

10/20/15
Week 43: Rescue Life
Chonda Pierce #2

James: Well, I'm still smiling from yesterday when Chonda just made us all laugh -- Chonda Pierce. You're going to hear her in a minute. Betty is not here again today but Chonda is here. Betty had a little surgery on her eyes and she should be back next week; and she is doing well. Thanks for praying for her.

Chonda has got a movie out, the 27th of October. You be quiet over there; you haven't been introduced yet. She is kind of like the cuckoo. And we haven't even gotten to the hour yet.

[Laughter]

Now here's the deal. Listen to me.

Chonda: It's a serious movie, for heaven's sakes!

James: I'm thinking about Tim Conway telling about his parents got tired of their cuckoo so they taped it up. And they could hear the hour and the cuckoo going k-chk k-chk!

[Laughter]

I feel like I've got Tim Conway's cuckoo sitting over here.

[Laughter]

Now here's the deal. She's got a movie, *Laughing in the Darkness*. Think about that the 27th of October -- now you want to go ahead and fill the theater. You're going to laugh in the darkness. But this darkness, it can be impenetrable.

Here's the deal. So many of you, you've got indescribable heartache; what seems to be an unbearable load, pain. It's like nobody cares. Somebody cares so much! It's beyond our ability to fathom it -- grasp it. Let me show you a little trailer of the movie you're going to go see on the 27th of October.

Begin video clip

>> Enjoy your flat stomach while you can, honey!

[Laughter]

Didn't we think we were going to have a happy ending?

You're going to swell up like a dead fish one of these days.

[Laughter]

I miss my family.

>> Would you go steady with me?

>> It's been a great sacrifice.

>> Death puts a lot of things in perspective. The recognition that you can't do anything over; you can't change anything or you can never say another word to that human being again -- that will change you.

I'm not even dreaming about exercise or anything. I wake up in a puddle just drenched. And what does a man, he looks over and sees a glistening woman and thinks he's still got it!

[Laughter]

I don't like it and I don't have to like it. I have to survive it.

But I don't want to die alone. I'm not the person I was when we started rolling on all of this and I don't ever want to be that person again. And I don't want to be the person that just spoke those very words. I just want to keep moving forward; keep taking positive steps. This is as private of me as it gets and it feels a little bit uncomfortable.

End of clip

In the studio

James: It looks like a captivating journey. I could tell there was acting and then there is reality.

We see a lot of reality TV that looks like so much pretense and put on to try to create a stir, but that was real. There's real pain you were actually going through.

Chonda: There really was. There is that fine line of what becomes sharing too much or exploitive. I struggled with it when we first started. There were a lot of times where I'd say, "Okay. This is enough filming. Let's don't talk about this anymore." And I'd have to take a deep breath.

It's one thing as a stand-up comedian, and I have about 15 DVD projects out there that I have written and you work on the standup comedy and then you go tour it and you share it with the crowd. And at the end of every DVD I've always had some little teaching or something the Lord's been teaching me. So that's been my M.O. for my entire career. Those things are controlled.

This was something that began to unfold and happen and it was all the behind the scenes and it was not a script and it was not written out. It was just as it was happening. And I walked through some very, very dark roads. Then you have to decide how much of the story is too much to share and how much of it is a testimony that you know there are other people that feel that way and so you allow it to be showed -- you allow it to be seen.

I'm nervous -- I'm nervous. It's one thing... I'll tell you and I don't know if this makes sense to anybody in the world, maybe but to you but sometimes I feel like -- see people are always going, "Why do you think God allows us to have -- God picking on you."

I never think much in those terms anymore. What I think of is man, Satan has hated me since I poked my head out of the womb. He has! And when I watch this movie, to me it's going, look how much he hates me! Look how many times...

James: He hates the purpose of God in every life.

Chonda: And he hates redemption and reconciliation, and he will do anything he can to keep that from happening. He'll even use what we think is good things. The church for a long time used to sell this bill of goods, if I may be so bold to say. And they would tell a congregation, "You come to know Jesus and everything in your life is going to be great and wonderful. And you're going to walk on water to the end of time, and you'll never have cancer, and you'll never have problems."

And we bought into that and then when life just did what life does as it started in the garden in the fall of man, came into place, when life begins to fall apart, the first person we blame is God and the church. We did that! Because we did that! That's what we told them the wrong thing.

What we should have said is life is going to probably fall apart from time to time because we're in a fallen world but you better hold on to Jesus because that's the only way you're going to make it. That's what we should have been saying.

