

12/4/17
James and Betty Robison
Rebekah Gregory

James: Thank all of you and we welcome you to *LIFE Today*. I'm James Robison.

Betty and I are thrilled to have our guest that has been through one of the most challenging experiences anyone could ever face. But when you talk about the glow and the glory of God on someone's countenance and their life and then you can tell it in their spirit, and then when you take the time to write a book, titled, *Taking My Life Back*, a story of faith, determination and surviving the Boston marathon bombing.

Over 250 people were hurt in that; many of them very, very badly. Some died. There were 17 that experienced what our guest experienced and having to have amputation. This is quite a remarkable story.

I want to you welcome Rebekah Gregory to *LIFE Today*. Would you do that?

Rebekah: Thank you!

James: Rebekah, this is a very pretty picture but you have a glow and a glory on you that is a radiance that is as far as I'm concerned could only be God. Let's face it, you experienced something very traumatic.

Rebekah: I did. But everybody goes through things in their life and at the beginning of each day I'm just blessed to be alive. My blessings outweigh my problems all day every day.

James: Wow! The situation that you faced was -- it was something we all watched over and over and over because the pursuit of the terrorist and the whole situation just captivated really the attention of the whole world; and the number of people that were hurt and the absolute, let's say, almost unimaginable happening when you're just out there enjoying it. Were you near the end of the race where you were standing or approximately where were you, let's say, in that line? You were obviously very close. Have any idea how many feet from the bag that exploded?

Rebekah: We were three feet away from the first bomb that went off. We had started out the day at the 17-mile marker, watching a friend of ours run. We had made our way closer to the finish

line; someone in our group of nine suggested that we do that. And so we ended up being right there at that first.

James: Okay, your son Noah, how old was he?

Rebekah: He was five at the time.

James: I want you to tell us what happened because he is right there. I want you to let the people see what's unfolding now. He is getting a little bit tired. Tell us what happened and then we need to know the significance of it.

Rebekah: I can't stress enough, tired, yes, but bored out of his mind, that's the better term of it.

[Laughter]

He was just over it. We had gone up to Boston. We had been there for hours. We spent the weekend there. It was so much fun. It was my 26th birthday weekend; our first time ever in the city. Noah had just gotten bored after watching the runners pass. We had already gone to the 17-mile marker holding up our signs.

So I said, "Buddy, why don't you sit down on my feet and play in the rocks like you're a scientist." And "rocks" was pushing it because we were on asphalt. But to a five-year old that was cool.

So Noah sat down on my feet and I was thinking I could see our runner, he wasn't going to get lost in this crowd of half a million people. So he sat there with his back against my shins and that's exactly where he was when the bomb in the backpack went off right behind us.

James: So your leg obviously, especially the left leg; but how many pieces of shrapnel are still in your body?

Rebekah: There's so much shrapnel still there four years later. So I've had at least 40 surgeries just devoted to getting those shrapnel pieces out. But there are some that they can't justify other operations just yet. So it's an ongoing process.

James: But you've got another surgery coming up because of one that is serious and you know that can continue. How many surgeries have you had over all, total surgeries?

Rebekah: Sixty-seven over all.

James: Man alive! Well, we're going to be praying. Everybody be praying for the next one and

for any of them that come afterwards. Now, what happened to Noah as a result of sitting at your feet? Had he been standing, likely we would have been killed because everything is going to blast right into his little head. So what happened?

Rebekah: I was essentially the shield for him. So I took everything in the back of the legs and that was ultimately what saved his life. Noah had a cut to his bone on his right leg that they were able to stitch up. He had a piece of shrapnel graze the back of his head so he has a small little bald spot. But that same little boy who was three feet from a bomb is now ten years old. We just celebrated his birthday and he's going out for the basketball team totally fine.

James: Don't y'all thank God for that?

Betty: That was God watching over him.

