

Week 40

9/25/12

James: Thank you a lot. I'm so glad we have this opportunity to share this time with you. I'm just laughing because I read this book. It was a serious book. It made me laugh. Made me laugh and made me cry. As a matter of fact, while I was laughing I was crying I was laughing so hard and yet it is simply the truth.

I'm James Robison, by the way. This is Betty.

I'm talking about a book; I want you to get this title, *Pharisectomy*. We need a pharisectomy. Do you understand? Well, I wasn't sure I understood. *Pharisectomy...* and how to joyfully remove your inner Pharisee and other religiously transmitted diseases.

I thought, man, this guy is strange. Somebody handed this to me at an Association of Related Churches conference and I actually got to close the conference, said the good-bye word. When I got through everybody wanted to leave. And he was there and somebody gave me the book and I get so many books. And I thought, I don't have time to read that. I tossed it over. And the Lord said, "Pick that up!"

I said, "God, I've got a lot of books to read."

[Laughter]

And I picked it up and started reading and it roused my curiosity. All of the sudden I'm laughing... and I'm crying, I'm laughing so hard. It's amazing what Peter Haas, pastor of Substance Church in the Minneapolis/Saint Paul area and just has a lot of different churches, kind of like satellite branches. They communicate, and they bring a lot of the drama and art and all the things that the church kind of left up to Hollywood and the world; like we gave them God's planet instead of being overseers. We gave up any oversight of what God entrusted to us to oversee; it was like, "We're going to take it back."

He's a young guy. He's in his 30s. I told him a while ago, we've got pets older than him.

Would you welcome Peter Haas to *LIFE Today*?

Peter, it's good to see you. I've got to know --

By the way, that's a skinny tie -- that's a skinny, skinny tie.

Peter: That's right, represent.

James: You know I got delivered from ties years ago. When you get a little older, maybe you'll get delivered.

I want to know because I hear you were a -- what were you, what kind of disk jockey?

Peter: A rave DJ. Yep.

James: What is that?

Peter: Well, you know turntables. You remember turntables?

Betty: Oh, yeah. Definitely, we remember them.

Peter: I'll tell you, it was funny because I would go around and the rave scene, it was kind of a big party scene. I started spinning records when I was really young, and as you'd imagine, I was in all sorts of unsavory places as I kind of grew up doing that. I was good at it.

Believe it or not, I gave my life to Christ in a nightclub of all places. I had different church experiences but I'm like been there, done that, I don't want anything to do with church. I had been deejaying -- at that time in my life I was really searching because the girl I was dating, who is now my wife, and this is kind of where the story turns serious, she found her father's body after he had committed suicide. Then that same week, one of my good friends died in a car accident. So I went to two funerals in a week.

As a non-believer, it really shook me because I realized life is fragile. I can't pretend that I understand what's going on here because I don't. And it rattled me and I knew I needed to start asking deeper questions. And yet, I thought, I want to know who God is but I don't feel compatible with that whole church thing.

Yet, a friend had actually challenged me, "Peter, you need to ask God to reveal himself to you." I thought, that's the weirdest thing I've ever heard. But I'll tell you what, I was

working in a nightclub one night and I remember looking down on -- I was looking down on the dance floor thinking -- and half of those people were drunk and stoned out of their minds, and I remember thinking, I hate this. I hate life. I don't want -- I don't want to live anymore. This is not living. What am I doing?

And all of the sudden the thought came into my head, Peter, ask God to reveal himself to you. So I'm like all right... all right. I remember looking up because you just imagine God is up there somewhere.

[Laughter]

And I literally prayed, "God, if you exist, if you created the universe, then you should be powerful enough to show me what religion is the right religion. I'm like give me a sign. I mean, lightning bolts across the sky spelling it out, Islam, Buddhism, none of the above." You know what I'm saying? I was desperate.

So I prayed this super sincere prayer and I kind of snapped out of it and I'm like what am I doing? I'm praying? I thought, "I need a cigarette."

