

8/26/14
Week 35: Christmas Shoes
Nick Vujicic

Randy: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm Randy Robison. This is my gracious wife Debbie. Are you having fun?

Debbie: Fun!

Randy: We're sitting in this week for my parents. They are taking a much deserved break but they will be back. We have a guest that has inspired us so many times over the years and he has really reached people all over the world. He's been on shows everywhere; he's been on Oprah, just to name one. He's got a new book called *Stand Strong* where he touches on a topic that impacts a lot of kids -- a shockingly large amount of kids. So we're going to talk to him about it. Would you welcome Nick Vujicic to *LIFE Today*?

Nick: Thank you!

Randy: Now the irony here, *Stand Strong*. Is that on purpose? Like *Life Without Limbs*?

Nick: Right! We thought it was a cool title. That no matter how tall you think you stood you still stand strong; not comparing yourself to other people, just knowing that within yourself you know the truth of your value and what you stand for and have a firm stand.

Randy: You mentioned to us before that when you were 10 you tried to commit suicide. Give us the sort of what happened there and the why as to that.

Nick: I was brought up in a beautiful loving home, Christian home. We went to Sunday school every Sunday and learned about the love of God. I was real enthusiastic, singing at the top of my lungs at times. And then at school I didn't understand why I had less than everyone else. I prayed for arms and legs and arms and legs did not come.

So God says he has a plan for you and you're like, "Can I suggest a plan B if you don't mind, God?" Anyone try and ask God for a plan B? I did too. I just felt like I was alone. I felt like I was forgotten by God. I didn't know what kind of life I would have. My fear was being dependent on my parents for the rest of my life, never being married. I thought even if I got married I can't even hold my wife's hand, won't be able to dance with my bride on our wedding night. How am I going to hold my kids when they are crying?

My parents who love me and held me when I cried and said, "Don't worry! Don't worry! It's going to be okay." They sometimes said, "Well, you're just special."

I'm like, "I don't want to be special!" Rrhhr! Like I felt like there was a greater purpose perhaps but I just couldn't see it.

It was basically the choice of saying, "I don't see hope, I'm not going to look for hope anymore. I'm going to give up." Sadly, a lot of teenagers feel that way.

Randy: What contributed to that from school?

Nick: The bullying aspect of school. Obviously, I can't hide the fact that I have no arms and no legs. I can't go incognito and just put a hat on and sunglasses. I get the unwanted stares. Little kids, they're pointing at me. I try to mix it up a little bit with how I react. Some kids come up and say, "What happened?"

I say, "Cigarettes."

[Laughter]

So I try and mix it up a little bit. But it was a difficult thing for me to overcome. It was really the bullying at school that let those lies of the enemy grow.

We know that the truth of God and his love for us is written in the Bible. The Bible says I'm wonderfully and fearfully made in Psalm 139. It says that God hasn't forgotten me. He has more precious thoughts of me than all the grains of sand in the world.

Yet when we let a seed of lie grow, saying, "You're not good enough, you'll never be anyone. God doesn't love you." All this stuff, if you let that grow, it overcomes you.

So my parents were there to encourage me and remind me of the promises of God as much as they could.

Randy: Now you are -- it baffles me a little bit that you were subject to bullying because I would think it is easy to pick on the kid who we just don't like but it was like we would have a little more sympathy for you, truly. But evidently this is a big deal. You're finding that a lot of kids are bullied or feel bullied in some capacity.

Nick: Yeah. I actually feel like we've got to come on an equal plane here. If it is "heartless," (these are my quotation marks,) "heartless" to pick on a guy with no arms and no legs, why is it less heartless to pick on someone who is in a broken home? Or looks different? Look at me, I look different. Why is that? So we've got to understand though that the power of your words are so -- I think underestimated at times. We underestimate the power of our negative words. We underestimate the power of words of encouragement as well.

So the power of affirmation in encouraging people to be all that they can be it's building them up instead of tearing them down and dividing them.

