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Week 35: WFL - Last Week

James and Betty Robison

Kate and Britt Merrick

James: Thank all of you. Thank you! You indeed make us feel welcome and I hope you feel welcome.

I'm James Robison. Betty and I welcome you to *LIFE Today*.

We have experienced something that we're told by people who just understand pain and heartache that perhaps the most, let's say, unnatural thing that can happen and is painful, as difficult to experience and you might say live through is the loss of a child. It's not something that Betty and I ever imagined would happen but we lost our miracle baby girl that came after Betty was told she couldn't have another child and we adopted a son. We had a beautiful daughter, Rhonda, we adopted Randy and three years after we adopted Randy then three years after we adopted Randy we had a miracle baby.

Betty: That's right!

James: And little Robin was a miracle. And boy, what a blessing for 40 years, and then we lost her in a battle to cancer. It is not something that parents even want to think about or talk about. And yet we have a couple here that lost a child. I want you to listen to the title, *And Still She Laughs* -- *And Still She Laughs*. And then the subheading. Now listen to this because I'm going to ask this question: "Defiant joy in the depths of suffering" by Kate Merrick.

Her husband Britt is a pastor in Santa Barbara. And they are here. I want you to welcome Kate and Britt Merrick to *LIFE Today*. Would you do that?

[Applause]

Britt: Thank you.

James: All right, I want to ask you, Britt, as a pastor and the father who lost a child, and watching your wife and then seeing her reach this place, were you -- I know you felt the pain because she just talked about it. You experienced it, but did you find yourself somewhat amazed that she reached a place that she wrote this book?

Britt: James, like you were saying earlier, there's nothing in the world I imagine like losing a child and we lost our daughter, Daisy Love when she was eight years old after battling cancer for four years. We went to some really dark places after that.

As you said, I'm a pastor and we've been in ministry about 20 years and it was just really unexpected that this would happen. And quite frankly our perspective was that the Lord would let this happen to us and we didn't really have a framework to sort through that. So we went to some deep places of doubt and questioning and concern and being mad at God.

To see my wife, we both did, but to see her journey of fighting back from losing her daughter because she very much felt like she lost when we lost Daisy Love to cancer. She has that mom thing, that instinct that I'm going to win for my baby girl no matter what. When we lost her, she felt like she lost the fight of her life. She felt like God let her lose the fight of her life. So to see her come back from the depth of suffering and sorrow to joy and beauty has been a privilege to be a part of.

James: Kate, I want you to tell us about it and I want you to address though that term "defiant joy." What are you implying there? And then I want you to just take us on the journey as you see fit and as you did in the book, really.

Kate: Sure. The defiant part comes because as you guys know, it's virtually impossible to manufacture joy when you experience that heavy of a loss. You lose something so much a part of you, so close to you, so deep and heavy. And as a Christian, you know, I'm supposed to have joy. Right? I'm supposed to have joy when this kind of stuff happens. "Consider it all joy," Paul says. And then it happens and you just feel like -- you just feel like hurting yourself or getting under the covers and not coming back out ever again.

So it took several years to get to a place where I could say I had defiant joy but I went on a journey where I knew that joy would come and it would come defiantly because it's not in my nature to just say, "Oh yay! I experienced this heavy suffering!" And it took a long time to get to a place where you realize that God means something a whole lot deeper than that joy that you think you're supposed to have in the beginning and that the joy is actually kind of defiant.

James: So you indicated in your book and as we even had a brief visit that you journaled.

Kate: I did. Well, I mostly blogged because there is something about when you have to keep --

James: So you're sharing your heart, you're letting it out.

Kate: It would just come out. There was no way. We started this blog just to keep people abreast of what was happening. Well, there is this surgery and there is this chemotherapy and this scan. And instead of answering the question 100 million times you just start a blog. I actually took over writing the blog. He was writing it for a little bit.

Britt: I was no good at it.

Kate: He was terrible. He was absolutely terrible. So one day we were at the hospital and I'd seen that he writes a post and I said, "Oh, what did you write?"

So I grabbed the computer and I look at it and I go, "This is lousy! This is depressing. Give me that!" And I didn't know anything. I still don't know much about blogging at all. I didn't know that you could take a post down. I thought you had to add another one to scoot the other one up or to scoot it down or to get it out of the way. So I grabbed the computer and I just started to write, and that's kind of -- who knew there was all this stuff in there that needed to come out.

