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Week 37

Betty: Thank you so much for joining us on *LIFE Today*. I'm Betty and this is James.

James: And we've got two very interesting guests today. And I want you to get catch this. Victorya Rogers has written a book, *How to Talk about Jesus without Freaking Out*. Now I really want to know, I'm going to ask her.

Do you mean the people you're talking to freaking out? Are you looking like you're freaking out? Or do you do it in such a way that it looks like you're freaking out? It does seem that we Christians, at least we who say we are, oftentimes don't seem to know how to connect with people we want to talk about -- that's really too bad.

We're going to talk to her. But we've got another interesting guest, Larry Poland is here. He wrote a book, *Chasm* and there is a chasm. And he is talking about crossing the divide between Hollywood, the entertainment community, and people of faith because it seems like there is a great divide there.

So how do you witness to them, the people in that business? Have Christians just left it up to people who are not people of faith to be in that business? Do we not know how to communicate with people who are gifted and talented in that way? Let's find out what we can do.

Would you welcome Larry and Victorya to *LIFE Today*?

Larry: Thank you! Thank you!

James: I've got to ask you about this... what did you come up with freaking out? Are you talking about the people who are listening or about the people who are doing it?

Victorya: Well, it can certainly be for both but we're really referring to the Christians that are so afraid of sharing their faith. They're so afraid that someone doesn't want to hear it or they're going to lose friends or they're going to lose their job. And there is so much fear that we wanted to tell you, you can share your faith. You can help change

people's lives about being real about what's going on in your life and sharing your faith. And you don't have to freak yourself or anybody else out.

James: So how do you talk about Jesus without freaking out? I know you wrote a whole book about it but give somebody a tip.

Victorya: Well, in a nutshell, what we talk about is a three story approach. First you want to hear their story because no one cares how much you know until they know how much you care. So you hear their story first. Then you find what's relevant in your life about what's happened to them because there's always a common ground at some point, if you really listen. And then you share your story.

We teach you, Karen Covell and Jim Covell, my co-authors on this, we teach you how to share your story in three minutes or less. And you can share relevant of what God's done in your life in a short period of time. And then if they want to hear more, they'll ask. Then the third is, of course, sharing God's story and what he's done for you, the plan of salvation.

James: Your own personal testimony. You don't have to give them a big Bible lecture or anything; just tell them what God did to me. A person with an experience is never at the mercy of someone with an argument. If you've been to the moon, you can tell them what it was like to be there because you've been there. You don't have to just talk about something you don't know.

The New Testament Christians couldn't help but speak what they'd seen and heard. They had seen, they had heard, they had experienced something and talked about it. Let's talk about Hollywood a minute. I do have friends in Hollywood who have been here on the show, Robert Duvall being one of them.

Robert Duvall came to us... and here's what he said to me when he came to our home. He actually communicated a few times. He said, "I want to come to see you because," he said, "I'm an actor and I know actors." He said, "There are some preachers that are actors." But he said, "You're not an actor. I want to come to your house --."

Larry: That's a compliment.

James: Yes, it was! It really was. "I want to come to your house, I want to see your family because I believe it is real." And he did, he came and ate with all three of our children and it was really great. And then he used one of my illustrations in one of his movies. And we've been friends; he's been here several times. He said to me that the

Hollywood entertainment community is very difficult to reach. He said, "I wish I could lock them up and you could talk to them." Meaning that it may be difficult to keep them. You talk about how you have seen Christians in the way they approach the entertainment industry, people who may be executives who are actually over what's happening a lot of times as well as --

Larry: The power brokers, the gate keepers.

James: And they actually come across in such a way that they repulse the person that might need their message and their love. What are they doing wrong?

Larry: I finished a 10-minute cold call with a guy who headed one of the biggest media companies in the world. And at the end of it he said, "You're not angry; are you?"

I said, "No, I'm not angry."

He said, "Well, you know everybody's angry that comes in here anymore. Men are angry, women are angry, the ethnics are angry, the gays are angry, the Christians are angry. In fact," he says, "Angry Christian for us is a redundancy. It is the only kind we know."

And I think probably the single biggest barrier is we've been so angry at the product that we've transferred that to the people, and we should be angry at the product. We're supposed to love what's righteous and hate what's evil but you can't hate the people because every one of us, if we hadn't had the redemptive power of Christ in our life and we were in those shoes, we would be doing the same stuff. I'd probably be doing worse.