I just feel like everyone thinks, well, it is just culturally acceptable. I don't think it should be at all. We know God doesn't accept it and I believe the first schools that should stop bullying altogether should be the Christian schools because we claim to know the love of God. And the youth group gossips and all that stuff, bullying starts at the home, bullying goes to the workplace, bullying goes through all parts of our life because we know that at the root of all bullying is evil from Satan but if you know the truth, the truth will set you free.

Randy: How exactly do you define bullying?

Nick: That's a good question. A lot of teenagers, they ask me how do you know if someone is a bully? I simply say that if three people think that you're a bully, you're a bully. Simple -- right?

And we're like, "Oh, yeah, really?"

"Well, what if I just spread gossip?"

Well, if you spread a fire you're just as bad as starting the fire. So we've got to imagine God's thoughts and feelings when we tease and put other people down. We are all God's children; we are all wonderfully and fearfully made. We don't know if those

people are being sexually abused at home, have already written letters to say good-bye to their family and friends.

And I know when I was at school many people didn't know how many times I was already teased that day. And one girl, she stood out to me in a good way after being teased 12 times by 12 different people, accumulatively 12. I'm thinking I'm just going to get out of here. I don't want to come back to school.

This girl who didn't know how rough a day I had, she saw me. She said, "Hey Nick!"

I'm like great! Here's another one. She comes up and she says, "Nick, I just want you to know that you're looking good today!"

And I'm like, "Ah!"

[Laughter]

And all of the sudden now you don't care what the other 12 people think. So coming back to the truth, the truth of your value is not determined on how you look or how many friends you have or what achievements you have, God loves you just the way that you are. You don't have to be anyone else. Be the best you you can be. Do your best and God will do the rest.

Debbie: You said in your book that being bullied in a sense made you stronger or launched you into what you felt you should be doing.

Randy: How's that?

Nick: That was an amazing story. When I was 17 years old, I had to wait an hour after each school day to wait for my taxi to take me home. The janitor in my high school and I became friends and we talked about everything. He looked at me one day and said, "You're going to be a speaker."

I said, "You're crazy!"

He said, "You're going to share your story."

I said, "I don't have a story."

He encouraged me to speak in front of a small youth group at the school, a prayer group at Friday. After three months of me saying no, he twisted my arm. I said, "Yes."

[Laughter]

I went there, and people were crying. I'm like, "Are you okay?"

And this girl said, "Yeah. I was just touched."

I'm like, "Who touched you?" Like I didn't understand.

Then youth group started asking me to go and speak, and people were crying. And my mom's like, "What are you doing?"

I said, "I don't know. I'm just going to speak."

She said, "What are you speaking about?"

I said, "I don't know but they're crying."

She said, "Why are you making them cry?" I didn't understand.

But the big pivotal thing was 12 years ago when I was 19, I got up in front of 300 sophomore students. I had seven minutes to talk, I was really nervous. My palms were sweaty, my knees were shaking, and within three minutes half the girls are crying and one girl put up her hand and she said, "I'm so sorry to come and interrupt this speech but can I come up there and give you a hug?"

In front of everyone she came and she hugged me and she cried on my shoulder. And she whispered in my ear, "Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! No one has ever told me that they love me. No one has ever told me that I'm beautiful the way that I am."

I was in shock because if my parents had never told me those simple truths persistently, planting those seeds of faith and love and ignoring whatever grows or does not grow but being persistent and sharing, "Nick, you're beautiful! Nick, God loves you. Nick, we love you! Nick, we're here for you." I wouldn't be here if I didn't have that.

So that's when I was called to the ministry of saying, okay, God, I get it. Use me if you want me to share my story and if only one person is saved, when you don't get a

miracle, you can still be a miracle for someone. I'm like, "God, if you want to use me as a miracle, I'm here. I'll go anywhere you want me to go."

