

10/19/15
Week 43: Rescue Life
Chonda Pierce

James: Well, thank you. I hope any of you that are not smiling are ready to smile. You might smile so much your makeup would crack. Would that be all right? I'm James Robison, by the way and I welcome you to *LIFE Today*.

Betty has had some surgery on her eyes; she had some cataract issues that they dealt with. They tell her her eyes are going to be like a 20 year old. She is confident they will be. She'll be back next week. Thanks for praying for her.

But I'll tell you what. You're going to enjoy our guest. She comes so frequently I think she's like part of the team. But we are thrilled to have Chonda Pierce.

Would you welcome Chonda Pierce back to *LIFE Today*? Here's Chonda!

Chonda: I love you guys! This place has been so good to me! And in honor of James Robison I'm going to do all my favorite preacher jokes because there ain't nothing funnier than a preacher who messes it all up.

My favorite -- my dad was a great preacher. He really was but he would get tongue-tied when he got really, really nervous. So one time he looked at the congregation and says, "Now I just want you to leave your hearts and bring your seats to the Lord."

[Laughter]

Three heavy set women came down front. I'll never forget we were singing as a family. Now my mother wanted us to be a great singing group, a great southern gospel quartet. All we needed was a bus but we never did get one. But you would have thought the church would have bought us one to get us out of there. But we finally got asked to sing a few places.

Now this was back in the -- well, I'm not going to tell you when it was. It will give my age away. But there was a big song that was real popular in southern gospel music back in those days. It was called "The King is Coming" and the Speer Family used to sing it. Do you remember that song? The king is coming! And my brother thought he was Ben Speer. So my

brother, myself and my sisters, we all sang that. We'd sing: The king is coming! And he would go, "I said the king is coming!" He had that southern gospel with the chord-around move like you have never seen in your life. It was hilarious. And we were singing: The king is coming!

Now Brother Smith in my church was a runner. I don't know if you've ever been to a church where they have a runner and I don't mean something like in your hose.

[Laughter]

I mean when you get so blessed you can't stay in your seat and you take off and you run around a circle and you wave your hankie and you slap somebody in Jesus' name.

[Laughter]

But he got blessed. We'd sing: The king is coming! And he took off running. He ran around the circle of that church. He's shouting, "Praise the Lord!" And he tripped over this great big wire, and it toppled speaker over as big as Pete. He said: The king is coming! That speaker went boom! -- Real loud. Fourteen teenagers hit the altar; it scared them to death.

[Laughter]

I was one of them! I got saved 342 times growing up. Every time it would storm and lightning outside I would get saved. I was always scared to death. If there was a good-looking boy at the altar, I'd get saved.

[Laughter]

I grew up in a Holiness Church. I had the revolving door experience with the Lord. I got saved every year at youth camp -- every single year -- saved, sanctified, and petrified! Because on Monday they would preach on salvation you'd get saved right off the bat, first night, because you wanted to fit in with all the Christian kids, and you wanted to be able to sing in the youth choir. So then you get saved the first night.

About Wednesday or Thursday you'd kiss a boy so you'd have to get sanctified. Then Saturday they preached on H.E. double hockey stick and that would scare you to death, you'd get petrified and you'd have to start all over again.

That was my experience with the Lord. I've been baptized nine times. I'm not kidding! Nine times I've been baptized. Not because I thought maybe the water wasn't any good but it's just how it worked out. I got baptized the first time, I know I wanted to be. If you don't know what

I'm talking about, baptize, that's like if you go to a dunking church -- I'm not talking about the flickers. There's a lot of flickers out there.

[Laughter]

There's a lot of polite baptismal people out there kind of flicking you as you go out the door. They give you a spritz. I was at a church in California; the preacher stood there with a water gun, "Anybody else? Anybody?" Pssh! They are going green in south California. Maybe they're saving water or something. "Anybody?" Pssh! Pssh! "Anybody?"

I'm not talking about those kinds of churches. I got dunked. I mean where they dunk you, they hold you down, they wash you down, they... That's how it was for me anyway because my dad was doing the dunking. I don't think you should have to use a defibrillator at a baptismal service. I think that's carrying things a little too far. All I could remember was hearing my dad quote scripture while he was baptizing me. I could hear in the gurgle of the water with that beautiful passage: "Vengeance is mine," saith the Lord!

[Laughter]

So that was the first time I got dunked. Then I got baptized again when I was about 15 because I needed to. Then a couple of times in college, which is none of your business.

[Laughter]

Then I got baptized three times in the Jordan River. Now Jesus got baptized in the Jordan River. If you've never read all the way to the end of the book, there's usually a map back there. If you look at the map of Israel, the Jordan River is in Israel and I got baptized in the general area where Jesus himself got baptized. So I feel very special to get... he got baptized once -- because he's Jesus.

