

Week 21

5/23/13

James: Oh, boy! Thank you very much. You make us feel welcome. We appreciate it.

I'm James Robison. I welcome you to *LIFE Today*. Our son Randy is here. If you heard me earlier in the week, Betty asked if she could have a little down time to be lifted up in the presence of the Lord. We are still going through the process of living without our youngest daughter and being an encouragement to her wonderful husband, Ken Turner, to their three teenage children. One of them just moved out of the teens into his 20s -- he's 20 now. We just feel like it was right to give her some time to just be refreshed.

I want you to know that I have in the studio audience many friends who are members of the great First Baptist Church in Dallas. I want all of you to know, and you go back, and all of you at First Baptist, you need to know how big you are, I believe to God, how big God is obviously to you, but also how big you are to me because you loved me when I was a very young preacher just starting out.

Your former pastors -- several pastors back, Dr. W.A. Criswell invited me to start preaching every off Sunday from the time I was in my early 20s and I did that. You encouraged me. You have been nothing but an encouragement to me. I want you to know, I've loved all your pastors you've had through the years. Many of them are my closest friends, even to this day. I love your pastor now, Dr. Robert Jeffress.

Would you just give Dr. Jeffress a welcome to *LIFE Today*?

Dr. Jeffress, I'm glad to have you.

Dr. Jeffress: Good to see you.

James: I want you to know, as I told you, that I admire you and appreciate you for taking a stand when it seems to be less than popular for preachers to stand and address serious issues that are very important to God, which he fully addressed in his Word, which can be trusted.

And now those things have been dragged into every arena of public life and discussed and discarded. And yet you have held the standard up unwaveringly and I want you

to know I for one appreciate it and I've told you that. Has that been a fun journey holding up that standard?

Dr. Jeffress: It really has, James and Randy. It's been a real privilege.

By the way, thank you for all those personal phone calls you've made to me when we've been in the heat of the battle. I've been amazed, really, that a church like ours would be called anti-Semitic because we simply teach that everyone, Jews, Catholics, Baptist, Hindus must trust in Christ to be savior. And because we have this novel idea that marriage should be between a man and a woman, that somehow we're called anti-gay.

The fact is, we're not teaching anything radical at First Baptist Dallas. We're simply teaching what the Bible has taught for 2,000 years.

But you know, I'm not depressed at all about this. I think these are exciting days for Christians to live in, because the fact is, the darker the background, the brighter the light. I think Christians have an unprecedented opportunity to share the light of Jesus Christ right now but we've got to be equipped to do so, which is why I've written this book we're talking about today, *How Can I Know?*

James: I want to hold that up and I want to show all of our viewers the book, *How Can I Know?* And it answers specific questions, seven of life's most important questions. I think probably, one of the highest compliments that I could possibly pay the book is to say that our son Randy, who I admire greatly; I admire him not only as a son but I admire him as a father and as a husband. I admire and appreciate the way that he has reared his children and pointed them to Christ, and how obvious it is that they have seen the Lord.

But he gave this book as a gift to all four of his children, teenagers, as a gift for Christmas. I think that's a pretty high compliment for the book. So why did you do that, Randy? Why did you take this book -- I've written a lot of books, son! I've got books everywhere!

Dr. Jeffress: I don't want to get between y'all now!

Randy: That's true. Now that's true! Well, we get those any way.

[Laughter]

This book, I got an early copy of it and I read it, and I remember telling you that's the topic that we need to talk about on *LIFE Today*. Because even though my children have been raised in the church, they all believe; my oldest daughter is at a private school that has Christian roots, college that has Christian roots --.

James: Go ahead and tell them it's Baylor. A Baptist guy can take Baylor.

Randy: He can take that.

[Laughter]

But I don't want to alert all the guys down there at Baylor that my daughter is down there. Right? Stay away! So...

James: They will find her.