So when you keep people abreast of what's happening with your baby girl the heart just pours out along with it. I think it is a completely different -- and I know you can agree with me -- it is a completely different whole frame of mind when your baby is still here and you're fighting and there is a chance and you're doing everything. You're doing everything the word says. You're doing everything that modern medicine can give you. You're doing it all.

And then after your baby goes to heaven, that's a whole different ball of wax. And I shut that thing down. I shut that blog down. She died, I did my last post and that was it. It slammed shut. I'm done. I just had to sit in it and I had to think and I just had to cry and I just had to question. We would ask why? Why? A hundred times over, why? Why? Why?

You know what? It lasted a couple of years. I don't know about with you guys and how quickly it was, but for us it lasted a couple of years before I could even get to a place where God just said, "You know what honey? You've got some stuff going on here and I want to heal your heart of some things here." But God let us cry for a couple of years about it.

James: Britt, what do you think actually has happened because I find you looking at her for a gratitude for what you watch God doing. So therefore he is doing something in you. What do you want our viewers who may have distress or heartache over something, what do you want them to hear that could help mend the hurt?

Britt: Well, I think a big transition for us was when we finally got to the end of asking the why questions because we weren't getting any answers. And honestly, there isn't an answer that is good enough. God himself isn't going to tell me anything that's good enough with the why

question to take the pain away. I just want my little girl back.

Job had the same experience. Job suffered tremendously, and he shook his little fist at God and asked why in so many different ways -- and all his friends were wondering why and offering solutions. At the end God just said, "Job, I'm God." And all through it you get a sense of God was there with him. So when we transitioned from just asking why and we started realizing that God was saying, "I'm with you." "The Lord is my shepherd. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, he is with me." That changed everything when we just said, "Okay, God. We'll never know why on this side of eternity but we really want to experience you with us."

Because that's the promise that we have in Christ. And God is a God of all comfort. And God is the God who opens up the door of hope in the valley of trouble -- and he is our stronghold in the day of trouble. He upholds us with his righteous right hand and he hides us in the shadow of his wings. And once we accept it, that he would be with us in our suffering, that's where we're able to turn a corner.

That's what I want your viewers to understand and see is that God is willing to be with them in the depths of pain. He said to Israel through the prophet Isaiah, "In all of your suffering, I was with you."

We get stuck in the why but when we realize who is with us and that he carries us in those days we're somehow miraculously sustained.

Betty: I think that's the thing that has meant the most to me on our journey, which a journey we never asked for -- you didn't either. I understand others better now that have been through this journey of a loss of a child or a loved one. But the thing that has meant the most to me is knowing and sensing God's presence all the way through this journey. And even closer, a better understanding of who he is because he was there with me and still is when I'm on my face weeping. And what joy? And when I'm desperate, he's still there. And his truths are so wonderful because I can go to his word and say, "God, I know what you say in your word is true. And that someday I will count it all joy."

And when that joy at that point comes, I just praise God for it because even today when I have those moments, one little thing can remind me of her. But you know what I remember now is the life that was in her, the person she was that God created her to be. I don't remember so much the sad part of it as I do the joy of her being here with us. And that I will see her again someday.

James: Tell us about Daisy because I know you're identifying with everything Betty is saying. I know the memories are precious. Even in the pain, there is a preciousness and then where

God has taken you, there's a preciousness for which you're grateful. Tell us about her.

Kate: Daisy is probably the coolest girl that has ever walked the face of the earth, next to yours, of course -- of course! She was legit. She had great faith. Man, we watched that little girl go from five years old to eight and a half -- so half of her entire lifespan was spent in hospitals, and bald and hurting and torn apart and missing out on everything.

She lost everything a little girl could have. She couldn't play with her friends. She couldn't get out of bed. She lost everything and yet, she wanted to live. I don't mean live like she wanted to beat cancer. I'm saying that she wanted to actually live.

One day when she was really sick, she was about seven years old, because you know it came on and off over those three years, she was about seven years old and I'm walking through the house and I hear her listening to her boom box in her room. We still have boom boxes. And it's that song, "Lead me to the cross where your love poured out and I went to my knees."

Anyway, I walk in and she said, "Mom, what do you think this mom means?"

I said, "Well, you tell me what you think it means."

