

2/8/16
Week 7 WFL last week
Rich Wilkerson

Randy: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! We all build our lives on something. Is it really something we should build our lives on? That's what we're talking about today. Not just building on something that may not last but building on a firm foundation. What does that look like? Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm Randy Robison. Sheila Walsh is here.

Sheila: Greetings earthlings! I am so excited about today's show because I actually had the opportunity to hear this guy preach when I was in Australia. And my 18 year old son -- 18 year old son said to me, "Mom, any time that man opens his mouth I want to hear it." So when you have somebody who so captivates an 18-year-old, you really know that God's anointing is on him.

Randy: Yeah, my 18-year-old will not listen to me.

Sheila: Yeah, well, we'll deal with that later. That's another show! That's one on rejection.

Randy: Can we welcome Rich Wilkerson, Jr.

Rich: Thank you so much!

Randy: Glad to have you!

Rich: I am delighted and honored to be here. I'm really great for this opportunity. I love what this program has done for so many years. And thankful to your parents and thankful for what *LIFE Today* really represents in taking the gospel to the ends of the earth and putting the message out there. So it is my privilege to be here today. I'm excited about it.

Randy: It's good to have another P.K. here who is doing good things just to prove to the world we don't all turn out bad.

Rich: You and I were joking. The jury is still out. I'm only 30 so pray for us. P.K.'s we have a way of getting into mischief a little bit.

Sheila: And for those who don't know the language, that would be Pastor Kids.

Randy: Or Preacher's Kids.

Rich: It's kind of like an exclusive society of our own thing.

Randy: The only thing worse are E.K.'s, the Evangelist's kids and the M.K. is the Missionary's Kids. And then the D.K.'s are the Deacon's Kids. Forget about them!

Rich: Wow! Don't mess with the deacon's kids. That's true!

[Laughter]

Don't know! Don't know!

Randy: Before we get into *Sandcastle Kings* which is your new book and we're going to talk about some really powerful truths. I know Sheila has been impacted.

Sheila: I love this book!

Randy: I want to ask about something because I know a lot of people that tune in, they're going, "I've seen that guy!" Or they're tuning in because they've seen that guy on another network with Rich in Faith, a reality show where they've heard your name and sort of the pop culture thing because there have been a lot of celebrities come through your church down in south Miami. So what's up with all the whole kind of pop culture thing you've got going on?

Rich: Well, I don't really know if I have the best answer for that. I think that we are a church in Miami, it's called Vous Church. My wife and I have got to lead it. Really, our church is just for all people. I think we work really hard at saying everybody's welcome. In fact, I really believe the message of Jesus is, "You belong before you believe. You belong before you behave." He said, "Come to me all you who are weary and heavy-burdened."

So I think we've tried to create a community that is welcoming to all people. So with that, if you're going to reach all people you're going to reach people that nobody knows their name but you might also reach some people that everybody knows their name. So with that, we've seen all sorts of different people come through the doors throughout the years. I think sometimes they get put into a category that is not a category that I've strategized or tried to get into but it's just something that the Lord has led us into.

Randy: I think that's important. It's not that you're seeking a spotlight. It's just that you're

seeking to be used by God and he chooses to use you in areas where other people are in the spotlight.

Rich: One time some guy came up to me and said, "Man, I want to do what you do, which is reach high-profile people."

I just said, "Man? Reach high-profile... I don't even know what a high-profile person is. Everyone is high-profile. I think if we just make our effort to reach people it is amazing where God will take us and lead us.

So that's kind of been our story. We just try to follow where God leads us and we try to serve people. We always say at our church, "Jesus is our message, people are our heart." I want to create a church where everybody feels welcome to come in whether they're famous, nameless; whether they're a pop star or not. So lots of people come through our doors and we're grateful for it.

Sheila: I think it's interesting though that your cover, that Kanye West actually designed your cover. But it's interesting because you quote a couple of lyrics of his in your book which I find fascinating. He talks about -- I'm not going to get them right but almost like those who get to the very top of the ladder are the most insecure of all or something?

Rich: Absolutely. This book *Sandcastle Kings* is really a book that we're trying, and I believe we've already seen, where it's invading some dark spaces. This is the message of Jesus. I think Jesus' message is really a message for all people. I love this idea: Those that hunger and thirst for righteousness will be filled. What I've discovered on my journey is that people aren't necessarily hungry for another church or more religion but they are hungry for Jesus. He has the greatest message ever told, which is the gospel -- good news! That Jesus said, "I came to take everything that you deserve so that you can get everything that I deserved."

