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Week 15: Rescue Life, Last Week

James and Betty Robison

Jason Brown

James: Hey listen! James Robison, Betty here. We're Cowboy fans but we're old enough to remember back when we used to could really play and win some Super Bowls. It's been a long time now. I have to remember a lot of you weren't even born. Our guest, a great football player as the highest paid center in football. And he played for the Ravens, he played for what was the St. Louis Rams. But Jason did something real unusual. He left football. It sounded like the craziest thing in the world -- to go be a farmer. But it was a farmer on a mission.

I want you to welcome this football player. Would you welcome Jason Brown to *LIFE Today*? Jason, glad to see you, buddy.

Jason: Thank you for having me. Glad to be here.

James: I appreciate it. We're not going to go back and repeat it but you told me all the responsibility. I knew a center is one of the most valuable and has to be one of the most talented players on the entire offense, period -- quarterback and all. You told me things that I didn't know. We're not going over it again. But centers, many times had to direct all of what the linemen are doing, what the defense is doing, more than the quarterback did. You said some quarterbacks got a little sharper where they could help a little bit. But anyway, you were very interesting.

I want to know why, when you had a great football career... And by the way, I do want you to tell our viewers about your brother that influenced you so much. Because your brother's life on you made a big enough impact that in many ways it transformed your life. But it probably, at

least I get the impression, even had something to do why you would leave a great successful football career and go be a farmer. So just take that and unravel it and share it with your viewers the way you want to.

Jason: So when I was a junior in college, just 20 years old, my older brother, Lunsford Bernard Brown II decided he was going to make a big change in his life, and he joined the United States army. He was signed up to go to basic training and boot camp on September the 9th of 2001. And everybody knows what happened two days later, September 11th. And so our country went from a time of peace to a time of war very quickly. He was stationed in Germany for a period of time before he was called into service in Iraq and Afghanistan. In 2003, he paid the ultimate sacrifice and he gave his life in service.

It struck me so much to my core. I didn't know if I was going to continue playing football or not. I was ready to drop out of college, I was ready to quit football because literally the rug was snatched from underneath me. I didn't know what was real anymore. If someone who you love can just be taken away from you. But I knew how much he cared about my success and my future. And I said, "I'm going to live for his legacy and for his memory. I'm going to memorialize my brother by trying to be the best person I can be, the best football player I can be."

And that's exactly what I did. I was "whooping tail and taking names" as they say. It propelled me to be drafted by the Baltimore Ravens in 2005. I earned the highest paid contract for a center at the time with the St. Louis Rams. And now seven years had passed and I'm at the top of my mountain. Couldn't make any more money, couldn't reach any higher in fortune or fame, and I'd turned 27 years old, the same age that Lunsford was when he was slain in service.

When I walked into the bathroom that morning, I looked in the mirror, I didn't like what I saw. Because Lunsford had lived a life of service and I was living a life of entertainment, fame and fortune. He wore a size 14 shoe, I wear a size 16 shoe. I couldn't wear his shoes nor could I walk a mile in his shoes. And so many kids, they would come up to me and say, "Oh Jason, what you're doing is so great!" Like, "You're my hero!"

I would say, "I can't take that title, kid, because I know a hero. My Lord and savior Jesus Christ, that's my hero who said this, 'Love hath no greater deed than this that a man lay down his life for his friends.'" He did that. And my older brother, he did that as well.

So at that point going forward I said, I've got to make a change in my life. That was my first coming-to-Jesus moment. But still at the same time I was still playing church, still enjoying, I remember that 12,000 square foot mansion in St. Louis. Going to church on Sunday, putting on that false godliness, and then living like hell Monday through Saturday.

My wife knew the real me. She knew how much of a hypocrite I was. At the time she couldn't stand me. I was on my way towards being a statistic, just like most professional athletes, headed towards divorce. She had already drafted up the papers, I just wasn't served yet. And I said, "Jesus, I know that you can save my marriage. I know that you can redeem and restore my family."

And he gave me a crystal clear vision that night in that mansion. He showed me the brokenness. He showed me the divorce. He showed me that I wasn't even able to hug or kiss my children anymore. He showed me the weeping and the gnashing of teeth. When he showed me that I was standing upright in our home but when we finished I was down on my knees. I was at a position of such brokenness. I said, "Whatever you want me to do I'll do it. You say the words right now. I know that you can redeem and restore my family. Whatever you want me to do I'll do it. You just say the words."

And for the first time I heard a clear audible voice from the Holy Spirit. Holy Spirit said, "Pour it all down the drain." I'm like, "I said I'll do whatever you want me to do, Jesus. I don't understand. What does that mean?" "Pour it out all down the drain." When I looked behind me I was on my knees in front of one of the bars in our home. And I'm not a drinking man. All right? All these bottles, they were uncorked but guess what? We weren't uplifting the name of Jesus in our home. I was uplifting the name of Captain Morgan and Jack Daniels. But in obedience I snatched up a trash can and started uncorking each one and pouring them down the drain -- even that bottle of Louis XIII that cost more than \$2,000! I poured it all down the drain.

