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Week 37

James: Hey, thank you so much. Y'all are nice! We appreciate it. We welcome you to *LIFE Today*. I'm James Robison. Betty and I welcome you to what we refer to as Wednesdays in the Word or Wednesdays with Beth. We believe you're going to be blessed.

I'm going to mention it because I love to talk about it, and you are going to be blessed by what you see in a little while when we show you some precious children. As a matter of fact, you're going to see what happens when shoes give a little child dancing feet. You're going to like it! This is what we call Christmas shoes and smiles.

Betty, we get to give little children that can't smile because of cleft palate or other facial deformities... and you just give them a whole new future by giving them a smile. That's what we do together.

Well, Beth's going to be teaching. She's concluding a series, "Our True Selves." I wonder what she's talking about. Let's find out. Here she is.

Begin video clip

Beth: Please stare into your scriptures. In verse 10, chapter 33 of Genesis, Jacob said,

"Now, please, if I found favor in your sight then accept my present from my hand. For I have seen your face, which is like seeing the face of God and you have accepted me."

Have you ever had such a restoration with someone that you knew you were practically staring in the face of God? Have you ever been restored to someone in an impossible situation -- I mean absolutely impossible? Where you're just going like, "Listen, when I see you, I see God because there is no way under heaven and you and I could even be speaking." Anybody? It's the wildest moment.

Then listen to what he says in verse 11:

Please accept my blessing. Please accept my blessing that is brought to you because God has dealt graciously with me and because I have enough. Thus he urged him and he took it.

This is so wild because he's called it a present all the way up to now. Boom! All of the sudden in the scriptures he says, "Take my blessing! Take my... Listen, I've come for you to just take the blessing. I want you to have it. I want you to have it." It's just such a powerful, powerful moment because what is happening here is that we realize, this is a major point we want to make before we end up this series together. We know we have grasped the blessing when we keep trying to give it away.

Finally, in all of our heel grasping, in all of our heel grabbing, we know we have truly grabbed on to the blessing when we cannot stand to keep it to ourselves. The promise over Abraham, it's so crazy because this is the moment when Jacob, after fighting to have this blessing, this is the moment he most had it when he was trying to give it away because do you remember the promise that was made over Abraham, his grandfather when God said to him, "I will bless you and you and every nation will be blessed because of you"?

From the very beginning, the blessing of God on our lives was meant to be given away -- over and over. We keep it somehow as we give it away. We don't begin to grasp it when we keep it to ourselves. But when we cannot bear to hold on and grasp that blessing but we constantly, every one we meet, "I want you to have it. I want you to have it! I've enjoyed --

Jesus has been by deliverance, he has been my truth in such a life of deceit. But I want you to have him. His Word just thrills me. Not every day does it stand the hair on the back of my neck straight up, but a lot of days it does. A lot of times I'll be up early with him in the morning and it will be like I can almost sense his presence right around me. Often enough where I live for it, I'll tell you that.

But it's not enough for me to have that. I want you to have it. I want you to have it. I want you who have been in bondage to know the freedom of Christ Jesus. I want you who have lived a fraudulent past to live in the truth and the honesty of the dignity of Christ.

I have received so much but I'm going to tell you, you know what drives me over and over again? This could only be of God because I don't have one valuable thing in me apart from him. What drives me constantly is that I want you to have it. I want women and men to love the Lord Jesus through the study of his Word. It is the driving compulsion of my life. I cannot get over it. We're driven to keep giving it. Here, I want you to have it. I want you to have it. This is what happened to Jacob. He finally had it. He knew the moment that he was trying to give it away he had it. He had something that could never be taken from him. "Listen, you take it. I brought you the blessing."

Esau goes, "You know what? I've got enough." But it says he insisted that he take it -- he insisted that he take it so he did. Anybody happen to notice, anything echo to you about a New Testament story in this Old Testament account of Esau running to his brother with the limp, grabbing hold of him, the whole time Jacob is trying to make excuses, Esau is kissing him on the neck, hugging him, and weeping with gladness over the sight of him. And that is the picture of the father of the prodigal while the prodigal is saying, "Listen, I don't even deserve to be called your servant. I mean don't even call me son."

All the meanwhile his daddy is just kissing all over him, going, "Get the ring! Get the cloak! Put it on him!"