Randy: But they're facing these questions. They all go to public schools and they are asked these things. They are having just a lot of weird things going on, especially in public school. And they have to be ready, even at that young age, as teenagers to give a good answer on these very basic tenets of Christianity.

So as I read this, I went wow! This is great! There is not a lot that I don't necessarily know but it's just presented so well and so articulately that it helps me as I go out and talk to other people to defend the faith in a sense. So I wanted to give it to all of my kids because I wanted to equip them.

The other thing I have to say about you, Dr. Jeffress, and this is not always true of Baptist pastors and of people of faith in general, you speak the truth and that is critical. It is critical that we stand up and we speak truth and I appreciate you doing that -- but you do it in love.

Dr. Jeffress: Thank you.

Randy: And when we don't have truth or we don't have love, we're unbalanced, we make no sense, and I think we make a mess of things. And just getting to know you I see that you speak the truth in love and that's why I wanted my kids to kind of tap in to some of you as you share these basic answers with everybody.

Dr. Jeffress: Well, I appreciate the compliment because that is the greatest compliment, to speak the truth in love. You've really tapped into why I wrote this

book. I've been a pastor for more than 30 years and yet I'd have to say there are many people in my pew right now who have been asked some of the most basic questions, they couldn't answer them. How do you know there is a God? How do you know the Bible is true? How do you know of all the religions in the world Christianity is the right one? How do you know there is such a thing as life after death? How do you now how to forgive somebody? And most Christians, if they were asked that they would stutter and stammer and break out into a sweat. They wouldn't know what to answer. That's why I wrote this book.

First Peter 3:15 says we need to be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks for the hope that is within us. And I wrote this book to equip Christians so that they would have the answers to share in this increasingly dark world. But I also wrote it as a way that people could give as a way of sharing their faith to other people. I don't know if our audience has had this experience, I certainly have had, the hardest people to share our faith with are those closest to us: family members, people we work with.

Randy: I've been trying for years!

[Laughter]

Dr. Jeffress: We're praying! We're praying! Maybe today is the day it's going to happen.

James: You're getting some help!

Dr. Jeffress: But here's an easy non-offensive way to share your faith. People are asking these questions today and we're having people buy these literally 10 and 20 at a time to give out to people who had the most basic questions.

A lot of people have said, "Well, you could have written 600 pages on these topics." That would have been an easy way to do it but nobody would read a 600 page book. I wanted to take the best research and I spent more time researching this book than any of the 20 that I've written. I've spend a year researching it and then boiled it down into the best evidence and best arguments for these seven most important questions of life. It is not a book that's going to offend people necessarily.

I have two Jewish friends in New York that read this book and they couldn't believe; they were kind of apprehensive about reading it because they are of the Jewish faith. They said, "We didn't agree with everything but the way it was presented wasn't offensive to us." So this is a way to share your faith with other people.

Randy: It's a great way! It's very effective. One thing -- can I bring this up real quick? You talk about forgiveness and the importance of forgiveness. This is not just for beginners, or just not for non-Christians, this is something I think we need all of our lives. Why did you include that chapter in this book?

Dr. Jeffress: Randy, this is what makes this book different than some of the other apologetic books out there because I talk about some real practical issues as well. And there's no greater issue that people grapple with anymore than the issue of forgiveness, both Christians and non-Christians. How can I know how to forgive somebody who has hurt me?

I think there is somebody watching right now. You have been deeply hurt by another person. It may be a mate who abused you or a parent who wronged you in some way. You can't move any further in life until you deal with this issue of forgiveness. And you know what I say is one reason people have such a hard time with forgiveness is they really have a misunderstanding about what forgiveness is and what it isn't.

There may be an abused wife right now watching this broadcast and you know you're supposed to forgive but you think, well, does that mean I have to go back and live with this abusive mate?

