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Week 45

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

James: Well, it is a thrill to be with you. Nancy Alcorn is one of our favorite people. She has started the Mercy Mission and the beautiful, really homes of mercy and mercy-filled homes. We've been her friend and her co-laborer and her partner for many, many years, and she ours.

We not only support her and lift her up but they support what we're doing. We have received some of the nicest love gifts and surprises from a mission organization. You'd be surprised. We support missions all over the world and we'll get a gift from a missionary in an impoverished country that says, "These people wanted to send you something." And they don't have hardly anything, we're trying to keep them alive but they said, "We want to do something." That's the way Nancy is. She is doing so much for so many.

You know what you're going to hear? You're going to hear her story. And you may find yourself saying, "How in the world could she ever live through it?" Joel Osteen said there's nothing closer... Listen to this. This is on the front cover, "Nothing closer to the heart of God than to help heal the brokenhearted." This is the driving force behind the work of Nancy Alcorn.

When we lost our daughter Robin just after Christmas, our baby girl, I told Betty not long after for the first time, that first part of... the first verses Jesus said when he spoke from Isaiah, "I came to bind up the brokenhearted." It jumped all over me. Boy, our hearts were broken! Bind them up! Her heart was broken and she spent her life binding them up.

Would you welcome Nancy Alcorn?

Nancy, good to see you! We love you.

Nancy: I love you!

James: I want you to tell our viewers here and all over the world what happened to your heart.

Nancy: Well, I was eight, almost nine years old, James. Grew up on a farm; middle kid of seven kids and my youngest baby sister was the only one still at home, the rest of us at school. My dad raised Black Angus cattle and worked two jobs to feed all the kids that he had brought into the world.

And so he was working on the farm, got the tractor stuck in the ditch and didn't have his farmhand there that day to help so he came in the house and got my mother and said, "I need you to come out and just get in the truck and pull the tractor out of the ditch. It's no big deal. It won't take that long."

So my little sister came; and we always liked to ride in my dad's lap on the tractor. You know how little girls are and their daddy's, and act like you're driving. So they gave her a choice, "You want to ride in the truck with your mom or do you want to be on the tractor?" Well, of course she wanted to be on the tractor.

So my mother went to do what should have been a simple little thing and put her foot on the gas pedal and pull -- it wasn't even that steep. But the brakes went out on the truck and the next thing before anybody could do anything, it just happened so quickly, the truck jackknifed on top of the tractor and it went like an accordion. And the force of the steering wheel cracked my dad's ribs and my little sister, three and a half years old was between steering wheel and my dad's body. So he would have --

I didn't even really realize this until I was older and could really think it through. But my dad, what he would felt at that moment, but he would have felt every little bone in her body snapping. He would -- and the blood from her eyes, her nose, her ears, her mouth, it would have --

My mother jumped out, tried to do something real fast and it was just like a nightmare. All I remember is they came and got all of us from school and we got home. Both my mother and father had a lot of siblings and so aunts and uncles were running around there. Everybody was busy doing... But nobody would tell us what had happened.

So my brother was the oldest, the rest of us were girls. So I remember hiding behind my brother and everywhere he would go I would go because I knew if they tell anybody anything it will be him because he is the oldest. And he finally went to my mother's

youngest sister and he said, "Is Beverly dead?" That was my little sister, and my aunt shook her head yes.

I just remember just being crushed. I went outside and sat under this oak tree because, James, what had happened, and Betty, the night before, you know sisters and brothers have sibling fights and the last words I said to my little sister, because I was the big basketball player and I was out there as a little -- almost nine year old dreaming of being a basketball star one day and shooting hoops until the sun went down and it was in May. I remember she was getting in my way and so I called her a little brat, and called her and told her she was a punk and all this stuff. So she goes in the house crying, "Momma, Nancy called me a brat." So she goes to sleep and that's the last words I ever said to her.

So I remember walking outside and sitting under that oak tree and thinking about that. And I was just like so distraught and devastated and shocked and all that. I don't know how long but it was maybe an hour I sat out there just thinking about it. This ambulance pulls in the driveway and I see my mom and dad get out and blood just all over them. I found out later that my dad was told he needed to be hospitalized and he refused.

So he's all bent over, my mother is screaming hysterically, there's blood everywhere. I know this is graphic, but that's what I saw as a little kid. Back in those days, this was in Tennessee and in the south, oftentimes they would bring the little kids -- particularly if it was a child, bring the casket into the home and the body would be there. So for two nights we slept with her body in the house and I would look at her and I would wish that I could change that last conversation.

