

5/3/16
Week 19: WFL
Rifqa Bary

James: Thank you! Thank you so much. Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm James Robison.

Betty and I are thrilled to have someone who has quite the story! As a matter of fact, there is enough of a threat about her even being here, the danger because people say they want to take her out that we couldn't even publicize it.

Her name is Rifqa Bary and it is, a little subheading: Why I risk everything to leave Islam and follow Jesus. Look at this title: *Hiding in the Light*.

Would you welcome Rifqa to *LIFE Today*? We're glad to see you. Now we're going to cover some ground. Do you mind me asking? How old are you Rifqa?

Rifqa: I am 23 years old.

James: So we're going to cover the whole deal right here. Now why are you afraid right now? You're not really afraid, you're at peace. But why is there a threat on your life? Let me just ask you that.

Rifqa: There is a threat on my life because if you leave Islam the threat is death. So I converted when I was 13 years old. I have ruined the honor of my family. So the only way that honor can be reclaimed is if they take my life.

James: You renounce it or take your life.

Rifqa: Exactly.

James: And you're not going to renounce.

Rifqa: No.

James: You're going to hide in the light.

Rifqa: That's right.

James: Your journey as a young girl, you've lost the sight in one eye; right? I want you to tell us about some of those things that happened when you were a child.

Rifqa: There were two events that happened that changed everything. One was I was blinded in my right eye by my brother accidentally. And the other was I was sexually abused by an uncle. These two events...

James: How old were you when that happened?

Rifqa: I was around six.

James: That's hard to imagine.

Rifqa: It was very, very painful. At the time, even in America here, that would be seen as a tragedy and like that's awful. There would be pity on the child. But in my culture, all the shame is put on the victim. So much so that my family had to flee our little country that we lived in called Sri Lanka to run away from the shame. So we came to America. So this is how much my family is bound by honor.

James: Do you find it difficult to imagine how people could be so committed to some kind of religious ideology that could put that kind of pressure on people? How in the world do people keep coming into that which it seems like it is so far from what you would imagine a heavenly godly being -- their character, their manner, their desires?

Rifqa: Now I see that as a Christian. Now I see the complete difference between love and hate, and obligation and willingness to follow. But what I saw, experienced, going to the mosques, watching my father, is you're blinded to the truth. You genuinely think that what you're following is the way and the more you give yourself to it the more you're deceiving yourself.

But it is hard to imagine, especially when you do come to the light and you do recognize this is truth from the lie; this is false and Jesus.

Betty: So did you have to leave your immediate family when you became a Christian?

Rifqa: Yes, ma'am. I did. So I grew up and I lived in an extremely abusive home to the point where I'm 12 years old and wanting to commit suicide. But something changed in the midst of all the abuse that happened.

I remember hearing from someone that I could pray in English. That idea fascinated me because as a Muslim I prayed in Arabic and I didn't know what I was praying. So this idea of talking to God and he could hear me and understand me was amazing. So I prayed.

James: You had heard Christians say this?

Rifqa: I had heard a Christian -- someone had said that if you pray to God in English that he would understand me. So this is at 12 years old...

James: Could you speak English pretty well?

Rifqa: Yes, I could.

James: They teach English because they know that's the best way to be able to advance around the world, it's becoming a more common language?

Rifqa: That's right. And we had moved here to the states from Sri Lanka.

So I prayed. I got on my knees and I said, "God, if you're Allah, if you're Buddha, if you're Jesus, whoever you are, I just want to know truth. Show me who you are."

And months later was when a Korean girl at school, we were in 7th grade, invited me to church and I went with her.

James: What happened?

Rifqa: My life completely changed. Oh, my goodness! It was that moment where...

James: You look like it was yesterday.

Rifqa: I know! It still feels like it. That memory is just so engraved in my heart because I found the love of my life.

James: It is like a marriage that you don't really get over or get tired of.

Rifqa: Yes, sir!

James: Yeah, he is the one that really... doesn't have a lot to criticize in him. You can't find much fault in him. "Who can find fault in me?" Well you can.

Okay so you really experienced what you thought was really and truly a relationship with Christ.

Rifqa: I did! It was the moment when the pastor preached and I -- my parents didn't know that I was at a church. I went in secret. It was that moment when I walked forward and it was like time stopped. I felt like this whisper, this most gentle whisper saying, "You are mine! You're mine!" And I started weeping; feeling all the pain that had been stuffed down, all the abuse. And I knew that -- I didn't know what I was experiencing. I just knew that whatever this was, like that was the answer to the prayer that I prayed so many months ago.

James: Jesus was no longer just a story, he was alive. This father that you talked to, you feel like there was communication established. It was real.

