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Week 42: Mission: Rescue Life

James and Betty Robison

Kasey Van Norman

James: Y'all are good. Welcome! Welcome to you. James Robison here, and my wife Betty, and we're approaching anniversary 57! Hard to believe; isn't it?

Betty: We were just children when we got married.

James: We were just kids. Still are. We're still kids. This is an amazing journey. You don't call it like the kind of journey most people want but the title kind of summarizes reality, *Nothing Wasted*: God uses the stuff you wouldn't.

Kasey has been through a lot of stuff. She's been through cancer. Miracle! Kind of told her story here. She's been through real challenges in her life. And then in marriage she -- let's just face it, she tells you she could have wasted everything. You might say if you get real honest about it, which she is totally honest, she made a mess that only God could prove the truth of that.

Would you welcome Kasey Van Norman to *LIFE Today*? Kasey, good to see you.

Betty: Good to have you back, Kasey.

James: A lot of story here. It's captivating so people get into it it's going to carry them. So you got a rough start. It kind of probably set the stage for some vulnerability and some inappropriate action but then you got in a marriage, and then inappropriate action came again. So it looks like you were pretty well digging an impossible situation.

Kasey: Yes. This is why this message is so important to me because our God is such an intentional God who designed every part of our life, of our past. It's meaningful. It's intentional. It's purposeful. I think if anyone who would want to dismiss their past or disconnect themselves from their past experiences in relationships it would be me.

And yet, I found the greatest sense of freedom and peace, and really the reality of God in embracing those parts of me, even the worst parts of me, even the boring average parts of me, the parts that I didn't want to look at, that I didn't want to take ownership of. And when I finally, truly allowed all of those pieces to become a part of my story, I could see God working to draw me to himself in all these things. Things like a broken home and a really chaotic, dysfunctional family, and a father who left; things that I think unfortunately are such a common story now.

James: That was your childhood?

Kasey: That my childhood, yeah. I grew up in the Bible belt of the world, East Texas. So it is really cool to be a Christian, and easy to be a Christian and that's, in and of itself can be a drug, going to church, religion, doing the things of God that we completely miss God. I had this really big moment, this crux of my life story when I was 15 years old because I was really clinging at everything to make sense of God and make sense of why I felt this deep self-loathing, rejection, abandonment, why I wasn't enough, why I... I had all those questions for God.

I'll never forget I was 15 years old. I went to a "True Love Waits" Conference. Remember when those were -- that was a big thing back in the '90s. It's a little ironic because they place about seven boys that look like Justin Bieber on the stage and they say, "Don't have sex with these guys."

[Laughter]

You walk forward and you get this ring and it is to signify your purity and that you're going to keep yourself pure until you're married. That moment I remember walking forward, smoke and

the guys with their hair and everything, and really meaning it. Really meaning it at 15, as much as I knew in my heart that I was going to promise my purity to the Lord.

And about three months after that conference I was molested and raped by an older man. And that's not so much the story as is what took place after that and this wounding that manifested itself in my heart and in my mind. And to really think that you are not useful but then to have a physical experience of that, feeling so unworthy and so useless and like someone's garbage; that did a number in my heart and soul as it would for anyone and has for so many.

I just used everything. Everything you want to imagine, bought the T-shirt, went to the concert, I did just to try to numb that including church. I just learned to play this part. Because I was really in love with a lie.

I talk about that a lot in the book is how we can become really consumed with the lie because we placed so much of our resources and our time and our energy into this thing. And if it's not true of us, which it wasn't true, but if it is not true of us it is like we've wasted so much time we don't want to deal with the reality of what's been happening. That was me. I didn't want to look at this part of me that was bitter and angry because I really felt like I had made a promise to God and kept it and yet God had not kept his. As crazy as it sounds, I can look back at this now, in hindsight and say I even married my husband as another Band-Aid to try to distract others and myself from the reality of who I was and what I was going through and the depression.

I remember Justin, he is a mighty fine cowboy and he looks good in a pair of Wranglers. And he comes from good Baptist stock. He's a good guy and he came from this wonderful family, didn't seem to have all the problems that I had. He had saved himself for marriage. He truly was a virgin. I had all of this stuff. I had all of this stuff and I couldn't bring myself to tell him. I remember standing at the altar with all of this stuff and just hoping and praying that everybody would see him in his goodness then it would deflect off of me. I loved him. I loved him as much as I knew what that was.

