
Wilderness Conversations

A Day at a Time - with Steph and Nic Collins

This is a transcription of a podcast conversation Stephen Dodson had with Steph and Nic Collins on April 19th 2024. Sadly, Steph fell asleep in Christ 46 days after recording this on May 28th 2024. The full two parts of the podcast can be found at...



[Part 1](#)



[Part 2](#)

Adelphicare is grateful for the permission of Steph and Nic, and Stephen, for being able to post this edited transcription on the Adelphicare.org site. This transcription comes from Part 2, Wilderness Conversation 79. Permeating all of Steph's and Nic's conversation is their fundamental and unshakeable faith in their understanding that God guides them through all times of their life.

This audio conversation has been **Transcribed by** [TurboScribe.ai](#).

It is Steph's and Nic's prayer that anyone reading this story, or listening to the podcasts, will benefit by understanding more about the role God, our family and friends have in helping us cope with the trauma of living with illness and immense suffering on a day-by-day basis.

Interviewer: Stephen Dodson

Stephen: Steph was born in Perth. She moved to Sydney to complete her medical doctorate and residency where she met and married Nic Collins who is a Registered Nurse. Before their first wedding anniversary, and on the eve of moving from Sydney to Brisbane, where Steph was to start a new position, she was diagnosed with breast cancer. Steph has been sharing with us the ups and downs of living with cancer, and Nic and Steph joined Wilderness Conversations to finish their story.

Discovery

When we pick up the story, Nic and Steph, you'd just moved from Sydney up to Brisbane, and you've heard that the cancer is more serious than what you thought it would have been. And so you have to return to Sydney, and you're expecting to go to Sydney for scans and for surgery. Is that what you're expecting? I mean, I'm not a cancer expert by any stretch of the imagination, but obviously there's different levels.

Did you, in your own mind, think, well, this might be fairly low level, I'm young, et cetera, this may not be a big deal, or did you have a foreboding that this was actually quite serious, well, on a level of cancer, all cancer is serious, but this was actually a serious one?

Steph: Unfortunately, being young is worse. So, with breast cancer, the very quick explanation is it's either hormonal or not hormonal; 85% of cases are hormonal. That is the better cancer, I guess. There are different types of hormones. So basically, if you block the hormones, you can treat the cancer quite effectively. It's slow growing. These are the cancers that get picked up with mammograms. You get it later in life.

So that's better. In that group, some are worse than others, but then the other 15% don't have hormone receptors. And these are like really sneaky and tricky ones that grow incredibly fast, spread incredibly fast. We can't shut off the hormones. So it's hard to find targeted treatments for it. So it's called triple negative because it doesn't have any of the three hormone receptors.

This is the ones that people under 40 get. So they're young people. Unfortunately, I think we were all expecting it to come back as this one, but we were hoping that maybe it will be hormonal. Unfortunately, the younger you are, the more aggressive it is because people at 28 normally don't get breast cancer.

Nic: On the balance of probabilities and from a statistical side of things, there would have been about 30 women in the whole of Australia diagnosed with this specific illness. Pretty small; and the chances of being one of those 30, so infinitesimal. It was pretty gutting, not only to find out you've got cancer, but that's also hard enough in itself and not to detract from any of those other hundreds and thousands of women out there who get breast cancer of all of those different varieties that

Steph's described. That's horrendous. I'm not wanting to take anything away from that. But to get what Steph got, and for both of us knowing too much for our own good and understanding, even for myself, and I, as a nurse, know half what Steph knows, as opposed to the doctor, to understand the implications of that, just absolutely shattering.

First wedding anniversary

Steph: And this is at the same time that we're meant to be celebrating our first wedding anniversary. So we're in the Brisbane city in this hotel, we're booked and trying to go out for dinner, but I'm not eating and I'm having panic attacks. And yeah, it was just to... I also have no family history and that's what a lot of people kept on asking. No one in my family has breast cancer. So while breast cancer is really common, one in seven women will get it in their life. And it's getting more common in younger people now. You don't find people in their twenties having breast cancer. So that was a bad week of waiting to find out that it was really aggressive, but we kind of had a plan. So we flew back to Sydney and the next day, yeah, we flew back to Sydney with the news that it was quite small. It had been caught quite early and come Monday, we were going to chop it out. And I thought on Thursday night, it's bad, but that sounds good. I'll need chemo and radiation. They're going to throw everything at me. It's going to be a bad year, but it'll be fine.