Rebekah: That's exactly what it was. There were angels all around us that day. I felt it even laying on the ground. I remember everything from that. I remember my own bones were laying next to me on the side walk. I remember I was in a pool of my own blood and my left leg was on fire. There were nails and BBs and ball bearings and everything that these brothers packed into these pressure cooker bombs. And even other people's body parts that weren't even attached to them anymore laying on the ground. I thought that was going to be the day that I was for sure going to die.

James: I want you to just share freely with our audience, all of them watching all over the world what you want them to hear in light of what you encountered and a lifetime of encounters that really brought you to the place of taking your life back was even far beyond the marathon bombing. It was a lifetime of situations that would require appropriate attention.

Rebekah: It was. From childhood I grew up in an abusive home where my dad was an evangelist. But he would come home after preaching to these enormous congregations and beat me and my mom. And so from a very young age I had a very skewed vision of what Christianity was. But then I had this mother who was an amazing Christian woman and just showed me that God's love is so much bigger than that particular situation that we were in.

Later on in life, as a teenager, I suffered with an illness in high school that was I passing out on a regular basis. I had a car accident that almost took my life when I ran into a deer and he came through my windshield. Six months before Boston I was held up in a Walmart parking lot and robbed at gun point.

So there's been all of these different situations where it's either a sink or swim. But when I look back on it all, God has been there and he's just embraced me. So when I was in the process of

writing this book and telling my story, my story is so much bigger than just the Boston bombing and he's essentially prepared me for the platform that he was giving me and I had no idea.

So the majority of people are not going to get blown up by a bomb at a marathon but everyone has life blow up in their face and it happens countless times. There is so many things throughout the day that can steal our joy if we let them. But when you wake up in the morning thankful to be alive and know that God has a plan for you, then that's a great day and a great way to live. So that's what we do and we live in the moment and we just use it for his glory.

Betty: Did you come to see more of the purpose that God has for you after all this happened?

Rebekah: Absolutely! That's crazy when you think about it. The toughest things that I've struggled with, the obstacles that I thought for sure I wasn't going to be able to get through, God's used those in such magnificent ways. So even in the toughest amount of pain you see beauty and that only comes from God. So if I can be that light or that voice or that person for someone else to share his love, what more would I want to do with my life?

So I'm thankful to have that relationship. I'm thankful to have that faith to survive something like the Boston marathon bombing because I don't know how I would have gotten through it without something to cling on and God's love and his hands in everything.

James: So had you abandoned him with the first challenge you might not have been there to see him being all sufficient in the next challenge, the great challenge. I think you see the miracle of your son as exactly that. It was a miracle. You gave him mother's advice. You didn't, "Stand here and behave yourself." You did it with love and tenderness and you said the right thing and it saved his life.

Now tell me how it affected him because this is a very traumatic experience. You already talked about the trauma yourself and I happen to know what you're doing now for people who have this posttraumatic syndrome and what it does to you. It's probably one of the most damaging, debilitating things that can challenge a person.

So your son was exposed to this. I want you to tell us how it's affected him and then I want you to tell how this entire experience led you into starting what I would call a very Christ-centered, Christ-like, very important, very meaningful ministry. So just process what I just said. Share it with the people.

Rebekah: While Noah had minor injuries, what he did have from that was the emotional. I think that's even bigger sometimes than the physical injuries because I know for me it is. I struggle with P.T.S.D. on a regular basis. In fact, when I came here today from Houston there was a backpack in

the airport that someone kind of launched my way a little bit and it terrified me. Because when I think of backpacks, I associate that with bombs. So that is P.T.S.D.

My son, at first could tell you everything that happened that day. He could tell you what everyone around him was wearing. So he had a very detailed memory of it all. But because we put him into therapy early, because he got the help he needed, Noah is a happy, healthy, as normal as you can be ten-year old after surviving something so horrific.

So I talked with his therapist and she said, "Rebekah, if more kids could get the help that Noah did that early on then their lives as adults will be so much more successful because they're healing from this trauma."