That was the beginning of -- I remember a lot of people came and said... they meant well but they said a lot of really ridiculous things like "God caused this to happen because he wanted another angel to sing in the children's choir." So I remember thinking, if that's who God is, I hate God and I don't want anything to do with him. Because people said a lot of things like that. We went to a Methodist church every Sunday but I never had a personal relationship with Christ. So no one really talked to us or helped about grief or anything.

So we just, from that point on, my parents were, as you can imagine, they were devastated emotionally and they just didn't have the ability to connect emotionally. I think they, in fact may have distanced themselves because the loss hurt so much. And you would know what that would be like. So the unspoken family rule was we don't talk about this.

But unfortunately, that was the beginning of a whole string of deaths that happened either in our family tragedies or people that were very close to us like our neighbors the next year, my youth pastors a year later got killed in a head-on collision, people that I was going to open up to say, "Can you help me work through this?" because the unspoken rule at my house was we don't talk about it. So we just all lived as roommates and nobody talked about it, nobody discussed it, nobody worked through it, nobody said, "Let's pray." None of that!

So as I went into junior high and high school and I began to date, there were two different boyfriends that I was very, very close to that got killed in tragic accidents. I just began to feel like there's something wrong with me because every time I get close to someone and open up to them, something happens to them. So I just remember I still wasn't a Christian and I'm sinking myself into sports. Sports became my escape and I played basketball, softball, ran track, did all that and then I blew my knee out so that just -- I had a surgery and then a second surgery A.C.L. They finally told me you can't -- I was supposed to possibly get an opportunity to play at a small college and it just devastated me to the point that I was so angry that I turned to drinking and partying and rebellion and just all that.

But I experienced at a very young age the emptiness of trying to fill that void and deal with that pain in a way that was just more destructive. So basically, I experienced at a young age the emptiness of sin and the emptiness of partying and the emptiness of trying to fill a void with wrong relationships.

And the summer after I graduated from high school, a friend of mine who was a cheerleader at my school in high school, I found out later she had prayed for me for three years, Betty, three years. And I was not nice to her because I knew she was a Christian and I tried to push her away. But there was this thing called love coming out of her and I couldn't push it away.

So finally, when I was hurting so bad that I didn't think I could stand it anymore, she was the one that I called and three weeks before I left to go to college, she led me to Christ.

So then that began a journey of me getting in the word, renewing my mind, and just really going for it in the Lord. So I spent eight years working for the government. Then I go on and start Mercy 30 years ago, this is our 30 year anniversary of starting Mercy Ministries. But in 2001, which was I guess 17-18 years after I started Mercy, my dad passed away. What I didn't -- I always had a heart for my father because I could look in

his eyes and I could see the grief, I could see his heart was broken, I could see the sadness and he later would have a bit of joy with the grandchildren but yet at the same time that sadness was always in his eyes. And I had such a heart for him because I knew -- because I knew Christ, I'm like Christ can heal that and I knew Christ had healed me so I thought.

But when my dad died in 2001, 17 years into me being a leader of a major ministry, all of the sudden, all this stuff starts surfacing in me and what I didn't realize is the grief that I thought I had dealt with, I had just pushed it deep down inside of me. So I started going through all this -- I don't know, I was just in pain all the time. I would cry. I knew I needed help but I was afraid to go to the church and say, "I need help" because I'm the one that's supposed to have all the answers for all these other people.

So a friend of mine who coaches division one college basketball, she's the head woman's coach at Florida State, a very close friend, she called me one day and she said, "Nancy, I see all that you're doing to help all these other people but I cannot stand back and let you self-destruct." She said, "I see the pain you're in. I see that you are not coping well. You're not doing anything wrong, but I see the pain and I know that eventually, if you don't deal with the issues that are confronting you right now they're going to deal with you at some point. And if you want to stay the leader of this ministry and lead well and finish well, you've got to get help."

She said, "I did my homework." She gave me five names, these are the top five Christian counselors in Nashville, I did my homework, and you have exactly 24 hours to call me and tell me that you made an appointment with one of them. So basically, she did a one-on-one intervention with me.

And the next 23 hours and 45 minutes I went through all the well, what are people going to think about me if I go to a counselor? What are people going to think because I'm supposed to be the one with the answers? And what are people going to think... and all that.

