

Week 16

4/16/13

James: Thank you. Thank you! Thank you! What a privilege to share this time with you. I'm James Robison. Betty and I welcome you to *LIFE Today*.

A few years ago, I was actually going to remember where I was. I was sharing with -- well, I was speaking in the Nashville area, having lunch with a contractor that had built a platform for me to preach on in Gallatin, Tennessee and they talked him into staying around to see the preacher; he wasn't a Christian. He stayed and he got saved - - wonderfully saved. He loves Jesus. He is now one of our trustees of our board of *LIFE Outreach*.

I was eating lunch with him and he said, "Hey, a lot of people in our church are reading this book. As a matter of fact, they're talking about it. Would you check it out and see what you think?" And it was called *The Shack* -- that's interesting, *The Shack*. He told us a while ago, it did so well he thought maybe he would come back and write one called *The Condo*.

[Laughter]

That ought to hold him an audience. But Paul Young published the book in his garage. And it was a book he published because he had a broken heart for his truly fouled-up life. Now whether he wants to share what happened, that's his call. He was stuck. He got unstuck and he wanted to help his family understand so he wrote *The Shack*, a very unusual book. No need in being critical because it is a little different because it did reveal the greatness of our God to get anybody unstuck.

Well, he has a new book called *Cross Roads* and he is here to tell us about it.

By the way, *The Shack* that was in the garage, it finally had to get out of garage into the real publishing industry, like a real writer. Well, has it done anything? How about 18 million copies of the shack?

Would you say welcome to Paul Young?

Paul, good to see you, buddy.

Paul: Good to see you too. Thanks. It's an honor to be here.

James: You really blessed us when you were here. I think you remember we stayed afterwards and we just prayed with people. They didn't want to leave. One of the reasons they didn't want to leave was because we had a wonderful full audience, there were a lot of them that were willing to admit, "We're stuck. We don't want to be stuck anymore." So we just prayed for them. And the reason that we prayed for them, and you made it very clear, it wasn't to sell them a book, it wasn't even to get them to read a book, you wanted them unstuck. And you showed them love, the love of God that you revealed in the characters that represented God the father, God the son, the Holy Spirit.

Now, you're showing us and you showed us the Holy Spirit; you're throwing us another curve in the way you reveal the Holy Spirit. It's like you think the Holy Spirit can live in anybody and behave like the Holy Spirit. It is amazing to me. And it is like God can be like in anybody and reveal himself. What kind of thinker are you? You're wacky!

Paul: Imagery was never intended to define God. Right? Because there is lots of imagery all over scripture. There is masculine imagery, God is father. There is feminine imagery, God is a woman who loses a coin or God is a woman who is a nursing mother bouncing her baby on her hip, that's in the Hebrew Scriptures. So imagery... there are inanimate objects: God is a rock and a fortress and a strong tower. We know that God is not those things.

James: We're sheep for crying out loud!

Paul: Even in the Old Testament, Ruah is feminine for the Holy Spirit, and the verbs are feminine. It doesn't mean that God is male or female. And I wasn't trying to say that. I was trying to say look, all of maleness, all of femaleness is derived from the nature and character of God.

James: You really weren't trying to get into a theological discussion, you were trying to show people that God is great enough to come into your situation and make the difference you're looking for.

Paul: And here's part of the beauty of it. A lot of us who have grown up, I'm a missionary kid and a preacher's kid so Pharisees are my people.

[Laughter]

But a lot of us grew up with an idea of God being distant, unapproachable, unreachable. In fact, a lot of us had a theology where Jesus came to save us from God the Father.

James: That's sad; isn't it?

Paul: It's very sad. But a lot of us understand that. Then we have a difficulty trying to trust someone like that. So those of us who grew up that way, that distance doesn't make any sense. You can't trust someone you don't know loves you. And it was like there is a secret agenda behind the back of Jesus and you have to try to please this God.

Well, for some of us and a lot of us who have been broken and have damage in our histories, we're not -- we don't have what it takes to please people and live up to their expectations, even our own fathers -- let alone God. And to learn to trust, now that's a whole different ball game. Why does it surprise us that the first conversation in the Bible about God is in the mouth of the accuser and he is saying, "You can't trust him. He is not good all the time. He doesn't want you to be everything you were intended to be." And he'll lie to you.

James: Tell us enough about the book, *Cross Roads*, to let people know why you think this would be an interesting but meaningful journey for them.

Paul: I'm not an agenda-driven writer. I don't -- I'm not trying to pull people from one place and get them somewhere else. I'm more like I have a question and I want to explore it; and the question here in *Cross Roads*, different than *The Shack*. In *The Shack* you have an individual, but the question here is how does grace -- or how does transformation penetrate into the life of someone who is absolutely opposed to it who has set up systems where they don't even want relationship anymore; it is all self-protective and they've become sort of a despicable person. At least Mackenzie in *The Shack* was likable. Tony is not. So how does --

James: You would actually ask how could God love somebody like that? -- That's how despicable he is.

