

7/28/14
Week 31 WFL
Kasey van Norman

James: Oh, boy! I like this! -- Raw Faith by Kasey van Norman. I like the picture here. I don't know how Tyndale did all that but Kasey is a beautiful, beautiful woman. They just kind of got her out here where -- you have to get the book. And inside the book is a story of living with what is diagnosed as incurable cancer. She has this little subheading here, Betty, Raw Faith but what happens --

Betty: When God picks a fight.

James: How about we talk to Kasey? Would you welcome Kasey to *LIFE Today*? Kasey, we're glad to see you. You're in a battle, and Betty was curious.

Betty: What do you mean by that? "When God picks a fight."

Kasey: Well, three years ago I got the phone call that I had cancer. I don't know if you've ever been on the street and walking down the street just minding your business and somebody comes up and accidentally bumps into you and catches you off guard and knocks your shoulder. And you kind of look by and it took you off guard and it surprised you and you realized that that stung a little bit. That's how it felt whenever I got the phone call that I did in fact have cancer. It was completely off guard, not expected.

I went in for a routine surgery, and they found a golf ball sized mass in my abdomen. It turned to be malignant, and then go into chemotherapy treatments which I did for a year. And just to be in just a place where suddenly everything was between me and God because everything else in my life had been relational in nature until cancer. Cancer felt like my creator God... and it wasn't that I didn't love him. I still loved him deeply but it felt as though he had walked by me on the street and knocked me in the gut and just kept on walking. And I was left to say, "Wait a minute! What just happened? Why me? Because we were going one way, God, and I thought we were going this direction, and then suddenly this happens."

So what I began to see and learn after chemotherapy and in the midst of that valley is that's right where he wanted me. It was on purpose that he caught me off guard with

that. It was on purpose that... and it really is like a fight. It's like a wrestle. It really does feel almost like a sucker punch when things like this happen in whatever that is. For me it was cancer that took me to that place of seeing God in this way, a different perspective of seeing God and wrestling with God and believing God in this place of pain and suffering.

My life as a child, I grew up with a lot of abuse. I was a victim of rape as a teenager and I had a very promiscuous upbringing -- I mean very promiscuous teenage years; tampered in so much sin and rebellion. And carried those things into my marriage, had those deep woundings, and God brought me out of that through a suicide attempt. He rescued me from a suicide attempt and redeemed me and restored my life.

But everything in my life that had happened to that point had been about me and another person. It had been relational in nature so I had to deal with the other person, reconciliation, forgiveness, and old victimization and insecurities, and all those things with other people. Suddenly, I've got cancer and I'm 31 years old...

James: At a time you think you're walking the way you should with God.

Kasey: Yes. Yes! I'm coming up out of this and it was right when we released my very first book called Named by God. And it was this story of redemption, this gut-wrenching story of redemption and what it looks like for me to overcome...

James: So you're in the center of God's will and this is not the kind of thing that should happen. It makes no sense.

Kasey: Right! It makes no sense because I'd truly, for all accounts that I could see, I was going to church, I was loving my kids, I was loving my husband, as far as I knew I had dealt with my sin. And here I get this phone call that...

James: Broadsided you.

Betty: You felt like you were caught off guard, so to speak. Like what the heck?

Kasey: Like God had picked a fight.

James: Why me? Why now? Makes no sense. Okay, obviously God didn't zap you with it; yet you in it, it's here. Okay, how did you handle it? Where did you go?

Kasey: Well, I didn't handle it that well. I struggled. I doubted. I had fear. I still struggle with fear.

The doctors have told me that I have incurable cancer; it is something that I will fight for the rest of my life. What I did was I started to go back and read the Bible, read God's Word now from a different perspective. I wanted to look at the people in God's Word that had gone through these places. And what I saw there was breathtaking.

So I looked at the Bible completely different now, and all the people on those pages, he had picked a fight with, for his glory, because he can see the entire painting -- he can see the landscape of eternity and he sees his glory and he sees how that's going to be used for his glory and for our good. And we can only see the brushstroke on the canvas; we can only see the small part.

