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Week 39
Philip Yancey #2

James: Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm James Robison; my wife Betty and I are coming to you again from the beautiful state of Colorado. We came up here to be with Colorado residents that are in love with Jesus, who are highly effective. We're going to be talking to Andrew Wommack and his wife later in the week.

We've got Philip Yancey back with us today. Philip Yancey is not only one of the most gifted writers, authors, I think in our day and perhaps of all time, and he certainly studied the great writers. And when he talked about some of the profound impacts of highly visible people made on his own life he really delves into what made them tick. And it is amazing how he captured that but also how he transfers important truth that is oftentimes overlooked.

One of the books that he wrote years ago, he's actually now brought it up in a new version that is available online. Philip Yancey wrote the book, *Where is God When It Hurts?* Betty and I have experienced a hurt that no parent wants to experience. Children bury their parents; parents are not supposed to bury their children. We bury spouses. It is an incredible pain. Where was God? We've tried to share some of the insight and hopefully the help.

Well, Philip Yancey is here. What we're going to talk about today... and if you missed yesterday, go online and go back and watch it but we try to deal with the question why. This week, this day, we want to talk about what can the church do?

Philip, I really am glad you're with us and I want to thank you for allowing God to take the gift he's given you, use it for his kingdom purpose, in my opinion very effectively. You wrote this book because you experienced hurt, sadly as I know well because I have read your writing, you were hurt by religious people. You were hurt by dedicated religious people, Bible-believing religious people who could bludgeon you with the Bible. You came through with this amazing grace and you wrote about what is so amazing about it?

In your hurt, you asked the question why, where is God? And then you watched people asking you... you really went on a glorious pursuit to try and help them. I want to ask you first of all because we're going to talk about what the churches say -- why was this such a... let's say a passion for you to deal with the subject?

Philip: I began my career as a journalist and I started writing these Reader's Digest's drama in real life stories, people attacked by grizzly bears and caught in blizzards and all this. And as I interviewed people again and again I would hear something like this.

They would say, "I went through this trauma, I'm in intensive care in the hospital. I'm trying to get well. It's bad enough, frankly as I look back on it, the worst thing was the Christians who came to see me. The church made it worse. Because I'm lying there and I just want to get well, and some people come in and say, 'God's punishing you. You must have done something wrong.' The next person comes in and says, 'Oh, no, it's not God, it's the devil! The devil is attacking you.' The next person comes in and says, 'It is not the devil, it's God, but not because he's punishing you. He's chosen you to be an example to others.' And I'm just lying there. All I want to do is get well. I'm confused. What do I do?"

When I'm confused, I write a book because it gives me a chance to go to some people who know more than I do and investigate and go to the Bible and try to find some answers. One of the first things I learned is our words don't usually help. That should have been a message in Job; shouldn't it? Because his friends came for seven days and seven nights, they sat there and just grieved with him.

James: His comforters were tormenters.

Philip: ...When they started talking. Until they opened their mouths, I think they were good friends. It's when they opened their mouths and they had all these neat little pious theories about why God did this. Why Job, you deserved it.

And I love the scene at the end where God says, "You know, I'm not even going to listen to your friends, Job, unless they pray through you and then I'll listen to them. You're my kind of guy" -- even though Job had been protesting and whining and complaining.

And what I learned from that is, if you feel angry, if you feel upset, God can take it. He knows. We just have a little tiny view of the world. So get it out.

And what I also learn is those of us who come alongside, keep your mouth shut as much as possible. I've asked a lot of people, "Okay, these are things that church did wrong; who did it right?" And almost never do they say, "Oh, there was a theologian from this university who came and visited me." Often they don't even say their pastor. Usually it is somebody like a grandmother who sits there by their side, who when they need a glass of water gets them a glass of water. It's not the words! It's that practical demonstration of love and comfort that people need.

So that's my primary message to the church, speak slowly. Don't be a Job's comforter. Don't come in with words. So many of the words that we say that are well-intentioned come across wrong.

You say to a child, "God needed your father in heaven."

And a child's response is, "Wait a minute, I needed him as much as God needs him. I need him more than God needs him. I'm just a little boy."

We need to be careful of what we say. What we need to do is just express, "We hurt too. I know a little bit about what it's like and I grieve with you. I'm sorry, do you need to talk? What else do you need? Do you need a meal? Do you need somebody to look after your dog? What do you need?" That's how we show God's love even more than words in a time like that.

