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Week 34: Christmas Shoes and Smiles

James and Betty Robison

Ron Archer #1

James: I'm telling you what. Listen. I don't know where you are watching this, but it is a real joy for me and Betty to welcome you to *LIFE Today*. And our wonderful prayer warriors in the audience, and our friends, thank you for tuning in.

You're going to meet someone today that I think you're really going to love. Dr. Ron Archer is a blessing. I want to tell you something. First time I heard him on a YouTube clip I thought, dear God, that man has the ability to communicate as effectively as Dr. Martin Luther King; and he actually received the Dr. Martin Luther King award, and I'm sure it had to do with communication.

It is easy to see how effective he is when he speaks. He has been representing Right to Life and speaking to Right to Life organizations all over America, and really, all over the world -- and having a profound impact. As a matter of fact, many of the leaders of those organizations said, "No one inspired our prayer warriors and our supporters any more than Ron Archer did." So we're really glad to have him here. Would you join Betty and me in welcoming Ron Archer to *LIFE Today*?

Ron: Hello, sir!

James: Ron, it is a thrill. Your testimony is powerful. Both of us, let's say our conception was not necessarily, specifically planned at all. We both grew up fatherless. I want you to tell us, so our audience can hear, just exactly how you were conceived and the attempt to keep you from being, because my mother was forced to have sex, asked a

doctor to abort me and he wouldn't do it. So it is a miracle when she prayed that she knew she should have the baby. But tell your story so our viewers can hear it, because I heard it when you were speaking at one of these big assemblies, but just so our viewers can hear it.

Ron: Yes, sir. I was ten years old and I held my mother's gun to my head. I wanted to blow my brains out. You've got to ask the question, why would a ten-year old boy want to die? So I took her gun, put it to my head and closed my eyes and pulled the trigger but my mom had a safety on the gun, so it didn't fire.

But the reason why is our family is biracial. My grandmother came from Germany. She was tall and skinny. We called her French Fry. My grandfather was a black Cuban. He was big, black, and burly. We called him Hamburger. And Hamburger met French Fry and made a happy meal. And they had seven McNuggets that they raised in Cleveland, Ohio. They both loved the American dream. They did it. They built their first home, they built their first car, and all was going well until one fateful day.

You know, back in the day it wasn't acceptable to see a big black burly man and a skinny white woman in the 1930s and 40s, and so after their anniversary dinner a man came up and saw them together and he lost his temper and did a bad thing. He took his fist, went back to Cuba, came up through Alabama and hit the man in the jaw and broke his neck and went to jail. And when that happened, disaster hit the family. Grandma got cancer. They took out her eye and some of her face. They lost their house, they lost their car all because of vitriol behavior and decision.

My mom was the oldest of the seven kids. She was 14 and during that time a man saw her and said, "You know what? You are sitting on a gold mine!"

She said, "Where?"

He said, "You're sitting on it. Let me help you mine this gold."

Now she is 14. Now this is a part of being without a father when there is nobody to protect and guard the family, predators come in. And they basically turned her out, she became a call girl, selling her young body to grown men for money to support the family. And she got pregnant. That's called having a "trick baby." You're turning a trick with a customer, you get pregnant and they wanted to kill that baby because it was in the way of their profitability. So they tried different things to abort me from her womb, but it didn't work.

But she had me and it was tough, James. When you're a young woman with dreams and aspirations and hopes and your life is shattered. Your father is in jail, your mother has cancer and here you are the oldest woman and sometimes, beauty in the wrong situation can be a curse and not a blessing in that particular environment. So she's pregnant, she has the baby. I come out a little bit premature. I have all kind of problems. I wet the bed, I stutter. I'm just not a good species of human being. And they said, "See! You should have aborted him."

I can tell you one thing. Even though I was born a trick baby the trick was on the devil because God had a plan. And what saved my life were two women. One was white, she was my fourth-grade speech pathology teacher. She was from the Deep South. A white woman and she had a Gideon Bible. And she said, "Son, baby, God don't make no junk now." And she said, "I want you to read Jeremiah." She said, "Before I formed you in your mother's womb, I knew you. And I sanctified you for a purpose." And I got enamored.

