

2/23/17
Week 9: WFL
James and Betty Robison
Rebekah Lyons

Betty: Thank you so much for joining us on *LIFE Today*. I'm Betty and this is James.

James: It really is an honor for you to give us an opportunity to spend time with you. I think you're going to hear some things today that could prove to be as meaningful as anything you've ever heard.

Most everybody, if you really get honest, we carry some weight, we have challenges or we have areas of recurring defeat in our lives and we don't feel like we're living free. The greatest man who ever walked on this earth said, "You'll know the truth and the truth will set you free." He says in fact, he is the truth and that if we abide in him we will know that truth that sets us free.

This book is titled, *You Are Free: Be Who You Already Are*. This beautiful lady here and mother and wife of Gabe Lyons, Rebekah has really discovered something about freedom and we're going to talk to her about it. The book, *You Are Free*. I want you to welcome Rebekah Lyons back to *LIFE Today*. She was a wonderful guest and we're glad to have you, Rebekah.

Rebekah: Thank you.

James: Glad to have you here. *You Are Free*. You say that as a declaration. How do you respond when I say a lot of people that are reading that cover and hearing that? They don't feel like they're free.

Rebekah: I understand. That was me. I grew up in the church. I was born on mother's day. I'm pretty sure I was in church by Wednesday.

[Laughter]

Memorized scripture, I prayed a sinner's prayer at age five. I didn't know, really, fully what I was being saved from but I did know that I believed that Jesus was the son of God, and that he loved me and that was enough. At the age of five, I think you want to do the right thing.

I remember even as a child meeting God in what felt like a secret place. Where it was almost that

childlike faith that Jesus invites us into where we're kind of like I believe everything that you say you are. Let's do this! And as a kid, you just kind of approach it.

I remember I would ride my bike at dusk and my mom would call me in and I would linger. I was like the rebel, out of all of us. There was something about the wind in my hair and as the sun was going down, I just felt like God's nearness to me.

I remember I was on swim team and I would jump in the pool early at 8:00 a.m. all summer long. My parents were teachers and they thought, here's a great way for you to get up at 8:00 a.m. all summer long, instead of sleeping in. So I'd jump in the pool. I just remember swimming laps and like back and forth and back and forth. It's almost in the silence and in the stillness I felt God's nearness and I felt free as a child.

Then I would go, though, I would go to Christian school or to church. The expectations would all of the sudden start to put pressure to where I would be headstrong, type A control freak. I'm not sure if there is anybody else out there, I'll just speak for myself but I had a tendency to lean into striving and perfectionism. So I would, in church, while it is all well-meaning, I wanted to do all the right things but this vitality or freedom was really only there when it was just me and God.

So I walked this life throughout middle school, high school. I was a chameleon; I could read people a mile away and kind of conform to what was acceptable in each of those environments.

Then my firstborn comes -- I get married, my firstborn comes along and even as a mom I think, this must be free-ish -- like free enough. I wasn't entering any diaper changing competitions or anything. I was just doing the beautiful work of raising kids.

And it really wasn't until, honestly, I was here a couple years ago but right around that time was when I realized how unfree I was. My first book had come out. I was starting to speak and talk about my journey through panic disorder and anxiety; living in New York City, and crashing and burning and the Lord rescuing me from that. But once I started to speak on a stage, it created this bondage in that like I didn't enter diaper changing competitions but I would now all of the sudden compare myself to other speakers or writers and think, did they like me? Did I say the right thing? Did I do it correctly? And I had to get real honest and this is how the book begins and the chapter "Free to Confess" where I would run back to my hotel room and I would check social media. Did it resonate?

I realized like, Rebekah, everything you're doing right now is not for an audience of one. So I watched a talk by my dear friend Ann Voskamp in a dark hotel room one like random night in California. And I'm eating a cheeseburger -- and that's when you know you've like sunk. You're like in a dark hotel room watching a screen. And she said, "Those who keep score in life just

want to know that they count. And when you do what you do for an audience of one you always know that you count."

I realized right then and that's why I write "Free to Confess." I had to confess to God in that moment. I said, "I am keeping score and for some reason I have lost the freedom, the childlike freedom that I had known or grown to love from my earliest memories."

He was like, "Well, you matter to me. Is that enough?"

I'm like, "No. It's actually not."

And the confession of that, I know was more for me than it was for God. It was this entree to intimacy and beauty that I'd never walked with him up until that point. It almost like opened the door wide open to him to begin to say, "Well, you're right. I'm glad you're finally realizing that." He's like, "I want to begin to show you all the places that I want to set you free."

So it began with the approval of man, like what he showed me even in that season was like, Rebekah, you're operating out of a broken heart and private rejection. He said, "Public affection can never heal private rejection, so let's start there."

