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Week 37

James: Hey, thank all of you! I appreciate it. Thank you very much. Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm James Robison. It's always a joy to share the time with you. We appreciate you giving us the opportunity, wherever you happen to be watching; many of you watch us at home at various times through the day. If you don't know, we come on probably on the major satellite networks anywhere from six to eight times a day. In most major population centers, you'll not only find us on those networks, but on independent cable networks and oftentimes on network stations. So check it out, *LIFE Today* or James Robison and *LIFE Today*. Betty is always here with me.

If you don't know, we've been married 50 years. She has given me another one year extension, and I'm going to see if I can make it --

Betty: I'm going to stick with you.

James: Well, thank you! But we've also had 50 years of ministry and one of the beautiful things that we've enjoyed about ministry is bringing people in to share their story with you and to find out that a person doesn't have to be highly visible, they don't have to have a platform or television program to be incredibly effective in what they do, and normally, their stories are inspirational.

Now here is a very gifted author; considered to be one of the 50th most influential women in the world from Christianity Today's perspective. She's written a book, *The Beauty of Broken*. This is a broken plate; it looks like it might be china. There's no such thing as a perfect family. Would that include the family of God? Are you trying to measure perfect by how you perceive perfection? Are you in fact perfect? Be perfect as I'm perfect; might that be the perfect pursuit of God as yielded clay? Might it be? Might it be appreciating all the different pieces in the whole and their importance to the whole? -- My story and likely yours too.

Elisa Morgan -- would you welcome her to *LIFE Today*?

Elisa, we're glad to have you. Did what I just say about perfect and about all those pieces being essential to either the puzzle or the masterpiece and bringing it all together with all of the difference, and is broken important like you seem to imply?

Elisa: When I was five years old my father called me into his study and beckoned me

up onto his lap. And I loved daddy time, so I clambered up there. And he turned my little shoulders toward me and looked straight in my eyes. And he said, "Elisa, I've decided I don't love your mother anymore and we're going to get a divorce." And in that moment my family fell and broke. And I felt like it was my fault somehow.

And then my mom, who was addicted to alcohol, with the rest of our family moved across the United States and my family fell and broke again. Honestly, I felt as a young child, and then a young woman, and then a married young woman, that more than anything I wanted to change that. I came from a broken family and I wanted to create a perfect intact family.

But I have to tell you today now after 34 years of marriage and my children are close to 30, and I have a grandchild, I still come from a broken family because I'm broken and God's family is broken and we create broken families.

I think the reality out there is that so many of us of listening and watching right now, us included, we have things behind the walls of our homes that people don't know about. In our own family we've had issues of teen pregnancy, abortion, adoption, a relinquishment, abuse, learning disabilities, homosexuality, death, cancer, on and on -- imprisonment -- they've affected us. And I haven't talked about those for years but what I've discovered in the process of raising my family, and I adore my children and I love my husband but I cannot create a perfectly intact family. My best efforts are going to fall short but I can respond to what God allows in my family. I can't choose for my children. I can't control their choices but I can control my responses to them.

James: So when you wrote the book, which is in the bookstores, and she really covers important bases, what do you want the reader to get?

Elisa: There are probably 12, what I call "broken family values" that I go through in this book. They are ones I unpack as I tell the story of our family; and it is important to note that it's not my children's story, it is my story. It's told through what I've been through. I unpack things like commitment and courage, and reality and relinquishment; facing the reality of who your child is and who you are.

Partnership for example; I spent a lot of years pushing away the husband -- the help that my husband wanted to offer me because I thought I had to do it all right. I was the mom. I was supposed to fix it.

Or the lessons of forgiveness or respect -- love, that it's never too late really for relationships to continue to grow when we're on this planet, thankfulness that God can

inhabit those relationships and teach us a new kind of understanding or respect that we can be very different. I've learned that with my family; we can be very different and even believe differently and still love each other.

I want to really encourage people that they don't have to live lives of shame. One of my favorite verses is Psalm 34:5: Those who look to him are radiant and they will no longer cover their faces with shame. And we hide out in our closets thinking I'm the only person who's been through these issues. When really, if we responded inside ourselves, how many people in this audience today have a daughter who has had a baby as a teenager? And then another one? How many of us have had a child who's struggled with addiction? Or a family member who struggled with homosexuality? How many of us would raise our hands. Let's say so and let's come alongside each other and lift our faces and receive the radiance that God wants to give us because he can redeem everything.