So when they understand that someone accepts them as is, where is, and isn't out to get them because they all have a target on their back, we have people who said, you come here --

I had a billionaire -- a Jewish billionaire, 93 years of age, about three weeks of ago tell me, "You've been coming to me for 20 years and you've never asked me for anything." And he said, "I give millions away."

I said, "I know you do."

So I think that unconditional love and acceptance and the authenticity, which she indicated is so critical, and you did too, in terms of we can spot an actor and they know when you're acting, but when they see the real thing and it is authentic and you're not uncomfortable about talking about your faith... one of your good friends, Adrian Rogers said, "Most Christians are like arctic rivers, frozen at the mouth. Once you break that sound barrier and start talking about your faith comfortably it becomes easier to do so. And when you're not uptight about it, usually, they're not either, even though they're Jewish or gay, and those who are the dominant communities in the entertainment industry.

Betty: And it is not our responsibility to convince them anyway. It is to testify what God has done in our lives. And if we do that, and if we live it, then it's going to be demonstrated.

Victorya: And it is up to the Holy Spirit to do the work that, absolutely!

James: How did you, Betty, find the comfort zone where you could talk to people about the Lord? Did you find it would turn you off if you felt like you were on some kind of an assignment to go collect a trophy or get a scalp for Jesus, or something and you've suddenly realized there is a different approach.

Betty: There is. And of course, that difference is as my relationship with God grew, I began to see that there wasn't any front I had to put on, there wasn't any pretense that I had to present to them but just be who God created me to be and what he was doing in my life. And the realness of it, like you said, the authenticity.

James: You pointed something out about telling your story in a brief time. We've been married 50 years; I've got 50 years of ministry. I'm nearly 70 years old this year; it's sort of a long story. You've got a few hours? I'll tell it to you. I can actually tell them my story in just a matter of minutes. The product of rape, my mother was raped by an alcoholic man in the home where she was caring for the elderly father. She put an ad in the paper and asked someone to come get me. I grew up as a child without parents; a couple tried to adopt me couldn't, my mother took me away. I lived in poverty for ten years; didn't even have a home that faced the street. I grew up fatherless. One day somebody witnessed to me. I met the father. I put my hand in a pastor's hand, my life in the master's hand. It changed my life forever. We have beautiful marriage, three children, 11 grandchildren, and love God. It's a miracle of God's grace.

Now it didn't take long, did it?

Victorya: It didn't!

James: It arouses curiosity. Is that what you're talking about?

Victorya: That's exactly what I'm talking about. And they're going to have relevance because then they're going to want to know more about it and see all that's been done. And it's worth the effort to be able to look at your life because every life is relevant, everybody has a story. And I want them to be able to tell their story because God has done something special with every one of our lives and no life is boring.

James: Now you were a talent agent in Hollywood?

Victorya: I was! I was for over a decade.

James: Any talent out there? Did you find any?

Victorya: There is amazing talent. And there's also some great Christians out in Hollywood so I want you to pray for the Christians in Hollywood. The Hollywood prayer network is a wonderful ministry out there that helps Christians connect. If you're not talented to be an actor, don't worry about it. Why don't you choose somebody to pray with in Hollywood? Prayer never goes void. We talked about that at dinner. You want to change the world? Then pray for somebody specific in Hollywood and you can get hooked up through the Hollywood prayer network.

But we also need Christians out there that are gifted and talented that are excellent at what they do. We want you to not be afraid, churches to send out your talented youth that are gifted and talented to break into secular entertainment because there's some great Christian ministries out there that we can connect you with out there that can help you stay a strong Christian in Hollywood without falling away and still make a difference.

James: That's the fear a lot of people have. It's really puzzling to me. If we were really filled with the spirit of love and the boldness that the New Testament church was characterized by, and the love that compelled them, then we could go fearlessly into any arena and know that God's grace and love would hold us up in the witness.

We've actually, it seemed like, been afraid to let talent go into the world like the world is going to capture it. And it is sad that we've got so many people in churches that seem to be captured by the world rather than by God, if they even really know God. I

think that's one of the biggest problems we have is that there are a lot of people associated with church or some religious group that really don't -- and don't think this is being critical, this is just simply the truth, who do not have a genuine, legitimate meaningful relationship with Christ. They've never had a real change of life. When you've had that, then you are able to go in and pierce the darkness with love and light.