[Laughter]

I got baptized three times... because I'm not.

[Laughter]

I did meet Jesus in rehab one time. But he sobered up the next day and his real name was [Hey-suis] Jesús. [Spanish for Jesus]

[Laughter]

That was a little strange right there. But I did get baptized three times in the Jordan River because they give you a little souvenir if you get baptized there. And I'm trying to collect the whole set of little Jesus action figures made out of olive wood.

You've got to visit the Holy Land; it's a wonderful place! But we would, we would collect all of the action figures. Now you can also get a Jesus action figure in your Jesus Happy Meal at the Sea of Galilee. There's a place there called Saint Peter's Fish and Chips. And I kid you not – (I'm on James Robison. Would I be lying to you?) So you get the little Jesus action figure. Then you collect them and you get back out on the tour bus and you get to trade your action figures. "Can I have one of your Matthews?" You have two Matthews. You get really upset. Judas, I didn't care for him.

[Laughter]

We took turns throwing him out the bus windows.

[Laughter]

I just think that is so funny. But anyway, I've been baptized a few times. And then I've been flicked off at four churches. You know what I'm talking about? -- The flickers. I was at a church -- I didn't know it was a flicking church. I was at a church and I went to take a sip of water. But there was this goblet of water; I thought it was for me in case my throat got dry. But the little priestly dude in the dress said, "No, no, no!"

He had a conniption is what we could it in the south. Because I went to sip his water and he said, "No, no! That's our baptismal!"

I said, "Are you kidding me? I'm from Tennessee. Ain't a woman in my church that can fit in here!"

[Laughter]

Thank you!

James: God bless you.

Chonda: I love you!

James: Oh, mercy.

Chonda: I'm just waiting for some of your bloopers to talk about! I could talk about a few. I could come up with some.

I miss Betty. This is very sad. I know it is just cataract surgery. I mean it's not "just cataract surgery" but somebody should sit there. We should put like a Betty puppet.

[Laughter]

You can reach over and do the mouth. That would be so cute!

James: She might talk more than she normally talks if we did that.

[Laughter]

Well, Chonda, you bring tears to my eyes, you make me laugh so hard.

Chonda: Well, you need to get out more!

James: I probably do. I definitely do. We need to have you here more. Do you like Chonda? Do you think she's all right? Do you appreciate her?

[Cheers & Applause]

Okay.

Chonda: Okay, let's get serious!

James: Here's the deal. You've had quite a journey and it ain't over. You've laughed your way in the darkness.

Chonda: Yeah, I have.

James: Chonda has a movie coming out, and October 27th it will be in the theaters. It's a documentary, basically of her life. Not even knowing as it started that there would be so much darkness that she would be laughing through. Because when they started it, there had been quite a bit of darkness but it was like the darkness intensified.

So are you pretty pleased with the way this journey is turning out in the sense that you can see a possibility of all the darkness and trying to laugh through the darkness, that maybe you're actually going to lift people up with they can actually find peace and joy?

Chonda: I see where God will work all things for good.

James: He didn't say they were all good.

Chonda: Exactly! He has worked all things for good. I still don't like some of his workings, and we have had a chat about that. I would much rather have a different ending to my movie. I wish I had a different testimony.

I used to envy the people that said, "Oh, I got saved when I was four. I loved the Lord and had four kids and a picket fence. And then just lived my life pristine to the kingdom to the glory of God and was lifted on into heaven."

I don't have one of those. I got saved 150 times along the way, mainly because I needed it. And I lost... I sit here on a journey of being alone now. It's hard! It is really hard. I think --

James: Because your husband had sat here with you, giving his stories, and he fought his challenge and the alcohol, and all of the sudden he's gone.

Chonda: Yes. This movie kind of goes through the last three years of my life where it had to go back a little bit and tell you the back story of Chonda Pierce just to establish who I am and how in the world does somebody become the number one selling female comic in history? How does that happen for somebody that came through such tragedy? But the writers, the director, they wanted to have the back story. The back story is I grew up in a very dysfunctional Christian home with two parents that were not all that great a parent.

I lost both sisters to death as a teenage girl; one was killed in a car wreck, one died with leukemia. My parents later divorced. I married my high school sweetheart. Things seemed to be okay. We had two children that God blessed us with. One walked out of our lives. My husband spiraled into alcoholism because of the sadness, I think, of a lot of that and a lot of circumstances, and then he died about a year and a half ago.

My son and I are now here, and my mother passed away in the midst of all that as well. So my son and I are picking up the pieces of that. I say all that to say, that is a journey that many of us have. I don't think I have the corner market on pain and dysfunction and grief. It just happened that my lifetime is laced with a lot of that while making a living for 25 years making everybody laugh. How in the world do you pull that off without drugs and alcohol? You pull it off

because I believe Jesus is who he says he is and I believe the Word of God more than anything in this life. I believe he is good, he is faithful. I believe he is love. I believe he cares for me even when this world beats me up.