We had the cover done by Kanye; he's a friend of mine. He's on the journey of faith. I love him. I think one of the things I've learned in life is that you don't have to approve or even agree with everything that somebody does in order to accept somebody.

On the flip side of that if you disagree with somebody that doesn't give us the right to disrespect somebody. I think right now one of the big issues that we've got in our country is that whenever we disagree, we feel like that gives us room to disrespect one another. I don't ever want to be a person like that. I want to be a person who stays in the conversation.

So getting Kanye to do the artwork, I'm not here to be an advocate of any -- he's a friend of mine but I do think when the history books are written that he will go down as one of the

modern artists of our generation. As we look back throughout church history, if you go all the way back to the Sistine Chapel, which Evangelical Christians to Catholics go all the way to Rome to the Vatican to kind of have an experience. And they will walk into the Sistine Chapel and they'll go, "Oh, my goodness, I feel the presence of God." They look up and there the Sistine Chapel was painted by the artist of the day, Michelangelo. Well, Michelangelo was not a follower of Jesus, if you're looking at the history books.

But as you study church history what you'll see is the church always called upon some of the greatest artists of the day. I think if we've got the greatest message which is the content inside that book, which is the gospel, I think that we should cover it in great art. I'm glad that we've got Kanye to do the art. The art on the outside, the cover is cool. I say the content is life-changing. So I'm hoping that just as a tool to get it into some spaces that they say the gospel doesn't belong.

Randy: I'm glad for Kanye's sake that you're his friend. That's my prayer for anyone, high-profile, low-profile, no-profile that comes through your church, is that they will say, "That guy who loves Jesus is truly my friend."

Sheila: One of the most powerful things I think about your book, Rich, is you tell that story that we find in Matthew about the wise man and the foolish man building their castles. As I read through your book I thought, it is even more relevant today than it was when Jesus told that story. What caused you to choose that one particular thing of the idea of sandcastles to show where we're at as a culture?

Rich: For me, I grew up in a strong Christian home; I'm four generations preacher on both sides. I got into a lot of trouble growing up for sure. My first slow dance was to "Our God is an Awesome God." Pray for me. I've got real problems. "And the Lord wasn't joking when he kicked them out of Eden. Our God is an awesome God!" It's weird! It's very, very weird.

But I grew up in a strong Christian home. But I had parents that were conservative, they were strict. But you know what I loved about my parents? Is my parents raised us in a grace-filled home. There is a spirit of grace. Do you know what I mean? Even in the midst of lots of rules you can carry that spirit. My parents, no matter what they preached, they always lived that out.

In 1998, we moved from Tacoma, Washington to Miami, Florida where my dad took over a little inner city Assemblies of God Church. I kind of went from this world of Tacoma where my grandfather kind of pastored this big suburban, sort of mega church to now going to this inner city urban church where I was like the only white-skinned kid in the place. I went from being the majority to the minority. Everything about making that move was just full of change: The

climate, the people, the Food. Everything I can think of, it was just one word, would be change.

Yet the one thing that always kind of ran the same to me, Sheila was going to the beach. We always grew up going to the beach. One of my favorite things to do at the beach was to build sandcastles. I think just looking back on life, I just have these memories of taking a lot of time building a sandcastle and putting detail into it; building the moat, because you've got to build a moat. And working on it for hours but no matter what, you'd leave that day, when you came back the next day, that sandcastle had collapsed; either rain had fallen, either the tides had come in, someone had thrown a football, a little boy had walked over and stumbled on it and it just collapsed.

When I read Jesus' words there, it just spoke to me because it is not just kids who are building sandcastles. We, as adults, we build our lives like the song that Kanye talks about where we kind of create these lives where we have so many things that are decorated. And we think we have all the trappings of life, whether it is our bank account, whether it is our titles in front of our name, whether it is our health, whether it is the person we marry, the person we fall in love with, whether it is sex, drugs, rock and roll -- whether it is even religion. All of these things in and of themselves at times they can be good things.

But what Jesus makes really clear is that a good thing becomes a bad thing when you make it the foundational thing. And to build your life on any of these things is like sand. And the reality of life is that the wise man and the foolish man had to face the storm. Meaning wisdom did not prevent the storm. We can't prevent storms. We can prepare for them by making sure that we have the right foundation.

What is that foundation? Well, this book, I believe is an advocate to say that Jesus is the only foundation, Jesus says I'm the king of kings, Lord of Lords. I am the chief cornerstone. I am the rock. He's the only thing worth building a life on. He didn't come for a make-over, he came for a takeover of our lives.

