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Week 39
Philip Yancey #1

Betty: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! Thank you so much for joining us. We're in beautiful Colorado. I'm Betty Robison and this is James.

James: We're here in Colorado because –

By the way, if you live in Texas during the summer and it is like 102 and you come up to Colorado and you go up on the mountains, it will be like maybe 72 and maybe like 42 in the morning. It is a pretty good break.

But we're here because there are some guests that have just impacted, really the whole church in the whole world because they are gifted, and they live here in Colorado. Betty and I really thought it would be wonderful if we could just come and spend some time with them, actually in fellowship but also to let them share with you.

Philip Yancey is our guest today. Later in the week you'll meet Andrew Wommack and his wife, and for her and for many of you who watch television, it will be the first time you've met Andrew's wife Jamie. She is just not real excited about being on television but she is doing this so you'll meet them together later in the week, Colorado residents, and we're thrilled that they're here.

We have Philip Yancey, who is one of the most gifted writers on planet. As a matter of fact, if you are a writer yourself and you read what Philip writes then most writers think I think I'll retire because he really does have a divine enabling that is so supernatural that you see it. And he is ministering out of his own journey but also observing other's journey with great passion and great sensitivity.

He's written a book that has always been highly effective, a bestseller, *What's So Amazing about Grace?*, *The Jesus I Never Knew* -- so many books that were Gold Medallion Award winners, millions of copies sold.

This one is *Where is God When It Hurts?* When you think about it right here in Colorado, people just in a few nights, 360 people lost their homes to fires that were uncontrollable. There was incredible pain: Why my home? Why here? Why did the wind blow this direction? Where is God when it hurts?

Connecticut, all the things that have happened -- the tornado damage, storms, the pain. And Betty and I understand that.

Well, Philip Yancey is with us.

And, Philip, we don't have a big studio audience to welcome you but Betty and I are so thrilled to be here in your beautiful state and to be able to talk to you. *Where is God When It Hurts?* You point out in your book that one of the first questions that comes up is why? How do you answer that?

Philip: Why did I write this book almost 30 years ago? It was the first book I ever wrote. As I think back on it now, it comes from my childhood. When I was just one year old my father and mother were planning to go to Africa to be missionaries. I had a three year old brother, I'm one. He contracted polio; he was in an iron lung, totally paralyzed; couldn't even breathe on his own, the iron lung breathes for him. A lot of Christians who are supporting him and were praying, believed he would be healed and they actually had him removed from the iron lung.

James: This is your dad that was going to mission field?

Philip: My dad was going to the mission field, and he died, and that "why" question has haunted me all my life.

When I started writing articles for Reader's Digest and other magazines, again and again, I would run into people who would ask just as you said, "Why did the tornado

hit this town and not that town?" "Why did the wind blow this direction and not that direction?" And I have stared at every passage in the Bible on pain and suffering and frankly, all I have to say is I don't have an answer to that why question.

Even when Job, (the oldest story in the Bible,) when Job had an audience with God himself, (if anybody deserved an answer to the why question it was Job), and basically, what God said was, "Job, you couldn't possibly understand. The universe is so much bigger than what's going on so get your mind off that question."

What we can concentrate on as Christians is not why did it happen but now that it's happened, what good can come out of it? Can it be redeemed? Can it be recycled? And that's why I turn to the question like where is God when it hurts? Why doesn't the Bible answer the why question?

I think if you pin down the people who wrote the Bible they would say, "What do you expect? We live in a broken planet; it's ruled by evil forces. Bad things happen." So we are here as God's representatives to bring comfort, to represent what God is really like, to bring that God of all comfort to people who are going through hard times.

James: You know it's interesting because, Philip, I basically heard in very earnest prayer and God seeking, not only in our behalf like when we lost a daughter to cancer, and you ask why, but way before that, when I looked at the pain of others and I've had plenty of sorrow in my life growing up in a broken home and not having a father, you lost your father. As a matter of fact, the way you tell and this is why your books are so fantastic.

When you even talk about how you looked in the iron lung and this was the only relationship you really had with your dad and you're watching him die, and there's no real interaction but he gets to see you for a few minutes -- it's very emotional to me just to see that. It impacted you greatly, you felt that. I think you had empathy and you could feel with others. So I've been able to do that.

But like when I was praying and seeing others in pain, I'd say, "God, I know they're asking why, why, why? They second guess and they wonder." And the Lord just

seemed to say to me so clearly, it was almost like he's really conversing with me. I think sometimes when we really shut ourselves up in his presence and draw near and get close to his heart, I think sometimes he really expresses himself where we can feel his heart and his mind. And he said, "The real question is now that it's happened, what will you allow me to do with it? What will you allow me to do through it? What is going to come from this that can be not only a blessing to you but to others?" Does that make sense? Is that a little bit of what you're hearing and sharing?