Rifqa: Yes! Yes! And it was a journey of really discovering who is this Jesus? What does this Bible mean? What is the cross? But more and more as I started learning about Christianity, I was becoming consumed.

Betty: When was the point that your family found out that you had accepted Jesus?

Rifqa: I hid my faith from my family for about four years. I lived double lives. On one hand, I would pray in the mosque for six hours a day but praying to another God but looking like I'm listening and paying attention. And yet I would sneak out to church and my heart was so won by Christ.

When I was 16 was when... something had to give. I couldn't keep hiding it. My parents would find little things here and there and I would lie about it and say, "Oh, it is just for school. It is just for school." They knew. They knew that something was changing. The Rifqa they knew was no longer the same Rifqa.

Betty: So it became dangerous for you?

Rifqa: It did. When my parents found out is when my father made threats and I really lay out in the book how all of it happens. But I'd seen my father angry many times but this was a kind of anger that I had never seen before.

James: Your subheading and I referred to it at the very opening, "Why, why I risked everything to leave Islam and follow Jesus."

That's what the story is about. How do you answer that simply? Why did you risk everything knowing it would be a risk to follow Jesus? The complexities and challenges that you just

shared, is that why you were willing to do it? Or was it because of what you experienced when you came to him, nothing else mattered but walking with him.

Rifqa: There is a quote in my book that says "Christianity and Jesus cost me more than I imagined but it gave more than it could have dreamed of." So it wasn't necessarily the challenge and the dare, it was God pursued my heart and showed me himself in such a way where he was worth it.

Philippians: I count all things a loss for the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

It was his beauty. It was his truth. It was his justice. It was Christ that drew my heart. I couldn't go back once my eyes had been opened to the truth.

Betty: And the relationship was real. It was that relationship and that connection.

James: More than religion.

Rifqa: More than religion.

James: More than ritual, more than going through the motions.

Rifqa: Absolutely! It was knowing that I'm loved by God unconditionally, and that he had poured his life out for me and consistently feeling that more and more and more as I gave myself to Christianity. I knew that this is why I had been made.

James: Some will say the Muslim Islamic faith is the biggest religious group in the world; no question more than a billion people. Knowing what you know about Islam, and knowing what you know about Christ in this relationship, what would you want every person connected with Islam to hear that you believe they need to hear and understand in simple terms? What you would want people in Islamic faith, what would you want them to hear from you that would be meaningful to them?

Rifqa: I tried Islam and it didn't work. I tried it. I would want them to know that the search for truth was what changed my life. I believe that Jesus is the answer but it is also a journey and he meets us where we are. He calls the broken. He calls the hurting. And so I would want them to know that they are loved and valued.

My life changed through walking to God and I would challenge them to ask Jesus to show themselves to him because -- I would even challenge them to do that because my life changed in doing so.

James: So the threat that if you don't believe we're going to kill you, that's a heck of an invitation.

Rifqa: That is right!

James: Jesus said to those who killed him because he said, "I'm the way, the truth, and the life, no other way," and they killed him. And he said to his father, "Forgive them. They really don't know what they were doing."

He was saying they're under a power so overcoming and so powerful over them they don't even know what they're doing. They're actually blinded. You talked about how people's eyes were blinded. The eyes of the unbelieving are blinded so they don't see the truth. You were blinded in the eye but yet your eyes were open spiritually and you saw the truth.

So the difference in threatening people and forgiving people and threatening to kill them if you don't believe, and saying you believe I give you life and forgiveness and you're going to heaven and to an abundant new way of life here because of what I've done and because of the fact Jesus said, "I send another one like me, my spirit to live in you."

Now just be honest, as a little Islamic girl who has come to Christ, do you sense the spirit of Christ, the power, his spirit, his character, his nature, do you feel it living in you?

Rifqa: I do -- with all my heart. I've never felt a sense of purpose like this. I don't have to work. I don't have to strive for God's love.

In Islam it is a system of works, constantly striving. It is right and wrong. That's what gets you to heaven. Even then, you don't really know if God is going to arbitrarily going to change his mind. But having a faith where it's fixed on the cross where he has purchased my sin, he has purchased me as his own and I am no longer enslaved to the sin that binds me, I am now free from that, and he empowers me to walk in righteousness and holiness.

I think there are many Muslims who ache and long and hunger for righteousness and think it's doing it by themselves. But I have found no, it is Christ who sets us free.

James: You are saying you're hiding because of the threats yet you say you're *Hiding in the Light*. So if you're in the light you're not very well hidden. I think you're implying that I found security, escape from this threat to where I can actually find a peace and a comfort *Hiding in the Light*. Is that correct?

Rifqa: Absolutely! Yes, you are!

James: I'm communicating that correctly. Will you ever be able to see your family again?