Betty: And living in a state of brokenness in our hearts can be very rewarding and very... it's a good place to be if we're submitted to God in what he wants for our lives. We have a choice to make.

Elisa: We do!

I remember, Betty, one afternoon in the middle of so many different trials, I was taking a rest, a very old word but it worked for me that day. And my little grandson was over taking a nap and I heard this horrendous crash in our house. And I thought, my goodness, what was that? And it sounded almost like an automobile crash or something.

I went through the house looking for its source. As I entered my dining room I knew exactly what it was. My grandmother had given me her antique plate collection; it was the only thing I really wanted from her. It was these beautiful plates that she had gathered in old lady trips in buses across Europe, portrait plates of Louie the 16th and Marie Antoinette, they're beautiful! And they hung on my wall. And that shelving unit had lost its grip and the entire contents had fallen to the ground, crashing, fragmented, like the picture on the cover of the book. And all of the inheritance that I had was now in shards on the floor.

I wept because it was a season when everything was falling apart. And by the way, might I add I was the C.E.O. of MOPS International for 20 of these years, leading this international ministry to moms and feeling like a failure. As I looked and picked up each one of those shards, I realized that God's inheritance wasn't on the walls of my

home, it was in my heart; that he was bringing forth the reality that he doesn't sweep me into the dust pan like I had to with those shards but he picks me up and he builds me back together. And he gives me hope.

James: I remember listening to testimonies of several people in a short period of time who had lost a child or experienced something very difficult and it was amazing how that seemed to draw them closer to God in that brokenness. But I remember thinking, well, maybe I need to just lose something or maybe I need to lose everything to really be broken and yielded.

And God really spoke to me. I'll tell you how he did show me brokenness because he showed me and I think this is where people really sometimes misunderstand brokenness. A broken contrite heart does not necessarily come because something awful has happened to you or in your life, even though it can and trials and tribulation and pressure and pain, it happens as long as we're on this planet in this particular state that we live in, it's going to happen. But we don't have to have a crisis to have a broken, contrite, yielded humble heart.

I was asked to speak at a small country church in east Texas where the pastor that gave me a home was speaking in his retirement. I bet there weren't 60-70 people there. And as the pastor got up he said a little boy there about nine years old wanted to say something. And that little boy walked up on the platform and he turned around and he looked out at that small group of people, and I'm going to speak, I'm sitting on the front row; I'm fixing to come speak. And I'd been asking God about this brokenness. Am I going to have to lose everything to have the tender, broken, contrite, yielded heart?

And he walked up and he started talking and he started talking about Jesus, and how much God loved him. He's nine years old! And he began to weep. He told everybody how much God loved them because Jesus died for him. And he wanted everybody to love Jesus.

I'm telling you, I was wiped out right there on the front row of that church. And God spoke to me and he said this, "That little boy has never lost his parents, that little boy has never had a disease, he's never had a wreck and he's broken." And he said, "All necessary to break anyone should be the cross -- the same thing that broke that little boy's heart." And the Bible is a hammer. The Word of God can keep us yielded. And the truth of God and the love of God through the cross can break us.

Does that make sense? When you see that brokenness?

Elisa: And it is often horrible things that God allows in our lives sometimes it's just really seeing ourselves. As I said, I didn't want to create anything but a perfect family but what I had to deal with and most of the things that happened were beyond my control like I'm saying, but I had to deal with my own brokenness because I realized I was proud -- I was proud -- I was proud of not making mistakes myself.

And I finally came into Luke seven, the story of the sinful woman where Jesus very clearly says that she who has been forgiven much loves much. I think that's what you're saying, James is that when we open ourselves up to what our own need is for forgiveness through the cross, it is only then that we say, "Yikes, God! I need you!" And then he can love us.

I think God does two things for broken people. I think he loves them -- unbelievable! All he really wants is for us to let him love us. And when we're broken we say, "Help!"

