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Week Five: WFL

Randy Robison and Sheila Walsh

Jonathan "JP" Pokluda

Randy: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm Randy Robison. This is Sheila Walsh. How are you?

Sheila: I'm great actually. I'm real excited about this guest.

Randy: Evidently, a lot of people are excited. Anybody in the audience excited about tonight's guest?

[Cheers & Applause]

Sheila: He travels in packs.

Randy: The great thing is most of these people are the age of my kids. So they use words like *adulting*. So we've got the author of a book called *Welcome to Adulting* because he is reaching a generation with the truth of Jesus Christ. Would you welcome Jonathan Pokluda? How great is this? JP, we'll just call you JP?

JP: Yeah! That's great. It's easier than Pokluda.

[Laughter]

Randy: We were talking about your book before the program and I'm looking through it going, okay. Yeah, it's true. Great advice. True! True! But yet it's had a profound impact. Why do you think what you had to say in this book is really connecting with a

generation?

JP: I'm sure your listeners, your watchers, your viewers have seen young adults leave the church in droves. The largest religion growing in America right now is the "nones" or the "noners." I believe they're burnt out on this fake Christianity. This idea of hey, get your act together. Put on your Sunday best, tuck in your shirt and let's go in here and act like we haven't had an argument in the car on the way to church this morning. They're just burnt out on that. They don't want a replica of their favorite celebrity pastor. They just want someone being real.

Listen. I'm not bringing a lot to the table other than I've spent the last decade of my life researching the millennials that won't leave your home or the son or daughter or grandson or daughter that you're frustrated with. And I believe they want something authentic, especially in the church. They want someone being real, talking about their struggles.

So I wanted to write a book that would be helpful. Helpful to both the young adults but also to parents and to grandparents to give to their young adults as a subtle hint.

Randy: Your background though is interesting. You didn't really grow up living the typical fake Christian life that a lot of young people did; that would be revolting against that idea. You're a little bit of a...

JP: I kind of did. I kind of did, Randy. I was raised in the church. I had amazing parents. I just was rebellious. That's the truth. I didn't want anything to do with their God, especially when I went to college. So when I got to college I had all the freedom that college presents but none of the responsibility and the maturity to go along with that freedom. So they say, "Drug, sex, and rock and roll," in my case it was drugs, sex, and hip hop and I crammed a lifetime of partying really, into two years of college.

I kind of thought of God as this police officer in the sky. So when I'm doing this, I didn't want anything to do with that God. I didn't want him to judge me. I didn't want him

coming into my life saying, "Hey, what you're doing is wrong." So I just kept going that way. One night I was saying my prayers, I was in my twin-sized bed in my on-campus apartment and I was praying to God, like I always had. I just started weeping, all by myself, started weeping, just sobbing. I thought, nobody is listening to me. These prayers are bouncing off the ceiling.

The next day I called the only person I knew to reach out to and I just confessed my sins to them and said, "Hey, this is what I've done over the past several weeks. These are the choices I've made. These are the sins I've committed." Which included partying, drinking, sex, pornography, all of these things, and they said, "Well, that's kind of college. That's what you do. You just kind of go and you're wild. And then after college you come back to faith."

It was terrible advice but it was prophetic in a way because that's what happened as I continued to party. And then after college I moved to Dallas, Texas and I was at a bar 16 years ago, and it was the club that I loved, I had V.I.P. access to and I bumped into an old friend from college and they invited me to church. I went hung over. I sat on the back row. I still smelled like smoke from the night before.

I just began to wrestle with this idea that I've always said that I believe that there's a God but I never had done anything based on that decision. I lived my life however I wanted to do. When faced with a decision I thought, well, what do I want to do? And I did that. So really, I thought, what are the odds that I'd be born to the right country? Because if I was born in India I probably would be Hindu. If I was born in Iran I may be Muslim. If I was born in China I would be Buddhist. So what are the odds I'd be born to the right country? So I really had this bias against Christianity.

So as I began to explore these world religions I kept tripping over the character of Christ in history; that every atheist we know acknowledges him by the date they put on their checks. That this guy, this carpenter in Nazareth, a town we would have never heard of except he lived there, who was born in Bethlehem, a town we wouldn't know of except he

was born there, he reset the calendar.

And as I looked into that and began to study the evidence of the existence of Christ, I trusted my life to him. I realized the reason that he became so world famous was because he came back from the grave. He rose from the dead. When I trusted in that, that he did that for my sins, that he died for my sins and God raised him from the dead, everything in my life changed. Who I hung out with changed. What I did for fun changed. The way I dated changed. The way I talked changed. Eventually, what I did for a living changed.

So when I got into young adult ministry I didn't bring a lot to the table other than I love these guys. These are world changers. I know that they have so much potential that wants to be unlocked and just began to pour my life into them and tell that story.

