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Week 46: Shoes and Smiles
James and Betty Robison
Ann Voskamp #1

James: I'll tell you what, I can tell you like our guest. Ann Voskamp is here. *The Broken Way*; she is a New York Times bestseller. She is a tremendous writer. She has a gift to write. We would call it a divine enabling, a gift of God from God for the glory of God and the benefit of everybody who will take advantage of what is being sown in your behalf.

But she calls *The Broken Way* "a daring path into abundant life." She seems to understand that.

So why don't we let her talk about what she's put in this incredible book that's in the bookstores. You can go online and get it. I suggest you do it because it is a way to abundant life -- abundant life; abundant life when you don't have abundance of stuff but you've got abundant life.

Would you welcome Ann Voskamp to *LIFE Today*?

Hi, Ann! I'm glad to see you. Are you comfortable being around us?

Ann: I am! I am!

James: I told everybody in the audience you got on some Texas boots here.

Ann: We've got our boots on together.

James: Okay. I kind of talked about this title. How do you define brokenness?

Ann: I think brokenness like all ancient true truths is paradoxical. There is brokenness that is detrimental, that impedes deep flourishing, which I call in the book "bad brokenness." Then there's good brokenness; but brokenness of humility, of vulnerability; of being broken and given generosity. So I think I came to realize that good brokenness, the brokenness of humility, of vulnerability, of generosity being broken and giving breaks bad brokenness in the world.

So when I've looked at places in the world where there was brokenness that was impeding flourishing, brokenness that was detrimental, how can my good brokenness step into that place and break the bad brokenness?

My first memory is the memory of my younger sister being killed in front of my mother and I in our home farm yard. My mother was hospitalized in psych wards throughout my teenage years. I cut myself all through my teenage years. The book opens with that, and that even as I hit 40 trying to process feelings of failure, how do I deal with parts of my life that were still broken?

We each have -- the front cover of the book has a bucket. We each have a container that's the whole of our life. We just don't know how big that container actually is; how many days we actually have. Our daughter Salome had wanted to know, "How long do we get to live, Momma?"

I said, "Oh, well, if the Lord gives you 70 years that works out to about 25,550 kernels of wheat, so many days, which is four cups of wheat."

And I put it in a Mason jar on the counter right by the sink there. And I've wanted us to see, these are the days that you have to live on earth. How do you live with a broken heart? How do you live with pain and suffering in the world? How do you live an abundant life in the midst of that? And realizing that again, it is paradoxical.

Those kernels of wheat, if they are broken like seed in the earth, in broken ground, if the sky breaks over the top of them and rains, they will yield a great abundance. I think the entire broken way was how do I live broken and given -- that good brokenness -- in a world of bad brokenness? And not to be afraid of broken things in my own life; my own brokenness, that I could take that to the cross.

How could I not be afraid of brokenness in the world? I think we see so much suffering in the world, so much need in the world and after a while we can get numb and hard to that and turn away from that. I think if we choose to take the dare into *The Broken Way* it's not I'm afraid of broken things. I'm not afraid of my own brokenness and I'm not afraid of brokenness and suffering in the world anymore. I really realized that all of the fears in my life were because somewhere along the way I was afraid of brokenness. And I don't need to be afraid of broken things because Christ is redeeming everything. There is a resurrection and abundance happening in those broken places.

Betty: Don't you think that all of us will experience that broken -- broken heart, whatever it is in life. It is just what we do with it or allow God to do with it in our lives.

Ann: I think none of us can afford not to think about what will I do with the brokenness because brokenness is going to happen for all of us.

Betty: It's coming.

Ann: Exactly!

James: Is pain seen as a friend when that pain causes you to avoid the catastrophic consequences of ignoring it? Did God not build that into our very nervous system as warnings of something impending so that you can appreciate the fact that he gave you a warning? Do you think that brokenness ever heads us away from what could be rightly considered catastrophic devastation if we respond to that crushing effect properly?

Ann: I think it is how do we respond to the broken places? How do we respond to pain and suffering? It is our response that can either lead us into darker places or that response can push us closer to Jesus. I think sometimes the cold, the pain, the dark, the suffering can actually be what pushes us to the heat, the fire of Christ's love.

So I think too often we try to escape from the pain and the suffering instead sitting in it and saying -- too often as Christians we judge our feelings as opposed to we are meant to feel our feelings exactly as they come, to feel the feelings. Emotion means we feel and then there's motion involved in that. We're supposed to feel our feelings and then let those feelings move us closer to God. So go ahead and feel the pain and the suffering.

