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Week 37: Christmas Shoes and Smiles

James and Betty Robison

Darryl and Tracy Strawberry

James: I think they're glad to see you. Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm James Robison. Betty and I are thrilled to have Darryl Strawberry and his wife with us. Tracy is an incredibly gifted communicator. I think Darryl would probably tell you that she kind of became the rock upon which he found great strength by, let's say, receiving from her the insight that God gave her. Darryl Strawberry and I've already told him, I told our audience here, that for a guy to play in New York, which he is just incredibly gifted, great player. Not many people can say they won four World Series and have those rings, not many. Just kind of fill up every finger; I don't know exactly how you do all that.

But here's the thing about it. Here's the miracle. He wins a World Series with the Mets in New York. You do understand that; right? I know it is a Yankee town but the Mets, they're serious business. Then he wins three with the New York Yankees and he's still alive. And New York he wins for both sides and the man lives through it. That might be as big a miracle as all the overcoming drugs that he went through.

Would you welcome Darryl Strawberry and his wife Tracy to *LIFE Today*? Would you please? Good to see you both.

Tracy: Thank you! Great to be here.

James: You know, Darryl, I did track the whole journey with you. You know Josh Hamilton and I were friends. I watched his challenges and those gifts. But I knew when you had the little say downturns after you had an upturn, and man, we cared. Boy, there were a lot of people. You

may not believe this, but you were actually brought up a lot on our sport shows here and people asking for prayer. Some would of course express disappointment that you might have slipped.

I want you to help our viewers understand how you got into the journey you got into of trouble. We know you had a gift in athletics but how does a guy in athletics with all the ability then suddenly find yourself ultimately becoming addicted and strung out?

Darryl: Well, thanks for having us. First of all, you guys, we really appreciate you guys and thank God for all that you do.

I think the most important thing that people need to understand about people's lives is we really don't know what happens behind closed doors. We don't know what people become. And for me, my life was like just an empty vessel full of things. I accumulated a lot of wealth, fame, fortune; been privileged my whole life, lived behind community gates. But I had nothing. I had a bunch of stuff, but I had nothing on the inside because I was broken.

See brokenness is so real and the broken me was broken before I ever put the uniform on. My dad was an alcoholic and he beat me and said I'd never amount to nothing. So I believed him. My pain led me to my greatness, but my greatness would eventually lead me to my destructive behavior. Because it doesn't matter how much money you make, how much fame you have, if you're never well on the inside you can never be the person God created you to be. I think so many of us miss that. I was that particular person that missed that just like everybody else that comes along and finds themselves in trouble and find themselves being successful but what's wrong with me on the inside.

Yeah, I could hit a baseball. I could do all these wonderful things but who am I as a man? Because if you're never taught what a man is supposed to be like growing up, you can never fulfill those promises. And I think so many of us want us to believe that we can just because you put a money tag behind them and they have a skill and a talent to perform but if you've never been taught principles, worldly principles, yes. Worldly principles tell us we can have everything.

But what does biblical principles tell you? And that's the part of my life I missed for so long was the biblical principles in my life until I watched my mother and I watched my wife. It is so funny. I always say God put two women in my life to straighten me out. He's got a great sense of humor. I love that because he used my mother as an example, and he used my wife to lead me back to him.

James: Didn't you say you found after she was gone, you found under her bed journals?

Darryl: We found a journal under her bed and she was praying to God to really save my kids, knock them off their throne or whatever. It doesn't matter what kind of career I was having, she wasn't concerned about that. She was more concerned about my soul being saved more than anything. I think you have a praying mama; I always told mama, "Just keep praying." She didn't get to see the miracle in the natural, but she is watching in the supernatural. Because my life has changed forever due to the fact that God found me in the pit and put me in the pulpit -- what mama had been praying.

So God is a miracle worker behind the scenes. I think sometimes we want to see the miracle and God may not let you see the miracle but through that whole process and through my mother and through bringing Tracy into my life, and 16 years ago, she was pulling me out of dope houses. I was shooting dope, smoking crack and I was \$3 million in debt and didn't have a driver's license when we first started on the journey. But God used her, and I listened.