What I learned was I had P.T.S.D. as a child because of my abusive childhood that I had no idea about until I went to therapy for P.T.S.D. for the bombing. So those wounds that had never healed in my life started to heal. And not only that, but God laid it on my heart to start a foundation for children especially with P.T.S.D. due to trauma to try and get those resources and funding for them so that those children don't have to struggle.

James: So you're able to say with strong conviction because you've experienced it and now you've watched it with your son and now you're sharing it that there is an approach to dealing with this syndrome, this trauma, this potential to I guess nightmares, hard to sleep, hard not to just imagine again it's happening. I don't even want to imagine the symptoms and what comes. But you're convinced that there is an appropriate way to approach and deal with it that is so effective that it's like a miraculous intervention for people.

Rebekah: Yes! And the biggest thing is to talk about it. When you have people talking about the things that are important and that they're struggling with, then it is going to do so much for that person. So for me, going to therapy and just talking about it, expressing my emotions, expressing all of the things that I have pushed way down deep in my heart for all these years, I was able to heal in ways I never thought I could.

I've watched Noah just blossom from this. Instead of being that timid very shy little boy who was scared to get back on his bike after the bombing because he was afraid something was going to happen, he now is doing things he would have otherwise never done before because he doesn't live his life in fear. It's because of the resources he got early on. It is now my passion, it is where my heart is and if I can help someone else through what I've been through, I'm just grateful to be able to do it.

James: He's going to start in competitive sports now; right?

Rebekah: Yes!

Betty: You and I were visiting earlier before the show and we were talking about how difficult it is even as a Christian to go through trauma like this or anything tragic like that without -- how do people without God do that? Because even in your situation, it's been tough at times; hasn't it?

Rebekah: It is tough. I think that's when you say, "Okay, Satan is really try to go get me today. He is really trying to take away my joy and my smile." But you can see the blessings in any circumstance in your entire life.

I look at my little girl who is now a miracle and she is 17 months old. In Boston, they told me I would never be able to have another baby. She didn't come into this world completely healthy. We had to spend a summer in the NICU after I went into preterm labor and almost lost my life again, but now I look at her and I look at my son and how can I be anything but happy and blessed and thankful? And I have an amazing husband! And my list just goes on and on because I focus on the beauty. I don't focus on all the pain anymore. It's always going to be there. But this is temporary. People call me disabled. I'm not disabled eternally. This is all temporary and one day I'm going to be whole again.

James: Well, I think you're mighty whole now. You're incredible expression.

When you're talking about getting this counseling, this therapy, you know the Bible talks about "confess your sins one to the other and you might be healed." There has to be something about confessing, about being willing to share that is part of the healing process. A moment ago you were talking about being able to share your challenges, share your hurts so I would think in this syndrome counseling and so forth, this trauma situation, the challenge, that when you just share your heart, when you share your challenges, when you share your battles, when you share your fears, it probably has a little bit of the same potential healing effect as confess your sins because those are certainly challenges, those are certainly a problem. So when we just talk about our problems that's part of the healing process if we'll open up, it seems to open us up to healing us. Do you see that as part of the therapy?

Rebekah: It absolutely is. I am blessed to have a career in public speaking now. So I go all around the country and I talk to people and I basically share what I've been through in my life. Every time I do that, it is so hard because I'm recounting and rehashing the toughest parts of it. And even with the book, I was so scared to put it out there because some of the things I don't even tell my closest friends. But I've learned that it is healing. And so for every person that I try to inspire, I leave feeling inspired by hearing their stories. And my counselor even said, "The best thing you can do is talk about it because every time you do you're becoming more desensitized to it and you're moving forward." So that's been a huge blessing.

James: All right. Let's put the address up of your foundation. Tell us the name of the foundation and we're going to put the website up.

Rebekah: It's Rebekah's Angels. It's RebekahMGregory.com.

James: And they are supporting if they want to help with the posttraumatic syndrome problem, that challenge, that disorder, they can actually begin to fund your ability to help children and others who face it. Or if they wanted to seek help they can go there to find out where it might be; is that correct?