Paul: Yeah!

James: But God does love him.

Paul: Absolutely! And the thing about the way that God loves us is that God is going to continue to pursue us regardless. Because what does the love of a father do? Are you going to love your child less because they don't live up to some set of expectations? No. The love is unconditional. Right? And it is because of your love that you want to be a consuming fire or want to burn out of their life things that are not true or a lie or a disease.

You've just gone through a loss and I'm really sad with you about that. And I'm angry with you about it because it's wrong. We weren't designed for death, and we weren't designed for disease.

James: That was not right for our daughter.

Paul: And I've got a daughter who is been fighting a little micro pituitary adenoma, it is a brain tumor and she's been in this fight for almost five years now.

James: And we want her to win! She will win! Period! Ultimately!

Paul: She will but that's because life is bigger than death. And see, most of us have lived our lives as if death is bigger than life. So it is the thing we're afraid of and we've made it the event of death. Guess what? All of us are going to die. Every faith healer I know has died.

[Laughter]

James: It doesn't frighten me even a little bit, even though I'm quite happy on the journey, I'm not waiting for the next bus out. I'm very happy because listen, heaven is all over me. Heaven is all in me. God's all in me and yet, it's beyond anything I can imagine here. But I'm going to get as much of heaven in me now as I can; I'm going to share as much of what heaven is out there. Everybody ought to want to go there. I ain't going to be playing a harp -- I'll guarantee you that. I'm going to be floating around with a halo and wings. It is going to be wonderful! Beyond anything you've ever imagined and our daughter knows that.

So see, people have all these false notions. But the sad thing is, they don't understand how much God loves them, no matter what they've done. And what you do in *Cross Roads* is you show God revealing his love the way he wants to reveal his love and revealing who he is to someone who everyone would find almost impossible to love -- but not God. The reason people don't understand unconditional love is they've seen so

little of it. They might see it from their puppy, for crying out loud. They think that -- and really, it is unconditional. But they haven't seen it enough from us. I feel like it is in you because God pulled you out of a pit. He got you unstuck. He definitely did me.

Betty and I sit here. We talk to people all over the world. This is not some kind of game show facade. The real deal -- you may not think we're the real deal but the real deal got us, and I mean he won us to him. And I look for him in people; when I don't see him in people, I want them to know him because of what he would do for them. This is just what's inside. Does it make sense to you?

Paul: Oh, totally. Because that God that is distant and unapproachable and unreachable, he doesn't show up because he doesn't exist. This is the father of Jesus. Jesus, remember he was crucified because he called God his father. This was something that was unknown inside the Jewish community. When he said at 12 years old, "I have to be about my father's business," nobody -- nobody had ever said that. The word *father* was only used 15 times in the entire Hebrew scriptures and now it's used 176 times in the gospel?

James: I use it that many times almost daily. And I didn't have a dad -- I didn't have a dad. I got a father -- I needed to learn some things from a dad. And sometimes it is difficult for us to get this father concept into how we father because we didn't see it firsthand, oftentimes. But if we'll really press in, he'll reveal. It's amazing how he covers our mistakes as a loving heavenly father. I've said of our children and it is the absolute truth, they looked far beyond this father and they saw the father and they live amazed at the father. We've got a lot of viewers, and people here in the audience, and a lot of viewers all over the world, why do you think they would benefit if they read *Cross Roads*?

Paul: You know me. It's not about the selling of a book or anything like that because even with *The Shack* --

James: I know it is. You don't publish them in the garage if you're really -- you really weren't real bright, to be honest with you. You just kind of dug it out. Okay.

Paul: But the first 15 copies did everything I wanted it to do.

James: You wanted to help your kids.

Paul: And it was. I was trying to obey my wife, is what I was trying to do.

James: That's good! It works -- 50 years worth.

Paul: I know! *Cross Roads*, again, is an invitation inside the journey of process. I wish it was extreme soul makeover; I wish you could take a red or blue pill and it would just fix everything, but the sense is that God has such a respect for the human person, and the soul of a human being is this unbelievably beautifully intricately constructed thing. It is uniquely damaged. That's why you can put ten children in front of the same abuse and you'll have ten lives go ten totally different directions. It's the uniqueness of that person.

God is very careful not to become an abuser in order to -- even for our own good. He doesn't come in and decide to make our choices for us. So the invitation is inside this process, is this a God I can trust who knows everything there is to know about me who will continue to pursue me, regardless of my ability to create the defensive systems and mechanisms and everything else. And *Cross Roads* is just an illustration of that adventure, and again, brings people into the conversation in ways that are a little bit unique.

