

8/30/12

Week 37

James: Oh, thank all of you! You're great! You are great! Thank you. Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm James Robison. Betty and I are thrilled to have you. Tullian Tchividjian, that is -- it is an anointing of God to be able to say Tullian Tchividjian. Did I do all right?

Tullian: Perfect!

James: Would you welcome Tullian to *LIFE Today*? Tullian, we're glad to see you. Tullian is pastor of one of the most famous churches in America and that is Coral Ridge Presbyterian. He actually followed Dr. James Kennedy.

Now interestingly, he not only followed a very famous pastor but he is the grandson of a mildly-known preacher, Billy Graham. So you know you really -- you've got some pretty big shoes to fill. Do they even know at Kennedy's church that you have any connection ever with Billy Graham or is that just kind of --?

Tullian: Oh, sure! Yeah, yeah. Absolutely.

James: Does Billy admit it?

Tullian: Yeah, he admits it. He is actually proud of it, which is good news for me. Yeah, for sure they know. In fact, my grandfather did the dedication service of that sanctuary that I now preach in; did the dedication service of that sanctuary in February of 1974 when it was brand-new building. He preached the dedication service; I was 18 months old at the time and it is just neat how in God's economy so many years later I'm preaching from the same pulpit that he dedicated.

James: And you don't wear the robe anymore.

Tullian: No, I don't wear the robe. It's too hot in Fort Lauderdale to wear robes.

James: But Dr. Kennedy didn't know that.

Tullian: No, he didn't. He wore robes, not me.

James: When you came here the last time, you were just going through really the transition. You had brought -- two churches came together. One I think you were pastoring and you joined with Coral Ridge and it remained that name, Coral Ridge Presbyterian. How is everything now?

Tullian: Everything now is remarkable. But I wouldn't have been able to say that three years ago. As I mentioned the last time I was here, in 2007, Dr. Kennedy died. He was the founding pastor of Coral Ridge. So after he died the church was in the very unique position of trying to find a pastor for the first time. So they came to me.

I had planted a church back home, I'm from south Florida. I had planted a church in 2003 and the church that I had planted was about four and a half years old and God was doing great things in the church and great things through the church. We weren't looking at doing anything like this at all.

They came to me and asked if I would consider becoming the pastor. I said, "I'm honored, I'm humbled, but I'm not interested."

I knew all of the stories. The guy who follows the founding pastor oftentimes gets chewed up and spit out in six months or whatever. They call those guys "the sacrificial lambs." I wasn't volunteering for that.

So they came back about two months later and asked if I would reconsider. Again, I said, "I'm honored, I'm humbled but I'm not interested."

Then about five months later they came back and that's when we started talking about the possibility of merging the two churches. So after about a four month due diligence process where a team of guys from the church that I had started and a team of guys from Coral Ridge, together with me, met together once a week for about four months and when that process was completed, it became pretty clear that this is in fact what God wanted us to do. So on Easter Sunday of 2009, the two churches came together as one new church and the celebration that morning was big and remarkable.

I thought for one terribly naive second, "Wow, this might not be as difficult as I thought it was going to be." And then about ten days later or so, all of the fireworks that we anticipated -- we knew it was going to be hard. You merge anything, family, business, whatever, certainly churches, it is going to be hard. I felt like the father of a blended family. But about ten days, two weeks after the merger was official, all the fireworks started to go off.

There was a small but vocal group of longtime Coral Ridge people who were really opposing just about every change we were making. And the church had been in decline for about ten years so there were some things we needed to do right away just to make sure it would stay afloat. And people don't adapt well to change; I don't adapt well to change, not too many people do. And so there was a lot of resistance at the beginning.

It culminated after six months in a congregational vote. Petition drive was started to get me and the team that I had brought thrown out and that failed at the congregational meeting and those people left and went and planted their own church. So really, the whole message of the book was born out of that very, very painful experience.