Philip: Very definitely. One of my friends is a religion professor at Whitworth College, his name is Jerry Sitser. He was in an automobile accident. His daughter was performing at an Indian reservation and some drunk driver going 85 miles an hour slammed into their van. He lost his mother, his wife, and his daughter all in the same accident. Actually held each one as they died because they were in a remote area and emergency couldn't get to them.

And he's written a couple of books and I've talked to him. He uses this word *redeem*, can this bad thing be redeemed? Now that's kind of an old-fashioned word. You could almost substitute the word *recycle*. You take an old aluminum can that's all smooshed down, you take it to the recycle center and they make something new out of it, something good out of it. It is a bad thing. I think that's what we can trust in as Christians.

There's that great verse, Romans 8:28 that God can use all things for good. Paul goes on in that same chapter to describe the kinds of things he went through and they included a lot of bad things: Shipwrecks, snakebite, prison, beatings, all these things and yet, as he looked back he said, "Every one of these things God used for good in my life." Not that God said, "Here, I'm going to make you suffer so something good will come out of it." We live on a planet where bad things happen. We don't have a promise that we are like Superman, like we're invincible but rather we do have a promise that no matter what happens God can redeem it, God can recycle it, and use it for our good.

Betty: I think, really, I know in our situation, in our tragedy because tragedy does come. We can't do anything different really to avoid it. God says we will suffer. But to

take that tragedy -- and it's okay at the beginning, I believe, to ask why. But we have to go beyond that and that's what I have sensed in my healing journey of losing a precious daughter that if anybody deserved to be healed here on earth we felt like she did.

But God had a different plan. We don't have the answers to all that but I want -- just as James said, I want to know, now God, what? Where do I go to from here? And I have never in this journey thus far felt God disappointed me.

This has been the key for me. I have felt his presence in the midst, right in the center of the whole tragedy. I have felt like I've drawn closer to him than ever before. And as Job said, "I thought I knew him. I didn't know him like I do now." And that is the joy that can come from such a tragedy is that closer relationship with him and letting that flow through us and relate to other people, to be a healing source to them because God wants me to go on living. He wants to put his life continually in me that I can be a blessing to others -- and I know that's what our daughter would want.

James: We got to see, Philip, as I look back, you're looking for the healing, how God binds up the brokenhearted. That really jumped out at me. I kept hearing it over and over and I'd preached, "I came to set the captives free, set at liberty those that are in prison." And it was so easy for me to preach that, but I never did seem to see in a significant way that first part, when Jesus made that announcement from Isaiah, "I came to bind up the brokenhearted." It was like when your heart's really been broken, what does it take to bind up the wounds?

He said, "I came to do it." So I found myself saying, and I've got to believe that somehow this is what you're doing, you're wanting to heal the wound, to bind up the wound, you want to help heal the brokenhearted. As I've sought that healing, all I can see when I look at Robin, 40 years of life. It's all she left on planet earth was the impact of life in her husband and her three children; I just see life. I guess I could wish everybody that's been hurt, somehow if you could move from the pain, the death, the loss, and you move into what God can do to show you the greatness of his life and the reality of his presence, his abiding presence -- and that's what we've been able to do.

Betty pointed out when we lost Robin when she was going through those early days, it was not long after that or right in that same time frame that the children were lost in the school in the shooting in Connecticut. And Betty said to me, "At least we knew Robin 40 years. We got to see the glory of God in her life and we got to enjoy them and we got to see what she did." These little children, six years or so, that's tough, Philip and you went there. You went to Connecticut.

Philip: I did. And right before I went, someone sent me a little statement from Fred Rogers, Mr. Roger's neighborhood. He was actually a Presbyterian minister and then became known as a children's television program. He said when he was a little boy, when a bad thing would happen, a tornado or the kind of things that we've had all year here in the United States, his mother would say, "Fred, when bad things happen, look for the helpers -- look for the helpers. Whenever bad things happen there are going to be people who come as helpers."

And I'll go back to that question that I started with, where is God when it hurts? I don't know the answer to the why question but I know the answer to where is God? For one thing, you can substitute where is Jesus when it hurts because he came to bind up the brokenhearted and all you have to do is follow Jesus around to know how God feels about people going through hard times. Jesus never once gave a lecture about, "You deserve this," or anything like that. He was there with healing even with resurrection. And you could also substitute, where is the church when it hurts? Look for the helpers.