Sheila: Whoo! I love that! That's good! That will preach! That's awesome!

Rich: Sheila Walsh, ladies and gentlemen!

[Laughter]

Randy: The interesting thing I take away from -- and there's a lot of great things in there but when you talk about it rains on the one who builds their foundation on the rock and it rains on

the one who builds their foundation on the sand; is unbelievably true. And a lot of Christians think, if I just build my house on the rock, or if I'm a good Christian...

Rich: Then life's easy.

James: Then I won't get any rain. But we get it.

Rich: Absolutely! Jesus never promises a problem-free life. He just promises that he'd walk through every storm with us. He's Emmanuel; he is got with us. I think we've got to discover that there is this journey called faith.

I think one of the most powerful things about this book, this whole book is based on one chapter of the Bible. I'm by no means any theologian. I could only handle one chapter. That chapter has got four different stories. Really, the book doesn't blatantly say this but each one of the stories for me in the outline of my mind represented a common castle that I think people tend to build on.

Once again, these castles, every day I find myself in one of these categories. Every day I have to reprogram. Every day I have to resubmit my life over to Jesus. Say wait a minute. I want to build on you. I want to be trusting in you.

Luke seven has got four beautiful stories, the faith of the centurion, the widow at Nain, John the Baptist in prison doubting Jesus, the woman with the alabaster box.

The first story is really trust in self. If I just got more, if I can do more then I'll deserve this.

The second story is a trust in others. If I've got the right people around me, my boss, if I can get the approval of him or her, if I could marry this guy. Even my kids -- these are all good things but they're nothing to build a life on. People they actually don't complete us; they actually just compliment us.

The third story of John the Baptist doubting Jesus is the sandcastle of religion. If I do enough good things then somehow God will owe me. But the flip side is if I do enough bad things will God reject me? Jesus didn't come to institute religion. He came to establish a relationship with us. So it's about trusting in him.

And the fourth story, the one with the alabaster box, which most theologians would tell us they believe that she was a prostitute. Meaning she probably didn't grow up wanting to be a prostitute but somewhere on her journey she decided to believe the lie that instant gratification

was possible and so she took the quick path. We don't know how she got there but one day she hears about Jesus. I just think about this woman. So often in life, I think about this woman that she had dealt with people who had rented her body, who had given her a wage and who had then just used her, abused her, and went on.

But one day she heard about Jesus. And Jesus doesn't come to rent us, he came to buy us back. He wants to own us.

Why I love this idea is that when we rent something we're careless with it, but when you own something you're quite careful with it. Jesus, he is not careless with people. He is so so careful! Because he came and he paid the ultimate price, which was to lay down his life in exchange for ours. Jesus didn't just die for us. It is better than that. He died as us. He took all of our sin. He took all of our bad deeds. In exchange he gave us all of his righteousness. It is the most powerful story ever.

I believe as you read the pages, it is a book that is obviously for a non-Christian. I think it is an easy introduction to Jesus. I think it is for a person who is in a storm. But even more than that, Paul time and time again writes, "I want to remind you of the gospel." It is a book for me. Because the gospel is not just my entry level. The gospel level is my entry level, it continues my journey, and that's where I finish is with the gospel. We never graduate from this message.

I think as I read this book, it reminds me, I want to build my life on Jesus, the firm foundation. I might bend but we don't have to break.

Sheila: Well now you probably guess why I really love this book. I want to jump back to the third story you tell, the one about John the Baptist. Because honestly, of all the passages of scripture, that has arrested me and challenged me and encouraged me in my faith, this is one of the main passages because John -- its set up a little for us. John is the one that got to say, "Behold the Lamb of God!" But now he is in prison and what's happened to him?

Rich: I think, Sheila, you and I were chatting the other day. This is one of those kind of stories in the Bible that I, even as a young preacher am so nervous to come around because there are some things in the Bible where it's like I don't want to lend my voice to that because I haven't lived enough to experience this. For me to even make comments on John the Baptist is scary for me.

But it is a profound story because we see so many facets of Jesus in it but also we discover some powerful truths. John the Baptist, who is maybe the most powerful preacher that ever walked the planet aside from Jesus, and he was the forerunner of Jesus, he was the cousin of Jesus. He is out in the wilderness saying, preparing a way for the messiah, "Repent! Be

baptized." This guy was fierce. He was full of passion, full of conviction. He didn't have a church web site. He didn't have a great church strategy. He wore not cool clothes. He was in camel clothes eating weird food and yelling at people.

Randy: It kind of was hip back then though. I don't know!