Several years into our marriage, several babies later, depression later, I was addicted to

prescription pills and I would find myself playing this part in the day, leading ministries, leading Bible studies, leading worship teams, had a beautiful home, hosted lots of parties and about 2:00 in the morning I would wake up and I would find myself in our closet tucked beneath our clothes in the corner sobbing. It was exactly -- it was me as a child. Here I am, a 25-year old woman and I'm still this five, ten-year old girl completely insecure, feeling completely rejected, completely lost and feeling like at the end of the day eventually, Justin was going to reject me if he knew all this stuff.

We had wonderful community, wonderful friends in our church. I had a best friend and I began to share with them. And they began to notice in me changes of depression and isolation; just a darkness in me and become concerned, specifically, the husband, my best friend's husband became concerned and we began to talk.

And at first it was just a bond, just an emotional bond or tie. He had experienced some of those things in his own life and his own childhood and we just bonded in that. And slowly over time I really felt like oh, maybe this was the man I was supposed to be with. Maybe I missed it. Maybe in all of my mess, I wasn't supposed to end up with Justin and I was supposed -- and that's what we do, we justify our sin. And Satan is really tricky because we can even justify our sin for the sake of others. And I would use God and I would use not wanting to hurt my husband to justify this affair.

I was in an adulterous relationship with this man for three years in our church, in leadership in our church. At the end of three years I was a mess -- literally, and I'm not trying to be over-spiritual, I really am not. I was dying from the inside out because God doesn't let his children sin successfully. And I really truly was a believer, not the story of all this mess, then I came to know the Lord. I really knew the Lord, I really wanted him to save me. And how in the world would somebody like that in this habitual pattern of sin in her life, I mean, it wrecks me to think about it.

James: Okay. So now you've got to think if all this gets found out this guy has got to be gone. So I'll catch everything I deserve. You're really digging your own grave; right? And basically,

that's where you're living.

What in the world happened because it just looks to me like, from an average point of view it is just hopeless.

Kasey: Yeah. Everything was exposed. She found the phone records and there it was, this lie that we built and our little world, our little fictional world.

James: The other person's spouse.

Kasey: Yes. My best friend -- my best friend. Totally spirit --

James: Yeah, it doesn't take a real spirit-filled person to figure out they ought to tell you off; you know that?

Kasey: Yeah! Yeah!

James: I mean you really messed up. Am I helping you right now?

Kasey: Yes!

James: I mean it is just the truth. The devil is telling you what you are. You have to agree with him.

Kasey: No. I think this is so important. I'm so glad that this is what I go through in the book because I needed to experience the brokenness and the sorrow of my sin because that is where healing is. It is in this honest place, and this purity. And you even see David crying out and saying, "Thank you for breaking my bones, Lord. That you can purge me into my secret heart and clean me with hyssop. Hyssop was a plant that was used for medicine.

James: So you weren't looking at your failure as something to be defended. You weren't trying

to like defend yourself. You actually...

Kasey: Not at that moment, I was done. I was begging the Lord because I could not carry this thing anymore. Truly.

Betty: Well, you had to have lived with low self-esteem. You didn't see anything good in yourself. I think maybe even God giving you the man that he gave you, you saw the goodness in him and felt some of that goodness would rub off on you.

Kasey: That's exactly, Betty, what I thought.

James: But you couldn't really believe it would. How could it possibly?

Kasey: Yes. So here's what happened and this is where the book really starts. This is ten years ago, this is a decade of hindsight here. Here's Justin and he is hearing this information, and completely betrayed, and he is thinking everything that anybody would think at that moment.

James: It wasn't like this woman came and redemptively dumped all of this on him either. Bow!

Kasey: And he wants to leave, and he is angry and he is hurt and all of those feelings he felt. I fully expected him to. Instead, and this isn't everyone's story but this is my story. And this is how the Lord became real to me and that's the point of this, is I want Christians to stop living with God as a concept. I want him to be real to them and experience him. And that came in the form of my man standing there and saying, "Hey, I'm so hurt." And these were his exact words. "But I don't know how to not love you. I don't know how to not love you."

James: God bless him! What's his name?

Kasey: Justin.

James: Justin, that's amazing, buddy. That's much of a man but it is that man. So much bigger than you in you. And I just admire you, salute, I wish your picture was back here with your wife. I look back here to see if it was because you're the real deal, man. You let him be who he is in you.

And I want to thank you, Justin. From the bottom of my heart, thank you for showing us that love for her. Because you know I was already doing the judge/jury deal all by myself. And she is feeling the same way, and you showed us something so much greater, you showed her something so much greater, and now then as a couple, you're showing a whole lot of people something much greater. You've made your home into a haven for the hurting and you're trying to get God's arms around people; right?

