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Week 27: Water for Life

Chonda Pierce

James: Thank all of you! We've got a guest today that's as much fun as Tim Conway was when he was here. I'm James Robison. My wife, Betty, we together welcome you to *LIFE Today*.

Chonda Pierce, Girl Talk! She is crazy! She is absolutely crazy! We've got her caged. We're going to let her out in a minute and she is going to come out and talk to us. This is her new DVD. You're going to hear a little bit of it and then we're going to talk to her about some challenges that have gone on in her life and family that you'll be able to identify with.

I tell you what, why don't we just together, why don't we welcome Chonda Pierce to *LIFE Today*? Here's Chonda.

[Cheers & Applause]

Chonda: This is so much fun! I love this part because there's nothing like doing standup comedy standing right in front of James and Betty.

[Laughter]

Where they can pray for the backside of me, because you try to hide everything with the camera. I've got on two pairs of spanx right now; I can't breathe. I put on one pair, I had a hole in it, I thought I had a tumor.

[Laughter]

There's one man who has no idea what I'm talking about. If you don't know what

spanx are that means your wife is skinny and we don't like her.

[Laughter]

...In Jesus' name. Yeah, I had a...

I gave up spanx in Afghanistan. That's because where you should give up spanx. If you've never walked through the Afghanistan sand in a pair of spanx -- let's just say I have a rash that the government is still trying to identify.

[Laughter]

But I got invited to do a U.S.O. tour. I was so excited. It was just before they got Osama bin Laden so I feel like I had a hand in that.

[Laughter]

Because I did tell General Webster, "If you want to shut this war down you send the menopausal mothers over here packing."

[Laughter]

And notice how I do the gun. That's when you mean business right there. This is L.A. Law -- this is Andy Griffith. But I'm just saying. So I went over there and I was real excited to get to do it because you know, I'm a Christian -- unbeknownst to James. But I am! And I was excited because they had country music stars and then they went over there with the Dallas Cowboy cheerleaders so we had a lot in common.

[Laughter]

I told them, "I wear my spanx on the inside of my clothes!"

[Laughter]

They wear their spandex right out where everybody can see. And they have strategically placed stars on their spandex. I don't have that. So we're on this plane. Now we're flying for like 30 hours.

Have you ever been on a plane for like 30 hours and you're 50? There are parts of you that will swell. Water -- it is called "water weight." "Water collects," they said. Well, it collects in places I never had water collected. My fingers looked like little sausages. That's how bad it was.

Then this general, this big shot from the -- oh, the sergeant major of the whole army is on there. He tells all us girls, "Now you might want to get spruced up. We're going to have a photo shoot on the Tarmac when we get to Kuwait City. Ain't that wonderful?" And he's looking at me when he said it.

[Laughter]

So there I was having this dilemma. I didn't want to give in to the peer pressure but they already had their bags of mascara out and their lipstick and I'm like, "Well, I've got Blistex."

[Laughter]

So I decided I'm going to have to get spruced up so I went in the bathroom. Now here's the thing. Here's how the Lord is a miraculously working in my life. Have you ever tried to put on a pair of spanx in an airplane bathroom?

[Laughter]

My body twisted in ways I didn't know it could! It was amazing. Then one of the girls that was the emcee of our show, she had been on the cover of playboy and stuff like that, so you know it was just wonderful chatting with her.

[Laughter]

-- All three words.

[Laughter]

So one night we were in Iraq and you're wanting to be -- I loved the soldiers. They're the finest military known to the planet is our military; and so I wanted to be funny and I went...

[Cheers & Applause]

I wanted to be funny; I wanted to be respectful because they all had guns.

[Laughter]

So what was so wild is this emcee, this girl who -- let's just say there are parts of her that walks in the room before other parts of her.

[Laughter]

And she seemed very proud of those parts. She told me one night, "You know, honey. I have a whole body suit of spanx if you'd like to try it. It hooks around your ankle and it pushes everything up and over, if you know what I mean." Well, I couldn't slap her. I'd already told her I was Christian.

[Laughter]

It took that whole cheerleading squad to get that thing on me.

[Laughter]

You just lay down, it hooks on your heels, and it pushes everything in an upward position. And it was uncomfortable; I couldn't breathe. I said, "Oh, General Webster, how are you doing sir? I don't normally dress like this. This is not my cleavage, this is my ankles."

[Cheers & Applause]

And yes, I just said "cleavage" in front of James Robison!

[Laughing]

James: Oh, boy!

