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Week 12: Mission: Rescue Life

Dennis Jernigan

Betty: Welcome to *Life Today*! Thank you so much for joining us; I'm Betty and this is James.

James: And Dennis Jernigan is with us. He's been known in many circles as the psalmist of the 20th century and I'm telling you the man has written some of the greatest praise songs that we will ever sing to the glory of God. The title of his book, his testimony is *Sing Over Me*.

I think I remember very well the first time Dennis talked about how he really sensed the Lord singing over him. And now that he's had nine children and has five grandchildren I think he's probably had a lot of time to sing over him and sometimes weep over them and laugh with them. It's an incredible autobiography. He also has and I really think it's very important, both these books for our day, this documentary really is the story where he goes back to all the areas where he journeyed in his life and tells you what happened there.

Dennis Jernigan will probably tell you how everybody found out about his battle and it's interesting. I'm always so helpful to everybody on their journey but he was trapped in homosexuality. I think in our day and I want everyone to listen to this now.

Betty and I have three children and 11 grandchildren and I really do believe that every one of us must look at every person in whatever battle they're in as though it was our own child, our grandchild or family member. I want you to welcome someone who's been on that journey who wants to help everyone in whatever area you are in your life, whatever battle, would you welcome Dennis Jernigan to *Life Today*? Dennis, good to see you.

Dennis: Good to see you.

James: We've been, let's say, walking together for a long time when we used to do the nation-wide Bible conferences, anywhere from 10,000 to 15,000 people. That's where we introduced you and your music. But I think I did something else for you. You might want to tell our viewers.

Dennis: Well, in July of 1988 the Lord really called me to tell my story publicly. I thought before I do that I need to tell my family, and then I need to tell everybody who is connected to my ministry. And at that time, Jeanne and your team were using some of my songs. I thought well, I'll need to tell them so they...

James: They were doing well; weren't they? They were popular.

Dennis: My thought was they'll want to quietly take them off the table because I don't want to bring any reproach to his ministry. So I wrote you a letter detailing my story in a nutshell. The next thing I know people are calling me saying, "You better watch TV because James Robison's reading your letter." I had a ministry whether I wanted it or not.

[Laughter]

So thanks a lot! No, I really do appreciate that.

James: We try to launch ministries. We try to help people on their journey.

Dennis: Well, you knocked that one out of the park, buddy!

[Laughter]

James: Did you imagine then with where you had been, where we would be in America today with the gay marriage and Supreme Court and all the different decisions saying that we just go for it? How do you think that's actually affecting people who may be and we're not even allowed to use the word, maybe trapped or held captive or struggling – those are like words we can't use today. We'll probably find out that it's illegal to even use them. Did you feel like you were ever trapped or struggling? What was going on with you? I want to use the appropriate words.

Dennis: When I was a kid I remember being 10 years old hearing the men of my church discuss what they thought of homosexuals. I didn't even know what to call myself until that moment. But these were the men who were most like God to me, the

men I respected most. My only conclusion I could come to in that moment was God must hate me because they certainly hate me. If they knew it was me they were talking about they would disown me.

I longed and hoped that somebody would tell me that freedom was possible but I never heard it from the pulpit at all. All I ever heard was condemnation. So suffice it to say, when the Lord did set me free it happened on November 7th, 1981. He set me so utterly free in my mind that I decided that one day I will tell; I'm not ready for that just yet. In fact, it took me seven years from the moment I was free 'til I got free enough to tell anybody in the church because I remembered being that kid wishing somebody would tell me there was hope.

So I decided I'll go down with my dying breath to tell somebody out there there's hope. I can't help those who think that's just the way they are but I can help those who want out because Jesus did that for me, and I want to be a lifeline.

James: So do you think in today's world you can even be accepted saying there's hope as though they need this hope or this help when we're being told you can't even imply that they need help. This is simply the way they are. Do you believe that because that's what you perceived yourself to be? How do we deal with it, Dennis?