Randy: No doubt. Sort of the encouragement is the opposite side of bullying thing, for those who don't get any encouragement, what do you suggest they do to kind of build that shield around them if they're not getting the encouragement?" Yes, we should be encouragers but there are some people watching right now who are saying, "I don't get any encouragement." What do you tell them?

Nick: The greatest encouragement is knowing what your heavenly Father thinks of you.

Let me give you this quick story. When my wife was pregnant with Kyoshi, my wife Kanae, my baby boy, I'd never seen him, never touched him, never saw his smile. I put my foot on her womb to feel him kick. And when I felt him kick I just teared up, straight up, and I looked at my wife, and I said, "Babe, I love him. I just love him because he is mine." So remember that God loves you simply because you are his, that's number one.

I talk about in the book, *Stand Strong* how to build your own self-defense system against bullying, how to humbly stand tall; to understand that most of the time it's not you who has the issue, it is the bully who has the issue, who has the insecurity, who has the fear, who feels like they need to control other people, to feel like they need to be noticed or have some sort of reputation. You've got to assess the situation. Not every bully is the same.

I realize that the biggest bully in our school was in a foster home and he kept going from foster home to foster home. I didn't know that until later. So what we've got to understand is first of all assess the situation. Respect the bully. I've got to love my enemy. I've got to pray for my enemy.

Sometimes I would approach people who are teasing me, my bullies and I'd sometimes say, "Hey, just quit it. Stop it!" Sometimes they'd stop, sometimes they wouldn't. Sometimes it helped to tell my friends, sometimes it didn't.

So I talk about all the different tools that one can do in looking at their specific bully or bullying situation, assess it. Know first of all that within yourself you can stand strong. You are beautiful just the way you are. I don't care how you look, I don't care what job you have, I don't care anything anyone says about you, I love you because Jesus loved you. Jesus loves me; not because of how I look or what I can do for him.

He loves us. He has a plan for us. No matter what anyone else says, no bully can define who you are.

So there are a couple tools that we share and I share the whole thing. I admittedly head butted a kid. You're going to ask me about? All right! I'm ashamed of that today.

Randy: You fought back.

Nick: I fought back.

Randy: And is there a time for fighting back?

Nick: See that's the thing. To me, I believe, if someone -- because I had someone come up to me and rattle my wheelchair like crazy; threatening to push me out of my wheelchair.

Randy: See, I'd punch him.

Nick: I can't, right? So I'm thinking...

Randy: Oh, I know but if I was next to you and someone came up and did that to you, I'd go, "Get off him."

Nick: So if someone is attacking you, I also -- I even talk about having self-defense classes, even for the confidence that you have. If someone is actually trying to kill you, that you at least know how to do -- get in self-defense mode or get into a position or whatever.

I don't endorse attacking back for the idea that that's going to solve any situation. Gossiping back is not going to solve it; punching them back doesn't solve anything.

And the guy that teased me that I head butted said, "I bet you can't fight."

It was like a conversation that just started out like, "What do you mean I can't fight?" So I was trying to be big brave Nick. I was even shorter than now and I'm not even three foot. So he never touched me again.

Randy: What did you do just whisper until he got... "Huh? Huh? What?"

Nick: No, no. What happened was -- I don't like... anyway. This is my... This is real. In grade four he said, "I bet you can't fight."

I said, "I'll prove it to you. Let's meet on the field."

We were there. There were 20 people there; about 16 girls and about 6 guys and they were like, "Oh, leave him alone!" And the last thing I want is pity.

I'm like seriously, is he really going to pick on a guy without arms and legs? Like really? And I'm like how low can you go? So that's so bad; right? So I'm thinking, "Well, you've got to get on your knees."

And he said, "Well, get out of your wheelchair." So now, he had hands and he's got full advantage. I'm thinking he's not going to push me over. I walk up to him, he pushes me down.

Everyone's like, "Leave him alone!"