James: And the book is titled, *Jesus Plus Nothing Equals Everything*. You really have settled in on this. You went through some rough times as a young person, even though you had religious moorings and background and so forth, and you fell in love with Jesus. You obviously, had a successful church, you merged, and you go through the real pressure. I imagine some brokenness, and ending up just you and Jesus on the journey. That's what inspired you to write this?

Tullian: Yeah, what happened was in the summer of 2009 I was at the end of myself. I'm not naturally prone to despair or depression. I'm an extrovert, I love people. I'm remarkably optimistic about things and life... and love life. Things were so rough during this transition and I was being attacked in so many different ways that I was at the end of myself. I had never experienced anything like this. I wasn't eating, I wasn't sleeping. I was scared, I was angry, I was frustrated. I was bitter, I was confused -- all of these things, and so I was really in bad shape.

At the end of June in 2009 we went away for our annual family vacation and we go to the southwest coast of Florida. And I woke up early one morning, the first morning of vacation and I grab my Bible before anyone was up; grabbed my Bible and grabbed a cup of coffee and went out to the balcony of the place we had rented, and I'm looking at the Gulf of Mexico. And I open my Bible to Colossians chapter one and I'm reading the first chapter and I close my Bible and I absolutely had it out with God. I was at the end of myself and I basically said, "What have you done? You've ruined my life! I've done everything you asked me to do. I didn't want to merge these two churches. We were doing just fine but you led us to do this. I agreed and said 'yes.'" Very self-righteously making my case before God; that I had done everything he asked me to do and therefore, he owed me something better.

I said, "You can fix this, just give me my old back life."

James: By the way, I think it is real important for everybody in the audience and everybody at home, wherever you're watching to know that God can handle this. You can really go ahead and download on him. He's really big enough.

Tullian: He knows you're thinking it anyway; you might as well say it. If you go back and read the Old Testament specifically and you read the prayers of Abraham and Moses and David, through the Psalms, you see God is big enough to handle prayers like that.

But it was during that time that God said, "It is not so much your old life you want back, it's your old idols you want back and I love you too much to give them to you." It was then that it dawned on me, I had been unconscious of this, but it dawned on me that for so long I had become so dependent on human approval and human acceptance to make me feel like life was worth living, to make me feel valuable, to make me feel like I mattered and now for the first time in my life I lacked human approval, human acceptance and I felt like the flesh was being ripped off of my bones.

What I came to realize through Colossians chapter one was that all of the acceptance and all of the approval and all of the affection that I was longing for and looking for in things in people that were infinitely smaller than Jesus, I already possessed in Christ.

So the whole book really is about my rediscovery of the gospel because oftentimes when Christian people think about the gospel we think about the gospel in terms of that's what people outside the church need. The gospel is almost synonymous exclusively with evangelism. And we believe that once God saves us, he then moves us beyond the gospel into something else. And yet when we read the Bible carefully, what we discover is that once God saves us, he doesn't move us beyond the gospel, he moves us deeper into the gospel that Christian people never outgrow our need for Christ's finished work.

James: It's really relationship. And one of the most rotten substitutes is religion. Really, it becomes a form of idolatry too. Any idol that is so lifeless -- and by the way, when you try to look totally for the life of God in other people, you will often be greatly disappointed, even though you can see it there, if they have relationship that's really, really right.

Betty: Don't you think there is something frightening sometimes about being moved

out of your established place to something new that you don't know what's ahead of you? We get pretty comfortable.

Tullian: And we love comfort! Comfort can be an idol. I talk a lot about idolatry in the book because through this painful process God revealed the idolatry of my own heart and helped me to see all of those things that I was leaning on that were smaller than Jesus to invest my life with worth and value and significance and security and all those things.

And it was during that time that I freshly realized, Jesus Plus Nothing Equals Everything, and that's more than just a preachable tag line. It really became my functional lifeline. It's when you come to the end of yourself and you come to the beginning of God's amazing grace and you come to the fresh realization at a functional level that Jesus Plus Nothing Equals Everything, that you can actually say crazy counterintuitive stuff like, "To live is Christ, to die is gain." It sets you free because now I don't have to live under the pressure of trying to make something of myself, trying to prove myself and pretend that I'm someone that I'm not. I can take off the masks. I can be real, I can be bold, I can be sacrificial.