Now we weren't church-going folk. We didn't go to church. My uncles were involved in some stuff; and the Black Panther movement and drugs and all that kind of good stuff. So there was no Bible, there was no church. And for the first time in my life I got exposed to the Word of God and I began to understand that God was my father. Fatherlessness is such a devastating thing. It leaves a hole in you that you want to be affirmed. I made a million dollars at 28. You know what I thought? I should have made

two. It is never enough. No matter what I did, I felt as though there was something still wrong with me, still missing.

So this white woman, she just took the Bible and just let me understand that God uses broken people to help other broken people. God doesn't call the qualified, he qualifies who he calls. So I took that Bible home, that Gideon Bible, and I took a flashlight and over the next three years I memorized 2,000 scriptures. I couldn't get enough of these people that were dysfunctional like me but yet God used them. I just couldn't get enough for the Word of God. I got saved. When you memorize 2,000 scriptures something happens to your brain. Your reticular activating system, your cerebellum becomes transformed and I developed a photographic memory.

So I went back to school, James. I was kind of sharp. I could talk about Aristophanes, Euripides, Parakletos -- the Parthenon. I just couldn't forget anything. I graduated and went on to college and became a pastor at a young age.

But one thing was breaking my heart. God was using me to save everybody but my family wasn't saved. They were hard core, man. They were not open to the gospel. So one Mother's Day --

James: By the way, you mentioned that you stuttered and I heard in one of your testimonies that even as you got older, how in the world did you manage with all of this going on, with the scripture, was the word, was it suddenly like miraculous? Or I've had some, actually, as a matter of fact, one of our good friends was at Prestonwood Church over in Dallas. He was a quarterback at Baylor. Sometimes he'd have trouble calling a play, but he always called the snap call. But he stuttered. But when he would get up to speak like a preacher, suddenly it went away. Did you experience any of that or did you just suddenly find that it was gone?

Ron: The exact same thing. I would stutter at home all the time, I was working on it and I worked on the incontinent sounds of my words to be able to become more eloquent and

more diction focused, but at home I would stutter. When I got up to speak the Word of God it was flawless, fluent, articulate.

James: Supernatural.

Ron: It truly was. I still stutter today just not when I speak for God. It is just when God says he touches your mouth for his glory and his purposes, no matter what your disability may be, he transforms pain into power and wounds into wisdom.

So my only prayer at the time was not preaching to the world or building churches, it was Lord, save my family. Save my family, they're so lost. So one Mother's Day my mom comes to church and I'm preparing my sermon. You know a young preacher, you want to preach the whole Bible, and God says, "Put it away and preach on the rehab of Rahab." And talked about this woman, who was a prostitute, because of her faith God included her into the lineage of Jesus Christ and was saved. When my mother heard that that was the kind of God I was serving, she got saved!

When she got saved she became the apostle Paul. She told everybody, "You've got to come to Jesus. You've got to come to Jesus!" And went and brought in folks. And my church deacons, they got a little nervous saying, "Pastor, the church is changing. We need a dress code, Pastor." Because she was bringing in folks from all over. And one by one by one my family got saved.

And years later, when I was 28, God blessed me to make a million dollars with S.E. Johnson's Wax and I met my dad for the first time, through a series of miracles. He was a lawyer. And he said, "Do you ever think how God found you?" I said, "No." "Nobody in your family was saved, there was no Christianity in your family. Do you ever think how God found you, Ron?"

I said, "No, tell me."

He said, "You didn't know this out of the family until much later but my father, your grandfather was a pastor. And he would pray for the generations yet unborn to come to know Jesus."

And the church he pastored was Zion Hill Baptist Church about ten minutes from where I grew up; not knowing that that church was founded by my grandfather. That is the mercy and the grace of God. And why I'm preaching today is because of those. So keep praying for your family. Keep praying for your children. Keep praying for those that seem they can't be reached because God can do a miracle through prayer.

