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Week 32 WFL

Jim Leininger and Tracy Leininger Craven

**James:** Thank you so much for giving us this opportunity! I'm James Robison; my wife Betty and I welcome you to *LIFE Today*.

We have a very good friend, a man that we admire and his daughter that we've just come down to such appreciation for. I want to hold something up because this is a movie and it is in the theaters and it will soon be available on DVD. It's the kind of thing you would want your family to watch, to show at church too, as well as seeing it in the theaters because it is a true story. *Alone Yet Not Alone*: Their faith became their freedom. It was written by Tracy Leininger Craven. The book was written initially when she was only nine years old; you're going to hear about that story.

Her dad, Dr. Jim Leininger is a man that I respect and appreciate because of his deep love, first for God, but his love for people, for you, for his patients. And the things he's done to save people's lives is nothing short of a miracle of love. I want to welcome Dr. Jim Leininger and his daughter Tracy Leininger Craven to *LIFE Today*. Would you welcome them? Glad to see y'all!

**Tracy:** Good to be here.

**Jim:** Good to be here.

**James:** Jim, I love you but I want to talk to Tracy.

**Jim:** I don't blame you a bit.

[Laughter]

**James:** I'm really captivated by how this came to be. Just tell us when you found out what somehow caught your attention when you were quite young. Tell us about it.

**Tracy:** I'd always dreamed of being an author when I grew up. *Alone Yet Not Alone* is one of ten historical fiction books I've written. It is the nearest and dearest to my heart. I was inspired to write it at age nine. I'll never forget the night I went to my grandparents' house for dinner and my grandmother was so excited. They had found this story about these girls that were captured by Indians during the French and Indian war, and the story of their faith and how it ultimately led them home to be reunited with their family.

It made such an impression on me at nine years old. I was the same age as the little girl when she was captured or one of the girls. It made such an impression on me I went home and started writing the book right away. Obviously, it's changed a lot over the years but yeah, that was the inspiration for that book. The story, the message of not being alone has encouraged me over my lifetime. Before I wrote the book and since I've written the book --

**James:** Was it the fact that there was a connection through ancestry? Or was it just the fact that these girls had faith to know that God was with them even when everything was totally wrong; and they were so young and so innocent and taken into such a totally different environment. Was it the two together that connected the fact that there was some connection through heredity or was it purely their faith?

**Tracy:** I think both. I think the fact that Leininger was our last name and that was fascinating, and checking their roots to the same little village in Germany that we all came from. Even though it was a distant relation I think it was almost like being related to a hero as a young girl -- even more, a hero of faith.

One of my favorite childhood memories is my dad would read stories to us every night before bed and that was our bedtime ritual. It would be our motivation to get to bed on time. He'd read all sorts of stories of historical fiction, biographies, the Bible, poetry, you name it -- the whole gamut.

But I think that story of faith and just those girls and what they went through, and the fact, like you said, that you go through wilderness experiences in your life but you're not alone. We may not be able to relate to being captured by Indians but we can all relate to having a moment when we're feeling alone; and just to know that God is there and that he'll be with us in our deepest trials.

**Betty:** Is that what you really want people to see as they read the book is that God is steadfast in our lives if we allow him to be? And he is with us going through those difficult times.

**Tracy:** Absolutely! One of my favorite parts in the book is the two sisters are captured and they're being taken away by these Indians. And the older sister, Barbara, the night before the girls are separated, because they both went to different tribes, she made her little sister to promise to never lose the song in her heart.

Regina was the bubbly younger sister that was always singing; her mom called her her little song bird. Just that message of when we go through trials, that not to lose faith, not to lose hope and that the joy of the Lord is our strength. Ultimately, Barbara escaped five years later; and my book follows her escape and it is a very exciting. It is one of those fact is crazier than fiction, all the things that she went through. And she actually published her narrative after she returned from captivity so we have all those facts in real life documented facts.

But Regina was not returned until nine years later and she did not remember conversational German, which was her native language. She couldn't remember conversational German but she remembered the song, "Alone Yet Not Alone" that her mom had sung to her as a child, and that's ultimately how they reunited.

**James:** And that song became in itself quite a story and quite a witness, doc. I could ask you a couple of questions but I do want to touch on that song. But did you realize what a treasure you had here with this young lady writing like she did? And that this would actually become a movie? This is actually the book with the movie version where you can actually see the scenes and the pictures in the book, which we'd be happy to make it available to you. But did you realize what a gift she had? Were you

captivated by the *Alone Yet Not Alone* story -- not just the fact that it's family, but the story itself?

**Jim:** Well, I'd known for many years what a treasure we had. But I didn't know that she could write like that, to be honest with you. When I -- she was gracious enough to ask me to read the manuscript, I was blown away. I mean it just -- it got right to my heart. That's a gift that God has given her that certainly I don't have, most people don't have that ability to get on the heart level immediately in chapter one, and you're just grabbed into this story. It's a page turner. You just have to know what happened to these poor little girls.

