

Healing from Abortion, Miscarriage & Adoption

从流产/流产/收养愈合
從流產/流產/收養癒合

Mike Connell



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Personal Testimony - Adopted Daughters Wedding

Mike and Joy Connell, together with their daughter Josephine, share their story of reconciliation — testifying of how God can turn situations around when we obey Him.

It was a love story that seemed to go wrong at every possible turn. Like Romeo and Juliet, they were two young lovers forced apart by their family backgrounds. To make matters worse, they brought a baby into this world; a baby they decided not to keep. But unlike other stories, this one has a happy ending, because God intervened and turned tragedy into triumph.

个人见证：收养女儿的婚礼

这是一个曲折的爱情故事，有欢笑也有悲伤。就像罗密欧与朱丽叶一样，他们这一对年轻的情侣因各自的家庭背景被迫分开。更糟糕的是，他们将一个婴儿带到了世上，并决定放弃她。但是这个故事，不像其他的故事那样，它因为有神的介入，让悲剧变为欢笑，有了一个开心的结局。

個人見證：收養女兒的婚禮

這是一個曲折的愛情故事，有歡笑也有悲傷。就像羅密歐與朱麗葉一樣，他們這一對年輕的情侶因各自的家庭背景被迫分開。更糟糕的是，他們將一個嬰兒帶到了世上，並決定放棄她。但是這個故事，不像其他的故事那樣，它因為有神的介入，讓悲劇變為歡笑，有了一個開心的結局。

Healing from Abortion/Miscarriage

The heart of God is full of compassion to heal and restore damaged lives. Abortion is a doorway for grief and bondage, which is largely hidden under secrecy and denial. When the truth is faced that the life of a child has been taken the pain is immense. The reality dawns, there is a son or daughter in heaven who we will meet one day!

Discover how to bring meaningful healing to families who have lost a child in the womb, and set them free from bondage and torment. Jesus did not come to condemn - He came to save, heal, deliver, restore.

从流产/流产愈合

神的心脏是充满怜悯医治和恢复受损的生命。堕胎是门口的悲伤和恶魔般的束缚，这在很大程度上是在保密和否认隐藏。当真相面对一个孩子的生命已采取的痛苦是巨大的。现实即将来临，有一个儿子或女儿在天堂谁，我们会遇到一片天！

探索如何把有意义的愈合谁失去了一个孩子在子宫内的家庭，使他们免受奴役和折磨。耶稣来不是要谴责 - 他要拯救，医治，拯救，恢复。

從流產/流產癒合

神的心臟是充滿憐憫醫治和恢復受損的生命。墮胎是門口的悲傷和惡魔般的束縛，這在很大程度上是在保密和否認隱藏。當真相面對一個孩子的生命已採取的痛苦是巨大的。現實即將來臨，有一個兒子或女兒在天堂誰，我們會遇到一片天！

探索如何把有意義的癒合誰失去了一個孩子在子宮內的家庭，使他們免受奴役和折磨。耶穌來不是要譴責 - 他要拯救，醫治，拯救，恢復。

The Silent Scream (Bernard Nathanson)

Dr. Bernard Nathanson's classic video that shocked the world (mentioned briefly in previous sermon).

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Personal Testimony - Adopted Daughter's Wedding

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Mike and Joy Connell, together with their daughter Josephine, share their story of reconciliation—testifying of how God can turn situations around when we obey Him.

It was a love story that seemed to go wrong at every possible turn. Like Romeo and Juliet, they were two young lovers forced apart by their family backgrounds. To make matters worse, they brought a baby into this world; a baby they decided not to keep. But unlike other stories, this one has a happy ending, because God intervened and turned tragedy into triumph.

I want to share with you two principles; then we're going to share a testimony about the goodness of God, the tremendous goodness of God in our lives - how God has just brought blessing. It's almost like fairytale stuff, you can hardly imagine that it could happen like this.

We want to share with you our testimony; and to highlight what we did that activated these principles - because God just doesn't move. God is always good, but His goodness is released as we position ourselves for things to happen. You actually have to make decisions to position yourself for God's blessing to come.

Positioning means: you take on an attitude; or you say words; or you do the right things; that make room for God to come and to touch your life.

The Bible says very clearly: we must believe that God is a good God; and we must believe that He will come and touch our lives.

