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Week 44: Rescue Life: Last week

James and Betty Robison

Russ and Tori Taff #1

James: Thank you. Russ Taff is here and his wife Tori. I'm James Robison. Betty and I welcome you to *LIFE Today*.

Russ Taff won 6 Grammys, 18 Dove Awards. And I want you to listen to this statement. Now he sang with the Imperials, with Bill Gaither; he just set everything on fire even on his own but he got in with these others. But he was inducted in the Christian Music Hall of Fame and Russ Taff has been hailed by Billboard Magazine as "The single-most electrifying voice of Christian music."

You know what? If people will see the movie that's going to be in the theaters tomorrow, I mean if you'll see that movie, you're going to hear all these people saying just what this guy was. And with all the gifts, I mean this is Gaither talking about you, this is other very famous Christians, the Imperials talking about you, the Mercy Me and "I Can Only Imagine," the author of that incredible song and the incredible singer, talking about this guy, what a gift he was.

Here's the deal. Hard to believe but buddy, you were trapped and being destroyed and basically, ultimately collapsed. The story of the redemptive work of God in your life and his love for you is as great as I've ever heard. I want all of you to listen to this. This is a movie that will be in all the theaters one night only -- tomorrow night -- you don't want to miss it! Then it will be the kind of thing you'll want to get in every home. I pray that sometimes when something like this happens, that some way the theaters or whatever it takes would say, "This thing is coming back and it is going to stay for a while."

Lord, I pray that because this is a story of transforming love as great as we'll ever see. So God, you just bless the message of your love that's been poured out on the life of Russ Taff and Tori and now through his life in Jesus' name.

Now would you just welcome Russ and Tori to *LIFE Today*? Would you do that? We're glad to see you. Let me tell you what I want to do. I want them to see a little trailer that shows really the quality of what this... I think the whole film is like. It is fabulous! So let's look at that right quick. I think you all will enjoy it.

Begin video clip

I've been out in a cave

>> Shame is a prison. I was locked up in shame's prison for over 40 years. Behind its bars I was safe in hiding from pain.

I wanna give out

>> Abused as a child, shame told me that it was my fault. Singing for Jesus and living a secret life as an alcoholic, shame whispered, "There is no hope." But prison doors were made to be open. Captives can be set free. I am a child of the king. I am forgiven. I'm Russ Taff and I still believe.

I still believe.

Through the shame and the grief, through the heartache, through the tears, through the waiting and all of the years I still believe

End of clip

In the studio

James: Wow! That puts a smile on your face. I'm telling you, it didn't take me but just a few glimpses of the various parts of the movie, that and some other trailers. I think if you

go to the website, RussTaffMovie.com people can see a lot of the glimpses and tell their friends. I pray we overflow every theater in your community and all over the nation.

But Russ, we could just see the glimpses of the glory of God. I honestly really identify because I've had enough defeat in my own life. And because I love people who are in a pit, however they got there, and want to get them out; I just see how great the love of God is to never leave us no matter where we were.

Tell us how you got into the ultimate cycle. What happened in your childhood that a lot of people might not know that perhaps set the stage for the enemy to get such a grip on you?

Russ: Well, there was a lot of trauma growing up in that house. Daddy was a Pentecostal preacher and mom was an incredible singer but everything was guilt -- everything was guilt. They motivated by guilt and shame -- and shame. When you're a little kid growing up, 2-17, you're just constantly fed... My mom and dad used to say, "You're not worth the bullet to shoot you with," just about every day. "You're not worth the salt that goes on your bread." And "Why can't you be more like your cousin?" Who was a straight A student and athlete.

So you grow up with this and by the time I hit 13. Well, let me say I was 11 and 12 and daddy never could get sober. He tried and he loved to preach but he would be in there for six months and then fall away; be in there for six months and then fall away. When they would throw him out of the first church, mom wanted me to go down there so I could tell her what everybody said. But I sat there and I cried because they were saying this about my dad. I was, what am I doing here? It was breaking my heart. And a lot of them were family.

The only thing I knew to do was music. In my sophomore year and my junior year it was the music that held me. But dad would get jealous of me when I was like 12, 13, through there. He would get jealous when I would do good. He had to be the center of attention.

He had to be. Like me and my brothers, we never had birthdays because mom and dad both had to work but the church would always throw him a big birthday party every year.

