

9/1/14

Week 36: Christmas Shoes and Smiles

Ricardo and Jennette Sanchez

James: It is a privilege, it is an honor for us to share this time with you. I'm James Robison. My wife Betty and I prayed a lot for Christopher Reeve when he broke his neck. It's pretty tough when Superman breaks his neck and he's paralyzed. He really went to bat for people who are battling. We've got a guest whose son had the same break Christopher Reeve had, three vertebrae broken. I mean tragic! This is total paralysis. But this miracle that occurred, this young man is gloriously, perfectly healthy.

His mom and dad, Jennette and Ricardo Sanchez are here with us. He is a musician. They are a beautiful couple. They have three sons; and this miracle son. Would you say welcome to *LIFE Today* to Ricardo and to Jennette?

The book is titled, *It's Not Over*. You have a CD that has that title. You're going to sing a song with that title. We're going to know what it means. I want you to tell us because I know you are headed to basically an emphasis on the National Day of Prayer, and you were at the airport or maybe you were already on the plane. Tell us what happened.

Ricardo: Well, Jennette had -- it's a tradition, she'll take me to the airport in Atlanta. We had dropped the boys off at a friend's house to go swimming, two of our sons. She drops me off and ironically, I was headed to go be a part of the National Day of Prayer in Jacksonville, Florida. So that Hartsfield-Jackson to Jacksonville airport is about an hour and a half flight.

As my plane starts coming down my phone is bombarded with 911 emergency texts saying, "Get home" from my pastor, from my friends, from Jennette. I immediately

called Jennette. No weirdness going on in our ministry, just doing what God told us to do; just minding our own business.

I call my wife and she's screaming frantically on the phone, "They took him! They took him!" She's yelling, "Help me! Where are you?"

It wasn't that she is annoyed; it was a gut-wrenching cry. I'm surrounded by complete strangers on an airplane. I said, "Baby, who did they take and where did they take him?"

And she said, "Josiah," our middle son dove into the shallow end of a friend's pool and broke his neck.

James: How old was he?

Ricardo: Josiah was nine years old when this happened. We ironically had just again gotten back from central California, watching the seals in the San Luis Obispo dive in. So I can only imagine that's what he was thinking, is being the first one, the fire ball of the boys.

James and Betty, I'm surrounded by strangers. There is no B3 organ, there is no choir to sing, singing a miracle; it is just me and God. I get my gig bag, my guitar off of the plane and just fell to my knees.

And Jennette was again frantic. She had a different position. She was with our son. She actually took him to Urgent Care and heard the paramedics tell the story.

James: Could you tell when it happened and by looking at him something bad had happened or not?

Jennette: No, I couldn't, ironically. For any parent I think everyone could relate, you never want to get that phone call that your heart just hits the floor. His plane had just taken off and we've never really had any accidents, not even any broken bones in our home. I was driving home after his plane had taken off and I got a phone call from the

parent at the house where he was swimming. She said, "Jennette, Josiah is not okay." Obviously, you still get emotional when you think about it.

By the time I had gotten there, they had pulled him from the pool, and she said he definitely needs to be seen but he was able to move his extremities, he was able to move his limbs. And we went straight to urgent care and within seconds of being in Urgent Care they were rushing around. They had called Life Flight. They had him sedated on a board, his neck sustained. They had taken x-rays there and all the doctor says is, "If we don't hurry it is extreme."

So within 15 minutes Life Flight had him on the helicopter. I was not allowed to go on the helicopter; there were weight limits and balance issues. I just remember putting him on the helicopter and him saying, "Mommy, don't leave me." And he is nine years old at the time.

So they took him down to a children's hospital in Atlanta, which was about a 45 minute, hour drive. A friend came and picked me up and rushed me down there. By the grace of God, we had gotten there maybe within 30 minutes or so, and still hadn't heard anything other than when they took him, the paramedics just said, "Pray. There is a one percent chance of life in this."

And they didn't want to exacerbate any of the fractures while they were traveling via ambulance so they took him via Life Flight. So he was in the Jacksonville airport kind of waiting to hear a report of what was going to happen.

Ricardo: That's all we had. We just had each other. They say when one door closes and there's not another one open it is hell in the hallway, and that's what it was. We didn't know what the outcome was going to be. We just -- I fell on my knees, James. I was surrounded by complete strangers. I exited the airplane, past the ticket counter in terminal A. I'm 6' 5", weigh 200 nobody's business, you know what I'm saying?

[Laughter]

And I threw my hands over my head and it wasn't scripture... I wish I could say that I

got everybody born again and I raised a million dollars. It was ugly; it was me and God because I wasn't praying for somebody else's boy -- it was my son. And as I cried out to God I just remember people walking by me and making fun of the weird guy on the floor. But I tell you, I wasn't going to leave until a miracle happened. We didn't know if one was going to.

Over four hours we laid there and just begged God. I didn't remember any sermon but I tell you, if there was a rope of hope -- a rope of hope for me it was a song that we had written that says "It is not over and it is not finished, it is not ending. It is only the beginning because when God is in it, all things are new."

