

Week 5

1/25/12

Betty: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! Thank you so very much for joining us. I'm Betty Robison and this is James.

James: Yeah! And we've been married a long time, nearly 48 years. Right? Is that right? Going on 49? It's going to be 49 pretty soon. Then it will be 50. We'll have a 50th anniversary. We'll have a big one on television -- 50th anniversary! We are!

Yeah, and then we'll do 50 more years of ministry while we're waiting for Jesus to come. Are you going to be around with us waiting for him?

I'm telling you what, I'm excited about life. I know I'm an older person right now. Kind of got a few years on me but I've never been more excited about life, never been more excited about sharing life, never been more excited about loving others and loving him and him being first because I follow a very exciting person. He is very real to me too. He's not just wishful thinking. He's not just some story I read about, he is someone I know -- like I know Betty.

I don't just read her letters. She doesn't just read mine, I'm still crazy about her. I'm not tired of her. We've been together nearly 50 years. I'm not tired of her. Do you understand I like this girl? She's real and we're not locked up. We enjoy the relationship.

You know something? You know what breaks my heart? God really wants everybody to have a relationship with one another that is meaningful and precious and when you have stressful relationships or painful relationships or you have division, there is a great healer of broken hearts in relationships who wants to help you. He wants us to have a relationship that is meaningful. Never unchallenged -- it always will be -- all of life challenges us but he wants to help us. He wants to enable us; he wants to walk through the storms with us. He wants to be the great Jesus that he is in our lives personally. The relationships we long for begin with a relationship with him -- the real living Jesus of the Bible, not some make-believe, religious Jesus.

John Eldredge is our guest. He really does kind of rattle the cage and shake things up. He really does! And now he wants to tell you that there's a beautiful outlaw named Jesus. Think about that. Jesus? A beautiful outlaw? What in the world is he talking about? ...this gifted writer. Well, let's ask him. Welcome John Eldredge to *LIFE Today*.

John, it's good to have you back.

John: It's good to be with you.

James: Always good to have you! It's an incredible title. How did you come up with the title, by the way?

John: A lot of prayer, actually. Really, just thinking about him loving him. Going, "How would I tell someone about Jesus? If I wanted to introduce him in one phrase, what would I use?" And it was "Beautiful Outlaw."

James: Did you see him as a lawbreaker or a tradition breaker, or are you looking because he said, "There will not be one jot or tittle of the law that will pass away." So we know he is not talking about the law of God, we know you're not talking about the law of God, so when you see him as a lawbreaker, do you see him as a tradition breaker? Do you see him as throwing down the things that we've set up as idols that we've actually made like a god and we had no business doing it? What are you getting at?

John: Look what he does in John chapter two in the temple. He goes to the epicenter of Jewish religious life, turning over tables, makes a whip out of cords, clears the temple because what was happening was religion, religious falsehood, getting in the way of people just knowing God -- knowing God. That's what made him so angry. So yes, he is a disruptive man.

James: They made the house of prayer a den of thieves. And we know who the thief and the robber is, he's the deceiver; he's Satan himself. So evidently, this real thief was prevailing in the temple and he drove this out. He said, "You're here for all the wrong reasons." It wasn't like he was putting down the right reasons, he is putting out all the wrong reasons that are going on in the place that is supposed to be a place of worship and prayer.

John: That's brilliant! Because here's what happened, Satan tried to kill Jesus and it backfired badly. So then he tries to stop the revolution by killing all the early leaders: Peter, James, John. Right? That backfires and so Satan figures out -- it's the most cunning thing he's ever done -- he figures if I can't lick them, join them. I'm going to create a brilliant counterfeit. I'm going to give them religion. And he will warehouse hundreds of millions of people in a church experience and they never know God... they never know Jesus.

James: And it will give a lot of choices of church experiences. And religion will tell you they're all right and they will all be telling you how all the other one's wrong and they never seem to love each other. And it seems to me that this Beautiful Outlaw said, "You will know them by their love, and you'll know they're my disciples because they love one another." You can't get most church people to even like one another. We're not starting churches all over America because we're mission minded; we're starting more churches because in many instances we're mean and we just go up and start another fortress and fire at the one we just left. Sound like church? Welcome to church -- dear God, deliver us. Jesus is trying to. Right?

John: He's a disruptive man but Jesus is holy. It's just that his holiness isn't what we expected it to be. Speaking to women in public -- we would never do that! Touching lepers --

James: A tax collector up a tree?

John: He is radical!

James: Sinners and publicans?

John: But he is holy. This is a man you can love. This is a man you can love.

James: I like him a lot.

John: Me too!

