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Week 35: Christmas Shoes & Smiles

Randy Robison and Sheila Walsh

Bobby Schueller

Randy: Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm Randy Robison. This is Sheila Walsh. Sheila, I'm excited because we've got another sort of legend in Christian television here. As the son of James Robison --

Sheila: You mean like we are?

Bobby: Yes!

Randy: I'm trying, I'm doing my best. Robert Schueller is like, he's like iconic in Christian television. Everyone loved *Hour of Power* and everyone loved Robert Schueller; and his grandson is carrying on the ministry in his own style by his own calling and we're thrilled to have him. Would you welcome Bobby Schueller?

[Cheers & Applause]

Sheila: I love the title of this book, *You Are Beloved*: Living in the freedom of God's grace, mercy, and love. But as I got into it and read it, I cannot think of a more timely message for the days we're living in. Because I think, most of us long to be known and to be loved but we're so afraid if we're known we won't be loved. What led you to writing this, Bobby?

Bobby: Well, it's exactly that. And the order -- you got the order right. First to be known, then to be loved because so many of us, we are loved, people love us but we think they love the ego, like the thing, the best version of ourselves that we put in front of others, our successes. If you're young and good-looking, then as you get older or you gain weight or you have kids and well,

I'm... and all these things that we put forward and we think people love that. So we don't feel truly seen.

So the need to be seen as we truly are and not to everybody but to at least some people, especially to God, and then to be loved in spite of my imperfections, in spite of the skeletons in my closet, in spite of my doubts and fears and stresses, whatever -- that's a huge need. And it's at the heart of so many of the problems in our churches and the problems in America today, at the heart of it is this inner need to deeply bond with other people and especially with God.

Sheila: Did you write this from a kind of intellectual assent to the importance of it or is it something you struggled with in your own life?

Bobby: Well, it's both in a way but a lot of it is a journey of self-discovery. So for me personally, a lot of -- you know you mentioned my grandfather. He was an amazing man and I had, in many ways, I've had an amazing life but I also had a lot of pain in my life. We all do. It doesn't matter who you meet, how famous they are or how rich they are or whatever, we all go through pain. We have bullies, we go through loss, people we love die. We go through divorce, break up, rejection, abandonment and these are all things that play into the way we view ourselves. And the way we view ourselves then affects the way we bond with others and the way we view God. So the heart of the message that we have to come to is that look, first of all, everybody is messed up. Nobody is perfect. If you need to know -- that person you think is perfect, you're just not married to them. You've just got to marry somebody or become best friends with them -- and that's the thing.

So everybody's flawed, everybody's messed up and there is something so healing about believing that God sees you with all your doubts and fears and sins and vices and addictions and all these things that we all have as human beings and just says, "I love you! I'm proud of you. I want you. I'm glad to be around you. I'm not embarrassed by you. I believe in you."

Randy: You've got on the back of your book this statement of affirmation that's really beautiful and I think is sort of something you live by; yes? Would you read that, Sheila?

Sheila: Creed of the beloved: I'm not what I do, I'm not what I have, I'm not what people say about me, I'm the beloved of God. And then you went on and add, it's who I am, no one can take it from me, I don't have to worry, I don't have to hurry, I can trust my friend Jesus and share his love with the world.

How did you come across because I think the first part of that creed is from Henri Nouwen; is that right?

Bobby: Yeah. The first part is almost exactly from Henri Nouwen. And the second bit is not that original either, it's really from Dallas Willard. It is piecing together a lot of Dallas's work. These are two -- some people may not know. These are two authors that have had a big impact on my spiritual life.

I come from a reformed tradition and our tradition, creeds are really important. So we have these old creeds like the Westminster Shorter Catechism and the Belgic, and these confessions but they've sort of lost a lot of their steam for especially unchurched people. So when we say, "Not by works" for example, unchurched and unchristian people don't get that -- even church people. In fact, when I said, "I'm not what I do," which is you're just saying in plain language, "not by works," when I say that there is a lot of people in church are like, "Uh! What do you mean?" This is the gospel, this is orthodoxy. "I'm not what I do" is Orthodox Christian faith.

