

8/22/13

Week 34

**James:** Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm James Robison. My wife Betty and I are thrilled to welcome you.

Now Betty's father used to like the wrestling matches and I used to tell her, I think it is about mostly fake. The men and the crowds were huge. You don't want to tell one of those guys they're fake. They just throw each other up, and falling down, it's pretty good stuff. But I've watched this cage fighting stuff and man, I don't know why they get in that. I guess the cage, once they get them in there they have to keep them in there because they want out. But they get in there and get after it and it is amazing. And we've got a cage fighter, one of the most incredible stories.

As a matter of fact, I've got to tell you this. When I met Justin, I really liked him. As a matter of fact, his spirit was so Christ-like I really couldn't imagine him being in that setting, and yet he was bullied when he was a kid and it kind of readjusted his focus. But an incredible journey took place that has led to one of the most incredible journeys I've ever heard of. I think you're going to be totally captivated by it.

As a matter of fact, if you've ever liked anything about *LIFE Today*, if you've ever liked anything you ever saw, anything we ever did, you want to listen to this.

Would you welcome Justin Wren to *LIFE Today*?

Hey, Justin! I think cage fighting looks dangerous to me.

**Justin:** It kind of is.

**James:** Are those your teeth?

**Justin:** These are all real. Yeah. Yeah. I've got them all.

**James:** You don't let them hit you or what?

**Justin:** Try not to. You try to do the hitting, and you dodge getting punched. Yeah.

**James:** I want to -- I think your story is amazing. I want viewers all over the world to

hear it because it is a journey that is still in process. And you talk about a real miraculous, kind of a Damascus Road type encounter, and then a real modern day missionary that you would be in the most unlikely places. Tell our viewers about your journey and how the change came and what it's led to.

**Justin:** Well, I guess at 13 years old, that's what you referred to earlier where I grew up in... and I didn't get... well, I got heavily bullied but just at times, and really in middle school, that was the time that I got really heavily bullied.

Shortly after that, I found the U.F.C. and I would save up my allowance and buy the U.F.C. V.H.S. tapes. I'd hide them under my bed so my parents wouldn't find them. I just had that dream. I saw those guys and I looked at who I was and I had gotten invited to costume parties that weren't really costume parties, it was just me that would dress up and people pointing and people laughing and just --.

**James:** Boy, that hurts.

**Justin:** I remember at 13, really, that's whenever I became in the first fight of my life where I was battling suicidal thoughts and all sorts of things. When I saw the U.F.C. and those fighters, they were kind of like modern day gladiators and I knew that they probably didn't deal with the things that I was dealing with. And so at 13 I found my childhood dream to be an U.F.C. fighter, be one of those modern day gladiators. If I could just do that, I'd have the purpose that I always dreamed of and I would be living the life of my dreams. So I went on just a journey to do that; at 15 years old, started wrestling.

Shortly after that I had two Olympic gold medalists that became my high school wrestling coaches, wrestled at a school called Dallas Bishop Lynch and we were the second best team in the country. I shortly became a national champion wrestler after that. Then I started pursuing the Olympics and went to the Olympic training center for wrestling.

Then at 19 years old I made my professional fighting debut and I was the youngest heavyweight in the country then. And I got on the U.F.C. show, it's called The Ultimate Fighter, reality TV show, six million people was the average viewership of that. And at that time I finally felt like I'm living the life of my dreams. And I don't know, something just wasn't right. I literally wanted to transform from that person that was bullied and felt worthless, and then I became this guy that was now getting to travel all over the world and I had wrestled in Moscow, I had kick-boxed in Amsterdam, and I had fought in Las Vegas. I was the main event at the Hard Rock

Casino in Las Vegas. I found myself in a position where I was just... From the outside looking in, I was in front of all the lights and everyone thought everything was great but on the inside I was completely utterly dark.

The purpose of my life, it just didn't seem like it was going the way it was planned, even though my game plan in fighting -- that's something that is real important in a fight is a game plan. If you don't have the right game plan, you aren't going to win. And I had successfully lived on that game plan and achieved basically most of the things, or all the things I really wanted.

**James:** But you were empty?

**Justin:** I was so empty!

**James:** And you tried to fill it other ways probably? What did you do?

**Justin:** Absolutely. When I was 13, I started filling with those dreams, and then when I had those dreams, that became a reality, I started filling it with other things because the fights weren't fulfilling. I literally can't remember one fight where I had my hand raised and I won, and sometimes big knock outs and crowds roaring where I smiled afterwards. I just -- I never celebrated. Some guys climb the top of the cage and they celebrate and they flex and they're really excited, really pumped up. I always thought, man, is this it? Is this all there is? I thought that was my identity. This is who I am and it is not fulfilling me.