[Applause]

James: And that's really true. Ravi Zacharias sat where you are and said, "Have you ever noticed all the people that worship Mother Nature? When something awful happens they blame Father God."

The deal is God has already told us that in this life it is full of trouble and man's days are short and full of challenges and trouble. And they are. That's part of this life's journey. That's why you put on armor because you're in a battle. Most Christians act like they don't even know there is one.

I found myself wondering if people that never meet the force of the enemy, if he hadn't already got them lock, stock, and barrel. I think that's it. Because it's the one that's going to go on, they're going to see him attacking.

The others, he's already got them locked up; they're not having the joy of the Lord. They're just here and they just have an existence. They don't even have this journey. But in this lifetime you're going to face challenges.

Now you can have times of indescribable peace when it looks like there's nothing there and then it seems like all hell breaks loose; you have no explanation for it. You and I both have talked in our discussions about some of the heaviest moments in our life. When we lost our daughter, which everybody will say you lose a parent, you may lose a spouse, when you lose a child, that's totally unnatural -- that just doesn't happen. It's indescribable. So Betty and I, we got that. We just praise God for the memories of this incredible witness for Christ and beautiful life and everything she sowed is life. We just wish we all had that legacy.

Chonda: And you believe where she is.

James: We're not looking for her; we know where she is. And we know she wouldn't come back because she is happy but she loves us. Here's the deal. That weight, that heaviness, that broken-heartedness, when Betty and I process it and we're still processing, we realize how many people are carrying a tremendous load right now, a broken heart. They're trying to find a way to sing in the darkness.

Jesus actually came to lighten the load and he came to put a song in our heart, to have joy come in the morning; above the clouds the sun is shining. That is reality -- naturally and supernaturally. And what you're trying to do is take people on a journey that had incredible darkness and pain that was unexpected and yet, very real, and then how you dealt with it. Part of the time, with your laughter, it was kind of an escape mechanism but just doing that all the time could have become pretense and then it would have been nothing but an act.

You and I are not happy trying to be actors; we're realists. We just have to come out and here's the truth. It's the only way we live. Because if you know the truth, you want to live the truth, you want to live in truth, you don't want to live a lie. If you ever really know the truth you can't ever be happy living a lie. So we know that. But boy, the pain is indescribable.

So what in the world are you supposed to do with all this pain? And what is this movie, *Laughing in the Dark*, what is it supposed to do for people? What do you want it to do?

Chonda: My dream and my goal is two things that happen. On a selfish point, I do know and I have experienced firsthand in my life everything that is dragged out of the dark into the light has no more power over me. And I have found that to be true about depression, about sin, about grief, all of those things. When I drag that out of the dark and do not try to suffer alone in my own little corner, and bring it before the Lord or bring it into my group or to my therapist or to my doctor, every time I bring that issue to them together the light shines on it and we find peace and we find moments of joy -- that's one thing.

But the biggest, more giant picture is that I had this Hollywood manager I tease all the time and he was always questioning, "How can we get Hollywood to know who you are?" And what started out -- and I think God did this. He'll humble you. I think what started out is we were going to show a behind the scenes and these packed houses and Chonda getting her gold records; and then Hollywood is going to sit up and take notice.

We took a camera out on the road thinking we're going to get something and I got a phone call that says, "Your mother is very seriously ill and she is dying." And the whole movie takes a big giant turn. We had to deal with mother's death. We had to deal with David struggling and his demons that cropped up in his life, called alcohol. We had to deal with an estrangement from a child, that pain that never ends then, all the sudden, in the last three and a half years. Then David died. So do we paint a silly picture and still just show the accolades and the big sold out crowds? Or do we tell the truth? And we decided to tell the truth because if you tell the truth, it sets you free.

James: Yeah, and it will set others free.

Chonda: And that's what I pray. That's would be the only reason to get this in front of people.

James: Did you find a freedom, a load-lightening when you decided this can be redemptive and meaningful for others?

Chonda: Yes. And some of the subject matter is hard. I'll be very honest with you. The issue of dealing with alcoholism; for a long time the church never dealt with that. Now we have wonderful things like Celebrate Recovery, A.A, and wonderful programs for people who find themselves trapped in addiction. But we never were great in the church world about talking about addiction. Then we were never really great about talking about depression. And then here comes a loud mouth comedian dealing with all that and more.

James: And you and Sheila Walsh both have been through incredible, indescribable depression -- and both had to have care. And really and truly, the church should be the first one to step up and say, "Let's deal with this." You know what I'm hearing while you're talking and that is a tremendous need for somebody -- you're going to unload on God. You're going to download on him and he invites it, he can handle it. He doesn't get upset with us because we're upset with him. He just loves us and wants to hold us.