So yeah, we flew back to Sydney and the next day we had all our scans. Immediately after the first scan, we kind of got pulled into a room and we found out that instead of the one centimetre tumour, there were two tumours that were probably four centimetres together. And it looked like maybe lymph nodes were involved. So this was bad news. And I kind of, again, broke down. By the afternoon, it had been confirmed on another scan that definitely lymph nodes involved.

Stephen: So the cancer has moved out of the breast into other parts of your body?

Nic: Progressed.

Steph: Yeah. So it was still like in the chest. So technically it wasn't other parts of the body because it was only the lymph nodes within the chest wall. So still very curable, but obviously it went from stage one to stage three, which again, was more high risk immediately. So surgery was cancelled. I needed chemo ASAP. And by Friday evening, I was speaking to an oncologist and she was saying, get back on a plane and get up to Brisbane yesterday because you need to start chemo. So again, this is where the chances of finding this oncologist and handing over the medical care was, as we see it, a God moment. We'd had this amazing surgeon friend who had helped us out that week in Sydney, but we were moving to Brisbane and a GP had referred me to this oncologist at the closest hospital to our house in Brisbane.

That oncologist was actually away. And so I got sent to my actual oncologist, and she is the most lovely person and cares so deeply about me. And so pure chance that I got her, and she actually

called us late on that Friday night, not knowing us at all, and spent time explaining what had happened and fit us in on the Monday. So that again, the start of the formation of an amazing team.

Stephen: So if I understand you correctly, you've got this terrible news, which is bad enough. And then a week or two later after this investigation, you realised that it's actually even worse than what it might've been or was probably.

Steph: Yeah. As my oncologist says, it just kept on getting worse and worse. She first found out that it was something pretty okay. And then every phone call she got, it was just worse and worse news. And it had probably spread even further at that time. We just didn't know about it.

So yeah, we were kind of getting sucker punched all the time. Yeah. And that week too, it's just so very overwhelming what you had to do. We hadn't actually seen a medical professional in person, but as part of our first wedding anniversary week, you have to see a fertility specialist immediately because the timing of chemotherapy. The way chemotherapy works, it kills all rapidly dividing cells in the body by preference, which is cancer cells, but also your hair cells, your guts, the lining of your stomach and also eggs. So being 28, preserving fertility is really important. We wanted to start a family.

So within, I think, three or four days of being diagnosed, Nic's sister actually worked for an IVF company. So again, we got in the next day and had help from that. We saw an IVF doctor and this was the first doctor that we'd seen. So he was completely amazing. But suddenly on our first wedding anniversary, he's asking us what our egg count is and if we'd like to make embryos and what our family plans are.

Stephen: This is a whole new world. **Nic:** Yeah, very surreal. Very surreal experience. I've just been told that my wife's got...

Nic – a struggle with coping emotionally

Stephen: Well, I was going to ask that. We're getting some sort of feedback from Steph in some sense of what she was going through, although we'll never fully appreciate it, obviously. But Nic, you're in a completely different situation as the husband. Tell us how you dealt with this and from your point of view.

Nic: Well, from the moment Steph came out of the bathroom white as a sheet and going, I think I found a lump, just the icy ball of lead forms in your stomach. For the next few months, it didn't really go away. Pretty tortuous experience, to be honest.

To this day, I don't know whether I've actually coped with it. I think I just had to lock up my own emotions and perceptions. And just function and do everything I possibly could to remain functional and so I could be there for Steph. I think we've been talking about provenance a lot, but the fact that I was a nurse, that caring is my profession. I sort of went into autopilot, into nurse mode.