Betty: I know through what we went through in the loss of our daughter, that has been the most help to me is the family and the friends that have let me know that they're there, they're not trying to put all these scriptures on me even though I know that they love God and they're right there. They know the scripture but it is just being available and knowing that you're on their mind.

Because I know when this hit us, I thought, why is the world going on? Our daughter died! It should stop! And I know a lot of people feel that way. They think, do you not know the hurt I feel? So we need to be there for others just to let them know we care. We don't need to offer all our advice. Through our love, God's love coming through us, that's the healing power that will come our way.

Philip: Betty, I have a friend who was a grief pastor, here in Denver; went to a very large church, so large that most weeks they would have at least one funeral and always people in intensive care in the hospital. And his job was to be with those who were dying and about to die. Tragically, he himself died of a heart attack at a young age.

But I interviewed him one time. I said, "What have you learned?"

He said, "What I learned that helps me most, I learn scuba diving." He said, "When you're scuba diving, you can go really deep but you don't want to come up fast. You've got to come up slowly, slowly until that mixture of oxygen and whatever works in you. If you come up too fast, you get the bends; it can be fatal."

He said, "What I've noticed is that Christians who are around people who are in the depths, they want to get them to the surface as fast as possible. What they really need is somebody who would go deep with them and wait until their ready to come up, slowly, slowly." Not that you, you don't pretend you don't have some comfort and answers, of course you do, but let the person grieving set the stage of when they're ready to move up, when they're ready to move up.

Betty: One of the things that I've done along the way is journal. And if you read my journaling, you would see that one day I might be just be on the mountaintop and that joy is there. But the next day, I might be shouting out and be angry. So it is definitely a process.

Philip: It is a process. For those who maybe don't feel comfortable journaling, I'll say, you've already got the journal, just read the Psalms -- read the Psalms. You go to the hospital and you want to read Psalm 23: The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. Back up one Psalm, Psalm 22: My God why have you forsaken me? And the Psalms show exactly what you said, it is like a heart printout, up and down, up and down.

Betty: But we must not be discouraged because of that because that is the healing.

Philip: That's right! And there's a way to get to that Psalm 23 but you have to go through Psalm 22 to get there.

James: Rick Warren said our Pastor Robert Morris... and of course, we did all we could to be an encouragement and comfort when Rick Warren lost his son and it was not too many months after us losing our daughter, totally different circumstances but he said to Robert in a brief conversation. He said, "I don't think it is a matter of if we're going to get over it, I think it is a matter of we live through it. We really never get over it because we never stop feeling it and caring."

And when you were talking about the cycles there in the Psalms, I was thinking, well, that was the journey of David and the Psalmist but it was the journaling of their

journey, which is what Betty is doing quite beautifully. I think someday we'll be able to share it and it will be a real blessing. The thing we're trying to get across to people is how we help people who are hurting. We really love them. I think we suffer with them.

I had to write right after we lost Robin, I wrote a commentary. You can go back to JamesRobison.net, right back to the early part of the year because she died right after the Christmas. We had the funeral right after the first of the year and you'll see the article I wrote, Good-bye for Now, Sweet Robin. Very powerful!

I think they were able to track 1.7 million people read it in the next few days. And that was a part of the healing process for me but it was a great healing for others. The thing about it was the comments that came. They were, in most instances, so appropriate, Philip. They were saying to me and Betty and Robin's husband and children, how much we love you, how much we care. The sweet little handwritten notes that just came from Beth Moore almost daily to Betty knowing as a mother how you feel, it was precious. That was so right. We didn't need sermons.

I've said to you many times, people in their pain don't need a sermon, they often need a shoulder. We really need to be a shoulder to bear one another's burdens. We need to learn how to do that. And I really wish the church through these things that happen could learn more about how to identify with those who suffer.

And in our own suffering, as we learn, what are you going to do with it, (that answer,) because we'll never get a satisfactory answer to why. I don't know that we'll get a satisfactory to why in heaven -- why my child? Why my house burned? Why the tornado hit my area? Why did we lose our daughter? Why did disease hit us? Why did they get healed and we didn't get healed? Why didn't it happen sooner? I don't think we'll every get those satisfactory answers but like we talked about in the program yesterday, what will you do with this? What will we allow God to do with it? And for the church to step in and help people walk through that what process.