Chonda: You know, it was a hard trip. It really was difficult. I had so many spanx on I didn't have to wear my Kevlar. You couldn't get a bullet through that. But it was an amazing trip. We went all over the Middle East. They didn't let me talk to the natives much because I told this one fella that he reminded me of home because he looked like my bed spread. But that... Some of them do! They have the wrapped up... and the robe. I'm so glad in my religion I don't have to wear all that.

James: I'm hurting! I want to tell you, hey, I don't know, Tim Conway, if you're watching, but you've just been bested, boy. I'm going to tell you. This is my lead to the resurrection to the Carol Burnett show. We've got another one. By the way, all this nonsense is right here. We've got this thing captured.

Chonda: You know what's funny? You hold up everybody's book and say, "You've got to get this ministry."

"This is nonsense right here!"

James: By the way, do you ever get to anything serious before this thing is over?

Chonda: I always do! I always do! You know it's so weird about -- I've been doing this 20 years now and 18 of it here. [Sniffs] But the interesting thing, I always get this little nugget.

[Laughing]

I wish you could say it was just prophetic. Sometimes it's bad pizza. But I do get this truth; there is something that I'm learning and most lessons, I'm so sad to say, I have learned the difficult way. But I always think my life has got to be as normal as anybody else so there's probably another girlfriend that needs to know this. And so like an idiot, I go, "I should just plan a video!" But I get that nugget and then I start writing the comedy. So I start with the end of the video and write backwards to begin the thing.

This one came about because well, one, I talked. I spent seven weeks with my mother dying in the hospital. I took off work and I never missed a day; we sat with her nonstop, my brother and I took turns, and it was a miraculous beautiful thing. She had a wonderful, beautiful life but you're still not ready for your mama to go. She was a wonderful godly woman and what dawned on me in our talks and our visits and playing the music and everything that you do when you know someone is leaving this world, what came to me was the things we didn't have to talk about. I was more proud of that than anything in my whole life. There wasn't an "I'm sorry" we hadn't taken care of. There wasn't an "I love you" that I withheld. My relationship was as current with her as it is with you and Betty. It was good and clear.

Let me tell you, we had some obstacles to overcome in my childhood, as you well know. But when she took her last breath it was a good day. I even whispered to her, "Mom, if you want to go, this is a good day. It's okay to go. I'm going to be all right." Which she twitched a little about that. She wasn't... I'm afraid she was aware. I told her, "I'm in James Robison's hands."

[Laughter]

"You can go now." But it was a beautiful night.

James: You do go to -- when she did our 40th anniversary, which is now 11 years ago, and she did her funny stuff, and then she cut to the serious and then ended up singing. At that time, we didn't know she could sing. It was like an angel -- literally, because she's got such a god-given voice. It isn't just the fact that well, she comes out of this crazy demeanor and all of the sudden this angelic sound. It's the only reason it sounds

angelic is because this other stuff was so off the wall. But the fact is -- the fact is -- listen to me! She can flat sing. She's got a God-given, beautiful voice and a powerful message. So this is going to bless you.

Here's what we'll do, Chonda. We're going to give this where people can go to the stores and get it; go get a bunch of them and give it to your friends. They need to smile; they need to laugh and feel better and hear something wonderful. But we're going to give it to people who will help us just give children literally a cup of water.

Betty: And that is such a ministry, Chonda that you can make people laugh because it is healing for the soul.

Chonda: It is as healing for me, Betty, as it is anyone else. We always quote that verse, "Laughter doeth good like medicine" but it's not just me that brings the medicine. Only the Lord can make medicine out of it. When I'm not feeling joyful, it's fine because the joy of the Lord is my strength. None of this moment becomes about me. I might have silly words as he says that I have to vomit out.

[Laughter]

But you know, the cafeteria lady that used to come and put the dust on the throw up so it could clean up nicely in the cafeteria -- doesn't anybody else remember that besides me? That's kind of what the Lord does; he just puts the dust on the vomit. Now there's a verse somewhere for that I'm sure.

[Laughter]

James: Now listen to me. We've got to cut to the chase. You've been through an experience that we need God to take us through. You -- I want you to share.

Chonda: I get choked up because it is something about coming here and talking to you, it is like visiting with your parents. And I love my husband, 31 years -- he was sober 26 and we hit a crisis with one of our kids, like many families go through and my mother passing away was hard on him.

When I get crisis I work, I just stay busy. It's a rough thing to have to face as a wife when you come home and I thought my husband is having a seizure; I thought he was having a heart attack. I called an ambulance. They came and took him to the hospital. I rode in the ambulance with him terrified that my brilliant English professor husband was going through some kind of episode only to have him all hooked up and blood taken and a doctor come and tell you, "Ma'am, your husband is snookered."