As much as I was struggling with my own emotions and apprehensions and everything, I was basically doing everything I could and spending all of my time trying to keep functional for her and to be there for her. She made reference before to the differences between boys and girls and emotion versus logic and reason. And so I was trying to balance out the scales of emotion and worry and panic and talk about the balance of probabilities and remind her what the likelihoods of

things were and get her to explain to me from her significantly larger knowledge of all of this stuff, what those things were to try and balance stuff out.

But at the end of the day, and I think almost any husband or partner who's been in this situation, and this will be an enduring theme in my side of this story, is the powerlessness that you feel. You can be doing everything you possibly can, but you have this very conscious realization that's deeply frustrating and defeating is that try as you might, you can't change the thing. You're at the mercy of events, you're at the mercy of things that are completely outside of your control.

And speaking as a guy – guys are fixers. We live to fix things. And there's nothing worse than giving a guy a problem that he can't solve, an issue we can't fix.

And I had no way of fixing this. So I was doing everything I could to keep Steph on a level and keep it from spiralling into some pretty dark holes. And it was very dark at this stage.

And there were some pretty dark times to come too. But yeah, I think if that was just coming to terms with that, having every conscious or subconscious perception of your life and what it was going to be like, your hopes and dreams, everything at the very least placed on hold, pending outcomes, if not shattered entirely is pretty soul destroying. And just something as Steph just described of being ushered into an IVF clinic on your first anniversary eve, having just been told that your wife's got the worst kind of breast cancer imaginable and being coaxed through the process of having a rapid IVF cycle, egg harvesting, and sticking embryos on ice, pending outcomes.

And the first question that I get asked in the whole experience is, so do you know what your sperm count is, mate? **Stephen:** Not ready for that one. **Nic:** Not ready for that at all. So not even something that I'd even remotely thought about asking myself at any stage. So yeah, it's just absolutely surreal and deeply, deeply traumatic. And yeah, just really not swimming in a world of doubt, just desperately trying to keep your head above water.

Going public

Stephen: Well, it was around this time, I guess Steph was primarily your decision, but I know that Nic was involved. People handle these sorts of scenarios differently, but you decided to be quite public about your experiences. And you did some Facebook posts and I think some WhatsApp groups and things like that. You obviously made a decision at some point in time that you would actually be very transparent and actually give as much information as possible to anybody who was interested in following your journey. Talk us through that decision.

Steph: Yeah. So I can't, definitely can't take credit for this decision myself.

There's a fantastic book that is my first recommendation to anyone going through cancer called *Life is Tough, But So Are You* by Briony Benjamin. And it's by someone who had Hodgkin's lymphoma. She works for Mamma Mia, a company, and she writes a book basically that is a how-to of dealing with cancer.

And as part of one of the chapters, she talks about keeping people updated. For us, that was extra important because we had literally just moved our entire lives. I knew two people up here and Nic's family, and that was it.

And so in the book, it says there's many ways to update people, but you want to offload that as much as possible. So either by a Facebook group or WhatsApp group, you can keep people

updated. So that was the first motivation to do so, to keep my Sydney people, my Perth family, everybody updated.

Obviously, you can keep them updated and then share what I did as well. That decision was made from more, I guess, a medical perspective and an awareness perspective. I had never done a breast exam before in my life, which I probably should have, and if I had, maybe we could have picked it up earlier.

So I wanted to be able to educate people. I found that at my new meeting, my new church, that there was at least eight or 10 women who had had breast cancer, and it's so common. And so everybody is going to be affected by cancer or breast cancer in their life.

And I thought if someone can learn one thing out of this, then that's amazing and it can be a great platform to learn from. And as a doctor, I have a unique knowledge that can be used for that. So that was kind of the main reasons to do so.