Dennis: First of all I don't believe homosexuality was even my big issue. I believe it was something deeper and I got to the root of that issue. To me, that was my core identity. I had to come to the place where he's God, I'm not. So if he made me then He may know a little more than I do about what I'm supposed to be like. So I began to seek him.

My issue with today's culture, as long as there is freedom of speech in the United States I'll continue to tell my story and I'll just put this in your pipe so you can smoke it, even if for some reason that law's changed, I will not stop telling my story because I'm commanded by God's word. Let the redeemed of the Lord sit quietly on their hands and hope everyone knows they're redeemed. No! Let the redeemed of the Lord say so.

In other words, if we who have been redeemed don't say what we were redeemed from, how in the world does anyone in that same bondage going to even know there's hope? For me, it was bondage. For me, it was a desperate place. For me, it was leading me

right to the place of destruction and self-destruction. In fact I wanted to take my life at one point. So when I got free...

James: And really, the church though can contribute to that by being mean-spirited or this bullying and making fun of people or putting them down, ostracizing them. This is totally wrong. There is nothing biblical or Christian about doing that period!

I know there are times that we have a tendency to lash out. I've been guilty of striking back when I've been struck by people who are promoting or trying to shove something down our throat or push us out or telling us we can't say something. We have a tendency to say, "Well, I must!"

You just said, "I'm going to speak." You probably didn't speak as bombastically as I did because I was rather forceful about it and I'm trying to be more like Ben Carson all the time. I tell Ben...

Dennis: Good luck with that!

[Laughter]

James: I don't think I'm going to get there. Ben didn't either. He laughed just like...

Dennis: I'm think just be James.

James: I'll just have to be who God made me and hope I'll be kind.

But the point is, I really don't think we're supposed to ever compromise nor are we supposed to condemn. There is therefore no condemnation. And we must not heap it on people. But at the same time I think we say we don't move the standard of God to accommodate our weakness, our bondage, our failure, or our appetites or our desires. We just don't move it. We try to adjust to it.

But I think we have to invite people with the love of a father of even a prodigal, who's really made a mess of things, or he's really been in trouble, we've got to always let him know we want him to come home, come back.

What do you feel, Betty when you look and you've got such a tender heart and you have such compassion and love and you're always a great balance to me and everybody loves you for it. I know you listen to me because she's sitting here. But what do you feel about the situation we face today? What does it do to you?

Betty: Well, it breaks my heart. I agree with Dennis in that when God has really changed your heart and your life, it should be within us, we should feel compelled to share that change with others no matter what we came out of.

Dennis: And reality is this, if I have one message it is to the body of Christ. The church, to me, should be the first place a hurting person regardless of what their struggle is should be able to turn because we look like Jesus. My own story is I had to go outside the church to find somebody who looked like Jesus, who would love me like Jesus.

In fact, in the fall of 1981 I was so desperate for help and a friend of mine discovered what I was struggling with and he confronted me in love but he'd walked with me for several years. He said, "Dennis, I don't know how to help you I just know I know the answer."

I said, "Well, tell me!"

He said, "Well, the answer is Jesus."

I said, "I've heard that my whole life and it hasn't proven true to me."

He said, "Not like this you haven't heard it. I believe Jesus is the answer so much that here's what I will do. I will walk with you towards him. If you fall down, I will help you up every time if you'll let me. I won't kick you, I won't say 'I told you so.' If you need a shoulder to cry on I can handle it. If you just don't understand and you cry out in frustration and need someone to yell at, I can take it."

He loved me like Jesus. That compelled me to want to seek Jesus because he just loved me. He knew in his heart, he told me, "I'm not responsible for the outcome, Jesus is. But let's just seek Jesus."

You don't have to have gone through anything to help someone else out of a struggle, you just have to be willing to get involved in the mess. And life is messy, and it's called relationship. Jesus came to build relationships and that's what I'm called to. It's all relationship – it just really is.

James: Do you have a website, Dennis that people can go to where you try to offer help?