Finally, it was like, my friend loved me enough to tell me "you need help" and I knew I did, I was hurting so bad. I called and made an appointment and I thought, I'll go two or three times and satisfy my friend and then we'll get on with it. And that was the beginning of seven years of intense counseling that I went through as a leader. And at first I didn't tell anybody but about a month into it, God put this huge desire in my heart to tell everybody. So I'm going to speak at these international conferences in front of thousands of people and I'm telling them, "Hey, I'm going to counseling." I'm telling them my story. "I want to give you permission if there is something going on in your

life. I'm tired of all of us leaders acting like we got it all together."There is no such thing as anybody that has it all together.

So in this new book that I just released, I share much more of the story than what I could ever share on the show. But I actually share about going to counseling for seven years and how God helped me get healed of that deep seeded grief that I had lived with, that I had just pushed down, where I wasn't just coping with life but I was actually set free and totally healed. I was partially healed of a broken heart but a partially broken heart is still a broken heart. God wanted to completely heal me and set me free.

James: I just pray that somehow you're hearing. I really think it is important for you to know what she is telling, you can't tell in a half hour television program or just a few minutes of sharing. And she poured the truth into the mission of mercy, allowing God to use you to make a difference in others. I want you to listen to these bullet points.

I said this really, kind of to the audience before I actually welcomed the TV audience. I said some things to you. Listen to what she said: Are you willing to be part of the answer? See, we not only need help but are you willing to be part of the help process? Can God trust you to love the unlovable? We're talking about you doing what this woman did for Nancy. We're talking about those of you who need help reaching out but also saying, "Some day I'm going to need a place to reach out the way I needed somebody to reach out." Will you move past judgment to compassion?

Nancy, that's something the whole church needs to learn to do. Condemnation: It isn't a matter of approving of sin when we really do care about the person that's trapped. They may not even know they're trapped. See, you didn't really seem to realize deep inside there was a hurt. This friend could obviously see but you were feeling it even though you didn't necessarily know how to open up about it, you knew it was there. And the relief and what's happened, I hear you saying not only do people need to get help, but I really hear you saying I want to show you how you can give help. Betty and I are going through this process, Betty, of a broken heart being healed and it is a process.

Betty: It definitely is. If you live very long, you're going to experience pain, hurt, disappointment, great expectations in your life that you think you haven't been able to achieve or expectations that people put on you. It can devastate you if you don't feel like you live up to those expectations. But the thing we need you to understand is God knows all this. He knows all about each one of us but he wants to walk with us through all of this. And there's an opportunity when we're hurting, we're disappointed in life, things aren't going our way to turn to God and say, "God, be here in the center of this.

Come and be in this place where I'm hurting so bad." Because that's what he wants -- He wants us to invite him in to the center of that hurt so that he can walk through it with us. And when we come out on the other side, he's going to bring good out of it, I guarantee you!

James: If you want the book that Nancy has written because you're going through something that you say, "You know what? I believe she can help me." We'll gladly send it to you. Nancy, you have -- and I'm going to put your web site up -- but you have homes all over the United States where you are helping girls that have reached a point most people think, of no return, they're desperate. Whether it is anorexia, bulimia, whether it is cutting and punishing themselves, whatever they want to do to inflict some kind of pain for whatever reason, or addicted, you have the information there.

I would say to all of you watching, you may have it in your heart not only to get somebody to one of these incredible places of healing but you may want to help them. You may feel called to do it. We never try as I -- I told Nancy, we don't try to protect our donors, they're not our donors. They're our friends but they're God's people and we encourage you to help wherever God directs you. I know you'll be sensitive but check out what she's doing. If you know someone that's desperate, she's reached that point.

We're going to be talking all this week about heading people off before they reach this point, seemingly of such desperation that they literally have to go and be restored in a place where mercy prevails. But if you'd like to have the book, we'll be glad to send it to you.

Nancy, I'm going to ask our viewers, and I want you to look and those of you here in the television audience, a picture does say more than a thousand words and these are far more than pictures, these are precious people -- children. I want you to look at them. I want you to look at them with eyes of mercy. Look at them with the idea what if they were someone in my family? What would you want for them? What could someone do for them? Please watch prayerfully.