James: When you walked into his life because you had the same journey. You had a... Did you have a missing father in your family too?

Tracy: No. I was the opposite, which I want to encourage someone because I grew up in a faith-filled loving family. I didn't come from a dysfunctional family. I made my own choices. I did not embrace the faith that was sown into me. So I want to encourage someone out there who is maybe trying to beat themselves up or something of that nature, I did this, I did this, I did this. That's not always the case.

I was separated from God and became enslaved to sin. The Word of God teaches us that. I did not know or embrace my identity in Christ. I did not follow his ways. It sounds so simple, but it is the answer. So when Darryl came into my life, I could relate to him. My addiction was so severe I lost custody of my three children. So I understand it from the depths of that person out there who thinks, God can't help me. God doesn't love me. God made me this way. I had all these things in my mind. Why will God not rescue you? God, where are you? And he's right here. If you're hearing my voice, if you're hearing a voice, he is right here telling you come on out. He is waiting for you with love. You're never too bitter, you're never too broken, you're never too old for God to completely come in and transform your life through his power and his great love for you.

Betty: You're never too bad that God can't pick you up and change your whole life.

Tracy: That's exactly right. You're never too far from grace. Never! He's waiting.

James: Were you strung out when you met him, or had you gone through a freedom process when you all connected? Or were you still fighting addiction even then?

Tracy: I was fighting the crave of addiction because I went to a secular program. I had one year clean and sober, but I was not saved. That's why I'm passionate and wrote a curriculum called, "Clean, Sober and Saved: The principles of Christ to get free."

So when I met Darryl, I was just coming into Christ. I was learning what "saved" meant. But I wanted a new life so desperately, but I was working a program, I was trying to heal without the healer. My faith was in a program and a support group, not against them -- please don't hear me wrong. But it will not set you free and it does not make you right with God.

So when I came along with Darryl those principles I was fighting, and fighting the crave, but when Jesus came into my life and I surrendered and I walked in faith, not my feelings, because if you're doing it on your feelings, you set yourself up for failure. I just kept showing up, I kept

pressing into God, I kept giving him my anger. I wrestled with God. He revealed himself to me. And he took the desire. I don't -- I'm 18 years clean and sober, 19, 17, clean and sober and saved today. I don't have a crave. I don't live my life trying to battle this thing. God took it from me. He delivered me from that, and I've never gone back.

James: Did her journey, and at the time you all connected, and then as she continued to grow, did that immediately start having an effect on you?

Darryl: Well, I think what really had an effect on me was watching her follow God the way she followed God. We were in a relationship and I was like always, "God, why are you always speaking to her?" And God spoke to me clearly one time and says, "It's because she spends time with me."

That's the problem for most of us. We want God to do a miracle in our life, but we won't spend the time with him. And we won't come to the understanding of biblical principles. That's what the Bible talks about, "My people perish because of a lack of knowledge." There is no knowledge in understanding of God's word, that's why I was perishing. And I realized it wasn't until I dove in myself and I started hiding out with God, I started turning off the cellphone, turning off the television and I started spending time in the Word of God. That's when I started to get to the place of understanding who God was for myself. If we don't ever take the time to lay with God, you'll never know him. He is so good.

That's the thing I would tell people. You've got to taste and see that the Lord is good, not all these things. I had everything from a worldly standpoint. It never satisfied my soul. The only thing that satisfied my soul today is Jesus himself. His crucifixion up on the cross and what he did and understanding the blood and understanding he is a man with no sin. He is a holy man. He's a righteous man. You get to live this life if you follow the commandments, if you obey his word and follow his will for your life.

I always ask myself, I don't know what took me so long to pick the Bible up and read it for myself. It wasn't until I started saturating myself in the Bible.

James: It was an enemy attacking. He is attacking it. He is all-out against anything that will get you to see the Father because he is the father of lies and he wants to keep us in deception.