So what I began to see on the pages of God's Word as it leapt out and it captivated me with this new place of understanding God. This place of that sometimes catching us off guard, well, that's faith first of all, because if we know what's going to happen to us, there is no trust in that. We know the end scene; if we know the final product, where are we trusting God? He's got to catch us off guard. It's got to be something we would never expect because that's where great faith is developed and that's what I began to see over and over in the lives of all the people in God's Word; is that the deep places, the champions of faith, where people who went through horrible persecution and suffering and pain and trial and doubt, and God was not caught off guard by any of this, he was not surprised by any of this, he was the author of all of this and he wasted none of it.

That is where he has brought me is that this was not some punishment for my sin, it was not an attack from Satan. Like Job, God had everything to do with this for his glory and I do believe that because I believe it is through pain and trial and suffering and the fire that our great faith is developed.

James: It's certainly tested in the fire. It's tested in the trial. It's testing in the testing -- in the challenge. I see a glow and a glory, I told you that before we came out here. There's a holy glory; your husband has a peace on him.

I think that what you all are doing, which I really want to get to that because your raw faith, you're dealing with this and pressing on toward the prize, toward the mark, toward Christ, toward his will, is beautiful to see. It is not like you're blaming him for the pain or the challenge. You're saying, okay, here it is. All right, develop what you

want to develop, which is a stronger faith, a trust, a confidence, a rest, a peace, in the midst of the storm; Jesus slept and the storm's raging. Seemed to me, they're troubled, he's still in the boat.

Okay, so he's with you, here you are. Now I want you to tell the viewers what you and your husband are excited about doing and what you're focused on and captivated by because I can tell it's so real in the midst of this storm. You live, he lives in you and the life that he lives in you is being poured out on people who could be so easily forgotten and overlooked but you can't because he doesn't. And so the life he's living in you spills out over here. Tell people what you're doing. I want our viewers to hear it.

Kasey: Well, when we were going through chemotherapy it was some of the darkest days of our marriage. My husband was having to take care of me and the children and I couldn't get out of bed and I was very, very sick as you can imagine.

I realized... a year later you look up and a year's passed and you realize that everything has been about you. And suddenly, everything is so heavy and life, the purpose and the meaning of life and what we're here to do as believers has gotten blurred; the line has gotten blurred and you can't see it clearly. So God in his grace and his mercy, he took us from the pain of chemotherapy and the dark days of chemotherapy right into really a mission field right here in the United States.

So my husband and I work and live full-time as leadership staff at a ranch facility in Texas called Still Creek Ranch. We, right now, are the only long term facility that rescues children, minors ages 5 to 17, we rescue them out of crisis and we give them hope and we give them healing and restoration and we point them to Jesus. And so I had to go through cancer to be able to do –

I'm the licensed counselor there on staff and so I talk every day with all of these kids that come from such victimization. We can't even fathom the lives that they have come from, the abuse and the betrayal and the hurt. And just girls rescued off the street out of trafficking; girls that had been used by men and addicted to drugs so that men could just use their body over and over and over and that's all they know of life. And then we get them and this is where God is -- now I'm still wrestling with him but this is where he's brought me through cancer and it is just glorious, you can tell I'm fired up about it.

I'm passionate about what God is doing because I want people to be inspired to see their pain from this place that I'm no different than the girl rescued out of human trafficking. I'm no different than the young boy that's been brought up by a mother

who is a prostitute and told he has no value. That the pain that we have been through, the fire that we have been through...

First Peter says we are like gold that is dipped into the fire and the impurities rise to the surface. And when you bring the gold out it is more valuable, it is more weighty and it more clearly reflects the character of Jesus. And that's what we get to tell these kids. I couldn't deal on a daily basis with these kids that are coming out of these crisis situations had I not seen this place of God. And so when they come it is not, "I'm so sorry this happened to you." It is not, "Poor you, you're a victim." Instead it is, "You're going to change the world because God has chosen you to go through such pain and trial and it is on purpose. There is not one thing that happens in your life that is not on purpose and for his glory."

And I have to believe that God. I can't unsee the things that I have seen. It would be a lot more comfortable, I think, with people if I could just unsee some things but I can't go back. I cannot go back to where God has brought me. And it is to a place where it is not about... see God in our pain and our trial and our suffering, illness, hurt, rejection, disappointment, God wants to take us to a place where it is no longer about our circumstance but it is about who he is. He wants us to see his character, that he is faithful when we are faithless. He is constant and unchanging and abiding, and everything he does is on purpose and for his glory.

