

8/7/17
Week 33: WFL
James and Betty Robison
Patrick Gray and Justin Skeesuck

James: Hey! I think they are really happy to see us! Thank you! I wish I could see you. You say, “No you don't! You don't want to see me!”

Well, I just want to thank you for joining us. I’m James Robison. Betty and I are thrilled to have this time with you.

I am so excited about our guest! I’m excited about all of our guests. This is one of the most unbelievable stories I’ve ever seen. Can you imagine, with a 500 mile journey. Let me see what they call this journey, Camino do Santiago. A 500 mile journey! I know it’s beautiful, but gosh! It would have to be like going through hell, especially the way – the situation here.

I just have to tell you, Betty, you weren't with me when I first saw this but I saw the love of God that I want, and I told our audience here, and I’m just telling you, if we will ever turn the love of our great God loose on this old planet and on the people in this world that are so desperate for that real love, I don't think you can imagine what would happen.

Well, here’s the book title, *I’ll Push You*, a 500 mile journey, somebody that can't maneuver on their own. I want you to welcome, if you would, Patrick Gray and Justin Skeesuck. I think I got it right. If not he’s going to – Would you welcome them to LIFE Today?

Yeah! I did my best! Did I do okay?

Patrick: Perfect!

James: I saw you two guys. You were in the nursery together; I think you were born pretty close to the same time. And you knew each other’s kids, and in school. And he gets, in his teenage years, a disease. Now, he can say the name of it.

Go ahead, tell us the name of it, Justin.

Justin: It’s called Multifocal Acquired Motor Axonopathy. It’s almost identical to ALS, Lou Gehrig’s disease.

James: And a little bit like Lou Gehrig's but it moves randomly. It could hit one part of the part of the body, then another part of the body. So it started with you, what? 16 or 17 years old?

Justin: Just shy of – Well, 16 years old. Then it started progressing from there. It started with my left foot, went up my left foot, right leg, and then –

James: When did it get serious enough that it was obvious you were really heading for a challenge?

Justin: Believe it or not, I actually managed pretty well throughout my 20s. I got married, had kids, started having children, had a career as a graphic designer, was able to manage. Slowly but surely the disease was working through my body. But in the winter of 2010 it jumped to my right shoulder and within about 40 days I lost 60 to 70 percent of my upper body. I tell you what, it's very, very humbling to have people feed you and help you get your clothes on, help go to the bathroom and it became very, very eye opening at that point in my life.

James: You were a Christian during this journey?

Justin: Yeah, Patrick and I were both raised in a Christian church, Christian homes, had amazing parents who just loved us and supported us. Yeah, we had it as a cornerstone and a foundation for who we are as individuals, and in our friendship as well.

James: How tough was it for you to deal with the "why me?" "why this?"

Justin: I never really got there. I never really went to this "why me?" You question, no doubt. You question God, what is this path you're putting me on? It's not "why me" as in "woe is me." It's okay, why? What do you want to do with this? And how do you want to work in this? That's how I kind of looked at it. And I tell you what, when you approach it from that angle, amazing things can happen.

Betty: This is a very rare disease, right?

Justin: Very, very rare. Yes. There's about a handful of people in the United States that –

Betty: Anything particular happen to make it start manifesting in your body.

Justin: Yeah, when I was just shy of 16 I was in a car accident and I didn't know it at the time but several years later I found out that that car accident triggered the disease that was in my body.

James: Okay, Patrick, what did you observe and what was going on inside of you when you saw this lifetime friend – and y’all were close, right? I mean, there was a pretty meaningful relationship just as buddies. So when does it begin to grip you that you’ve got some serious issues going on with your friend?

Patrick: Justin was saying the disease was pretty easy for him to manage throughout his 20s. He gets married. I get married. We start our families in our late 20s. There was no real worry or kind of wait that I witnessed or I felt he was dealing with, as long as he was in that manual wheelchair. So he went from braces to a cane, to a walker, to a manual wheelchair. But it stayed at his waist and below for quite some time.

But in 2010 when he lost his hands – he’s a graphic designer, so that was his life blood. It’s gone, right? So, as he kind of faces this darkness of okay, what does this look like and he dealt with it so well, but it was a hard time for him. I kind of went down my own dark path for two years, of a lot of anger. I was just so angry at God. Like, how dare you! How dare you take away his hands! How dare you take away his feet. I prayed for miracles, I prayed for something different. It didn’t come. And the anger grew.

But in 2012 Justin and his wife and the kids were up visiting my wife and family. After a church service a gentleman took Justin aside and was asking him the question – I was eavesdropping because that’s what friends do.

[Laughter]

But he asked him, “If you could have your hands and feet back, would you choose it?”

And he said, “No.”

