

6/23/15
Week 26 WFL
Ken and Joni Eareckson Tada
Book: Untold Love Story

James: Oh, boy! Thank you all. This is a beautiful couple right here on this book cover, Joni and Ken Eareckson Tada. They are just really a special couple. Betty and I have known about Joni pretty much since she had a pretty traumatic experience.

It was Billy Graham and his son-in-law and family that told us about this incredible young woman. We watched the journey. She and the love of her life, Ken, who loves her but he is so open and honest about the challenges that they've gone through when she, in an accident, broke her neck and was basically paralyzed. She is a miracle. I want you to give a really great welcome to Ken and Joni Eareckson Tada.

[Cheers & Applause]

Yeah, it's a real honor. Joni, I knew when things happened and I knew how you began to give God glory in the face of almost unbearable circumstances. How are you doing now many years later? How are you?

Joni: Well, 47 years in this wheelchair as a quadriplegic, James, don't be thinking I'm a veteran at this and a pro at this. I wake up every morning facing somebody else giving me a bed bath, doing my toileting routines, strapping on my corset, getting me dressed, leading me in the wheelchair, pushing me to the bathroom, brushing my teeth, brushing my hair, blowing my nose.

And honestly, James and Betty, every morning, without fail, I say, "Jesus, I cannot do this! I can't do this. Please! I can't do quadriplegic but I can do all things through you as you strengthen me."

I don't know. By 7:35 in the morning I've got joy sent straight from heaven. I've often wondered, boy, what would it be like to wake up in the morning, throw back the covers, jump out of bed, take a quick shower, and scarf down breakfast? I don't think I'd be needing God as desperately. So what I described earlier, I think, is a very Christian way to wake up in the morning, needing Jesus desperately, requiring him urgently. And that's why the wheelchair, it's a bruising of a blessing -- it's a bruising of a blessing but a rich blessing. That's how I'm doing,

James. I'm just getting up in the morning and ah, taking a deep breath and leaning hard into Jesus.

James: Well, it shows. I've got to be honest about that whole journey and the truth of it, but I've got to ask this question. As wonderful as Jesus is like that, is it not somewhat encouraging and comforting when you see Jesus dressed up in somebody else's body and beginning to express the love of Jesus the way Jesus would?

Joni: Absolutely!

James: And has Ken been that person?

Joni: I was in the hospital with pneumonia not long ago and I was so worn out from coughing because I have no chest muscles, no abdominal muscles; people have to pound on my back, push on my abdomen. And in the middle of the night, Ken was by my side; he slept on the chaise lounge by my hospital bed. And in the middle of the night after my 10th time of coughing I prayed, "Oh, Jesus, I need your touch. I need to see you. I need to see you." And you want to tell them what happened?

Ken: Well, I've never been taken for Jesus before but I got up to cough Joni and I reached out to touch her and she looked at me and she said, "You're him!" Now I didn't know what she meant at the time but then she proceeded to say, "You're Jesus."

Joni: You're him! You are him! And it was so wonderful to see Jesus with flesh on him in the form of my husband. What a great guy he is.

James: I feel like I do fellowship with the Lord. If you don't know his Word, you won't really know his voice well. If you don't know his Word, you'll be pretty unreliable thinking you're hearing all these sounds, and it's always God and it isn't. So much of the time it is your thoughts or an enemy making these suggestions. But if you really know him, you can pretty well have a good time talking to him. He loves to talk to his kids and he really loves to talk to people who love to hear him talk, and love to listen to him.

I felt like the Holy Spirit said to me the other day, he said, "I'm not really excited about being a ghost. I like to live in a body. I like to live in a somebody and reveal him."

So when you see Him in somebody's body like you did there, that's what she is saying. Jesus was dressed up in Ken just like he was dressed up in Saul of Tarsus and became Paul the

apostle. He really wants to dress up in all the people here and he wants to dress up in everybody there.

Betty: That's what I was going to say. We'd all be better off if we would get up saying, "God, dress me up in you each day. Let you be seen in me and in my life, for someone else, to be an encouragement to them, and let them know it is possible."

Joni: Absolutely! And as I will often tell other people who get a bad medical report, people who have a child with a significant disability, suffering is just the very difficult textbook that will teach you who you really are. It's like a lemon that God squeezes and out comes the anxiety and the worry and the peevish disposition and the sour attitude and the complaining spirit. And that's the stuff -- that's the stuff I think God really wants to heal us from.

Betty: You're right!

Joni: That's the stuff that needs to go. There are more important things in life than walking. There are more important things in life than having use of your hands and having a soul that reflects Jesus is a lot more special.

