

Week 14

3/26/12

James: It is an honor. I'm telling you, I'm excited that we have this opportunity to be with you.

I'm James Robison; Betty and I are thrilled to have the pastor of the Good News Church in Russia, Moscow... Fabulous! You talk about a work of God, a work of grace, I mean it is awesome. Rick Renner is here. I want you to welcome Rick Renner to *LIFE Today*.

Rick, it's good to see you here.

His wife Denise is sitting up here smiling at us.

And Denise, we love you. You all are such a treasure. We just thank you for being ambassadors of life and light into one of the great areas, I believe, of human possibilities and potential for the grace and glory of God to work and manifest. Beautiful people! I love the Russian people. We're just glad you're here.

I've got to hold something up. You've got to be real strong to hold this up.

Betty: You want me to help you?

James: Yeah, you need to help me.

Listen to me -- this is positively the single most beautiful book that I've ever put my hands on. It is absolutely fabulous. Not only is it well done, the pictures, the history, the art, the production quality, everything in here is just stunning! You talk about a book that needs to be on the table of every Christian family and every individual that says, "You know what? I think I'd like to know something about history that's reliable, especially biblical, perhaps New Testament history." Well, here it is. *A Light in Darkness: Seven Messages to the Seven Churches*.

This is only two of the churches addressed here. There are bigger volumes coming. And this one weighs, I think, seven or eight pounds -- maybe more than that. It is fabulous.

Rick, I tell you, when I got in the book, I'm going to be honest with you. I felt like I got to know the Apostle John for the first time and I felt like I was on Patmos. I felt like

somehow I identified with what he looked out and saw. I'll be honest, I felt like I beheld the glory of the Lord. I just felt like I was taken back into that moment.

Did you sense when you were bringing all of this material together, I know you're a Greek scholar, you're a great historian, you love what took place in the New Testament areas and regions of the world, but did you sense that, what I'm talking about, even while you're compiling all of this material?

Rick: Absolutely! In fact, when I wrote this book -- this study began as a study for me, and things began to open in the first three chapters of the book of Revelation. When I began to study what happened to the Apostle John, how old he was when he was arrested, how long he lived, what happened to him on the aisle of Patmos and how he received the book of Revelation, it just absolutely turned me inside out. So I went to Turkey 10 times! I could take you on a tour of Ephesus as professional as any tour guide there is.

I went to Patmos and I took a whole team with me. I took journalists, I took people in history, I took photographers, and I hired the best archaeologist in Turkey and we went everywhere you can go.

James: Awesome! And the pictures!

Rick: We took those pictures.

James: I'm telling you, it looks like something out of some historical collection! They're absolutely fabulous. In light of what you saw here, and just our viewing audience, you'd say, "Pastor Renner, what do we need to hear?"

Rick: Repent! Jesus, to the church of Ephesus, which is the first church, Jesus said, "Repent," and he told them to remember. Now that's very important because remembering is a part of repentance. If you think everything is going fine, then you're probably not going to repent. But the church of Ephesus, by the time John wrote this, was just 30 years old. Now think about that. In 30 years they had already left their first love and Jesus said, "Remember and repent."

James: Do you know that very reality is what brought me as a preacher, defeated, in a highly successful ministry, looked good on the outside but on the inside I was dying because I defeated; the enemy had his feet on me. And what brought me back to first love, Rick, was remembering. I remembered what it was like when I was in love with Jesus and

the sweet intimate fellowship. I remembered what he had done. I remembered how he walked. Does that make sense? That you go back and remember the great things of God and you come back to it.

I really fear that some people who have been associated with religion or church have never really experienced first love because you've got a false love. You've actually substituted something for what must be first love. You've gotten plugged into some religious system, to some process of going through the motions.

But that intimacy, that first love -- listen, if you've never had that, don't miss that for a mess of pottage, for just church. Trust Christ and get to know him and if you do, you have something you'll want to remember. And when you remember it, I really believe it will bring you back and you'll know what you're coming back to. Does that even flow with what you saw?

Rick: Yes, sir. In fact, when you look at Acts 17, Acts 18 and 19, when the great revival happened in Ephesus, they repented. The Bible says they came confessing their sins and they burned all their occultist fetishes. It was such a great revival. And the church became so powerful and so established and almost institutionalized within 30 years.

Now that's an amazing thing to me because 30 years is a very short period of time. And just after a mere 30 years, Jesus was already saying to them, "Hey, you need to turn around and remember." And you know what just gets me is Jesus says, "Remember from whence thou art fallen." And that word fallen describes an already completed state. So in the eyes of the Christian world, they were the biggest church.

But Jesus sees things differently than people sees, and Jesus was not impressed with how big they were, or how sophisticated they were, or how theological they were. Jesus said, "You have already completely fallen. Remember!"