I've had so many people say to me... as a matter of fact, somebody said it to me in a conference call just the other day that had... everybody was killed on the plane but his daughter and people would say, "Then God had a purpose for you." And she's saying, "Well, we're all in Christian school. Why didn't he have a purpose for them? Why did I live?" I mean she is afraid to get on a plane.

But her dad said, the greatest thing, he said this to the whole group of church leaders, "When James said to me, 'Ask what' and carried that to my daughter and my family,

you have no idea what that did." So that question of, what are you going to do with this is critical. The church stepping in and the what the church does is comfort not preach to people.

Philip: I just learned today James that the very day your daughter died was the day I was in Newtown, Connecticut speaking to the folks who had lost their children. And the hurt that you feel, that you talked about in your journaling, Betty, the only reason you feel that hurt is because you loved her. What I said to the folks in Newtown is grief is the place where love and pain converge; where they come together. The crazy kid who shot those 20 little children, he felt no pain. He felt no love. It was the parents who had invested in them, who had kissed them good-bye that morning when they put them on the bus. So the hurt is right. The hurt is a sign of how much we love.

What we need to do is, as Christians, is to absorb... help absorb that hurt and express that love. I could say to the folks, to the parents, God is not happy with what happened. God hurts more than you do! God is more upset with the things that go on in this world than you are. And the only permanent solution is what God has said, "I'm going to make all things new. I'm going to make this planet back to what I had in mind from the very beginning." It's a long, complicated, pain-filled process to get there but you can count on it. And there will be a time when you'll reunite with that little six-year-old you kissed good-bye on the bus. I can promise you that.

Right before going to Newtown, I had been reading some of the "new atheists" they call them. They were saying things like: "This universe is a universe of blind pitiless indifference. We're a cosmic accident that could ever be repeated." Interestingly, when a tragedy like that happens, the New York Times never calls on those people to comment. What could they say? "Well, what do you expect? It's a world of random accidents." They go to the priests, they go to the rabbis, they go to the pastors because we say, "There is a God; God feels as upset about it as you do and God can do something about it." And that can bring some comfort. Your daughter wasn't just a six-year-old little... like a flame of a match that dissolved and is gone forevermore. She is alive. You'll get her back some day. And that is the kind of hope that we can offer.

James: And the God that we know is the one that can change the minds of people who have that torment that takes them to torment and hurt others because they are not healed of the hurt that rages and burns inside. And God can transform hideous minds and hearts into totally new creations.

And the other thing is that he can heal the brokenhearted and he can make all things new; not only in eternity, but he can give us a newness of life right now in the midst of the storm. We can experience peace in the valley. We know that he's watching over us.

I want you to know that Philip Yancey, you've written and how do they get the book that's online now, the electronic book?

Philip: We'll show you a web site, actually, just my name: PhilipYancey.com. I call it the question that never goes away because it doesn't; it just keeps coming up as things happen.

James: The question that never goes away. But for those that are hurting, or they know someone who is really hurting and they're asking all these questions, this is something that will be a tremendous blessing to them as it has been.

So here's what we want you to know. You can go to the bookstores. Of course, you can go online, you can order it but we'll send it to you. If anyone understands up close and personal right now what it is like to hurt, well, we do understand that. And we want to see broken hearts bound up because that is what Jesus came to do. Philip is committed to helping. That's why he has been called upon. He happened to be in some of these places where tragedy struck. But he's been called upon to be a healing factor because of the insight, and inspirational word power God's given him.

We'll gladly send you the book. What we want to ask you to do, and this is the last week.

And Philip, we really appreciate you sharing. What a blessing! We're going to give some of these little shoes to children that don't necessarily have a broken heart but they have a need and the missionary said, "Can we do something special? You give them water and you give them food, could we give them a surprise?" You know what? Our viewers love to do it.

I want you to see what a very special girl did. This is going to bless you. This is how you take a challenge, pain, and difficulty and you make something beautiful.

Begin video clip

>> Over the years Monica has always been in Special Ed. She's always... her speech has always improved because there was a time when she was very young we didn't even know if she would ever say her name. We didn't know if she'd ever learn to write her

name. This is who Monica has always been since she was a small child. This is just the first time we stepped out and let her be herself.