Randy: I'm sorry! Did you have a good question coming up?

Sheila: No! You go ahead.

Randy: I just wondered, you mentioned that these things changed, what you did. They're all very external, which I believe will change. But something obviously deep down changed. What was that?

JP: It was belief. I always say that our behaviors follow our belief. Christianity is not a behavior of change, behavior change ideal or...

Randy: But it is often, unfortunately, used that way.

JP: That's right! Because you can change the outside. We can wash -- Jesus said you can wash the outside of the cup but the inside is still nasty. It's got mold and gross stuff in there that's been sitting in your car for two weeks. I'm just talking about my car.

[Laughter]

So we don't want to start by trying to change the outside.

We've got to come to this idea, what do I really believe about God? What do I really believe about Christ? Who is he? What did he do for me? When I started there, and my wife and I, we kind of came to this realization at the same time because of God's grace and mercy, we began to build on that and he just did an incredible work in our lives.

Sheila: My son is a senior at Texas A&M, and we've... Whoop! Whoops! Oooouh! Those are fighting words dude!

[Laughter]

But we were talking about the fact that he said that he feels like on the college campus A: There is like an epidemic of anxiety and depression, and people might be connected but desperately lonely. Is that something you see?

JP: Oh, yeah. For sure! So I just got back from A&M and honestly, God's doing an amazing work in that university and on the campus there. I was there three weeks ago. Got to share at their break away. And so two things you talked about, is the social disconnectedness but also anxiety and so I want to address both of those.

Social disconnectedness is we live in this time of social media where you have 5,000 friends and 2,000 followers but no one knows you. You don't have anyone to live out James 5:16 which says to confess our sins to each other and pray for each other so that we may be healed. So there's this facade of depth and facade of relationships but really you're so unbelievably lonely because you go back to your apartment and as soon as the power is out, as soon as you're not on your TV, as soon as you're not on your cellphone, you're by yourself and you realize, I have no real relationships. It is different than being drunk on the back of a tailgate saying, "I love you, man!"

"I love you too!"

That's one thing that changed when I came into the church is just like, people took an interest in me and began to pour into me and offer me hope and real reason for living. It was like hey, I began to find purpose. There's a chapter in the book on purpose. So there's that.

Then on the topic of anxiety, I think that's true because a lot of times anxiety starts in our life of caring too much or not caring too much but carrying too much or thinking, believing we have to do this all on our own. I liken it to if you ever have been where you had to put up chairs. Have you ever had to do that? Folding chairs, like at a conference or something? You're there and they're like, "Hey, let's put up the chairs."

And so we do that every year. We have this big event and this big retreat and we're putting up chairs and there are thousands of chairs and we're putting them up and at some point, it never fails, you just hear this huge commotion. This steel hitting the concrete; this loud explosion where somebody dropped the chairs. The only reason they drop the chairs is because they carried too many. I think that's what's happening a lot on these college campuses. They feel all the pressures of this world to choose a major and to figure all of life out at 20 something and they're carrying all of these chairs. And at some point, they're carrying more than they were made to carry in that season of life and they just come crashing down.

Sheila: What do you see... you've brought a bunch of your friends here tonight that are part of your church. Pretty awesome! What do you see God doing in the lives of these young people?

JP: I'm so glad you asked. People ask me, they say, "When you think about the future of the church, are you hopeful or are you discouraged?" I would tell you I'm unbelievably hopeful. Because I think young adults, 20-30 something's, they want to do something bigger than themselves. And the biggest mistake that we can make is as their parents or

their grandparents is to not call them to something great because that's what Jesus did. He called people to greatness. When he met with the rich young ruler he said, "Sell everything you have, give it to the poor and follow me!" When he would interact with people and he would say, "Follow me."

They would say, "First let me go bury my dad."

"Well, let the dead bury the dead. You follow me."

"Well, where am I going to stay?"

"Well, listen, foxes have holes and birds have nests but the son of man has nowhere to lay his head. Follow me. Take up your cross and follow me. Don't put your hand to the plow and look back. Follow me."

So the worst thing we can do is kind of dumb this down and say, "Oh, just show up to church on Sunday." That's such a lame ask.

Jesus would say, "Give me your life. Come and die. Come and follow me."

And to connect that to the anxiety because you think, wait a minute, you said they're carrying too much. Remember, he said, "My burden is light. My yoke is easy." So he helps us. When his spirit, the Holy Spirit comes and works in our life, he helps us. He surrounds us with people that knows us and loves him and loves us and knows him. We have people to go through life with us, to carry our burdens and celebrate our victories.

And so when I look at the future of the church, I'm incredibly hopeful because I just see a bunch of world changers and people who want to respond to the gospel and follow Christ.

Sheila: I had a conversation with a young woman last week and she said to me, "My boyfriend and I are really committed to each other. We both love Jesus. I dumped the guy

that didn't love Jesus."