James: Phew! I don't know what's going through your mind when you look at those images but I know what goes through my mind and my heart. I find myself wanting to bring some of them back up on the screen and say, look at this little child because that's somebody's baby. But that's also a child that God loves more than we can describe.

And, Betty, as difficult as it may be to grasp or even comprehend, he expressed his love very beautifully through the death and the gift of his son. But to express his love today that his son gives so freely, it must be expressed through us. We're the ones that don't just look at that little child and say oh, my! We're the one that says here's help.

And as the conclusion of what you saw, actions always speak louder than words. We've been helping people a long time, Betty and we've been doing it because people who watch do more than watch, they help.

Betty: As I watch that and I hope as you watched it, even though there was silence, I heard a lot. One thing I heard was that life is in our hands. We can give the food that's needed to help these babies live, to grow up and to have a chance of hope and joy in their lives -- and to be children like children should be; to be able to play and run and laugh. We have an opportunity to do that. I hope you will join with us and let's give to help the children.

James: I've got to tell you, I'm confident you will.

Father, I just thank you that I believe people are going to be your hands here to pick these little children up. And I thank you.

You don't have any idea what it would mean to a mother to be able to give her little child something or to see their little child leave that malnutrition clinic or that area where they came so desperate to try to head off death.

We try to head it off too before they get to that desperate state in our feeding centers where we have children that are in many instances still able to walk or stand up and their families will bring them a long way to get to the food. We're feeding hundreds of thousands of children and the way we do it is just one child at a time, so to speak. \$30 we can feed three children for the next months. \$50 we can feed five, for \$100 we can feed ten.

We have some beautiful gifts to give you. We want to give you as a thank you and to bless you in your life and your spiritual journey and your spiritual nutrition and strength, *Moving Past Your Past*, don't be trapped by it, Christine Caine. We're offering it in CD or the DVD's, two of the books that Christine has written, one of them a bestseller, *Undaunted: Daring to Do What God Calls You to Do*. We're sending the CD's and one of the books for any gift. We're sending the DVD's and the CD's and both books for a gift of \$100 to help feed ten children.

You may be able to do more than that. We're asking you right now if you would, please reach out and touch someone with love by dialing the number. Take your bankcard, use it like it's a check. If you write a check, make it to *LIFE* but call us and tell us you're mailing it. Would you? And do the best you can. Help as many of those little children who each little face, each little child represented many that need to feel the love of God expressed through you and through those missionaries and relief workers.

Please make the call or go online, LifeToday.org; would you? And make the gift God put on your heart.

Begin video clip

Announcer: In remote and impoverished areas of Africa, families are suffering, facing death by starvation, and those hit the hardest are their children.

Life's Mission Feeding program is there able to feed and care for over 400,000 children in crisis areas of Angola, Mozambique, and Sudan. Our mission partners urgently need your support. Our food reserves are gone and we desperately need to replenish our supplies at more than 800 feeding centers immediately. Your life-saving gift of \$30, \$50, or \$100 will help feed and care for three, five, or ten children for the next three months.

With your gift we'll send you *Moving Past Your Past*, a powerful new series featuring author and speaker Christine Caine. In Christ There are No Yesterdays, Only Tomorrows; in this series, Christine provides you with the keys to leaving your past behind and receiving all God has for your future.

For a gift of any amount you'll receive the audio CD series along with Christine's book, *Can I Have and Do It All, Please?* With your gift of \$100 or more to help feed ten children, please request the entire teaching on both DVD and CD. And as a bonus, we'll send you Christine's latest book release, *Undaunted*.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1,000 or more to help feed 100 children and you may request our 50th anniversary bronze sculpture, "Brotherly Love." Please call, write, or make your gift online today.

End of clip

In the studio

James: I sure do thank you for being an answer to the request and the heart cry of those families and the missionaries.

Remember, today, if you'd like to have Nancy Alcorn's book also, *Mission of Mercy*, we'll be glad to send it to you. Sometimes I know my staff says, "Just like every day you just give stuff away everywhere." I make our administrators nervous. I can't stop because I don't think love stops and I never have thought Pharaoh could fix the problems only God can fix; any form of Pharaoh, I think it is God's people doing God's will. That's what Nancy Alcorn is doing. You check out her ministry. There's the web site again.

Would you join Betty and me in saying thanks very much to Nancy Alcorn?

Nancy, we love you! Thank you so much for sharing. We love you big time! Big time!

Thank all of you for giving us this time and thank you for helping us help others.