She has watched *LIFE Today* over and over again but for some reason when she saw this mission project, she was really captivated.

>> She told me, "Pastor David, I want to do this for the children." And she was just bubbling over with excitement, with joy. The morning that Monica got up on the stage and asked the church family for help was just an awesome feeling for me. And believe it or not, she stood in front of this entire church of 300 people and made that same plea to help the children have shoes.

>> For Monica it was never about how much money she had raised. I don't think she understood that part. She wanted to know how many children were getting shoes.

>> And it was amazing the response. Every Sunday, she would stand in our commons area with her basket and people would come by and just fill it up. And believe you me, Monica embodies that kingdom of God. She made this church come alive for missions.

>> She had collected a total of \$6,000.

>> Yeah, I did!

>> You did!

>> Uh-huh!

>> Through all this I now realize that she has been able to express herself using her own voice and her own words; not just to one person, but now all around the world.

Did I ever think -- did I ever think that she would be able to do this? No! But God did. He knew! She been passionate about it and she has done it and she has changed so many children's lives just because of her passion and her love to help someone else. And I just think that it is important that everyone knows that we all have a purpose. And no matter her mental ability or education or anything, we all have a call and we all have something that we can do.

>> Please help the children.

End of clip

In the studio

James: Wow! I love that family! What a beautiful mom!

Monica, we see Jesus. You're a sweetheart, honey! Thank you!

\$6,000 Monica raised -- that's amazing -- to give shoes like this to little children because it touched her heart.

Betty, I find myself praying all the time that God will touch the heart of every believer of every person with what touches his heart and they will do, like Monica, do something to inspire others to literally be an expression of the heart of God. And I've said it many times, it's a play on words but it is the truth, and then an extension of his hands. We are asking you to help us give 200,000 children in very challenged areas of the world where the missionaries have asked us, "Would you do this?" In many of the areas, it will not only open the hearts of the families and the children to receive Christ and the truth of God because they've seen his love, but in many of the places they've already led these families to Christ and they just want to do something to be a special blessing at Christmas.

So we're asking you to help us give shoes. These little shoes that are quite expensive when you get the typical ones like them in the marketplace, we get them for \$3.60 a pair, which means \$36 we can give ten pairs of shoes. Monica gave many pairs with the help of her friends. \$144 you can give 40 children a pair of shoes. We try to give them to them... they are expandable, they are adjustable, a little larger so they can grow into them and these are all weather and they last a long time, they're very durable. And of course, we've got the little tiny ones that always touch your heart for these little ones, but we're asking you to help us do it and this is the last week.

Would you dial the number? Take your bankcard to say, "I'm giving 40 pairs of shoes"? Or "I'm giving 10 pairs of shoes"? Or go online LifeToday.org and say, "I'm going to help." You can make your gift right there.

By the way, if you write a check make it to *LIFE* but do call us and tell us you're sending it so we know, we've got the shoes and we can tell the missionaries they're coming.

We're sending you the little Christmas ornament, you're going to love this, it is beautiful -- a little shoe. As I've said over and over, it's a conversation piece when

people see it. You tell them we're giving shoes, we're sharing the love of God. It will inspire them to do the same.

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.

Betty and I together say thank you so much for your love, your help. Please call today - this is the last week -- or go online and do all you can to help.

Begin video clip

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: I want to remind you again now, this last week we need your help and please do what you can.

Also, if you would like to have Philip Yancey's book, *Where is God When It Hurts?*

And by the way, I'm sorry if you hurt. I want to see your broken heart bound up as only God can. I believe what Philip shares, because he cares, will help heal your heart and help you know how to heal the hurt in others. I really believe that. You help us give some shoes, some smiles, you ask for the book.

Betty and I want to say thanks to Philip Yancey. We're taping our program in Colorado where Philip lives, and you'll meet Andrew Wommack and his wife. And so we don't have a studio audience so we're just going to say the thanks to Philip. And there is where you can find his online book, an updated version, everything up and current to right now, what's going on, that will be a blessing to you.

Philip, thank you so much for giving us this time. Thank you for making divine deposits in all of our lives.

Again, thank you for watching *LIFE Today*. And from the depth of our heart, we appreciate your help.