So I had to confess, here are all the places that I've compensated for not being enough. Then I scribbled out a freedom prayer in my journal and started to put that out there. That began all these places where he showed me like you're free to grieve. You're free to be weak. You're free to begin again. You're free to wait. You're free to rest. It was almost like he opened the door wide to what this communion could look like.

The freedom for me came in him saying, "I want you. If you want more of me, there's no limit to what the resources of heaven have to offer you as a daughter."

So that's what this story really turned into. It is kind of one by one by one, him just gently taking my hand and showing me more of him.

James: You know what I saw the last time you were here and your heart was going through what I saw as a transition time but your journey there was so rich that I even asked you, "Just pray for me." I wanted to be in that journey where you are right now while you're moving forward in that longing and that yearning and that seeking to be available.

Now then I got this book. Rebekah, you have a marvelous God-given gift. You're not in competition. You are pointing to him. I know that. I see that.

Now you wrote one of the chapters that I just had to read because Betty and I lost a daughter that was -- it just makes no sense. Okay, it's our baby girl; mother of three beautiful children. You wrote a chapter on "Free to Grieve." Where did grief hit you real hard? Because you tell the story of something that happened.

Rebekah: Well, grief hit me early. I was 26, 39 weeks pregnant. I walk into the O.B. saying, "Do you do ultrasounds at the end?" And they're like, "No." But something was off and they quickly picked up on that.

We did an emergency C-section and I learned very quickly that I had a four-and-a-half pound full term baby boy. It had been failure to thrive. In fact, very life-threatening, actually, how quickly it escalated. But they whisk him away. I didn't even get to hold him. But six hours later the doctor comes in and they say, "We've been checking out your son and we see signs of Down syndrome in your baby."

So in a moment, in one day's time, honestly, from the start of walking into the doctor's office that morning to 1:00 a.m., so many hours later, I thought, okay, this is life -- we've gone rogue. I don't even know what's going on, what God has.

They sent off geneticist testing and they confirmed it five days later. I tried staying at the hospital. They had to kind of kick me out. You're only allowed to stay about three nights with a C-section but Cade was going to be there until he got up to five pounds. And I'm just like -- they're having to drive me away.

So I remember the first morning getting in the shower, once we were home and I got up early and I'm hurrying to shower so we can get right back down and the doctor calls. I know that it is the doctor and I know they're calling with the results but there is just something in me that is like, no. Like it is all -- he doesn't have a heart defect. Maybe there is a chance he doesn't have -- I was still kind of reeling from the emotion of that week.

So the doctor calls, Gabe takes the call. I'm in the shower. He opens the door and just looks at me. And in that moment, I knew -- and I broke. I just collapsed on the floor.

I don't know how many of you have had like a good shower cry but I've had a few because with toddlers, it's like one of the places you can go and hopefully not get interrupted. But that was that moment where I found God even again in the secret place, like on my face while the tears -- the water just hit my back and I grieved in a way I'd never known. The best way I describe it in the book is that I grieved in the spirit. That the spirit of God grieved with me and through me. It almost felt like a shedding of grief. You know where you're like your body just kind of shakes and you can't quite get rid of it fast enough?

But what I learned in that moment is that the more I would kind of release the pain that there was a transfer happening. And that Christ was actually absorbing my pain and giving me comfort. I had never -- since then, that's been 16 years but since then there have been moments in my life where I understood grief in a way that -- this idea of if you grieve you will be comforted. It goes together. And Jesus says that. It's like, "I will comfort you when you hand me your grief." It reminded me of him on the cross, where he absorbs all our sin and all our shame and all our guilt and all our pain. And then he transfers that, I call it the cross did a switcheroo and we traded up. We give him our pain and he gives us comfort. We give him our sorrow, he gives us joy. We give our just brokenness, he gives us wholeness and healing. To me, grief was a very tangible way physically to even experience that.

There was another time that happened. We went to Franklin just a couple years ago; I missed New York. I talk about God taking us from Manhattan and then bringing us to Nashville and I wasn't ready for that. I remember the Lord just very much imparted on me, Rebekah. I was like why are we here? We are in Christianville? There are 25 churches on Franklin Road; they don't need more Christians here. I was just being stubborn. I was like, "I want to stay in Manhattan. They need Jesus. That's why we're here." I'd even become a bit of a martyr with my faith. Like you can't be a Christian unless it is really hard!

[Laughter]

So anyways, I'm like back in Christianville, in the south, like why don't we just do a northern swoop via New York from Atlanta. It just didn't make sense to me. And so my doubt was coming out again. God, in his kindness is like, Rebekah! I think he was like -- what he said that day was like, "You cannot see the unknown until you release the known." And it was just again an example of like, "Hey Rebekah, who is at the helm of your life right now? Because I think there is a little confusion here."

