

Week 32
8/2/12

Randy: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm Randy Robison and this is my beautiful wife Debbie. My parents are taking a well needed rest today.

We thank you for tuning in. We're going to have a good discussion today. I've got a couple of guests; I've got Kasey Van Norman who is here. She is the author of the book, *Named by God*. A wonderful book, I encourage you to check that out.

I also have got Joy and Tait Cruse who are here and they wrote a book about their son called, *Hope Transformed*.

Would you welcome them to *LIFE Today*?

[Applause]

Now if you didn't see the programs with them, I would encourage you to go to lifetoday.org and watch those programs as soon as this one is done. But there's a lot more here. I want to recap quickly.

Kasey has had a difficult past or childhood, a broken home, it evolved into cutting and an eating disorder and promiscuity, and God brought you back. Then you went through another bout of difficult times that led to an attempted suicide, and always God has brought you back and gone deeper with you and healed a lot of the original wounds.

But more recently, as people might note by the hairstyle, that's not your choice. Right? That's a result...

Kasey: Although it makes Sunday mornings a lot easier. It really does.

Randy: It's great! I love the short hair. But you just survived a bout of chemo. So give us the short version of how that went and how you're doing.

Kasey: I was having a routine procedure six months ago and the Lord led the surgeon

to a tumor. They told me there was a tumor there. I never once gave it another thought. I just went on about my life. I said, oh, no, it's nothing. It's a benign something. Got the phone call two weeks after that it was, in fact, malignant and that there was some other lymph nodes involved and I had follicular lymphoma; it is a case of Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma.

Much like many people when they get -- I was listening to your story, very similar in that you're just reeling that day and you just -- it's like you're standing outside yourself looking in going, this doesn't happen to me. This happens to other people.

I'd just been through this with my mom. I had just lost my mom only two years prior to cancer, to kind of a sister cancer of mine, another blood cancer. I was her caretaker during that time and I had watched her suffer with this cancer and it literally eats her body. The chemotherapy and all the things that they were putting in her body just gradually just tear her apart.

And immediately, you go to all these scenarios. You flashback to all those moments with my mom and being with her when she took her last breath, and thinking, "Wait a minute, I'm 31 years old. This isn't -- this isn't where we're going, God. We just had all this restoration and healing. This book is coming out. What are you doing?"

Randy: But you're in full remission now.

Kasey: Yes, by so many prayers of so many people and by his will, I am. I'm in complete remission after four chemotherapy treatments.

Randy: Now I'm all for giving God the glory in that and I'm very glad that you're doing well.

It's interesting though the Cruse's are here because their story is one of prayers, of effort, of looking to glorify God through the situation and over four and a half years, from four to eight and a half, nine?

Joy: Four and a half to eight.

Randy: Connor battled cancer. Thought he won but it turns out the treatment that killed one cancer brought another cancer that took his life. How do you feel when someone says, "Hey, I'm cancer free. Praise God my prayers worked!"

Joy: Yeah. At first it was kind of hard to swallow because you're like, "Why did you

answer their prayers but not ours? Did we not have enough faith?" Did he love her more than he loved Connor? Did she witness to people or talk to people more about God during the whole process? Did she help more people in the process?

Randy: Did she do the right things? Did she tithe more? Did she do the right things that we didn't?

Joy: The checklist -- we had the checklist on the prayers. We had the checklist on doing everything. I think that's kind of the pitfall of where you can fall into is to believe those lies. You know in reality, it is sovereignty.

I remember thinking one day, you know they always say it is by God's grace that someone is rescued. "Oh, man, they were saved from that car accident. That's God's grace." "She was healed from cancer, that's God's grace." But I think there's even how much more grace is poured out in our lives when we are not rescued from the deepest pain or the biggest trial that we are going through. I think that's just when you experience God fully.

Randy: And you say that from experience.

Joy: Yes. And I couldn't say that right away. Right after Connor passed away but I just know that we couldn't have survived, we couldn't have taken one more step to get out of our bed without God's grace fully enveloping us.

I remember telling somebody, you have this deep fear like when Connor wasn't doing well, like, "What's it going to look like if Connor passes away? How will we survive that?" But you imagine your deepest fear without imagining God walking you through it and carrying you through it.

So in reality, when we walked through those dark days after Connor passed away, we felt his love pulling us through it, carrying us through. It's almost like I had a padded jacket on keeping me just comforted and keeping all those things away from me, and just getting me through each day, and just keeping all those things from getting at me.