If it is true that everything I need in Christ I already possess, now I can spend the rest of my life going to the back instead of getting to the front. I can spend the rest of my life giving instead of taking. I can spend the rest of my life living for other people instead of trying to get other people to live for me.

So I say right at the outset of the book that I learned... and it's totally liberated me, and it's changed me forever; it's changed me as a preacher, as a leader, a husband, a father. But because Jesus was strong for me, I'm free to be weak. Because Jesus won for me, I'm free to lose. Because he was extraordinary for me, I'm free --

James: I'm sitting right here looking at that.

Tullian: I really wrote that! I didn't have a ghost writer.

James: I absolutely have the page. Go ahead. I'm checking to see if this is exactly what you wrote.

Tullian: See if I'm getting it right. But because he was extraordinary for me, I'm free to be ordinary.

James: Good! That's right here.

[Laughter]

Tullian: Because he succeeded for me, I'm free to fail.

James: That's big too because we don't like for people to think that we absolutely have fleas -- we have problems. We have issues. And the first people, other than God, we ought to be able to share our issues with are family and family ought to act like family.

I'm sorry a lot of families don't and a lot of -- he talked about how the church behaved. They didn't behave like family, they behaved like congress. But I have an idea we taught congress how to behave in churches and we've got to get over that and we've got to start learning to behave like family. Don't you agree we need that? And this is what I'm hearing you say.

Now I've got to ask you, when you went back, after having that little meeting with the father, after you downloaded on him and then he probably put some new information in, he reprogrammed you, when you went back how long did it take for that flow and that river to begin to bring forth fruit?

Tullian: Well, this was fascinating to me. I'm glad you asked that because things when I got home circumstantially, actually got worse -- worse!

James: Oh, good! Way to go, God!

Tullian: Thank you! Things got worse but what I realized in that time is that it wasn't so much my circumstances that were causing me my pain, it was the idol structure of my heart that was causing me so much pain. What I realized was that so often our suffering, our pain is a result of God prying open our hands and taking away something from us that we've been holding on to more dearly than him.

Because once I got back and God had sort of revived me and gave me a fresh sense of the gospel's now power, I was able to go back and deal with those circumstances as a free man, not so much afraid anymore or confused. In other words, because Jesus won for me, I was free to lose. Because he was strong for me, I was free to be weak. That absolutely set me free because he succeeded for me, I was free to fail. So much of my pain was the result of I can't fail, I can't be weak. I have to succeed. I have to make this happen because I'm going to amount to nothing. What are people going to think of me if I don't make this work? It's a famous church and my family is well-known and

people are watching. And if this doesn't work then I'm going to have a bad -- I was so self-preservational and it was enslaving me.

James: So you were living up to the expectations of people? Because that's real bondage or trying to live up to that.

Tullian: And I think even more than that, even more acutely than that, every time the Bible describes slavery, it talks about it in the terms of self-reliance, depending on what we can do or how we can perform or what we can achieve or what we can make of ourselves. It's really justification by works; it is how do I justify myself existence by what I do instead of being justified by God because of what Christ has done. And when that takes root, it changes everything.

James: The book is *Jesus Plus Nothing Equals Everything*. Do you have a web site that people might go to that they would find -- that you might share on or what's going on with the church or where you go, what you do.

Tullian: I blog. I have a regular blog at the gospel coalition web site which is just TheGospelCoalition.org. Our church has a web site which is www.CRPC.org, and all my sermons are on there. I'm a mad tweeter. So @PastorTullian is my -- I was made for 140 characters, I've discovered. At least that's what everybody tells me. They're like you just think in tweets. Your sermons are nothing more than a compilation of tweets. I'm like, I've been doing it my whole life. Now I have a name to give it -- thanks to Twitter.