We're going to share about is from our background, from our lives. Where we came from, an what happened to get us here; but we want to talk specifically about how God wonderfully came on a wedding that we took, the weekend before last.

The wedding that I took, was that of a daughter we adopted out before we were married; and for me to be able to take the wedding, to shape how the whole wedding service went, how the reception went - is absolutely unbelievable. To have even been there was a miracle; but to have had the ability and the privilege of being able to shape how it went, and make room for God to come, was even greater.

I want to first of all highlight the two principles; and then talk about how we activated these principles at various points in our life; and how God has been so faithful, and has given us a testimony that's just unbelievable.

With children being adopted out, the stories don't usually end as good as this one. This is just one out of the box, but it demonstrates that God is always good, so no matter how the story ends, God's goodness never changes.

For some people, finding their adoptive parents is very painful; and often it increases the pain that they experience. In our situation, it was exactly the opposite, and we want to share some of the background.

So here are the two principles:

- 1) James 4:6 – “God gives Grace to the Humble.

When the Bible talks about humility, it's talking about a 'positioning of your heart' - an attitude you take; and humility is not sort of grovelling stuff.

Humility means: I come up-front and agree with God about life; I agree with Him about my mistakes and failures; and don't try and cover them up or be defensive. It's really important.

Humility enables me to look at my life as God sees it - both the negatives; and the potential.

The Bible tells us: God will give an empowerment to those who humble themselves; so it means positioning yourself to come into agreement with God: 1) about your mistakes and failures - so you're open about them; 2) about what God says about you, and your life (if He says: "you're forgiven", then you're forgiven). Humility means: I believe it and stand on it; and 3), it's about your positioning - what God has called you to do, and to be.

Humility can manifest itself by boldly and strongly standing up. To some people it looks like pride, but it isn't. It's actually I'm in agreement with God about who I am, and what I'm called to be, and do. So that's humility.

2) The second principle is: the Principle of Honour.

The Bible puts it negatively in Romans 1:21 – "When they knew God, they did not glorify Him, or give Him honour for who He is. Neither were they grateful to Him; then their minds become futile and darkened, and they moved away from God"

Principle: Whatever you respect and appreciate, will come towards you; whatever you disrespect, will move away from you.

Respect and honour and value will attract people into your life. Disrespect will cause them to pull away from you.

If you don't place value on money, it will soon depart from you. When you treat it with respect, and handle it well, it will come towards you. Life operates this way.

To 'honour someone' means: to give them appropriate recognition and place and value. It can be in: an attitude to them; our words; what we do. When we honour people, we place value on them, and we position ourselves so they are lifted up.

It's very important, if we're going to walk successfully and enjoy God's blessing, that we learn: the Principle of Humility; and the Principle of Honour.

There's three grounds upon which you honour people:

1) You Honour them because of: what they have done. If someone does something notable, you should honour it, and value it, and appreciate it.

2) You honour a person's character - the kind of person they are. If someone is courageous, they may never stand out from the crowd, but in a moment of pressure they were courageous. You honour that.

3) We're called to recognise the Position and Rank that people have in our life; to value and esteem them, just because they have their position. That's why the Bible says: "Honour your parents - that it may go well with you". You say: you don't know what my parents were like... It doesn't matter; you honour them because: that's the positioning that God has given them in your life; and if you do it, you'll come into blessing.

Two principles: Humility - coming into agreement with God about life, and what He says about us, and standing up and believing that what He says is true; and Honour - being willing to give value, and appropriate respect, for people. You'll find it will always release the grace of God.

Having said that; we want to talk and share about how these principles were applied in our life - in relationship to: what happened before we were married; and then how God has worked this out in our lives since then.

[Joy Connell] There's a verse I'd like to share, that the Lord drew to my attention this week. It talked about "preparing the way for the Lord, make straight in the desert". It was a very 'desert' place for many years - a highway for our God - because God wants to come in to desert places.

It said: "Every Valley shall be exalted". It was certainly a very 'valley' time for me - having a child in secret, and releasing it for adoption - a very, very low place. But it said: "Every valley shall be Exalted". To be there on her wedding was a very high place - amazing.

It said: "Every mountain shall be brought down low". It was a huge mountain for me, to face my parents at the time of pregnancy. It was just a mountain I couldn't cross. To have all my family there last Saturday, standing with us, was huge.