James: Whoa! Now when you look at the church today, let's really cut to the chase. Let's look at the church here in the United States. Would you agree this has been a very blessed and prosperous nation?

Rick: Absolutely!

James: Do you believe we've been blessed because we understood something about first love and about founders love?

Rick: Yes, I do.

James: What's happened to us?

Rick: We've forgotten. We have drifted so far from our foundation. We have a whole generation who don't even understand. They don't even understand who we are as a people.

James: Isn't that sad?

Rick: It's very sad. If we just remember -- let's say that we remember -- let's just remember 30 years ago for us. What was America like 30 years ago? What was the church like 30 years ago? Yes, we have made some great advancements, there is no doubt about that.

James: But the church today is not -- it's not what he said we should be; is it?

Rick: No, but we will be. We will be.

James: I believe that. I really believe we will be before he comes back. I believe he is coming for a church dressed in his glory. Do you think that's biblical?

Rick: That's what the Bible says. There is going to be a people that are going to come forth.

Betty: As Christians, when we remember, when we look back because I know personally in my own life, when I look back at all the different seasons of my life when God was there, and maybe I was struggling, but God did something in my heart, I remember, and that brings a newness to my spirit, and a refreshing. Isn't that the way it should be?

Rick: Absolutely! Denise and I both got saved when we were young, and we met each other in church and we've always served the Lord together. I know even in my personal life, our ministries can become so involved and such a machine to operate that Jesus can get lost in the middle of all of it. And I'm afraid that very often Jesus gets lost in the church.

James: Yeah, he got lost in my situation because I was operating in the gifts of the spirit and not walking in the fullness and the fruit of the spirit. I was living under an anointing on a gift but I was not walking in that fullness because I had literally left that first love.

And I was committed to the work of God rather than the God of the work with my whole heart. I really think that happens to a lot of sincere people. You said of this book, as you worked through it, that the New Testament came alive in ways that you'd never really fathomed. Explain what you mean.

Rick: The pagan world just opened to me. For the first time, I saw the church in its first century setting, how they had to deal with perversion, how they had to deal with the issues of abuse. The world was so dark in the first century. A lot of that paganism is reemerging today. We're facing the same issues today.

James: I think that's exactly right.

Rick: Jesus said, "He that has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches." And the same message Jesus spoke then, I believe he is saying to the church today.

James: I believe that wholeheartedly.

Rick: So in these seven messages to the seven churches, it is the Word of God to us today about compromise, about holiness -- it's all relevant for where we are.

James: We really lack brotherly love. We found so many reasons to divide the family of God that we have actually lost vision of the very purpose of God in our lives on this earth. We're living a day that we really don't have time to waste arguing about theological differences when we need to recognize the real issues we face that biblically we can effectively and correctly address.

And if Christians won't come together and do it, if the people who claim to love God, who claim to believe principles, who claim to love their family, who believe in responsibility and hard work, who want to earn a living, who want to bless others, if these people are not interested in the direction of the nation or interested in what people do who direct our nation, then how can we ever hope for a positive outcome?

And the most indifferent people it seems are the ones who should be the most concerned about our present state, and a lot of them show up at church. And it's like we've done the whole thing by just showing up but they don't ever let the light of God's glory shine.

To me, I feel like I'm echoing Jesus' message to the churches. You're the Bible scholar, you're the Greek scholar, am I out of step?

Rick: No! It's exactly right. James, I really believe with all my heart that if the Bible is true, and it is, the church is going to end on a glorious note -- we're going to end in power.

James: It is time for a great awakening. This is the time to rise and shine. You see hope? You're in Russia.

Rick: Oh, do I see hope? Listen, Russia is a great example. There is a big difference between America and Russia because America had light and seems to have walked away from it. Russia never had it. So the level of accountability is very different.

James: Much greater here.

Rick: But Russia is emerging from a period of darkness and we see the Protestant movement coming forth. In fact, so many churches have been birthed in these 20 years. We just marked our 20th anniversary, that we are now 20% of the vote. Think about that! From going, as the underground church, now we are 20% of the national vote.

James: That means you can influence the decision makers and the whole process. By the way, you say, "Why would you even bring up politics?" Isn't it amazing? Why would you bring up that which determines the very future for the children and families you claim to love and all the people you seem to care about? How could there be anything of any greater importance than the people who are going to provide leadership and direction and the policies that they put in place that either encumber or assist? I love you said that. We have influence. That sounds like kingdom imprint to me.

Rick: We do! The church has really come forth. In a certain way, communism cleared the slate. It just cleared the slate.

James: I guarantee you it was a walking, invisible, disastrous proof that it won't work when God's out and any other source is in.

Rick: But when those walls fell no one had wrong thinking about God. Nobody had any thinking about God.