James: You tell though, in this incredible story, Joni and Ken, *An Untold Love Story*, you're in another battle in the last little while, a battle with cancer. Ken, you're open and honest enough over this journey to talk about times when it wasn't -- you probably didn't feel like it was Jesus in you and you -- tell us about that because there are a lot of people who need to hear what you also experience.

Ken: Absolutely, James. We went through all the things that young married couples go through. There was a time, about a year into our marriage, where I was just getting tired. I mean the routines, going out and shopping, turning Joni at night, doing all the things that I knew I had to do but it just got to be tiring.

So one night I sat on the bed and gathered up enough courage to tell my wife, I said, "Joni, I just feel trapped."

Joni: And I, this is only two years into our marriage and my response to him was, "Well, where was your head on our wedding day? I'm a quadriplegic. Didn't you know it was going to be this hard? What were you thinking?"

And as soon as I said those words I felt like stuffing them back into my mouth. I remember apologizing to Ken saying, "Ken, that's not me! That's not like me at all." But it is like me. It is just like me.

And so that catapulted Ken and me into a long, wonderful journey of memorizing scripture, praying together morning, noon, and night, in the van, driving to work, driving from work, and studying the Bible.

And then when I got cancer, and Ken had to get up extra times to turn me and countless visits to the hospital and holding the bucket so I could throw up, he also sat on the edge of the bed one night and confessed the same thing, "I'm tired. I feel trapped."

But this time I said, "Oh, sweetheart, if I were you, I would feel exactly the same way. I don't blame you. I don't fault you. I'm not going to scold you. I think you're doing a great job! And I'm going to stand by you and cheer you on with my prayers and encourage you and applaud you and do everything I can to make this journey through cancer as easy as we can make it." And it brought us so much closer together.

Don't you think?

Ken: I don't know, James and Betty, how couples make it without Jesus. From the very beginning Joni and I developed a communication skill. We both knew oftentimes in our disagreements we may not come to the same conclusion but one of us was wise enough to say, "We need to stop and pray." And that's what we did.

And today, I think this is my greatest partner, besides Jesus, because she is with me everywhere in terms of supporting me and praying for me. I think this is probably our ninth year now that we're reading through the Bible in a year. Try doing that with your wife sometime. That really is a special, special time.

Joni: It is!

James: I can't even describe how clearly I see Jesus in both of you. Joni, I have from the time after -- I love Billy.

Billy, I know you don't hear well. You hear me when I'm with you but you don't hear well like now unless you really have the volume up to Billy Graham. You were always good at spotting Jesus in people and you certainly did in this girl. Thanks, Billy, for showing us Jesus in Joni. And Joni always saw Jesus in you.

I know there are plenty of times we could say well, you're just amazing. You're not complaining. There are probably times when you dumped on God and complained and know he can heal... why didn't he just get you up and get you going? He can do that.

We have Nick Vujicic who has no arms and legs. He says, "But I've got shoes in my closet."

[Laughter]

So he's going to -- I think we know that you guys could go back tonight to say a hotel or something and she can get up in the morning. We know God's able. But he's also able to get you up when you can't get up. And Jesus can stand up in us when we're sitting down. He's standing up in both of you.

Ken, you don't have the physical challenges and yet you bear the physical burden and challenges out of love. And both of you are being so honest and I just want to say to you that I see Jesus clearly in both of you. You magnify him and you're beautiful and radiant. Would you agree?

Would you say thank you, God, for revealing yourself through this couple?

[Cheers & Applause]

I'd love to send you this *Untold Love Story* and let you read it. What would you want to say to people that are really battling?

Joni: I would say that they have a savior who has been tempted and trusted and tried in every way like they are. My savior was paralyzed on a cross -- nailed, unable to move, couldn't scratch his nose, couldn't wipe his eyes, and I can't do that either. But I'm so grateful that the God of the Bible is a God who wrote the book on suffering and he called it Jesus. He is not some meditating mystic of some guru of a God sitting on some mountaintop somewhere. He is always beside us in our pain -- especially in our pain.

I think if we could just embrace him and then do what he did, Jesus was always reaching out to others, even when he was on the cross. What's he doing? He's caring about the thief next to him. He's taking care of business with John and his mother. He's serving -- he's ministering even on his death bed!