Stephen: Is it therapeutic for you to share? **Steph:** Yes and no. It was very challenging at times. When you focus on other people or focus on education, that is helpful. But sometimes it can get quite overwhelming in a good way, I guess, because the group has definitely taken off and reached all across Australia and the world. And so there was so much support and so many prayers that it can quite often be overwhelming. But overall, it's been such a positive experience. I can always control how much I share. So, yes, it's only really been a positive thing. It definitely has changed over the past few weeks with my change in mindset. But, yes, keeping people updated and then educated about this were the two main reasons that I started that group.

Stephen: I want to ask you a little bit about your experiences over the last couple of months. But before I get onto that, forgive me for quoting yourself back to you. But not long after the period of time, which we're just talking about actually in February, so we're only talking a few weeks later, you talked about how you had to wear a 24-hour monitoring device and you spoke about a wave of fear, panic, anxiety, nausea, anger, frustration and bitterness swept over you. You said, these triggers do happen and it's a constant battle each day choosing to give into my human emotions of anger, jealousy and fear or to be able to step into God's perspective and choose to see joy and trust in God. You went on and spoke also about, again, anger and bitterness, despair and jealousy.

And then literally later in the same day, you continued to write and you spoke about the opportunities in life to see the best in the day. You talked about chatting to nurses, talking to friends, you mentioned a barbecue and a good night's sleep. And you said, there's so much to be grateful for. Tell us about just those waves of emotion, which almost contradict each other and how you get through that.

Happiness, and darkness

Steph: Yeah. So you have summed it up as to how, well, yeah, those words sum up how I kind of live my days. And I'm so grateful that nowadays it's 95% of the joy and happiness and probably 5% of those other emotions that Nic has also touched upon. Four months ago, I had just finished my treatment. So I had done six months of chemotherapy, hit every complication under the sun.

Nic had to drag me crying and screaming to hospital most days for six months to have chemotherapy. And the drugs made me want to die. I was so incredibly sick. I wanted to die at times. It was, yeah, truly horrific and shared in that group. So I'd finished chemotherapy and had a great response. I'd had surgery where they had taken off a breast and then I had had five weeks of

radiation where I got completely burnt. And I was due to start another six months of oral chemo when that was in remission. And we were starting to think about, you know, all those things in life that had been put on hold.

And I went to hospital to get a scan for something else. And a doctor walked in the room and told me that I had metastatic cancer and it had spread over my body and was in my lungs. This was only two weeks after finishing radiation. And that was the moment that everything changed. So over the last four months, we have navigated the impossible. We still don't know how to do it.

So we're taking it day by day. I have incurable cancer. And at the moment, it's in lots of places. There's at least one in my lung. There's a very big frustrating one in my liver and a few other ones in my liver. There's a few in my bones and none in my brain at the moment, which is good.

So that's where it is at the moment, I guess. So initially, once we got told that it was incurable, I spent the first four weeks either sleeping or screaming or crying. I think that's a fair reasoning. I couldn't function. Nic stopped work. We've been very lucky to have income protection and insurance and Nic can do that to basically care for me.

After those four weeks, it kind of sunk in and most people in this situation have that period of depression or processing. And we started treatment and I got really, really sick. So by October, November, December, I was for hours each day having fevers, shaking. I was needing blood transfusions all the time. We were back in hospital most weeks and basically life was pretty bad. I was full of those emotions.

When you live in life, you constantly get told that, yes, this is unfair. If you speak to people, they'll say, they're so sorry, this is unfair to you. We have had our lives ripped from us. We've had things taken from us. We can't do things. And we live day by day not knowing. You live in three months scans. So at the moment, I don't know where the cancer is. And at any point, the next scan can be bad news and you can deteriorate and get really sick.

So yeah, things will be taken from you and your life has completely changed. So all those feelings are very valid and people, yeah, anyone would feel them. So that's basically how I felt most of last year. I felt cheated, anger. I couldn't be around friends that were pregnant because it was too hard. I'm just angry at everyone and not coping in hospital because of all the bad experiences.

A lot of PTSD from bad hospital experiences, nightmares, sleepless nights. Yeah. So I was not in a good place. And then we had a holiday booked in Adelaide and we had a good scan and it looked like the treatment was working. And so we were able to go to Adelaide for Christmas. And unfortunately, when we were down South in Adelaide, in South Australia, the liver cancer grew and tried to kill me.