When there's trauma in the home and active addiction and violence, there's really not parents anymore. By the time I was 10, 11, 12 I was raising my younger brother; and my three older brothers got out of there as quick as they could.

But I knew God was teaching me the anointing when I was so young. I would just pursue him and pray and get up and sing and the Holy Spirit would move. He couldn't appreciate it. It would threaten him that this young guy was getting some attention.

So we moved back to Arkansas and there was a church there that said, "We'll help." It lasted a couple of years. Once again they throw us out and that transferred shame. People don't talk to you anymore. You're downtown at Walmart or something and they'll cross over. The first time that they did it, I had my guitar Sunday night and I was going to go down and sing like I'd done my whole life. My uncle stopped me who was pastoring at the time and he said, "Russ, you can't come in here."

I said, "This is all I know." I couldn't play sports but I could sing. I would feel his pleasure when I would sing.

But he said, "I'm sorry but you can't come here anymore."

James: So the church said, "You can't come here."

Did you know him back at this time when all these things were happening, when he was that young?

Russ: She came in when I was 19.

Tori: I met him when I was in high school and he had stayed in Arkansas when his

family went back. I met him when I was in high school.

James: Was he a singer that you noted then as having an ability?

Tori: Yes, but when we met, I was a teenager and I was dating the quarterback of the football team and I wasn't interested in romance. I thought he had...

Russ: That was of the devil! That was of the devil!

[Laughter]

Tori: I thought, that's a big voice in a guy. But the part that I was attracted to ultimately was who he was and the voice was gravy. His talent was sort of that struck-by-lightning talent.

James: Did you know he was struggling with things at home?

Russ: I hid real well.

Tori: He learned to hide literally at his father's knee. I didn't see it.

James: This story takes a whole movie to cover it. But I want our viewers to grasp where he went because I knew you when you were at the height; you were with us at the height. You just had such a gift. Man, the memories are precious. But here's a guy that's really being trampled on. I mean you talk about a grip.

Tell us what you were going through when you're singing. Tell us what was going on between you and God when you were using this gift. Did you feel like you loved God when you were doing it?

Russ: Absolutely!

James: Did you feel like you were doing it for God?

Russ: Absolutely!

James: Did you feel like when you were drinking and being controlled by alcohol, right? Did you think he still loved you?

Russ: No.

James: You didn't think he did?

Russ: No.

James: Let me just ask you this. When you look back, and I know we're going to jump to some places, when you look back, do you realize how much he did love you?

Russ: I see his hand everywhere. I see it everywhere. Every time that Dad would get drunk and I'd go hide in the bedroom with my little brother, he was there. I saw it later on.

But I tell you, I was 26 and we were in New York and it was real hot. I never drank because of Daddy and the guilt and the shame of this whole thing and I would just push it away, push it away. But I had a Heineken beer. Never drank before, never would because of Daddy. And I started feeling something, and I had another one. And all those voices of shame and accusation and failure that God didn't love you and you're not jumping high enough, all of that stuff just got quiet.

I promise, the next day I said, "Thank you, God, that these voices are silent. I can live this way," not knowing what was ahead of me; the trail that the devil had just hooked me and was bringing me down. But you get caught in this thing of like I sang but I feel like God

doesn't love me but I love him. I loved him through all of that. So you add alcohol to it and the guilt goes away, the shame goes away and you don't really care what people think anymore.

But then this starts taking you down this really dark place and you're afraid to tell anybody. You don't want to let anybody in because you know you're going to be judged and they'll probably throw you out if they know what's going on.

James: And you're really afraid of church people.

Russ: Oh yes! Because I saw what they had done to other folks.

James: That's got to change. We don't ever embrace or endorse wickedness or sin or even weakness in people but we've got to reach out with the love of God, the love of the Father of the prodigal. I think of all things people need to see through your story in the movie that is so powerful it's to see that abiding love of God, that unconditional love.

What happened to you? You said you wanted to tell me about an experience that just kind of brought you to a breaking point. Take us to that point and then tell us what you really wanted people to know.

Russ: I started going to therapy. I was so mixed up and all of that. So I started going to therapy and I got involved in a 12-step group that would help me deal with addiction. But my life slowly started turning and those voices -- the Holy Spirit changed those voices. My mind was transformed to where I am his child. I don't have to be afraid. I belong to him. Either he is everything or he's nothing -- and he is everything.