Then what do I do with that? What is my response to that? Let it push me closer into the cross. Because I really realized, James, what I wanted more than anything with the shape of my days, those 25,550 kernels, if 1,000 gets my counted blessings, I'm counting days, (what do I do with the time I've been given,) I really want the shape of those days to be cruciformed; to take that pen that I wrote all the things I was grateful for, and to write a cross on my wrist every day, I want it in the shape of my days to be cruciformed, which is broken and given out into the world. That cross looks like a symbol of brokenness, of suffering, but it's the symbol of resurrection and transformation.

I think it's all upside-down kingdom. It's all paradoxical to what we think should be the way. The way isn't necessarily strength but scripture tells us that in our weakness he is strong. Step into those broken places and let the cross get all the glory.

James: I feel like if everyone could see and I've got to believe that what you're saying with *The Broken Way* is to put those pieces and the pain and what you don't understand into the master's hands.

Ann: He takes all of those broken pieces of our hearts and makes a mosaic of grace. Too often we think that those broken pieces of our heart really, it's proof of how much we're loved. Those tears, it's proof of how deeply we have loved. The brokenness, he will make into abundance if we'll take it to the cross.

James: That's powerful! Powerful! You've done a curriculum around this. Explain that. Is it like a syllabus and DVD's that you can use in a home Bible study or church Bible study or a whole church study sessions?

Ann: Yep. Six sessions.

James: Where do you find out about this? Is there a web site?

Ann: Again at TheBrokenWay.com.

James: Why do you do all that? Why do you go to all this trouble to do all this teaching like that? What is it that makes you do that? Because I know what goes into that. What do you see happening as a result of somebody getting this, having questions, having concerns, having interest and then you do this? What are you trying to accomplish?

Ann: Because I resonate deeply with broken hearts, people walking through deep brokenness and feeling desperately alone. What do you do with your brokenness? They don't want cliché and pat answers. They want someone to walk alongside of them. And I believe with-ness -- with-ness breaks brokenness. God says "My name is Emmanuel" -- God with us.

I think a lot of time in suffering we don't want an explanation from God as much as we want an experience with God, and the with-ness breaks brokenness. I hope stepping into that curriculum, I think everyone is going to face suffering and brokenness that they question that not only do we have to face personally but society as a whole is saying where is God in all this brokenness and all of this suffering and all of this pain? I think we want to find real answers that meet the hard places with honest, authentic answers.

Betty: And it is a journey. It really is because when you're broken, when your heart is broken it takes time to heal. It is a walk. You have to grab on to it.

Ann: And you know what? Time doesn't heal wounds. God heals wounds. And how are we going to step into those broken places? Wounds are healed by other wounds. How do you take your wounds and press them into the wounds of Christ and let Christ heal those wounds? So I hope people if they're willing to take that dare to step into *The Broken Way* it really is how do I find meaning with my life? How do I multiply my time? How do I really live a life of abundance in the midst of brokenness?

James: What were you saying awhile ago about not -- absence, nobody is there. What was the term?

Ann: With-ness.

James: You may be amazed at this but to those of you who are watching, one of the let's say the most frequent calls that comes to the prayer center and I've got to tell you, I'm really glad of this. You say, "Well, there's no support coming there. There's no..." But see, 80% of the calls that come to that number that goes up there right now, 80% of them, I don't care if we're trying to rescue 1,000 people with immediate assistance to save their very lives, 80% of those calls will still be, "Me!" And it's the with-ness.

Many call. They will call in and say, "I didn't have anybody to talk to. And boy, I need to talk to somebody. I feel like they'll really pray for me; just somebody that is with me."

I talk about the Holy Spirit a lot and how the power of the Holy Spirit is here but we really feel better when the Holy Spirit is dressed up in somebody. Ghosts, even Holy Ghost can be pretty foreign until he is dressed up. This is what people are longing for. This is what I'm sitting here listening to, I feel like I'm listening to somebody who cares. I think everybody watching us sees she cares. This with-ness -- we're watching *LIFE Today* because we're with you. If you were in the studio you'd know we're with you. If you were eating a meal with me and Betty you'd know we're with you. If you dumped all the garbage of your life in front of us, and you'd say, "They're trying to help me cover it. They're going to try to pick me up out of it." You got it. That's exactly who we are.

You did something recently. You went overseas. You brought somebody back. Tell me about it. Tell our viewers. What did you do?

Ann: As my husband and I, our family chose to live *The Broken Way*, chose to live broken and giving in the midst of our own brokenness...

James: With six children.

Ann: With six children -- crazy children! We have four boys and two girls. We just really realized, I believe that we're all really like Esthers. We live in the palace. We have been given so much. We're called for such a time as now to be broken and given for those outside the gate. That's what we're called to do.

So my husband and I, we have adopted a little girl. Her name is Shiloh; like Hannah, who went to Shiloh for this child. I have prayed and went to China and adopted a little girl. Shiloh has literally a broken heart. She has half a heart.

James: Literally, physically, half a heart.