Kasey: Yes. Yes!

James: And don't you have a ministry now? The name if they want to know how do we maybe get some help that y'all are offering. Where would they go to find it?

Kasey: They can go to my website, KaseyVanNorman.org.

James: And you do have help in the College Station area, but you also go out and speak. Go ahead and finish the story. I didn't mean to cut you off here. But I was fixing to leave.

[Laughter]

This whole deal is that he's showing us Jesus, but it got on you.

Kasey: Right! And that is where the gap was closed for me because there was a gap in my life. And I think that's a big part of the book is I'm speaking to Christians who feel disconnected in some way to the Lord because of their past. So there's messaging out there now that's saying we're not our past, we're not defined by our past but as a professional counselor, I can tell you it's just physiologically impossible not to be defined by your past. And there's something so

liberating and clarifying when we take ownership and embrace those parts of us.

And for me, this is where God was no longer a concept or something I just said that sounded good or a message. He was my reality because now I have this man who is, I have nothing to offer him, I have cheated on him, which is what we can do to the Lord, just prostitute ourselves out to all these other gods and just cheat on him, and run the other direction. And yet, here is Jesus standing here saying, "I don't know how to not love you. To not love you would be to turn on myself and I'm here to do the will of the Father which is to love you."

And that is the work of the gospel in our lives. That is the good news that on our worst day in our most unlikely places, God is using that material, that resource. Not taking from somebody else's good day or bad day, he is using our life, our story. And for us to find the words and the language to put around that is powerful because it integrates us with who God is and it draws us into his will for our life. I hope this helps readers do that.

James: The book is so well written. Would you say thank you to God? And thanks to Kasey and Justin? She just downloaded so much truth. What she is saying about how God is this way and he takes the brokenness that we're treating and trying to medicate in all the wrong ways, and people trying to escape all the highs and getting away from reality rather than letting the Lord take that reality and make something incredibly beautiful and magnificent out of it, which this big mess proves it wasn't wasted. But you're talking about the greatness of God enabled somebody to do that which you couldn't do, like what Justin did.

Kasey, I've been hurt by, even in my journey with the Lord, when I say I'm going to go wherever you want, God, no boundaries. I'm not going to be bound by sectarian divide, partisan divide. I'm just going to love and never going to compromise knowingly your word. And what happened is God put something, I can't not forgive.

In other words, you're talking about a God doing something so full of mercy and grace. You saw it through your husband and then you had to receive it. It was easier for him to give it to you than it was for you to receive it -- but you received it and that's the miracle. That's what you want

everybody to receive. It's what you're trying to share in counselling. It's what the story is and it's what all of you, I pray with all my heart that you'll understand that this great Jesus can come in and live in us in His grace and greatness.

Father, do it. Precious people, so much there that is painful and hurtful, often self-inflicted but sometimes it seems to come from the most unexplainable, unexpected places. God, heal. Let them see your greatness and your grace; in Jesus' name.

If you want someone to pray with you, you see that phone number there? It's paid for by love. Do you realize that? Do you know there's never a day goes by more than 1,000, 1500 people don't call and they say, "Please, I want God's arms around me." But they're also saying, "I want to learn how to put God's arms around others."

Let me tell you what you can do right now. You can be the miracle like Kasey didn't expect. You can be the miracle somebody longs for and never believed possible and it will change everything. Would you like to be that kind of miracle that Kasey was for her? How about for someone that's really been abused and there is no way of escape without a miracle? There really wasn't for Kasey. But there is a way, it is the way of love through you and I believe with all my heart you're going to want to be the miracle that you can be, perhaps for many. Watch!

On the mission field:

Ralph: We're standing here today on the edge of two countries, India and Nepal. And what you see behind me is a flow of vehicles, people. There's a lot of business going on out here. What we don't see so clearly though is the evilness, the darkness because some of these people are actually being trafficked against their will.

>> For years and years and years, thousands and thousands of Nepali children, Nepali girls and even older women have been trafficked into India. And from India, they're taken into third countries like Middle Eastern countries. So there's such a need for us to be able to do something

to prevent this. So our program allows us to install teams of people right at the border between Nepal and India.

Ralph: Is that what these girls and the men in the yellow shirts are doing?

>> Yes! That's our staff. We have about 55 people located in three different stations that cover the three trading, major trading posts between Nepal and India. We have been able to rescue over 1900 women, girls and boys over the course of three or four years from three different stations. So it's been a huge, huge success just to be able to curtail the trafficking problem in Nepal.