So I spent 65 days in this one facility dealing with shame and trauma. It was a miraculous thing. They took me all the way down into it and then they brought me out. When I left there, I didn't hate anymore. I wasn't ashamed anymore. All of that stuff came to the light. And I trusted them that I could tell them because we're only as sick as the secrets

we keep. But I was able to just get it all out and they worked with me and they taught me how to continue the work. This was about 11 years ago; I come out of this place. Mark Lowry asked if we would just come and hang out with him a couple of days. We got there...

James: Is that in Houston?

Russ: Yes. There was a friend of his that the pastor of this church said he was dying of cancer. "Would you come and just meet him and say hello"? He loved that DVD Gaither did on me. And he had pastored 44 years and you can't say no. My Lord, he is a prophet of God. So I got my guitar and I went. When I stepped through that door, I froze because he looked so much like my dad. I wanted to turn and run, even though the whole process of healing and stuff. But I got my guitar out of the case and I'd say, "Pastor Franklin, what do you want to hear?" He'd do, "Heartbreak Ridge" and other songs like that.

I was getting ready to leave and he asked me to pray for him. I mumbled something. But I asked him to pray for me. I wanted to take those words back. But he said, "Russ, I'd love to." And he stands up and he puts his hands on my shoulder and I'm looking up into his eyes, Daddy was 6'2", and those blue eyes, the white hair, the big hands and I start trembling and I start shaking. I felt the Holy Spirit just zoom into that place. I thought I was going to go. But God had orchestrated this whole thing that as he stood and he prayed for me, and 50 years of tears just started rolling out of me -- 50 years of just abandonment and hurt and everything else. And he began to affirm me. And I collapsed to my knees. I cried.

He grabbed my head and pulled me to his belly and began to stroke my hair. He said, "Russ, you have no idea how proud Jesus is of you." He said, "You have no idea how your gift that he's given you has reached so many people." And the more he did it, the harder I cried because I had looked as a man for affirmation, somebody tell me I'm doing good. But if you would I wouldn't trust it because that shame inside of me, I don't deserve it. But that afternoon I felt 50 years of pain and hurt and I thought I was going to have to

live the rest of my life with that. I'd gotten better but when the Holy Spirit came in and I collapsed, and he just kept stroking my hair and telling me how much God loved me and how much he loved me. And the more he did it the harder I cried. I was just trance -- everything went away. Everything went away. But it's like that day he became my Father God and not dad or it didn't work out too well over here. But he said, "Let me in. Let me be with you. Let me share this whole thing and I'll give you power to get through all of this."

I just didn't know what to do but I felt his presence so strong and it is like the therapy and the 12-step program and all of this and I was working so hard to get all this together. And then he orchestrated this before I was born. He knew the path that I was going to take and he had a dad in his body waiting for me. And I saw, this was ordained by the Holy Spirit -- ordained by the Holy Spirit!

James: I don't know where you are. There are a couple of fatherless guys. When you talked about meeting the Father that was what happened. He was loving you everywhere you ever went. I need all of you here, I just want to say I'm so proud of you. God's so proud of you. He's so pleased that you let us see his love. We thank you!

But I need to say to every one of you, you need to hear the affirmation of God. He didn't make a mistake. God, I know what it is like not to be picked, I know what it is like to be overlooked. He's my Father -- children that love the Father. One of our daughters is in heaven. You know that, right there with the Father looking down at her grandbaby, our great grandbaby.

Listen to me. I know that Father. Our family has come to know that Father. He wants you to know how much he loves you. He's not mad at you; gave his son to cover every mistake, every failure, every sin. Would you let him tell you how much he loves you right now? Please! Just right where you are, just close your eyes but say, "Father, you said you want to be my Father -- my Father! I want you to be. You gave your son so I could know you. I receive him as your gift. I want you to be my Father." Just tell him. I

want you to know the Father's altogether pleased. Jesus in you, he sees that glory and grace.

Don't you thank God for this testimony? Don't you thank God! Tori, God bless you. Russ, I'm going to -- you know we've been showing people how they can share the love of God all over the world for a long time and our viewers have been doing it. I believe that what you're about to see and you hear Sheila Walsh, I think you're going to see Jesus and his love and his compassion about as clearly as you'll ever see it. I want you to watch this very prayerfully but knowing you can be in someone's or many people's lives what that man was in Russ's, let him see the Father. Watch this closely.