So what I was trying to do was put in my own language. If I was looking in a mirror and was trying to make a confession as an American man in the 21st century, how would I say this? And that was what it was. So that's why Henri Nouwen's words meant so much to me. So I started employing those words like a creed just to my own personal life. So when I go into solitude and prayer, I began to say it over myself, "Bobby, you're not what you do, you're not what you have, you're not what people say about you, you are God's beloved. You are his beloved."

Like John -- this is what John does. John says, "John, the Lord's beloved." That's his identity!

That's the name of the book; that's all he is. He is "John the beloved." And that's who you are, Sheila. That's who you are, Randy. And that's who you are at home. You are not what you do, you do enough. You're not what you have, God has made everything available to you. You have everything you need. And you're certainly not what people say about you. What he says about you, you are his beloved and that's the truth.

Sheila: One of the things that seems to be epidemic in society, and I know it's something I've dealt with in my own life is this feeling of loneliness. It's something you talk about a lot in this book and I'd love you to unpack what you mean by that. It might be a little different than what people think.

Bobby: So I have lots of friends and I have a big family and I have people around all the time but a lot of my life I didn't realize that in a way I was a bit emotionally numb. This is something men do a lot but people do it in general. And it is this idea of becoming strong where you sort of box out a lot of the bad emotions that you had when you were a kid. What you don't realize is that you're also training your body to box out emotion in general. So when you box out frustration, fear, anger, doubt, you're also boxing out joy, happiness, laughter, mirth. So you don't feel -- you lose both and become numb. That's not what we're supposed to do, we're supposed to be truly joyful.

So part of my discovery, actually a big part was having a friend who is a mentor, who's also a therapist but he's also a spiritual mentor to me. So we would spend Fridays together for hours praying together. And he was helping me discover my own emotional life.

As it was happening, years into it, this emotional part of my life that had become dead was coming back to life. I talk about this in the book. There was this amazing moment when I was with my wife and we were pulling off the freeway and I was driving. And in my conscious mind I was going to tell her this funny story about this relative in my family who called me an S-head. He called me this because I did something dumb. And in my conscious mind, it was hilarious because what I did as a little kid was so stupid and silly and stuff.

And I was laughing as I started saying it and then I said, "He called me..." And then I locked up. "He called me a..." And then I just started weeping and weeping and weeping. It was such an amazing experience for me because it helped me understand that in my conscious mind I thought this was funny that my soul had been wounded and had been identifying with being an s-head for a lot of my life. Even talking about it now, it is hard.

So these things we experience when we are children, we're so innocent, we're so joyful; right? But that joyfulness and that vulnerability also leads us to places of a lot of pain, a lot of loss, a lot of confusion. And so as we get older we box these things out. But you want to know something? The average child smiles 400 times a day. The average adult smiles 20 times a day. So something happens in that journey where we learn to turn off a lot of the things that make us like I'm not the beloved of God, I'm a s-head -- or these things that we have that are going on; we don't recognize they're going on. So that's a bit of a loneliness.

The loneliness comes then when we succeed and people are like, "Hey, great! That's amazing!" When you're good-looking or popular or achieving or for my case in ministry you're doing great, the ministry is great. So then it's like, well, I'm the beloved because I'm doing great because of what I do. I'm the beloved because of what people say about me. So then there's this loneliness that happens because you're not truly seen, you're not vulnerable. People know the best bits about your life but you're like if they knew this thing about me, they wouldn't respect me anymore. They certainly wouldn't love me. I wouldn't be invited to that party, that's for sure.

Sheila: I remember one of my dearest friends, an older lady who is a spiritual mentor of mine asking me how I would feel if there was a movie made of my life and nothing edited out and anyone could watch it. At that point, I said I would be horrified. She said, "You need to know God's seen your movie and he loves you." That was radical for me. It was like this is the one place I actually get to show up with everything, the bits that are working and the bits that are not working.

Why is that so hard for us in the church to grasp hold of? It is the gospel.

Bobby: That's right. Christianity falls into the trap of religiosity. So the one thing that makes Christianity different than every other religion, well, it's Jesus but at the heart of that is that every other religion on earth says do everything right and then you're in. Do everything right and you go to Heaven or Nirvana or a better after life or whatever.

Christianity, though, orthodox Christianity does not say that. Orthodox Christianity says you're in just as you are. God loves you just as you are, not as you should be. You're loved, you belong, and you move from the sinful, hidden, beat yourself up life into a life of vulnerability where you're like just take all this junk in your heart and mind and stuff. And you're like, okay, here's all my stuff. This is who I am.