I make the point in this book, there's a difference between forgiveness and reconciliation. Forgiveness has no strings attached to it. Reconciliation has several strings attached to it. When I forgive somebody, what I'm doing is giving up my right to hurt them for hurting me. I give up my right to vengeance. I don't give up my desire for justice. Basically what I'm doing when I forgive somebody is I'm turning them over to God to let God deal with them. I'm letting go so I can get on with my life.

I tell people, forgiving somebody is a lot like letting go of a rattlesnake. Yeah, it benefits the snake but it benefits you more. That's a good reason to forgive.

Randy: The reconciliation that you mentioned though, there has to be change on the part of another person if you're going to reconcile, but if you can forgive them even if they never change.

Dr. Jeffress: Here's an interesting thing. In Mark 11:25 Jesus said, "If you're standing in the temple to pray and you remember something you have against somebody, forgive him." Jesus was saying you have the ability whether that person is in the next

room, the next state, or in the cemetery, you have the ability unilaterally to forgive that person.

The biggest mistake Christians make about this forgiveness thing is trying to make our forgiveness dependent on what the other person does or doesn't do. We are waiting for them to do something so we can forgive them. I like to say that's like -- remember those old three legged races that you'd have at the old fashioned picnic? Where you would tie your leg to the other person and you'd hobble down to the finish line together and everybody would laugh at the sight. The problem with that is you could not run any faster or farther than your partner you were bound to was able to run; you were bound to that other person. Well, when you refused to forgive somebody, you are emotionally binding yourself to that other person. And you can't go any further or faster in life than he is willing to go.

But forgiveness is the process by which I let go of that person. I say what that person did to me is wrong, they deserve to suffer for it but I'm letting go of that hurt so I can be free to get on with my life. Lewis Mead said one time, "When we forget, we set the prisoner free and the prisoner we set free is us."

James: Now in our mainline Bible churches, oftentimes we use the Bible -- I've actually used it as a bludgeoning instrument to beat the hell out of people with it and think I was doing something righteous.

[Laughter]

I used to tell people I gave them so much hell, nobody wanted to go there, and I would preach that way.

[Laughter]

But here's the point, we will sometimes in our stand for truth, not even seem to realize we've alienated people unnecessarily and then we don't seem to care. And that's why we have so many denominations, that's why we, as Baptists, have so many factions it's ridiculous. And really, God wants to heal the factions if we would just care enough to say, "God, heal the hurt, heal our hearts," and really seek each other out.

I've watched -- you know you've watched it -- people don't want to be seen with certain people because they're of that crowd and that -- and really and truly, they just had a little difference but they've let that wedge come in. And I've personally, this is my opinion -- I think it's a very biblical position but I think when we allow that to

persist, and that bitterness to prevail and that divisiveness and dissension to prevail, we hinder the work of God through his people the church. Do you agree with that?

Dr. Jeffress: I agree with that 100%! Somebody said, "Refusing to forgive is like drinking rat poison and waiting for the rat to die."

[Laughter]

It hurts us a lot more than it hurts the other person. That's just one of the topics we deal with in the book that are very practical. How can I know how to forgive somebody who hurts me? But there are a number of other questions people have too. One of the most basic questions right now people have with all that's happening in the world is, how can I know that God's good with all the suffering in the world? I think what...

James: Sure, we could have asked you that right after our daughter died when she was so faithful and so full of faith. But because we know God, we know we can question him but we know he is still great and loving and he will work all things, even the hurt and pain for good because we love him.

Dr. Jeffress: That's true and yet, the fact of suffering in the world is probably the greatest barrier to some people becoming a Christian. When people ask us, "Why does God allow this?" -- we need to have something to share with them.

I tell people about an experience we had. My wife and I were driving one night from west Texas or from Dallas back to Wichita Falls. It was in a driving rainstorm and the lights of our car went out. And I mean here we were in this driving rainstorm. We didn't want to pull over. We thought we would get hit but we saw this 18 wheeler behind us and we allowed it to pull in front of us and we focused in on the taillights and allowed that truck to guide us through the storm back to our home.