I think, if all of us, our listeners, our friends watching could find somebody else who is suffering more, I know Ken and I have been so blessed that we just have to pass on the blessings. We want to find those people who are suffering more than we do and so through our ministry we deliver wheelchairs around the world and give the gospel, give Bibles to needy children with disabilities and their families; do disability ministry training where they still think that cerebral palsy is a curse from the local witch doctor. And we hold retreats for special needs

families and developing nations. That makes our lives so rich, so meaningful. Extending the same mercy and love Jesus is giving us to others, that's so... and besides, you know, I'm going to get my new body one day. I'm going to get -- and we'll be there together and we're all going to stand up, jump, kick, do aerobics together.

James: And you know what? I'm going to sing in heaven and people are going to listen, and you're going to run in Heaven and people are going to watch!

[Laughter]

Joni: Absolutely! But you know James and Betty, I hope that I can take my wheelchair to heaven with me. Because if I could, I would put it right over there and I would be standing next to Jesus with my new glorified body and I'll hold his hand and I'll feel those nail scars. And when I say "Thank you, Jesus for your grace" he'll know I'll mean it because he will have recognized me as the woman who came to him every morning, hemorrhaging human strength.

And I will say to him, "Jesus, you were right when you said that in this world we would have trouble. That thing was a lot of trouble!"

[Laughter]

"But Jesus, the weaker I was in that thing, the harder I leaned on you. And the harder I leaned on you the stronger I discovered you to be. And that's so precious! It just never would have happened had I not known my desperate need of you. And now if you want, you can send that thing to hell."

[Laughter]

[Applause]

Ken: James and Betty, I want to share one other thing and that is in 2010 Joni was diagnosed with breast cancer. And there were some times with clenched fists that I was wondering, God, what is it that you're trying to do here? And we realized afterwards that the declaration of cancer in Joni's life was pretty well planned because Joni now as a spokesperson, she was now a spokesperson for the disabled as well as people with cancer. And we have found that to be true in these last few years.

She is four and a half years of being N.E.D. or No Evidence of Disease, and at the end of the fifth our oncologist says she can be declared cancer-free. But the one thing that I discovered, my wife is a fighter, she is a warrior. At a time when I thought maybe I might lose my best

friend, I watched her go through this battle and this journey of cancer. It was oh, about three years into the cancer journey and we realized that she is going to be around a little while longer I called a friend of mine who happens to be an outfitter up in Montana. We do a little fly-fishing and he is a great --

James: By the way, we'll do that in heaven too!

[Laughter]

Ken: But he is the quintessential mountain man. He has stared grizzly bears down with a bow and arrow. I've often told Chris, he is a brother in Christ, I said, "Chris, if we ever go to spiritual battle, I'd love to have you in my fox hole."

So I called him three years ago, and said to Chris, "Chris, I'd love to have you in my fox hole but I want my wife in there first because I know that this woman right here is really a warrior and she would watch my back." And she has.

James: Well, you both are.

Would you say thanks to God and thanks to them for their testimony? I want to put on the stream there for you; there is Joni and Ken's web site. Now take note of it.

By the way if you don't get it down you can always go to LifeToday.org and you can call it back up, watch it again or you can call the prayer line and they'll give it to you. They give away wheelchairs; they do things for people. You may just want to help them do it. And if you do, do it. I also want you to know that I would love to send you the book, *The Untold Love Story* about this beautiful couple.

Joni and Ken, we love helping people and giving people water. Jesus said that he's the water of life. He says out of our innermost being will flow rivers of living water -- they're flowing out of you. But they're flowing out of all of us. And an expression of that water is just the release of life. Water brings forth life -- refreshing life.

Our viewers love what I'm about to show you. I want you to listen but above all listen to God. You're going to hear Tammy Trent. You're going to see something and you're going to be able to be a miracle. Yes, you are. You're going to be an absolute New Testament miracle today. Watch!

On the mission field

Tammy: This is absolutely horrible -- to think that this is his only source of water. I've watched child after child come in this little pool of water and dip their precious little cup and drink this water. It is horrific!

My heart aches to know that they struggle every single day to survive but they have nothing else that they can do. This is it! This is their only source of water so if they don't even dip in to take a drink of this, they won't survive.

This water brings death but we are on a mission to bring life and not just a quick fix but something that will change this community for generations to come. We can change this for them. We can come in here with a drill. We can drill them a water well. Won't you partner with me today? Together, I believe that we can make a huge impact into this community -- together we can make the difference!

End of clip

In the studio

James: Father, I thank you for Tammy and I thank you for the missionary relief workers and the ones who run the drilling rigs. Please God, give us the resources to keep sharing life; in Jesus' name. I'm asking you to partner, I believe with God and his heart, with the Lord Jesus. "Give a cup of water in my name," Jesus said, "you won't lose your reward." I've said it many times. If you look for a reward beyond the blessing you can be to others as reward enough I think you'll always have a little bit of a distorted perspective. It's more blessed to give than to receive. So if we could give and give to give not to get, but give to release the river of love and life, I think it is so enriching and fulfilling.