And then over time, it doesn't happen -- that's why I hate overnight testimonies; they're just not real. The guy who is like doing drugs and the next day like never -- I'm sure it does happen but I'm a pastor and I've watched these stories unfold and they unfold over years -- they don't unfold overnight. Addiction doesn't usually just change overnight. The stories are amazing when you hear that but those stories are not healthy for us because we think, well, if God was really moving in my life, I wouldn't struggle with addiction anymore.

Randy: It would have happened when I prayed five months ago.

Bobby: I would have had the miracle. But you look at what God does, this is his world. Trees grow slowly. Fruit is bore in its season. People -- and things are trained, it doesn't happen overnight. So that's why it is so important that we are okay with our imperfections for a season and we just trust that the Holy Spirit is going to do the work. And then bond deeply with others.

Randy: You point out sort of two different kinds of labels; the negative ones like the one that was put on you and then also that identity that we can get from our works a lot of times. So there's kind of the bad identity and kind of a good identity, if you will, but both are false identities. How do we get past identifying in those very human ways to get to a place where when you say "You are beloved" it actually means something?

Bobby: The answer is silence and solitude. We need time alone and we need something like this creed. It doesn't have to be this one but you need time where you get away from your work, you get away from even your family; all the stuff that's really important to you. It's not that you're abandoning... Silence and solitude is one of the kindest things you can do for the people that do life with you. So you get away and you don't go for half an hour, you take a day, every once in a while at least and you go somewhere beautiful, somewhere that you're most alive and you just go, "Lord, here I am."

And the first thing you feel is boredom and then the second thing you might feel is loneliness but Henri Nouwen says your loneliness can become solitude. And it is in that place you realize I'm not alone. And that deepest part of you, that loneliness moves into a place of experiencing the kingdom of God. That's an amazing thing. We all need that.

Sheila: I've been, just in the last couple of years rediscovering the classic spiritual disciplines, even just meditation. I talked to a friend about it and she said, "I'm not doing that. That's all that eastern stuff."

I'm like, "Whoa! Whoa! That actually belonged to us first." David said, "May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart..."

Bobby: Hey! Almost every time the Bible refers to itself it doesn't say "study the Bible." It says, "Meditate on the Word of God." Constantly it says "meditate." The Hebrew word is hagah. And hagah, it's like this form of breathing. You actually see it, when many of the Jewish people, if you see them at the western wall, they're going like this, they're in a spirit of hagah, this meditation. And you're supposed to do that with the Word of God. First by memorizing it and then saying it over and over so that it goes from your mind to your heart.

The long and short of it is we have to train our mind and heart against what the world is training us. So the world is always training you to be more like the world. And we have to train first our mind and then it comes into our body, all that anxiety, worry, and fear, train all of that stuff out

of our body; and to faith and to believing, look, even though I messed up and I have challenges and problems and baggage, and aah! Aah! Aah! Aah! I'm just going to let that go. The cross takes care of that and I'm just going to enjoy the freedom of grace.

Randy: Why is not worrying and being sort of relaxed significant to you?

Bobby: It's so huge! So Dallas Willard was asked, "What is the one word that describes Jesus the most?" He said, "Jesus was relaxed."

Randy: We don't think of that often. You don't hear that a lot.

Bobby: Being relaxed is the fruit of faith. So if you trust God with your life, worrying means either God doesn't care about this, God's not going to handle this for me, God's not faithful, he's not trustworthy, or he doesn't exist -- it's one of those things. So that's what you're doing when you're worrying. Like God is not going to handle this for me. I have to manage this myself. First, I have to predict it rightly -- which you can't do that -- and then by predicting it I've got to take care of it.

What happens is worry becomes a part of your body. That's true. That first worry begins in the mind but if you worry long enough it becomes a part of your body. That's why you go on vacation, you think I'm going to stop worrying, it takes a while for you to like, even though there's nothing to worry about, you're sitting out on the beach, enjoying everything, not a care in the world, at least you shouldn't have -- you're still worrying. You have to untrain your body.

Sheila: I think that's quite a challenge to me and to all of us, this concept of taking a day. Because we're so tied to our phones and we think we're so connected and we have so many friends but we don't know most of those people. And I think there is something profound about allowing God to speak in the silence.