And so to look at our life with that thread tying it all together, it really changes our perspective of who we are and who God is. And suddenly, the most loving thing that he does for us is pick a fight. Suddenly, the most loving thing that he does is strip everything out of our life that we could depend on outside of him, and that's what he did with me through cancer. That he had to strip everything down; and that was the most loving thing that he could do -- like taking the training wheels off of my kid's bike knowing that he's going to fall. I know that my son, when we took the training wheels off of his bike that he's going to take off and he's going to fall. But if I never took the training wheels off... the most loving thing I could do is take the training wheels off so he would learn to ride.

And everything -- if we could begin to see that everything that we go through takes us to that place where he is deeper or satisfying and our life is more purpose-filled -- I mean it is glorious!

James: Now when you got yourself totally even in the midst of this battle, yielded to God and consumed by God, which we can see, something happened to your daughter in the midst of this. What happened?

Kasey: Yes, I love to tell this story. And it is in the book because it was a day that again was one of my darkest. I was so sick. I had just finished, I think, my third round of chemotherapy and it was like really strong; it was like five different chemos in one. It was killing me; it really was. I couldn't get out of bed. I was angry, and I was scared and I felt very alone.

It was Christmas Eve, 2011 and I was in the bed and it was late. My daughter came in the room and I was just overwhelmed. I was laying there in such pain I couldn't move, even if the pillow touched me it would hurt. And my daughter never gets out of bed but I was laying there in the bed and she never gets out of bed in the middle of night but she got out of bed late, it was about 10:00 that night on Christmas Eve. And she came into the room and she said, "Mommy, I need to tell you something."

I remember responding like I was frustrated, just "Emma Grace" -- her name is Emma Grace, "Emma Grace, what?" She's seven years old. And "What do you need? Get back in the bed." She crawls up into the bed with me and I remember just aching and agonizing because she was touching me and it hurt. And I'd just been laying there just crying out to God in that... just moments before she'd come into the room; crying out to God, "God, why?" Really almost, "Why have you left me here for this? Is this really what you want?"

And here comes my daughter. She crawls up next to me and she lays next to me and she said, "Mommy, I just need to tell you that I want Jesus in my heart. And I want to go to heaven with you." Because she really believed -- we had prepared our children and she really believed that she -- we talked about death and we talked about heaven and we talked about hell and we talked about salvation. And she really believed that might be where Mommy is going, and if she's going, that she wants to.

But she had this supernatural divine moment with God and it was so gracious of God to send her to me in that time. See, it was her coming to faith, it was her salvation experience because it was unexplainable. It was so God pursuing her and bringing her heart to him, and then it was a renewing of my faith. At the same moment, my daughter, my seven-year-old daughter is experiencing faith for the first time and then here I am being renewed through that. And to me, it was just one of the most remarkable moments of love and grace that God has given me in my life.

Betty: That's the preciousness of God because he does... he is faithful. And I think through his faithfulness and your trust in him, you've proven to be trustworthy to God and that's why he can trust you with this challenge in your life knowing that you're

going to look to him for all your faith and all your strength as you do what he's called you to do.

Kasey: Thank you.

James: And we've been on this journey and we didn't lose, even though our precious Robin, with cancer, went to heaven. And what has happened to you, Betty, when this is the sort of not the end but a chapter?

Betty: Well, it was the end of a chapter to the fact that we don't have her here with us physically anymore but I know where she is and she is happy and she is whole -- she is healed. God did not fail us. God did not disappoint us. God was there right -- and still is -- right in the center of this journey that we've been on. I know his faithfulness; he is true and he is there.

He didn't say we would avoid these heartaches or this pain but he said, "I will walk you through it and I will be with you and you will come out on the other side." And we're seeing the other side of it. And I do, miraculously count it all joy.

James: Many of the people you referred to, which we can read about in Hebrews, the chapter didn't end; that great faith chapter talked about people being sawed in two. Their faith would be fulfilled in us. I don't think there is any way to describe how many people have come to Christ because of the life of Christ expressed through our daughter Robin. I don't think there is any end to the number of people who will be touched by the raw faith God's developed in you, a girl who was abused and hurt, and yet who went on foolishly to do things that were not appropriate as we all tend to do. And God is faithful; he develops our faith in the journey. This is a remarkable story.

The web site to talk about this outreach to children that is simply supported by people who love, how would they find out about it? Say somebody needed what you offer or they want to be involved, they want to help you do what you're doing, how could they find the web site about it? What would it be?