It said: "The crooked places will be made straight, rough places will be made smooth, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed". We saw the glory of the Lord revealed.

"and all flesh shall see it together". Everybody there in wedding place saw the glory of the Lord. They didn't know it was the glory of the Lord, but it was.

He said: "The mouth of the Lord has spoken"; because God gave us promises. What He decrees and declares - it does take place.

I believe it's a time for prophetic decrees over many of your mountains. I know many of you are facing mountains, but God can bring them down - and when He does it it's just absolutely amazing.

If you go right back to the beginning of the Bible, when Adam sinned – "through fear he hid himself". At the time after we'd been dating for about seven years and there

was just huge conflicts. The fear - I just took the same response that Adam and Eve did. They just hid themselves with secrecy; and think: this is a way of coping.

I also had inner vows - things you've told yourself in the past, which have become very binding; then, when you face a crisis, you operate out of these things that have been programmed inside you. Even though they're not the best way, it's the way that you do, because of things you've told yourself that you will do.

I was never going to "trap anybody into marrying me", or go through the shame of the pregnancies and marriages I saw, in the church I was in.

These inner vows I'd made just said: "there's no way I'm going to go there"; but what happens is: they're strong controls, and they actually build walls around your heart; but that was in place at that time in my life.

Also, my own way of coping with a crisis... Mike was saying humility is "acknowledging God's way"; but if you don't turn to God, you have all sorts of 'great ways' of coping with life.

The enemy will also put a few good ideas in too, but when you listen to those, and make your own way of coping - basically there's immediate short-term relief. You protect yourself, but all these ways lead to great isolation and pain, further damage, and huge bondage. But that was what it was like, way back in 1969.

[Mike Connell] Prior to us getting married, I wasn't a Christian, and did not know the Lord. When Joy got pregnant, we made a decision that we'd adopt our girl out - a very bad choice, very bad decision. It was just made in the pressure of: inability to stand up and be courageous.

Having made one mistake, we then coupled it up with a second mistake. When you cover things over, you never, ever prosper (the Bible says); and so for years, we endured tremendous grief and pain.

There wasn't a year went by, that we didn't remember our daughter, and didn't pray for her, and wonder what was happening to her. You just can't get over these things; they're just part of your life.

But the day that we got married, I made a decision to receive Jesus Christ into my life; and asked the Lord to become part of our lives. Then I went before Him and totally repented, and came into agreement with what He said, about what I had done: the failure to be responsible; the failure to actually stand up and be courageous for Joy's sake; the rejection of a child, and all that would come upon her as a result of that.

I made a vow before the Lord that day, coming out of repentance (some vows are very good to make).

I said: "No matter where we are in our lives, I know there is a day that You will bring this daughter back to us, because of who You are. It's got nothing to do with our

rights, because we gave our rights up; but because God is good, You will bring her back".

And I knew in my heart, I had a faith, that she would be restored; so when I repented, I said to the Lord then: "the day You bring her back, no matter what position, what standing I have in life - I will be open and transparent about who she is, and her place in our lives. We will give her the acceptance, and love, and welcome that we withheld from her, when we sinned.

That's what humility looks like. You actually turn around completely, and come into agreement with God about what needs to happen.

Some years later we came here. The Lord was speaking to us about issues in our life, and we ran a wedding renewal or a marriage renewal service.

[Joy Connell] The church was still quite small, but when we got married, the only neutral place we could get married was the nurse's chapel! We had: a Catholic priest; and an Anglican minister (who was married to a Brethren, and understood my side of things). It was just amazing. God came through.

It just seemed totally impossible to get a marriage which both families would accept; but Mike was flatting with some guys who had left the seminary training to be Catholic priests. One of them broke his leg, and was in Wellington Hospital, and fell in love with a Presbyterian nurse - and he created a precedent for us. He got special permission from the bishop (or whoever it was) - and he was able to get married.

So we just followed in his wake, and God made a way, which just seemed totally impossible. But we realised that a lot of things had changed from when we got married. We were very broken, barely saved, finding a way back to God; and we realised that there's others in the church at that time that were like us. They'd come to the Lord, things had totally changed for them; and they were ready to make a fresh renewal of their marriage vows, so we got about 12 couples... We met for about three weeks, and we talked about the foundation of our marriage; and prepared ourselves to go through this ceremony again - which was for me the very first time I actually lifted the cover off my big secret.