Well, it was releasing chemicals into the body and I got incredibly sick down there and kind of got trapped. I almost died multiple times, got Royal Flying Doctor back to Adelaide and then to Brisbane. And it took that experience to realise that for the whole last year, these feelings that I had, even though they were very valid, weren't actually helping.

And I was almost like fighting what God was doing throughout this. In life, we think that we are promised things. We think we are promised a long life because we live in Australia and everyone lives to 80, 90, 100. We are promised to find a partner. And I mean, our story, I got married at 28, Nic at 33. And we, obviously a lot older than a lot of people, we think that we're promised kids. If

you're infertile, that's hard, but you can do IVF nowadays. You think you are promised all this stuff, but we actually aren't. The only thing that we're promised is eternal life.

And last year, I couldn't accept that. I wanted what everybody else had in this life. And so for some reason, it took almost dying for me to realise that, yeah, it's not really about this life.

"Every day is extra"

And so now every day is extra that I shouldn't have. Nic saved my life in Adelaide and then the doctors did. And so instead of focusing either on is the cancer spreading or focusing on, we can't have kids or stuff like that.

Every day it's focused on how much it's extra and I shouldn't be here. And so I just get to experience the joy of little things and happiness.

You talk about the WhatsApp group and sharing stuff. And it's just been absolutely phenomenal. The amount of people from my life that have contacted me from kindergarten or my year one teacher, my school friends, people in my medical cohort that I don't remember ever speaking to, people that I didn't think that I even got along with in medicine, people from Canada and the UK and Germany and all across Australia, they have contacted me and encouraged me.

So the amount of people that I can reach out by sharing my struggles with this and how I now cope when I do feel those emotions is being able to flip it and see how much joy there is in life. There is the ability to be able to walk, the sunshine. When you actually stop in life and don't focus on achievement and just are grateful for family, watching my nephew laugh, spending time waking up, like waking up next to my husband and not in the hospital bed. Um, there's just so much joy in life. In each day there will be moments where yeah, I can be triggered by someone complaining about a kid or those things but then I can see that I don't work and I am lucky. Yeah, I don't work and my purpose each day is just to bring joy to other people and that's, I'm actually in a really privileged position, one that I would still rather not be in but if God's, yeah, using that to help others and I'm most of the time happier than I've ever been in my life by, yeah, I'm learning to be content with that.

Stephen: It's an extraordinary view that you've expressed. When we caught up a couple of weeks ago, you mentioned how that, and we don't need to go into the details of the Adelaide experience, but as you described, you virtually died, perhaps even should have died, except for an extraordinary series of circumstances and so now it's almost like every day's a gift.

A change in mindset

Steph: Yeah, every day is a day that, yeah, I shouldn't have and so you think what is the purpose of the day and it's literally to find happiness and the joy and to share that with other people and so I think I'm sometimes the luckiest person in the world because I can do that and I don't have to go to work and the amount of joy I have by catching up with people and doing that is amazing and yeah you do have times where the thought of what's the cancer doing and dealing with the symptoms of cancer pop up and that's why I try to explain that in the WhatsApp group as well but primarily I'm just so grateful to God for changing that mindset because no human could have taken the sadness and how bad my headspace was towards the end of last year and transformed it into where I am today.

We survived last year but we also had to learn a lot and so we're making a lot of changes to try to be able to live life more instead of have cancer dominate it as we move into our third year of marriage and try to kind of regain our identities a little bit instead of having it all based on cancer.

Stephen: Your view on the kingdom, the coming of Christ, has that changed at all through this?