Did you watch her, and was it kind of watch her and part of her growth process you were observing; right?

Darryl: Yes!

James: Now did you watch him start finally turning and beginning to grow to where you could actually see it?

Tracy: I did. And I literally had to let go and let God because I was trying to fix him. When you love someone so much desperation will come in and you enter into enabling out of desperation. I had to let go and let God and that is such a catch phrase. How do you do that? That is one of the passions that Darryl and I have, the resources on our website to help people because we have 15 minutes to talk about here, this is a process that we need to bring people through.

James: What's the website?

Tracy: The website is FindingYourWay.com.

James: FindingYourWay.com. And you can actually show them and maybe even invite them to different situations where you all are sharing? They can see where you're going to be. But they can also find material and resources that you've already made available.

All right, now you watched him start changing. He was talking about you being able to hear God. He said, "How come I don't hear God?" Did you watch him start hearing God?

Tracy: I did.

James: Was it fun?

Tracy: It was!

[Laughter]

And I was praising him all the way.

James: Did you realize that it was actually His voice and it's better than any manager's voice you ever heard? Or anybody else's voice?

Darryl: No question about it. When you spend that time with him, you're going to hear his voice, you're going to be led by the Holy Spirit. If you allow the Holy Spirit -- the Holy Spirit is supernatural. And if you allow him to descend upon you and you allow him to speak and you allow yourself to hear him speak, he's going to teach you. Like Jesus said, "He is going to teach you all things in remembrance of me." He's going to teach you all things.

The Holy Spirit started teaching me the Bible supernaturally nine years ago.

God said, "Preach."

I said, "I don't want to preach."

He says, "Well, you're going to preach. And the Holy Spirit is going to ascend on you."

And supernaturally the Holy Spirit started teaching me the Bible. And then I went to Billy Graham. I went to -- who was my favorite preacher. I went to him because he was about winning souls. And I think that's what we've gotten away from is winning souls. We're so consumed about brands and this and that and we've forgotten about winning souls. And supernaturally the Holy Spirit started teaching me the Word of God and started teaching me scriptures. And Billy

Graham started teaching me why Christians are not empowered because they don't know scriptures. I just fell in love with it. I just laid in his book and I laid in the Bible, and all the sudden supernaturally scriptures started flowing out of me because I started retaining them and started understanding what scriptures mean. Because that's where the depth is and that's where the power is to victory over the enemy.

James: You know, Billy helped me, and I wasn't a great athlete or a drug addict. It's amazing what God's love does. I'm looking at the book. By the way, you get the book. You can go online and get it. It's an exciting story. Reggie Jackson said this guy had two strikes against him. But boy, I tell you what, he didn't strike out, not in the spiritual realm. He thought he did. Several times you said, "Well, that's it."

You know you said here in this little subheading and I've got to pick up on it, "Finding my way." Now I think what you're finding, if you're finding your way, is finding his way; am I right about that? So when you're talking about "finding my way" in the book were you referring to finding his way?

Darryl: Yeah, I was referring to finding my way to the cross. I think a lot of times people don't understand the symbol of the cross and the shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ himself. You have to find your way to that to understand that so you will be able to have the revelation of who you are.

So what does that mean? That means Darryl Strawberry the baseball player, you've got to die. Tracy or whoever, you've got to die. And when you die that's that Galatians 2:20 where it talks about, "I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live, it is Christ who lives in me." It is Christ who rules and reigns and takes over your life. And now you can operate in such a different capacity of life that you never experienced before. It is supernatural.

I tell people, I learned that through seeing my wife, I learned that through seeing her. Sometimes God brings people in your life, and I always tell men when I'm at a men's conference, "Listen to that woman because God is speaking to her. By him speaking to her she's going to be able to

help you and help you get well." Because when I wasn't listening to her everything was falling apart. But when I started listening everything started to come together.