And my wife, who loves *The Shack*, actually likes this story better. It's broader, has more community in it. I think that's part of the reason why it is doing as well as it is.

James: Do y'all appreciate Paul Young? Do you appreciate his journey and what he's doing? Any comment, Betty, you want to make along the line of what he is talking about?

Betty: Well, what I hear too, it is more -- it is about that relationship with God that he isn't someone that is far, far away. It is about him being the father in our lives.

Paul: I was talking to a gal that's writing a book and she's a good friend and she is writing an important book. It's about how to keep your children safe in an environment where abuse happens so easily, unfortunately. And at one point I said to her, "Let me ask you a question. If you put your heart and soul into this thing and it impacts one person, will that be enough?"

She thought about it and she was really honest and she said, "No."

And I said, "Well, then you don't understand the value of one and you wouldn't have left the 99 just to go find the one."

And she said, "Oh, my gosh! I get it."

See this is about the one -- and you're the one -- I'm the one! And the beauty of it is that you matter. And he'll leave the 99 because you're the one.

James: It's really interesting that even while I'm sitting here talking to -- in virtually every home in the civilized world, at least we're knocking at the door. Think about that. Go preach the gospel from house to house -- to every house where they can get it. I'm knocking on the door but I don't see that. I'm looking at who is there. I'm looking at you. I really wish that I could talk to you. I'm trying to.

Paul, an interesting thing about when you're talking about this uniqueness of God, the more godlike it is, the more sameness you see in how he works. He is not a God of sameness -- no two snowflakes, no two fingerprints, no two hair, no two people. Why do we try -- religion will make you the same. The systems of men create like, not godlike because godlike is diverse and beautiful. And however unique you are, don't start measuring yourself by people you see. Just say, "God, you have created me uniquely."

Betty and I are so different. Let's face it, she is a whole lot prettier. God did good over here. God did good right here with this little sheep too. I want to tell you something; God uses us in our uniqueness. He'll use you, he'll shape you. He loves you beyond our ability to adequately communicate. He communicated by saying let me send an expression of who I am, my son, to show you what I'm like and to give his life to show you my unconditional love for you. If you're the one that spits on me, spites me, spurns me, I love you.

Would you simply say, "I receive it. Be my father. I want you to be my father. I want you to do in me what you long to do as a father." Would you? Just say, "Father, be my God. Jesus, be my savior." You want someone to pray with you, call the number.

I've written a little book that's a Bible study that's called *Knowing God as Father*. You'll like it. It is a little of my story without a father, found the father; it will help you grow.

Would you say thanks to Paul for writing as God directs? *Cross Roads* is in the bookstores and I hope you'll get it. I believe it will bless you. Paul, one of the greatest joys of our life is sharing his life. And you know, we've been -- you talk about Fanny Crosby wrote "rescue the perishing, care for the dying, snatch them in pity from sin and the grave." We get to do that all over the world because people watch us and say,

"I want to join you in doing it." Now look, we're going to show you someone in desperate need of love and I promise you this, for some, you are the source to point them the way, the way out and rescue them literally. Please watch prayerfully.

On the mission field:

Announcer: This is a prison. Not a real prison run by a government and police officers but it is a prison nonetheless. Room after room contains not much more than a bed. Depraved visitors to these types of prisons pour millions of dollars into human trafficking worldwide. The prisoners are scared young girls held captive by violent slave traders but the prisoners that live here did nothing wrong. They have broken no laws. The girl in cell 4D is innocent.

Open Captions: I have no control over my own body. I don't want to do the things they make me do. I feel trapped here like I'm in bondage. Even my heart feels like it is in bondage. My life is over. I have no more hope. When my life gets really bad, I cry out, "If there is a god, please save me."

Jesus was sent to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, and that the oppressed will be set free.

End of clip

In the studio:

James: Okay. Lord Jesus, we know that's why you came. And you set me free. Betty's little story about being set free as a little church girl, *Free to Be Me*, we've experienced it.

Let me tell you something, because we've been set free, because the Lord is alive in us, and his love is in us and because of people like you watching me right now and watching that beautiful girl, she is now set free. Yes, we got her out.

Betty, when you see that and you remember how we wondered if our viewers would even tolerate watching those scenes, our viewers didn't tolerate it, they pressed in on us and said, "Let's go get them. And we will rescue them." That's what they said.

Betty, that girl's set free. And our missionaries have pointed now that they've got 6,000, so to speak, in the zone that they can reach out to to rescue before anybody gets them because they can get them out of their family and poverty situations where they're so vulnerable. The ones that are in there, they can work carefully to get them out, and then they restore them. They reach them, they rescue them, and they restore them and they actually give them a future. It works, in other words.

Betty: It does, James. I was sitting there watching that and I thought how many tears have they shed -- all those that are like this precious girl? They cry time after time and no one hears them. They're hurting.