And I'm making all this noise going on 12:00 at night and Tay, my wife came out of the bedroom, "What are you doing making all this noise at night?" And she could see the tears and the snot just pouring down from my face. And I said, "I'm pouring it all down the drain."

"Yeah, I can see that. Why?"

I said, "Because Jesus told me to."

And she just took a step back because she had never seen that type of humility or surrendering to Jesus before because I was bad Jason Brown -- like nobody could tell me anything. But that was my first act of obedience. Within that, just asking Jesus, "What else do you want me to do? With all the gifts, the talents, the blessings you've given me, you tell me to do it, I will do it right now. Whether it is continue to play football, whether it is leave football, I'll run for you."

And Jesus, he started sharing with me about hunger and food and security. And I'm like, "Okay, well, thank you Jesus." I took my truck, went to Sam's Club, loaded up with a whole bunch of non-perishables and food items and I said, "All right, me and my family, we're ready."

He said, "No, Jason. I haven't been blessing you for my blessings to stop at you. I've been blessing you for my blessings to flow through you."

I was like oh! So I said, "What is it? What do you want me to do?"

He said, "I want you to feed my people. I want you to take care of my sheep." It wasn't just feeding people the Word of God but literally meeting people's immediate needs. What it truly means to love thy neighbor.

And so of course when we think about hunger we're only, a lot of times we only think about third-world countries but there is a lot of need in our very own backyard. And North Carolina ranks 10th in our nation as far as food and security.

And so I said, "Okay. So you want me to do something about this? You mean you want me to give food?" And I'm thinking, where does food come from? All right? I'm like it doesn't come from the grocery stores. It doesn't show up on the dollar menu. I said, "It comes from farms. You mean you want me to grow food and be a farmer?"

Like ding ding ding ding! Yes, Jason!

I'm like, "Hold on a second now. Like I'm not prepared. I'm not qualified. I don't know anything about this. Like what's going on?"

And of course, he tells me, "I'll apply all your needs. All you need to do is just walk and step in faith."

And so at this time I was still under contract for two years, two more years with the St. Louis Rams. And I'm like, "Okay, well, I'm still going to play football for a few more years but if you give me a way out, Jesus, then I'll hang up my cleats and I'll run for you."

Sure enough, the St. Louis Rams early 2012 released me. And I'm like okay, this is coming real quick. Like what's going on here? And then the temptation comes. My agent calls me up and says, "Jason, you can't leave because there are three teams that want to sign you to a long-term deal right now."

I'm like, "Well, who are they?"

The next three teams that he says are the Carolina Panthers, the Baltimore Ravens and the San Francisco 49ers. And only myself and Tay knew at the time that those were the specific three teams that I wanted to play for more so than anything. And the odds of that happening are astronomical -- 31 times 30 times 29, that's almost one in 30,000. But of course Satan he was saying, "Jason, don't go and serve God. I'll make you a new deal." And that was one of the hardest decisions that I've ever had to make because I actually contemplated turning my back on

God to go back after the world.

But here's the leap of faith; is that I finally took the courage to sell that mansion in St. Louis, move back to North Carolina, didn't have a home to move into but we went back in faith. My wife and I, our first covenant, that was our marriage, here was our second covenant. We said, "God, whatever lands you bless us with, whatever farm you bless us with, we're going to name it First Fruits Farm and we're going to give your people, God, our neighbors who you have called us to love, the first fruits of whatever is produced and grown on our land."

And here's what happened. God opened up the windows of heaven because he blessed us with the most beautiful farm in all of North Carolina. Guys, I can't make this up. Like God is just so awesome.

James: Yes, he is! You don't have to try to explain that. It is unexplainable but it is one we can experience. Okay, you've got a great farm. How many are you feeding now with your first fruits? Just tell us what's happening every year.

Jason: So of course, I started out still not knowing a thing about farming. Didn't have any equipment. Here's an awesome part of my testimony that I don't share with a lot of people. But I said, "God, I still don't have a testimony yet. I want you to write my testimony. You're the author, you're the creator, I want you to write it." And I said, "God, I want to be taken to a place where I need you, where I cry out to you."

Don't ask me why I said that prayer! All right? And you've got to be real careful. I know you've said some pretty bold prayers before where you're like, "Did I just ask God for more responsibility? Did I just ask God for more suffering?" Okay?

Here's what happened. Right after we got the place in 2013, some real crazy things started happening with our finances. The good Lord giveth and the good Lord taketh away. We went from being wealthy and having millions of dollars to having to budget our finances just like we were back in college at ground zero. And I felt forsaken. Because I said, "God, why did you

allow me to purchase this farm? Why did you call me to a farm to be a farmer and now I'm supposed to get ready to go and farm the fields and I don't have any seeds? I don't have any seed money. I don't have any equipment."