So I started turning to different things like all the partying and all the drugs, and became a depressed drunk drug addict. I found myself literally in a prison that I didn't know how to get myself out of; whether it was emotionally but also physically to the drug addictions and alcoholism and everything.

**James:** What happened to you because you are anything but a drug addict looking drunk to me right now? You've got a glow on you that I saw in the room when I walked in. I didn't have to wonder whether you were going to whip me and throw me on the floor.

[Laughter]

I said this old boy here, this guy has got love. What happened?

**Justin:** Well, I'll save my spiritual gift of laying hands for later.

[Laughter]

But no, to be honest, I got to the lowest place. I hit rock bottom and then I discovered the true rock, I guess. The drugs that I got into, I don't remember two, two and a half months of my life. I had my medical marijuana card for three years living in Denver, Colorado, and then I got into pain pills and narcotics, and then I got into some heavier drugs than that. And I just remember missing my best friend's wedding -- I mean that's how low that I got. I missed my best friend's wedding and I remember getting an eight minute voice mail whenever I was kind of sobering up.

**James:** That makes me sad.

**Justin:** Yeah! And the voicemail I only got ten seconds through maybe because he said, "You missed my wedding! I can't believe you missed being my best man." And in that moment, I just realized, I'm a hurting dude that I get paid to hurt people but even the people I don't get paid to hurt I'm hurting now, the people I should love, I'm destroying, I'm hurting them on the inside. And because of that, I turned into even wanting to hurt me and became suicidal once again.

So this is ten years later, 23 years old, had everything I had hoped for basically, except for maybe ten pounds of gold that would have wrapped around my waist and then one day collected dust on a shelf, but I had put all my hope and everything in that.

And then I had a guy, that's actually in the audience, named Jeff Duncan that went to war for me and told me that my life was worth living, told me that this life is a battleground not a playground. If you treat it like a playground, you'll lose the battle. And he just told me that he had a game plan for victory, and that he loved me.

I thought Christians -- to be honest, I thought Christians just judged people. Even when I heard, in that world that I was in, when I heard John 3:16: For God so loved, I replaced it with: For God so judged. So I wanted nothing to do with Christians. When I graduated from high school, my favorite quote was from Gandhi and it said, "I like your Christ but I don't like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ." And I never experienced the real deal.

I remember Jeff kind of making it clear for me, he actually sent me an e-mail and in the e-mail it said, "Game plan for victory" or something like "The best thing you'll ever do in your life is a trip paid for to a men's retreat called Quest." And then Jeff stepped up to the plate and he just started going to war for me. I didn't return probably 60 of his

phone calls, text messages, e-mails, I didn't want anything to do with anything Christian. And I remember telling him, "I need something real, bro. Like I don't need to sit around a campfire hold hands and sing Kumbaya.

[Laughter]

That's not going to do anything for me. If that's what it is, I want no part of it." He said, "Bro, I'm telling you. Like when you get a hold of the real deal you'll actually learn what it is like to be a man." He spoke softly and he loved me through it.

I ended up coming on that -- he actually even ended up paying for -- and this is a youth pastor who has kids, who has a wife, paying for a training partner of mine also who also needed to find Christ too, to come on that trip, that men's retreat.

And yeah, there he just started -- the whole group started rallying behind me and around me and telling me how God loved me, and that he already forgave me and that he has a purpose for my life and a passionate life to live and a fulfilling life to live. I just remember that love was just coming out of them. They were reaching up to God loving him with all they had and then it was spilling out of them and it was coming on to me and it was contagious and I needed it. And I just told them, "What now?"

And he said, "All you've got to do is tap out."

That's a term we use in fighting: Tap out. When someone taps out you lose. So for me it didn't register. Like if you tap out you give up -- if you give up, you lose. And he told me in that moment that I would be given the greatest victory I've ever won in my life, and it's true. Three years and exactly nine days ago I gave my life to Christ and it changed everything.

[Applause]

**James:** You tapped out and you won the greatest victory of all, and that victory has just started. Where is the young man -- where is the one that witnessed to you?

**Justin:** Jeff Duncan.

**James:** Where is he?

**Justin:** Right there.

**James:** Stand up. Do you appreciate this young man? Love you, buddy!

[Applause]

What God did with him he will do with anybody if you're available.

**Betty:** Do you know if any of the kids that bullied you back then know what's happened to your life and how it's changed?

**Justin:** Yeah, a few of them do. When the TV show took off, all of them were saying, "Man, we wouldn't have picked on you so much!"

[Laughter]

And now some of them still keep in contact and say, "Wow, your life is completely radically different." And it is. All I can say is when I gave my life to Christ I was absolutely hopeless. I had drugs on me when I gave my life to Christ, and he fulfilled that void and set my heart on fire, and he put my life on purpose. And he took me from fighting against people, and that being my life purpose, to now fighting for people.