In Newtown, Connecticut, in other places where I've been, Virginia Tech, Columbine, the church is there, Oklahoma, the New Orleans hurricane, you know this -- the church is there. And we are making God's presence known. We are helping that process of binding up the brokenhearted. And I think that's why God put us on earth to do God's will.

People talk about is it God's will that this tornado hit? I'll leave the theologians. What I say is, is it God's desire? And we know it is not God's desire for people to suffer because Jesus showed us what God's desire is: Healing, resurrection, and promised us there will be a time when there is no pain, there is no death, there is no sorrow, like

you guys have experienced, like all of us will experience at some point. That's God's desire. And for whatever reason, the stuff that we have to go through in this world is a way of getting to that point and that's what we Christians can represent.

James: And you know what I find is that when I identify with the suffering of others, compassion, which that's the reason people ask you, "Why do you help little children that nobody even knows their name? What will they ever amount to?" When I say that, I think boy, they're so big to God! So overlooked by others, but not by God. So he's looking for someone to touch them.

So when I see all these things that happen and the suffering, Paul said, "I want to know the fellowship of his suffering, be conformed to that death that I may know the power of resurrection life." I feel like there's something in identifying with the suffering of others from a God perspective or Christ perspective that we really identify with where they are, and in the same way we are identifying with Christ because he really feels, he wept because they wept when Lazarus was gone. He knew what was going to happen but he was moved with compassion. He saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion.

We need to be moved with compassion today. But what happens when you're moved with compassion is you can impart the life of God in that situation. So the answer to what you want to do with it; God led us in some way come out of this with the power of resurrection life over reality. I believe that that happens, Philip. In the midst of all of this pain people are going to begin to see Jesus. Isn't that what you've been trying to say in your book?

Philip: It is. Where is the church when it hurts? If we respond -- it is easy for people to blame God. We can represent that God of compassion, that God who actually took on pain himself. I'm so glad Jesus didn't come as Superman. The bullets didn't bounce off, the nails didn't -- he felt them, he experienced it. And here is, probably the worst thing that has ever happened in history, the murder of God's own son who had never done anything wrong. And what do we call it? Dark Friday, tragic Friday? No, we call it Good Friday because God can take even that worst thing that could possibly

happen and recycle it, redeem it into something that we look back upon as good. And that is the promise we have.

The worst thing that could happen, God can still make good out of it and that's every one of us can trust in that promise that no matter what happens, no matter what we're going through, God can somehow redeem it, can recycle it, make good out of it.

James: Philip, you are gifted beyond words. I'm not trying to be patronizing, I'm not after something. I love you, I appreciate you. You've blessed my life. I have sat as I have read *Amazing Grace*: What's so amazing about it, *The Jesus I Never Knew*, the book, *Where is God When It Hurts?* I just look at the gift God's given you and I realize he gave you that gift for us.

And when I said a moment ago that the Lord really made that real to me, that Jesus came to bind up the brokenhearted, listen, the majority of people watching us every day all over the world, I don't care where you are, you're hurting. You hurt. There is a loving God that is not for all that causes the suffering and pain but he is the one who comforts, who binds it up. Philip has done an incredible job helping you find this grace and this peace that you're looking for, the comfort.

Get the book. It is in the bookstores or you can go online. He has a new electronic, new version of this updated with all that's going on. It's fantastic. You can only get it online. There's how you get it. This incredible best-selling book that's blessed so many, we will send it to you if you just help us bless someone else at a very special time, I'll tell you about it in a moment.

But Philip, I want you to just talk tomorrow, what does the church do? How do we respond when we see people with the heartache? Because a lot of things church folks say, people don't need a sermon, they need a shoulder a lot of times. And boy, we download on people to their demise and not for the glory of God and you effectively deal with this. So I want to talk about it. Are you good with that tomorrow? Can we do that?

Philip: I am. Yes.

James: Let me just say this to you, and Betty and I do together just thank you for the privilege of being here with you... to spend this time with you. We count it an honor. I want to say to all of you who are our supporters. As a matter of fact, I was looking over our little donor list of friends that have been giving and so forth and just thinking, what remarkable people you are! I wish I could know all of you personally. The missionaries say that. They say you're the greatest Christians on the planet because you don't know them but you keep them doing the good things of God. And you have just this compassion, and you don't just say we care, you share because you care. Thank you!