And God said, "Jason, cry out to me now!"

And you know where I found myself? Right back on my knees, tears coming down my face. I said, "God, you're going to bless me." Amen? I said, "All these other farmers out here, they don't work for you but I work for you." Okay? I said, "God, you're going to bless me."

And that very first year with no equipment, no experience of my own, it was just simply me walking in faith. Called on other farmers in our community. We planted five acres of sweet potatoes without a dollar to my name. And then I said, "Hold on a second, God. Five acres of sweet potatoes will yield more than 100,000 pounds. Like who is going to harvest all these sweet potatoes? Where's all the labor going to come from?"

God said, "Don't worry. You plant the field, just like the *Field of Dreams*, I'll make sure that they come."

I'm like, "Who's going to come? Like who are the people that are just ready to knock your door down saying, "Yeah! I want to help give some physical labor."

And sure enough, we prayed about it. The Society of Saint Andrew gave us a phone call, a network of gleaners and said, "Hey, we heard that you might have some gleaning opportunities at First Fruits Farm. We just want you to let you know that we have a network with thousands of volunteers in the triangle area."

I'm like, "Who are you angels? Where did you come from?" I said, "The unfortunate thing is that we're not going to have many gleaning opportunities. We're going to have harvesting opportunities at First Fruits Farm."

And that very first year more than 600 volunteers showed up to our farm to harvest more than 120,000 pounds of sweet potatoes. And over the past five years, we've grown, harvested, and donated more than a million pounds of food. And here's the awesome part of the miracle is that a lot people think it was done in Jason Brown's own might, or in my bank account, and little did they know is that it was all done by God's grace and mercy operating on hope, faith, and a prayer -- and the community coming together in love.

I have such a long list of answered prayers; all right? Just like War Room, God is batting a thousand. Okay! Like a long list of answered prayers. I'm just so thankful.

James: And he's just getting started too; isn't he? Where do you see, because I want...? What's the website if people say, "Look, we want to be involved. We want to support what you're doing. We want to see it multiply." We may want them to find a way to help either financially or manpower, where do they go to find you?

Jason: Our website is WisdomForLife.org. F-O-R is spelled out. We received a few donations, help here and there, partnered with a few other local churches. But one thing that we desire is also for people, you can start your own First Fruits Farm or a garden wherever you are. There's nothing proprietary that we own as far as farming and gardening. It is something that God called Adam and Eve to do from the very beginning.

James: And you're feeding people that have a need for food. You're feeding the hungry. Do you like what God's doing and done in Jason's life? This is an amazing, amazing journey. I pray that you will take... There's the website and you'll really be praying for him.

I just Lord, ask you to multiply it beyond anything Jason ever even imagined. And Lord, he's got eight beautiful children. I pray you'll be the best father kids could ever have, pointing them to the ultimate Father with his life, his example, his love, and love for others. God, just multiply this witness literally to the ends of the earth; in Jesus' name.

Jason, you're really an example, I think, of the kind of love that God wants to begin to pour out

through his family, the church. Betty, our viewers put their arms around people all over the world. Right now we're involved in Rescue Life. I want you to listen to somebody you really respect. I want you to listen to Sheila Walsh as she shares God's heart. And you're going to be the miracle her heart's crying out for in behalf of people who desperately need a miracle. Watch closely.

On the mission field:

Sheila: Sex trafficking is the worst kind of prison I've ever seen. I've been in maximum security prisons. I've talked to women on death row. There is a worse kind of prison than that and that's sex trafficking because it is pure evil.

Open captions:

>> I was blindfolded and locked inside a room. A guard at the door brought in many men every night.

>> The men make me take drugs. If I don't do what they want I will get beaten.

>> They said, "We have no problem in killing you. We have done it many times. We will kill you and throw you out of the window. There will be no help for you."

Sheila: We will rise up and we will change this, and we will do it because -- our whole thing here at *LIFE* is reach, rescue, restore. Reach her and let her know, hey! There is a better way for you to live your life. You don't have to do this. Rescue -- go into these horrible bars and clubs and brothels and rescue these girls. And then restore them; bring them to a place where they can learn their value in Christ. The value that God places on their life is not diminished by what they have to do every night. And because of that we get to tell them you're not a number. We will step in. We will say, "Let us be your spiritual mom and dad much let us be your big sister in Christ. Let us be the ones who come and fight for you because you are worth fighting for."

End of video

In the studio:

James: We've been really, really blessed by Jason's testimony. Let me thank you because it's people like you that made his dream begin to unfold and I think it is just beginning. This is the last week and I'm just praying, Betty, I know you're praying with me, if you can help please do so. And know that whatever you do, it's going to be doubled, it's going to be matched because of love. Thank you so much for watching.

Would you join Betty and me in saying thanks to Jason for being a blessing? Jason, we love you. We pray for your family, we pray for those eight children. You be a great father to those kids. Okay? And a great husband.

Thank you for watching *LIFE Today*. Thank you so much for sharing life.