**James:** We've only got a few minutes for you to cover it but it is important. Now basically as a missionary what are you going to be doing? Tell people where you're going.

**Justin:** I actually have a real burden for the pygmy people, the Mbuti pygmy in Eastern Congo. I've gone there twice now and spent about two months with them. They've accepted me in their family, so I actually have a tribe name, name Efeosa. And Efeosa translated -- so my mom is Tribusiku in the tribe and my grandpa is Jalwa, and my brother is Bywonja and I'm Efeosa.

**James:** You know what it means?

**Justin:** Yeah, it actually means the man who loves us. Yeah. So what's so awesome about that is God told me to go. I left this comfort zone for the conflict zone of Congo and God showed up and he's loving them. I've seen...

My second trip there, I partner with the oldest Bible college in Congo called Shalom University. We actually -- it is eight years in the making for them but we saw the first 60 men, women, and children, Mbuti pygmy slaves be set free.

**James:** Isn't that great? I understand the significance of that.

[Applause]

You know we've spent so much time in Rwanda and with the refugees in the Congo. We flew into the Congo where the refugees were and then to go into Rwanda when bodies were everywhere; one of the greatest killing fields in all of history, and went in there to rescue these children. Found a missionary that had planted himself with the little children that had crawled out from under the bodies of their dead parents chopped up with machetes. And the little children were afraid of everybody. And they did what the pygmies have done with you, they sat in my lap. They didn't want to be around any adults, but they came to me.

I treasure the picture. It looked like I think Jesus looked, these beautiful little black children crawling up in my lap. They wanted to feel the hair on my arms; the same thing they did in the Sudan when Franklin Graham and I went to the starving children. They were dying and they wanted to touch the hair on our arms, they'd never seen it. And you experienced that kind of response. You're going back now right away; aren't you?

**Justin:** Yeah, and it's actually a real blessing. I had gotten, it's been such an overwhelming thing, a burden that God has put on my heart. It's been about a year and a half, and actually, almost two years now, and for a year and a half I felt kind of alone on this mission for me to go live among them for a year.

**James:** That's where you're headed now?

**Justin:** That's where I'm headed. I'm excited about that. And news sources like T.M.Z. have picked it up and the daily show or the Today Show and Jimmy Kimmel and different things like that. God is just opening doors.

**James:** And you are telling me before we came out here and because this is what we're emphasizing now, how important and how effective is giving those people a water well?

**Justin:** Oh, it's huge! It's huge! When I go there for a year, I believe God has said he is going to set -- we already have negotiated over 1,000 slaves to be set free.

**James:** Isn't that great? Praise God!

**Justin:** And one of our bargaining chips with the slave masters, because they're in deep poverty as well, it is changing their lives, not just the pygmies but even the Bantu people, changing their lives by giving them water wells, developing them in sustainable ways of life, but a water well was really what basically bought the freedom of the first 60 and now it's doubled to 120 already set free.

The water wells are so meaningful because in September I had a one and a half year old that I buried, a pygmy named Andibo. While I was digging his grave his mom asked me, or the chief asked me to dig his mom's grave as well. She was a widowed slave who worked for minnows or salt or soap 10-12 hours a day and what she got, she could share with Andibo. But she had already lost her husband, already lost her other son and now she is all alone; and it was all waterborne illnesses that could be cured with one pill, it was one dollar for the pill, and it was \$48 that I used for his casket. So the water is what radically -- it is a way to radically love them.

I think what I've learned in the Congo with them is that people will doubt what you say but they will believe what you do. And whenever you lead with love, they're so thankful and grateful and it changes everything -- it is a game changer.

**James:** If you will, you stay in touch with us, Justin, and you let us know specific ways, like you find another place that needs a well, we'll start praying for that. You find another way that a door can be opened that we can be a part of that love expression -- you know, you've already won the hearts of a lot of my staff, and admiration, and you just let us know. You understand I mean that. Don't you want to support and pray for ministers like this and what God is doing?

[Applause]

I want you to see this, Justin. I know it will mean a lot. I want you to look in and see a tremendous need but then I want you to see what love does. What we together can do. We really can reveal a loving God and father, so different than what he thought about God. And a lot of times religion keeps people from seeing God, church folks can be very ungodlike, unchrist-like, and I think God's changing that. I think we all can



contribute to that change. Here's one way we do it. Watch this closely. You're going to be inspired.

### **On the mission field**

**Tammy:** I had the privilege of meeting and holding and spending time with so many people in India who expressed to me in the best way they knew how that they need help.

**Tammy:** It's just so heartbreaking because there's so much struggle in her life and there's always been. It's possible for us to change this for her through water -- something simple like water that we take for granted every single day but to them, it's a cup of life! It's a cup of life! I just can't leave here and not do something about it.