**James:** What do you want the movie to do? Now it is in the theaters, hopefully many of you have seen it or you will see it. I'm praying it will get a long run but it will also be available in DVD. What do you hope the impact and effect of the movie is? What is your prayer because I know you care deeply about people. You and I are good friends; we pray about our deep concerns and the love God's given us for people period, especially if they suffer or they're going through hard times. What do you hope the movie and the book will accomplish?

**Jim:** Well, I think, Tracy touched on it, our society today, we're more and more isolated. Used to be, on the family farm you had relatives, extended family, neighbors, and everybody pulled together. And now everybody is on their computer off by themselves and there is much more loneliness now than probably ever in the history of our society.

So if only one thing was accomplished by this movie and that would be that people would gain a vision that God will never leave them or forsake them, that he will always be there no matter how hard the trials and certainly, probably none of us will ever put up with a trial as difficult as these little girls had physically but emotionally, and the aloneness that people have today with families broken and just being alone, if they don't know the Lord, they're alone spiritually. If they don't have family nearby they're alone relationally. If they've got broken relationships they're alone emotionally but God will always be there, will always love them faithfully.

**James:** Who sang the song “Alone Yet Not Alone” for the movie?

**Jim:** Joni Eareckson-Tada sang the song. And when our music producer suggested that she would be very good, he said, "She has the voice of an angel," I questioned it. As a medical doctor, I knew that because of her injury and her paralysis she didn't have abdominal muscles and diaphragms that it takes to sing the high notes and I just didn't understand how she could possibly do that. When I saw the videotape of her singing it with her husband down on his knees next to her, pushing on her abdomen to be her diaphragm so she could hit the high notes, oh, my God, I was a puddle! It was amazing! I realized at that moment how she could possibly do it and I really didn't see any way up until that moment.

But when it was nominated there were three polls taken, Parade Magazine and People Magazine did one the first weekend. And *Alone Yet Not Alone* got about two thirds of the vote in both of those polls and the other four were way down in mostly single digits. And then the Hollywood reporter had a daily poll going on so this was the newspaper to the Hollywood community, the Hollywood insiders. And the day before, about two weeks after it was nominated and a day before they rescinded the nomination, *Alone Yet Not Alone* had gone all the way to 82% as their first choice among the Hollywood insiders. So I really think that it would not have gotten rescinded if it had gotten 6% or 20% but it was a runaway favorite.

**James:** Well, you got a lot of leg, so to speak and more than a million people have already watched it on I guess YouTube?

**Jim:** Yes, that's the miracle of it all. What others meant for evil, God meant for good. The little videotape of Joni praying before she sings that song, and then singing it with her husband's hand on her stomach has been viewed over a million times on YouTube. We never ever could have gotten that kind of notoriety.

**James:** Would you like to see a little bit of that clip of Joni? Let's look at it.

### **Begin video clip**

**Joni:** We are the ones who run to you when we are weak. And you know this body, you formed this body; this is a quadriplegic body that is broken, my lungs are limited but there is this fine balance between presenting to you all of my weakness and thinking that it can't be done. I don't want to think that it can't be done.

So Father, I pray that you will mitigate any crackiness in my voice, any age in my voice, any tiredness in my voice and please, give me your strength. These words talk about in your strength I find my own. So make that my prayer -- I make that my prayer, O God.

I'm Alone Yet Not Alone

God's the light that will guide me home  
With his love and tenderness  
Leading through the wilderness  
And wherever I may roam  
I'm Alone Yet Not Alone

I will not be bent in fear  
He's the refuge I know is near  
In his strength I find my own  
By his faithfulness he's shown  
That so mighty is his shield  
All his love is now revealed  
When my steps are lost  
And desperate for a guide  
I can feel his touch  
A soothing presence by my side  
Alone Yet Not Alone  
Not forsaken when on my own  
I can lean upon his arm  
And be lifted up from harm  
If I stumble or if I'm thrown

I'm Alone Yet Not Alone

When my steps are lost  
I'm desperate for a guide

I can feel his touch  
A soothing presence by my side  
By my side

He has bound me with his love  
Watchful angels look from above  
Every evil can be braved  
For I know I will be saved  
Never frightened on my own  
I'm Alone Yet Not Alone  
I'm Alone Yet Not Alone  
Hoo

**End of clip**

**In the studio**

**James:** Hoo boy! I just want to say thank you, God.

Did you know one of the main calls that comes to our prayer center is, "I'm just lonely." I hope you'll go see the movie. It basically tells the true journey of true faith. And Tracy here and Dr. Leininger, they not only love the Lord they love you.

And Joni, we've been with you since you first sang; you were one of our first singers on our television program, so we love you deeply.

I'd like to send you the book. I want to encourage you to go and see the movie. I want to encourage you to get it on DVD as soon as it is available and show it to as many people.