JP: Good for her!

Sheila: Yeah, but there is a follow-up line. She said, "What's the problem with us sleeping together because we're pretty committed? We're pretty sure." What would you say to that?

JP: I would say God loves you so much. And as my friend Todd Wagoner, he's a guy who discipled me, poured into me, says often, God doesn't want to rip you off. He wants to set you free and his word leads to life. So if you want to sleep with that guy, I would -- he should put a ring on your finger. He should put a ring on it, as they say. He should commit his life to you. Sex was made for the context of the covenant of marriage.

It is been well said. It is cliché but I don't know that I could say it better. It is like a fire in a fireplace; it brings warmth and beauty and it's an incredible asset and resource in there. But when that log rolls out of that fireplace it will burn the house down and it will destroy a family. And sex, or intimacy as God created it, because God invented sex. He is the author of it. He made the parts and he made them work the way they do and it is his beautiful invention. So he gets to tell us how we should have that.

So the problem with that young woman is she is trusting God in one aspect of her life, Second Corinthians 6:14, but she is not trusting him in First Corinthians 6:18, 19, and 20: Flee sexual immorality. So she's picking and choosing which of the scriptures she wants to listen to.

Sheila: I think that's one of the things that is the strongest about this book. I'm thinking of you, if you're a grandmother, or you're a mother and you're thinking, wow, I wish I would have told my kids this. It is no too late. This book is really going to inform those people in your life you care about. Honestly, I wish I had read it when I was 18. There is so much.

Randy: They're worth reading now. I realize the book is a little bit targeted toward those just a little bit younger than us.

Sheila: Oh please! Hello!

Randy: But the truth, the truth applies to all of us.

JP: Younger than *you*, Randy.

Randy: Younger than me, not her. Okay, fair enough! My younger sister, Sheila.

Sheila: I like him!

Randy: But the truths, they don't stop at any age.

Sheila: It is like saying, "Read the Word of God and live it. Don't just pretend."

Randy: And it's even to the point where if you are a little frustrated, you feel like you haven't matured, maybe spiritually like you should have, whatever age you are, the truths here are the truths in the Bible just put into a language that we can apply and understand a little better.

I like what you said. You were talking about the don'ts in the scripture. One of our guests on the show recently said, "I started reading don't in the Bible as don't hurt yourself by... Don't hurt yourself by committing adultery." When you look at it that way, you realize okay, it is not a God who is just sitting up there waiting for us to fail so he can tell us we just failed. It is a God who is sitting up there just waiting for us to come to him so he can lift us up and make us succeed. That's the kind of maturity that I see that you're showing to a generation and they're latching on to it because they're hungry for something beyond just the show. They need the know.

JP: He's telling that young woman, don't run out in the street where there are cars because I'm crazy about you. Everything about me, God, everything about him desires to lead us to life so that we might have it abundantly. He is not trying to rip us off, he is trying to set us free.

Sheila: The reason I think your message is so important, JP is, you and I actually publish with the same publisher but every now and again God puts his hand on a book and you can have great marketing people as we both do, but every now and again God says, "This is a message for now." I really believe that that's why God has put his hand on this book because this is a message that I believe if we embrace then a world that is dying will perhaps look at us because we are living and living in a way that Jesus -- I just pray God's increase on your book.

JP: Thank you so much, friend! I appreciate that so much.

Randy: There is something that you can do to change the world. There is something that you can do to do something great. There is something you can do that moves beyond yourself, that moves beyond the mundane things of life and the ordinary problems we have. You can move out there and really change a life. You can actually save a life. I would like you to get Jonathan's book, we would like to send it to you but we want you to help us as we help others. We would like to show you how. Would you watch this please?

On the mission field

Tammy: East Africa, many would see exceptional beauty in the wildness of its terrain. But the family struggling to survive here every day sees a very different landscape. One marred by loss and darkened by grief. Claudine, a single mother in the remote village of Buganda is all too familiar with this view.

Open Captions:

>> I have two children now. I have also lost two children. They have all had the same symptoms: Bloated tummies and constant vomiting and diarrhea.

Tammy: It always seems to come down to the same issue everywhere I go and that is their water source.

Open Captions:

>> We drink dirty water from the hole we dig near our village. All this disease... All this death... Is because of this water, but we do not have a choice. If we keep drinking it, I fear that my remaining children may die as their brothers did.

Tammy: I have come to know that there is a solution, there is something that works. The truth is, there is water underneath my feet and I know that we could drill a well that will go deep enough to hit clear, fresh, clean, healthy water.

Open Captions:

>> I believe that one day we will have clean water. When you put your faith and trust in God, He provides.

Tammy: A divine opportunity awaits us. An immense need and a viable solution at a critical time. With your partnership, we can bring hope and health to countless families in desperate need of our help.