Bobby: God speaks to us. He is speaking now if we would only listen. He just loves us so much. We just don't understand how much God loves us. And at the heart of it, that is the heart

of all of our pain, all of our brokenness. That's why we're so fragile. That's why everybody gets so offended is we find these identities with other things and you just got to let that go.

Randy: Go on about that because you mentioned that earlier, the offense level in our country is real high and you put your finger on it in a way I hadn't heard before.

Bobby: Yeah, so we're so easily offended because... Well, first of all we're teaching people to be offended not resilient which is one problem. And that comes from...

[Applause]

Randy: It gets better. That's good but it gets better!

Bobby: At the heart of that is this loneliness that I don't belong. So what we're doing very often when we have debates is we're debating what our team or our group of belonging says. So it can be, this is not necessarily bad things but being republican, being a democrat, being an American, being a Christian, being a dad, in my case, being a pastor. We find these groups that we can be in so that when that group gets attacked in any way that we get offended because this is where I belong. I belong in America. I'm a Texan. Or I'm a Californian. And we find these subcultures so that we're finding our belonging in the subgroup. But we can't do that either. It's good to be proud of America, obviously.

Randy: So it's when our identities are stepped on we get offended.

Bobby: Yeah, we get brittle so we can't handle it. We just can't handle anything. And actually, if you want to do great things for God, you have to be resilient. You have to let go of what people say about you. The more good you do for God the more people are going to say bad things about you. I can't think of any great influencer that doesn't have lots of people saying all sorts of bad stuff.

When I started doing the *Hour of Power*, I was not ready for the online criticism of me and my

family and my kids. People making stuff up, people lie. That's why Jesus says, "Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you." What does he mean by that? Actually at this time there's a website that was making stuff up about me and publishing it every day. I was just like mired in self-pity. I was walking with my wife and we were at this thing and there was this kid and he was walking around with this shirt and it said, "If you ain't got haters, you ain't doing (expletive s-)." And the Lord spoke to me through that. I read that shirt and I was like, "Yes! That's right! Yes!"

And I started thinking about some of my favorite people and how they were called heretics or whatever! And I started thinking, Lord, I pray someday there's ten websites that are all just making up lies about Bobby Schueller. I hope that -- and this should be the way we think, we've got to just let -- if we're going to do great things for God, we're going to have critics. You can't have an opinion and not have an enemy.

Sheila: But what gives you a strong place to do that is you just don't belong, this book says *You Are Beloved* and that is profound -- that is life changing. We're going to tell you how you can get a hold of a copy of Bobby's book.

But first of all, we would love to give you an opportunity to join with us here and make a profound difference in the lives of some children this Christmas. Would you watch this?

On the mission field

Announcer: In the rural highlands of Southeast Asia, *LIFE's* mission partner Tony Brewer has worked to provide life-changing care for special needs children throughout the region, including those affected by cleft lip and cleft palate. With few wage paying jobs available parents can seldom afford medical care for these children or the cost of travel to a health facility.

Tony: Many children that are born with cleft lip and cleft palate simply did not get corrective surgery and do not unless we go the extra mile to go get them.

Announcer: Recently, Tony was joined by *LIFE's* Mission's Director, Ralph Done to meet a young boy named Dui whose parents have been longing for the day when their son would have a normal smile.

Ralph: Little Dui here is only four months old but he is one of our latest recipients of Christmas smiles. His sweet family, his mother and father and Dui have traveled over 250 miles just to get to this point. We're here today because today is his big day. He is going to get his surgery done.

Tony: This child would probably not have gotten the cleft lip repair that he's getting today except for *LIFE Outreach International*. A changed life.

Ralph: I cannot explain fully in words the stories that I hear all around the world of the need where children, boys and girls just like little Dui who need this surgery. So I'm going to ask you to give a generous gift to help little boys and girls just like Dui. And you're giving a gift that doesn't just last through the season but it lasts a lifetime.

Open Captions: My wife and I thank you.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: Wow! That's powerful, Randy!

Randy: What a huge opportunity. We cannot just put a smile on a child's face but give them the ability to smile? Can you believe that?