I get up, against my wheelchair, get up again and start bouncing faster toward him. Pushed me down again; I'm like, "That's it!"

I charged like a bull and I go like a missile. I get some ground and I go like [whuhkk] like right in his nose. And he falls back and everyone is like, "Yeah!"

Randy: Go Nick!

Nick: And I'm like, "Oh, no!" I figured I'm going to get in trouble. I felt, I'm the P.K. right? I'm the pastor's kid so I got to tell mom and dad before they find out because I'm going to get in deep trouble.

I told them, "Hey, mom and dad. I beat up a kid at school."

[Laughter]

And they didn't believe me. So I was like, "Oh, that was awesome!"

But the point is, yes, I've been there and I've even tried that to sort of prove a point but that never solves anything. That never brings a completion and you know within your soul, and in your mind and in your heart, knowing that you have been created for a

greater purpose. You have angels around you. You are filled with the Holy Spirit that raised Jesus Christ from the dead. When enemies come at you and lies come at you, come back to prayer. Come back to the basics of knowing why you were created.

Randy: What is the best response to the bully?

Nick: The greatest response that I've ever had I went up to one of my guys and I said, "Hey, can you just stop?"

He says, "Stop what?"

I said, "Can you just stop saying what you say every time you see me for the last three weeks?"

"Oh, you're hurt!"

It takes you to swallow your pride to admit that, "Yeah, it actually does hurt me, so please stop."

And he genuinely realized, "Oh, okay."

And I said, "So I forgive you."

He's like, "What?"

I said, "I forgive you."

I said, "Give me a hug!"

He said, "What?"

I said, "Give me a hug!"

And he gave me a hug and he never picked on me again. I actually believe that he stopped teasing other people because he realized that it is not just everyday life, it's what he was always been used to but he doesn't realize the full effects of his words until that day. And he was like it's not cool anymore.

Randy: And you showed him honesty and you showed him love.

Nick: Love -- showing them love is the greatest thing. And that's hard to show love to someone who hurt you or abuses you in any way, shape or form. And that's where we need help. So I talk about sharing it with your friends and your family and having people pray for you as well. That's a big thing. I had a lot of people praying for me.

Randy: No doubt. There's something we've been praying about around here and it is coming up, Christmas is coming up. We want to do something to bless people.

Nick: Awesome! I love what you guys do, by the way. I love it!

Randy: These are kids that are easy to love. So I want you to watch this and keep in mind when you join with us today, I'm going to send you *Stand Strong*, Nick's new book and it's going to bless you. But watch this so you can see how we're being a blessing in the lives of other kids around the world.

On the mission field:

Announcer: Unfortunately, there are children around the world who have many different kinds of needs. Some are hungry and thirsty, in need of food to eat or clean water to drink. Others still simply have never had a new pair of shoes or they're unable to smile due to a cleft palate.

>> All year long we come to you and tell you about things that change people's lives, that save people's lives and you're a part of that. I want to tell you what we want to do this Christmas, is we do what is called "Shoes and Smiles." A little child just like this that has a cleft palate, that's never had a real smile, we give them surgery and this little child will have a new smile. Little kids like this that have never had a pair of shoes before in their life, we give them one.

Announcer: A child with bare feet may seem harmless but the potential danger for children living in these types of conditions can be life-threatening.

James: One of the things we found in the Central American countries is that they have a real problem with hookworms, which they get from walking in dirt or sand and then it creates a tremendous intestinal problem.

The answer is just shoes. We can provide literally for some of them the first pair of shoes they've ever had, not only for fun and comfort, but for health.

Announcer: During the past several holiday seasons, *LIFE Outreach* and its missionary partners have passed out thousands of pairs of shoes to children in many different countries around the world. In addition, we have been able to restore numerous children's smiles through corrective surgeries.