I was like, "Well, that's impossible because we don't have alcohol in our home."

He goes, "I don't know where he got it but he's drunk; that's what's wrong with him."

And I noticed changes in him. I noticed that the golf game took a little bit longer for him to get home with the guys. I noticed... you know what it was, James and I have to only confess where I am in this process. We had a boundary in our home and when our children were living there, we didn't have alcohol in our home. But when they left, he would go, "It's just a couple of beers."

And I would come home and I would notice something. And I didn't speak up maybe like I should. Now I didn't hold him down and pour alcohol down him but what happened when crisis came, as my alcohol was just staying busy, my drug was just staying busy and staying busy, his was he internalized everything and he drank it away. It wasn't probably two years ago he finally confessed he was an alcoholic. And he's been into treatment several times and as you well know, it's a process. He will get 30 or 40 days under his belt and he may relapse a little bit here and there.

And what I've learned to say as a woman, "This is something we are struggling with together as a family. Today he's sober. Today is a good day." And my church and my family and the Celebrate Recovery program, all those things come into play and have been a wonderful asset.

But what I've learned is, we... I thought I knew everything about unconditional love. I thought I could stand by him no matter what and God has tested me with it. I've had to learn to eat a lot of words, to put away -- to hide the frying pan.

[Laughter]

And just learn how to love like you've taught me, is to learn to love not the condition of the man, not what he's doing, but love that man because deep down inside is really a hurting little boy who's missing a momma, who didn't have a dad; had an alcoholic father, alcoholic uncles, alcoholic brother and I'm learning what it means to really walk a rugged road with a man I adore, and watching him climb up out of it. So we're climbing up out of it together. I work a little less and stay closer to home and he's traveling with me a little more. And it's kind of -- making up is kind of good!

[Laughter]

James: Well, I want you to know we hear the weight and you know we care. The thing is there is so many of you listening, you say, "It's my story too." I think Chonda would say she finds comfort in knowing that James and Betty do care but also that a lot of other people care. There are some of you watching us today -- hoo! -- and this is nearly -- it's like somebody puts a knife in me because I know somebody is sitting there saying, "I don't have anybody to talk to." I've told you this many times --

As a matter of fact, right now we're in our water drilling emphasis, we want to give water to children and families that don't have clean water and our viewers love to do it. But today, even while there may be a hundred or a few hundred people calling to say we want to help you drill a water well, there are going to be hundreds and possibly way over 1000 to nearly 2,000 who will be calling today to say, "Could you pray with me?"

And listen to this. This really gets me. One of the biggest prayer requests that we get, "I'm lonely. I don't have anyone to talk to."

So Chonda, I'm moved by your story because I love you but I love all the people at home that don't have anybody to hear them. And those of you who sit here, those of you who watch *LIFE Today* all over the world, you need to understand that every good thing *LIFE* ever does is because of somebody like you who said, "Okay, James. We're

going to give somebody a prayer partner by making that phone center operate 24 hours a day." "We're going to help you feed a hungry child or rescue somebody from sexual trafficking." And "We're going to help you care for children." And "We're going to help you drill water wells." But you're also helping us have that prayer center and you're also helping us bring people like Chonda to tell their story to hopefully inspire people to reach out to one another and to comfort.

This girl has walked in here. She's walked in here a whole release of the joy and the love of God; hasn't she? Do you not get a blessing just knowing her journey and knowing that we get to literally walk it out with her?

Because this studio is full of people that love you. And they love you for a lot of reasons. They love to laugh but they love you because of the woman you are and they're not loving you because you never had any challenges or you never fell flat.

Now you've got a husband that you said, "I'm going to pick him up. You know what? If he falls again, I want to be in the ditch." Remember, our savior is on the edge of any ditch or pit any one of us dug for whatever reason, inclining his ear and saying, "If you'd just call me I'll get in there with you and get you out." That's the kind of God we've got.

[Applause]

So I want to say to all of you here, find somebody to love in some way and help them walk it out.

Chonda, we love you.

I'd like you to get this. You just need to laugh a while. Okay?

You know what I'm going to ask our viewers to do because I know you love what we do. We're going to ask our viewers to help us drill a water well.

I promise you -- listen to me -- what you're about to see is going to touch you because in the matter of seconds that you're going to listen to a mother, you're going to listen to her heart. Three little children are going to die because of contaminated water and we can change that. Please listen to this mother. And while you're listening to her, listen to the Father in heaven and just do what he says.