Dennis: JennisJernigan.com. There's a button that says, "Need help." We can generally connect people to ministries right where they live.

James: Right now we're trying to drive ministries out to where you're even almost being charged with some kind of criminal act if you say, "We will help you deal with this," as though it is something that really might not need to be dealt with no matter what you feel. I really think that the only people...

Do you remember Jesus said to the man there by the pool of Bethesda, "Wilt thou be made whole?" I think there has to be a desire to be made whole.

Let me ask you this question. Do you think that a person can be delivered and yet still have an attraction? I have to ask this because I struggle, I've said this. We'll use me as an example. Every time we have something about weight loss or controlling your appetite, I'm the subject. And I know chocolate talks; it speaks to us. I know these things call and I've never been able to make it look like rubbish. It still looks like chocolate.

So the fact you overcome doesn't mean something suddenly becomes ugly. Can you still maybe have some attraction, just like men who love their wives may still notice another woman as beautiful but he wants to keep things under control but he hasn't suddenly seen every other woman as ugly. Women certainly don't see other women as ugly.

Dennis: No one gets to choose what they're tempted by. The temptation defines no man because God's word says Jesus was tempted in every manner just as we are, yet without sin. So that tells me right away, temptation is not an identity. I was tempted to be attracted to men but that's not who I am. That's not who I was created to be. Therefore, God has given me the power of choice. We have a free will. I can choose what I look at. And with the power of Jesus running through my spiritual DNA, that is my first option – that is my only option and I've chosen that.

But temptation defines no man. In fact, one of my personal rules is I don't get to tell myself who I am; that comes down from my Father. The gay community doesn't tell me who I am, my past failures do not get to tell me who I am – only my Father gets to define me.

In fact, I've been fasting from negative personal words this past 40 days. I can't call myself something my Father doesn't call myself. If I do something stupid and I say, "Oh, you idiot" the Holy Spirit instantly has been coming to me and saying, "No, that's not who you are. You're my precious son. I didn't make trash!"

So if we as believers could come to the place where we love people like that and realize we're not responsible for the outcome but we can teach people who Father is and in the process of them understanding who God is then they discover who they can be. It's as simple as that.

James: And you believe if the church would reach out in love that people would come to them if they weren't feeling condemned?

Dennis: I have no doubt!

James: The telephone number is there if you want someone to pray with you. We're so anxious to do it.

Let me just tell you this. The book, of course, you can get it online or you get it in the bookstore but if you'd like to have Dennis' book, *Sing over Me* and his story, we'll be happy to send it to you. You know that we always ask all of our viewers, we ask you to invest in the lives of others.

As a matter of fact, we're going to ask you to help us set free children and women from sex trafficking where they've been trapped, even sold and they're in bondage totally against their will. It's just a tragic thing! We're going to ask you to help with that but we will send you Dennis' book. Then on his website, this is a phenomenal documentary. I think that just for a group to sit around and watch and hear would prepare you to reach out to others. Do you feel like it would?

Dennis: Very much so.

James: What's your hope for the documentary? Do you want it to be something that all who are struggling with their same sex attraction that they would watch it or is it for everybody?

Dennis: It's two-fold. I want the body of Christ to wake up and realize this is part of our calling. Then those who struggle, who feel like maybe there is another way, that there's hope, this is just my story. I can't change my story. It is my story. Nobody can

argue with my story. It's a done deal. I'm not trying to tell somebody they have to do anything or I'm not judging them if they don't do what I did. All I'm saying is this is my story. This is what God did for me. Deal with it.

James: Do you believe that this is one of the things that God really wants the church to learn how to focus on as Jesus would and as he desires to, and you're trying to inspire that kind of an outreach, that kind of a focus on the part of the church?

Dennis: I think it's pivotal! If the body of Christ doesn't get this, we're sunk. I'm serious!

James: What do you feel, Betty when you listen to Dennis and you think about the things that we're seeing and really we actually see this lifestyle thrust on us as though if you're not moving this way there's something wrong with you. And if you don't see it as totally normal and acceptable and that God actually did this, then there's something wrong with you. Unkindness, something is wrong. Putting people down, not caring about something very wrong. But how do you feel, Betty because I know how much you love people.