I think when we are going through a storm of suffering, we can't answer all the whys of it but there are some lights from God's Word that we can focus in on that will keep us and guide us through that storm. We can know for sure that God is good and all powerful. He has allowed this in our life for a reason. We can know that a lot of suffering that we go through is not God's fault.

C.S. Lewis said, "Most of the atrocities in the world are the results of men with bayonets, guns and gas chambers." We can't blame God for what men do to men. A

third thing we know for sure, James and Randy is that God can use suffering for good. When people ask me, "Well, pastor where was God when this happened to me?"

I say, "He was in the same place he was 2,000 years ago when his own son was murdered and executed."

And then finally, I think we can know for sure that God will one day bring an end to the suffering that we're experiencing -- that's the great hope of this second coming. That God will bring these things to an end. He will have victory over these things.

Again, I think we have to resist the idea of having pat answers but we need to be able to offer people hope. C.S. Lewis said one time...

I think about your daughter Robin, I can't imagine the heartache of losing a child. I can't imagine what that must be like. But C.S. Lewis said one time, "For every desire in the human heart there is a corresponding reality somewhere." We have a desire for food, guess what? There is such a thing as food. We have a desire for sex. Well, guess what? God created sex. We have a desire for something beyond this life called heaven. Why do we have that desire? -- Because there is such a place called heaven. I think that's the hope we have when we go through what y'all have experienced.

James: Let me just tell you as directly as I can, I love you. Thank God for you. I thank you for taking the time. And I know the time and energy, the prayer, the focus that went into a book that is so clear and so helpful. From the bottom of my heart, I want to thank you in behalf of all the believers who need to know how to answer very important questions well. Would you join us saying thanks to Dr. Jeffress?

Dr. Jeffress: Thank you.

James: *How Can I Know?* If our son thought this was important enough to give to his children that we all love so much as our grandchildren -- we have 11 grandchildren -- and I just want to say to all of you, I would love for you to have it. I can tell by listening to Dr. Jeffress how much love prompted him to do this. Love first for God but not only for God, God's people, and all the people who need to know the God we love.

And he's given us great answers. We'll send it to you as a gift if you'll do one thing I want to ask you to do. I want you to reach out and in an expression of love and simplicity. I want you to be an answer to a mother's prayer, her heart cry, and a child's need. Right now -- and this is not a feeble statement, this is an absolute truth -- you can

provide the answer to the needs of these precious little ones and you can provide it now.

On the mission field:

Announcer: Have you ever known hunger like this? Have you ever known sickness like this? Have you ever known desperation like this? That's all they have known.

One thing we know is they are fighting for their lives because of severe malnutrition. Now that you know will you help the thousands of children who are fighting to survive?

End of clip

James: I do love you. Your little emaciated body and your beautiful little face and your eyes have captured my heart. I want to be a part of loving you, not in word only, but in deed. Yes, little ones, I wish you could hear me but I would rather you see a demonstration of the love of God that beats in my heart in your behalf. People who are watching me all over the world, I know, I know somehow you wish that you could save those little children.

One of our staff held one of those precious little ones, prayed, it was the last day that little baby lived. You could say we got there too late, but it wasn't because the missionaries weren't there, it wasn't because we hadn't set up and tried to keep all the supplies going to a hospital, a clinic, a malnutrition clinic because we have.

But you see, the fact is, the children are coming there in a steady flow right now because there are desperate conditions in that region in parts of Angola right now, where we've been helping for more than twenty years, saving lives, millions of them. They've got a serious drought, and this is all they have to live on. They're not lazy, they work, they try to make a living, and they do their best. They don't have anything.

We can give them life. It's not going to take all we have to do it, it just takes what's in our hand. \$30 we can feed 3 of those little children for several months. \$50, we can feed five. \$100, we can feed ten.