While we're making all of our excuses why we don't deserve it, why we don't deserve it. He just keeps putting the son ship and daughter ship all over us as people; that we would know we are the product of the grace of God and not our own works and not our own doing. Oh, praise you, God! Oh, praise you, God!

[Applause]

Sometimes God can just bring a shocking peace to our fiercest wars. Can't he? Shocking peace! Has he ever shocked you with peace? Like that should have been so bloody and there was peace -- that shocking peace with God. We'll just dread like everything on and up to him where all we've been, what happened last Saturday night. Oh, to heck with that, what happened last night? Whatever it may be. We just dread it, and we dread it and we dread it, we're coming clean with it, repenting of it. And we don't realize that the moment we come to him in honesty, true confession and a desire to repent, that in that moment comes a shocking peace -- shocking! I can't get

him to listen to how undeserving I am for him kissing all over my face. It's so interesting.

You know when I was telling you earlier in the series about narrative art, the word for *embrace* here, when Esau embraced Jacob is only one letter different from the word *wrestle* in chapter 32; when Jacob wrestled with the angel and then when Esau embraced him is one letter different, comes from exactly the same root. One is *abag*, the other one is *habag* with a guttural on the front of it. That's as different as it gets. So you see, embracing and wrestling are both forms of intimacy -- make no mistake.

Sometimes you're never any closer to Jesus than when you're just wrestling through with him -- just wrestling through, and then comes the embrace. And somehow after a really big war, very often comes tears. What a beautiful picture of redemption.

You want to know what's interesting here? They didn't stay together. They parted. Sometimes in a situation where God will bring some peace, he doesn't mean for you to go marry them.

[Laughter]

Anybody? Sometimes we still go our separate ways. Sometimes there's just been too much water under the bridge. Never with Jesus -- but sometimes with people. You can only know from God; you have to find that out from God.

But it's interesting because they still settle in two completely different places but you know what happens? We don't see them together again until their father dies. But you know the gift at their father's funeral? The boys were at peace with one another. They were at peace.

It says in Genesis 35:29:

And Isaac breathed his last and he died, and he was gathered to his people, old and full of days. And his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.

Notice they did not bury each other?

[Laughter]

They just buried their father. They had come to peace -- they had come to peace.

It's so interesting because you know, biblically, down through the ages and generations, there became a terrible conflict between these two lines, the line of Esau and the line of Jacob. Don't you find it interesting that the two men themselves had peace? But their descendants fought?

Anybody fighting somebody else's battle where they have gotten peace and you're still fighting it? Mothers? Fathers? Whoo! We will keep fighting that thing.

Some of you have been like me, that honestly, like a 12 year old did your 12 year old wrong and here you are an adult and you honestly hate -- you hate a 12 year old. Anybody know what I'm talking about?

[Laughter]

Because why? Because even when they get to be friends you're like, hmm! They come over to your house and... hmmn, I'm just going to be a little bit cold because I remember when you did. Anybody? Anybody? Still fighting the battle. When somebody else has gotten their peace, we're still going to fight the battle.

This series has been all about becoming a more honest version of ourselves -- not trying quite so hard to hide our limp; to lay down our working people for working with people.

C.S. Lewis says something in *Screwtape Letters*. I want to read this to you because it so speaks into what we're talking about: When he talks, (and it's when God talks). When God talks of their losing their selves, he means only abandoning the clamor of self will. Once they have done that, he really gives them back all their personality and boasts that when they are wholly his -- (and I mean W-H-O-L-L-Y,) they will be more themselves than ever.

We're so afraid we're going to lose something if we just give ourselves entirely -- lose ourselves entirely to the Lord Jesus. We're just going to lose our -- we'll have no more personality, no more distinctive features. That is untrue! We will never be more ourselves, with the fullness of our personality and the uniqueness of our gifting than when we just wholly give ourselves over to our very faithful, faithful God.

I started this series several weeks ago by telling you about a story trying to get Keith to compliment me. Listen; when I'm not trying to worm a compliment out of him, or work him, he gives them profusely. That is my very honest man's honest way.