Now, Larry, you're out there talking to these executives and seeing how they use and manipulate people. You found out that love never fails but it doesn't usually work on your time frame. You have to just keep loving them. I think every Christian needs to learn that. We can't go out and always close the deal; it's God's work that brings that to pass.

Larry: Well, I say one of the things they don't like about God is that he is not an American. He doesn't do anything instant, right now, and on my terms like most of us Americans do. Being kind of an arch-typical American, kept going into Hollywood in 1979, which is early 80s, 33 years is a long time. I never would have thought that I would have hung into anything this long and people are now lauding me for my perseverance, and I'm going, you're not talking about me.

But I get a lot sympathy because they say, "Well, it must be such a hard ministry, all those Jewish people, gay people, secular people, countercultural people."

I go, "Hard? I'm not sure that should be in the vocabulary of any believer." I just calculated that between Bill Gates and me, we're worth \$60 billion. And I just figure between God and me, is there anything the two of us can't handle? If you have that attitude and that approach to people and they see that you're not intimidated, you're not fearful, because we've not been given a spirit of fear but of love and boldness and good sense -- and a sound mind. And if you go in with love and you're not afraid of anybody or anything because of the power of the spirit of Christ is in you, then all the sudden it exudes this kind of impact on people.

And my associates and I walked out of the offices of some of the most powerful people in global media. I was with the head of the number two largest media company in the world three weeks ago, 30,000 employees, 30 minutes talking about Christ, praying together at the end. He doesn't know the Lord but that fear factor is gone when you realize that you've already died and there is nothing they can say about you too good that it flatters you or too bad that it can offend you because you're not in your own flesh your own approach.

James: And you're making progress because if you weren't, he wouldn't have spent that time with you, you wouldn't have been praying with him.

He has a media leader prayer calendar that he sends out. And he has the names of people to pray for who are leaders. If somebody said, "Okay, I believe in the power of prayer and I want to pray for you as you minister and pray for leaders, I want to pray for them too." I have said to you many times, quit condemning Hollywood, quit criticizing Hollywood and start praying for them; quit criticizing people in the entertainment entry. You might as well quit criticizing sinners of sin. They're doing what their nature says do.

I'm trying to get Christians to do what God's nature in us tells us to do, love them, pray for them, care about them. We don't have to go that route but they're trapped there. They're blinded by unbelief. Why do we need to live blind? Let's don't! Let's live with our eyes wide open, let's love people.

I think praying for these media leaders, as well as entertainers, like I've asked you to pray for the visible ones, pray for the ones that disturb you. We've seen some miracles happen right here. We had a porn star saved who came on to tell why she got in it and she was taking care of her child. And lo and behold, after we got through talking she accepted Christ. She's out of the business. But we didn't bring her here to condemn her. We said, "How did you get here? We care." And we saw her changed.

If somebody wanted this, what's the web site if they said, "Okay, look Larry, we'd kind of like to connect with you and we'll kind of be praying for you and with you." Where would they go?

Larry: Well, Master Media International and the I-N-T-L is part of the web name: MasterMediaINTL.org.

And you put your finger on it right there because when my associate 24 years ago said, "Larry, we're never going to see any traction here if we don't mobilize extraordinary prayer."

I said, "Well, given but what do you have in mind?"

He says, "Why don't we make a calendar with the names of a power broker every day of the year so they know who they are praying for?"

I said, "That's genius! I'm going to start asking the Lord for 100,000 people who would pray every day for these people by name."

Well, about ten years later we said, you know, people said, "We don't recognize any names -- we recognize Rupert Murdoch, we recognize Michael Eisner, head of Disney but...

So we said, "Well, let's put influencers on there." So now there's an influencer and a power broker every day. But now you don't even have to carry this with you. You go on our web site and go for media minute and we'll drop those two names every morning into your e-mail box.

James: Where do they find that?

Larry: MasterMediaINTL.org.