So I put on a mix and I walked out of the DJ booth and I was only about 30 steps away from the DJ booth and a total stranger came up to me. Basically, kind of grabbed me by the arm and essentially said, "I know this is weird but Jesus has a plan for your life and he wants you to follow him." Freaked me out!

[Laughter]

Because I was scared at this point, I literally was sweating. I think I kind of grabbed him and said, "What did you say?"

He gave this really awkward gospel presentation and it felt like the words just jumped out of my mouth, "Tell me what I'm supposed to do. I will do like anything you tell me to."

Of course, I'm sure he was thinking, it shouldn't be this easy.

[Laughter]

I'm like, "Tell me what I'm supposed to do."

He's like, "Ah, we can pray."

I'm like, "All right!"

[Laughter]

So he literally grabbed my hands, pulled me right down into a nearby booth and I repeated an old school repentance prayer and that was it. I think I weirded out all of my friends and family. "Pete went for Jesus? That's the weirdest thing ever!" And that was it; I was sold out to the Lord.

So for me, even as a pastor, it's all about people like myself who were open to God but we just didn't know how to -- we just felt incompatible with church. I always want to remind everybody and even the audience here today, that there's nobody that is beyond the grace of God. I think that everybody has that loved one that they don't know... "God, can you reach that family member?"

I'll tell you, if God can come to my nightclub and if he can turn Saul into Paul, the writer of the New Testament, I'll tell you what, God can redeem anyone. I'm just an example of that.

James: So you ended up pastoring shortly thereafter? Tell me the journey.

Peter: Well, my story was crazy enough where I get yanked into different pulpits just to share my story. I ended up going almost immediately into ministry, pastored for about ten years in Wisconsin then we ended up moving to Minneapolis to plant Substance and it's been kind of a wild ride. Our whole goal in Minneapolis was really to plant a church that would exclusively reach the unchurched and really go out of our way to do it. So God has really blessed that and we've been flourishing. So right now we have four locations throughout Minneapolis/Saint Paul.

James: And all of them are called Substance?

Peter: Yes.

James: Now you use video and you do use that quite extensively in communicating. I've got to ask you about this book, it's really good. The web site, if they want to know how to find out about the church? I want to say go online to your web site. Can you send us the book? It's in the bookstores but what's the web site?

Peter: *Pharisectomy.com* and if *Pharisectomy* is too much to spell you can go to *PeterHaas.org* and it will link you there as well.

James: One of the places I laughed a lot -- and I want to ask you why you wrote the book. Had you met people like me made you want to write about the Pharisees?

[Laughter]

Because I've really never been high on Pharisees -- I've never been high on Pharisees, I've never been high on religion. We had Bethke, the kid that wrote the poem that he did on YouTube that I think it had 21 million hits when he was here, it is probably 50 million or 100 and he wrote about not liking religion but loving Jesus.

Betty: Would you say that Phariseeism is a lot like being quote religious?

Peter: Absolutely! Well, I'll tell you...

Betty: Because I could be in that religious column in the first of my life.

James: But you were nice religious. You weren't like most Pharisees.

Peter: I would highly doubt that you were ever a Pharisee.

Betty: But religious.

Peter: Well, the truth be told, I think all of us have an inner Pharisee that we need to be delivered from. After 2,000 years of really demonizing the Pharisee movement, I think a lot of people forget that it originally was a revival of God. This was a movement, a back-to-the-Bible movement; this was a prayer movement.

A lot of Pharisees, believe it or not, would memorize the entire Pentateuch, the whole first five books of the Bible. They would fast two 24-hour days a week. They would pray and meditate for nine hours a day in three three-hour segments. So if you took that kind of self discipline, I mean nowadays we would call that person a super Christian; right? And yet Jesus actually went as far as to say they're missing God, which is a pretty intense thing to say to the Pharisee movement.