I hadn't even told my parents about this daughter; but with this small group, we talked about our background, and we decided: this is the time to bring out our baggage. Maybe we should at that time write to welfare and see if we could reconnect with our daughter we lost?

You know how good God is? Our daughter's mother Carol decided it was our daughter's right to know her heritage, and she wrote, and those letters had landed the same day at welfare. As a result of interest on both sides, they gave us information, and we started to make contact.

For me it was incredibly difficult; when you've covered something, and lived with denial; to face the reality - I couldn't cope with even a photograph of her.

I meant to have something shut away, and behind a big stone; and God says: "roll away the stone" - you don't want to go there. I mean its death there. It's ugly there. It's painful there; but when you actually roll it away, and look at a photograph, and think: actually this is a person.

Her name was Josephine. I thought: that's kind of a bit of a religious name; and the Lord reminded me about how Joseph was: separated from all his brethren; and came back and had a reunion.

It was quite a big thing to actually face reality, when you've been living in denial for 18 years; but we had to really roll away the stone, remove the covering. Then you feel incredibly vulnerable and fragile, and dependent on God.

That's actually just what He wants us to do, when we let go whatever we hid behind. They had fig leaves in Genesis; but they had to actually take those fig leaves off, to receive the covering of skin; and the provision of what Jesus Christ had done on the cross. For me that was quite a vulnerable stage too.

[Mike Connell] So again the issue of humility came in. We had to face the issues in our personal life. We put matters right with one another, and realised that all our lives there'd been this deep hurt. To come and actually admit it... the Lord spoke to me, and clearly He said: you need to put this matter right.

I had to put it right with Joy; I had to go to her father, and put it right with her father. We had to actually come clean about what we had done, which was wrong; and when you do that, when you position yourself the way God says - He provides blessing for you. He provides grace.

[Joy Connell] Yeah, I remember my parents - I invited them up. I said: "there's something I want to talk to you about..." I took the two of them out to the Old Flame, which is the best restaurant I could think of, and sat them down.

I just had to deeply apologise for my secrecy, what I'd hidden from them; and asked their forgiveness for what we had covered at that time, because...

[Mike Connell] That's actually honouring them, by putting right what was wrong. Where there'd been dishonour, there had to be honour restored - and that made such a difference.

[Joy Connell] Then we wrote to Josephine, and we apologised to her. We both apologised for the rejection, and the effect it had on her life; and asked her forgiveness.

Then we decided to make her very welcome. We invited her to come and stay - and that again was a miracle. She was half way through dentistry school. She's a Dentist in Whakatane, and at that stage, she was half way through dentistry training in Dunedin, and she was going back to do a summer school paper; so we invited her to stay after that paper.

Of course, when you pastor a church, and you've got six children that look a bit like you, you can't just turn up with another one the next Sunday...

[Mike Connell] Looks like you...

[Joy Connell] ...without saying something to the church. But this church is amazing. We stood up, the Sunday before she arrived to stay, and shared our testimony. Some of you I know are still here - I remember some of your faces. At the end of the service, God was so good then, He just - I think everybody's closets were opened, and all the skeletons came out. God just moved, and brought quite a wave of tremendous healing. But also as a church family, you were tremendously responsive to us, and we invited her to arrive. She arrived right on Mike's 44th birthday.

[Mike Connell] What are the chances of that?

[Joy Connell] That was the day she said she was going to arrive.

[Mike Connell] She had no idea when my birthday was; but the day she chose to come was my birthday!

That week we had just an unbelievable time; and over the years since then, she's connected to us, come to know and love us. She cries every time she comes home, and has become quite bonded and connected to our family.

It was just amazing when, the young man that's asked her to marry him came, and he honoured me by asking me for permission. I had no right. You understand that when you give a child up for adoption - there are no rights; and in those days, there was also no contact - no way to make contact. It was closed.

When we gave the child up, and God spoke to me - I knew in my heart she was going to come back; but there was no possible way it could happen, because you never had any contact with them.

You couldn't get the contact; and then the law changed, and made this possible. She came back, and we were able to reconnect; and he asked me for permission to marry her - which was a great honour to me.

She also honoured me, and asked me to help with the service. She'd come to the weddings of our family - and had just got blown away; and she said: I don't know what it is - but what you've got I want.