And the second thing he does is he uses broken people. We think the brokenness that we've experienced might disqualify us but it actually can, when put in his hands, then he redeems it, qualify us. When I have a child who has been in prison and I go through the doors of inmate visitation and I hand over my driver's license and I watch the video clock tick down, and my minutes with that child go away and I have to hang up the phone and his face goes away for another week, I might think I'm disqualified but the reality is that when I run into someone in the grocery store and they're ashamed and they finally blurt out, "My child is --." I can put my arm around that person because I know what that's like.

So God loves the broken and God uses the broken. It is an amazing journey, one not to be afraid of but to embrace.

James: And we really aren't perfect. There isn't going to be a single person you're ever going to see that doesn't have blemishes. If you put your hopes in any individual rather than in the blessed hope, Christ in us, the hope of his glory, Christ in us the hope of everything. But if you put your hope and trust in somebody that they will never disappoint you, get ready to be disappointed. There is not a single one of us that don't have needs in our lives. I think one of the great tragedies is that we're not willing to open up and admit we've got some issues.

Elisa: So we all run around scared to death instead of being honest and just taking down that defense and saying, "Me too! Me too! Me too!" And let's embrace each other in the body of Christ. There is no such thing as a perfect family. And our story

becomes God's story of redemption through us. But wow! How much more he's glorified and revealed when we share how we're broken and how he's healed us and don't hide it.

James: When you -- how did MOPS respond to you when you told them you were leaving that position?

Elisa: Thank you for asking that. It was a season of great care. It's time to talk now, 20 years later, but during that season the board of MOPS walked very closely with myself, with my family, with my husband and our marriage. They very much held us accountable, made sure that we were in the kind of counseling we needed to be in, that we were holding things as much as we could together.

I was quiet in some of those years with the public at large. It was a distracting message for a president of an organization like that to talk about but I did share many of the things like when my daughter was a teen and her first baby she relinquished in adoption and then her second baby she kept. As I shared that journey, I realized that God had created room in my heart for one more Mother of Preschoolers; I really hadn't wanted this to happen but she happened to live with me. That's where the love grew in my heart. And the board walked through it with a very appropriate covering.

My children also weren't that ready in those years for me to talk. As I said very clearly, this is my story. It is not their story. They would tell their own story. But they know now that their choices and their journey and how it shaped our family will help other people. And I wouldn't say they're proud of it but I think they're very relinquished and yielded to that reality. They know it's shaped me and they pray that it will shape others as well.

James: I hope you will get the book.

Would you say thanks to Elisa for sharing openly about her own journey? It's -- I found that out of -- when Betty and I share openly about our journey and our challenges, even the heartache that we experience when -- no explanation from losing a daughter that believed right and lived right, to die with teenage children at such a young age, and the weight of that; in some way it seems that people have found healing because you can look at us and say, "Well, you ought to be at peace and you ought to be look at what all has happened. I mean you've got a family that loves God; that looks like things are together."

And I've said many times to people when I talk about how wonderfully our family seems to be flowing in the love of God, that when I say that, I realize I'm speaking oftentimes to thousands of people who would say, "I can't say that."

I always say to them, "If I were standing here and telling your story of your heartache and where something seems to have fallen apart and the wheels come off, I want you to know that I'm extending to you the kind of love and concern that I would want you to extend to me if rather than saying our family... it's well with our family. If I said, "I've got a child here" or "a grandchild there," I would want you to love me. I would want you to want to embrace me and hold me. That really is what God wants from the family. That is the perfect -- that is understanding the perfect -- it is the perfect love of God for imperfect people who are flawed and too often fail or experience failures.

Would you again say thanks so much to Elisa; and her book, *The Beauty of Broken*? I'm going to show you something right now and Betty, you haven't seen this, I have. I kind of want to say buckle up. Your heart is about to be so touched that you're going to be stirred, I believe, to the most positive possible expression of love. Watch.

On the mission field

Tammy: This is something new for me. Coming into the home of this precious family to talk about the conditions of this little child who suffers with cleft palate, and it's probably the worse condition I've ever seen. It affects so many things; can even affect the hearing, the way they speak, their teeth, the way they swallow. There's just so many things. I feel like I'm truly at a loss for words. My emotions completely take over because no child should ever have to live like this. No child should ever have to fight to fit in.

I've been given so much in life and I've lost so much too. I know the feeling of pain and I know the feeling of heartache, and of suffering, and yet, even my own pain and my own suffering, it seems so minimal to me in this moment.