James: Don't y'all love this testimony, what God's done? I mean it is a miracle. It is a miracle of God's grace. I don't care where you are, I don't care what challenges you have, what you've been through, what you're going through, God wants to be right in center of that situation. And he really does want to hold your aching heart, your broken heart real close to his heart. And he wants to give you a comfort that only he can provide. He is the only one that can really comfort the brokenhearted and he wants to.

Betty and I care about the people who are suffering and hurt. We care about people who need help but we can't help all of them. But there is a Father who can. Now he does use us as those who love him and know him to so often be his hands and express his love. But he can heal every wound. He can work a miracle in a trick baby's life, in a problem child's life with a family that is totally dysfunctional and change everything. And that's what you've seen him do.

Ron: And what I can honestly say that I have struggled my whole life with that fatherlessness feeling of inadequacy. And for the first time in my life, at 55 years old I found a father -- James. James is the most gracious, wonderful, loving human being I have ever met in my life. He has helped me to understand what a father looks like, what a dad talks like, what a dad is. It took me this long to figure out what fatherhood is like, but this man has loved me like nobody else in my life and is healing me because there are still wounds in me that I still struggle with. There are issues I still deal with every day,

but this man of God has embraced me and become the father that I never had. I thank God every day for you, sir!

Betty: And that's the goodness and greatness of God because he was fatherless. And God can take the fatherless sons and they can become fathers.

Ron: I'm telling you. He makes me cry all the time. I'm a big strong guy, right? But when we talk on the phone, "I want to thank you for calling me. I needed to hear your voice. Thanks, man!" Every time we talk, he makes me cry because the love of God flows through him.

He says, "I believe in you son! I'm with you. I'm not going to let you go. I'm going hold you." Because when you're fatherless you have abandonment issues that you're going to be left behind, that nobody really loves you. And when he grabs me with his soul and said, "I am with you. I'm going to be there for you." I mean it's transformative!

Betty: And he means that.

Ron: I know! I know! He called to tell me, "How you doing, son? How's my black son doing? Doing all right?"

I said, "Yes, sir, I'm doing good."

"All right now, I'm checking on you. I'm not going to let you go. You're mine! God gave me to you."

"Thanks dad!"

James: I didn't know you were going to do that.

Ron: It's the truth!

James: I did not know this. But you know, Betty, like really and truly just like I said to you just a moment ago, you don't have a care, a hurt, a need, there is not an ache, not a broken heart that God's not anxious and able to heal. And oftentimes he does use people in your life. You never dreamed that you had seen me on television, our ministry perhaps, but thank you for receiving me. I didn't expect you to say these nice things before the whole world. I had no idea he would do that. Even though he's told me that I've been a help to him.

Here's the thing. I'd like to know we've been a help to you. We got a letter, an email today from a lady, I have no idea how old she is but she made it very clear, "James, you need to thank God every day that Betty is right there besides you. You have no idea how limited you would be if you did not have Betty." I'm telling you, she basically said, "I don't even know if you would have made it if you hadn't had Betty."

What you don't know is, I know that. And the other thing you don't know is I pray for and even plead with Betty to share more because I feel like every time she shares, the glory and glow and grace of God flows through her.

So you know I'm always pulling on you, sometimes when the camera is on the other people I'll be pulling on your arm. And I always tell you, if you'll just lay your hand, I'll try to cut a sentence short or turn to you. Don't want to miss it. Let me tell you something, I do know what a blessing she is. Can I tell you this? It means so much to me that you recognize that; that you see the glow and glory of God. The reason that that's important, that's what I told her when I was able to convince her when she said, "I'll never be on TV. I don't ever want to go to the mission field." Here we go 25 years on the mission field, here she is sitting here on television now for so many years.

You know what it is? I said Betty, you are showing people that someone that would rather be alone, rather be at home, rather be unseen, stay behind the scenes, that if you'll just share your heart, the love and power and glory and grace of God will flow like a

river." And she's shown so many people that.