Betty: I do, James! As Dennis has shared, this is what he has dealt with but we all have strongholds in life, things that come at us and the enemy will keep pounding at us. That doesn't necessarily stop when God delivers you from it. You always have to be aware. He's waiting for every opportune moment to just come and pounce on you.

But with that relationship, that's what you're talking about, Dennis. That personal relationship with Jesus and realizing that he wants you to know who he sees you as, who you are in him and not who we see ourselves as because we will condemn ourselves worse than anybody will. I used to do that. Just put myself down and say, "You're not significant; nobody notices you, knows you're around, they don't care about you."

But God said one day, "I created you. I want to tell you whose image I want you to be of and that's my image. I made you. I want to show you all the gifts I gave you and put within you. I want those gifts to be used for my honor and glory."

And if we will just allow God to do that and say, "God, here's my life. Make with it what you want it to be. Let me be a blessing to those who are hurting in different areas of our life." We can all be set free in those areas.

James: Well, I think you heard a whole lot of truth right there. Would you say thank you to Dennis Jernigan for telling his story?

[Applause]

And you might just say thank you to me for telling his story before he was ready to tell the world!

[Laughter]

We just kind of launched you out there in the deep. The book is a blessing. There is his website again if you want to get the documentary and share it. I think it will be wonderful for your church groups to watch it.

Dennis, we're doing something and I just thank God for our viewers. I feel like we have the most special people in the world who watch what we do because they see God's work through people in a marvelous way and they say, "I want to be a part of it."

We want to enable the hands of God to put arms of love around people. I want you to listen. You're going to see a miracle. You're going to see a beautiful model that was trafficked that now is a mission minister. She's beautiful! You're going to hear her talking to a woman that was trafficked from the time she was young and held captive.

Please, please listen to this. Don't turn away at all. Just listen real closely because you're going to be the answer to what you're going to hear.

On the mission field

[Open captions]

>> My name is Sophina. When I was 11 or 12 years old, I was brought from Bangladesh and sold to a brothel. They used to scare me so I would work. They would beat me with broomsticks and force me to have sex with customers.

There was a girl who lived next to me in the brothel. She once threatened our owner that she'd go to the police if they forced her to serve customers. When the ring leader heard, he killed her by burning her alive.

When I saw those things happen, I was so scared. The brothel owners would strip me naked and beat me throughout the day so that I would be ready for customers. I have accepted this as my fate.

I have 2 young girls. They've tried to take them. I'm afraid I might lose them any day.

I want to live. I want my mom.

[Closed captions]

>> You should be able to see her. You should be able to see her. I'm so sorry.

Giselle: She was taken as a little girl from her village and she's sitting here now today, so many years later, saying, "I still want my mommy. I want to go back to my mom."

And all of those horrible things that we just heard her say that happened to her as a child is exactly what's going to happen to her daughters. She doesn't want this for her daughters. She wants to run away right now. We need to do something about this and get these little girls out now!

End of clip

In the studio

James: Well, we can't get her to her mom but we can get her to the father that loves her and we can show her the love of a father and a mother through an expression of his heart on our part.

Betty, I want to put God's arms around her. That was Giselle that was holding her who was trafficked. When she was set free she went on to become a beautiful model. But she went back to India and to Nepal and she went back over where we built – you did it, you built it. We asked you to. We've got an incredible *LIFE* Center right now where we're able to take these precious children and girls and women and then train them in a skill where they can make a living and care for them.

And what it takes, if you'll understand we built the largest *LIFE* Center in Thailand which is the sex trafficking and sex capital of the world. These men come in on 747s all through the day to find little children. And we're setting them free. And it's a very dangerous thing. We have to do what we do with hidden cameras. The missionaries are risking their lives and all they're asking us to do is just let them stay and help the

children and help the women and be an answer to their heart cry. We are the ones that not only build the centers but we keep them functional and we keep the mission workers and relief workers working.