She said, "I think it means that I'm going to live if Jesus wants me to live and I'm going to die when Jesus wants me to die. But until then, I'm going to live." Then she said, "I can feel it in my bones."

What seven-year old says, "I can feel it in my bones"?

So she's such an inspiration to me because she went through everything a little girl could go through and it just hurt so much to watch her do that. She is so happy now -- that makes me okay.

But part of the journey of losing your baby is dealing with those memories. I would say, like those first two years, you just have all these horrific memories of the suffering and of the pain and getting beyond that is like a whole different story, it is a whole different ball of wax. I just felt like I was in this place where I couldn't get past -- I couldn't get past and I had this bitterness and it was just boiling up in me and I didn't know it was there because I believe in Jesus, I believe the Bible. We have a church. We love God. We read the word every day. Why would I have bitterness? I don't have bitterness.

Then God told me one day, "You have bitterness. You have bitterness but it is hidden." And that's where the title of my book comes from *And Still She Laughs*. God told me through the

book of Genesis because of the wife of Abraham and you know when she was in her tent and you know when those travelers come up to the tent and Abraham runs out and says, "Oh kill the fatted calf! Let's go and make these guys some cheese burgers. And Sarah, hurry up. Go bake some bread."

And they have to cook for these strangers. And we know that one of those strangers is a very important stranger and has a very important word for Sarah. And we know that Sarah is eavesdropping. He says, "You're going to hold that baby you've been waiting 24 years for."

And she goes, "Pssh! Yeah right!" She mocks God's goodness. She laughs. But she laughs with bitterness.

When I was reading those scriptures God said, "That's you. I've given you some promises and they're really good promises and you're mocking my goodness. You are laughing with bitterness."

I didn't realize that those whole two years after Daisy's death I just was pssh, how could I ever be blessed again? All the time -- all the time in my heart that's what I wore. That was my garment that I wore on a daily basis.

And God said, "You know what happens in Chapter 26. You know she holds Isaac a year later and names him Laughter; Isaac's name means laughter. Why would she laugh bitterly if she could see what's coming down the road?" And God said, "She can't see because she doesn't have the whole word of God. You do. And you have what? 25 copies in your house bound in leather, every different translation. You know what's coming down the road. Why would you laugh bitterly like Sarah? You should be laughing with joy and abandon."

I was like, oh! You're right! And that started my whole journey was I'm not alone in suffering. And God has so much more for me coming that I can see. So Sarah was my catalyst to wellness, really, to getting over -- not getting over -- I'll never get over it but getting rid of bitterness.

James: And basically, that's precisely what you shared. You feel like if people take it and you've seen it too, Britt, you know it's here, that they can learn to find the true source of joy that you found, and you're trying to help lead them on that.

Father, I just pray right now for everyone watching with a broken heart. Lord, if Kate can help them with what she's shared and their precious little Daisy, then Lord, let it happen. But I want you to put your healing arms around people right now that hurt so bad, a mom, a dad, a brother or sister, a spouse. I want you to bind up the broken heart and hold them up close to your heart. Let them identify with your heart as you identify with theirs, and just heal the broken heart. In

Jesus' name.

You know if you need someone to pray with you that phone number that's there is paid for by love for you to call and just say, "Would you just pray with me?"

By the way, we have just seen some unbelievable miracles in recent weeks of people miraculously healed physically, spiritually -- in their minds. If you need somebody to pray with you, don't hesitate to call.

I wonder if you would just like to join me and Betty in saying thanks to Britt and to Kate for being willing to share their story. Thank you for it. The fact that you just blessed us tremendously! The book is in the bookstores. You can get it online.

One of the things all of our viewers really love to do and I don't know that there's anything we do that viewers tell us they find more joy in, in literally giving people fresh clean water when they have none.

This is our last week for this emphasis so when I tell you that we really for the sake of the precious people that missionaries have located and loved so deeply, and who so desperately need water, that we need a miracle response this week in order to be able to complete the 400 water well areas that we've committed to. We've told them we're planning to come here but you're the way we go. I'm praying God, not only meet that need but pour out even something where we can do something that we didn't expect to do. You add a miracle.

I want you to watch closely and see the need but then know this, you're the perfect answer. You're the perfect cure. You really are. Watch.

On the mission field

James: I am by a water source that is so typical of water sources all over the world. We know for a fact in this area disease is killing entire families -- and many children. Why? From drinking contaminated water.