Betty, when I see those precious people and children going to that filthy water -- and there's a pig right in the middle of it, you really don't want the pig to drink it -- yet the people are drinking it taking in disease, and many of them die and losing their children. But we have the perfect solution and it's just to give them a clean water well.

Betty: It is, James. The thing that's so beautiful to me, when you realize it, the gift that you give today is not just a short-term gift; it is a lasting gift because that water well is going to be there to continually give them clean water to drink, to keep these precious children from ever getting sick from that old diseased water. Because I promise you, you give them a choice, they're going for the clean water. They're waiting for it.

So let's please join together and let's do this. Let's drill those water wells so that they can have something they can have hope in and know that somebody is praying and caring about them.

James: In advanced countries like the United States and Canada and the United Kingdom and Australia and many places, everyone wants to feel good, have fun. We try every way to find it and so many people still remain empty. They just want to feel good. They just want a chance to live; and when you love them and in love you give them a way to feel loved and better, they're going to listen to the greatest love story ever told. We give them Water for Life and we introduce them to the water of life and they're ready to hear it. That's why when we save millions of lives we win even more millions to Christ in those outreaches.

So would you please today go online, LifeToday.org and take your bankcard and use it like a check or just dial the number right there. Many people are calling for prayer because their hearts are broken and that prayer number is paid for by love, somebody like you. But today, would you dial the number or go online? Take your bankcard and say, "I'm going to help drill a well." The wells cost \$4800. Could you give one?

Many people say it's the greatest joy of the entire year to do it. Small businesses do it. Couples do it. Churches do it. But most of all, individuals do it. Could you?

Wait a minute. Most of the wells are drilled by people making \$48 gifts and it's multiplied. \$48 just to break it down gives ten people basically water the rest of their life; \$144, 30 people. We have many friends who give \$1200 and pray, God, help three more join me or \$2400 and pray one joins -- we've got a well. At whatever level you can participate, do it please. LifeToday.org, take your bankcard, do it, you literally can release a well of water -- love expression right now today or you can dial the number. Would you do it?

We have some gifts for you, a daily devotional that is going to bless you. I know it will. It is amazing. It's literally broken out seasonally, where you can see the seasons of the year, and every day. It is a journal there where you read the word, you get an inspirational devotional, and then you journal. We want to help you grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord.

We have some beautiful "Names of Jesus" pens that people have told us over and over, "Please, send us those again. We want to share them with somebody else, and they become a great testimony every time we take them out." So we're sending them.

Also, the Thomas Kinkade "Forest Chapel" to say thank you.

Would you make that gift now? Thank you so much for doing it.

Begin video clip

Announcer: Every day millions of children are forced to make a dreadful choice: drink filthy, polluted water filled with deadly disease or die from thirst. No child should ever be faced with this decision.

The good news is there is a solution! *Mission Water for Life* is one of the most exciting and viable demonstrations of God's love in the world today. Suffering can end because clean water changes everything.

With your gift today we can establish and drill 500 water wells for remote villages in over 12 different nations. Your gift of \$24 will help provide clean water for 5 people. A gift of \$48 will help provide for 10 people; \$72 will impact 15 people. And \$144 will help provide fresh, clean, disease-free water for 30 people for a lifetime!

With your gift you'll receive the "Every Day a New Day" devotional broken out into the four seasons of the year. This daily devotional features scriptures, inspirational thoughts, a Bible reading plan, and a place for you to journal each day.

With your gift of \$100 or more, you may request "The Names of Jesus" pen set; one inscribed with the names of Jesus found in scripture and the other reflecting the gifts of the spirit.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1200 to help provide water for 250 people or a gift of \$4800 to help sponsor a complete well.

And request this beautifully framed canvas print of "The Forest Chapel" by Thomas Kinkade.

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

End of clip

In the studio

James: Well, Betty and I say thanks in behalf of all the people whose prayers you were an answer to, that you give hope to and help and water. We're sending you the "Every Day a New Day," the pen set. And if you'd like to have Joni and Ken's the *Untold Love Story* and you've heard a portion of it, this is great -- and you just help us give a cup of water, we'll gladly send it to you to say thanks. I think all of you in the studio and I really think those of you at home want

to join Betty and me in saying to Ken and to Joni thanks so much! We love you! We see Jesus! Thank all of you. Grace and peace!