I'll tell you what, you can look very, very spiritual, you can seek the Bible, you can pray intensely and still be really missing what God is doing on the planet. When I

started studying the Pharisee movement I started realizing there is a lot of parallels between what's actually happening with the American church nosediving and really how the Pharisee movement contrasted with what Jesus advocated in scriptures.

James: Tell us how it's nosediving. Tell us how it is because I know the church today, the religious community, whether it is Protestant or Catholic, we in the religious community and those who profess to know Christ personally, who believe in a personal relationship with Jesus, these churches are going down. And I frankly believe it is a spirit of religion and it is like a Pharisee; it's where we've settled in and that river is not flowing.

You have to wonder if it was ever there in the first place; if there was ever that something inside that made one say, "I can't help but speak the things I've seen and heard because I've actually seen and heard, I've experienced something and I can't hold it back." It's like we've just settled in, we're smug, sometimes we're very judgmental and critical, but the church is really declining, especially among young people. Is that what you were referencing?

Peter: Absolutely! In fact, 40-46% of Americans claim to go to a church but only about 14-20% will attend maybe Christmas and Easter. But the people that actually attend weekly, Charismatic or evangelical church particularly, only 9.1% of Americans weekly go to an evangelical church of any kind, a Bible-believing evangelical church, and the vast majority of that 9.1% are baby boomers or older. So really, even in the United States, there's not been a single state in the U.S. since 1990 where evangelical church growth even kept up with population growth. And so we're talking about a 22-year stall out for the American church. Although there's growth, it's not even keeping up with population growth.

So particularly in the under 40, the odds of a person in America under 40 going to church is probably actually less, researchers are finding, less than 3% would go on a weekly basis. So we're pretty much seeing an entire generation giving up on church. And yet, the funny thing is, the research shows they're not closed to Jesus, they're not closed to God, they're just finding themselves incompatible with church. And why is that? And so that's what I'm exploring in the book.

James: Well, when you talk about getting rid of the Pharisee in us, give us some examples.

Peter: Well, for example, I always tell people, the Bible isn't a list of requirements; it's a list of results after experiencing God's love. And it is important that people

understand that. Christianity isn't a process of earning God's love; it's a process of reflecting God's love. Righteousness is not the reward for living rightly; it's the gift that results in right living.

Now see, I just spattered off a few little one-liners that help instigate the foundations of biblical Christianity but there are so many Christians, they walk around with guilt and guilt is a symptom of a deeper disease that really shows that we do live a little bit more like the Pharisees still. Guilt is a sign that "I think I can do it." Just like in the book, I kind of referenced this funny little thing about Marilyn Monroe's estate sale.

Marilyn Monroe, they were selling all this junk that Marilyn Monroe had at some point in her life and people were -- it was like people were just throwing away money on -- like Kleenexes and things of that nature. Somebody paid literally thousands of dollars for her creaky old doorknob. I thought, what are you going to do with a doorknob? How do you even showcase that in your house? -- Next to your celebrity gumball collection? Like what do you do with a doorknob? And yet, really the doorknob had no intrinsic value. The only value it had is that Marilyn Monroe had touched it.

Really, it's no different for us in Christ. The only value we have in Christ, the only reason why we're able to stand before God justified, to gain access to heaven is because Christ touched us. And yet, I think there is a lot of Christians who kind of strut around and be like, "But wait, I'm a great doorknob. I'm like -- God, look at me! I prayed for an hour today. I read my Bible an hour a day. I go to a church that has three-hour church services. God, I'm an amazing doorknob."

As if God is up in heaven like, "Wow! Look at that doorknob! I haven't even touched it and yet it's got to be worth thousands!"

[Laughter]

A lot of Christians act like that. And it really shows that we're missing the very foundations of biblical Christianity. So that's kind of one of the issues I address.

James: The Pharisees say, "Look at me," instead of "look at Him"?