Ralph: All day long just watching for girl -- seven days a week. Any of you who are parents out there, the feeling that you have, to have one of your own little girls tricked by traffickers, let's just say for the next 20 years of her little life, she is going to be a slave to men and they're never to be heard of again.

That would break my heart to have my own daughter caught in a situation where she can't get out and just to be used and abused day after day, night after night. I think that would break your heart too. I know it breaks mine. We need to do something about that.

End of video

In the studio:

James: And we will together. I can't look at Ralph and these precious daughters that are just beautiful girls and knowing that our mission director and overseer said good-bye to his wife not too long ago. And there he is. And these beautiful girls, his daughters are precious. There's a dad that's just trying to put God's arms around the most overlooked, abused, hurt people, perhaps on the planet.

Would you please join Ralph who goes right there? And look at all these incredible mission workers that your love and your support makes possible to support the outreaches. Not only there on the border of India and Nepal but all over the world. And then the sex capital of the world, the

most unbelievable home for trafficked children that have been totally changed all by love.

We have an amazing, Betty, this just stuns me. Some of our donors said we so believe in this, it's so important to us, would you join with these people? Think about what they did. They stepped up and said, we'll give \$320,000 as a matching gift, Betty to everyone who will make a gift we'll match it. It takes an average of \$128 to reach, rescue, and begin the restoration process.

I always challenge our viewers, you know I do this, I want to elevate your thinking. If you can give \$128 please do. It will be doubled. You'll reach two. But I always say to our viewers, could you possibly rescue ten? Could you give \$1280? Would you please? Betty and I will. And we know it will be matched because of the love in people just like you. All right, what you do will be doubled.

We have some beautiful gifts to send you to say thank you. We'd like to bless you. But you're giving the greatest blessing, you're giving freedom and life. Please right now go get your bankcard, would you do that? Or write a check, make it to *LIFE*. That's what you're giving! Or get that card and go online or dial the phone number there that people are calling in for prayer. And that's paid for by your love. But would you call right now and say, put this on my card, knowing it will be doubled. If you could help rescue ten or even more, do it. Rescue one it will be two. Please right now you respond as God's leading you to and you immediately become someone's miracle. Thank you for doing it.

Begin video clip

Announcer: Behind the bright lights there's a darkness where a world of innocence is lost, and abuse runs rampant scarring the souls of children with no one and nowhere to turn for help. With bodies broken and hopes crushed, these young victims are trapped in a never-ending nightmare.

Today you can shine the light of God's love in this dark world to reach, rescue, and restore these young ones to the life God designed for them to live. With a generous \$320,000 matching gift,

now your gift of \$128 to help rescue a child can be doubled to help two children. Your \$64 gift will be matched to help rescue one child from the horrors of human trafficking. And a \$32 Mission Rescue gift will be doubled to \$64.

And with your donation of any amount we'll send you the faith, hope, love tea towel set. These beautifully woven hand towels are a wonderful reminder to remain steadfast in faith, hope, and love each day.

With your gift of \$128 or more you'll receive the life-giving Proverbs journal bound in genuine leather. This journal is filled with wisdom and daily encouragement from Proverbs, featuring lined pages for your personal notes as you reflect on godly instruction to success in life.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1,280 which will now help rescue 20 children! And you may request our beautiful bronze sculpture, "Safe in the Shepherd's Arms."

Please call, write, or make your gift online.

End of video

In the studio:

James: I'm believing with all my heart the response is just going to be just exhilarating, just fill us with gratitude for your love, poured out on people that need it desperately.

Sending you the beautiful journal, the Proverbs, the wisdom of the Proverbs. The beautiful tapestries that are hanging; we call them cup towels. Some people call them other things but they are beautiful: Faith, hope, and love. And you can hang them in a place just to remind you of the faith, hope, and love that you've been sharing.

And if you'd like to have Kasey's book you say, "James, I know someone that needs that story" or "I need it." You just help us put God's arms around these precious ones we've been talking about and you say, "Would you mind sending me that? I sure would like to have it." We'll send

it to you. You can get it in the bookstores or get it on line, but you help us help others and you say, "Would you send it?" You better believe we will. Thank you so much.

Would you join Betty and me in saying thanks to Kasey for blessing us? Thank you very much! You're a blessing. And thanks to Justin. Justin, I want you to send me your picture. Okay? I'm going to pray for you. Need more like you. God bless all of you.