And we laid there and we got a phone call from a doctor that we had never met before that said, "I've got your doctor and your wife on the other line. Want you to know that I just met your mother-in-law in central California. We heard what happened. I called your doctor, spoke with them and we're not sure what you're doing but keep doing it because your son is going to be okay. Your son is going to be fine."

[Applause]

Jennette: "Your son is going to walk."

Ricardo: As a parent, nothing just takes the wind out of you. We sat there and not knowing what was going to happen and our miracle showed up. There are plenty of people out there who their miracle hasn't showed up. But I believe that Josiah is a testimony to those who are still in the hallway, to those who have gone and who have been fighting a fight. That you know what? We're going to see them forever in heaven; we're going to see them forever have a testimony -- parents, family members, of how God is sustaining them through a season of pain.

I just remember laying on the floor and thinking of the why factor. So many people are in a valley called why. Why did this happen to me? And the way that I envisioned it was literally the letter Y, capital letter. There is a valley. It takes no effort to fall into a valley. Somebody can push you into a valley. Remember what you were before you met the Lord. Remember what you did to me in the past. You can fall into a valley,

you can get pushed into a valley, it takes no effort but it takes unique muscles to crawl out of a valley. It takes discipline, intent, and focus. If you're not careful, you can spend 5, 10, 15, 20 years stuck into a valley and not just a good opportunity but a God opportunity can walk by you and you just don't want to get hurt again, you just don't want to take the risk again so you're stuck living in a valley.

As I was lying on the floor, and as we wrote this book, I suddenly realized one of the things that helped us through our valley, one of the things that helped us through this, it's not over moment, was picturing the arms of the Y and those who are struggling in the "it's not over season" is picturing the arms of the Y extended in worship.

I tell you, what I've realized in this season that if my worship doesn't change my situation my worship will surely change me. And it is not so much what happens to you that defines who you are, I believe, it's how you respond to what happens to you that will ultimately define who you are. There are some people who could be watching this morning that are in a valley because they had an abortion or they've had a divorce. But I tell you no longer do they have to be known as the one who had the abortion or the one who had the divorce. But I believe, through pursuing God that they can be the one who overcame the abortion, the one who overcame having a divorce, and ultimately seeing God victorious in their situation.

Betty: The beautiful thing we can know is if we live very long, everyone is going to experience that valley at one time in some way, that pain, that loss, that heartache, whatever. But knowing that God is right in the center of it and he will never leave us, and that's what we have felt as we walked through this journey in the loss of our youngest daughter over a year ago, that God has never left us. We know him like we've never known him before, if we allow God to work in us.

James: So you experienced a healing miracle but people like Betty and James, and you, wherever you are, may see this, this is the miracle we all pray for, long for, hope for but there is also the miracle of the impartation of grace worthy of our praise that he is sufficient. Though the mystery remain, then he still... he's there. We don't get all the answers. You wrote a song; it's the title of the book. By the way, this is in the

bookstores. And it's a great story of grace, what God will do. Would you like to hear him sing this song that has this message? Could you do that for us?

[Ricardo sings]

I know it's dark
Just before dawn
This might be the hardest
Season you've experienced
I know it hurts
It won't be too long
You're closer than you think you are
You're closer than you've been before
So look to the sky
Help is on the way
It's not over
It's not finished
It's not ending
It's only the beginning
When God is in it

Then all things are new
Ooh hoo
All things are new
Yes, they are
I believe the old is passed away
All things are new
New -- all things are new
New, new
Oh, oh!

It's not over
No, it's not

When God is in it
Oh, oh!
Thank you, Jesus
For the valleys and the mountains
Oh!

I believe something is moving
Turning around
Seasons are changing
Everything is different now
Here comes the sun
Piercing the clouds
Oh, you're closer than you think you are

You're closer than you've been before
Just look to the sky
Help is on the way
Our God is faithful
Faithful to say
It's not over
It's not finished
No, it's not ending
It's only the beginning
Not over
And God is in it
It might not be the way you want it
But oh!
When God is in that
When God is in that
When God is in that
Oh!
When God
When God is in that
All things are new

We believe Jesus
You can make things all new
Oh!
The old has passed away
When God is in it

When God is in it
There is no limit set
When God is in it
It's not over
It's not over
Oh!
When God is in it
It's not over
If our God is in it
I believe Jesus
You're still on the throne
When God is in it
It's not over
It's not over
Thank you, Jesus!
Oh! When God is in it
It's not over
It's not over
It's not over
It's not over

It's not over
Oh, Holy Spirit
It's not over
It's not over

If you believe it, give God praise!

James: Here's Josiah! Sit down right here, little buddy. How are you doing? Man, you're looking good!

[Laughter]

I want to say something to you because you're seeing a miracle. But now just come right in here on me and Betty together.

We lost our daughter. We watched her middle son and her youngest daughter graduate, bring roses to grandmother instead of mother. It's not over. Robin is more alive than she's ever been.