Rifqa: There is not a day that goes by where I don't think about them or miss them and pray for them. I long...

James: Do they ever communicate in any way?

Rifqa: No.

James: Have they tried to find you and you don't particularly want them to find you because you are sitting here in a studio in a state in the U.S. So now somebody may tell them we saw her. Does that bother you?

Rifqa: No. I think it's really difficult because the complexity of my story doesn't enable communication unless their hearts change. But I'm also praying for them so much that their hearts turn towards Christ. I know there is a lot of brokenness in my family that Christ needs to heal. But my heart is open. I feel like it is the story of Joseph. What they have meant for evil, I believe that God will use to save them.

James: Do they understand English?

Rifqa: They do.

James: If you wanted them to hear something from you right now and somebody told them -- because this will be online. This is going to stay online unless you call us and tell us for some reason we've got to take it down. It's there. So if they happen to be listening, what would you want to say to your family right now? Because if you'll look right there you can talk to them; what do you want to say to them?

Rifqa: I would say I forgive you, and I pray for you, and I love you so much. Yeah, I know there is a lot of brokenness and pain but I'm trusting that the Lord will unite us one day and I'm praying for that so fervently.

James: I do know that Islamic people have an understanding of the importance of a vision. I see Jesus in your daughter. And to the whole Islamic world, for all the appreciation you have for those you may admire in your heritage, there is none like Jesus -- none! I think even Muhammad recognized that. I think most Muslims recognize the uniqueness of the man Jesus.

But now listen. If he wasn't who he said he is, then he is not being honest because he said, "If you've seen me you've seen God. The only way to God is through me. No one will ever get to God but coming through me. I am the way. I love you. I forgive you regardless. I died for you to give you eternal life. And I've sent my spirit to live in you so you can love and forgive and experience peace and joy. You can have all the fullness of the fruit of the spirit of my life," Jesus says. So that's to all of you.

Rifqa, we praise God for you. I hope you'll get this book. You can go online and get it, *Hiding in the Light*. I think it will enable us to more effectively and with understanding pray for those who are in the Islamic religious world and lead them to hide in the light of Christ's presence, his abiding, very real presence. I think it will be a treasure to you and an encouragement to you.

Rifqa, we're going to be praying for you on your journey that you keep pointing to Jesus. Would you say thanks to Rifqa for her testimony, her courage, her faith, and the greatness of God? We can live in the light and that's the way God wants us to live.

Rifqa, we love helping people. Our audience, you are the most amazing people. I've told you this! And it is simply the truth because you express amazing grace, life, and love.

Now I want you to look in kind of around the world and I want you to just ask this question, if I had a serious need and somebody saw it and they could do something about it, my heart will rejoice if they did it. If you called out to God, "God hear my cry!" And suddenly not only God heard it but someone else heard it and they became the feet to that prayer providing the answer through an expression of love, would you not rejoice? What if you could bring the joy to somebody else who is in need right now of a miracle?

You watch and see if you don't want to be part of that miracle.

On the mission field

Announcer: It is a known fact that a person can survive without food for a long period of time if they have access to water. But without water a person may not live more than a week.

The irony for these mothers is they can provide water for their families but in so doing have suffered the loss of one or more of their children to a waterborne disease. Why? Because they did not have access to a clean water source.

Open captions:

If I had more money I could have paid for medicine to save my daughter's life. Even though we are poor, if we had clean water I feel there would be hope for my other children.

Announcer: What a tragedy for mothers who must live each day thinking will this be the day that one of my other children gets sick and dies? Unfortunately, that day comes far too often for mothers in villages like these throughout the world. With your help, this year *LIFE Outreach International* and our partners will reach a milestone of 5,000 completed wells. Our question now is can we together press forward and provide more water wells so mothers don't have to live in fear that this might be the day another child of theirs dies simply because they don't have access to clean water.

End of clip**In the studio**

James: We have focused on 15 nations where the situation you saw there is just evident, undeniable reality. What you heard in that mother's pathos and heartache was a prayer, a heartfelt desire that this tragic occurrence be ended -- and it can be with love. And the fact that God has given us, many of you who are watching *LIFE Today*, you and I prayed that we could drill a well every time we had the emphasis on it. When we started, the wells were \$3600 and then the costs with the petroleum increase and other things around the world, it went up to an average of \$4800. It could go up again with petroleum where it is and the cost of fuel, it likely won't. But you never know. But when it went up we were still able to do it.

The thing that has been so gratifying to us is that many of you have said, "We make it a goal every year to drill a well." And then believe it or not we've had a few people say, a few individual churches even and groups, but we've had quite a few couples and business people say, "We're going to drill a well a month." That's astounding!