James: I'm in love with him. And I like all the scandalous ways he acted because he was really, really wrecking the scandal. He was really tearing down what people have put up in place of God.

John: Okay, so here's the story. John 13, it's the famous upper room. Jesus is going to be executed pretty shortly here in a pretty gruesome way. Now he's been working with these guys for three years. He's trying to get the point across. You remember the story. And even that -- upper room, we've made it such a lovely religious story. It just means upstairs.

[Laughter]

Second floor -- there's nothing holy about upper room. They're upstairs. Oh, okay. So

Jesus takes off his garment, he wraps a towel around his waist, it says and he gets the basin out and he starts to wash the disciples' feet.

He comes to Peter -- do you remember what Peter says? No! Right? "You shall not wash my feet."

This is really crucial. The number one thing that keeps people from Jesus Christ is actually false reverence. Peter loved his master, he respected him, and this just blew him away. He's like, "No, I can't let you do this. No!"

And Jesus says to Peter, "Look, you don't understand what I'm doing right now but later you will. And Peter, if I don't wash you, you have no part with me. So let me close the distance with you. Let me be intimate here."

And these kind of pious postures that we take toward God, keeping him high up in the heavens, he wants to be here.

James: I have a barfing impulse when you do that.

John: Don't you?

James: Oh, I do. It's a throw up. It just makes me sick. When people are like this, pious, religious. You see how it makes you sick just going -- [splbb]

John: This stuff is rampant! It absolutely -- it has the church by the throat. Many good people do not experience an intimacy with Jesus because they've actually put up the barriers. So if you want to experience this Beautiful Outlaw, you've got to start removing some of the debris and much of it is this kind of false piety.

Betty: So man has created religion, so to speak.

James: The devil did it through man.

John: We have! We have! And much of it is good intentioned. I used to use for example the Book of Common Prayer in my morning prayers and it begins like this: Almighty God and everlasting father. Okay? But Jesus said, "No call him 'Papa... Abba.'" Now there is a difference between "Almighty God" and "Everlasting Father" and "Papa." Right? This has got this coat-and-tie formality to it that you would -- "Good morning, Mr. Father sir. May I approach unto thee?"

[Laughter]

It just kills the relationship. No one would want that with their real dad. Jesus wants intimacy. He came to close the gap. The most scandalous thing that ever happened in the universe is the incarnation -- God became a man. The Word of God had to learn how to talk. "Jesus, this is a cup. Can you say cup?"

"Cup." Like baby Jesus was like real -- he is real. He is not this cartoon figure. He is not Superman, sort of floating around. Can you picture little baby Jesus -- and this was the Christmas cards. They show little baby Jesus, he looks like a miniature adult. He looks like he's ready to become prime minister. Can you see him having a conversation with his mom and dad? "Oh, I think there is a different interpretation of that passage in Leviticus. Are you done with the olive oil?"

[Laughter]

He's real... Jesus is real. He's real and he closes the gap between man and God. He wants us to know him as he is. So all we're trying to say is don't let these religious veils keep you from Jesus like Peter was trying to do.

James: So when you talk about clearing away the religious fog, this is what you're talking about, everything that dims your vision of God as he really is. And really, aren't we supposed to be as great a manifestation of God as there is on earth?

Now you said he revealed himself in everything he created. You see if you don't see God in everything you're not likely to see God in anything. I can see him in everything he made. The heavens and earth declares the glory of God. I see him everywhere I look. But the thing is I believe that he should be most clearly revealed in his family -- in us being like him.

John: But here's the deal. Because we've stripped Jesus of his personality and we've made him just this kind of two dimensional, kind of wispy --

James: I don't want you to say "we," I want you to say "they" or "some people" because I don't -- I don't want to live there. I won't live there!

[Laughter]

I'm with this outlaw. I'm part of the gang.

John: Here's the deal, by stripping Jesus of his personality, what happened is we stripped the church and his followers of personality as well. How do you imitate this man? One or two qualities: Love and compassion... love and compassion. Jesus is a whole lot more than love and compassion.

James: You better let him live in you to be who he is. That's why he sent this other one to live in us so we could be like him.

John: If the real personality of Jesus were to actually invade our personalities, it would be the single most powerful thing to rescue the power of Christianity on the earth.

James: Do y'all agree with this? Are you all okay out here?

[Applause]

Now you talk about letting Jesus be himself with you and you actually touch on forgiving Jesus, which you know he never did anything wrong. So what are you implying here because I have enough confidence in you and the fact that you know this real Beautiful Outlaw in a very intimate way, and since I know him too and since I know we know the same person, but I've got to ask and since I've read it and know, I want people to hear, what are you talking about when you talk about forgiving?