James: Really, Jesus in her, you were listening to. Now I see two people that really want to spend your life helping people get to know Jesus in fullness. That's what you want and you're talking to young people and you're doing things.

If all of our viewers prayed for you, what would you say you want them to pray for you? You believe God wants to do something with your life. How do they pray for you to see what you believe God's will is for the two of you for the rest of your life?

Darryl: I see our will is helping to reach the younger generation because of the epidemic with opiates and heroin. And we come from that place and we know that they're broken. We know that they're spiritually broken. My wife sees it on the other part. I feel like reaching them -- I go into the schools and try to reach them and educate them about drugs. And my wife, she wants to be in a place of...

Tracy: Discipleship. Evangelism catches them, discipleship keeps them. We want to keep them. We're seeing too many people fall out of the church. We're seeing too many of our young people fall away. We're seeing marriages fall apart because of the disciplined ways of God which reveals his great love and transforms us into new people.

So I would ask for people, if you could go to our website, FindingYourWay.com and partner with us, we're in the development stages of being able to have more doors of opportunity for the younger generation. But also not just to reach them but to keep them, to open up avenues of programs and discipleship to where we can get the word in them, walk out the journey with individuals who are broken and suffering in many different ways. Addiction is just one way.

James: I want you to start praying very specifically, like they ask, but also, focus on your own area. Don't just start wishing for some little miracle to come in. Start praying, God, is there any way that we can connect what you've put in them with our situation here in our community? Is

there any way they can come in and not only touch the young people in the schools but is there something we can do together? And then could we multiply that? So begin to pray that. Actually ask God if you're supposed to have a part in it. See if there is any way they're supposed to come to your community where they know they're coming because it's been birthed through prayer and by God. It is not somebody looking for some little thought up miracle, some quick relief. This is where I want God's will to be done. Start praying that.

Father, now help people to realize that we're asking them to talk to you, the one who knows how to address their need. If they recognize there is a need they want to see you meet it, give them wisdom and insight, and show them how they can work together with this incredibly anointed, gifted, delivered couple that have been set free by your power and who are gifted to communicate. So please just draw them, lead them and have your way in their community; in Jesus' name.

Do you appreciate what God is doing in this beautiful couple? It is a lot greater -- it's got to be great to win a World Series. Goodness gracious, maybe someday Texas, somebody will have one. Houston, thank God Houston got it. Praise the Lord.

But anyway, the point is aren't you more excited about what God's doing than all the things you ever even saw in the sports world?

Darryl: No question about it. Its great winning and being a professional athlete but when you stand on the platform for the Lord and you start winning souls, there's nothing like it. There's nothing like it; when you do an altar call, not because of you, because of the anointing of God that brings the people. And people are hurting! We need to give back what God has given us freely. God has given his love to us freely and we need to give it back to people and show them that God truly loves you. Your life matters. You're not a mistake.

James: Darryl, you all are going to love what you're about to see. You're going to see some of the most beautiful children, and you're going to see what love does to make them happy. You know why Betty and I get really excited when we watch what you're going to watch? You're

going to want to watch it because you just love to see the joy of the Lord when it's poured out on people who think nobody cares. See, we get to see people we know and love loving people. And we get to see our own family members loving people. It's beautiful to see! And we've been doing it.

But here's the deal, because you care is the only reason we're able to share the love you're about to watch. It's going to put a smile on your face. It's going to put a lot of joy in people's hearts. And it's going to put joy in their hearts, many of them, forever. Watch!

On the mission field:

Announcer: Can you believe we're already in the last half of the year? With a worldwide opportunity to share God's love through mission outreach our teams have been hard at work offering hope and healing to those in need. Whether it is providing a hungry child with a daily bowl of food or drilling a clean water well for a thirsty village, we simply could not go into all the world if it weren't for the compassion of *LIFE Today* viewers.

Well, today presents an extra special opportunity for ministry and it is just in time for a special holiday.

Isak: We all celebrate different holidays around the world but a holiday that is pretty common to most of us is Christmas. That's what it feels like here today, it feels like Christmas for us because we're getting to do one of the most incredible things and that is to bless these children with a pair of shoes.