And that was part of the story is just how gracious is he that even in our frailty and our doubts and our grief and our questions and our fears, he is just so kind. He is so kind. He was like, "You know what?" I think sometimes he grins, sometimes he rolls his eyes but there is just such kindness to him that showed me like, "Rebekah, I'm going to show you and in a couple of years you're going to look back on my hand on this city that I've brought you to and you're going to marvel at what I've brought you into." And that's where we are. Again, we are all in this life. Like he is the head, he is saying, "Come, come, follow me." And we're like, "okay, I'll do it." And then he shows us every time.

James: I hope you're seeing it. Here in the audience, you're seeing this incredible flow. It's God inspiring her to pour her heart out on the pages of a book where you just literally sit down in

the situation that you go through and the simplicity of every one of the things she addresses as she goes down: Free to be rescued, free to be called, free to be confess, free to thirst, free to ask, free to begin again, free to wait, free to rest, free to grieve, free to work, free to celebrate, free to be brave, free to love and then free to set free.

One of the greatest joys for people who have been set free is helping other people get free. We were able to help Robert Morris get free. You remember the journey there? And when you think we have over 30,000 people attending Gateway every weekend. A lot of people have found freedom. Robert has led a lot of people into freedom and a lot of preachers into it.

Betty: I can so readily relate to what you're talking about, about the freedom. Because I went through some of the similar circumstances you did with the expectations and put expectations on myself and letting people put them on me and feeling like I had to keep working so hard at this. God showed me that real freedom and *Free to Be Me*, which is a book I wrote about my story several years ago, that brought such great joy to me; is to know that I can be free to be the person that God created me to be. And he is closer than close if we allow him to be.

Rebekah: Yes, absolutely.

James: I'm sitting here looking at two just very pretty women. I'm having to look back and forth on the monitor. I'm looking at you, you're just a very young lady in your early 40s, Betty is her early 70s. She says, "Why do you always have..."

Rebekah: She looks like she is in her early 40s.

James: She does! I'm looking at both of you. You just have the radiant glow of God on you. You really do. It's just the glory of God. And you look at me in the middle and say, "God bless that poor fella."

[Laughter]

I just try to get here in the midst of glory.

But here's the thing. Listen to me. We were with Rebekah before we came out here and we were just about weeping over what God wants for you. You look at me and say, "Oh that's really sweet, honey. You're just a pretty little thing." I just wish you knew. I just wish you knew how much God loves you. I wish you understood how special you are. I wish you knew that you could just dump a whole load on him and he will say, "I can handle it. And I don't care how heavy your load is, I don't care how big the hurt is, I don't care how miserable the failure is, I'm bigger and you let me get in that yoke and that yoke will be light. And I'll brighten your darkest

day. I'll lift you up out the deepest pit, even if you dug it yourself. I don't care how you got in it, I'm the way out."

Would you just let him lift you up? Would you let love lift you up? That's what reading the book will do. I hope you get it. But more than anything, I know Rebekah wants this, Betty wants it, I want it, I know God wants it; he just wants you to let him be who he is in you.

Please right where you are? Would you just say, "Jesus, hold me, hold me! Heal me. Free me. Forgive me."

And don't start looking for feelings. You might have one. You might have a wonderful feeling. You might have a sense of a load lightened. But you're not trusting in feelings, you're trusting him and he is altogether worthy of your trust.

Father, I just pray you'll set people free; in Jesus' name.

I know you've been blessed. I know you're going to be a blessing.

Would you say thanks to Rebekah for sharing her story, her journey, for sharing the book? You're speaking in conferences too. If you have a website where people can go and find out where you're going to be? What is the website?

Rebekah: It is *YouAreFreebook.com*.

James: And they can find where you are going to be.

Rebekah: Um-hmn.

James: Rebekah, we're giving folks water. You know we help a lot of people. When I say "we" I'm talking about all our viewers. Betty and I are faithful to give; we're good givers. We're faithful givers. I want you to watch this. I promise you, I promise you, your heart is going to be moved. And let me say this to you, just like a moment ago, I believe you felt the love of God coming toward you. Well, the love of God is going to flow through you in a miraculous way. Watch! Watch closely.

On the mission field

Open captions:

Announcement: We would like to inform that, in order to safe and use properly the little water that we have, we would like to ask you to not come with more than three buckets. Signed: The Chief responsible of this water.

Announcer: It's a list of rules. Rules meant to preserve this: The only source of water for the many families living here.

Open caption:

>> It is so little water. It's not enough for all of us so we have to ration it.

Announcer: As desperate a challenge as this scarcity is, it is only where their struggles begin.
Open captions: The water is very dangerous. There are many parasites which make us very sick.