I was in a position then (this is what's so amazing) - to shape a service, in a way that God could come into the service. I was in a position to help shape the reception; so that the things that needed to happen there, for God to come, were in place. We taught her about how to honour her parents, how to actually address them and speak to them - and the things she needed to say, as she exited from their care, and came in to start a new family.

[Joy Connell] That time, even though Mike had a chance to prepare her, for the wedding, and coach her how to honour her parents - which of course, immediately

met with a burst of tears. Mike wasn't as emotionally connected to them; but he listed all the ways in which they had come through for her - and how to honour them.

In the meantime, I was flying to Taiwan, and I was watching a movie on the plane about an adoption story, and I felt quite stirred after watching this movie; so I decided to write Josephine a letter.

It was coming up to her wedding, and I honoured her (in a letter) for her courage; and for the steps she was making; for the choice that I regretted, but the choices that I've made since, which were great choices, like: marrying Mike; giving our hearts to the Lord; building our lives on Him - and just encouraging her in those responses.

But I forgot to post this letter; so when I was in Taiwan, at the hotel, I got some hotel paper, and posted the letter - stuck it in the counter at the hotel.

That letter arrived the day of our women's conference - when she was having a pamper day (ahead of the wedding). She'd invited me to join her for a pamper day, but I couldn't make it (because we had our women's conference), but as she was leaving to go on that pamper day, my letter was in the mail. She felt I was with her.

[Mike Connell] We went to the wedding. The wedding practice was very, very difficult. You have to come to face things.

One of the things about walking with the Lord, is that He never spares us from the consequences of bad choices.

One of the things about growing up, you have to learn that bad choices have bad consequences; and although God will forgive us, there's a 'walking' out of those consequences.

Of course for me, one of the biggest challenges was to on the day of the wedding - to have another man walk my daughter down the aisle. That was very, very hard. You'll see it - I'm going to show you a couple of pictures of it just in a moment. [See video attachment]

The night before, I was very distressed. We did the wedding practice, and went to have time with them - but there was no presence of God there! It was very awkward - just so uncomfortable, that after the practice, I just went to the beach - and just wept before the Lord.

I said: God, You've got to come and help us. This is just so difficult!

It looked like there was going to be no real Value and Honour. You know what Kiwis get like - that funny humour, that's kind of a putdown sort of a humour?

I so wanted God's value, and presence, to come into the place; but it just seemed like it was impossible for that to happen - so I went home. I was quite upset, the night we'd met with the family, and did the wedding practice; and I went home saying: God, You've got to help. You've got to show me how I can actually make a difference in this service tomorrow - and so we talked about it.

I would've spent probably a couple of hours, just waiting on God, to get something that was appropriate for that situation. It was an incredibly unusual feeling - we'll show photos through as we go, then you'll kind of catch the feel of it, as we do this.

It's a most unusual feeling to have some 'other man' bringing my daughter down the aisle. It was quite challenging to deal with the emotions that went with that; but I had to face the consequences of choices I made years ago.

I knew that the Lord would provide grace; and what He did was: He showed me to speak on honour - to actually demonstrate honour; and to use honour to unlock that service.

So we had Kate and Andrew (our son-in-law, and daughter-in-law) put a song together - and as they began to sing - the atmosphere just began to change. It wasn't even a song they chose; but nevertheless, because of what's in their lives, the atmosphere began to shift and change - and the presence of God came into the place. You could feel the change; and of course everyone's looking at me: what's he going to say? What do you say? How much do you say?

We felt for her parents. Originally we had felt: perhaps just a couple of members of our family come; but Jo wanted everyone there, so we were kind of 'very sensitive' about this. But the Lord showed me exactly what to say.

[Joy Connell] The little boy 'Alex' is Josephine's little son.

[Mike Connell] That's her father and mother; and that's them giving our daughter in marriage to Steve.

I felt the Lord show me to actually honour the parents - because they would be feeling uncomfortable. And humility is 'knowing your position', and adopting the 'right position'. Sometimes we can be in charge; but sometimes you actually have to be the servant.

You've got to see how God has positioned you; and choose to position yourself in that way. I actually spent time, and honoured them; spoke directly to them, honoured them.

It was a very difficult choice for them, to take home a baby that had...

[Joy Connell] Congenital hip.

