: What about you, Richard? What do you think of when you hear the term new beginnings?

Richard: I think there's a little bit of unknown to it all. So, that can be excitement and fear all at the same time. Often new beginnings to me means you're leaving something. Something's happening in your past and then you're moving to something in the future that you're not quite sure about. So that can be a whole mixture of emotions with both sides. One is actually letting go and saying goodbye and moving out of that direction and then moving into a new beginning means what's awaiting.

And I suppose it depends too if it's something that you've made a choice to do or if it's something that's been imposed on you.

Tania: So, Richard, you worked in media for 12 years. Moving from a media role to becoming a parish pastor must have been a huge change!

Richard: Yes, it was strange walking out of media and walking into that environment. I felt really ill equipped to know what to do. But it's been an amazing journey. And I think the main thing for me being a pastor in the church into that space was knowing that God was in this. And that God has got me; he's there to help and to guide. And that meant a real lot. It gave me a lot of comfort, that this new beginning can happen and having the eyes to see all the positives of a new beginning sometimes, is very helpful.

I like how you said 'every day is a new beginning.' We wake up every day and there are moments throughout our day that can be new beginnings. Sometimes they can be from a conflict situation, and you think, 'okay, is this the end?' But then to actually realise that, no, there is possibility of forgiveness or a new start.

And we can see that in our Christian faith and how God gives us new starts with Jesus and the forgiveness and the love he has. God welcomes everyone. So, to have a new beginning then with God in that way can be a moment, it can be the start of the day, it can be a significant moment in your life. But I think having that hope of a new beginning sometimes means a lot and can take away any fear that you may feel in some of those situations.

Tania: You're mentioning attitude, really, that attitude of being positive about the new beginning.

Certainly, when I started in this role here with Lutheran Media, I felt overwhelmed to begin with. My background's in education, so I feel quite comfortable in the classroom and very comfortable in teaching children or adults.

Even public speaking doesn't particularly worry me, but did I know anything about the radio or the media industry? No! I realised I really didn't, and felt quite ill equipped. But I knew that God was with me and God had a plan and, maybe that plan was still unfolding. It wasn't really clear to me, though I felt a calling to

come into this space. And you know, it really has been a tremendous new beginning.

Clare: And I think, you know what you were saying, Richard, about hope - my youngest daughter about two years ago, she was diagnosed with a medical condition and I didn't even know what it was, and it came out of nowhere and I spent a lot of time in the initial stages, I think there was grief and there was just real confusion of 'what did I do wrong as a mum?' And I really kind of beat myself up about it and it didn't matter what any medical person would say that it was nothing to do with me. I felt that I needed to fix her. That was kind of my goal. And I spent a huge amount of time researching, being hopeful of that and actually through that process, I realised there was nothing to fix about my daughter. It was really just accepting and letting her be who she was. And that is just a real shift in our whole lives. And now I really try and work on this aim of enjoying the process. And going through that pain and fear and anxiety or whatever those feelings are, knowing that when you get to the end point, you can reflect back and go, 'I've learned so much about myself. I've learned how to be a better mum for that.' And I think when you said about that hope, it is just going, 'this is a real tough time for us as a family, because we're navigating things we don't really understand.' And then we go, 'but we're hopeful because we know it's going to be okay.'

And actually now, I've gone on to study in something I never planned to, and I have to be thankful to my daughter in the end, for that, because she's made me look at life in a completely different way. And I think it's only when those events happen where you do have a reset and go, 'okay, what does this new beginning look like now? It's not the one I planned, but it's different. But it's still really good.'

And I think it's managing those expectations and enjoying the journey as painful as it can be. I think it is really, really important; we have to remind ourselves of that.

Richard: Yeah, and I think you pick up something interesting there. It's one thing for us to go through change, but it's another then for our families, and how they feel about it and then how do we also I suppose as parents or partners actually go with that journey? Because it's one thing for us to come to terms with what's happening from the past to the new beginning in that space. But how our children or partner and family members cope is another challenge and sometimes it can be a burden on us.

Tania: So when I think of new beginnings, too, sometimes I think of, New Year's resolutions. Clare, are you a New Year's resolution kind of person?

Clare: Oh yeah! And I'm a to do list kind of person. So yeah, every New Year I do have my 'eat better, do the exercise, make more time...'
And I'm trying not to do every January now. I'm trying to do it in whatever time of the year. Maybe I'll start tomorrow, rather than, 'oh, I'll wait till January', because I think that's the other thing, you kind of delay that big new beginning. You're like, 'oh, I don't want to do it yet, I'm not ready.' Whereas I think actually I should just start doing it now.