John: Again, Jesus is trying to close the gap; that's what the incarnation is about, that's what the whole rescue of mankind is about. God wants intimacy, he wants closeness. The number one thing that separates people from God is their pain, "Why did you let this happen?" Loss, suffering, heartache of some kind... that's when our hearts pull away from God.

James: If you were really a loving God you wouldn't let this happen. You must not be much of a God. What kind of a God would do this?

John: And this is what destroys many people's experience of an intimacy with Jesus. They may hang on to their faith, they may still try and revere him, some... but the relationship really suffers. So what I mean by forgiving Jesus is that there are things in our hearts that we're holding against him and it's hurting the relationship. And until you forgive him for that, until you let that go, and don't let it be a cause of offense between you two, you're going to have a hard time experiencing the playfulness, the beauty, the intimacy of Jesus. This is a beautiful thing.

In John 14 Jesus says, "If you love me, I'll reveal myself to you." One of the most powerful things you can begin to do is simply love Jesus. Love him! I don't mean just respect him. I don't only mean obey him or serve him; I mean love him. You actually "I love you, Jesus." To say that, to speak those words because it opens your heart up to him, and in these painful places to begin to release that to him and not hold that against him will be immensely freeing -- immensely freeing for people who want a real intimate relationship with God, which is what this whole thing is about. Everything else doesn't matter unless we have that and nothing else is right until we have that.

James: I had my assistant, Carol ask me one time, "Don't you think that you had a little exposure to a pastor and his wife when you were young? And then you had all those years of brokenness and nothing? Don't you think being in that church a few years probably did more than say the ten years of being out just in poverty and the whole family?" I had to answer truthfully, no. I find myself more grateful for those times when I could have been putting all the blame because in my pain, I found the answer, I found the balm of Gilead, I found this living Jesus.

But in that situation, John, I was able to see where most people live. They live with what you're talking about, blaming God, holding this back, against God so that they never connect. And really, God in his grace, I don't even know that I can explain how that happened, but I think maybe somebody like you or someone who shared truth like the Beautiful Outlaw because I met this Jesus. I met this Jesus as the Jesus that I saw of all places in a classic comic book being baptized by John coming up out of the water and I heard the words that were written up here in this little circle and it said, "This is my beloved son in whom I'm well pleased." I remember standing there a little ol' boy about 12 or 13 and I start crying and I remember thinking, because I'd never heard a dad say, "Good catch." "Nice throw!" "Good run" -- "Way to go, son!" I never heard it. And I remember standing there with that comic and I thought, boy, wouldn't that be neat if God said this is my beloved son in whom I'm well pleased? And I remember thinking, I'd like him to say that about me and the night I got saved, I heard the Lord saying, "Go to Jesus and I'll be so pleased." And I live with that Jesus.

You like this kind of Jesus? You want to say thanks to John Eldredge? Here's the book and there's John's web site.

You may say, "Okay, John, I know you do men's conferences. I want to know the dates. I want to know where -- I think I'd like to come spend some time with you because I have an idea I'm going to be also with this Beautiful Outlaw." So there is the information.

John, I really do thank you. I consider you a real friend and you've been praying for us and for our ministry a long time. I thank you.

We're doing something right now that our viewers tell us they enjoy doing more than anything we do -- and we do a lot of things that I believe the Lord is pleased with. The Lord is pleased with what his people do that expresses his heart and his love. I want you to -- I want you to just really focus and say, "God, what can I do about what I'm about to see and hear. Please show me." Because you really -- I'm telling you now -- you are the God expression. You are the revelation of God in the situation you're about to see. You really are. This is for you! Jesus in you, the Beautiful Outlaw, live -- the giver of life in you. Watch closely.

Begin video clip:

Translator: My daughter died when she got an infection and diarrhea. The doctor said it was because of the contaminated water we were drinking. She was only eight months old.

We don't have any clean water here. We have to go to the river. We know it's dirty and bad for us but what else can we do? We don't have a choice.

I visit the cemetery to talk to my daughter and to take flowers to her grave. She would be eight years old now. I miss her so much. But what I can do? She isn't here anymore. There isn't anything I can do about it.

I worry about my son's future. We still have to use the contaminated water and sometimes he gets sick like my daughter did. I'm afraid of what might happen.

There's an expression in Spanish that says, "Hopes don't fill you up, but they keep you going." I'm hopeful that God will bring us some help and we can have clean water for my family and the community.

End of clip

In the studio

James: You see, we were translating her story from Spanish so you could hear it, and she lost that little baby that would now be eight because of contaminated water.

You could just see, even with the pain, I could see love. I could see a sweetness in that mother's face, an appreciation for her little boy that she prays will not get sick.