Rebekah: Yes. We are in the launching process so we're having a launch party in February we're really excited about. Our new website is on its way so it is Rebekah'sAngels.org. All the money will go to just the medical funding and resources available for these kids with this posttraumatic stress disorder.

James: And if they wanted you to come speak you said you're happy to come speak and give your story and be a help and be a healing factor. Where would they contact you? Same website?

Rebekah: Same website. RebekahMGregory.com. A portion of our proceeds from the book also, one of the big reasons for writing it goes to our foundation.

James: Here is the book; it's *Taking My Life Back* which I think we probably all have occasion and opportunity to do that and God will help us and you confirm that. I think this will be absolutely wonderful for you to get. I think you'll be inspired. And who knows, you may not only find healing, you may be able to share it with others.

We have been putting God's arms of love around the overlooked around the world for 30 years. Our viewers, Rebekah, are amazing. That's why I know they're going to pray for you, they're going to remember all the challenges that you have, surgery, whatever. They're going to, I believe, pray for and support your ministry. Many of them will.

What we do right now, we give our viewers an opportunity to save children's lives and their family from malnutrition, from starvation, from death. We have 400,000 children that have been located and the missionaries are ready and you're the key to them being able to feed children. All they need for their healing for their cure, for their miracle is just nutrition, something to eat. You can provide that miracle. I believe with all my heart you're going to want to. Watch closely. See if you don't agree.

On the mission field

Announcer: Areas of Southern Africa are currently experiencing one of the worst droughts seen in over 30 years, and as a result the usual crop harvest has failed yet again. Desperate for food of any kind, families living in the remote villages of Angola will try to eat just about anything but unfortunately, leaves and tree pods offer little nutritional value. The effects of this devastating drought are most obvious on the young children.

Isak: I'm here with a little girl called Adalena. She is just two years old and you can see from the color of her hair, from her extended belly, this child is not in good condition. Her health is not good, the reason being because she hasn't had good nutrition. This child has really suffered. This village just some months ago there were children that were dying here, dying on a weekly and a monthly basis as a result of malnutrition, starvation, simple lack of food.

And yet, thanks to you, thanks to the gifts that you've given, you've made it possible for us to bring Mission Feeding to her village. Her story is going to be a good story, a story of life rather than death.

But if you look just over my shoulder you'll see the valley behind me and just in that valley is a village where we were yesterday. It is a village where they don't have Mission Feeding and so children are dying. Mothers told us some had lost two, some three, one mother as many as five children to malnutrition. But it is so easy for us to change that. It is so easy for us to extend what we're doing here in this village.

The trucks are here. Our people are here. We're ready to do it. We're ready to extend Mission Feeding into their village, and to extend that life line. You can make it possible for us to end the cycle of death. Please help us today. Give the gift of life. Give Mission Feeding.

End of clip

In the studio

James: I don't know how well you know this but just like that little boy leading the other little child with a bowl, that little kid will likely feed that smaller child before that child will get the food. They're amazing how they want to share and that's what makes it possible.

Betty, when I see a child, I watched one of them a while ago just with a little bowl sitting there eating, when you see those little kids sit down with a little bowl in front of them and they begin to eat, well, you actually -- you see the simplicity of what we're asking our viewers to do. You've just given them a miracle in a bowl. Life! And in the bottom of the bowl it says: *LIFE*. That's precisely what our viewers provide.

Betty: Absolutely! First of all, let me say thank you. If you've been a part in the past and continue to be, thank you so much for helping us feed the children. It is a matter of life and death to most of them. And to see the mothers, smiles on their faces when they know their children are getting the help they need.

But we still need to help some. There are more out there. There are more that are so needy. I hope you will join with us and experience the joy of knowing that you're helping a baby; that all they need is food. That's the problem. You're the solution. So please join with us.

James: And you've really been an amazing solution because when we started right at 30 years ago, I asked you to help us drill water wells, to feed the hungry, to rescue the perishing, to set captives free, we didn't know what you would do.