Tania: What about you, Richard? Are you a New Year's resolution kind of person?

Richard: Maybe ongoing, but not necessarily around New Year's.

But someone actually pointed out something a while ago to me: we're so wrapped up in our to do lists of things to do, but actually to work on a 'ta-da' list. And I thought I hadn't necessarily heard that before. So kind of like New Year's resolutions in a way. But rather than just saying, 'I'm going to do this or give up that,' it's actually a 'ta-da' list is, well, what's on your heart? What is it that drives you or is important to you? And actually make time for that.

We're so good at getting the to do lists and 'I got to do this, run here, and be there for that person and this person,' but to then actually build in time to go on a 'ta-da' list. And so what is it that gives me joy?

When I took the call to go to Glynde, a couple of interesting things happened. I've never been really good at learning languages. But all of a sudden, you know, I've just started enjoying learning languages and communicating with people. But just re-prioritising too, actually. Making real time to, you know, spend with the family. To do a few things. And I suppose one thing for me is to not feel guilty about that. Because it is something important. It can be a new beginning and give enjoyment in life. But it also gives you that excitement. Life's not just about always working or always struggling to the next new thing or whatever like that, but actually taking the moment to smell the roses in a way.

Clare: You are right because I think life is moving so fast now. We do get really caught up with to do lists and, yeah, it's not always good for the heart.

Tania: And I think, you know, the 'ta-da' list is really something quite joyful. And I reckon God wants us to be people that enjoy life and live life abundantly. Know each new beginning is a new experience, a new chance to learn new skills or meet new people and I love that.

Tania: Richard, as a pastor, what's your wisdom about how having a faith and being a Christian fits into this idea of new beginnings?

Richard: I think the whole Bible is full of new beginnings, new creation, and Jesus says 'there's a new commandment I give to you,' 'there's new life.' And so the whole Christian faith is new beginnings. Baptism is a significant new beginning, whether that's been as a baby or later in life. It's a washing, it's a cleansing, it's a welcoming into God's family; you become a new member.

But it's throughout life. So, you live in that every day. And those moments when it doesn't look like a new beginning, it looks like old beginnings or repetitive, and you just can't break out of things. To know that there's a God who loves us, who wants a new beginning for us, who gives new beginnings in Jesus, that we can cry out and go, 'God help me with this.' He does give us a new beginning and it might just be a new, fresh way to look at it. So, it might not necessarily change your circumstances, but it can give you the hope to go, 'Okay, there's someone here who loves me, who cares about me, who forgives me, who gives me all I need.'

And so I'm just going to put my hope in God and have him carry me and help me through whatever this new beginning might be.'

Tania: So have we got any final advice to someone who might come up to you and say, 'I want to have a new start. I want to have a new beginning.' What would you say to them?

Clare: Don't underestimate the kindness of strangers. And making time. No one seems to have time anymore.

And I think that the kindness of strangers and making time to have a conversation, actually you don't realise that it can really change someone's day. I've had that on both sides and that's what I try and instil in the kids, that we all seem to be on our own little individual journey and we're stressed. But every day is, like we say, a new beginning, but actually everyone is doing it and if we spoke about it more then we'd probably be better off.

So I think that's my final thought really.

Richard: Knowing that we're not alone through whatever change or new beginning, whether it's a blockage in life and we can't see out of the darkness, there is hope, there is a light that God offers. That could be an encouragement from a friend or a family person that can help us then with a new beginning of whatever that might look like. But to know we're not alone and that we're all going through new beginnings should give us hopefully opportunity to talk to each other and talk to God.

Tania: Mine would be go pray. God's there for you. Ask lots of questions. New beginnings means that you're seeing things with new eyes. No question's too silly because you honestly don't understand what's going on. So, ask lots of questions.

And, if it's a new beginning for yourself because it's somewhere where you've stuffed up, where something's gone wrong, well, ask for forgiveness, and tell God about your feelings, your sorrow for what's happened.

So, when I think about, where's the hope in a new beginning? I can't help thinking about a passage from Isaiah in the Bible.

Isaiah writes: 'be alert, be present. I'm about to do something brand new. It's bursting out. Don't you see it? There it is. I'm making a road through the desert, rivers in the badlands, wild animals will say thank you.'

And, you know, that's God speaking about new beginnings. And I think that gives me hope.

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