And I think, James, when our children were small, if I heard a whimper, if I saw a tear, I wiped that tear, I took away the pain if I could, or if they were frightened about something. These children stay that way. They're frightened, they're hurting, they're scared; they have no one to reach out to them unless we do it. Please join with us and let's reach out to these children. Let's wipe their tears, so to speak and give them a place that they can be safe and they can smile again.

James: Betty, I hear you talking about that, how much it is in your heart as a mother, to wipe away the tear and to make it -- I just watched you so much with our beautiful daughter when she was fighting. She never admitted she was fighting for her life. She was fighting with life. But you wanted so much to fix her. You would come home and say, "I feel like I just want to do something so bad." There wasn't a thing you wouldn't have done. And we weren't -- she's totally healed forever. Looking down here and saying, "Mom and Dad, keep loving people because it is wonderful."

Let me tell you something, Betty said, "I would have done anything." We can rescue girls and children like that, but we do it together. And so here it is... I want you to understand how *LIFE Outreach* works. We're a minister to you every day, that's primary to us; bless you so you bless others. Bless the Lord by blessing others releases love; be an expression of the father's heart and extend the father's hands. We want to help you.

But listen, there is tremendous joy in putting God's arms around somebody else. So we give you an opportunity to help us rescue the perishing; to reach them, rescue them, and restore them. It takes an average of \$128 the missionaries tell us. All the missionaries say that's the average. Every \$128 we can send to help those girls and rescue them, we get another one. We've targeted 6,000, the outreach of the missionaries that we support. Would you dial the number during this last week?

Would you make a \$128 gift? Could you give \$1280 and rescue ten? Some of you can. I believe people give at the level at their God given ability and the desire he puts in their heart. So give all you can.

Remember this, the *LIFE* Center, the outreach center in the Ukraine burned. We not only want to restore it, we want to expand it and I believe that cost is \$275,000 and it is going to double the outreach. So we're going to build it better and bigger. I've prayed, God, will you just touch 275 people to give \$1,000? You could be one of them, see, if each of us do what God puts on our heart and just extends his hands of love.

Would you dial the number? Take your bankcard, use it like a check. If you write a check, make it to *LIFE*. Go online, LifeToday.org and make the gift there. But please, be persistent during this last week and say, "I am going to reach out with God's love. I'm going to rescue someone." Thank you for doing it!

Begin video clip:

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

Through *Mission: Rescue Life* you can help reach, rescue, and restore thousands of children from the horrors of the sex trade in Thailand, Cambodia, India, Ukraine, and many other nations. Your gift today of only \$128 will help rescue a child and change their life forever. And with gifts of \$64 or \$32 we will combine your gifts with others to help reach, rescue, and restore one more child from the horrors of their kidnappers.

With your gift of any amount, we'll send you *Free to Be Me*, Betty Robison's updated account of how she moved from fear and insecurity to true freedom. You'll also receive the companion journal for your quiet time and daily reflections.

With your gift of \$128 or more to help rescue a child, be sure to request your copy of the *Life Application Study Bible*.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1,000 or more to help rebuild the *LIFE* Center in Ukraine destroyed by fire or \$1280 to help rescue 10 children, and you may request the limited edition bronze sculpture titled Christian.

This is the last week so please call, write, or make your gift online.

End of clip

In the studio

James: This is the last week that we're asking you to help us with this emphasis on Rescue Life. This is Christian. Our daughter held Christian. This doesn't happen to be a bronze of our daughter, it's a missionary worker. This little boy came out of the sewers in Romania; that's where he lived -- a lot of kids did. Got them out, gave them a *LIFE* Center. That's what we're basically trying to do for these girls and we're giving the bronze to those of you who will help us rescue ten or make a \$1,000 gift. This is the commemorative bronze, Robert Summers. And this one has the gold plate on it for our 50th anniversary celebration of marriage and ministry. But I hope you'll help us.

I want to remind you again, Paul Young, what a blessing! *Cross Roads*, author of *The Shack*, a real friend; somebody who loves God and loves the people God loves and wants to help you.

Would you say thanks to Paul Young again? Get the book, *Cross Roads* in the bookstores. Thank all of you.

Thank you, Paul. Appreciate you, buddy! Love you!

Remember register for the Bible conference, the annual conference, the 50th anniversary conference, 18-20 of July. We'll see you there.

Announcer: Join James and Betty Robison July 18 through the 20th for the Awaken Now Conference at Gateway Church in Southlake, Texas! Featuring inspiring speakers such as Governor Mike Huckabee, international author and speaker, Christine Caine, Reverend Samuel Rodriguez, speaker and bestselling author Lisa Bevere, and many more including musical guests such as Phillips, Craig, and Dean!

Register today for this once in a lifetime event, celebrating fifty years of ministry with James and Betty Robison. Go to lifetoday.org.