[Laughter]

Yeah, I just have such a hunger and a thirst to see the church rediscover the now power of the gospel and to be liberated by the fresh realization that this whole thing is about Christ's performance for us, not our performance for him, His obedience for us, not our obedience for him, His feats for us, not our feats for him. Because what we begin to realize is that when our hearts are gripped by what's been done and we can realize that Christian people live their lives under a banner that reads "It is finished: paid in full," something happens inside of our heart and now we say, "Take my life and let it be, consecrated Lord to thee. Take my moments and my days, let them flow in ceaseless praise."

James: Do you bear witness with what you're hearing from Tullian? Do you like what you're hearing? Then see the fresh move of God on all people.

I really do believe, a lot of times people ask me, what are you a part of, James? Or what do you want to be a part of? I want to be a part of the body of Christ and I want to be caught up in the fresh move of God's power and spirit on every movement and on every place on planet earth. I really believe that's what kingdom imprint does. I believe living in his presence in the present, we literally release the weight of God's character on planet earth. That's what I sense you're doing.

I think the book is fabulous. I encourage everybody to get it and really encourage all of you in the audience to get it.

Tullian, we're doing something that -- everything we do we like to do. We like to do it because we believe it is in the heart of God and we're fortunate enough to have viewers --

I just think you are the most special people in the world who really like to allow the river of God's life and love to flow beyond themselves. We want to give you an opportunity and I love to hold up these little tiny shoes even though probably the majority of the little feet we put them on won't be tiny, they would be larger children like this and the children can wear these. They are actually adjustable. We're asking you to join us in what we call Christmas shoes and Christmas smiles.

Betty, we're beginning right up front talking about the smiles because we really want to ask you to make a really special effort to not only help us put shoes on 200,000 children that the missionaries have already located where we have the need, but also to do the surgeries for cleft palate and other facial surgeries that are needed.

I want you to just take this journey. I want you to just to look and listen. You'll see some of our family. You'll hear their comments, a son and a grandson commenting on what they see and on the need that we can meet together. Watch this closely.

On the mission field:

Announcer: *LIFE Outreach International's* mission is to share the truth of God's love in word and deed with people throughout the world. Together, with our friends and partners, we provide the essentials of life for people; like water for those who for the first time in their life now have safe clean water to drink; for thousands of children who once suffered from malnutrition but now have a hot meal to eat each day; young girls once in bondage in the dark and deadly world of human trafficking are being rescued and restored; and families, trapped in grinding poverty now have hope for a better future living in a safe and secure home provided by *LIFE*.

This season we once again have the opportunity to impact the lives of thousands of children who are exposed to the ravages of hookworm disease simply because they don't have protection for their feet. It is a simple remedy -- shoes! Shoes that can prevent children from suffering anemia, malnutrition, and in severe cases death caused by hookworms that invade their bodies through their feet.

Randy: This is a significant outreach towards improving the health and the lives of children all around the world. Not all of you can come here and have the privilege that I have of actually putting the shoes on the feet of these beautiful children, but you can still be a big part because really, we can't do it without you. Do what you can. Give as many pairs of shoes as you can. Every time you do it, you'll be making a child's day and you'll be improving their health.

End of clip

In the studio:

James: I want you to put that little kid back up there. I want everybody to see that. Look at that little fella, how happy he is. You see that? That's joy. Little feet... got some shoes. You know, Betty, when I see those little children's faces, wasn't that a pretty little boy? It's just joy. We can give joy.

Betty: We can so easily, James, and these children, not just the fun of seeing their smiles when we give them something like shoes because they've never had them, a lot of them but to know that they're there for a purpose, we're giving them for a purpose and that's to help them avoid diseases that they can get just as we saw, walking around on all the obstacles that are on the ground and keeping them from getting sick.

James: And they do get terrible diseases from hookworms. It gets into their intestines and into their little brains and it is just destructive.

We want to ask you to dial the telephone number there, and we know we're going to be talking about Christmas way ahead of time but we want to get the shoes and yes, provide the surgery for Christmas smiles to do the cleft palate surgeries where we can. We want to ask you to begin right now making it possible.