Like, wait a minute. But it was in that moment where yeah... right? But I realized that the battle I was fighting, the prayer I was praying for was different than the battle he was fighting. And I had this privilege, this gift, to step in and be his hands and feet. And more often than not God’s provision for the world around us is our hands and feet. And that’s beautiful; it’s a beautiful gift to be a part.

James: When you found out he wanted to do this race – walk – whatever, this 500 mile journey through the most impassable terrain, and why in the world did you want to do that? When you’re in a wheelchair and you were already very challenged, why did you want to do that?

Justin: You know, I learned about the pilgrimage through a public access TV show, I just

happened to watch on a random Saturday morning and I knew instantly when I saw that, and we were talking just a little bit ago about you have those moments – Sometimes people have these moments in their lives when you very clearly know in your mind, in your heart, and in your soul, this is something you need to do and you don't know why and you don't have a true explanation for it. It's something that's absolutely crazy and way outside the norm of what other people expect you to be and I just knew in my heart it was something I needed to do.

James: You were supposed to go on this impossible 500 mile march?

Justin: Yeah. Which it scared the living daylights out of me, I can tell you that right now.

James: But you felt who you are.

Okay, how do you get involved? Because you look like you're a pretty bright fellow.

Patrick: One might think. [Laughing] No, it was about two weeks after he had come across this journey through Spain. My wife and I were now down with our kids visiting in San Diego and he took me aside and we went into his living room and he said, “Hey, I want to show you something.” He had recorded the episode. So I sat down on the seat next to him and he plays it for me.

Then he asked me, “What do you think? Do you want to go across 500 miles through Spain with me.

I went, “Yeah! I’ll push you! Let’s do this. Why not?”

James: I’ll push you! It was a whole lot bigger pushing than you thought.

Justin: Oh yes!

[Laughter]

Patrick: Completely naïve!

Justin: Yes.

James: So how long did it take?

Patrick: 35 days.

James: 35 days. And you had some other helpers too.

Patrick: Oh yeah. We had a lot of help.

James: Why did they sign on? And the ones that signed on with you, did they stay with you so that when you needed them? Or did you have different ones join at different times?

Patrick: We had two individuals come from the states. A friend of ours, Ted Hardy, came on the front end to get us over the Pyrenees. And then another friend of ours and his son, Michael Turner and Matthew Turner, they came over for the last part. But we had a twenty – Gosh, was it twenty-four days?

Justin: Yeah.

Patrick: We had no game plan. It was just here we go! Other pilgrims that were taking this journey just stepped in.

James: People that were doing the same walk in the trek, they would say they knew you needed help and they just came and said we're going to help. It touches my heart because – I just think that's what we need to say as Americans and Asians or whoever you are, Europeans, and Africans, and people in South America, Central America – God help us! Because we can help each other. You actually got a glimpse of – to me you got a glimpse of the glory of God. And when this guy steps up, I mean, were you moved that Patrick – or did you just decide to get on this trip because you knew ol' Patrick would be there?

Justin: No. I knew – I mean, when I had this epiphany of going on this pilgrimage, Patrick was the first – You know, being born just over 36 hours apart and knowing each other for, at that time, 39 or 40 years. I just knew. I just knew instinctively. I said, alright. And he was just the first one to jump in and say, "Let's do it!" And through himself, that's one of the most beautiful things about Patrick, he just jumps in wholeheartedly. Loved me, supported me, and said let's do it!

James: And I saw it all over the clips that I saw. Even while we were talking, we were cutting in, people are seeing some of the things you went through.

Betty: Did you ever want to quit, part of the journey?

Patrick: Not the journey. We had one day that we wanted to quit... day.

[Laughter]

It was a rough day.

Justin: Very rough day.

Patrick: It was such a beautiful experience to see humanity at its best, day in and day out, loving one another. Just to love each other.

James: The book is a great story. Here it is. I'll just tell you, we're trying to give water to people who are dying of contaminated bacteria infested water. You help us give some people water, and you want this book along with other things we've prepared for you, we'd be glad to send it. I suggest you go online and get it.

But you really have a documentary coming out, sometime later in the year. What's it titled?

Justin: Same title, *I'll Push You*.

James: And this push is more of a – gosh, it's not just push, it's pull, it's lift. I just see love lifting him. It is one of the most powerful things I've ever seen because I've seen the glimpses of it. I have an idea this documentary could transform lives like few things have ever hit people.

So, you now have ministry too. Do you have a website if people said will you all come and speak in our church or our community? Where would they go? What website?

Justin: Simple! IllPushYou.com

James: So we're going to stay with that?

Justin: Yeah, stay with that.

Patrick: If it's not broke, don't fix it! Right?