Sheila: And having been in some of those countries and watch some of those procedures and that darling little one you saw there at the end with the little Band-Aid over his lip, we've had

some updates and that's now off and still a little swollen. But see here's the thing in so many of these countries, when a child is born like that, there is a kind of belief that somehow that child is cursed, that that child has no future.

If it was your son or your daughter, if it was my son, I would do everything. I would scrub toilets to get my son fixed. But so many of these people in those countries are desperately poor and they just can't. So they're crying out to God, what can we do?

So this is not something we have to do. This is this glorious privilege this Christmas that instead of buying some more ugly sweaters we actually get to make a difference in the lives of people. Do you know that for \$500, and I know that's a lot for some people, but if you could do that do you know that \$500 will repair one child so that they're able to have this beautiful smile for the rest of their life? That's what my husband and I are going to give to each other this Christmas because it is like, that's -- what a gift! That's what the coming of Christ is all about. It is not about us, it is what we can do to make a difference in the lives of other people too.

Randy: That's very cool, Sheila. I thank you for that. And everyone that comes together.

The other part of this are the shoes. I like the shoes because these shoes are not only fun for the children because a lot of these children have never ever owned a pair of shoes but they also, they're a health issue. There is a lot of diseases you can get from running around barefoot and cutting your foot and getting things I won't go into because they're not pleasant. But we can avoid all of that. You can give a child a pair of shoes for \$3.60. That means \$36 will provide ten pairs of shoes. \$180 will provide 50 pairs of shoes! I've spent, I'm sorry to say but I've spent more than that on less than this. Do you know what I mean?

Sheila: Don't you think it would be great, Randy this Christmas for your whole family to take it on as a project? To teach our little ones that this life is not about getting more, it is about becoming more. So to be able to say as a family to your kids, let's do this. Let's decide together what we're going to do.

So please, would you go to your phones and make the best gift possible? If we all do something, we all have different amounts -- and we'll send you this. Every year we have the new little Christmas shoe. This year it is like a little jolly rancher in red. We're going to send that to you so please go to your phone, make the best gift possible and together we can put a lot of smiles on a lot of faces.

Begin video clip

Announcer: Poverty is a killer and because of it children needlessly suffer, not only from a lack of food and clean water but also from a lack of things we often take for granted like a simple pair of shoes. Far too many children living in extreme poverty have never owned a new pair of shoes and while that may seem minor in light of all their needs, walking with bare feet puts them at risk of life-threatening infections and disease that can lead to crippling consequences and even death.

By responding today you can help immediately secure and begin shipping Christmas Shoes to 150,000 children around the world and for many, just in time for the holidays! Your gift of \$36 will help provide 10 pairs of shoes, a gift of \$72 will help provide 20 pair and a gift of \$180 will help provide 50 pairs of Christmas Shoes for children in need.

As a thank you for your gift of support, be sure to request this beautifully crafted red crystal shoe ornament, a treasure to display at each Christmas. With your gift of \$100 or more you may request "The Light Shines in Darkness" frosted glass candle featuring a beautiful golden design that's scripture from John 1:5.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1,000 or more to help provide 275 pairs of shoes or two children with corrective cleft palate surgeries and you may request the "Bridge of Faith" canvas print by Thomas Kinkade. Please call, write, or make your gift online today.

End of clip

On the mission field

James: Betty what do you think about all these beautiful feet and these beautiful children?

Betty: I think they deserve some pretty little shoes on their feet: Don't you? It's not just to give them shoes -- it is to bless them, we want to bless them! But the shoes have a real important use too, James. They can protect their feet from getting cuts and bruises and also from disease.

James: We found out that hookworms actually get in the skin of their feet just sometimes walking in dirt or sand and then it actually ends up in their intestines and it can be deadly. Let's put shoes on all these beautiful children's beautiful feet! It would just be such a wonderful gift to make at this time. I hope you'll do all you can. Just give as many pairs as you can to bless as many children and their families as you can.

In the studio

Sheila: Thank you so much. If the phones are busy please keep calling. I get the privilege of reading lots of books but I really want to recommend this book. I really think it will make a huge difference in your life. So for any gift you send then we're going to send you Bobby's book.

Randy: Would you thank Bobby for being with us on *LIFE Today*?

[Cheers & Applause]

Bobby, thank you for letting us know that we're beloved and you need to know that you are also beloved. And we would be loving it if you would join us every day on *LIFE Today*.

Sheila: See you later!