So we're talking about wanting Ron to know we love him and care.

See, Ron, I want everybody out there that they don't have anybody, sitting in their home or living room, they may not even have anybody in their life. This is what you really need to hear. There is a couple sitting here that come in your home every day with a very deep prayer, God let us lighten somebody's load.

And we hear Jesus say, "If whoever is listening to you would just get in the yoke with me, my burden is light, my yoke is light. I've got it." See, we want you to yoke up with Jesus. We want you to lose your life in his kingdom's purpose.

You know what else we do? You know what our viewers tell us and we're so glad? They tell us that they love to help the overlooked and the least of these. And we're going to do that. So just know this. Just like we shared love for Ron, and I've spent time with him talking to him because it was the love of God.

You knew you were loved, even when I had to say, "Ron, you need to look at some things here. You need to go back and examine them." And you were so ready to do it. But you knew you were loved. I want everybody out here to know that.

I'll tell you something else I want you to do. I want to show a lot of people I love them. Ron and I are going to talk with Betty and all of you about fatherlessness in a way that I think could be revolutionary in our country for the fatherless. I really believe that.

Would you just say thanks to Ron for the blessing he's already been and he's going to be in the next program? We're going to spend a lot of time talking about that, and how we can see it healed.

But the reason I'm kind of moving along is that I want to talk about what we're about to

do. We're going to give shoes. Now just look at this. These shoes last for years and we can get them very inexpensively. Now you've just got to understand. Somebody came to us and said, "James, we've been watching your program for a long time. And you've been helping all these little kids all over the world. They don't have any shoes. We see their little toes and their little feet and they're just so beat up. It's not the matter of dirty but we see kids that have got little infections in their feet."

One man said, "And we know what hookworms do. They get in the brain and they're going to kill you, destroy your health and kill you. And they come so often through your feet. We want to give shoes."

They said, "We can get them made at a very little price."

We said, "Well, I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll ask our viewers if they'd like to give kids shoes for Christmas."

And then one of our staff said, "Why don't we give all of our people and friends who will give a shoe, why don't we give them a little shoe to hang on their Christmas tree?" We started doing that. Let me tell you something. You are so amazing. Thank God for the businessman that came and said, "I found a deal for these shoes." Thank God for the burden. Thank God for the love.

And then we showed you, and Betty, we didn't know, are people going to do this? You know what? Boy, I started to say you blessed our shoes off. You blessed shoes on a lot of kids. We call it Shoes and Smiles for Christmas. We give beautiful facial surgeries to children with facial deformity, cleft palate and other issues.

I want you to watch right now. I want you to watch closely. See if you don't see somebody you're going to want to bless this Christmas in a very special way. Watch closely.

On the mission field:

Clint: We're approaching the time of the year when *LIFE Outreach* does its Christmas Shoes and Smiles campaign. The smiles are for corrective surgery but what we're doing today is we're getting these young boys and young girls shoes for the very first time. You can actually see the importance of what we're doing because look at this little girl, Veronica. She's got these sores on her feet already. She's obviously never owned a pair of shoes. She's been walking around in bare feet.

James: Betty, they just tough it out and they play but we found out right here in this area that hookworms get in the skin, get in the bloodstream, ultimately into the intestines and cause very serious disease and sometimes death. We can turn it around by simply giving them shoes.

Sheila: Something as simple as a pair of shoes can really change a child's life. This is a happy place today. Look at this face! Who wouldn't want to give her a gift for Christmas? So thank you so much. On behalf of her family, those who love her, I think you put the biggest smile on her face that we've seen all day. So thank you. Thank you for the gift of shoes. Thank you for the gift of life!

End of video**In the studio:**

James: I'm telling you what, I'm smiling so big watching Sheila. Sheila, you are so beautiful. You are so happy seeing those kids happy and seeing their smiles. I'm telling you, Betty, I think sometimes Sheila's smile rivals your smile. She is so excited. I don't know if I've ever seen anyone just love to love people like she does. What a blessing. Thank God! She and Randy our son have really been a blessing to you and the way you've received them has blessed us.

