

Week 20

5/10/12

Betty: Thank you so much for joining us on *LIFE Today*. I'm Betty and this is James.

James: And I'm smiling because I'm looking at the title of Chet's book, *I'm Not Broken: You Don't Need Arms to be Happy*.

Chet's not real tall. He came out here. His legs are about as big as my wrist and my hand. And he is just a remarkable person. He is really a miracle. He came out here and just got up in this chair a while ago and I thought -- I figured somebody would have to help him. Nope, not a bit.

[Laughter]

He's just a miracle.

His dad Jim is here. Chet McDoniel and Jim McDoniel.

I'm so thrilled to have both of you here. Jim and Chet, welcome to *LIFE Today*! It's a joy. You really -- you really are happy.

Chet: Absolutely!

James: It exudes from you and it is the joy of the Lord. You obviously have so much purpose in life.

I understand you actually have businesses; am I right about that?

Chet: Absolutely. I go around the country speaking at different places and then also run a Disney specialist travel agency called Off to Neverland Travel.

James: Did you come up with that idea yourself?

Chet: Actually, we heard a young child -- my wife and I were on a plane and as the plane's wheels left the ground and it was headed to Orlando about four rows behind us a young child yelled, "Off to Neverland!"

[Laughter]

And my wife looked -- we looked at each other and said, "That's the name of the company. We've got to call it that that!"

James: It had to be supernatural. *I'm Not Broken: You Don't Have to Have Arms to be Happy...* and you are happy.

Jim, was this a shock when you had a baby that didn't have arms and was obviously challenged?

Jim: In 1979 you didn't do sonograms unless there was some reason -- something to be suspicious of. We didn't know until we were in the delivery room that he had any abnormalities. It was a shock. It was a shock to his doctor; it was a shock to Judy and me.

And I still remember some of the bad scenes there as the doctor took him over, laid him in a little container that's for newborns, a little crib, and then went back to take care of Judy. He was the O.B. She was his patient. He told me later that he had done the minimum of suctioning life support for a newborn on Chet because he felt like if Chet could pull through he might have a viable life and if he didn't, he would be better off dead. That was quite a shock to even hear that.

I don't think it hit me as much then as it did later on because we liked the doctor and he was good to us. I think it was particularly a shock to Chet when he heard about it. But that wasn't as bad as another doctor who a day later told me, "Now, if you were in the state of California, you'd have three days to decide whether this child lives or dies."

James, what he was implying was that he would take care of that life. He would kill him if I just asked. That was the view of life -- the value that they placed on life.

James: I don't think it's gotten better. I think it's diminished until someone that has challenges like you have, Chet, would be seen as perhaps having little value, little potential, and would not see you as one to be protected. And if you were observed in the womb in this challenged condition, very likely you would have been aborted in the womb.

Would you agree that seems to be the trend and the thinking in America today on the part of many, many people?

Chet: Absolutely. When my wife and I were pregnant with our first child, there's another

one on the way now, by the way, when we were pregnant with our first child, our doctor asked to have a level two sonogram to make sure the baby was forming properly. Of course, me being who I am and the views I have immediately said, "Why would you want to do that?"

And she said, "Now slow down. Because you've got to realize if something is wrong, we're going to want specialists in the room, we're going to want every piece of knowledge of information that we can have in order that this child have the best chance at life."

And then she stopped and said, "And some parents, if they see an imperfect image on the screen at this point would choose to terminate."

And there was this awkward silence in the room and then a smile escaped her lips as she said, "I'm guessing you're not one of those people."

[Laughter]

Jim: We want to present a story of his success and yet, I want to say very clearly, it was difficult. There was a major blow to our thinking, to who we were and what we would do.

You would appreciate this, Betty as a mother. We used to stand over his crib at night and cry. And then we finally decided that wasn't doing him any good, wasn't doing us any good and we would rear him then just like we were trying to rear the other two, to have a full rich life. And if you could hear some of the stories of his life you'd know that nothing was held back. He was full steam all the way.

James: I think he tells some of the stories here.

By the way, here's an address, there's a web site where you can go and you can find out how to get this book but also how you could get Chet to come and communicate and Jim is quite the communicator himself, a pastor, and a wonderful father.

Chet's wife is out here and they've got a baby coming very, very soon. Jim's wife Judy is there, Chet's mother, and you're just beautiful, beautiful people.

