

2/22/16
Week 9: Rescue Life
Reggie Dabbs

James: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm James Robison. Betty and I are thrilled to have Reggie Dabbs back with us. His story you must hear because the end result of the story that would seem like possibly an impossible situation has continued and has really given life to young people like very few people. The organization that he has inspired, Youth Alliance, is touching a million teenagers and even school children elementary age. Because of the life and love that they offer so freely the school districts actually welcome it and encourage it. Youth Alliance, that's the web site.

Here is Reggie's book that's just come out. It's called *Just Keep Breathing*: A shocking expose of letters you never imagined a generation would write.

Reggie, we're really glad to have you! I want you to know it's good to have you here. I did 2,000 high school and junior high school assemblies years ago. I poured a lot of my life into those kids. And I still meet them where the kids will tell me their parents' lives were changed in those assemblies. And some who are very definitely adults now tell me themselves their life was changed. So I know that what you're doing in the schools has to be very positive.

You didn't get off with a start that would seem to be conducive of somebody going around helping kids because your journey and your beginning and your life as a child was pretty tough. Would you tell our viewers what you actually experienced?

Reggie: When I was little growing up everything was fine until eight years old. They had this event at school called parent/teacher conference, which could be devastating for many reasons for kids, and my name was the first on the list for my mom and dad to come and meet the teacher. So they came. And after we met the teacher, had the meeting, we leave and all my friends are at school with their parents. I noticed that all my friends' parents were young but my parents were like older.

And I was taught if you have a question ask, never be afraid to ask. So in the car going home I'm in the back seat and I just yell to the front seat, "Hey! Why are y'all old?"

And when we got home, my dad said, "We've got to talk." So they put me at the kitchen table to have "a talk." And everybody pretty much have had that talk with their parents.

I tell kids all the time, "If you've never been to the kitchen table to have a talk with your parents, here's the rule: If you don't smell food, run! They can catch you later! Just get out and run."

My dad started and he said, "Son, there is a plan for your life."

My mom looked at me and she said, "Baby, I'm sorry." She started to cry. She cried so hard for like ten minutes that my dad moved chairs and held my mom.

And I found out in everyone's life that we all have a time or a place or an event that we remember like it was last night. And no matter how many years ago it was, it's in your life where it changed something, something inside shifted whether for the good or whether for the bad, that could change your destiny. This would have been mine at eight years old when after ten minutes of crying my dad goes, "Tell him! Tell him!"

My mom said, "Baby, I'm sorry, I'm old because I'm not your mom."

And my dad whispered, "I'm not your dad." They told me I was in foster care.

That would be hard enough but then they told me I had a brother and two sisters and that my real mom kept my brother and my sisters but she gave me away. That made me start thinking that there was something wrong with me. If your own mom don't want you then what are you worth? What is your value? And for years I grew up thinking I had no value, I had no worth.

And every day my foster care mom would put us to sleep at night and she used to always say a prayer, "Now I lay me down to sleep. I pray the Lord my soul to keep. And if I die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take."

When she would leave the room I would literally look up and say, "Please let me die!" And every morning I'd wake up and he didn't. And I couldn't figure out why he would hate me enough to let me live.

That might sound strange to people but some people it doesn't because they're there today. There is somebody just flicking through the channel and they're listening to me speak and they're like, "That's me!"

What we decided to do, what I decided to do was as I got older I started finding out more and more. My foster parents would tell me more. That my mom's husband left and she had my brother and my two sisters living in a chicken coop, on an abandoned farm in a chicken coop.

James: They all stayed in it as a little family?

Reggie: They all stayed there and she ended up sleeping with a man for \$20 to get food for my brother and sisters and that's how she got pregnant and that's how I was born.

It's not that -- and I tell people all the time. I tell kids especially in school, "I don't need your pity because let me tell you something right now, my past is my history but my future is my destiny. You can't change yesterday but today and the rest of your life, it is up to you." And we can do that.

I know in my heart that God trusted me with that story. He trusted me to have that kind of background just to grow up and become a man who would reach out to other people because hurt people can help hurt people.