Amazing surprise; this mother claimed to be an atheist, but she looked at our baby, and said: I just 'knew' she was going to be alright - and at 10 months, she got up and walked!

[Mike Connell] No one wanted her, in the hospital - which we had no idea about.

Her own (adoptive) mother was resistant to her having this baby, because she thought she might be a cripple; but she felt in her heart that she should have the baby. So I honoured her for choosing to welcome Josephine into their lives.

We honoured them for the education, and family life they'd made. We honoured them for encouraging her to seek us out - knowing that this would be quite a difficult thing for them. And we honoured them then for...

[Joy Connell] Opening their home to us.

[Mike Connell] ...welcoming us into their home to meet with them and have time with them.

[Joy Connell] It's funny, the first time they met us (soon after we met Josephine), we went right to the bottom of the South Island; two sets of parents, and Josephine, having a meal together - it was big of them to invite us into their home. But what amused me: half way through the meal, the mother was just pouring out her heart, and her feelings, and emotions... and she suddenly said: hey, but you're complete strangers! I don't know why I'm doing this!

[Mike Connell] So what I did was honour them; honoured her brothers, our own family for coming and being with us, and supporting us. The whole family - everyone turned up - there wasn't anyone left out.

Everyone turned up; and then I honoured Steve, for the way he had conducted himself in approaching me; and Josephine, for her courage in actually being willing to seek us out; and then to make us welcome in her life and heart.

I indicated very clearly: it was not 'by right' we were there; it was by privilege - and by her choice, the goodness of her choice.

I shared a message for them that "wisdom builds the house". By wisdom you build a marriage; by wisdom you build in various ways - you can build relationships; business; and ministries.

But wisdom is making choices from God's perspective - and I acknowledged that we'd made a bad choice. We'd lived to regret it; but now we were glad that God had made a way for this day to happen. It was like a miracle that we could be there, involved like that, on that day.

[Joy Connell] Its one thing, when God restores things - He's got such a big heart; there's just one other thing...

On the journey, before we had the wedding day, Mike and I went to Nigeria to celebrate - I think it was our 25 year wedding anniversary. But the prophet in Nigeria put his bony finger in my face - and read my mail!

One thing he brought out was: in God's eyes, Josephine had been like an orphan. I mean, if I could have selected her home... the home she was great. We were both teachers; they were both teachers. She was brought up in the country - had her own pet lambs and calves, and had a wonderful upbringing!

The only thing missing was the God element. She was totally foreign from the things of God; so in God's eyes she was an 'orphan' to His family. I thought: wow - God,

You have a heart for people that are orphaned from Your things. It's better to have nothing in the natural, but to have Jesus, who is everything; than to have everything - and not have Jesus.

So that incident really made me feel deeply, and agree with God about orphans, and His heart for orphans - and our own passion for orphans was really birthed out of that. I'm just so excited that many people here support orphans - because God is on their side!

And He was grieved, that she was orphaned from the things of God.

[Mike Connell] When it came time for the reception, we wondered how that would go. When we went in - we noticed that Jo had done an interesting thing.

She sat at the main table; and she'd positioned the table with the two parents right in front of her - so they were given equal positioning. Quite amazing! I mean you can't make that happen. Then she stood up, and honoured her natural family (her adoptive family); and then when she'd honoured them, and appreciated them - she honoured us.

It was incredibly heart-touching; but when you honour people, it unlocks something. Look at a couple more pictures there, very happy couple.

What happened then was, her mother had said: she was 'not going to say anything'; and then suddenly she said: "I want to say something."

Understand that honour: opens the way for people to come near; and also brings God near. When you honour people, God's presence somehow, sometimes... it just seems to come in. So she stood up and what she said just stunned us.

[Joy Connell] Yes. The night before it was so awkward! I mean, she didn't kind of even want to look at me, or acknowledge me - she just got busy, busy, busy, busy...

[Mike Connell] It was obviously painful.

[Joy Connell] After she'd been honoured at the service, it just kind of disarms people. After Josephine had honoured her, the mother stood and she - this person who wasn't going to speak, she was so beautiful.

She spoke from her heart; and I don't think Josephine had ever heard her speak from her heart; but she honoured each of her children. Three of them are adopted; and they have one of their own - how precious each of them was.