And miraculously, right now, and I tell you it is, it's an answer to prayer. Someone, several people have put up a challenge, a matching gift of a half-million dollars, \$500,000. If you'll give today it will double your gift. They say, "We'll double everything that's given." Because here's the desperate situation: it's so serious we need

to add another 25,000 children immediately to save their lives, that are just like those children, they are headed for that condition, that place.

Would you help us save their lives? Would you please? Please, today make the largest gift you can. Would you reach out and truly touch someone with the love of God by dialing right now, that life line, in their behalf, and use your bankcard like a check. Please go get it! You use it oftentimes for things you could miss to save lives. But take that card, use it like a check. Write a check, make it to *LIFE* but call us and tell us you're putting it in the mail. Or go online to lifetoday.org but make the largest gift you can.

If you can give \$1000 that will enable us to save the lives of 100 children, but it will be doubled, immediately doubled today to \$2000. \$5,000 to \$10,000. I'm praying God let somebody do that because you've enabled them to do it and you put it in their heart to hold those little children in arms of love. Would you do it? \$30 is not a small gift for those three children, now six. It's not small, it's big, it'll give them life. The greatest gift you can give, the gift of life and we're going to tell them about the love of God,. That prompted those missionaries to be there in compassion expressions.

Please make that life-giving call right now. Please do it! You'll be glad you did! Their lives will be saved. They'll have a chance.

Begin video clip:

Announcer: At this very moment children are drawing what could be their last breath, struggling to stay alive due to severe hunger. You can help stop the cycle of death. You can help save a child's life. In addition to the 400,000 children already in our feeding program throughout Africa, we must immediately provide for an additional 25,000 children in the hardest hit areas of drought.

As an answer to prayer, a group of *LIFE's* friends have set a \$500,000 matching challenge for Mission Feeding. This means your gift today can have a double impact. \$30 to help feed three children can be doubled to impact six children! \$50 to help feed five children can be doubled to help save 10 children! And \$100 for 10 children can be doubled to help feed and introduce Jesus to 20 children!

As a thank you, we would like to send you *A Good Word for a Great Day*, a 365-day devotional providing a word of inspiration and promise for each new day.

With your double impact gift of \$100 to help save the lives of 20 children, you may request *The Family Reading Bible* to help engage your children and grandchildren in God's Word.

Finally, please consider a double impact gift of \$1,000 to help save the lives of 200 children, and you may also request the 50th anniversary commemorative bronze, "Brotherly Love."

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

End of clip

In the studio

James: I want to say thanks to you for watching. I want you just to focus. Some of you have already gone to the phone and you're going online or you're about to. I want you to just look at those little faces one more time, every one of them, precious unique little personalities -- incredible possibilities. All they need is a chance at life, which will come through an expression of God's love on your part.

Thank you for making a gift. I pray you make the best gift you can and I thank God it's going to be doubled.

If you would like to have Dr. Jeffress' book, along with the devotional book, the other things that we send to bless you, if you'd like to have it today, and you just help us minister to those beautiful children, help those missionaries so they're not empty-handed. Their hearts are full but their hands would be empty unless we give them the wherewithal to help. We'll gladly send you Dr. Jeffress' book, *How Can I Know?* -- Answering these very important questions.

And I thank you, Randy, for joining. Big help! Thank you a whole lot! A

nd would you join us in saying thanks to Dr. Jeffress?

Dr. Jeffress, we appreciate you.

Dr. Jeffress: Thank you so much.

Thank you so much, Randy! Appreciate it.

James: Thank all of you. And to all of our Christian friends -- yes, those of you at First Baptist in Dallas, we love you and have for a long time!

And those of you over here. Thank all of you for watching *LIFE Today*. Thanks so much for sharing.

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, Pastor Tony Evans, International Bible teacher and author Beth Moore, New York Times best-selling author and speaker Andy Andrews and many more, including musical guest such as Big Daddy Weave.

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