Peter: They'll say that and they'll also reduce church into a formula that they believe God loves more than anything else. So for example, one of the classic behaviors of a Pharisee is what I like to call "hedge making." In hedge making, it is -- for example, Pharisees want to obey the Sabbath. It was a motive that was good. Let's obey the

Sabbath. Let's radically obey the Sabbath. So what they did was they created over 100 additional rules beyond scripture to guarantee that people would obey the Sabbath. Again, it was a protective buffer.

James: It sounds like the federal government.

[Laughter]

Sounds just as dead. It's a stinking prison.

Peter: But really, and the motive is to protect people but in the end it enslaves people. That's the very reason why they missed the son of God on earth because Jesus didn't fit the spiritual formula that they created. Well, guess what? American churches create all sorts of spiritual formulas. We create idolatrous formulas for church services.

I think about like how many times as a pastor people have said, "You don't value the Holy Spirit if you don't do at least an hour worth of songs on Sunday morning." Or "If you don't do an hour long expository message on the book of Leviticus then you don't preach God's Word." They have a formula as to how church needs to be.

The funny thing is I think about like even worship. Music wasn't even the central driving force of church services until the 1700's, until the Moravians, until Charles Wesley mainstreamed that and yet, now the music is the very litmus test as to whether or not the Holy Spirit even visits a church.

[Laughing]

And doing their own -- I'm all for worship, I love worship but unchurched people will come into the church and they see those 100 additional rules for the Sabbath and to them, it's almost like we're stuffing big chunks of steak down a baby's mouth. They don't have the ability to digest it and then they think I'm just not cut out for Christianity so they leave. That's what's happening.

James: When you try to put people in that hedge, that cage, it's like keeping your children in a safe fenced yard all their life rather than teaching them how to live beyond the boundaries with wisdom so that they know the safety and security is the shadow of the Almighty, not the security of the fence or the hedges. And when you try to put people in the hedge you end up putting God in a box and heaven and earth can't contain him. You're sure not going to get him in a box. We try to stuff him in

religious boxes and we become like Pharisees and we're killing the release of the Spirit of God.

Now I'm so proud of you, Peter, and I don't want any part of the Phariseeism in us and that's why I enjoyed your book so much.

There again is the web site. It's in the bookstores.

Would you just say thanks to Peter Haas for just being so open and so real and he's going to help all of us. I'm telling you -- I had a great church leader tell me recently, I'm so sick and tired of all the church bullies and all the people who intimidate and then try to manipulate. That's what Pharisees do. They intimidate, they manipulate and they end up -- and probably, people trying to sincerely help, we end up caging people. That's why a lot of churches look like a prison gang when they march in, there's no liberty, there's no life.

And you don't measure liberty, just like he said, by how loud the band is, how many drums they've got, how much noise they make. It could be quiet. Be real careful walking in the Spirit of God shows up in all kinds of places.

I really do appreciate you. I hope our viewers will get the book.

Peter, we're doing something that's really nice and that's giving shoes and smiles for Christmas. I want you to watch this. You're going to like this. I promise you, you're going to want to have a part in what we're showing you. You really will. You're going to be excited about it.

On the mission field:

Announcer: Unfortunately, there are children around the world who have many different kinds of needs. Some are hungry and thirsty, in need of food to eat or clean water to drink. Others still simply have never had a new pair of shoes or they're unable to smile due to a cleft palate.

>> All year long we come to you and tell you about things that change people's lives, that save people's lives and you're a part of that. I want to tell you what we want to do this Christmas, is we do what is called "Shoes and Smiles." A little child just like this that has a cleft palate, that's never had a real smile, we give them surgery and this little child will have a new smile. Little kids like this that have never had a pair of shoes before in their life, we give them one.

Announcer: A child with bare feet may seem harmless but the potential danger for children living in these types of conditions can be life-threatening.

James: One of the things we found in the Central American countries is that they have a real problem with hookworms, which they get from walking in dirt or sand and then it creates a tremendous intestinal problem.