She honoured Josephine, for the tremendous joy she'd brought into their life, and all the wonderful experiences they had. Then what blew me away... (weeping)

[Mike Connell] She said that each year, when they had Christmas, and had her birthday; that they remembered the family that had lost her, and were deeply grateful that: our loss was their gain.

Of course that's very - you can imagine how we felt about that; because every year we'd remembered: we'd lost a daughter. It was quite heart-touching, for both of us, for her to say that. We both stood and shared; and I just shared that: there hadn't been a year go by that we hadn't thought of our daughter, and prayed for her - and that it was a great loss.

We just appreciated Josephine for her willingness to allow us to come back into her life; so it was quite - it was unbelievably heart-touching. You could hear sobs down the back. I didn't even dare look around to see who's - there are tears everywhere! I didn't even dare look around, and see who's sobbing down the back; because we realised that right through the whole of the group, there were broken marriages. There were adopted people, there were people who'd lost children, there were blended families, there were all kinds of things there; and when people are in the presence of honour, it unlocks their heart.

[Joy Connell] It makes way for the Lord to come in and...

[Mike Connell] It makes way for God to do things.

[Joy Connell] ...it's a powerful thing to experience: that honour does make way for the Lord to come.

Josephine didn't want us to say too much at the reception, if her parents didn't say too much, so we were kind of positioning ourselves. But when both her mother and father spoke quite well, and quite long, she gave us an opportunity to speak; and again, we wouldn't want to say too much, but just wanted to honour her - for how beautiful she looked; and what she'd done to open her heart for our family.

Steve - the most amazing thing about her fiancée; well two things. First of all, the very first time she visited us in our church, she went back to her flat. While she was away, one of her flatmates got baptised in the Holy Ghost. She said: I know what you're on about - I've been to my birth dad's church - and I know what you're on about!

The second thing was, she had a few other relationships... and then when Steve came on the scene, she's like: I knew you'd like this one - because one day, Steve was prayed for by somebody like Mike - planted down on the ground for 20 minutes with a back injury, and came up totally healed! So he had a real awareness of the power of God. She said: I knew you'd like this one!

But the week before the wedding - the Saturday before the wedding - he was 28 metres below the sea, and out of air. He had to shoot up to the surface; he got the bends, and was flown in a decompression unit - and got released two days before the wedding!

I'm just so grateful for Steve - that he was with us, that God had kept him. I wonder if it was a demonic assignment actually, when things like that are so difficult. God's got a great purpose and destiny for people's lives and I believe that's still being unfolded.

But I honoured him for what he'd done; and again said: it was not by rights - it was a significant event to be a part of, but we really had no rights; just that God is so incredibly good, the grace of God, and the goodness of God. So we both just had a chance again just to acknowledge God, and acknowledge and honour which again was part of the process.

[Mike Connell] We'll just finish with a couple of things, but what was amazing was the impact on people. There were lots of things I won't disclose, because they were just very, very precious; I just feel it wouldn't be appropriate to share them.

But there was a couple of things that were really thrilling.... One was that Jo has a son called Alex, who's seven years old; and prior to the wedding, he had been talking to Steven. Steven asked him: "Do you want me to be your step dad?" He said: "No - I've got a dad - I don't need a step dad. I'll just call you Steve".

But when we'd had this time, and the presence of God was touching people, he said: "why are people crying?" Jo said: when people say words from their heart - they feel something; and he said: "I want to say something".

So he took the microphone - this is a seven year old - and then he honoured his mother for being so beautiful, and so good for him. Then he honoured Steve; and he said: Steve, I'd like you to be my step-dad. I'd like you to have that place in my life. Well...

[Joy Connell] He sat down and burst into tears.

[Mike Connell] He sat down and burst into tears; and we're thinking (sob) you know - so there were many things that happened like that.

There was one other thing that was notable for me. Although it had been so awkward prior to the wedding; after the wedding, her mother came up and said: thank you for coaching her in how to put on such a great event. I just thanked her for acknowledging it, and so on; but really, what we had done: we'd coached her in the principle of honour.

As she did it, all the way through, the presence of God came, and made this even just an extraordinary event. We are deeply grateful to the Lord - it's something we could never do.

We believed that He would bring her back. We believed that we'd be part of her life; but we never would have guessed that God does is more than enough, that God gave us more than we expected.

I want to encourage you all to consider those issues of: Humility; and Honour - they can unlock so much in our lives.