I want to ask you this, Chet. When did life become challenging to you?

Chet: Early on other kids saw me just different but not anything to have any concern about. It wasn't an issue in conversation in playing together.

But in junior high, I became the target of bullies. I became the one that was ridiculed. I remember times where the bullying was so bad, not necessarily physical; in fact the physical was easy to take because I would challenge the bullies right back. "If you're going to throw a punch at me I'm going to hit you with my 400-pound wheelchair. We'll see how that works."

[Laughter]

It was the verbal abuse that hurt. It was the kid that was barely bigger than I was and what his tongue could do. I remember times in junior high that not only did I not want to go to school the next day, I can remember times that I did not want to wake up. It was that bad.

The discourse in our nation right now you hear adults say, "I don't understand how kids are killing themselves over being bullied." And I like to stand up and say, "I can. I understand what that's like. I understand those thoughts."

Had it not been for a very supportive family, a deepening faith at that point with God, because who else do you turn to? I don't know if I would be front of you. I don't know if I'd be alive.

But it was at that point where I decided either this becomes my faith and I serve him or I'm out. I don't need to be here because obviously, people are going to do this. Either they don't know, they haven't been taught, but they're going to do this.

James: Somebody fell in love with you when you were going through some of that.

Chet: She did! She did! Joanie and I met in junior high, in church together. We dated for about nine months. The break up was so bad that we did not speak to each other for three or four years afterwards. You know how silly kids can be.

We've often talked -- neither one of us even remember what the break up was about. Then we went to different colleges and came home and became best friends; wanted to be around each other all the time; spent about a year just being best friends and having fun.

Then one day I remember pulling over and turning to her before she got out to go home, and we were in my van, and I said, "Look, I've never been good at this whole dating thing so I love you and I want to get married."

I think she grinned and said, "Finally!"

She says that she had been thinking that for a long time and was waiting for me to tell her how I felt.

When it really cemented for me that I had found the one was -- I think on our first or second official date, I remember sitting on the couch with her and I turned to her and said, "Now look, I don't have any interest if this is short term. It doesn't make any difference to me; I want this to be for the rest of my life. And if you do too there has got to be some things that you understand that you're going to have to help with that most wives are not ever going to have help with."

And I started down that list and she stopped me and said, "Do you think that if I had a problem with anything you're about to say I would have said 'yes' to dating you?"

I said, "No."

She goes, "Then we're done talking about it." And I never asked again.

James: She is a special girl.

Jim: James, she has in that other book there, the one that I wrote, she has a letter in there that I had to twist her arm to get permission to print, put in the book that she wrote to her family saying, "Okay before you meet my fiancé, he looks different physically but I want you to know that he is as deeply spiritual as anyone I've ever met and will make a great head of house for my household... his household."

Betty: Tell me, as parents, and you see your son and his family, how do you look on this? What a beautiful thing God has done!

Jim: What a beautiful thing God has done, you are so right to say it that way. We swell with pride. I get to go with him. Sometimes we speak together and sometimes I'm just in the back selling the books. I tell you, I come back inspired every time.

I look at that horrible beginning and how rocked we were and then I see he is running two businesses, has a beautiful family, drives about all over the place with this van that is handicap equipped for him to drive and that bright happy spirit. He's been a worship leader in a church, a worship pastor, just everything -- exceeding, abundantly above all we could ask or think, Ephesians 3:20, I see it in him and I give God all the credit.

James: You know your story, Chet, is in this DVD that Governor Huckabee and the

Citizens United Organization did and your testimony is just really inspiring in the special documentary. My story is there. If you don't know, I'm a product of a forced sexual relationship on a 40-year-old practical nurse and she conceived and a doctor refused to abort me and I was allowed to be born. My story is here.

I really wish you'd get the DVD. I wish you would play it in your whole church. It's of the quality -- it's like Governor Huckabee said, there were four presidential candidates sitting in front of it the first time it was premiered and there wasn't a dry eye in the house, there was standing room only, overflowed the huge auditorium they were in. Governor Huckabee said it was awe-inspiring but it had a transforming effect.

We will send it to you; play it in your Bible study group. All we ask you to do is help us help others.