But here's the thing I want you to hear. When we think of Robin, all we see is life. All we see is Jesus. We only have precious memories of a little girl who grew up to be a mother, incredible wife, incredible example and all she left is a legacy of life. Betty and I draw on that. I don't know where you are but we praise him. And believe me, we feel what you feel, whatever is going on. You say, "I can't have what they just showed us." Yes, we do -- we can. Maybe not in exactly the same way, but we have a miracle-working God and he loves us and lifts us up.

And for all of you who prayed for us and pray for one another, listen, you've just got to know how special you are. Just say to God right now, "God, I praise you for being great! I praise you though the mystery remains, even though there is pain, I praise you."

Now Lord, God, let me reveal you. Let me share you; in Jesus' name.

Would you say thanks to God and to this family again just for sharing their testimony?

[Applause]

I would be more than happy to send you the book, *It's Not Over*. It is in the bookstores. You can go online and get it. But if you'll do something with us, if you would help us give these beautiful shoes for Christmas, we raise the funds way ahead of time to give 200,000 children a Christmas gift they would never expect. The missionaries say, "You have no idea what it does."

I want you to listen to one of our friends pour out the heart of God. Listen to her real close and then just see if you wouldn't like to bless children with such a simple thing. Listen closely.

On the mission field

Tammy: Something that we take so for granted is wearing a pair of shoes every day. I don't think any one of us watching this right now is without a pair of shoes but the reality is that there are hundreds of children around me at this moment that have no shoes. I love *LIFE Outreach* for so many reasons -- not just Water for Life or Rescue for Life or the food programs but even bringing shoes to little ones.

Listen, without it, they're in danger every single day. The simple things that we think about like even cutting your feet, walking in water that is diseased and full of bacteria getting into a cut. They could literally lose their life. What a privilege we have to bring them a pair of shoes. Every one of these little ones is going to get a pair of shoes today.

Tammy: What I love is that this simple pair of shoes has become a treasure to this little girl. I love that she is holding on to it like it's the greatest gift she's ever been given. And it costs very little! For a little amount of money we can produce thousands of shoes that can change a life, one child at a time, starting with her.

End of clip

In the studio

James: Well, Tammy, I love you! I love Jesus in you.

Most of you know, maybe here in the audience and at home that she lost her husband who was a great swimmer and he drowned. And she's just become a great missionary.

Aren't those children beautiful, Betty?

Betty: They really are! James, as I watch and we've been there. We've passed out the shoes and how precious and beautiful the children are. They're so grateful because it may be the only gift they've ever gotten of any kind. But they're so grateful and they do hold their gift close to their heart like that.

But I think of them and I think of our oldest daughter, when she was very small she loved her shoes. She had more than one pair though to protect her feet but she loved them. She slept in her shoes -- they were so precious to her.

But these shoes for these children mean so much more even though they may not realize it because they walk around and all the kind of disease that's on the ground that gets in their little feet in their cuts and it can eventually kill them and destroy them.

The fact that these shoes, yes, they are a beautiful little gift to them but they mean so much more -- they can mean life to them. So I hope you will join us and let's give a gift of love and life to these children.

James: Yeah, and I can go ahead and tell all of you that our daughter Rhonda never saw a pair of shoes she didn't want to buy. She is a shoe shopper to this day. And you know what's really interesting? Is it was her husband who really likes for his wife to be able to buy shoes that he has such a heart for missions that he designed and helped us have the little Christmas shoes to hang as an ornament to just remind you to pray for the children that they would have peace on their feet, not just shoes -- but peace.

And we're giving away this one for any gift. It's \$3.60 to buy a pair of shoes. \$36 will give 10 children shoes. And a gift of \$144 will give 40 children shoes. If you make a gift of \$100 or more we've got all four, including the one this year that we have offered over the years for you to just decorate your tree and any angle people come at your tree, they can see a shoe and it will remind them to love the little children of the world.

So what we're going to ask you to do, we try to say thank you in a way that is meaningful, but would you bless children and missionaries by dialing the number

there on the screen and saying, "You know what? I think I'll just give \$1,000 to help with the shoes but I think I'll also help you pay for those smiles for the little children with cleft palates that never been able to see their face and like what they see." We're going to give them a smile. And we're going to give shoes.

You know \$36, I think most of all of you could afford to do that. Would you do that and put it on your bankcard or go to LifeToday.org online and put it on and say, "Here's the gift"?

But if there's any way you could give 40 children shoes, \$144 will do that. There's a level at which all of us can participate. Would you make that love call right now and would you show people what Christmas is really all about? It is the life and love of God shed abroad in our hearts through the great gift of Jesus.

Please make that call today or go online. Thank you for doing it!

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

In the studio

James: Well, Betty and I say thanks from the bottom of our heart. We just praise God for the miracle that you've heard about, and the miracle that God sheds in abroad in our heart through the grace that we just praise him for. If you'd like to have the book, this story, we will happily send it to you if you just help us share shoes.

We want so much to be a blessing to you. We want to praise God and thank him for what he did for the Sanchez family, for their son Josiah. Would you say thank you, God and thank you to Jennette and Ricardo?

We love you, sir! Bless you! Thank all of you so much.

Thanks for being Friends for Life and sharing life!