Sometimes you look around and sometimes you think, is there anything that I can do? Is there anything that I can do to change this? If I just left it right there, I think we would all feel pretty hopeless, but the truth is I don't just leave it right there. There is a great hope and there is a great future. And truthfully, it doesn't take much to come in and to take her to a doctor and have this fixed for her, give her a chance at an even more beautiful life.

I'm asking you to be the change today. I'm asking you to make the difference today -- that could change everything for her life!

End of clip

In the studio

James: We're not looking at something that can't -- can't be corrected. It can be corrected. Don't you want to correct that?

Betty: Absolutely, James.

You know when God shows us that there is a way we should, in our hearts, leap with joy because we can be a part of the way to help little children like this.

I know that when our babies were newborn, the first thing that a parent really looks for is that first smile. Come on! Come on! Let me see the first smile. Some of these children would like to have their first smile. What a joy it would be to be a part of that, James, to know that we were able to contribute to be a help to that one child, if it was one child it would be worth it.

James: Oh, boy. That's a beautiful way to state it. Give them their first smile, give them what that mother wants. I've said it over and over, and I think it is appropriate that if you want your prayers answered, be an answer to somebody else's prayers. And Betty said it right, every parent wants to see a little grandchild or a child smile -- smile? Smile! When that little child can't smile.

And the thing is we can give them a smile. Yes, we can. We work with medical doctors and the mission doctors that if we'll just make it possible we'll do the cleft palate surgery and the facial surgery to give them a smile. We've done it now for years. We've given children smiles that were horrified when they saw pictures that we'd taken of them and then we let them see them in the video camera and it scared some of them. They really didn't know quite what they looked like because in some of the third-world countries, unless they see a reflection somewhere, they don't necessarily know what they look like.

Tammy's heart was touched, ours was. So I just say to you, if you could give a smile for Christmas, we call this "Shoes and Smiles for Christmas." The surgeries cost an average of \$500 and we're asking people to pray about giving two.

We want to send you a beautiful commemorative bronze of an orphan boy that we rescued in Romania, being held by a missionary.

We're also going to give shoes like these; they're little slip-on shoes but they're all-weather, and they are adjustable in size. Little children like that you see these little shoes always touches your heart.

So here's what we're asking you to do, I know it's way ahead of Christmas, I understand that, but we've got to do it now because we want to give 200,000 pairs, at least that many pairs of shoes, \$36, \$3.60 a pair, \$36 will give ten pairs, \$144, four times that, that will give 40 pairs of shoes. And we're asking you to do that. If you can give 40 pairs of shoes, do it. If you can give ten pairs of shoes, do it. We want to send you a beautiful little Christmas ornament of a little shoe that will become a witness and conversation piece in your home.

We'll send you the beautiful bronze to say thank you if you'll help us provide a smile for a child like we just talked about there. Would you do that please?

Father, I pray everyone watching us will say, "I'm going to do it." It may be a big step. What a Christmas gift! -- That they go ahead and make it now, in Jesus' name.

Dial the number, take your bankcard, use it like a check. You write a check, make it to *LIFE*. Make the greatest gift you can to give the gift of love, give a child a smile, give some children some shoes. You can go online, LifeToday.org and make the gift but do it. Thank you for doing it. I believe you're doing it right now. You're an answer to a mother's prayer, to a child's need.

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

On the mission field

Betty: James, I look around and I see all these just beautiful children and I think, it's not things we're trying to give them, it's life through shoes to put on their feet because there are so many diseases that come from walking around in their bare feet. They pick up so many things that get in their system, in their bloodstream and just slowly destroys their little bodies. So it's a need that we're asking for. It's not just a luxury. They need our help!

James: It's not even comfort! It's a chance and we're asking you to help make this special gift a reality for so many children all over the world by making a call or going online, LifeToday.org and make the best gift you can because you'll be making the greatest gift, you'll be making the gift of life.

End of clip

In the studio

James: Well, I just say thank you so much. How about let's give some smiles? Let's give some shoes! You're going to like this.

I want to thank Elisa again for *The Beauty of Broken*; for her openness and her honesty in her journey. Join us in saying thanks to God for Elisa.

Blessings on you and your family, all of you! Blessings on you wherever you are. Broken is actually beautiful when we open up about it.