On the mission field

>> Every day over 4,000 children die from a water related disease.

>> My name is Bun Toeun. I know mostly I don't have clean water. I use water that everybody uses, even the cattle. I had four children, but two of my boys died. I worked hard to get the money for the hospital, but it didn't matter how hard I tried. My two babies died. My dream is for clean water. If I would have had clean water to drink, then my two children wouldn't be dead today.

>> In the 60 seconds it took Bun Toeun to share her story, 3 more children died from contaminated water.

End of clip

In the studio

James: In 60 seconds! We can be the answer to her heart cry, her prayer... and for the other children.

Betty, we've been able to save the lives of millions of children, their families because our viewers have said, "We'll give you a clean water well." And she is now crying out in behalf of all the others who have their babies, their children.

Betty, I'm thankful to say our viewers are always anxious to step up and say, "We'll give her area, her village, a water well."

Betty: James, what really touched my heart about what she said was she said, "My dream is for clean water." As parents we have big dreams for our children; we want them to grow up strong and healthy, to be successful -- most of all, to love God with their whole heart. But her simple request was, "I want some clean water for my children." She had already lost two of them.

I believe that is something we can help that mother with -- that heartbroken mother, over losing two children already, is to help give them clean water through the water wells. It is a simple request -- not hard to do when we so readily have clean water; we don't even think about it when we go and turn the faucet on and get a drink of water. But every time she goes to that river she thinks about it because she knows already what it's done to two of her children.

James: Well, I'm believing that you'll reach out and touch someone with love, the love of God. Here's what we're asking you to do, help us drill 500 more wells. I can already tell you we have reached 250. That means that individuals said, "I'll drill a well." Or people joined and said, "I'll do my part."

I want to break it down for you. Currently, and I don't know how long this is going to remain true, but we're still able to drill a well for an average -- and it's because of all the cooperation, the resources and the drilling equipment that you have paid for -- you, the viewers. \$4800 is our average cost; that's about what it will cost where she is because of the depth, but that's the average. Could you give a well?

Many viewers, many couples, many individuals, many small businesses, many churches say, "We'll drill a well." Even children do! Can you drill a well? Dial the number, take your bankcard or write a check, make it to *LIFE* or go online at LifeToday.org and say, "We'll drill a well."

If you can't do a well, could you give \$1200 or \$2400 and pray three other people join you or someone else joins you? And we'll have another one.

Here's the key, for \$48 that amount will give ten people water the rest of their life; that's basically breaking down the cost, \$144 -- 30.

We have some special gifts to give you. We even have a little children's book to help them learn the joy of giving. It's one of those little touchy/feely books. It's called *Children at the Well*. We have *Women at the Well* that Betty has put together with 32 devotionals from the women that have been on *LIFE Today*, including our two

daughters and the one that's in heaven, our Robin, what she shared. We'll send these to you to say thank you for your help, for your gift to give water.

We're asking you right now to make that call. Would you do it or go online? Please reach out and touch someone with love and say, "We will give you water." "If you give just a cup of water," Jesus said, "you won't lose your reward." What an honor to provide clean water! *Water for Life* and we'll tell them about the water of life; we're going to show them the love. Thank you for joining us. Thanks for making that call or going online.

Begin video clip

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

The good news is there is a solution. *Mission: Water for Life* is one of the most effective life-saving demonstrations of God's love you could ever be a part of. Suffering can end because clean water changes everything.

With your gift today, you can help establish and drill 500 new water wells for remote villages impacting over 20 nations. Your gift of \$24 will help provide clean water for five people. A gift of \$48 will help provide for 10 people. \$72 will impact 15 people! And \$144 will help provide fresh clean disease-free water for 30 people for a lifetime!

With your gift, be sure to request the new *Children at the Well* interactive book to help your little ones understand the blessing of clean water, as well as the *Women at the Well* daily devotional with 32 refreshing devotionals for your quiet time. With your gift of \$100 or more you may request this beautiful leather journal to help capture your personal times with God.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1200 to help provide water for 250 people or a gift of \$4800 to help sponsor a complete well and you may request our commemorative sculpture glass statue "The Blessing."

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

End of clip

In the studio

James: I tell you what. We've had few blessings any greater than just having Chonda. We love to journey on the journey with you. We'll send you this incredible put a smile on your face and joy in your heart, and then hear what she's got to share and you'll want to pass it on just to say thank you for helping us not just give a cup of water but a well of water. Join Betty and me in saying thanks to Chonda Pierce.

Chonda, you're a blessing! We love you! Beyond words we love you!

Thank all of you. You are a blessing. Thank you!