[Laughter]

So when we came in and began to teach the Bible, there was no resistance. People just embraced. I tell you, Russian speaking believers, if you tell them what the Bible says, they

will take it to their heart and take it to the bank. They will do what the Bible says. And it is a thrill to live in Russia.

James: You know when we were in the Kiev area after Chernobyl and then went over and began to minister in areas where communist dominion had kept the people trapped, and we found people who would run up to us when they heard us talking about God and said, "We knew there was a God. We kept saying there was even when they told us there wasn't." We found a receptivity that was like the most fertile soil. It was like dry and thirsty ground receiving the refreshing showers. Is that been the basic impression you've got when you've mingled and ministered?

Rick: Yes! The Slavic people are just -- they love God. They have such an openness to God. I'm thankful that Denise and I are there with our sons and our daughters-in-laws and our grandbabies and we're helping to reap the harvest, right in the middle of it.

James: Do you appreciate someone being a missionary to the former Soviet Union, to Russia? I do! And all who support this ministry -- give me your web site. I want to put it up. Maybe people will want to come over and minister with you. They may want to help you. What's the web site?

Rick: Renner.org. That's it.

James: I know you've got a lot of building projects and a lot before you. I want you to just go to the web site and say, "God, can I help them?" I really do want to encourage you to go to the bookstore. Now take somebody strong with you.

[Laughter]

This will be one of the best expenditures and purchases you'll make. You're going to treasure it. It won't be the kind of thing you'll just sit down, I don't think, and just say, "I think I'll just read it first right through." No, no, no! What you're going to do is you're going to kind of thumb through it and you're going to read various sections and you're going to look at the incredible art and the photography. You're going to get a history lesson.

But what I found, and I'm just going to tell you, Pastor Rick, this is what happened to me. I began to identify with the Jesus in John, and John in Jesus. I looked out and I saw what was happening in that pagan world and I saw what was happening to the church, and I was able to equate it to so much of what I am watching today. And somehow even as John

got the revelation and delivered the message of Jesus in repentance, I too delivered that but I deliver it with a great hope, that you're going to respond to the invitation of the Father and come back into the shadow and the shelter of the Almighty. That's my prayer for America. I'm praying that every one of you as believers will not only start praying about issues of concern, but you'll ask God how can I become well informed and involved in an effective way so that we release and reveal the light that will expose the error of our way, personally and nationally, and the correct way we're to go.

A lot of people get caught up in an election. I think we need to be consumed by a knowledge of direction and the correction necessary. That's the repentance, that's the receiving him, the one who directs our steps. That's our prayer.

And I really want to thank you for this incredible book, *A Light in Darkness: Seven Messages to the Seven Churches*. Would you just thank Pastor Rick Renner with us? -- Our wonderful audience here.

Pastor, Betty and I along with all of our viewers, and I think, really and truly, we are blessed -- you know I love you. I mean I'm telling you that if I was sitting in the room with you I'd tell you. I wouldn't care how you were dressed, I wouldn't care where you lived; I'd love you. But I want you to also know that I greatly appreciate your love for what God has called us to do. I think you love this beautiful girl sitting beside me. I think you love her. I think you love me. Sometimes that's a challenge but I think you do.

But here's what I know without a doubt, you love to put the arms of God around people who are in desperate need and you know that love never fails. We're seeking with your help, and it's the only way we can do it is with your help, we can care a lot, we share little unless we join together.

We want to rescue children from the sex trade and traffic where they've been taken prisoner. We want to give women that we get out of the trade, we want to give them a job, we want to build them a place to live, a place of escape.

I want you to watch closely. We'll see some precious children. These children you see are targets of predators to make slaves -- it gets hard to fathom that kind of wickedness, but we can release them with love from that prison. Watch.

On the mission field

>> So you know, the nation of India is loaded with streets like these and neighborhoods like this and they've become a hot bed, a breeding ground for traffickers. They prey on children in these neighborhoods. They prey down lanes like this. Moms are afraid for

their children to go outside at dark because so many children go missing... mostly young girls.

>> So this little girl was just sharing with me right now that she knows of a story of a two and a half year old boy that was kidnapped and has disappeared.

But she also shared when the little girls sometimes play in the evenings, right at the back out there, they were playing, and she said that the girls just disappeared. So there have been about five or six girls, they were playing in a bunch and men just came and kidnap them and take them.

She says, "Yeah, I'm afraid but I don't venture out too much. I try to stay as much as I can at home. So I don't go out by myself." But it is definitely a fear for her.

It's children like this and it is girls like this that our hearts go out for. We need to reach out to communities just like this and rescue these little girls and protect them from those horrors and give them a hope.

End of clip

In the studio:

James: I'm asking you to put arms of love around those children. When we tell you there are literally hundreds of children that are vulnerable to the predators, we're not exaggerating. And when we tell you that their parents, who know those children are vulnerable, who are really asking us to take their children, take care of them because they know they're going to be captured, they want them to have -- some of them make the mistake of letting their children go with the wrong kind of people because they're telling them they're going to help the child or even give the child a job.