We have already found 200,000 children located where the missionaries have a heart to help them and to see the healing come not only to their lives and their communities but to their bodies.

So would you please dial that number? Take your bankcard; would you make a gift? The shoes are \$3.60 apiece; \$36 we've got ten pair of shoes. You may be able to give

hundreds of pairs of shoes. You make a very special gift, whatever you can do; you make the best gift you can.

We're sending you a beautiful Christmas ornament for those of you who will make a gift of \$100 or more that is actually a little shoe. It's beautiful! And you put it on the tree and I promise you this, you're going to be thinking about all of the children that you are able to help because of the love of God that was expressed through your gift. We want to send you also a book our son wrote, this is the first book that Randy has written that has been published, *God Wants You to be Happy; Discovering Deeper Joy than You Ever Imagined*.

Our son is a gifted teacher. He has always been an awesome student and he is a great communicator but he is also a gifted writer. What amazed us and everybody that's read the book is the incredible gift to communicate and teach the truth from God's Word. It reminds me in many ways of Beth Moore. Sometimes I say my goodness! This is amazing to me that you can experience joy even as you read the book, which we'll send for any gift that you make to help us give the shoes and the smiles.

If you can make a gift of \$1,000 or more, we have a special art piece, a collectible that I know you're going to treasure. We want to send it to you to say thank you. You can go online *LifeToday.org* and make your gift.

But would you please, would you dial that number right now and let us know what God has impressed you to do? Even if you write a check, make it to *LIFE* but call us and tell us what you're sending. Thank you so much for doing it!

Begin video clip:

Announcer: Poverty is a killer and because of it children needlessly suffer, not only from a lack of food and clean water, but also from a lack of things we take for granted such as a healthy smile or a simple pair of shoes. For most of these children, they've never owned a new pair of shoes and while that may seem minor in light of all their needs, walking with bare feet puts them at risk of life-threatening infections that could lead to crippling consequences, disease, and even death.

By responding today, you can help *LIFE* immediately secure and begin shipping Christmas shoes to 200,000 children around the world just in time for the holidays. Your gift of \$36 will provide ten pairs of shoes. A gift of \$72 will provide 20 pair and a gift of \$144 will help provide 40 pairs of Christmas shoes for children in need.

In appreciation of your gift, be sure to request the inspirational new book, *God Wants You to be Happy* by James and Betty's son, Randy Robison.

With your gift of \$100 to help provide 28 pairs of shoes, you may request this beautifully crafted shoe ornament to place on your tree each Christmas.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1,000 or more to help provide two children with corrective cleft palate surgeries and you may request "The Lion and the Lamb" bronze sculpture.

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

End of clip

On the mission field:

Betty: James, I look around and I see all of these beautiful children and I think, it is not things we're trying to give them, it's life through shoes to put on their feet because there are so many diseases that come from walking around in their bare feet. They pick up so many things that get in their system, in their bloodstream and it slowly destroys their little bodies. So it's a need that we're asking for. It's not just a luxury. They need our help!

James: It is not even comfort. It's a chance and we're asking you to help with this special gift a reality for so many children all over the world by making a call or going online, *LifeToday.org* and making the best gift you can because you'll be making the greatest gift, you'll be making the gift of life.

End of clip

In the studio:

James: Well, Betty and I express thanks in behalf of the missionaries and also the children and families that you bless.

And I do want to remind you of Tullian's book, *Jesus Plus Nothing Equals Everything*. It is a beautiful book. The endorsements and encouragement from the pastors that we all respect and other leaders, it's absolutely amazing. You know Matt Chandler is one of our best friends and a great pastor here in our area and part of the great Acts 29 emphasis. He talks about how great an impact this book will make on you.

Tullian, I want to thank you. Thank you for your leadership at Coral Ridge, a church that we've had appreciation and respect for. And we just thank God for you and for your family and your witness and for the book.

Would you join Betty and me in saying thanks?

Regards to your family.

Thank all of you so much for watching *LIFE Today*. We really do thank you from the bottom of our heart for helping us share life every day all over the world.

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.