Ann: She has a single ventricle, single atrium heart. She was abandoned beside a river when she was four days old and came to a foster home in Beijing run by a young 25-year-old woman from Oklahoma who looks for little ones abandoned because they have broken hearts. Shiloh had blue fingers, blue lips, blue toes. We brought Shiloh home and she had open heart surgery four weeks ago now.

And just realizing that I have a broken heart, we all have broken hearts and somebody needs to come and enter into our sufferings. Christ says that we meet him and we have deep communion with him when we enter into the sufferings of Christ; when we don't turn away from the brokenness in the world. Even though we feel broken ourselves, Christ is in us and allows us to step out even in our own brokenness to someone else in their brokenness. And there is deep communion and healing and shalom -- her middle name is shalom, Shiloh shalom -- there is great healing and wholeness in the midst of the broken.

James: In her first surgery, how has it progressed percentage wise?

Ann: So yeah, Shiloh, it's a three step series of heart surgeries but it was so palliative that don't fix us; we all deserve to be loved exactly where we are. So when Shiloh came home from China her oxygen saturation levels were when she cried in the 50s, baseline was in the 60s and now we're seeing mid 80s for oxygen saturation levels.

[Applause]

We have a compassionate, compassionate -- meaning co-suffering -- we have a compassionate shepherd who left the 99 to come after us when we were the one who was abandoned and alone and forgotten. I think we're all called to do that for one person in our community, in our world. Find one person who is suffering and alone and forgotten who feels too broken to be loved and say, "I was too broken to be loved but Jesus on that cross loved me back to life again. The only

person who has loved me to death and back to life again and I can love with his love to you in your own brokenness."

James: This is the love and life of God in you. I don't know, a lot of times, the people that will feel the most broken are Christians who failed and know they failed. And when they know they failed and they disappointed everybody they ever didn't want to disappoint, and they look out and say, "Is there any love for this broken, with self-inflicted misery or pain or shortcomings or wickedness or sin?" I've just got to tell you, there is a savior that will pick you up out of the filthiest pit that you dug with your own misdeeds and rebellion.

Ann: And then after he picks you up he will say, "Even though you feel like a too broken vessel to be used, I will go ahead and leak love out into the world through all your brokenness."

James: That's right! Lord, just let everybody right now that feels this love flowing, I pray, Lord, if they just need to reach out and touch somebody by making a call and say, "pray with me," then Lord, I pray they'll do it. I pray many will read the book Brokenness and they will do the Bible study and avail themselves the opportunity. And thank you for Ann; in Jesus' name.

Ann, we're going to talk to you in another program. We're going to bring another broken vessel to join us in that program and that is Sheila Walsh. She says, "Here I come to minister to you from the psych ward." She is such a treasure.

The book is in the bookstores. I'll just tell you what, Ann. We've got a lot of little broken vessels right now. We've been trying to reach out to them all over the world for a long time whether they're hungry or thirsty. We've got a lot of little feet right now that needs some shoes for Christmas. We started with our viewers telling us, we like that. Let's do that. Let's give these kids something for Christmas that they've never had. Let's give them a pair of shoes that's adjustable, they can wear a few years and they really will wear it well.

So we're trying to give 150,000 kids some shoes for Christmas. And then we're trying to give cleft palate surgeries to give them a smile. I want you to look at this. As others are calling for prayer knowing that God heals the broken heart in the way only he can heal it, and then you can be a healing factor when you receive that. But if you'll help us give some shoes and some smiles, I think when you see this you're going to say, "Count me in. I'm going to do it." Watch very closely.

On the mission field

Announcer: From your family to our family, your generosity has empowered *LIFE's* mission

efforts around the world -- and the look on these children's faces makes the impact obvious. It's in the smile of Mateo as he receives a bowl of food made possible by your giving or of Gabriella as she quenches her thirst from a clean water well that you helped drill. You could even say you make it your business to give children smiles.

Well, this Christmas we'd like to give a smile to someone who might not easily be able to smile otherwise. You see, all over the world there are children who have trouble smiling because they were born with a cleft lip or palate. But a simple surgery by loving doctors can radically transform the appearance of children like these and greatly improve their quality of life.

But they won't be the only ones smiling this Christmas because with your help we also want to give a brand-new pair of shoes to children who have never had them.

Tammy: You can see all of the little ones, honestly, the smiles on their faces, it's so exciting to be a part of it. You can look around at all of the children in this village and most of them are without shoes. They can lose their very lives because of an infection that they could get on their feet.

Announcer: Help make this Christmas special for a child like this. Help us provide Christmas shoes and smiles.

End of clip

In the studio

James: Boy, you know I don't ever want to come across like a beggar but if I ever beg I want it to be in behalf of those who really need someone to plead their cause. I look at all of those pretty little children, Betty and think how much we've loved them, loved holding them. And you've enabled us to hold them. You sent us to the mission field. You support the missionaries. Several thousand missionaries right now in Africa that you make possible -- several thousand! And then you don't leave them empty-handed.