But it means that there is something in your heart that says, "I want to do something that really works." And when you give people a well, you're giving them water the rest of their life. We tell people that \$48 of the \$4800 will give ten people water the rest of their life; that's how it breaks out. And you give \$144, 30 people water. So if you give a cup of water, Jesus said, you won't lose the reward, the blessing that I have for you, what would it imply to give a well of water? Well, I believe that if you're not giving to get, you're giving to give and bless that the greatest blessing is we just gave all those people answers to their prayers. We became the answer to their prayer. We became their miracle! -- The expression of God's love. And it lasts a lifetime! It is the gift that just keeps giving.

Would you please right now help us drill 500 more wells, one well at a time, in 15 nations? We just have a short timeframe to do it. Betty, I know you're sitting here listening. Did you feel impressed to add something?

Betty: The question that that mother asked there at the last, "Will this be the day that I lose a child? Will tomorrow be the day that I'll lose a child?" I want her to be able to say, "This was the day -- this is the day that hope came in." She was asking for hope. And I got hope for my children because there was a water well drilled so that my child might have pure clean water.

James: And those children rejoice when it's there as though you had just opened up an entertainment park for them. Every now and then the missionaries say, "Okay, you can play in it a little bit today." But it is so precious; they don't let them do that. But a lot of times when we go back to an area where we've drilled a well or some of our team does, they let them play in it because they're still so happy. And when the well comes in you'd think they'd hit an oil well, they got life.

Listen. I'm asking you to go to LifeToday.org right now. I want you to run get your communication device, your laptop, your iPad, whatever you use, LifeToday.org, take your bankcard and say, "I'm going to give the greatest gift I can today; I'm going to give the gift of life." Water for Life, and those missionaries, are going to tell them about the water of life.

Would you do it right now? Or you can dial the number. People are calling that number every day for prayer. Today you're calling the number to be an answer to prayer. So you call the number. Here's my bankcard, use it like a check and say, "Here's the gift God's impressing me and enabling me to give."

If you can give a well, \$4800, do it. You give part of a well, pray that others match it. If it is \$1200, you need three more; \$2400, you need another one. Pray God, match this gift. Remember, most of the gifts come from \$48 for ten people, \$144 to reach 30.

Whatever you can do. Please right now would you be an answer to that mother's prayer? I believe you're going to be and you're going to do it joyfully.

Begin video clip

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

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

With your gift today you can help establish and drill 500 water wells in remote villages in over 15 different nations. Your gift of \$24 will help provide clean water for five people. A gift of \$48 will help provide for ten. \$72 will provide for 15 people. And \$144 will help provide fresh water for 30 people for a lifetime!

With your gift we would like to send you Pastor Robert Morris's new book, *Frequency*. As you read you'll discover how to hear God's voice, receive direction for your life and experience a deeper connection with God. With your gift of \$100 or more you'll also receive the Hearing God Daily Journal and scripture pen. A wonderful way to record what God is impressing on your heart and a beautiful keepsake for your daily prayer time.

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 "Majesty" bronze sculpture.

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

End of clip

On the mission field

Tammy: This is absolutely horrible to think that this is his only source of water. I've been sitting here for awhile watching dogs and pigs and goats sitting in this water. I mean the smell - it's enough to take your breath away. And yet I watch child after child dip their precious little cup in and drink this water. It is literally killing them. But they have nothing else that they can do. This is it! We can change this for them. We can drill them a water well that will last for generations to come and produce life into their bodies.

Call the number on your screen or go online and give the best gift that you can give that will make a difference, that will bring life into the lives of these children.

End of clip

In the studio

James: Thank you so much for your help! You are giving life.

Robert Morris, our pastor and we have a real large church, it's grown so fast because the power of God's word. The question people ask most often is, "How do I hear God?" That's what Robert said. I hear it all the time too. Frequency, how do you get on that channel to hear God's voice clearly? Tune in to hear God. Robert has really got a gift to teach and he's able to teach you how to identify the voice of God, and I think to understand how to respond to it, and how to find the confirmation in the Word of God, the scripture that this is in fact the God, you know his nature, you know what he's like and you're going to be encouraged when you can hear him clearly.

We have other gifts that we'll send to help you grow. "Majesty" is a beautiful bronze; we want to express thanks to those of you who can give a well or help us make that step in a very significant way.

If you'd like to have Rifqa's book, *Hiding in the Light* and you say, "James, I gave a cup of water. Can I have that book?" We will send it to you -- Rifqa would want us to -- to say thank you for helping us share the water of life.

Join Betty and me in saying thanks to Rifqa.

Rifqa, we love you! We appreciate you. We see Jesus in you. Let's let Jesus' light shine through all of us. Let's live in the light.

Thank you for sharing! Thanks for watching *LIFE Today*. Visit The Stream -- stream.org every day.