Sometimes, I declare I don't know why but I believe it. That's what we captured is tough, tough moments like that and yet you keep pushing on, you keep moving forward. And hopefully, by the end of a 90-minute movie people will see that I will not make it through what I'm going through until I make it right with Jesus.

James: Well, don't you appreciate her openness and honesty even in the midst of pain? You know while you were talking and I do really believe this -- I don't want you to misunderstand what I'm saying. It can sound mysterious or maybe even spooky to you but really and truly, I think sometimes you can hear God talking over us while we're talking. Sometimes I'm saying something and I can tell God is communicating something. Somebody else is talking and I can hear. And while you were talking just then, this is very interesting, we're talking about the burden and the loads can get so heavy, how do we bear up?

And this is what I heard. Jesus said, "Take my yoke upon you. My burden is light."

Now I want you to think about this. This is living in a day when the yoke was on the oxen and the one that did the work and the pulling requiring strength, and the load would be heavy whether it was pulling a plow or pulling a wagonload and it requires strength and it requires harmony or one will bog down because the load is so heavy. So Jesus understood weight well. He understood the force required to carry that yoke and yet he says, "My yoke is light."

We lost a daughter; that load is unbearable. There is no way a person can understand the pain a parent experiences. It is totally indescribable. It is not right. It is not fair. It is not reasonable. It makes no sense. It is an unbearable load. It is like trying to find a way to seeing in darkness so intense that there's no way a melody comes up. And suddenly, this Jesus that is always there gets in and lifts the load by his power and his presence.

Chonda: And you can feel that.

James: Yes, you can! That's why the things may be awful, heavy, weighty, painful, indescribably unbearable but God will work it for good when he gets in the yoke and lifts it with his presence. You need to -- this is not religious stuff. This is relationship. This is not somebody you'll read about and you'll hear about, it is someone you know, and you fellowship with him.

And no one can convince you he is not alive, there, able and anxious to lift the load because he is real. If you don't know him that way, dismiss religion and get into a relationship with a living God, a living Jesus, and a caring father. So your story is talking about you did do the laughter to get through the pain but all the while it's as though Jesus is standing in the wings to lift the load. Has he been faithful to do that?

Chonda: Absolutely! I can tell you, sometimes to the hour, to the minute that I relinquished that burden to him and could feel that lighter. I struggle to this very day with broken relationships. I carry pain that a mother carries that -- sometimes that gnaw that never goes away. And yet I wake up anxious to meet the day. I can't wait to say "hi" to my son. That's because God does what he says he will do.

Sometimes, and that's hard to bottle up or to explain to somebody. I think that's why in this movie we couldn't just do it by telling a story. We just had to let people watch -- just watch it happen. It's painful to see but it's so -- you're so right. I wonder sometimes, Brother James, if when people are struggling in their faith, I sometimes want to take their little faces and go, then honey, you're not struggling in your faith, you're struggling with your belief. You've got to believe. It is not about a feeling.

People would say, "How do you know your husband loves you?" Well, I just know it.

And that's how I am about the Lord Jesus Christ. How do you know he was real? How do you know that he loves you and is not out to get you with all the stuff that's happened to you? I go, because it is not his nature.

James: The story -- and see it, laughing in the dark, 27th of October. I want us to talk in another program because when we're talking about pain, we talk about losing a daughter and you've lost communication with a daughter, and I want us to talk about this.

Don't you want her to come back and continue to tell you a little bit about what's going on?

[Applause]

We want you to know there is a telephone number there on the screen if you want to say, "Look, I've got a burden. I need somebody to pray with me." They're there, and the call is paid for by love. Just call that number; it's paid for because somebody loves you enough that they cover the costs. And we're asking you to give God a chance to get in the center of your darkness and the issues you face and the pain that I was talking about, and the one that can lift and lighten the load, Jesus.

You have an opportunity though, boy, this is so great. When we work in harmony with the heart of the Lord, we can lift somebody else's load. I want to show you how you can set captives free, which Jesus said I came to do. I'm talking about literally, people trapped in sexual trafficking, little children being used and sold like slaves and taken as prisoners. We can set them free and we can actually put them in a place of security. We can rescue them. We can give them safety but we have to do this together. But we have a miracle that's in process right now. I want you to watch closely and then see if you want to be a part of a completion of the miracle we're praying for. Watch closely.

On the mission field

>> There are a lot of things I dreamt I'd become. This was never one of them, but it is who I am now. They tell me I deserve it. They say my parents never want to see me again. I'm never alone here for long but alone is all I feel.

I can't keep them out because my door locks from the outside. I hear they've got my sister now. She's about the age they took me. She'll fetch a good price like I did. And of course, they say we're worthless anyway. There's no reason to smile here but I'm forced to. I hate this place but it's like we were meant for each other, filth for filth.