I want to ask you to join me right now as we give thanks for the fact that we can put these shoes onto his feet; that we can change his life. You say, wow, that sounds a little dramatic. Change his life with a pair of shoes? It is life-changing because what we're doing here is protecting this little child's feet from damage and disease that can even cost him his life.

So I want to ask you from the bottom of my heart, please help us to be able to continue allowing children like this to walk away with smiles on their faces with a new pair of shoes.

Announcer: This coming Christmas, please help us give a gift that children will treasure and it will protect their precious lives. Help us give the gift of Christmas shoes.

End of video

In the studio:

James: Don't y'all like to see that? Is that beautiful? Honey, what does that do to you when you watch that?

Betty: It just means so much to me. I see those little children and I think, it is so much more than offering them a pair of shoes to put on their feet. Most of them probably never had a pair of shoes but it means so much more because it is going protect them from the diseases of all the different trash and everything on the ground that they walk through because they can't avoid it, there's so much of it. But just to see the smiles on their faces.

We do a lot of wonderful things, giving water, feeding hungry children, helping those that need medical needs and all kinds of things to help them. But this brings such great joy to my heart and it must yours too because there is nothing like the smile of a child.

James: I want to thank you because you know, Betty, when we show the needs, our viewers don't look away. You don't immediately change channels. You kind of channel in. I feel like you see the heart of God. I just wish I could embrace you and give you a hug for all the little children and all the people you embrace with the loving arms of God. That's what we're doing.

Betty, you referenced the medical things that we do. In this particular time of the year we talk about shoes and smiles for Christmas. We do cleft palate surgery and little facial surgery where children have never been able, some of them to not even eat right or to even speak right and we

give them a smile. Those surgeries because of the doctors working with us are \$500 each. We're asking people to consider giving, would you consider giving a couple of smiles for Christmas? And those \$1,000 gifts will do that or a \$500 gift. We want you to know what it does.

But the shoes, now think about this, \$36 will give ten children a pair of shoes; \$180 will give 50 kids a pair of shoes. Now if you watch me very often I will never help you think small. I'm always -- I think we can think small pretty well on our own. I'm always going to try to get you to think maybe beyond anything you ever did. \$180 for 50 kids, boy, that's going to mean so much. The missionaries know exactly where the need is.

Would you help us? Could you do that? Or could you give the \$36? There's no gift too small. What's it going to mean to those children to get those? Those ten kids? It will mean a whole lot. Please can you help? Will you do it?

I always get a smile when I pick these up. These little Christmas shoes. Here's one for this year and we're giving one for any gift. You hang them on the tree. Our tree is covered with shoes. Here's a gift of three of the shoes; and you make a gift of \$100 or more, I'm asking for the \$180 for the 50 kids shoes, we're sending this to say thanks. And also the beautiful bronze, "The Arms of the Shepherd."

You do what God leads you to do. You're going to put a smile on a child's face and gratitude in their heart and we're going to tell them about the Christ of Christmas. We need to raise the funds now way ahead of time so we can deliver all those shoes and those smiles during the Christmas season. Thank you. Go to the phone, use your bankcard like a check, or you can go online.

Father, I pray everyone who can help will do so with joy; in Jesus' name.

Thank you so much for doing it. Please do it now.

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:**

James: Thank you so much for your gift. I want to mention this. You can get the book online, but I'll tell you what, you help us give some shoes and smiles, you say, "Could y'all possibly send us Darryl's book?" Well, if they've still got them, Darryl and we can get some of them, we'll do it. Okay? Can we do that? And we'll send it to say thanks. If you think, you know

what? This story just might change the life of somebody I love, we'll be so happy to send it to you.

Aren't you glad you were here? And don't you appreciate his testimony? We love y'all!

Thank God for you. Thank you for praying for us. I know in our exchange you love what we're doing. Thank you.

Thanks for watching. Thanks for being with us.