I want to tell you something, I don't know why this story wants to make me emotional but it does and I don't know exactly what it's tripping off inside of me. But a couple of Sundays ago, Keith had gone to shoot in a sporting clay's tournament. My man is a master shot. And he has practiced and practiced and the man, I mean he can destroy him some clay pigeons.

And just so you know, these are not real birds, they're just little clay disks that get flown in the air from every conceivable direction. And he's worked himself up through a number of years until he is in what is called the master class. And it means that he only competes against those who are at his same level. So you can imagine the competition and how hard the shoot can be.

And so I get a phone call from him and I know it's a little earlier than I'm expecting him home. It's later in the afternoon on a Sunday and he says to me, "Elizabeth! You're not going to believe what I'm about to tell you."

It was out of town, so he had about an hour to drive.

I said, "Baby, what?"

He said, "I shot a perfect score!"

I said, "Whoa! You are kidding me!"

He said, "No! Baby, I shot a 100!"

You have to understand, this is 100 clay pigeons coming out of nowhere in a row -- 100 and he shot all 100 of them.

I just came unglued on the phone. I was just like unglued! I said, "You're kidding me!" I said, "So you won!"

He said, "Well, you're not going to believe this." Because he competes with men of his same caliber so there were a couple of them that had also shot 100 perfect score so they had to go into a shoot off. So it went from like three, then it went to two of them, and Keith and the guy. So one of them was going to be winner, the other was going to be the first runner-up. Both of them were going to get big trophies. So it comes to the third round and the other guy shoots all five and Keith misses one and shoots four.

But he's still so thrilled because he said, "I got first place right underneath the winner. I got first runner-up."

I was just so thrilled, I was just beside myself. I said, "Baby!" I said, "Are you bringing me a trophy?" Because I love his trophies. And if somebody beats him, I'm all up to into him, "You know he's got a big gut!" I'll come up with something ugly to say about the guy.

[Laughter]

Because I'm all about my husband. You know what I'm saying? Like I'll go, "Ah! I can tell you one thing, he's not near as cute as you." I'll do anything. Because I'm all about my husband!

And I said to him, "Are you bringing me home a trophy?" -- Because I put them out every single time.

He says, "No!" He said, "You know what? I didn't wait for it."

I said, "Why?"

He said, "Because I couldn't wait to get home and show you my score card."

See, are y'all about to cry? I'm about to cry. I started crying immediately. I got off the phone and I mean, I cried and I cried. I just... because that was his trophy, he wanted to come home to his love. This is a man who, as ornery as he is, and as much as he wouldn't let me manipulate him, he will cup his hands around my face and he will say, "Life is not worth living to me if you're not in it."

You don't know how we fought. You don't know -- don't leave here going, "I want a marriage like that." Oh! You don't! But I'm just going to say to him, I mean the man -- I'm his love. And that trophy meant nothing to him. He wanted to walk in the door and go, "Here's my card."

And he wanted his beloved to say, "Well done! Baby, that was good!" I did. I cried. I still got it sitting up.

See, when we see Jesus... it's why we're just going to take all the rewards and just throw it at him because we're going, "I've got enough. I've been blessed by you. I bear your name."

And all that is going to matter to us is that our beloved says, "Well done! Beth, in all of your flaws, in all your weakness, I present before my father a perfect score card. You shot 100, girlfriend, out of 100!" Because of Jesus Christ! --Because he shot for me. --Because he did it for me. Perfect score card!

The Word of God says he will present us holy and blameless before our God and Father. It doesn't get better than that. Perfect score card! So forget the crowns, take the crowns, crown him with many crowns -- all I want is to hear my beloved say, "Whoo! Well done!"

End of clip

In the studio

James: If you watch us often, you've heard me say, as a child without a home, without any things that most people think are important, even the things we know are important, I just didn't have them, but I fell in love with the Lord.

And Betty, with the beautiful family that we've been blessed to have and all the blessings, all my dreams have been fulfilled, personal things, maybe trivial, maybe important.

But right now, my dream is to see Jesus' dreams and his prayer answered, his dreams fulfilled. And I know some day if I focus on what he wants, he will say, "Well done!"

No doubt Beth's going to hear it, no doubt you're going to hear it, because you've done really well.

Betty: You have too!

James: Well, you're sweet.