What do you want, Jim and Chet? What do you want people to hear today when we're facing rampant abortions as though it is just birth control? And even having arguments about being sure that even some church groups must be sure you provide it including abortion and then the tax funding and now all the concerns where Planned Parenthood has become the major abortion clinics in many instances when they're supposed to be there to help care for women and to look after them and benefit them and yet they're taking innocent life. What do you want America to hear and consider?

Jim: First I have to confess that I have to fight anger. Can you imagine this life not being here? So I have a tendency to get angry and then I have to pull back within my Christian perspective and say, "I want to help those people see that God is great and that he can take a physical body that is not right and give that person a life that is perhaps more abundant than mine." So why would you think of aborting?

And even if the life is troubled, if it isn't as full and rich and happy as Chet's, it's still a life. We don't have the right to say this one should live and this one shouldn't. That's God's choice and we don't have any business trying to get into his realm with that decision.

Chet: I think that's the key. Is that we're trying to play God ultimately. It's that humanistic desire to be more than we are in the wrong way. So we've got a culture that says, not only is it okay to abort but let's take it even further and say we're being humane, if it is not just a decision, we're being more humane or merciful to abort a baby who doesn't have arms or might have Down Syndrome or any other thing that we can see on a sonogram screen.

But the point is, it's not more merciful to take away life in any situation. No matter what there is no case that you can make to say you're doing something good by taking away life.

Life is from God and we've got to respect that, we've got to honor that, and we've got to love it!

James: You know when you start with an understanding of that love process, when you love life and you treasure it and you value it and you see it as a precious gift of a great and loving God and you treasure it, everything in life is enhanced immediately and blessed. We are so often blessed by circumstances that seem extreme that people who have dealt with indescribable challenges, the Bible is filled with story after story of what would have been hopeless without God and it became inspiration to all of us.

We really do have some serious issues we're facing in America. I don't know if there is any one anymore serious than this one. This is a year to choose leaders. Is there anything more important to consider than the value of life and protecting it? And is there any life more helpless, more innocent, more vulnerable than life in the womb?

Father, heal our land. Thank you for the incredible testimony of this family and of Chet and his wife, mom and dad. Thank you for your grace and your love. Heal our land; in Jesus' name.

Listen to me. This is the year for every person who understands the value of life, who understands the importance of faith, of family, and of freedom to register to vote, to prayerfully consider who you support and even more important than the election is to set the course for a new direction. That's why Jay Richards and I joined together as a leading respected Catholic and a very visible Protestant, and joined together on the issues that concern us to find the common ground to address our very legitimate common concerns. This is the time for the light that's been hidden to suddenly become the shining city on a hill that cannot and will not be hidden.

Would you say thanks to Chet and to Jim?

[Applause]

And thanks be to God for your witness and your testimony, both of you and your family. How we love you and thank God for you.

I want to show you something that your first inclination will be to just look away from. Please don't. I'm asking you and I believe you're going to find it very easy to do, I'm asking you to ask God to let you see as he sees. And then ask him to show you how you could respond the way Jesus would because we are together his body. Watch closely.

Begin video clip:

Oh, you can't hear me cry
See my dreams all die
From where you're standing on your own
It's so quiet here
And I feel so cold
This house no longer feels like home

Hoo, ooh
Hoo, ooh
Whoa oh
Whoa oh
Hey yeah
Yeah yeah
Whoa oh
Whoa oh
Hey yeah
Yeah yeah

You can't hear me cry

See my dreams all die
From where you're standing on your own
It's so quiet here
And I feel so cold
This house no longer feels like home

End of clip

In the studio:

James: I want to mention, if you do want *The Gift of Life* that we talked about today, and it will bless you and you'll want to show it to your congregation, your Bible study groups, or civic clubs, we are sending the children's Jesus Storybook Bible. Wow!

And then the side-by-side Bible, the New International Version/New King James version.

If you want the book, *Indivisible*, it's in the bookstores. We have really addressed the issue of right to life, preciousness of life and every major issue of concern to pray about. If you'd like to have it we'll gladly send it to you, just help us care for these children.

Join Betty and me again in saying just an incredible thanks to this incredible young man and his family, Chet McDoniel. Would you say thanks to Jim and Chet?

There is the web site again if you want Chet to come and communicate in your church, share his story, you invite him. You want to get the books, they're available. Thanks so much! Thank all of you for being with us. Thanks for sharing life!

Announcer: Connect with *Life Today* through your favorite social media sites. Just go to lifetoday.org and click "connect."