James: Your story is shared here. But in the story and in the book, you begin to talk about what kids are facing. As a matter of fact, you handed me some of the things that kids talk about. Just listen to this because I know Reggie is going to expound on this. Kids really, really like to hear what he has to say.

"People in crisis do not need to just be fixed: The greatest needs are to be listened to and valued."

You cannot always fill roles but you can always fill holes -- in the lives of others, especially if you begin to get them filled in your own life.

You said something here because suicide is a reality: Suicide is not the end of pain, it is the ultimate pain. It is pain to so many.

You have written this book. You have inspired the Youth Alliance. How many young people are speaking along with you and how many kids do y'all speak to a year?

Reggie: Well, we're all grown men. I like the way you say "young." I'll take that! There's like nine to twelve different speakers and we do our own programs. We go from kindergarten all the way up. We do district-wide events. They are secular events, even our night events are secular.

James: So you're talking about principles that would be foundational and biblical but you're talking about in the language of let's say impacting the culture and people where they live. And you're honoring their demand that you not bring your religion in, but you bring in your concern and your answers.

Reggie: We bring hope.

James: There's a little clip that kind of shares some of the things that the kids post on Facebook or the things they say after you've been there. Let's look at that. Let's just see what we can get from it as we hear what kids are saying and sharing.

Begin video clip

>> I don't really like to talk about it but I feel like I can tell you. It started off with me getting sexually harassed by my grandfather for my entire life. Then after my parents found out they confronted him and a week or two later he killed himself.

>> When I was 12 years old, I was initiated into a gang. They want to kill me but guess what I deserve; right?

>> I get abused and hurt all the time. No one cares.

>> I've been kidnapped and raped. I've even harmed myself before.

>> Has anybody in this gym ever hurt so bad it was just hard to breathe?

>> People in crisis don't need to just be fixed. They need to be listened to.

>> If that's you, then just do me a favor, just keep breathing because tomorrow holds the answer to the problem that you're facing today.

End of clip

In the studio

James: Reggie, one of the things that I found so essential in my own life is the recognition of the fact that we miss the mark, we fail. Sometimes it's almost like we're pushed down but sometimes we just fail and fall down. It's really a key.

I guess it would almost be like a competition and a fight, if you get knocked down, that's just an issue. But if you choose to stay down then that's just almost like a living death. You've got to get up. You've got to keep breathing.

Is that what you're trying to say to those who have been pushed down and they've been dealt really a load of pain?

Reggie: Absolutely! Because in any given day there is a kid in the bleachers of a gym that we get to walk into and you have no idea what they saw the night before. You have no idea that they were hiding in their closet from their own father. You have no idea that they were helping their mom that morning get in the shower because she was passed out from drugs and alcohol. We just don't know. So my job is to come alongside that kid and to give them hope, to give them love.

I look at it as -- I had a reporter not long ago say, "So who is your speech for? -- All these schools you do?"

I told them, "It's all about Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer." See, when Rudolph ran away from the North Pole, he ended up on the Island of Misfit Toys. And there are kids in the gym getting ready to start the program. I said, "Look around the room. Welcome to the Island of Misfit Toys, the land of the broken girls and boys." But the one thing they need to know is they're loved -- their loved!

Those stories that you just heard are from literal kids who heard me speak for 40 minutes. And they wrote for the public to hear and read, put their name to their stories and asked me for help. That's because they realize what I realize is that love is going to find a way. You can make it.

And a lot of kids just need somebody to come alongside them and say, "You know what? I believe in you. There's hope." That's what we do. Our job is in a new way -- and I know I love Jesus -- got saved when I was 12 years old. My foster care parents took me to church every Sunday and that's the base of who I am. But I took the principles that I learned in the Word of God and we flipped them around and made it to where the public schools go, "Our kids need that."