[Laughter]

James: So what do you want people to hear, right here tonight? Right here on this *LIFE Today* program? What do you want people to hear and what is your hope and prayer for the effect of this journey, where you're talking about it? What do you just pray really gets down inside the hearts of people?

Patrick: There's a lot of take-aways that we've been blessed to have experienced through this

story. But I think the most fundamental one is that our life isn't defined by our limitations. It's defined by what we do in spite of those limitations. Right? Our ability to overcome whatever life throws at us, whether it's a physical ailment or it's mentally, emotional, inadequacies, whatever it is. Our ability to overcome those rest within the relationships we possess. And Jesus calls us into these relationships that are grounded in love and compassion. Loving each other, in spite of who we are. Loving each other, no matter what darkness we deal with, and what light we have been a part of, a whole package. And when we love people that way, there are no obstacles that we're facing that are too hard to overcome.

And that's the whole point of the story is that, regardless of what you face, if you step in into a relationship you invite people into your story. You can do so much more than you can on your own. And that's what church was meant to be.

James: And you've left everything to do this, and you know that. Do you ever feel like you're a burden to people?

Justin: I used to, in some ways. Even in our pilgrimage I had moments of feeling like I was a burden because I'm seeing my best friend and Ted, who came along with us, getting over the first of three mountain ranges we had to go over, suffer on my behalf. Not just suffering but in that suffering, I knew that I was the cause of that because it was something that I brought up and that's why we were there.

But in the conversations and throughout this pilgrimage I have learned some pretty valuable lessons. One in particular that I had been learning for a very long time in my life, as the disease has progressed through my body it's basically stripped away my independence, was when you deny someone the opportunity to help you, you actually deny them the joy in life. It takes away the burden. It allows people into your journey to love you and support you, where you are weak and where you can use help. Patrick does that so beautifully in our relationship with one another. My wife does that. Other friends help us. I tell you what, it's a natural feeling to become – to feel like you're a burden. But I can tell you that when you decide to let it go and let God take over, have faith in God, have faith in humanity, truly beautiful things can happen.

James: Do you all see the glory of the Lord on Justin? Do you see his countenance? Here's the man that cannot move independently at all, enjoy the Lord.

And then, we move to you, Patrick. There's just a love of God flowing through you. This wasn't some human thing. This was supernatural. It's divine. And now you want to pour this out. You're really wanting the Christian community, the family of God to love one another like that and believing that we could actually love one another on this earth without compromising a single truth, we could be so filled with *the* truth that we could have this kind of love. Don't you believe

that what's been going on right here is the love that God talks about and the love Jesus showed us?

The documentary, I'll Push You, will be coming out later this year. You don't want to miss it. I'm telling you, you take – you go on YouTube and watch. Just watch this exchange of love and I'm saying to you guys, because the moment I walked in the room with y'all tonight it was just a gratitude to God for his glory and his grace being on you.

And I see it on Betty. I pray, God, can I have some of that on me? I want that. I want his glory and his grace and his love to be all over me, and I want it all over the church. That's what I'm praying for.

Would you just say thanks to God and thanks to these men for the way they stand? And really, to Patrick, for loving Justin like he did and making this impossible journey.

Now, I want to ask you to do something. We've just been talking about the joy of really caring about somebody else. You know Betty and I, we spend – I spent 25 years traveling all over this nation preaching, away from my family, to try to reach all the families. And then all of the sudden God tells me no, you're not going to just be this national spokesman that everybody says you're going to be. Billy Graham even said it. Okay, I understand that. But he said you're going to be a servant. And the joy that I get, listen to me, then Betty and I go to the mission fields.

Betty said when she got saved as a little girl, she said, "Jesus, please don't call me to the mission field." And here we go, overseas. We spent these many years and continue.

Now look, we find great joy in doing the will of God. But all the things that you see that you say that is amazing would not happen without God's amazing grace flowing through you. Now here's what I want you to do. I want you to watch real close and I want you to say, "God, what can I do to express your heart and be a big part of your will in those situations, in that situation, in those people's lives." Because you can, and you ought to get very excited about it. Watch!

On the mission field

Announcer: The countries change, the landscape changes, and the faces may change. But one thing that does not change is the hopelessness that people feel when they have no other choice but to give their families water to drink from unsafe sources.

[Subtitles]

Joseph: We've been drinking this water for 5 years now and it has killed my 2 kids that I treasured so much. Other children are dying in our community.

Announcer: this expression of despair is too common among the precious people our mission teams visit, people who have never known what it is like to take a drink of fresh, clean water.

[Subtitles]

Muriko: This is the water that killed my child. How can my other children have a good life with this water?

Announcer: Generation after generations have suffered from unsafe drinking water in villages just like Muriko's. Hopelessness pervades the very fabric of her village. But because of love, our mission teams are able to offer hope through prayer and a promise that we will try and do all we can to provide them with fresh water. But the only way we can do that is for those who hear their plight, determine to offer them not only hope but fresh water by helping drill a water well.