Betty, it costs an average of \$128 a year to save one of these children, one of these women. I think it's worth it.

Betty: It really is, James. And as I was watching that I thought that precious woman, there she is, a young woman now, and she didn't get to grow up in the arms of her mother. And she still longs for that. But she can be in the arms of Jesus, knowing him and a relationship with him. But she's concerned for her two daughters now, that they will be taken away from her. She's just one example of what's happening, how they're being degraded, how they're being put in prison, how they're being beaten and treated like animals, worse than animals! We have to reach out and do something to help them! And we have the opportunity so I hope you will join us.

James: Well, you've been such a blessing when you watch and you see something because sometimes we think we're going to show you something and you'll just turn your head but you don't. You reach out with loving hands and that's what we're asking you to do today.

I said a moment ago that it takes \$128 a year to rescue and care for those children and those women and to restore them and train them. Would you dial the number and take your bankcard or would you go to lifetoday.org. So many are going now just immediately because the gift comes right now. Or you can call and take the bankcard either way and use it like a check. And if you could make a gift of \$128 you'd turn it around but if you make a gift of \$32 or \$64 and pray others join you. There is no level too small or too large because what we're doing is just huge. We are putting the arms of a loving father.

Did you see Giselle showing her what a mother felt like? I mean, there she was. She felt, I want that so bad. Well, we can give it to them. Would you do that? We want to send you a beautiful praise tape with Integrity Music called Freedom. It is absolutely an incredible CD. We want you to have it.

And the book Indivisible which I wrote with Jay Richards to help you have understanding of what we do to heal our nation.

The Thomas Kinkade Forest Chapel painting, it hangs here in our studios. It's beautiful; we want you to have it. If you help us rescue ten, \$1280, we would have rescued ten. And we want to send you that beautiful painting.

And again, I know why you give. You give to give life. Would you make that call? If you want to write a check make it to *LIFE* but call us and tell us you're putting it in the mail. And please do it. Please reach out and put God's arms around those who are suffering like that precious woman you saw and her children. Thank you for doing it!

Begin video clip

Announcer: Innocent children created to be happy, loved, and cared for are being abducted and sold at the hands of violent predators, their spirit and bodies broken under horrific emotional and physical abuse. Through *Mission: Rescue Life* you can reach out to save children vulnerable to sex traffickers. You can help rescue those already enslaved and you can restore their lives with hope for a future.

Your gift today of only \$128 will help rescue a child and change their destiny forever. With gifts of \$64 or \$32, we will combine your support with others to help rescue one more child from the shame and pain of sexual slavery.

With your gift of any amount we will send you the *Songs of Freedom* CD, a collection of ten uplifting worship songs that are sure to become a favorite for your quiet time, drive time, or personal worship.

In addition to the CD, you'll receive *Indivisible*, a powerful soul-stirring book by James Robison and Jay Richards.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1280 to help rescue ten children and you may request this beautifully framed canvas print of the "Forest Chapel" by the Painter of Light™, Thomas Kinkade.

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

End of clip

In the studio

James: Betty and I want to say thank you in behalf of those you're helping and rescuing. If you'd like to have Dennis Jernigan's book, *Sing over Me*, it's his story. His website if you want to get the documentary, it would be wonderful to show.

And then I want to remind you of something. I want you to go to Stream.org – write that down – and then go. We're going to release rivers of life every day for as long as we live from the greatest tributaries of love and life and truth to transform hearts and minds for the glory of God and the healing of our land and our homes. Stream.org – tell all your friends to go there. You'll be glad you did.

Join Betty and me in saying thanks to Dennis Jernigan.

You're a blessing. Thank you for inspiring us! Thanks for telling your story!

Thank all of you for watching *Life Today* and thank you for sharing *Life Today*.

Announcer: Be sure to visit stream.org, a rich and lively source for breaking news, analysis, and entertainment! Stream.org