The answer is just shoes. We can provide literally for some of them the first pair of shoes they've ever had, not only for fun and comfort, but for health.

Announcer: During the past several holiday seasons, *LIFE Outreach* and its missionary partners have passed out thousands of pairs of shoes to children in many different countries around the world. In addition, we have been able to restore numerous children's smiles through corrective surgeries.

>> You know we put smiles on the faces of these children today as we've given them shoes but others need a little more, they need that cleft palate surgery. I hope you can help put a smile on even more children's faces. Do the best that you can and you can give shoes and smiles to children all over the world. So I have a special message just for you --

End of clip

In the studio:

James: Do you like that?

Betty: I love it! And it's so... it's so exciting to think that some of these children for the very first time they're going to have their first pair of shoes. They may look at it and say, "Oh, good! I've got something to put on my feet." But I look at it as a mother and grandmother saying it's going to help protect their feet from all the disease that can come from just walking around barefooted.

And then, James, just to think about the smiles; I know how excited we were as young parents for our firstborn to be able to smile back at her mom and dad. And some of these little children have never been able to smile because they can't and we can make that difference.

James: When I look at the children my mind right now is racing back at the images. Of course, the children are dancing and they're so excited and they're so happy but I

also saw the little children there with their little cleft palate and they were standing there by the other children and I don't know how you see them. I kind of have an idea we identify.

I don't think you look at them and thought that they weren't pretty too. I think you thought they were beautiful too. But I think you would like for them to smile too. I don't know how often they might not feel pretty.

You know being different, just feeling different is one of the big challenges we have in the world... left out, different. We can correct that. Love is the most awesome force on the earth, it never fails. I want to ask you to reach out and touch someone today with love. I want to ask you to dial that telephone number.

If your heart was broken right now, and you said, "I really need someone to pray with me, I'm hurting," you'll be like the thousands of people that call every day because the majority of people who call every day, 70-80% of them, it's still people calling to say, "I need someone to pray with me."

Here during our last week of the Shoes and Smiles emphasis, the Christmas special gift we want to make, we want to ask you to reach out in love and dial that number and say, "Here is my gift to provide shoes." We want to provide 200,000 children a pair of shoes. And we want to give as many as we can a smile; the surgeries cost \$500. We're asking you very directly if you could give \$1,000, two surgeries; could you do that?

We're sending the beautiful "Lion and the Lamb" bronze. It's a collectible, it's an art piece. You don't give to get. We give to you to bless. And these artists say we want to bless the people who help you bless others. So we want to send that if you'll help us provide those smiles.

Then the shoes, \$36, ten children have shoes; they're \$3.60 a pair. \$72 we've got 20. \$144 we've got 40 pairs of shoes. Whatever you can do, we're asking to you make that gift.

Reach out and dial the number. Take your bankcard, use it like a check. If you write a check, call us and tell us what you're mailing. You can go to *LifeToday.org* and make your gift.

We're going to send you Randy's book. Our son wrote, *God Wants You to Be Happy*. We will send you the beautiful little Christmas ornament, the little shoe that's beautiful. Every time you look at it think about those kids smiling right now, around

Christmas because we gave them shoes. Please make that gift. Please make that call. If you write a check, let us know you're putting it in the mail. Call us and tell us what it is; would you please? Thank you 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.

This is the last week! Please call, write or make your gift online today.

End of clip

In the studio:

James: Well, I just want to say thank you very, very much for helping us give shoes. By the way, we're offering Randy's book. I'll tell you what we'll do, we'll send you Peter's book, *Phariseotomy* today too. And if you help us today, this last week -- you're going to like this -- you're going to smile. You get over here to this page that says, "A river dance having a stroke." You're going to laugh until you cry. Be sure and get it. Help us give the Shoes and Smiles.

Would you say thanks to Peter Haas again. Appreciate you, buddy! God bless you.
God bless Substance. The church is Substance, Minneapolis/Saint Paul.

Check them out. Love you! Thank you for helping us love others.

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.