Announcer: It's absolutely mind boggling that anyone could survive long after drinking this disease and parasite-infested water. The sad truth is, many here don't. Most of them young children, little bodies unable to defend themselves against such a contaminated source.

Open captions:

>> My children died from drinking the water.

>> My child got very sick and passed away.

>> I'm scared my remaining children will also die.

Announcer: With your help we could drill a well right here -- abundant, clean, life-giving water. No more thirst and dehydration. No more sickness.

End of clip

In the studio

James: We really do have the answer. Betty, I couldn't help but look at the beautiful mothers; those very radiant, beautiful, beautiful moms, hearts broken. There's a perfect cure. It's clean water.

Betty, I'm thrilled that our viewers will help us and right now I've tried to make it clear we've got, according to the missionaries, think about it, the missionaries find these precious people. The love of God sends them. They see a legitimate need and they feel like those missionaries, they feel like they can tell us. And they feel like we'll tell you. And we feel like they believe and we believe, it's in our heart, that you want to help. And Betty, our viewers have proved it.

Right now they are telling us we have 188 areas that are crisis, where they've got to have a well.

And you gave us last year two drilling rigs so now we have 188 places but we've got to have the resources, the \$4800 for each one of those places. And it's urgent.

Then, Betty, this is the miracle that just -- we never dreamed. We can actually give families their own filter system in the areas where we can't get in a drilling rig. And they can filter enough water to keep all the contamination that's in their sources from getting to their children and their families. And you can give three families that filter system for \$100.

Now did you hear what I said? -- Three families. We've been telling you for years that \$48 will give ten people water the rest of their life when you put it toward the \$4800 well because \$144 toward that well will give 30 people water the rest of their life. And the well is going to give 1,000 people clean water the rest of their life. So there's an area where you can help. Betty, these little old filter systems are miraculous.

Betty: Awesome! I'm so excited about this possibility of getting these filter systems to these areas where they can't drill water. But as you saw on this video that we just showed you, of a place that we can drill a well there, James, but they're rationing the diseased water. It is so so sad.

We need to do this now. We can't wait. They are desperate. They're losing their babies because of the diseased water that they get, James but then they're losing them too because they don't have any water period. So please, help us get to these places where you drill the wells and then the places we can't, James, where we can get the filter system to them. A new avenue opened up that can really bless a lot of people.

James: It is an answer to prayer. And you are the great answer to prayer. I've always said, "If you want your prayers answered, be an answer to prayer."

Would you right now go online please? Would you take that bankcard? If you can drill a well, I believe you will and some of you can; you've been blessed where you can. Or give toward the well and pray others join you. If you can give that \$100 for three of those families to have their own filter system, do it. Go online or dial the number there, take your bankcard, make the gift God puts on your heart.

We've got some special gifts, as you know, just to say thank you because we love you. We want to be a blessing to you as you are a blessing to others. Thank you for making the gift God put on your heart. Thanks for giving them a chance, giving them life.

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.

Our teams have recently identified 188 remote villages in southern Africa where children are suffering from contaminated, disease ridden water. The situation is desperate. They need clean disease-free water immediately.

With your gift today you can help drill fresh water wells in remote villages across seven African nations. Your gift of \$24 will provide clean water for five people. A gift of \$48 will provide for ten. \$72 provides for 15 people. And \$144 will help provide fresh disease-free water for 30 people for a lifetime!

With your gift we'll send you Sheila Walsh's devotional, *5 Minutes with Jesus*, a fresh infusion of joy to help you experience a deeper connection with God.

Please consider an additional gift of \$100 to help provided three families with water filtration kits in emergency areas where our rigs cannot reach. And you may request our "No Greater Name" canvas print.

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 hand-painted "Determined Eagle" bronze sculpture.

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

End of clip

In the studio

James: Well, we're going to send you the beautiful gifts that we mentioned. I know you're going to love the canvas. I know you're going to love the *5 Minutes with Jesus* by Sheila Walsh. I know that beautiful eagle where you're going to learn to soar on the turbulence of the times will be an inspiration to you.

If you'd like to have Rebecca's book, *You are Free*, I'm telling you now, God's gifted her and she is sharing the gift God's given her with you to be a blessing. I hope you'll get it. So you help us just give water, and you say, "Would you mind sending me the book?" We'll be happy to send it to you because we want you to live free.

Would you join us saying thanks to Rebekah Lyons? Rebekah, we love you. You're a beautiful girl! Tell Gabe we said hi and we love him.

Thank all of you for being with us. Thanks for watching *LIFE Today*. Thanks for sharing life. Thanks for loving others.

Announcer: In his new book, *Living Amazed* James Robison shares how divine encounters can change your life. *Living Amazed* -- coming soon to online and retail bookstores.