You can't imagine -- so when you worry about what could happen and your biggest fears and everything and you're imagining what it was going to be like if you had to go through what your mom did, you can't imagine it with God carrying you through it.

So that was my message to people, don't be afraid. You have this fear but you can't imagine going through it with God's grace carrying you.

Randy: Your daughter read a scripture, was it at Connor's funeral or was it --?

Joy: It was hours before Connor passed away.

Randy: What was that scripture? Your 11-year-old daughter, I might add.

Joy: Well, we were all reading Bible verses to him about heaven. But the one she chose was when Jesus was praying, "Take this cup from me." And he said, "Not my will but thy will be done." And so she, even at 11 years old, realized it was God's will -- it is God's will that's most important.

If Jesus struggled with that and he had tears and pain, and he cried out to God, it made me feel more human, like it's okay that I'm hurting and that I would cry out to him in frustration, like did it have to be this way? Isn't there a better plan than this? I think there is a better plan but in reality it's his will and his sovereign plan.

I also dealt with a lot of guilt about did we do something wrong or could we have done something better with the treatment? But in the verse it says Connor's life was ordained before he was born. I know that God had a plan for him, and I see how God is still using Connor's life to touch people.

Before we wrote the book and before Connor passed away, we said, "We're not going to write a book if Connor passes away because that's a sad story. Who is that really going to help?" But I see that there's an audience out there that needs to hear this message because where do you go when God says no? What happens when you are devastated with God? When you have prayed and you have believed and you've done the checklist like we did, what do those people do?

Randy: We don't always get our prayers answered.

Let me ask you this, Kasey, did you have some of the same questions that she's expressing here when you were diagnosed? Like "Oh, what did I do? Is this my sin coming back on me?" Did you experience that as an adult?

Kasey: Absolutely. The big one, you hit it on the head there. Just is this a consequence, is my cancer a consequence of all my rebellion, of all my disobedience and now this is my punishment? Man, to be just in the bed reeling from that and what I've learned

through that is that the right question is not why. The question is not why, God? Why did this happen to me? The right question is what? What do you want to do through this? What do you want to do through me in this? That was just -- to come to that place that God is sovereign, it is his will and although the scripture tells us that even praying a prayer can change the mind of God. And so you're going, "Okay, God, if prayer can really change your mind..."

But ultimately, his plan is so perfect and it is so to make you more like the character of Christ and it is so to make you more -- Connor's life and his story and his legacy making them more like Christ.

I just want to briefly say, I can't fathom and y'all are heroes and the legacy that this little boy is leaving is ministering to me at the age of 32 with my children to just -- every moment with them is precious.

But one thing that God brought to me in the midst of chemo and will continue, because my type of cancer is not curable. I'll actually fight this for the rest of my life. It is not a curable cancer and so I'll have treatments for the rest of my life. But that healing, ultimate healing is to be with Christ and for us to get it reversed is to miss the abundance of living now. It doesn't make sense -- it doesn't make sense! But to miss what we could be living now because we're doubting and we're asking the why?

Randy: How does it strike you when you hear someone like that say, "Despite the loss of your son, through your pain God is ministering to me"?

Tait: Throughout when Connor was sick and after his death, I've always said it is a dark valley because you have your old normal, Connor being with us or Connor being sick, and then you get kind of on the adrenaline high of fighting because then we had to come off the adrenaline of fighting and we didn't have any fight any more. So you really have this new normal going forward. I've always said it is a dark valley; you don't know what's to the left, you don't know what's to the right. You can't go back to healthy Connor or healthy -- and really, you have to go forward. The only way you go forward is with believers pushing you through, and really Christ, walking along with you. That's the only way you go through.

So every morning I would get up and if I could see the sunrise, I was good. Wake up in prayer. But how do you get through it? You bond -- I had to bond to Joy because there's an 88% divorce rate. It's faith, family, and friends, you just keep going back to that. Otherwise you have nothing and you get real pure. You boil it down to the organic matter that it is and it's faith, family, and friends.

Joy: And when she said that, somebody had written me an e-mail that they had given their book to a co-worker and he came in her office and he shut the door and he said, "You know, I read *Hope Transformed* last night and I've always believed in religion but I didn't get it. This book has changed my life and I'm buying it for everybody in my family."

And I e-mailed her back, it was actually the ghost writer, and I e-mailed her back and I said, "I'm typing this as tears are streaming down my face because I realize God is still using Connor's life" and that is more rewarding to me, that is healing to me.