Rich: He was the hipster pastor back then. But people were coming from everywhere, religious people, lost people. He's baptizing them. And all of the sudden one day Jesus shows up and John sees him and says, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world."

I love that he says "takes away" because Jesus didn't just cover our sin, he cancels and takes away our sin. There's this beautiful exchange that we read about where they kind of have this, "You baptize me."

"No, you baptize me."

And finally John gets it, he submits to Jesus and he baptizes him. And when he does, the Bible says, that the heavens open up and that a dove comes down. And then the audible voice, I believe God's spoken to me but I've still yet to hear the audible voice of God. This is like an amazing moment!

John says, "I must decrease so that you can increase." He speaks all of this stuff about Jesus.

Then we read in Luke chapter seven, we see this completely different facet of John. This guy that we've always seen as being so strong, so courageous, so full of passion is now in a prison cell because he spoke truth against Herod and now he's awaiting his execution as he sits in a prison cell. I can only imagine what he must have been thinking about.

But he calls his disciples to him and says, "Guys, can you go and find Jesus? And will you ask Jesus, would you just ask him is he really the one we were hoping for or should we expect somebody else?"

I mean just getting the word as the disciples must have been confusing to those guys. "Wait a minute, John? What are we doing out here? We were out there when you baptized him. We saw the heavens open up and we heard God's voice. What do you mean?"

I can just hear John going, "I know, guys. But you're out there and I'm in here."

And until you go into a situation where you feel cramped and in a prison that's probably the first place you begin to ever doubt Jesus. And those people that say, "I have never doubted Jesus" are people that probably never been in the battle long enough.

But these disciples go to Jesus with this request. And even the request in itself is a pretty crazy request because if one of us were to say it right now, they probably wouldn't let us preach in any more churches. They'd probably take away our titles and say, "Oh, he's lost his mind!"

But they go to Jesus and they say, "Jesus, John's wondering if you're the one who he said he is." And Jesus' response is amazing. He quotes Isaiah and he says: "Tell John the blind receive sight, the lame walk, the deaf hear. The good news is preached. The captives are set free."

And he says these words that honestly, I think about them every week. It says, "Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me." Another version says, "Blessed is the man who is not offended with me."

Ultimately, what Jesus is saying is, "Hey John, you're going to be blessed if you don't lose faith now." What he is saying is, "Hey John, I'm not coming to rescue you the way that you want to be rescued. Hey John, this isn't going to end the way you want. But I'm telling you John, if you don't give up now there is a greater blessing than you can ever imagine."

I've always thought to myself, I knew Jesus could produce faith but is it possible for Jesus to reduce faith in my life? And the answer is yes. The moment you turn Jesus into your genie instead of your god. This idea of religion is hey, I do this and then God you do that. Guess what? God is in debt to no man. This is about trusting in Jesus through the mountaintops, through the valleys, when I can't see him at all. We're telling God's story not our story.

And the reality is John, he didn't recant the faith. John was executed still believing in Jesus. But what I love so much about the story, Sheila, or what encourages me because I don't know, I've never been in a prison cell. It is easy to preach it; it is another thing to live it. But what's interesting to me is that as those disciples go back, they never hear this, John never hears this but Jesus starts to talk about John. In fact, he starts to gossip about John. I don't know if you've ever wondered, does Jesus gossip? He does! What he does, he says good stuff about you. So that's called good gossip.

Jesus says, "I want to tell you something about John. John was the greatest man ever born of a woman." And the revelation that kind of hit my life is that when I'm doubting Jesus he is still bragging on me. That's who our God is. Even when I'm faithless, the Bible says he is still faithful. He doesn't do love, he is full of love. The only thing that's different about Jesus are his mercies every morning.

This, my friend is so much deeper than religion. It is not about striving, it is not about achieving, it is about a god who says even when you doubt me there is still a great blessing in front of you. I still see the best in you even when you can't see the best in your situation.

Randy: So much good stuff! So much! We could go on and on.

Sheila: Get the book!

Randy: Yeah, get the book! I'm going to tell you how to get the book in just a second. But there are a lot of people right now that are wondering does God see me? Does God care about me? Will God hear my cry? I want you to meet some of those people and I want you to watch and see how you can be a part of meeting them in the name of Jesus and showing them, yes, God does still see you, care about you, and love you. Watch this.

On the mission field

James: If you were thirsty in Africa or in many of the remote parts of the world, you'd walk up to a stream like this and say, "Oh, I've got great water!" Well, what you don't realize is in this area alone, thousands of people got cholera, serious severe diarrhea. Many people, it cost them their children.