We want to ask you right now to help us for Christmas and we have to do it now and this is the last week we're asking you to help, so we can get it for Christmas. We want to give 200,000 pairs of shoes for little children and we want to give smiles to children that need some surgery, cleft palate or whatever the need is. I want you to listen to Tammy Trent. I want you look at a little girl; she's going to touch your heart. Hey, let's bless little children like this.

On the mission field

Tammy: What I love is your smile! I love your smile. Getting a brand new pair of shoes is so exciting. It is exciting for any girl. So I know the feeling that you have right now and I feel so lucky to be the one to put these shoes on your feet.

That's what I love about *LIFE Outreach*. They're involved in so many amazing projects around the world and this is just one of them, putting shoes on the feet of little ones that are in desperate need of a pair of shoes. And I love how it makes you feel right now. I love that! There you go, baby.

Announcer: We admit it, like God our father, we have a soft spot for children. Those smiles... they get us. Sure, they come in many ways, lit up by fresh water, food, freedom but sometimes those simple things like shoes bring as much joy to the face of a child as that which saves their lives. There's a unique sparkle in their eyes. They

stand a little taller. And no, it is not because of the heel beneath their feet, it's because in these areas where their possessions are so few, shoes are greatly prized because for most, their feet have never seen them. What their feet have seen is disease, but shoes can change that and these are often their first pair. It's something many of us take for granted but their smiles show us they don't.

End of clip

In the studio

James: You've got to love that! You've got to love that smile and those children. Listen, when we look at them, we not only know we're giving them shoes, we're going to see them shod with the gospel of peace on their feet because those families, many of them you're seeing smile have already been led to Christ by the missionaries.

And we meet basic absolute necessity needs like food and try to get clean water to them, and many of these are where we drilled water wells. The missionaries have said, "Why don't we do something really special for Christmas for these children? Just give them something that they need but it will be a blessing and we'll be able to tell them about the Christ of Christmas."

Would you help us send 200,000 pairs of these shoes? We need to hear from you right now. They are \$3.60 a pair: \$36 we've got ten pair of shoes, \$144, we've got 40. And we're asking you to help us. We need to get it now and this is the last week. Would you do that? Is there any way you can help us give 40 children shoes? If you can, please do. You'll put a smile on their face. And Betty, don't you love to see those beautiful children?

Betty: I do, James. We love drilling the water wells, we love putting food in the bowls for the children to have the nourishment they need but this is something I think the child can really relate to; it is a gift to them personally that they put on their feet. I love it mainly because I know what it is doing for them; it could save their lives. They walk around in all these areas where they get disease, they get cuts on their little precious feet and I just look beyond just the gift of giving them some shoes. We're giving them life possibly because we're helping them avoid some of those diseases that can work up through their body just from a cut on their feet walking barefooted. So thank you

so much for being a part of this.

James: Well, Betty, you're right. It's a joy to them but it also is a gift of health. It protects them in so many ways. We are sending you this beautiful little Christmas ornament and I promise you, it will be a conversation piece when people see it, "What is that?" And you'll be surprised how many people -- maybe it won't be shoes, but you will make them aware of the importance of thinking about someone else, and at a time of giving, giving to those who least expected it and it's going to be wonderful.

Also remember we're giving smiles, as well as shoes for Christmas. We're asking you to help us pay for cleft palate surgery and the surgeons and doctors that are working with us have made it as economical feasible as possible. The surgeries are costing an average of \$500; some of them cleft palate, some of them facial deformity. Would you help? If you could give \$1,000 do it.

We're sending the Christmas ornament for any gift. If you could possibly help us give 10 children shoes with \$36 or 40 children with a gift of \$144, do it.

Please go to the phone right now; take your bankcard, use it like a check. If you write a check, do call us and tell us you're putting it in the mail. We need to know. We need to know this week. Or you can go to LifeToday.org and make your gift online. Thank you so much 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."

This is the last week! Please call, write, or make your gift online today!

End of clip

In the studio

James: Well, Betty and I say thanks for your help. I do want to say this to you. Of course, you can go to the bookstores, you can go online and there is the new book that is online, but if you would like to have *Where is God When It Hurts?* you can help us touch someone's life, whatever you can do, and we'll gladly send you the book. Just ask for it today; okay?

And we just thank Philip Yancey for being with us.

Philip, you agreed we'll do a program tomorrow and we'll talk about what the church should do, how we really best help bind up the brokenhearted.

Thank you so much for watching *LIFE Today*. And again, coming to you from beautiful Colorado. What a beautiful state! It is just good to be here with these Colorado citizens who have made such an impact for God. Thank you for making an impact for God.