I've kind of claimed the verse that all things work together for good to those who love the Lord and are called according to his purpose, Romans 8:28 as my theme verse since Connor passed away. I just have to believe that God can use even this -- even this for good. So that's how when you tell me that, it brings back that faith I'm really trying to hold in God again, I'm working on it every day, baby steps. It makes me believe, okay, he can do this. He can use it for good.

Debbie: How are your other children doing since?

Joy: It's been a struggle. Mackenzie, the oldest one, she's just -- she gives all the right answers so hopefully she believes everything that she says. She's strong.

Tait: Independent, became very independent.

Joy: I see God working in her life. I think Carson is the one that was closest to Connor, who is a year younger and he struggled so much with depression. He's had a lot of counseling and I just pray every day that God can use even this for his good and he is using it to mold him into who he is.

I met with Chris Tomlin's producer and he lost a sister to cancer at a young age. He said, "It made me who I am today. It molded me into that." I'm like that's what I'm praying for Carson.

Tait: And then our Mason who was born into this, into the chaos, he was born a day before we went into the 64 days of bone marrow transplant so we literally had him and threw him to our mother in law, we didn't hold that child for weeks. Angry, anxious, untrusting --

Joy: Kind of a control freak because he just had lack of control because we were gone

so much for Connor's treatments. It was a revolving door of people taking care of him. So it was --

Randy: Have you had to try to maybe, since losing Connor, try to maybe compensate for some of the lost time with the others?

Joy: Tried to. Just try to feed that insecurity, try to feed it with love and security and foundation --

It is funny, I remember it was the first Thanksgiving after Connor passed away and my kids are having a lot of issues dealing with this grief and this loss. I remember crying out to God going, I thought this was going to get easier? Because our focus had been on Connor's physical healing and physical health and now I'm looking at my children and they have emotional problems that they had to get through in depression. God, I thought this was going to get easier. Like Tait said, I want the white flag. My ticket has been punched -- I'm sure this was probably what you thought, my ticket's been punched, I'm good. Let somebody else play the game. I want to sit on the bench.

Tait: Take me out, coach, because I'm done.

Randy: I think Kasey can tell you as much as anyone, that it's not just the outward and the symptomatic, it is the root issues that healing has got to go all the way to the core to make the difference. Briefly, you talk about people in the church and as you're going through these struggles, what should people say to you during this time?

Tait: It's interesting, when Connor was diagnosed I had three interactions within a day. The first one was, "We'll go to this prayer garden and you walk in this prayer garden and you'll be healed." Okay.

The other one said, "Well, it's already been determined so whether you pray or not, God has made his mind up."

I'm like, "Yeah, but Nehemiah kind of -- I think prayers, we're commanded to pray."

Then one kind of said, "Go take them to mother earth will restore them with sheep and baby lambs and chicks."

Randy: This was at your church?

Tait: No, no, no! This is the community.

And so what happens is, whether it's -- it's all with best interests. But at the end of the day, they don't know what to say because what do you say to a sick child or a sick mother? What do you say when life punches you right between the eyes? It is a sucker punch. I would say, a lot of times just be quiet and let them know you're there to help.

We have friends in the audience that picked up dry cleaning, took our kids to school. I mean our house was never locked. Help and serve in action -- action.

Randy: Action speaks louder than words.

Joy: Just knowing you care. I don't know what you're going through, I can't fathom, but I just want you to know I'm there for you. I want to listen to you and I want to pray for you. How can I support you and serve you?

That's what I try -- when I talk to other families who are losing their child, their child is dying from cancer, even just struggling. It's hard, I know. I just want to be here to listen.

Tait: But people say the strangest things. I had one person say, "My dog had cancer, I understand."

I'm like, "No, you don't. No, you don't." So they need to be quiet and just serve.

Kasey: Don't say, "It's okay. It's okay, it's going to be okay." You really -- cancer or any other trauma that happens in your life, you don't know. It's not okay. In that moment it's not okay. It's not meant to be okay because your fate is intended -- you're intended to be constantly changing and molding into the character of Christ and that always happens in those pains and trials of life. That's the only time it happens. It's not meant to be okay. So don't say -- don't say you understand. Even though you may have been through -- I got that a lot.

Randy: From other cancer survivors?

Kasey: "I understand what you're going through." And in a way, yes, there is empathy -- there is certainly empathy, there is certainly compassion but understanding of my cancer with my chemo and how I have felt, you don't have.

So I think that -- I think what you just said, just action. And one of the biggest blessings in my life was people that prayed in the moment that they said they would pray for me. Because it is very easy to say, I've done it myself, I'm guilty, "I'll pray for you" and have every intention of doing so and then you get caught up and you forget to pray for that person.