Tammy: This scene is so typical around the world. This is their water source. And yet you can see that it is filled with trash, it is filled with cow manure that is flowing into this stream. But she has no option, this is it.

Kathy: This is filthy, dirty water and they're drinking this stuff.

Marc: You have to understand, in every single village around the globe right now there is a hospital with a dying child that is related to water.

Rhonda: There is so many children and babies that die every day because they have no clean water.

Beth: Now I want you to understand what that means as that translates into lives in all the rural villages of mothers and children that are drinking filthy water.

Betty: And they can't do anything about it because it is all the water that they have. I can't even imagine. This little baby is so precious, so beautiful! Her mother loves her so much. I want to see this little baby live healthy because we've given some fresh water to them.

Tammy: But don't think that you can't do something about it because it is so enormous. You can! Because it starts with one child, one family, one village at a time.

James: So we're not really talking about equipment. We're not just talking about drilling a hole in the ground. We're talking about saving lives.

Ruth: This one child you can see, wants the water, needs the water. And her little community now has it because of your gift. She will grow up with clean water. That's maybe a small item to you but to these children it is life. Let's not forget that. Please, these children need it now. And there are children all over the world who don't have it. So your gift will make a difference.

End of clip

In the studio

Randy: You can be that difference and you can be that difference today, right now, in the lives of so many. This is the last week of this current Water for Life outreach campaign so we need to hear from you. We have some nice gifts that we would like to give you.

But beyond that, when you look at the breakdown of what we do, \$4800 is the average cost of a well, wherever we drill it, around the world. You might be able to give the \$4800. Maybe you can give \$48 and help provide water for ten people.

I want you to understand that this is not just a one-time deal. This is investing for the lifetime of most of those people who need that water, the clean drinking water. You're not just giving a cup of water in Jesus' name as he says we should do, you're giving a lifetime of clean drinking water.

Your gift today can go far beyond what you'll ever see and that's the great blessing of us coming together in the name of Christ and doing what we can. Sheila, I know you've seen us do this now for many years. What an opportunity!

Sheila: This is so doable! If you think about the well, yeah, a couple of you might be able to do that and that's fantastic. But \$48 provides clean water for ten children for the rest of their lives! I can't imagine my son having to pick up water like that in a bottle that is filthy.

Think about the amount of money you spend a week just going for coffee or even if the family goes to a movie. If you skip one of those and you could provide for just \$48 clean drinking water for ten children for the rest of their lives -- we can do this people! We can't let this

happen on our watch.

Randy: We always tell them why we're there. We don't just give them water, we give them the water of life. So go to the phones, go online, make the best gift you can. But more importantly, just be a part. We need you to be a part, the hands of Christ as we reach around the world and we share Water for Life.

Begin video clip

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

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 15 different nations. Your gift of \$24 will help provide clean water for 5 people; \$48 will help provide for 10 people; \$72 will impact 15 people. And \$144 will help provide for 30 people for a lifetime!

With your gift we would like to send you James Robison's book, *God of All Creation*. Through his personal observations of animals and wildlife, James shares heartwarming stories and spiritual lessons of God's love and grace.

With your gift of \$100 or more, be sure to request *Majesty*. This beautifully illustrated book teaches you the blessing and significance of the names of God, including Jehovah Rapha, your healer and Jehovah Jireh, your provider.

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 you may request our beautiful new "Majesty" bronze sculpture.

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

End of clip

In the studio

Randy: Do go to the phones or go online right now. Give the best gift you can. You can make a huge difference! Just join with us and share Water for Life.

Sheila, do you think maybe they should request this book when they call today?

Sheila: Yes! Really, I get the privilege of reading so many books but honestly, Rich, this really is a gift. This really will change people's lives. So we would love to make this available to you if you would like to stand with us and make a difference in the rest of the world.

Randy: We're going to give away few of your books. Is that all right, man?

Rich: We can give away as many as you want. Yeah! I'm just honored. When you got Sheila Walsh talking about your book, it makes you feel a little silly and embarrassed and insecure because she is one of the greatest authors, preachers, everything. So its like, did you really read my book? Because that's really, really embarrassing to me because I know I missed some commas somewhere in that thing! You know what I'm talking about?

Randy: You'll get the cliff notes back later.

Sheila: I read it twice!

Randy: I appreciate all that you're doing. Would you just say thank you to Rich for being here?

Rich: Thank you so much!

Randy: Do call right now. Request Rich's book when you make your best gift towards Water for Life. Set your D.V.R.'s and watch *LIFE Today* every day!