Would it be wonderful, Tracy and Dr. Leininger, if everybody would just encourage their friends to watch that clip on YouTube? Because see, I can tell you, you are both saying, "If we can just help somebody know they don't ever have to be alone," I know you well enough to know that's your heart. That's certainly in Betty's heart, it's what's in my heart. So do it.

Would you say thanks to Tracy and Dr. Leininger for being here? I tell you what I'll do. I will send you the book if you'd just do something real simple. Would you do what Jesus said? Would you give a cup of water in my name? Could you do that?

We've had a few friends say, "We believe it is so important that whatever you give we'll match. If you give a water well, we'll give another one." And there are a lot of people that need them. I want you to listen to our missionary overseer who will oversee a lot of the drilling of these wells in Angola and other places on the continent of Africa. Listen to him. And then please, let's give a cup of water. Let's do it together. Watch closely.

### **Begin video clip**

>> It's really hard that I can't give more to my children. We have to dig in the riverbed to get water and we carry it here. There are insects in the water which makes the children sick. The water is giving them stomach aches, diarrhea and vomiting.

**Pete:** There is such a desperate shortage of water here. They go two kilometers to a dry riverbed and dig a deep hole to be able to get better water out of the dry riverbed. And that's how this whole village exists.

**Maneco:** Because of the dirty water there's Cholera, there's diarrhea, vomiting and the older people and the children have been dying.

>> We've been in a drought here. It's been 3 years since it last really rained.

**Pete:** Won't you help us change the lives of these children? Of this village? Of this area by putting in a deep water well here? And we'll get the water and we'll be able to pump it out and put it in tanks. We can even grow agriculture here. It will bring food stability to this village.

**James:** Boy, I hear Peter's heart. Twenty-five years we've been weeping with him, praying with him, working with him; watching his dream and vision. That little family, Betty, that beautiful little girl, when they kind of zoomed in on her and those little kids' faces, I just want to hold them with arms of love. But if we just did that, however sincere we were and didn't give them the water that we could give them with a well, and you heard that missionary, he's left everything -- he's planted his life there. And he said, "If we'd just do this for this village." He said, "We'll make this a deeper well; we'll even get enough water we can give them a little bit to water some little plants and crops." That can happen there.

That particular village is going to be a little more expensive. I told you the wells average \$4800. We get some places we can get it for maybe \$3,000; that one is going to take more than \$4800 but it's going to do a lot more. But I'm hearing the missionary's heart.

And, Betty, that's why our friends stepped up and said in Angola, "Where they've got such a critical problem, we'll match what people give for the necessary 68 wells of which that's one."

So here in the last days, as we complete this challenge to drill 500 wells, you drill one right now for them and we've got two. Or you give \$2400 and then it's matched, we've got another well. I'm just believing that people want to hold that little family in the arms of God's love and say, "We're going to give you clean water."

**Betty:** I do too, James. The thing I guess that touched my heart was to listen to one of the parents say, I walk a long way to get this water for them, this diseased water that I know is going to bring a slow death to them but they've got to have water. Let's give

them the opportunity to offer them living water, clean fresh water that will give them hope and opportunity to grow up as we love for our children to do. We watch our children, we care for them with such tender love. They do too but they don't have the resources. So please join with us and let's drill these water wells that they can see life in the water that springs from those wells.

**James:** Well, I want you to -- I don't think the right word is run, I want you to hasten, go get your bankcard. Like you were going to get something that you really wanted. A lot of times, what you really, really want is not really all that important. This is real important. Go get your bankcard, use it like a check.

Call the number and say, "Here's the gift." Father, you lead everyone in what they are to do and enable them to do it gladly; in Jesus' name. If you can give a well, make that \$4800 gift knowing you'll have another one matched. If you can give part of a well at whatever level we have some gifts to send you to say thank you, to bless you and the children you love and to give you devotionals, to give you a life journal that you will write what God says to you hopefully daily. It is an absolutely fabulous journal. I will always treasure this as our daughter, who went to be with Jesus gave me this one time when I was fighting a disease and it became a way for me to record what God put in my heart.

So we want to bless you. Thank you for your gift. Listen, you can go online LifeToday.org, use your bankcard, if you write a check, make it to *LIFE* but call us and tell us what you're putting in the mail. We need to hear from you. We need to let the missionaries know, "Go for it!" Thank you so much for making the call.

### **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:** Well, Betty and I from the depth of our heart, in behalf of all those families and children, we say thank you. If you'd like to have *Alone Yet Not Alone*, the movie version, gladly send it to you. Just help us give a cup of water. Dr. Jim Leininger, I love you! Appreciate you! Tracy, God bless you. What a wonderful gift. We're going to talk to the other actress in this movie, your sister on another program. I think people will enjoy meeting her. Would you say again, thanks to this incredible father and daughter?

[Applause]

Thank all of you for watching *LIFE Today*! And thank you for sharing life! God bless y'all! You're great!