If I was worth anything, worth anything at all surely someone would have come for me. And though I'm all alone, I know there are many. I've seen too many come and disappear. Maybe they're the lucky ones.

End of clip

In the studio

James: Don't you want to open the doors of that prison?

Father, I pray for the men that are trapped by their appetites and desires that will never be satisfied until they're set free. I pray for those precious girls that are being told they are worthless and they're so precious and so special. Lord, help us show them love and life and freedom; in Jesus' name.

Think about it. It was for freedom Christ set us free, Galatians 5:1 -- for freedom Christ set us free. How important is freedom? How about those prisoners? He said he came to open the doors to the prisoners, to set us free from captivity. We can set those girls free.

We have been getting a lot of children that the predators are after and we've gotten them as the predators are going after them and putting them into a beautiful Destiny House, a home; safe houses all over the world that you've helped us build and establish. And \$128 per person/per child is what it costs to take care of them for a year. That's amazing but that's what it costs. We're able to do things so effectively overseas and in that market. We can do things in third-world countries that we're not able to do here but we all have to do that together.

But we want to build a rescue center. We want to build a place where we can actually get the girls out of that place where they feel so lonely, where the doors lock from the outside, and open those doors and take them to a place where the predators and those that have put them in bondage can't get them. This is a very secure place and it's expensive. It is quite beautiful. As a matter of fact, it almost looks like some kind of a college campus when you look at all the facilities.

But we're going to be able to put them in this secure place and keep them safe where they'll be in an atmosphere of love, and they're going to have everything their heart ever longed for -- something they never dreamed they would see because they've been told they're worthless, they're trash, they're somebody's possession and they're being used and just thrown away and damaged. But you know what? We can give them hope and a future. We can give them a place of rescue.

Now here's the miracle. This center, if we built it over here it would be \$4-5 million dollars; overseas we can build it for about \$1.25 million. And God miraculously gave us a family, that like many of you got such a burden for these people. They made a gift through their family of \$820,000 toward that near \$1.25 million. The remaining amount that we must raise is \$410,000, which literally means if you give that, \$1,000, \$100, \$40, it's going to be multiplied three times in its impact. For instance, \$40 will become \$120; over \$1,000 becomes \$3,000 in its impact because of this incredible gift.

Would you join with this expression of love and be a part of this miracle and let's build this rescue center? We can't tell you where it's going to be built; it is going to be a secure place. They're going to be secure. Would you go to LifeToday.org right now, please? Get up and go get your bankcard and use it like a check. Or you can dial the number there on the screen, either way, and make the best gift you can. Make the gift God puts on your heart. This is our last week for us to raise these funds.

Father, I pray everyone who can help will. And Lord, I pray they'll give abundantly because of the love that's in their heart for these precious people who want to be free, these girls, these women; in Jesus' name.

Would you go online right now, *LIFE Today*? Would you dial the number? If you want to write a check, make it to *LIFE* but call us and tell us you're putting it in the mail.

We have some gifts to send you that will bless you and inspire you because we always want to bless you and say thank you for being a blessing. Thanks for going online. Thanks for making that gift.

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.

Our dream is to build a unique child rescue center in Southeast Asia, a safe haven 100% dedicated to rescuing young victims from sex traders and helping them begin the recovery from the abuse they have suffered. This dream of a new rescue center can soon become a reality with your support, combined with a promised \$820,000 matching gift. All we have to do is raise an additional \$410,000 to begin construction. That means your gift today will be matched two-to-one having a triple impact! Gifts of \$20 will be tripled to \$60! \$40 will be tripled to \$120! \$80 will be tripled to \$240! And generous gifts of \$1200 will be tripled to \$3600 to help us rescue children from sexual slavery.

With your gift of any amount we'll send you Sarah Young's newest book, *Peace in his Presence*; favorite quotations from *Jesus Calling*.

Also, please consider a gift of \$1200 to help us build the child rescue center and you may request this beautifully framed canvas print of the "Forest Chapel."

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

End of clip

In the studio

James: Well, I do want to say thanks from the depth of my heart. And remind you, we are sending you some beautiful thank you expressions; *Jesus Calling*, Sarah Young, what a blessing you are! Thank you for being a blessing. You'll be blessed. The Thomas Kinkade "Forest Chapel," beautiful canvas, already framed for your home or for a friend you may want to give it to as a gift while you're giving freedom to so many people.

Chonda is going to be back with us on another program. We're going to talk about what's happened that's really a very heavy load. We lost a daughter, she lost communication and you know what a heartache that is. She'll be back.

Would you like to say thanks for being here today and thanks for coming back?

[Applause]

Thank all of you. Thank you for watching. Tell your friends to watch *LIFE Today*. Visit the stream -- stream.org every day.