You know it is one thing to say "I'm sorry" and to weep over it but you know when we can be the answer to the need and the prayer, doesn't it seem sometimes just a little bit hypocritical if we could do something and we don't? Well, we can but we need your help.

Announcer: For near 20 years, the viewers of *LIFE Today* have partnered with missionaries all around the world to help save children's lives by providing clean drinking water. *Mission:*

Water for LIFE has drilled over 5,000 clean water wells with an assortment of rigs in different shapes and sizes to meet the needs of a particular area. Each new water well is capped with a simple pump that even a child can use. And in areas where a drilling rig can't get into, the *LIFE* mission team is utilizing a new technology and providing thousands of water filter kits that families can use to decontaminate their water source.

With this attitude of doing whatever it takes to save lives, *LIFE Outreach* and its partners have already provided clean water for over five million people. But we still have a big job to do. Around the world, hundreds of millions of people still don't have access to safe drinking water and 800 children die every day from a preventable disease caused by contaminated water.

James: Jesus said, "Give a cup of water in my name, you won't lose your reward." I don't know what that reward will be for us, that's in God's hand but I know what reward is in it for the people we give water to. The reward is a chance, it's hope, it's a future -- the reward is life.

End of clip

In the studio

James: Father, I just ask you right now in behalf of all these precious people that you love so deeply, and you want to pour your love through us toward them, I pray you'll just work a miracle. In Jesus' name.

Would you go to that prayer line that's always there for you if you need prayer and you want someone to share your heart with, and turn it into a life line right now? Or would you go online to *LIFE Today* knowing that I'm actually going to share *LIFE Today* because Betty, during this last week in order to reach the goal, we're going to need a real outpouring of response. It may be that some of you have called in to help earlier in this emphasis but you can call again this week and say, "You know what? God's enabled me to make another gift to help you accomplish that mission because of all the outreaches of life, I know this is a big responsibility. So here's my gift. Here's a second gift."

I'm praying that many of you will ask for the "Determined Eagle" bronze. I think this is one of the most beautiful bronzes that we've ever created to say thank you to our friends. Here's what we're asking you to do. Determined eagles are determined to soar on the turbulence of our times and the challenges of the day. We're going to let them lift us higher because we trust God as our strength. We don't fear evil. We share the love and life of God freely.

We're sending this as a gift to those of you who will drill a well, they're \$4800. There are some of you who can. I know if you can you will; I really believe that. Some of you could give \$1200

and pray three join and then we've got a well or \$2400 and pray one joins and we've got a well. We're sending the eagle to say thank you, at that level. I want to tell you something, we're going to need many of you to make that kind of gift.

But here's where the majority of the support comes from. I don't want you to miss this because there is no small gift because it is a gift of love and we're giving life. Most gifts come, \$48; that basically gives ten people water the rest of their life -- \$144, 30 people. So whatever level you can give, please do this.

Then remember, you saw it very briefly, that little container with a filter on it that we give, we can give three families a filter kit in areas where the drilling rigs can't get in because of the terrain. But we can give three families their own filter system for \$100. So there is a level at which everyone watching can help. So would you right now go to the website, would you dial the number, take your bankcard, use it like a check, please, and make the gift God puts on your heart because you really are giving life.

Remember this, we give them Water for LIFE -- the missionaries share the water of life which is the reason for the flow of love flowing freely through us giving the cup of water or the well of water in Jesus' name. Please go right now. By the way, if you get a busy, you be determined to call until you get through. Thank you for doing it.

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.

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

End of clip

In the studio

James: Well, from the bottom of my heart, I want to thank you. Betty and I both do in behalf of so many people that you're putting God's loving arms around; and not just giving a cup of water but wells of water to so many.

We're sending you *The Words of Jesus* and these incredible *Words of Healing*, the beautiful bronze that I mentioned. If you would like to have Kate's really miraculous book, to go through what many say is the most painful experience a person can have on this earth, losing a child, and how do you find joy and laughter?

You say, "James, could you send that to me?" You bet! You simply give someone a cup of water and say, "We want to help." You say, "James, would you mind sending me the book?" Absolutely! You can tell your friends they can get it online, or they can go in the bookstores and get it and get their heart healed.

Would you like to say thanks again to Britt and to Kate? Thank you. And God bless the memories of Daisy. Thanks for sharing. Thank you for watching. And again, thank you for sharing -- sharing life.