And I'll give you an example -- a simple example. It's called: The Ten for Ten. Every school we do this year we're having this competition; that when kids hear us speak for the next ten days, every day, they must find ten people to show an act of kindness to. So it's called "The Ten for Ten Challenge." So every day ten people every day for ten days show hope to, give love to,

give peace to. If you do something for seven days, it becomes a habit. If you do it for ten, you could change a culture.

Now it's amazing what's happened. What happened in one school, we did it not too long ago and the next day the principal called me. I said, "How did you get my cell number?"

He goes, "Well, I have my ways."

I said, "All right. What happened today?"

He said, "Yesterday, when you spoke a kid jumped on stage and hugged you at the end."

It was a brother, big brother, long dreadlocks. And when he hugged me, he said, "You changed my life."

He goes, "What you need to know is that boy's dad is a multiple murderer in prison for life. Every morning he wakes up his mom goes, 'Would you please go die? Because if it weren't for you I'd still have my husband; he never would have killed those people if it wasn't for you.' And that boy took that to heart and has been the meanest, roughest kid in the whole school."

He said, "Today at lunch a girl with cerebral palsy, every day she takes her walker, puts it by her chair with her friends and she will walk through the line on her own, carry her tray on her own and sit down with her friends."

But that day she fell in the middle of the cafeteria and her food went everywhere. And that boy was the first one to help her. He helped her get up. And he sat her at a table. Then he disappeared for three minutes.

Then the principal goes, "When I looked for him, he had bought another tray of food exactly what she dropped, paid for it on his own, and said, 'I just want you to know I admire you.'"

So he said, "So I pulled him out of class."

I said, "Why are you so kind?"

He said, "You don't understand." He said, "My whole life I've been told I'm no good. My whole life I've been told I can't do anything. I can't go nowhere. I was told that my dad committed murder because of me. My mom says 'Go die today.' But yesterday, that man, he said I could be someone's hero. He said I could be someone's answer. He said I could be someone's hope."

All we need is to be that voice of hope. Because kids today, they really don't need parents. They can find everything they want on the Internet. Technology has gone so advanced that a kid really doesn't need to learn nothing from anyone.

But that computer can't hug them. The Internet can't let them know the value that they are. It can lead them away. It can let them buy a Nike shoe but it can't tell them that, "You're going to make. You're going to change the world." That's where humans can still change humans.

That's what this is all about. It's about giving hope to everyone. It's for a parent to learn about her kids, it is for a teacher to keep teaching. It's for kids to know, I'm not alone. Because the number one thing when you're in the middle of something horrific, you start thinking you're the only one hurting. You see everybody smiling but you. But hopefully, this can help people know we're in this thing together.

Betty: I love the title of your book, *Just Keep Breathing*, because I think everyone, if they live very long, you experience at least one time that moment of thinking I can't breathe, I can't breathe. It's all over. There is nothing left. There is no hope. I think everyone experiences that to some extent sometime in their life. I know we have. We lost a daughter. You think, O God! If it wasn't for you, I couldn't take that next breath. I couldn't do it.

And it is a lot like you said. There's a lot of children that come from circumstances like you did. But as you begin to tell your story, I thought, God planted hope in those foster parents because that woman wept when she had to tell you where you came from.

Reggie: You know what's great? My mom, I was 12 when I was told this, my mom gave me away to her favorite teacher at school -- and I speak in public schools now. And that teacher's husband was a school janitor -- and I work in schools now. It's like God has a plan. He has the perfect plan.

And we read the Bible. It's not just words in a book; it is life to live by. So I look at people who watch *LIFE Today* every day and they're your friends and they follow you. Why can't we be someone's breath? Why can't we be someone's hope? All we have to do is get up looking for an opportunity to do something for people.

And the schools that I speak in, and the story that I use is simple. I went to Wal-Mart. I ran out of bottled water. Everybody is like, "Why did you go to Wal-Mart?" Because it is cheap! That's why I went to Wal-Mart. I got my little buggy from the greeter at the front door. I went and got me a case of bottled water.

When I got in line to check out, I was behind a mom and her six-year-old boy. Now the mom is putting her groceries on the checkout belt and the checkout lady is checking out her groceries. And the little boy is just looking around the store.