On the mission field

Sheila: I just wanted to explain why with this particular little girl, that we're not showing her face. She's 11 years old so we want to do everything we can to protect her. So when you were just nine years old, something terrible happened to you one night. Why don't you tell us about that?

Open Captions:

>> My dad is in prison and my mom ran away with some man. So I collected cans for food money to feed me and my brothers and my sister. Then one night... A guy on a motor vehicle grabbed me and took me to a bar. I was locked in a room and many different men would come in. If I refused to be with the men, I was beaten. After a year, they let me out of the room and I ran away. Right now I'm free but I still have to go out at night to pick up cans. I still have to buy all the food for my family. I'm scared that I will be taken again and made to go back into that room.

Sheila: I'm horrified by her story and the tragedy is she is not the only one. There are so many girls. And here's what I think. If we don't defend her, if we don't say no to those vicious predators -- and trust me, they are very well organized and they're very well

funded so we've got to get organized, we've got to get funded. It is time to let our righteous anger rise to the surface. There is some things that we can say that is not good but this is evil. This is absolute evil from the pit of hell! And we cannot abandon these beautiful children who are longing to know that there is at least one person on this planet who cares for them. I want her to know it's you and it's me and we're going to fight for them in Jesus' name.

End of clip

In the studio

James: And we can pour out the love of the Father on that precious girl. God, I'm asking you to move the heart of everyone watching right now to say I'm going to rescue a girl like that. I'm going to give them a future. I'm going to set them free from that evil; in Jesus' name.

If you will, we can rescue a child, a girl and not only reach them, rescue them, but restore them. \$128 is what it takes because of the incredible efforts and sacrifice of the missionaries. And viewers like you, this amazes me, I call it an answer to a heart cry. Please help me! Our viewers, several of them came together and said we will put up \$320,000 to match what you give. So that means a \$128 gift to rescue one now gets two.

I always ask our viewers if there is any way -- and you're the greatest supporters of mission outreaches on the planet. \$1280 we rescue ten but now its 20 -- it will be doubled. Would you please pour out the love of God, the love of the Father on these children?

We've got some beautiful gifts to send you to say thank you about the glorious names of God in his word. And you really need to keep your mind, this is the last week now of this emphasis for Rescue Life, we really need to hear from you because you know we have other mission outreaches that totally depend upon our support. But boy, this is huge and I

thought Sheila put it so well, please stop that evil by pouring out love and grace and give a future to these precious girls.

You can go online or dial that number, take your bankcard, use it like a check and you make the gift God put on your heart. Thank you for doing it.

[Begin video clip]

Announcer: Behind the bright lights there is a darkness where a world of violence and sexual abuse runs rampant scarring the souls of millions of young children. With their bodies broken and hopes crushed, these children are trapped in a never-ending nightmare.

With your help, *Mission: Rescue Life* can shine the light of God's love in this dark world to reach, rescue and restore children and young people to the beauty God designed for them to enjoy. With a generous opportunity of a \$320,000 matching gift, your gift of \$128 to help rescue a child will be matched to help two children. Your \$64 gift will be matched to help rescue one child from the horrors of human trafficking. And a \$32 rescue gift will be doubled to \$64! With your gift of any amount today, we will send you the *Names of God* prayer journal. From Adonai to Yahweh, this journal is filled with beautiful photographs to help you reflect on 31 different names of God found throughout scripture. With your gift of \$128 or more, you'll receive the *Names of God* Bible. This special edition NIV large print Bible is engraved with the many names of God; a beautiful reminder that the God we serve is infinitely good.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1,280 which will now help rescue 20 children and you may request the beautiful "Bridge of Faith" framed canvas print by Thomas Kinkade. This is the last week! Please call, write, or make your gift online.

[End of clip]

In the studio

James: I feel like we've seen such a -- I don't know, Betty, an outpouring of grace and love and to hear... you know how much it means to me for somebody to say "that's good" because I never heard it from a father. I really felt like I'd made a daddy really happy. He'd just tell me he liked something I did. So Russ, when you were talking about that, see, here's what I hear. I feel like God tells me, "That's good!" I want you to hear that. I want you to know God's pleased. Just turn your life over to him. Thank you for helping others. Would all of you here just say thanks to God and thanks to Russ and Tory?