What did you think about watching those little kids? See we start raising the funds to buy the shoes and get them ready, then get them to where we can ship them to all the different

locations in the world so they can actually get them for Christmas.

Did you see that little cleft palate situation? When you see those little children that have never been able to smile and you see their family and we give them a new smile, it is just miraculous. So we call it Christmas Shoes and Smiles.

Now listen closely. Let me kind of lean in here and let me kind of really get down to the level of absolute importance. These shoes cost \$3.60 cents a pair. Now think what I'm saying. \$36, ten pairs of shoes. Ten children get something they've not had. In areas of the world where they've been too often overlooked it's just like a miracle. \$180 will give 50 pairs of shoes to children. Could you do that?

Would you do that for Christmas? When we receive the greatest gift, Jesus and we rejoice in that gift, would you join in giving? And then think about the smiles. Did you know that the average surgery, however serious, this is how it breaks down, we can do a surgery for \$500? That means that \$1,000 two surgeries for serious facial problems. Would you give smiles for Christmas?

Father, I pray everyone listening right now would say, "I'm ready to do it. I'm going to do what you need me to do. I'm going to bless some precious little ones all over the world with shoes and smiles"; in Jesus' name.

We want to send you the beautiful little Christmas shoe. This is the one this year, its crystal, if you make any gift. We're going to send you a beautiful little package of three if you'll make a gift of \$100 or more. I'm going to pray it will be the \$180 for 50 pairs of shoes. We have the beautiful bronze "In the Arms of the Shepherd." That's basically what we're doing. We're showing these precious children what it's like to have "The Arms of the Shepherd" holding you because we express his heart and his love.

Would you right now go online, or would you dial that number? Would you get your bankcard? Please! I know it will take a moment but go get it. Call the number or go

online and make the gift God put on your heart. Use that bankcard like a check. Would you do that? If you write a check, make the check to *LIFE*. Put on there, "Christmas Shoes and Smiles." Please do it.

We want to bless you with some gifts that will put a smile on your face, give you something to talk about around the Christmas tree. We're giving shoes and smiles. It will encourage others to do the same thing.

Thank you so much for your love and your prayers. Thank you for going to the phone or going online and making that gift.

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 could 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 just in time for the holidays. Your gift of \$36 will help provide ten pairs of shoes. A gift of \$72 will 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 green crystal shoe ornament, a treasure to display at each Christmas. With your gift of \$100 or more you may also request this keepsake boxed set of *LIFE*'s Christmas shoe ornaments.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1,000 or more to help provide over 275 pairs of shoes or two children with corrective cleft palate surgeries. And you may request the beautiful "Safe in the Shepherd's Arms" bronze sculpture.

Please call, write, or make your gift online today!

End of video

In the studio:

Tammy: This is just one of millions of children all around the world in desperate need of a simple pair of shoes. I'm so privileged to be a part of *LIFE Outreach* who not only brings Water for LIFE, Rescue For Life, food programs, but also shoes -- shoes to children who desperately need them to protect their little feet from cuts, from tears, from even waterborne illness that may get into the cut and infect it.

Please why don't you join me today? Go to your phone or go online and do whatever you can to make a difference just one child at a time, one pair of shoes at a time.

End of video

In the studio:

James: I'll tell you what, you're going to make some children smile like you saw Sheila smiling and us smiling. Ron, this is exciting, isn't it?

Ron: It is! And I can tell you, sir, why this is so important. I lived in Africa for three years and there's a place called Garissa in Kenya, and what I see the kids doing, they get old tires; they cut the tires, and take string and wrap them around their feet, and the radial stickers will stick into their feet. So the need for shoes is so great.

James: They're trying to find protection and doing more damage.

Ron: So this will change lives! We thank God for what God has led you to do because those tires don't work. These shoes will.

James: They will work! Love never fails. Would you thank Ron Archer for being with us? And he'll be with us in the next program so don't miss it! Tell your friends to watch. We're going to talk about fatherlessness and what we can do about it.