What spoke volumes to me and touched my heart in the midst of that trial was when people would just pray. It didn't have to be any kind of big prayer or formal prayer, it was just touching me and letting that spirit speak power into my spirit, doing it then.

Randy: Not saying you're going to do it, maybe you'll do it later but doing it right now. Thanks, you guys for sharing your story.

I want to show our viewers something because what they just said is the secret to it all. Actions speak louder than words and don't say you'll do it later, say you'll do it now. You have an opportunity right now to save children's lives. You can impact people with the love of Jesus Christ right now.

Go with me to Cambodia. I want to show you something. I want to show you an amazing opportunity. I want to invite you to join us on this mission we call *Water for Life*. Watch this.

On the mission field:

Randy: I want to look at this water. Good Lord! Ah! It smells horrible. It smells worse than it looks! But this is what they drink because this is all they have to drink. This is not water that you can live from. This is water that will kill you.

I have seen diseases, I have seen children with sores and kids with diarrhea, I've seen graves. I've sat with a mother while she wept over her children that she lost because of this contaminated water. This is death water and it's killing their children. I would never make a child drink this.

But these children have no choice. It is this or nothing and some of them don't know that it will kill them. It's not enough to tell them, "Don't drink the water." We have to say, "Here's water you can drink." Jesus calls himself "living water" because he brings life. We are his hands and his feet. Help us demonstrate the gospel as we bring them Water for Life.

End of clip

In the studio:

Randy: You know there's not much better in this world than to see a child smile? And when you know that they're smiling because you join with us in *Mission: Water For Life* and made that fresh clean drinking water possible, I tell you what, that's a feeling -- there is not much better in this world that's better than that. That's the invitation I want to extend to you right now. Join with us on *Mission: Water for Life*. You can impact a life for their lifetime. It's a gift that keeps on giving.

The average well is \$4800 and that reaches an average of 1,000 people. I know in that village I was in, there were more than 1,000 in that area that would come to that well to get the clean drinking water but on average, that's what it does. So your gift of \$4800 will reach 1,000 people. You will give them clean drinking water. What a huge thing! You will eradicate sickness and you will show them the love of Jesus Christ.

Wherever we go, we're not shy about the fact that we are there representing Jesus Christ. We are his hands, we are his feet; that's what the Bible tells us.

I want you to do that right now. If you can give \$1200, we'll send you "The Lion and the Lamb" bronze that will serve as a reminder of your gift and I hope you'll put it somewhere that you can see it and you'll remember the smile that you saw because you're putting smiles on other children's faces.

Some of you, that's a lot of money, I understand. I want you to know that there's not a gift that's too big but there's not a gift that's too small. \$48 will give water to 10 people. How simple is that? It is simple and yet the impact is profound, and so long -- it just keeps on giving.

That's the thing that just astounds me is how a simple act of drilling a water well has such incredible impact for years and generations. Will you join us right now? Will you go to the phone? Call us and make the best gift you can. Really, it's all about obeying God's great commission to go out and reach others. So don't get hung up on what you can or can't give. Just obey God and join with us in this great mission.

Go online, there's a web site right there. That's how I give. Do what you can. If we will all join together, we will reach our goal, hundreds of wells in so many countries impacting so many lives but we can't do it without you. Join us now -- join us in *Mission: Water for Life* and thank you as you give.

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 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. Suffering can end because clean water changes everything! With your gift today, we can establish and drill 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 impact 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 *Arise*, a beautiful new daily devotional featuring words of encouragement from inspiring women who have shared their faith on *LIFE Today*. With your gift of \$100 or more, you may request the *Arise* audio visual devotional featuring 40 days of inspiration from *LIFE Today's* favorite women guests.

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 Lion and the Lamb."

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

End of clip

Randy: I want to thank you for supporting *Water for Life*. Your gift is going to keep on giving. If you can't do it right this second, please write it down. Write down the phone number or lifetoday.org and you can do it later.

Also, I want to mention if you want to know more about Kasey Van Norman visit KaseyVanNorman.com. There is the U.R.L. And if you want to learn more about Team Connor -- TeamConnor.org -- you can check that out as well.

As always, I really appreciate you guys being here. Thank you so much!

Would you thank them for being here on *LIFE Today* and opening up and telling their story? I really appreciate it and I appreciate you for watching *LIFE Today*.

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* - now available in paperback at online and retail bookstores.

Announcer: If you're in the Dallas/Fort Worth area come be a part of the *Life Today* studio audience. Call or E-mail today to reserve your tickets. You'll be inspired and entertained!