I want to show you how we all can hear, "Well done." We're going to send you these beautiful little Christmas ornaments -- a little shoe. Everybody that walks in... you put this where they can see it on the tree, and I know this is way ahead of time, I understand that, but we've got to get these shoes for Christmas and smiles for Christmas, we've got to do it now to get it all over the world.

But when people see this, they're going to say, "What's that?"

And you're going to get to tell them. We gave a child shoes -- and some of you say, "And I gave smiles."

I want you to watch.

On the mission field

James: I'm asking you to give as many pairs of shoes as you can to put on these beautiful, beautiful feet of these beautiful children. Thank you! Thank you for your help!

End of clip

In the studio

James: I don't know if you could make a pair of shoes that would put me in that rhythm but I would like that. Now do you not just love that? Don't you just love to see a little child -- that may be the first pair of shoes they've ever had; it likely is. So many of the children that Betty and I have looked at, we have seen feet that were so covered with abrasions or cuts or infection, and we've actually seen people dying of hookworms that got into their bloodstream by coming in through the cuts in their beautiful little feet.

So what happened is someone came to us and said, "James, I can get these shoes..." and versions of them are quite popular all over the civilized world, and he said, "I can get them for \$3.60 a pair. I can get them in all the sizes. Why don't we give them to children for Christmas?"

And so we thought it was a good idea because we saw what the infections were doing to children. And we always bring to you something that we believe is very worthwhile but it's also doable, it's meaningful. And it's a way to share in a visible way that everyone can relate to, the love of God, the compassion of God.

So we said, "Would you do it?" And you loved it. Now we start way ahead of Christmas, but we want to get 200,000 pairs... and Betty, I'm praying we'll go beyond that. Think about this, \$36 and we've got ten pairs of shoes. Multiply that by four for 40 children, it is \$144. There's not a single person watching that couldn't say, all right. I can give a pair of shoes. I can give ten pair. Would you do that?

Would you dial the number right now, just go to the phone or go online? You can go to LifeToday.org and just say, "I want to give shoes." And tell us what God put on your heart. Take your bankcard, use it like a check. Or if you write a check, make it to *LIFE* but call us and tell us that you're sending it.

And then remember this, we also want to give smiles. We want to do cleft palate surgery, facial surgery where children need help and that averages \$500 because of the doctors and surgeons that are committed to help us. So we're asking you to pray about giving \$1,000. Let's give two surgeries: All right?

We're going to send you something that I think you're going to treasure. We're going to send you the beautiful little Christmas shoe, it is an ornament; it is will be a conversation piece. Put it prominently where people walk in, they're going to see it because they're going to ask you, "What is that?"

And you tell them, "This is what I do. I put a lot of smiles on kid's faces, I put dancing shoes on them." And you know what you're talking about. We're going to send that to you.

Also, if you help us with the smiles, we'll send the beautiful bronze, "Christian." This is actually a Romanian boy, it looks like him, and a missionary that was holding him. Our daughter held the same boy, our oldest daughter Rhonda held him when she went there because we gave this boy who lived in the sewer, we gave him a home.

So we'll send this beautiful commemorative bronze to say thank you for giving smiles. We want to bless you but you're going to really bless some families and some children and you could prevent them from getting very serious disease.

Would you go to the phone right now and make that gift? Christmas shoes, smiles and shoes -- would you do it? Thank you so much!

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 the 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 help provide ten pairs of shoes. A gift of \$72 will help provide 20 pairs. 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 our 2013 Christmas shoe ornament. This beautifully crafted antiqued ornament is a unique reminder of your gift for Christmas shoes, a treasure to place on your tree each holiday season.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1,000 or more to help provide over 275 pairs of shoes or two children with corrective cleft palate surgeries. And you may request the limited edition 50th anniversary bronze sculpture, "Christian" by renowned artist Robert Summers.

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

End of clip

In the studio

James: We are anxious to send you that beautiful little Christmas ornament but I would love to send this to you too, "Christian." This is a special limited edition of a little boy in Romania who lived underground in the sewers, in the drainage with a lot of other kids and we give him a home. And this missionary is holding Christian and they created a bronze out of the photograph and the video of it. If you'll help us give smiles, as well as shoes for Christmas, we'd love to send one to you.

Thank you so much for loving others and letting them know how much God loves them. Thank all of you for being here with us.