We have been promised eternal life

Steph: Yes, completely. It's gone from something that was very theoretical to something that's kind of the focus of each day. I think with incurable cancer you have to find peace and acceptance and not be afraid of death and dying and I think that's the biggest thing that I was struggling with over the end of last year. I just couldn't cope with that and so yeah, the only thing we have been promised is eternal life and we actually can't earn that and so we've already been given that and we can consider the Bible quotes to support that but that's what I've been given and I can't achieve that and so that's been given to me and by grace and by faith and just by believing in God that's what I have. So with the realisation of the kingdom, like the next death isn't scary because the next thing you know you're in a judgment seat so it's not scary. I think the thing that I struggle with is leaving people behind and so obviously I want as much time here as possible but you just don't know and that's the I guess struggle that both of us have is we still live life day by day and by scan by scan I could if this drug continues to work I could live five, ten years but as we saw in January it could be yeah it could be weeks to months.

I have friends who yeah have been fine and then two weeks later died, and managing that is hard so we don't know how much time we have, nobody does but knowing that yeah when you die the next thing you know is that but you will leave people behind is kind of the hardest thing so learning to coming to the acceptance that I'm not scared of dying has been huge and that's brought such peace that I didn't have before Adelaide. When I thought of cancer, I thought I'm gonna die, or how much time I had left whereas now it's just every day is extra and full of joy and happiness and sharing yeah God's love with people so that's kind of the big change.

Preaching my own gospel

Nic: I think that that transformation's been quite profound. I mean the story of last year was basically you know in terms of our relationship and our interactions with this was Steph struggling to with all of those emotions that she's just described - fear resentment anger depression and me trying to get her up every day and keep her going and counter those things or balance them out. You know you asked me before how I was doing how I was coping with it. To this day I don't know whether I can honestly say that I have coped or that I am coping I think that would be a pretty bold statement.

I think in the way that I have to function throughout all of this to be who I need to be for Steph. I am sort of benefiting from preaching my own gospel in a sense that every day that I'm working with Steph telling her all this stuff to keep her going I'm reinforcing it in my own mind too and whether or not I believed it at the start because of that positive reinforcement and that understanding at least at an academic level to begin with is that this is this is right, this is true, this is how we need to be thinking you know when it comes to know our mortality and to our natural human emotions and feelings. Those are quite real and valid feelings of resentment and anger and all of us at some stage of our life. Even people who have been spent a lifetime committed to the Truth and to God, find themselves in a position where they feel cheated and broken and they feel like blaming God for it. We've been through that; we're still challenged by that on occasions. The one question that you keep asking yourself or find yourself asking that you can't ask yourself because there is no answer is "Why?" I think that's where the blame game comes into it because

you desperately want that answer. Steph was talking about the fact that we're not promised anything in this life. From the day Adam and Eve sinned in the garden all humanity has been subject to the same fate; we are not promised anything. We kid ourselves thinking we're entitled to all of this stuff. In our Western world we're so privileged as regards to the average expectation of life but within that too, in terms of trying to take stock of where we are and remind ourselves of those realities, we need to be able to take the blinkers off of our own situation and pull back from the micro to the macro and see and appreciate more broadly. We need to understand that we are not promised anything more than the average experience. When you appreciate what that average experience is, you realize that this life is what it is for everyone. Human concepts of fairness are pretty ridiculous. There is no such thing. God is in control. This hasn't been done to us. This is just life.

Take stock of your blessings

There are plenty other people in this world, if you care to look, who are in similar or worse situations to what we're in and that's when you force yourself to consider and take stock of your blessings and to be grateful for them and force yourself to be grateful. Some days it's really hard where we're coaxing each other through it. Sometimes people we know check in on us and you come to appreciate those things all the more. We've been placed in a position that is even more visible in hindsight than we realized at the time where we have the right people around us to support us. We're in the right place to be able to deal with this. We've been put in a position where, as Steph has described what she's been doing with her WhatsApp group and publicizing what we're going through, she's been able to make a positive difference; we've also been able to use that as a vehicle to help us cope and adapt ourselves. One of the biggest things that we've had to struggle with is the up and down curve of the good and the bad and coming to an acceptance. Steph said our battle most of last year was a battle with denial.

Steph: I think a good example is I finally understand Jacob fighting with an angel. This is exactly what I was doing last year; I was fighting with God about why this is happening and refusing to accept.