Kasey: They would go to StillCreekRanch.org. So that's S-T-I-L-L.
StillCreekRanch.org.

James: And it is close to Texas A&M. I want to say the students, many of you love God so much. It's amazing, some of you I know, you may want to go help them as students. Look them up and help them. We'll be checking in to see how we can help

you. Get the book. As a matter of fact, I'll send it to you today if you'll do this. Would you say thanks to Kasey for being so open?

Kasey: It is an honor to be with you. Thank you.

James: And may God complete fully the healing process here, as well as in all eternity. Would you do something? Would you help us work a miracle right now? Please! I want you to look, I want you to hear and see a mother, and then I want you to be the answer to the prayers of thousands of mothers because you can be the perfect answer. This is not wishful thinking. I want you to watch closely.

Begin video clip

Announcer: The Bible says that gray hair is a sign of wisdom and gives prestige to old age. And when most of us reach the so-called golden years, we yearn for a lifestyle of leisure and pleasure. But for this proud grandmother who lives in a poverty-stricken village in Honduras, life has some different priorities. Her name is Petrona and she spends several hours a day walking to collect water for her family. While this hike is tragic enough for a woman like Petrona, the heartbreaking reality is the water she is collecting is contaminated and potentially life-threatening to her grandchildren.

Open Captions: We come here several times a day to get our drinking water. It takes us so many hours because we have to stop because it's so steep. The sickness starts with runny noses; then a bad flu disease with diarrhea and vomiting. Even us old people get stomach pains. I would kneel down and thank the Lord if we got clean water. Even though I'm old and probably won't be here much longer, my grandchildren would use the new water well.

End of clip

In the studio:

James: I know you know how grandmothers think and she is saying, "I may not be here much longer but it sure would be nice if we had a well that we could just go to." It seems like a pretty simple request; doesn't it, Betty?

Betty: It really does. She has the heart that a grandmother would have in caring, in warning her grandchildren to be well and not wanting the cause of any death of her

grandchildren to be because of the unclean water. But yet she still goes on that long journey. I know she has to stop and rest and get that water that she knows is going to hurt her grandchildren but they have to have the water. The request she has is if they could have some clean water.

James: We've watched all -- when we started our Friends for Life, I don't know how many of you remember this but this goes back nearly 20 years, we showed two little boys that had to walk, I don't know five miles to a dirty water source and then they carried it in a bucket, it took both of them to carry. You see them, there they go. Then we watched the women with the big pots of water on their head and marvel how they could balance it and walk with it and walk so far. And they take it back to utilize it and so often, it's diseased-ridden.

You know Betty and I started years ago saying we need to do something about this, and the big "we" was you because we did not know if people would help us. But you really have lived up to be the very people the missionaries said they believed you would be. Because when we called the missionaries the greatest Christians the missionaries always corrected us and said, "No, the greatest Christians are the ones that enable us to come and help; they send us -- and they don't send us empty-handed."

Betty, for so many years and you think, we've been ministering over 50 years and the last 25 years of it has been to the ends of the earth -- to the unseen, overlooked, precious people. If God notices a sparrow that falls, not a cardinal, peacock but a sparrow, it means he's looking at what you don't notice. And so we said notice... the grandmother noticed the children and you've done it and you've enabled us to drill water wells.

So now we want to complete this year's project of 500. We're more than halfway there. And we've got some friends that said because the need is so desperate in Angola we'll match what you give so we can drill the 68 wells that are desperately needed right there where they're drought-stricken.

So would you go to the phone today? Take your bankcard, make the largest gift you can; write a check, call us, tell us what you're mailing or go online LifeToday.org and make the largest gift you can make; and for Angola, know it will be matched.

Father, I pray every person watching will give something today; in Jesus' name. Whether it's \$48 or \$144 or \$4800 for a whole well or part of a well, please do it today.

From the depth of our heart we ask you to express God's heart and make the best gift you can. Please do it! And thank you for it.

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: Betty and I express thanks for all the grandmothers like the one you saw there and all the children, grandchildren. And we offer beautiful helps for you. If you'd like to have Kasey's book, *Raw Faith*, we would be so happy to send it to you. So just give

us that opportunity. But would you also join us just saying thanks to Kasey for her testimony?

Kasey, bless you! Bless the work there.

There is the web site for the ranch that you may want to check out. You may even be a part of helping. Thank you for watching *LIFE Today*!