James: There it is. You know one of the greatest pieces of advice that Bill Bright gave a very, very successful businessman that I consider to be full of the love of God, his name is Mike Ingram, he lives out in Arizona and he really loves God and he loves people. Bill Bright... and this is what Mike told me as we were just having lunch together. He said, "Bill Bright looked at me and he said, 'Mike, let me tell you something. Spend your life influencing the influencers.'" He said, "Mike, I didn't say 'influence the affluent,' I said 'influence the influencers.' That would be a teacher, that would be a coach, that would be an executive, that would be anybody that has influence." Influence them, witness to them. That's precisely what you're going.

Larry: And it was Bill Bright that gave me that idea. I was in his office one day and a beleaguered N.B.C. Vice President called with a P.R. problem and he wanted Bill to attend this screening. I attended the screening and at the end of it, (and the movie was fine by the way,) this young evangelical pastor in front of me beat up on that V.P. so badly I wanted to crawl through the floor.

So the room exited, there was 25 usual priests, ministers, rabbi kind of assortment, and after he left the exec and I were there and I said, "Sir," I introduced myself and told him I was going to recommend that Dr. Bradnick, Campus Crusade ministries support his cause because it was righteous.

I said, "But sir, I owe you an apology."

He says, "Why?" I said, "I couldn't help overhearing what this man said to you and the way he said it. I'm a follower of Jesus Christ. He is the most important person in my life and has been since I was a kid. But I believe with all my heart, sir, that if Jesus Christ had been in front of me in line, he would not have approached you as this man did. And on behalf of this man and all the others that have been beating you up with hate mail and angry calls, please forgive us and don't hold it against our Lord."

I wish I had a video of his face, but that was the beginning of this powerful ministry.

James: By the way, on the web site you can also get, if you're interested, *The Chasm*, and learn some things about how you talk to these executives.

Your book, I'm sure is in the bookstores. Do you have a web site that you do anything on to try to help people learn how to more effectively witness because I want to help you inspire people?

Victorya: Oh, yes. It is Victorya.com, and I spell my name Y-A, at the end. So it is V-I-C-T-O-R-Y-A, otherwise you get Victoria Secret.

James: We've got it on the screen so everybody can see it. There it is. There's how you should spell it.

Victorya: And I do help Christians break into Hollywood and those become excellent. But my passion also is to just help people be all God wants them to be. Hollywood has been our mission field. Everybody has a mission field but when you walk out the door of your home, the minute you open your doors wherever you are in this country, that's your mission field. And God has a mission field for all of us and I want you to be able to tell your story of what God's done for your life and that's why we wrote the book.

James: And it is absolutely excellent. I'm telling you, this is one of the things that when I –

I go to a big church, Betty and I do, Gateway; we have a lot of people there. I can always assure you any time I speak to them, I'm going to challenge them to be witnesses. We have thousands and thousands of people there every week; every single one of them can be a witness.

But here's the thing, Betty, I think is critical for people to understand, we're not sent out to convert them -- that's the work of the Holy Spirit. We're sent out as witnesses and we begin by loving them where they are -- right where they are. And when they

know we love them, it is like Victorya said, they don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. That's true on the mission field; it is true anywhere in the world.

Would you say thanks to these two wonderfully gifted people who have taken a difficult, divine assignment very seriously and I think effectively?

You know what we're doing and you love it. Have you ever heard about dancing shoes? Some people have them.

People kind of laugh at me when I sing or if they watch me try to dance; it's pretty funny. When we get to Heaven, you're going to listen to me sing. Do you understand that? I'm going to sing. I might even do a little dancing and it will be right in step.

But you're going to see a miracle with a child that saw love expressed, what we call Christmas shoes. You're going to like this.

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: Well, Betty and I just say thanks. I hope you take very seriously my challenge and charge to you to go and express the love of God in such a simple fashion.

Now think about this: When you enable the missionaries to bless these little children and their families, you just open their hearts to hear about the love God has for them because they've seen it and you've made it possible.

You be praying for Victorya and for Larry. Here are their books, "*How to Talk about Jesus*," *The Chasm: Crossing the divide between Hollywood and people of faith*. And there is the web site that you might get some information and a prayer list or go online and find out how I can pray specifically for people in this industry.

Would you say thanks to Larry and to Victorya for sharing?

Thank you for your witness. Thank you so much.

And from the depth of our heart, thank you for sharing shoes and smiles for Christmas.