>> You know we put smiles on the faces of these children today as we've given them shoes but others need a little more, they need that cleft palate surgery. I hope you can help put a smile on even more children's faces. Do the best that you can and you can give shoes and smiles to children all over the world. So I have a special message just for you --

End of clip

In the studio:

Randy: It was a privilege to be there in Cambodia on that trip, to give those shoes to those children. For some of them, it's the first shoes they've ever had, which is kind of hard for us to comprehend. We've got four kids. Have we ever given them shoes for Christmas? I'm sure we have.

Debbie: Yes.

Randy: Definitely, when they grow out of them and we've probably handed a few down a few times -- as much as possible.

This year, though, Christmas, we're already talking about it. It is too early for my taste. I'm the Grinch that doesn't talk about Christmas until after Thanksgiving.

However I want you to think forward with us because if you will partner with us not only will you give a gift that's not just a gift, it's something that's essential for these children. You won't just give them shoes which will make them more comfortable, (although it will,) you will give them something that will potentially save their lives. Think about that. Your gift of \$36 this year will provide shoes for 10 children. That's more than we could ever do over here when we're buying shoes for our kids. Your gift of \$144 will provide shoes for 40 children! A lot of you can do that.

When you do that we'll send you the Christmas Shoe ornament that you can hang on your tree this year; it is a great conversation piece and something to remind you of what you have done to change someone's life. If you can make that gift of \$1,000 or

more, not only will you give a child a smile, you'll give them the ability to smile; that will provide surgery for two children. I hope you'll do something.

Some of you can do more than I've mentioned. I'm asking you to do what you can. It's not just important, the amount that we give, it is the attitude with which we give. I hope you will go to the phone, go online, make that best gift you can and know when you partner with us not only will you celebrate the birth of our savior this year, you will celebrate his gift to us by giving a gift to someone else, a gift that will change their life. So partner with us; do it now. And let's give shoes and smiles to children around the world.

Begin video clip

Announcer: Poverty is a killer and because of it children needlessly suffer not only for 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. While that may seem minor in the light of all their needs, walking in 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 pair, and a gift of \$144 will help provide 40 pairs of Christmas shoes for children in need. With your gift of any amount, be sure to request this beautifully crafted red antique shoe ornament, a treasure to place on your tree each holiday season. With your gift of \$100 or more you may request a special boxed set of *LIFE*'s Christmas shoe ornaments from past years.

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 ask our commemorative glass sculpture "The Blessing."

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

End of clip

On the mission field

James: Well, we literally stopped by the road where I say we knew we would bring them shoes and I'm confident that we will because children like these need shoes -- all over the world. It is amazing. You may say, "Why would they stop and let you take a picture with them?"

Well, the truth is they stopped because I just got out and sat down here on the road and smiled at them. And they came over and started sitting down by me.

Then we explained to the parents through our missionary interpreter that our plan was to come right back to this area, this village and bring shoes. So that is our intention. But it is going to take you making that possible.

I'm asking you to give as many pairs of shoes as you can to put on these beautiful, beautiful feet of these beautiful children. Thank you! Thank you for your help!

End of clip

In the studio

Randy: Do go to the phone and you can put a smile on a child's face when we put shoes on their feet. I want you to get today Nick's book, *Stand Strong* because I know it will bless you. The stories we talked about today are in there and some other ones that you haven't heard and they're going to bless you. So call, go online, give and request Nick's book. Go to Nick's web site -- what is your web site, Nick?

Nick: LifeWithoutLimbs.org.

Randy: I wanted to get that in. And most of all, dude, thank you for the blessing that you are. And thank you for sharing that with everyone here at *LIFE Today*. You guys want to thank Nick?

[Cheers & Applause]

Announcer: Are you concerned about your family being ill equipped to manage resources when you pass away? Do you want to leave a legacy gift that impacts the lives of others? As a free service to our friends and partners, Life Planning Services, a ministry of Life Outreach International, is here to help with your estate planning needs and chart your financial future.

Do not put off this important step to protect your loved ones and leave a lasting legacy. Contact Life Planning Services today!