Betty, we've been all over that part of Central America and the impoverished nations and we've knelt by the dirty contaminated rivers and we've watched the little families where they would dig down and try to dig a pit and get some clean water thinking -- with animals in the river and filth -- that maybe by digging in the sand beside the river they might get clean water but they didn't. We saw the death cycle.

Betty: We have. And this precious mother, her heart's broken over the loss of her little girl by a simple problem and a simple solution, the dirty water, but we can make the difference and bring the solution with the clean water. This mother can't change what happened to her daughter but she has a son she cares about, and there's just so many more just like them. These mothers are desperate to know how they can help their children. We have the answer. We can offer hope as she spoke about; hope that her children might have an opportunity to grow up healthy.

James: I heard that mother's cry. It was one voice, to me, representing many mothers and many needs. You heard one cry and I really believe the answer to that one cry is one person who will say, "I will meet that need." And another person say, "I will meet another, and another, and another."

When we join together, we become together the full expression of the body of Christ, the family of faith. We really, with no exaggeration, extend the hands of a loving God to a dying world desperate for that love. We express freely the love of God and we express it by giving -- by giving the love and the life; not just in word, but in deed, in action.

I'm asking you to do something right now. Please, listen to me. I'm asking you to move quickly and get a bankcard and use it the way you're supposed to use it, like a check and call the number and give the largest gift you can.

Think about this, \$48 will give ten people water the rest of their life; \$144, 30 people. The wells average \$4800. I know I'm not exaggerating when I say this. Some of you, perhaps you, could give a well. Would you do it? It may be one of the greatest joyful experiences you'll ever have, and that gift will keep giving from now on. It is a gift that just keeps giving, and it will be the answer to so many mothers' prayers and give life to children. Would you do that?

If you want to write a check, make it to *LIFE*. You can go to *LifeToday.org* and make the gift online. Do that! But would you do it today?

By the way, don't think if I can't give \$4800, maybe you could give \$1200 and pray three join you or \$2400 and pray another person joins you, there is a level at which you can participate. But don't think if \$48, that's not much. Wait a minute, to ten people, to ten mothers for their children, it means so much!

Father, I pray every person watching will make the gift you put on their heart.

Would you dial that number? Would you make that love gift? Please do it.

We have some beautiful gifts to send you that will be a tremendous blessing. We love to bless you as you bless others. Thank you for it!

Begin video clip:

Announcer: Every day millions of children are forced to make a dreadful choice, drink filthy, polluted water filled with deadly disease or die from thirst. No child should ever be faced with this decision.

The good news is that there is a solution -- Mission: Water for Life is one of the most exciting and viable demonstrations of God's love in the world today. The suffering can end because clean water changes everything!

With your gift today we will begin drilling 350 new water wells for remote villages in 12 different nations. Your gift of \$24 will help provide clean water for five people! A gift of \$48 will help provide for 10 people! \$72 will reach 15 people. And \$144 will help provide fresh clean disease-free water for 30 people for a lifetime!

With your gift be sure to request, *Believe This Not That* a brand-new topical Bible promise book that will encourage you in every area of life.

With your gift of \$100 or more you may request our newly released *Water for Life* mug set, a daily reminder of the clean water you make possible to those who thirst.

Also please prayerfully consider a gift of \$1200 to help provide water for 250 people or a gift of \$4800 to help sponsor a complete well. And be sure to request the 2012 commemorative bronze sculpture, "The Lamb and the Lion."

Please call, write, or make your secure gift online today!

End of clip

In the studio:

James: You can take away the tears of many mothers like Rosa. Would you drill a well? "The Lamb and The Lion" together, that's supernatural. Giving somebody a chance at life, the supernatural life of Jesus in us.

We want to send you a book that will bless you, *Believe This Not That*, the coffee mugs, they'll remind you every day Water for Life. I enjoy this. I want to pray for others.

If you help us today, I know many of you would like to get John's book. If you help us give water, we'll be glad to send you John's Eldredge's book, *Beautiful Outlaw* just to say thank you and to bless you, and we know it will.

Join Betty and me in saying thanks to John.

Tell Stacy hi! Appreciate you.

Again, thank you so much.

Thank you.

And by the way, if you try to call to help us give water and couldn't get through, a busy, dial now -- get through or go to *LifeToday.org*.

Thank you for watching. Thanks for sharing life.

Announcer: Faith, family, and freedom are under attack. James Robison and Jay Richards encourage a divided America to stand together before it's too late. *Indivisible* – coming soon to online and retail bookstores.

Beth: We might come to a point where we feel like we're completely, emotionally involved where we cannot see.

Announcer: Spiritual discernment -- tomorrow!