But we really need to see -- the Holy Spirit doesn't like to live as a ghost. He likes to live in somebody. So you can see him expressed. So what we're really looking for is somebody to express this loving shepherd that will take this little lamb; that would never be happy if he's got 99 in the choir but he's got one out here. He's out here looking for that one and he just wants to hold them and keep them secure. We want that.

And really and truly, I was able to offer you that on numerous occasions. Now when I many times got you and it was like I would call and you were in the bottom of the pit. You were even trying to dig it deeper. And somebody said, "Not just Jesus loves you but I'm going to tell you how much he loves you by expressing it." Does that make sense that we need a whole lot of that going on?

Chonda: We do need that. We do need that more. We need to get involved in each other's lives. I think sometimes the Internet and the Facebook and all that stuff has been wonderful technology but what it has done is keep us alone. So then we don't reach out. And then what that quiet aloneness teaches us is that nobody is out there, nobody cares, nobody is calling.

I want to say this publicly and I don't know if it is appropriate to say or not but at one point in my life I was in the deepest part of despair that I truly believed I did not need to be alive. That's how deep your depression can get and that's how bad it can get. This man called me up on the

phone on a regular basis and would read scripture and pray over me like a father, like the heavenly Father would. He exemplified to me when someone says, "I care about you," he really did.

And he called me when no one else would. This man and his wife would call and I'd put it on speakerphone to pray over David while he was dying and David could hear his voice. And he would say, "James." These are the people that really mean that. I say all that to say not to blow smoke to James Robison because he's got his books lined up here like... like God is sitting here!

[Laughter]

I say all that to say, when we, in our deep despair, we get so self-centered and that's what pain does. It makes you so centered on self that we forget that there still is good out there. There is still good churches getting it right. And there are still Christians who are really caring. Go find them.

And also invite them into your life. Don't just text and stay at a distance, but get some folks with flesh on that you can feel those hugs and feel that camaraderie. That is so important because the devil loves to isolate us from one another or turn us on one another, especially in our pain because then it doubles your pain.

James: Look, this is why we're here. This is why the church is here. We're here to express the life of Jesus. And what I see in the movie, *Laughing in the Dark* is I see Jesus lightening the load while you're even trying to escape the pain by just doing what comes naturally to escape.

But all of the sudden there is this load lifter, there is this bright light penetrating and piercing what was the impenetrable darkness, you thought, and coming in. And you're saying we need to do this. I watched you love all the people here in this studio when you came out. You wanted to make them smile. But you also wanted to lighten their load. This is why we're here.

So my encouragement to you is this. Please, not only ask God to brighten your day and lighten your load, he is anxious to do it, and I pray you find somebody you can talk to. I pray you find a shoulder to lean on. But I pray that you also move to the place that you can be the shoulder to lean on. You can be the person that lifts that person. You can be the one that extends the hands of Jesus and embraces them like the shepherd with the lamb. This is why we're here.

Father, I want you to bless this documentary, *Laughing in the Dark*. I pray people will go and take people. But more than anything I pray we move beyond just *Laughing in the Dark* to find the joy that comes in the morning in your presence. I pray for every person watching right now

in their dark moment, in the pain that they bear, would you please get in that yoke and let them know you're there and let them yoke up with you and lighten the load? Lord, would you heal their broken heart and bind up the wounds? -- In Jesus' name. Then would you use all of us who know you to lighten other people's loads? -- In Jesus' name.

The phone number there on the screen, you want someone to pray with you, you just say, "I'd just like to share my heart." Well, you will be sharing with somebody that may have experienced the same heartache and pain you've experienced because all of our prayer partners, they've also been through those challenging moments and they love to lighten the load. So don't ever hesitate to call and ask for help. Just say, "I want to turn my life over to God. I want to know this Jesus that can brighten my day."

Chonda, I tell you what. It is a joy not only to minister to you when you hurt but to minister with you to people who hurt.

Would you join me saying thanks to Chonda Pierce for being a truly bright light in the darkness? She may be laughing in the darkness sometimes to overcome the pain but she has brought great brightness into the life of all of us.

When you get church folks who can look like they were vaccinated with pickle juice and swallowed a curtain rod and just sitting there -- just try to make me laugh! It's pretty scary.

Chonda: My job is hard!

James: It's really scary! And for her to be making these people laugh, and she does, listen, she's got a wonderful gift. I believe this documentary, this movie, I believe it will bless you -- October 27th, make plans to go there. Pray it will bless people.