He saw something because he was like, "Oh, my Lord!"

And I looked to where he was looking. All I could see was a sign that said \$7 and a bunch of Halloween costumes.

But he went nuts. He was like, "Mom! Mom! Mom! Momma!"

And the mom is like, "What?"

He goes, "Mom, look! I'm Batman!"

And on the bottom row was all these Batman costumes.

And he was like, "Mom, you've got to buy it. Mom, it's only \$7. Mom, Friday I could be Batman. Come on, Momma! Please Momma!"

And the mom goes, "Wait son, wait!" When she put all her groceries on the belt.

She got down on both knees. Pulled her son in close and said, "Baby, I hope you understand. You know I'd buy it. You know I would. But this is all the money we have. I don't get paid until next Tuesday. I'm going to make you a costume though. You're going to be awesome! You're going to be amazing. But baby, you can't be Batman. You just can't be Batman."

I'm standing there and I look at the cashier and she had a tear rolling because see, she's been there. It's not new. It's always going to come around, come around. It will hit the rich, the poor, red, yellow, blue. It don't matter, it hits us all. I saw that lady crying.

That little boy kissed his mom on the cheek and said, "It's okay. I understand we ain't got money. But Momma, don't ever forget, I'm Batman!"

She paid for her groceries and she's putting her bags in her cart to push to her car. I put my water on the belt and the cashier goes, "Can I get you anything else?"

I said, "How fast are you?"

She went, "I'm pretty fast."

I said, "Run and get a Batman costume for that little boy. Put it in a separate bag. I'll give it to him in the parking lot."

She was fast! She got that costume. And in the parking lot I said, "Excuse me, ma'am, you forgot a bag."

When I handed it to her she looked down and saw that costume and just broke. I mean just weeping. She looked up and she said this, "I prayed as I was paying, Jesus, if you love us, find someone. I just want him to have that Batman costume. And before I could get to my car," she said this, "You were the answer to my prayer."

That's what we are. We can be the answer to people. Every day, you guys know that because you do this day in and day out. You're the answer to someone's prayer. But as humans, I may not lead somebody to Jesus and they told me, while you're still doing public school, you can't even preach in public school, you can't even do night rallies and they can't accept Jesus at night anymore. All you can do is just tell them there's hope. But if I'm not there, then who is?

James: You're showing them love. Be witnesses, share the gospel; when necessary, use words. Actions always speak louder than words. We don't love in word only but in deed, in action.

I'm so glad you did that because if you hadn't I'd have said, "Why didn't you?"

[Laughter]

Some of the greatest joy I have is sometimes seeing people who can't get something out of lay-away and then being able to get it for them because they weren't going to make a special occasion. It not only wipes out the person you help with gratitude but usually the cashier.

Love is what never fails. The book, *Just Keep Breathing* is online, in the bookstores. I'd be happy to send it to you if you just share some love and help people keep breathing.

I want you to listen to me real closely. You're watching because God wants to lighten your load. Just ask him to.

Father, I agree with them. The miracle that they need to lighten the burden, the load, do it supernaturally; in Jesus' name.

You want someone to pray with you? -- The numbers there.

Now let me tell you something else. This is really important. When you see a need, a weight that you can lift, just like what Reggie was talking about, and you do it, you talk about not only brightening that person's day, but brightening your day, that's reality.

Here's what I want you to do. I want you to look and I want you to see someone in a far worse situation than Reggie was in or I was in when we were poor. You're going to see people in prison. You're going to see one of our really good friends from right here where we live that went all the way to the gates of hell to set captives free and will actually have won this person to Christ. But I want you to look at the story. I want you to watch.

Begin video clip

Kirie: I can tell you what this precious child feels right now. She feels the loss of the love of her mother and she is starving for that: To know comfort and safety and the innocence of a child.

Open captions: They blindfolded me and put me into a van. When we arrived, I was put in a room with two sets of locks. There I was forced to sleep with men.