Now we've got several fronts we're asking you to join us on. We want to rescue as many as we can. The average cost, this is what the missionaries have literally worked out to make it very clear, it's \$128 average to rescue one of these children or one of the women from the sex trade and we're actually getting the women into a trade. They're making these beautiful beads, and doing other things to learn how to make a living. We're actually sending these as a thank you gift to send a set of beads to say thank you if you'll help us rescue one of these girls or one of the children.

And we're also asking you to help us build the *LIFE* Center in Nepal, which the children there in poverty are so vulnerable to be taken captive and taken into India and into the sex trade.

And the beautiful thing is, Betty, right now we've got some very special concern coming from some of our supporters who said they will match the gift. They believe this is so serious that whatever gift to build the center, we're asking for gifts of \$1,000 or more to help build the *LIFE* Center in Nepal, and we really need that. And it will be doubled. I pray some of you would give several thousand and know it will be doubled.

But we also need many who will give \$128 and that will be doubled. Or, Betty, if they give \$64, that will be doubled and we've got enough to rescue another child.

Betty: James, I know here in the states when we hear on the news about a child missing, a child being taken, and we begin to be concerned, we even pray for them, God, please bring that child back safely. What you're seeing here is many children and women being taken; not by choice. I mean they were taken into captivity and they're put into a lifestyle that they never would have chosen for themselves or for anyone in their family.

Please help us so we can have a safe place for these children, and these women to come, a place for them to work, and James, for them to make a living for themselves and to have the opportunity to live and laugh and play like children should be able to.

James: I'm really confident that you are going to help. Would you dial the telephone number there? It's always there if your heart's broken or you need prayer, someone really to help you. Well, we're asking you to reach out and be an answer to someone's prayer, someone's heart cry, someone's need.

Take your bankcard and use it like a check; that's how you should always use it. But make the largest gift you can today. If there is any way you can help with a special gift to help us build that center of \$1,000 or more, please do it. And if you could make the \$128 gift, it will immediately be doubled.

Don't ever think, "My gift isn't important." Whatever you do, it's going to be matched and it's going to have a powerful effect. We have special gifts to send you.

We are sending the book, *Indivisible*. I feel like if you really want to know how to pray and how to focus your attention properly on the issues of our day and see God heal our land, this is wisdom, this is direction. We will send it to you to say thank you for any gift.

And remember, the beads that these precious women are making to say thank you. Help us rescue someone. "The Lion and The Lamb" bronze for those of you who will help us build that *LIFE* Center in Nepal.

If you want to go online, *LifeToday.org*, make the gift God put on your heart. If you write a check, make it to *LIFE*, call us, please? Tell us what you're putting in the mail. Thank you for making that gift.

Begin video clip:

Announcer: Human trafficking... it's impossible to believe but at this very moment innocent children, many very young are being sold and forced into sexual slavery and exploited in every way imaginable, and someone must save them!

With your help today we can reach, rescue, and restore their hope for a better future and we can also build the New Hope Life Center in Nepal, which will be a safe house for children for years to come.

And now a miracle opportunity of \$384,000 matching gift with a cost of \$128 to rescue a child, that means your gift of \$128 will be matched to help rescue two children. And \$64 will be matched to help rescue one more child.

With your gift please request *Indivisible* by James Robison and Jay Richards, a soul-stirring read for every Christian who desires to restore America to the values that formed our strong foundation built on faith, family, and freedom.

With your gift of \$128, which today will help rescue two children, you will receive a unique and beautiful necklace handcrafted by women who are survivors of human trafficking and slavery.

Finally, please prayerful consider a gift of \$1,000 which will be matched to \$2,000 for the New Hope Life Center and you may request the beautiful bronze sculpture, "The Lion and the Lamb."

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

In the studio:

James: Well, we are anxious to send *Indivisible*. You may want to mention to your friends and people that you know have a concern for the well being of our nation and for their families, tell them to get a copy of *Indivisible* so we can focus our prayers. You release energy like a river through a turbine when you focus your prayers and light up a city, light up a nation.

A Light in Darkness -- what an incredible book! I hope you'll go and get this. It will be a worthy journey. Take someone with you to help you carry it because it's quite a load. But I want you to know, you're going to treasure this.

Say thanks to Rick Renner, to his pastor, Denise, and their family.

Rick, thank you so much for being here. You're going to be back later in the week and you consented to talk to me a little bit about what you saw in the book, *Indivisible*. I appreciate it.

Thank all of you for watching *LIFE Today*. Thank you for helping us rescue people from the awful traffic of the sex trade.

Announcer: Tomorrow, Pastor Rick Renner compares the modern church to the first century church.

>> In the first century believers were not persecuted for their faith.