And you pray for Chonda, and you pray for that tension that's been there with her and her precious daughter. You'll see some of that and how that goes. And we'll ask God for the miracle and we're praying for that miracle even now.

I want to ask you, right now, to be a part of a miracle. You really can be. This is no ministerial statement of exaggeration. This is absolutely the truth. God is in the process of working an indescribable miracle for freedom in individuals' lives that thought it was totally over and it was hopeless. Watch closely.

On the mission field

Announcer: When we see children being children -- laughing, playing -- it brings a smile to

our face and joy to our hearts. But to the human trafficker they see young bodies who they can control and exploit for money through forced prostitution.

Sreyny was once a happy child playing with her village friends. Then one day, a relative of hers promised her a good job in the city to help her parents who were in desperate need of money. To her horror, Sreyny's relative ended up selling her to a human trafficker who locked her up in a room and forced her to perform sexual acts for several men. Three days later she was let out only to work in a karaoke bar and solicit more clients for the trafficker.

The harsh reality is Sreyny is not alone. There are thousands of innocent young girls who are trafficked every day. In the twinkling of an eye their lives can be destroyed by depraved monsters that live in darkness. Something must be done not only to help Sreyny but to reach out to other precious children who are being held against their will or are at risk of being trafficked.

End of clip

In the studio

James: In eternity, the Bible says, God will wipe away every tear. As you looked at the tear, did you not want to wipe it away? When Jesus was crucified, do you wish you could have given him some water when he was really thirsty? Do you wish you could have alleviated the suffering?

Well, he said, "If you do it to the least of them, the least of these, you've done it to me." We can -- and this is no exaggeration -- we can set many captives free, little children. And what we ask you to do right now is help us build a rescue center where we will actually be able to get girls out of the situation, not just get them as we do so often -- and it's so important -- as the predator and the traffickers are trying to get the kids, and get the children, we get them.

But we can now, with your help, if we can build this rescue center -- it is a rescue home, it is a miracle facility -- we can get them out and take them where they will be secure and safe. We cannot tell you where it is going to be built. We can tell you it's going to cost about 1.25 million U.S. dollars; if it was here it would be somewhere around \$4 million, maybe \$5 million. But where we're building it, it is what I just mentioned about \$1.25 million. Now we want to build this center. We believe it is absolutely critical. This is the last week now that we're asking for your help.

But now here's the miracle -- think about this. One family so believes in what we're doing, and they've been blessed, and they said, "We're going to give out of our family foundation \$820,000

towards that, which means we need to raise \$410,000 and we'll have the amount that we now realize it's going to cost. So we're asking you please, to help us get that \$410,000.

And this is the last week now that we're asking. And we're believing it is going to come in. It means that whatever you do will basically be multiplied in its impact three times because it is a two-to-one gift. Would you right now go online to LifeToday.org? Or dial the number and take your bankcard -- please do it! Go ahead and move now to do it. You can listen as you're moving. But take that bankcard and use it like a check.

If you could give \$1,000 it will be multiplied. Think about this: \$128 is what it takes to take care of one of these we rescue for a year. And we need many of those gifts; \$1280 helps us take care of ten. But the beautiful thing, when we're thinking about this rescue center is, as we receive the money, whether it is \$40 or \$80, you think about \$40 and it's immediately going to have \$120 impact. So whatever you can do is going to be tripled. And we can see the miracle today.

If you do what God lays on your heart, that's the miracle right now that you can give birth to. Would you do it please? We have some gifts to send you that I promise you will be a source of inspiration and blessing to you because we always want to bless you but you're going to be setting captives free. You're going to be part of a miracle in many people's lives. Thank you for going online, LifeToday.org, or dialing that number. If you want to write a check, by the way, make it to *LIFE* but call us and tell us what you're putting in the mail and then mail it this week. Thank you so much 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.

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: This is an incredibly beautiful book written by a woman that I think is so blessed! Sarah Young, what a treasure! Millions and millions of books sold. *Jesus Calling*, he's calling! He's calling through the movie and documentary that is about the journey of Chonda, *Laughing in the Dark*. Well, *Peace in His Presence*, Jesus is calling us there; we're sending it to say thanks. I want to thank you. This is the last week now for helping us set these incredible, precious women and girls free from being in sexual bondage and trafficked, held as slaves. Join me now in saying thanks to Chonda Pierce. May God bless you, Chonda as you bless others!

Chonda: Thank you! I love you!

James: You bless others all the time! Thank you for being a blessing! Thanks for watching *LIFE Today*, sharing *LIFE Today*. Go to the stream -- stream.org every day and pray about the issues we face.