**Tammy:** I travel around the world with *LIFE Outreach* in hopes to bring life to people that are literally dying. That's the reality. And the beautiful part of the story is because of you and the way that you give to this ministry, it has changed literally thousands of lives.

**Tammy:** In this village, generations, the lives of thousands of people are forever changed! But this is just one village -- there's the next village and the next village. The funds are all we lack. Please, partner with us in this glorious opportunity to bring Water for Life.

**End of clip**

### **In the studio**

**James:** Oh, boy, I love that! I would not be able to look at the ladies like Raney and the children, I see them peeking around a building. We've watching them almost look at us as though, "Who are you? And why are you here?" And then when they find out why and you have that incredible celebration that makes any celebration in the advanced countries like the United States pale in comparison, they've got water, they've got life, they've got a chance.

I just see them as such precious children. I see them as precious families. They have such meager substance and they haven't learned to hate everybody that has something they don't have. That's so sad. When you give them something, you give them a cup of water, a well of water, it's overwhelming to them. Betty, our viewers answer the needs of people like that by saying, "I'll help drill a well."

**Betty:** You do! And if it wasn't for the hope that you give, along with so many others

as we reach out to these places, these people that are in such dire need of clean fresh water, that if they don't get it, it's killing their children, they love their children so very much. As I watched Tammy throw her arms up, I felt like she was reaching to the heavens and saying, "Thank you Jesus that we can offer hope to these precious people that deserve it so much" -- a way to help their children. They're hopeless without our help. So please join with us in drilling the water wells.

**James:** I think that we probably don't really grasp what Jesus meant about the significance, "If you'll just give a cup of water in my name the reward" -- but Betty, I've said it and I'll repeat it as long as I live. I don't need a reward. Once I see that joy, once I see that child get healthy, once I see that family have access to something as precious as fresh clean water, and then to know that it makes their heart open to the love that sent us there, sent the missionaries, and gave them something that they so obviously needed. We didn't just tell them, "God loves you!" We show them God loves you. We don't love in word only.

There is too much word, there is too much preaching, too much talkie-talkie, not enough walkie-walkie, the Chinaman said when he looked at Christians. And there really is, there is a lot of this but we need to do it.

And I'm finding this, Betty. Our viewers and church people everywhere, they're becoming more concerned about putting the arms of God around a hurting world and that's so important! We've committed, really because the missionaries led us to the places, we've committed to drill 500 wells this year, it's the most ever in 12 nations and we've only got a few days left. \$48 will give ten people water the rest of their life. \$144 will give 30 people -- you can help at that level. \$4800 will provide a well.

Father, I pray there are several people today say, "I will give a well. I will give a well." In Jesus' name.

Could you give a well? Could you give \$1200 and pray three join you? Or \$2400 and say, "God, let somebody join me"? Whatever you can do.

We've got some special gifts to send you to bless you, to strengthen your life and enhance your witness. We want to bless you. You're going to be giving life. You're going to be giving love very clearly.

Would you go to the phone? Dial that number or go online LifeToday.org. Take your bankcard, use it like a check. If you write a check, make it to *LIFE*. Would you do it today? Please do! Do it right now.

**Begin video clip**

**Announcer:** Every day millions of children are forced to make a dreadful choice, drink filthy polluted water filled with deadly disease or die from thirst. No child should ever be faced with this decision.

The good news is there is a solution! Mission: Water for Life is one of the most exciting and viable demonstrations of God's love in the world today. Suffering can end because clean water changes everything!

With your gift today, we can establish and drill 500 new water wells for remote villages in over 12 different nations. Your gift of \$24 will help provide clean water for five people. A gift of \$48 will help provide for ten people. \$72 will impact 15 people. And \$144 will help provide fresh clean disease-free water for 30 people for a lifetime!

With your gift be sure to request *Majesty*, an inspirational new, fully illustrated book that will help you discover the promises behind the many names of God.

With your gift of \$100 or more, be sure to also request "The Names of God" pen set custom crafted with the various names of God and the gifts of the spirit.

Also, please prayerfully consider a gift of \$1200 to help provide water for 250 people or a gift of \$4800 to help sponsor a complete well! And be sure to request the limited edition 50th anniversary bronze sculpture, "*Living Water*."

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

**End of clip****In the studio**

**James:** Betty and I want to say thank you for your help. If you ever get a busy when you're calling to help or when you're calling because you need help, be persistent, call until you get through, to get help or give help.

I want to say thanks to God, thanks to all of you for being here. But I want us all together to say thanks for what God's done in Justin Wren's life.

God bless you, Justin. You're a missionary, buddy! You're going to definitely stand out among the pygmies! That's great!

Thank you for watching *LIFE Today*! Encourage your friends to watch.