Nic: A big part of why I was so on board with this concept of publicizing the way that we have tried to cope and talking about it was that I saw it as a vehicle that was helping my quest as the husband and the carer to achieve that acceptance and ownership with Steph because there was so much of last year where there was just a flat refusal to accept the reality circumstance. That's quite understandable but that was the battle that we had to fight.

Be courageous

Stephen: I had a conversation with a brother who quoted a verse to me which I thought might be appropriate and I really appreciated it. The ESV has a nice translation. It's Psalm 66 verse 16 and says, "Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will tell what he has done for my soul". It just has that idea of sharing our experiences with each other in a real way with God in mind. I am trying to think of a word that I thought was appropriate to draw this conversation to a close and I thought of the word 'Courage'. It's a Biblical word – 'Be courageous', and I really appreciate your time speaking with us. I find you both incredibly courageous and so I wanted to thank you for that and just finishing up, is there a final message or thought that comes to mind as we close our conversation?

Nic: For me, you spoke of courage. Neither of us feel courageous at all but I was struck with a series of recent conversations and experiences that there's a lot of things in life that we don't talk

about; a lot of internal struggles we don't talk about that we keep hidden and I'm not sure how broad an audience this reaches but if you know even if it's just purely in the Christadelphian sphere, we meet as a group of believers as a body in Christ as a family in Christ because the burdens of this life are too hard to be carried alone. Even just a life without God can be a pretty hard life where you're consciously trying to deny everything that is natural about yourself to achieve a higher ideal in a world that is all but forgotten or derides and rejects everything that God is all the more so. So for us to walk into our Service on a Sunday morning with any intentional or subconscious ideals of pretence or putting up a façade, I think our experience has taught us that we can't afford to live like that whether we intend to or not. We have to exercise that courage as a group and confide in each other because if you look across the aisle on Sunday morning and you don't know that your brother and sister is struggling, how can you help them, and vice versa, and that's what we're meant to be able to do for each other both in the spiritual and in the physical. There's a verse in James that says "Confess your sins one to another." I think we take that the wrong way. I think we take it far too literally. I think it scares us off. I think what it's actually referring to is that concept of being able to build a circle of trust and mutual reliance within our community. That's my take from all this and if I have anything for anyone it's put yourself out there, confide in your brothers and sisters and share your struggles and take the help that's available to you and be available for other people. That is what we're called to do.

It's not about this life, it's about the one to come ... but we can still experience joy and happiness

Steph: I think well firstly people are more than welcome to be added to as you said the WhatsApp group and we can put out the link where I share each day the positives but also some of the struggles as well. And thank you, Steve, for asking us to talk. We are so very blessed to live in a first world country where we have a lot of perceived control over our lives. I'm speaking especially to younger people like me who you think life just extends out in front of you and you believe in the Kingdom and that's coming. But it is like a long, long way away even with current events the way they are. Two big verses that have popped up recently are - it is very hard for the rich to enter the kingdom of God, and another verse says that if you love this life you will lose it and if you hate this life you'll gain it. I think our lives here are too good and we do love our lives a lot. I live each day on borrowed time, but everybody else does as well. I'm just extremely conscious of it, but at any time we've had people in the community who have just dropped dead. Everybody knows someone who's dropped dead or been hit by a car and died so you never know when it will be your last day, so slowing down and appreciating those moments and figuring out what the purpose is in your life instead of just rushing through the day trying to achieve. Being able to accept God's grace and using that as motivation to act towards other people that's how I want to be able to live each day as someone who has limited time and I guess that's the message that I'm just trying to get across - No matter how hard life is, we have that future. It's not about this life, it's about the one to come. But in this life we can still experience joy and happiness and if you can share that with as many people as possible the world is a much better place.

Stephen: Thank you both so much for joining Wilderness Conversations. God bless.

Steph and Nic: Thanks, Steve.

Postscript: Steph passed away 46 days after this recording, on May 26th 2024 at the age of 28.