End of clip

In the studio

Randy: Sheila, she says when you put your faith in God he provides. I know there are people watching right now who have faith in God and they're the provision.

Sheila: It is so interesting because when I've walked in these places in Angola or Burundi, it is easy to watch on TV and think, oh that's terrible! But when you're actually there, and you see what it is like, these moms have no choice. The only water that's available for hundreds of miles are these dirty puddles.

And I've watched these children drink the only water that's available and I've wept with mothers who have lost, like that mom, two children, and are so afraid they'll lose the others. But they have no choice. You can't give your children nothing. So they just give them what they have and then they pray.

I think one of the greatest adventures in this life is to get to be the answer to the prayers of people we've never actually even met. Maybe you watched that story of that mom and you think I want to be the answer to her prayer. Well, it is so doable. Our goal for this year, for 2019 is we want to put 200 new water wells into villages. I've been in the villages where there is nothing. I've stood beside a mom at the grave of her latest little one and I've been in the village where we've put in a water well and the difference is literally night and day -- death and life. Would you help us?

Randy: Actually, those 200 wells, that's just the beginning of the year; that's how we're going to start the year. With your help, we will far exceed that this year. We're looking into 15 nations where we have provided drinking water in the past, clean drinking water, and we want to expand in those areas and just bless more people.

Let me break this down for you. One well on average costs \$4800, to drill that well, to put it in place. So here's how it works out. Your gift of \$48 will on average reach ten people for a lifetime with clean drinking water. Clean drinking water changes everything for the people in these villages. I've been there. I've stood there at a well. I was just at one not too long ago in Africa and this is a place, it is interesting because we talk about community, Sheila, have you ever noticed that that water well becomes a point of community? People gather at the well, just like in biblical times. And they come there

for clean fresh drinking water because it gives them life.

So as we go and we share the life and love of Christ in the gospel, will you go with us and demonstrate the gospel for these people by giving them that fresh clean drinking water? It saves lives! Go to the phone right now. Go online. Give the best gift you can. Help us put arms of love around the world through Water for LIFE.

Begin video clip

Announcer: Today, a mother living in extreme poverty will do the unthinkable -- give her children dirty, diseased-filled water that she knows could kill them. With no other choice what's a mother to do?

With your help, clean water is on the way. Mission Water for LIFE provides a way for parents to save the lives of their children, to offer them a bright future free from the fear of death. With your gift today, you can help drill and establish the first 200 water wells of the year. Your gift of \$24 will help provide clean water for five children, a gift of \$48 will help provide for 10, \$72 will provide for 15, and \$144 will help provide life-giving water for 30 people for a lifetime.

With your gift, we'll send you the *Praying Grace* 55-day devotional. This new devotional will help you renew your mind to the realities of God's grace and help you pray powerful grace-based prayers for each day.

With your gift of \$100 or more, request the "Praying Grace" tumbler. This reusable 16-ounce container is constructed with insulated stainless steel, perfect for hot or cold beverages.

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 the beautiful, new

commemorative bronze sculpture, “Safe in the Shepherd’s Arms.”

Please call, write, or make your gift online.

End of clip

On the Mission Field

James: Let me show you a water source that these kids are drinking from. It's literally with no exaggeration contaminated water. They let this bucket down and they get the water but it is not sealed and controlled and capped.

Betty: They're making do with what they have but it is not good enough. It's not going to help them to be healthy. They've got this dirty, filthy contaminated water to work with. They have to drink it to even survive a day. I know that there couldn't be a greater joy from the parents of these children, James than to be able to watch their children grow up. Well, they won't be able to do that if they don't have some fresh water because after a while, the disease is going to kill them.

James: And we're the answer to that problem, all of us working together, each person doing what they can because we know the need is very real. We want you to see it up close and personal. But the thing we really want you to hear and know, you're really the answer. You're the way to provide hope and help to people who deserve it. And drilling freshwater wells, that's love indeed. Help us do it. Dial that telephone number and make the very best gift you can. Please do it and do it now. Please make the gift or you can go to LifeToday.org and make that gift online.

In the studio

Sheila: Thank you so much. If the lines are busy, keep calling. We can change the world. But I really love this book. The minute I heard about it, I bought a copy and sent it to my son. So I really encourage you to get a hold of it. And for any gift at all, we will send you a copy of *Welcome to Adulthood*. I don't care whether you're 18 or 78 or something, you can learn from this book. Thank our amazing guest, JP. It's been an honor to have you.

JP: Thank you so much for having me.

Randy: We appreciate you being here and bringing these great people with you. You guys celebrate at ThePorch.live online. So be sure to check out their website. You can always get it at *LIFE Today*. And visit us again right here tomorrow. Thank you!

Announcer: When planning your future keep their future in mind. Contact *Life Planning Services* today.