I mean we came back from Africa and sold things that we knew we could sell because we knew we were going to start. It's the same thing Peter and Ann Pretorius did. They came back, sold things, went and rented a truck, went to their neighbors and told them what was happening and a miracle began.

But Peter Pretorius and all the missionaries never imagined the miracle that would come from people like you who watch *LIFE Today* saying, "We're not just going to look at a need that can be met, we're going to meet that need."

You talk about bringing miracles into reality for people, you've done it. Millions and millions of lives have been saved. It all starts with simply making the gift that God puts on your heart and enables you to make. You saw them carrying those big bags of food, we need to enlarge our main food factory and that's doing to take us -- and it is really critical that we do it. It is going to make them even more effective. Likely, they'll be able to expand a little more because they will have the wherewithal to do it.

We need \$216,000 for that literally, for that upgrade. I've been praying that we would have 216 people, one at a time who would give \$1,000. Now we're reaching the end of the year here pretty soon. You might want to make a major year-end gift. Smart thing to do right now.

But then remember this, \$30, \$50, or \$100 feeds three, five or ten children for the next months. Would you, if you possibly can, would you help us feed at least ten? \$1,000 will feed 100. I don't know what level you can participate but don't think that well, I can only give this. I want to tell you, that \$30 gift might seem small, those three children it is a whole new life.

So whatever you can do right now, call the number you see there or go to the website. Take your

bankcard and use it like a check. And please make the best gift you can. When you write that check, make it to *LIFE*. When you make that call, use that card.

Remember this, you're giving the greatest gift, you're giving life and we're going to tell these children and their families about the source of eternal life, Jesus Christ. Would you help us share that love and that life? Thank you so much! Thanks for making the gift. I believe you'll do it now. Please don't delay. Thank you for doing it.

Begin video clip

Announcer: In impoverished and famine-stricken areas of Africa, children are suffering. The need is great. And without food, they face death by starvation. With your support, you will help feed and care for children in crisis areas of Sudan, Angola, and Mozambique.

With Africa facing ongoing food shortages and drought, we urgently need to replenish supplies and come to the aid of 400,000 children counting on us. Your lifesaving gift of \$30, \$50, or \$100 will help feed and care for three, five or ten children for the next three months. Please also consider an additional gift to help provide critically needed upgrades to our food factory that will increase overall production by a staggering 50%. This is a \$216,000 challenge above our normal feeding budget that could help save even more lives.

With your gift of any amount we'll send you *In the Middle of the Mess*. In her new book, Sheila Walsh brings insight to knowing the peace and presence of Christ in the midst of life's inevitable messes.

With your gift of \$100 or more to help feed and care for ten children, we will send you Sheila's book, plus the "Arise" coffee mug. This heat-activated mug reveals Isaiah 61 each time you fill it with a warm beverage; a wonderful way to begin your day.

And finally, with your gift of \$1,000 or more to help feed and care for 100 children, be sure to request our "Determined Eagle" bronze sculpture. Please call, write, or make your gift online.

End of clip

In the studio

James: We're going to send you some real thank you treasures. You're just not going to believe how this cup can in short order say "Arise and shine, your light has come" every time you put some warm drink in there. How you put coffee, whatever, you can say, "I'm going to arise and shine!"

And we'll send you Sheila's book, *In the Middle of the Mess* to help you get through it. By the way, that's what Rebekah's talked about, *Taking My Life Back*. I have an idea she knows a lot about some mess that a lot of people don't know and she wants to help us. If you say, "James, I know I can get the book online. I know I can go to the bookstore but if I help feed these kids, would you mind sending us Rebekah's book?" I'll tell you what, we'll do it. I bet you would like for us to do that; wouldn't you?

Rebekah: I would love that!

James: We'll just send it to say thanks. Would all of you join us saying thanks to Rebekah for sharing her story and her life? Thank you, Rebekah! Thanks for being a blessing. Do you realize what a blessing you are watching *LIFE Today*? But more than that, sharing *LIFE Today*! Thanks for helping us do it.