Kirie: Trapped in the hopelessness of her circumstances, it is an absolute tragedy the amount of cruelty and injustice this child has encountered. And the greater tragedy still is that she is now HIV positive.

I can't think of anything worse than to have your child sold into trafficking. I can't imagine how it would feel if someone had the ability to rescue them and did not.

Open captions: I miss the love and life I had when I was a child. It's gone now.

End of clip

In the studio

James: Well, we can be that girl's answer to freedom. We're trying to rescue those that are trapped as sexual slaves, Betty. And we're able to do it because of you.

It costs the average of \$128 to rescue someone and we have targeted right now where there are 5,000 that we can reach out to and with your help rescue them. We can rescue 10 with a \$1280

gift as an example. It does cost to keep the missionaries, the relief workers, the facilities, the housing, actual places of care that are rescue centers.

That precious girl, Kirie, James led to the Lord. Now Kirie and her husband, Jimmy have supported the outreaches of *LIFE*. They would be among the strongest supporters we have in prayer and with their support because they really put feet to their prayers and their concern and they express it. I think that's what you want to do. I'm asking you to. I'm asking you to reach out. And Kirie did lead that precious girl to the Lord.

Now we're going to do our best to get her out of that prison cell. And miraculously, because of people like you, and these totally committed mission workers, we're able to see those miracles. But they have to be underwritten and undergirded by people like you.

So I'm asking you to go to *LIFE Today*, please, LifeToday.org, use a bankcard like a check or you can call that number and say, "I want to make a gift." I'm going to ask you if there is any way you can help us rescue 10 or more, please do. It is \$128 per person.

This has been so effective. It's been amazing. You have been a miracle worker because of love. People just like you. So would you do that today?

Father, I'm asking you to touch hearts and that their hearts might leap to say "I want to rescue the perishing. I want to set captives free. I want to show them your love." -- In Jesus' name.

Would do you that? We'd like to send you a beautiful gift, a candle that is "The Light of the World." It is an example. You're going to love it! Then a beautiful, beautiful bronze, "Majesty," the God of all creation, what he does just to say we magnify the Lord because we see you in all your creation but we're going to express your love.

Would you go online LifeToday.org, use that bankcard like a check. If you want to write a check make it to *LIFE*; put it in the mail today. I need you to know this, short time left. We have added additional emphasis on important outreaches and we don't have much time right now. We need to see a miracle today. We really do. So would you be a part of that miracle and rejoice that Kirie led that girl to the Lord? And I think you'll be a part of setting her free from the prison she's in and thousands of others one life at a time. Or if you could help us with ten or more, make that special gift. 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.

Through Mission: Rescue Life you can reach out to save children vulnerable to sex traffickers. You can help rescue those already enslaved and you can restore their lives with hope for a future.

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

With your gift of any amount we'll send you the "Light of the World" scented candle. This beautiful encased in a frosted glass burns with a wonderful scent. Its flame is a reminder of your part in being a light to the world, especially to young women trapped in the darkness of human trafficking. Your gift helps provide them with hope and a way out.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1280 to help rescue ten children and you may request our beautiful new "Majesty" bronze sculpture.

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

End of clip

In the studio

James: I really would love to send you the beautiful bronze. It is amazing how great artists try to copy what God creates and they do a beautiful job. But I'm telling you, he is a God of great majesty.

I want to send you, if you'd like to have it, if you helped us rescue someone and you made that love gift and you'd like to have *Just Keep Breathing*, boy, these stories are going to inspire you and bless you. It might even change somebody's life where the situation seemed impossible, like it seemed with my life or Reggie's life. So we want to just encourage you to get the book either in the bookstores or you can make that gift and you'd like to have it, just ask for it.

Reggie, I want you to know, I appreciate you. May God bless you buddy in all you do, and everybody with Youth Alliance. So if they wanted to find you online, where would they go?

Reggie: The Youth Alliance.com.

James: Check it out. I think you may want him to come to your school district and put arms of love and concern around those kids. Thank you so much for watching. Thanks a lot for helping us share life.