Tammy: Gosh, it would be amazing if one day we were walking together and I was carrying clean water for you in a bucket. That would be my hope and my prayer. One day. There is hope. I promise you, there is hope.

End of clip

In the studio

James: Boy, I just want to speak to you a moment.

Tammy, watching you walk with that contaminated water knowing that you lost the love of your life, you lost your husband in water. He drowned, and he was a swimmer. Tammy, we love you. Thank you for going all over the world.

And all those people, Betty, that need that water, and it's not like we have to sit around here and think or call some council together to try to figure out, well, what are we going to do to deal with that issue. All we have to do is drill a well. And that's it. We drill the well. And the average cost still remains \$4800.

Betty: James, as I was watching it, of course, I'm drawn toward the mothers and the heartache that I see on their faces, the tears that I see them shed because they know what is happening. They possibly already lost a child that they love so much, but they've got others that they know the same destination they're headed for if they don't get some help. And it breaks my heart. It should break our heart. And there's something we can do about it. We can get them fresh, clean water. That's all they ask for.

James: That's not wishful thinking. It's not just a mere prayer. It's a prayer that we can be the

answer to. So we're now coming to the end of this emphasis to get 400 water wells drilled. And then we found areas where you can't get a drilling rig in and it's kind of like a miracle. We can give a filter system to families where they can have clean water. It's like dialysis. It's a little miracle that is a big miracle to a lot of people. And we can give three families those filter systems for \$100.

But the water wells average – You've got to understand we might drill one somewhere where the cost is \$3000, and in another place it could be \$6000. But the average of those 400 areas, over the years, has stayed at about \$4800. So if you could drill a well, I'm just asking you to do it. You just call or go online and say here it is on my bankcard. I'm giving a well. Or I'm sending the check in. You may be, as some, you can give more than one well. And if you can I believe you will.

But please remember this: at whatever level you can participate, you just pray for God to bring the others in. Most of the gifts come from people giving \$48, which gives 10 people water for the rest of their life. That's how it breaks down. \$144 will give 30 people water.

Many of our friends say, James, someday I'm going to be able to give a whole well. But right now I can give half a well. I'll give \$2400 and pray someone joins me. Or \$1200 and pray 3 join. I don't know what level you can come in but you can be the miracle that their heart longs for. And this is not wishful thinking, it's not a mere prayer. This works. So we know exactly what needs to happen. So you become the answer to the prayer, would you please?

Right now, go online. Take your bankcard, make the gift God put on your heart or call the number and use your bankcard. If you write a check, make it to *Life* but please call and tell us what's coming because we have to know and be able to say to the missionaries, yes, we'll be able to drill a well in your area.

We have found the areas, we know the water is there. Sometimes they find it with a borehole that becomes filthy and contaminated in a very short period of time. But we know the water is there. So we get to the water, encase it, protect it, and give them a manual pump that even a child can turn to get that fresh, life-giving water.

We have some gifts to send to you to say thank you. But you're giving the great gift. You're giving the gift of life. And we're telling them about the water of life. They see it demonstrated too, his love. Thank you so much. Please move right now and make the gift God put on your heart.

Begin video clip

Announcer: Every day children living in extreme poverty are forced to make a dreadful choice: Drink polluted water filled with deadly disease or perhaps die of 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 drill 400 water wells in remote villages in 15 nations. A gift of \$48 will provide disease-free water for ten people, \$72 will provide for 15 people, and \$144 will help provide clean water straight from the ground for 30 people.

Please also consider an additional gift of \$100 to help provide three families with water filtration kits in emergency areas where our drilling rigs are unable to reach. As our thank you, we'll send you the books, *Words of Jesus* and *Words of Healing*. One contains only the words of Jesus and the other scriptures for healing in your body, mind, and soul. With your \$100 gift you can receive both hardbound and softbound editions of these scripture promise books.

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 hand sculpted "Determined Eagle" bronze. Please call, write, or make your gift online.

End of clip

In the studio

James: Well, like I said a few minutes ago, we are coming to the end of this emphasis for these 400 wells. I hope you will give a well or \$1200, get The Determined Eagle. It is a beautiful bronze. We're sending *The Words of Jesus*, *The Words of Healing* and just to say thank you and help you grow. But if you'd like to have this book, this incredible story, well, you just feel free to ask for it. Encourage your friends to go online or go to the bookstore and get it. Great story of love!

Would you join Betty and me in saying thanks again to Patrick and to Justin?

Thank you all very, very much! God bless you on your journey!

And remember the documentary *I'll Push You*, later this year! Don't miss this! And share it!
Thanks for watching. Thanks for sharing love.