Closing Prayer

I know some of you will have been really deeply touched. Perhaps it's really touched your heart; and you're not a Christian, you don't know Jesus Christ; you haven't experienced for yourself yet the personal love of God for you.

Jesus said: to everyone who received Him, to everyone who personally invited Christ into their life, He gave them power to become a child of God; to have their sins forgiven, to have a new relationship with God, His Father; and to walk as part of a God family.

What a great thing for you to make that decision today. We made it - I had so many things wrong with my life before I came to Jesus Christ.

The goodness of the Lord is before us. Why don't you make that decision yourself?

If you're here today, and you don't know Jesus Christ; why not become a Christian? Receive the love of God, into your life. It's a personal choice to connect with God.

Perhaps you're disconnected from God. You've once had a relationship with the Lord; but because of disappointments, things not going like you thought - you've drawn back; and today you need to renew your relationship with the Lord. Just be honest, be humble.

Humility is: admitting my condition. You say: God, I need to come back to you today.

Related Article written by: Dawn Seow (www.citynews.sg - 16 June 2012)

It was a love story that seemed to go wrong at every possible turn. Like Romeo and Juliet, they were two young lovers forced apart by their family backgrounds. To make matters worse, they brought a baby into this world; a baby they decided not to keep. But unlike other stories, this one has a happy ending, because God intervened and turned tragedy into triumph.

In 1962, Mike and Joy Connell were freshmen at a university when they met in school and fell in love. But because Connell was from a Catholic family and Joy from a strict Brethren background, their families were against their relationship.

"We were both the eldest in the family and we faced a lot of pressure from our families," Joy recounted. "There was tremendous resistance between the Protestants and Catholics at that time, which caused strong religious opposition in both our families; so we kept breaking up and coming back."

Six years later, they made a mistake and Joy found herself pregnant.

"I was in shock, fear and shame, thinking to myself: what do I do? We made a silly decision and that was to hide in secrecy and not tell our family. We were living away from home and so I managed to give birth to the baby without anyone knowing," she said.

While Joy made a decision to bring the baby into the world, she decided not to keep her. "We gave her up for adoption. At that time in New Zealand, the law was such that if we gave up our baby (for adoption), we will never be able to see her again. The law restricted all access between the two families."

Thankfully, God made a way for the young couple to eventually get married, as their parents felt they had been together for so long. Even though Joy felt like a backslidden Christian, there were people who knew about their problems and were praying for them. "And one day I did feel the Lord said he (Connell) has a heart after God and it was okay to marry," Joy said. "I felt a release."

To pacify both families, the couple decided on a joint service by a Catholic priest and an Anglican minister. "On the day I got married I gave my life to Jesus; I realized that we will never make our lives work unless Jesus was there. So I made a commitment to Christ at the service just before we got married," said Connell.

This is the love story of Mike and Joy Connell, now the senior pastors of Bay City Outreach Center in Hastings, New Zealand. Their names are not unfamiliar at City Harvest Church. Connell is an internationally recognized teacher of the Word who moves powerfully in the prophetic, deliverance and inner healing gifts. His ministry has brought great healing to the hurt and broken-hearted.

While he was at CHC to minister over the weekend of Jun. 2 and 3, his family shared with City News the story of how he and Joy came to reconcile with the firstborn they gave up for adoption.

Reconciliation Begins with Healing

"After coming to the Lord, I realized how wrong I was (to give the baby up for adoption). I believed in my heart that the Lord will make a way for her (the baby girl) to come back, even though the law said otherwise. So I came into deep repentance, and made a commitment that when she came back in our lives, whatever I was doing, I would make it public and be completely open with everyone, because the sin was in the hiding, and repentance meant doing the exact opposite."

Eight years after they were married, the Connells were called to start a Christian school in the same year they started pastoring a church. As life moved on, they never talked about how the trauma of what happened affected both of them.

"We were working with a few married couples at one time and decided to have a marriage renewal service, looking at the foundations and helping these couples make a fresh commitment towards each other," Joy shared. "And that was the first time we look at the foundations of our own lives and we realized how much damage had been done in terms of the grief and pain because of what happened. We resolved our hurts and shortly after, the laws (that restricts parents from meeting their children after giving them up for adoption) changed! God knew that the laws were changing and He got us ready for the change."

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