Right now all over the world, 150,000 little feet we want to put shoes on because the missionaries got our attention to their area. They said, "We've got some real issues here."

So I don't want to sound like a beggar but here's what I want to ask you to do. I just want you to give the greatest gift you can give right now. First you pray. But if you could give 10 children a pair of shoes, that's \$36. They're \$3.60 a pair and they're all-weather. They're like Crocs, very much the same. You pay a lot of money for them here. But they're very similar and they do

expand to fit different sizes as they grow; they can grow into them a little bit. And they're very good protection and they don't wear out, not easily at all. So just give all you can.

If you can give 50 kids a pair of shoes, that's \$180. We're going to send you a beautiful Christmas gift with six little shoes over the six years that we've been doing this, a different one made every year and then a special one this year. The little blue one that is the new addition and it is like this. It comes in a beautiful little felt package. But it's also one of the six because it is the sixth one. If you can give us some smiles at \$500 a smile, for some of the most beautiful faces that they don't look pretty.

Betty: James, that's what I want to encourage them to do, the smiles. It's heartbreaking when we hear a child crying because they're hurting but it is heartwarming when we see a child smile. I want to see a lot of smiles on these children's faces because they deserve to be able to smile because they can. So I hope you will reach into your heart and ask God what you can do to put some smiles on these children's faces.

James: I promise you, when you put a smile on these little children's faces you put a smile on a mom and those parents and that family.

This is the last week that you're going to have an opportunity to help us this year with the Christmas Smiles and Christmas Shoes. So let's do it together. Like Betty said, let's do it. Just go to LifeToday.org and use your bankcard. If you could give \$1,000 for two smiles, would you do it? I know that may be a real stretch. And then again I know I'm talking to someone who could give several thousand dollars.

Can I just say this? Thank you! Many of you overwhelm us. A lot of people are leaving LIFE Outreach in their estate. There are many people right now thinking, you know what? I've got pretty big insurance policies. When I leave here I'd like that. Or I've accumulated some things and I want that to go on forever in impacting lives. And you can do that. There is information on how you can contact... You know what we'll do? Show how to save your family a lot of money. And bless you and enable you to give. But don't forget that.

There's a level at which every one of you watching can give. LifeToday.org or dial the number, take your bankcard, use it like a check. If you write a check, make it to LIFE but we need you to call us and tell us you're sending it because we've got to let the missionaries know the shoes are on the way. They're paid for. And Betty and I can't pay for all of them. But we do our part. You do your part sharing God's heart. Will you do that? LifeToday.org or dial the number.

Thank you so much for the gift. We have some gifts to bless you but boy, you are blessing people with the gift of love and it never fails.

Begin video clip

Announcer: Poverty is a killer and because of it, children needlessly suffer not only from a lack of food and clean water but also from a lack of things we take for granted such as a healthy smile or a simple pair of shoes. For most of these children, they've never owned a new pair of shoes. And while that may seem minor in the light of all their needs, walking with bare feet puts them at risk of life-threatening infections that could lead to crippling consequences, disease, and even death.

By responding today you can help *LIFE* immediately secure and begin shipping Christmas shoes to 150,000 children around the world just in time for the holidays. Your gift of \$36 will help provide ten pairs of shoes. A gift of \$72 will help provide 20 pairs. And a gift of \$180 will help provide 50 pairs of Christmas shoes for children in need.

With your gift of any amount be sure to request this beautifully crafted blue metal shoe ornament, a treasure to place on your tree each holiday season. With your gift of \$180 or more you may also request this keepsake boxed set of *LIFE*'s Christmas shoe ornaments.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1,000 or more to help provide over 275 pairs of shoes or two children with corrective cleft palate surgeries. And you may request our "Majesty" bronze sculpture.

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

End of clip

In the studio

James: Well, Betty and I just say thank you. I'll tell you what we'd like to do. You help us with some shoes and you want this book, we'll send it to you to say thanks because you've expressed love and you've healed someone's brokenness and we'll send it to you.

This is the last week that you're going to have an opportunity to help us this year with the Christmas Smiles and Christmas Shoes. Let me tell you, it means a lot that you help us share God's love the way you do. I hope you never stop.

Would you say thanks to Ann Voskamp?

[Applause]

Thank all of you. Listen! Thank all of you.

Now listen to me. All of you here, if you haven't voted, go vote. All of you watching, go vote! Okay? If it is early in the morning, start praying for everyone to vote. Do you realize that not to vote is actually to cast a vote for the person you have the least confidence in? That's what you actually do. So let the principles guide your vote to find principled people or people who are willing to learn what matters and they willing to be changed by principles and truth. God bless you! Go vote!

Thank y'all for being here.