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Week 27: WFL

Randy Robison and Sheila Walsh

John Tesh

Randy: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm Randy Robison. Sheila is with me as always. It's great to have you guys here because we have a guest that is going to give you some hope today. I talked to John Tesh a few weeks ago on *LIFE Today* live, which is online on our social media platforms. I was like, you know, everybody needs to hear this. Everybody watching television needs to hear this. He's got a book called *Relentless*, and it is about not giving up. I know this has been a tough year for a lot of people. A lot of years are tough for a lot of people but especially this one. We need some encouragement to just keep going, to have some hope. So John Tesh is here. John, how are you doing out there?

John: I'm well, I'm healed, I'm whole and I'm in my basement so I'm good.

Randy: When you say you're healed, you're whole, people that don't know what you've been through might wonder what that means. Tell us how you're doing and how you fought.

John: Well, in 2015 I went to the doctor for a routine exam. He found the most aggressive form of prostate cancer that he'd ever seen before. It didn't show up in my blood, I didn't have any symptoms, whatever. It was a rare form of non-PSA producing

prostate cancer. So that exam led to another exam and then to a biopsy. And then within about a week I was given 18 months to 2 years to live. This was in May of 2015.

So it was literally the tablecloth being pulled out and all of the silverware going everywhere. It was our lives. My wife, Connie, Connie Sellecca, and our kids, and grandkids, everybody just stopped. It was like, what? What happened?

So we're connected to some good, like you guys, we're connected to some good hospitals and some good doctors. We made a bunch of phone calls, did a bunch of research and that ended up being two major surgeries, bone biopsies, chemotherapy, and it was... "Yeah, we could probably give you two years to live at the outset but that's about it."

So that journey lasted for about three years. During that period of time somebody handed me a CD of somebody you know, Andrew Womack who is a Bible teacher out in Woodland Park, Colorado. The message was basically all about Mark 11:23. So in the middle of this journey, I had faith in the doctors, if I hadn't, I'd be dead. But in the middle of that when the cancer kept coming back, every time I'd get a test three months later, four months later, they'd find another lymph node and it lit up.

I finally was out the options when they got to the point where they wanted to fire bomb my pelvis with... carpet bomb as they called it with 57 treatments of radiation. They went through a list of contraindications of all the different... I might lose this function, that function, and when they got to the functions that I really wanted to keep, I had a look with my wife at that point and an amazing amount of revelation and faith was born and we stood on Mark 11:23 and 2 years later there is not a trace of cancer. That's the real

short story. As you know, the grueling specifics are in that book.

Sheila: For those, John, who might not know what Mark 11:23 is, what is that scripture?

John: You can read it on my arm. It's right here tattooed on my arm. It is, "Whoever says to this mountain, be removed and be cast into the sea and does not doubt but believes that what he says will be done shall have whatever he says." Basically, Jesus talking and talking about the fact that you will, with faith-filled words have what you say.

So I grew up in the Methodist church. Way back, I was born in 1952 and my dad ran the church. I had two uncles that are Baptist preachers and nobody really taught me that when Jesus went to the cross he not only took our sins and it was worth salvation but he also took our griefs, our sorrows and our sicknesses.

Until I got to that revelation, my wife and I both, and then got to Proverbs 18:21, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue," I was begging God. I thought God had put this sickness on me. I thought that I had given myself the sickness.

In fact, I still believe that. Because when I was 63 I was diagnosed and my dad, at 63 years old, same year in his life, he died from cancer. So I'm sure that my worrying helped to manifest that in my life.

Sheila: When I read this book, *Relentless*, which is amazing, it was, even though I've known of you and I've loved your music for so many years, I had no idea that you went through so much rough stuff as a young guy. Could you just give the kind of CliffsNotes

of how you got to where you got to?

John: Well, if you're familiar with the story of Hernan Cortes burning his ships so that his men would take the island and they wouldn't mutiny, I burned my ships a couple of times in my lifetime. And most of the things that happened to me, I guess it is like this with a lot of people were self-inflicted.

And the story that everybody loves is when I was 19, I tried to change my major in college from textile chemistry, my dad was vice president at Hanes underwear, and he wanted me to follow in his footsteps. I wanted to be a performer. My whole life I had musical training and theater training and all that. So my dad sent me to school to study textile chemistry. I lasted about five or six semesters. And then I wanted to change my major without telling him and without permission from one of my professors.

I'm shortening the story, it's going to sound even worse. I took a leap of faith and I signed my professor's name to the drop/add card to try and drop my statistics course. He checked and in a room of 120 kids, lecture hall, he checked and then filed a grievance against me. And at 19-and-a-half, 20 years old, the university asked me to leave. They suspended me indefinitely; said I had broken the honor code, which I had.

And then my dad, a very honorable World War II veteran, he threw me out of the house saying I was no longer welcome in his house. And then my girlfriend broke up with me. I shot myself in both feet.

So I ended up in a tent for like six months in Raleigh, North Carolina pumping gas and

working construction. It's like the way a lot of people have felt recently, being quarantined. That's the way it felt for me except that everybody else was not quarantined.

Randy: So while you're in that tent, because it's a nice picture of your lowest point in life. It's kind of like, I've tried to do things my own way and it's not working out and look where it's gotten me. It's a little bit of a prodigal son kind of story. What was it that you thought, and then did to get yourself out of that situation?

John: Yeah. I had no money. I was making some money pumping gas, working construction. I was like a farmer. I woke up at first light to work construction and went to bed, in my tent I had like a little Coleman lantern and ate hot dogs mostly, which was all I could afford.

But I realized I liked the media, I liked radio. I'd gotten bitten by that bug. I took a radio course while I was in school trying to raise my G.P.A. So I thought, maybe I could get a job at a radio station. So I found a way to break into the campus radio station. So since I was already a criminal, I figure, what the heck, I'm just a repeat offender. How much more time can they give me in a tent?

So I got into the campus radio station, a friend of mine let me in, and I made a fake radio broadcast. I needed a demo tape. Right? So I went in there and there was a piano in front of so I played a little bit of piano, of course, and also there was a microphone and there was an electric manual typewriter. I held my nose and did all the actualities. I was like, "This is John Tesh, WKIX 2020 news. Let's switch you live now to Maurice Gindi in Kyle." "This is Maurice Gindi in Kyle." And I did the... did the helicopter traffic report.

"Oh, the I40 is just jammed right now! John, back to you in the studio." I did the sports report.

I took this reel-to-reel tape, if you remember that, and I took it to a radio station. The guy called me on my pay phone, which was next to the tent. He said, "Did you do all these noises and all this stuff on this tape?"

It was like a 15-minute demo. I said, "Yes, sir."

He goes, "If you want a job that badly I'll give you a job running the religious tapes on Sunday morning from four am to 7:00 a.m. on WKIX."

And you know how it happens. You get your foot in the door, somebody leaves, whatever. So the most bizarre thing, and this is how I always say this, this is how I know there is a Holy Spirit. Within 36 months of me being in that tent, I had five different jobs and I was anchoring the news at WCBS TV in New York City in the same building as Walter Cronkite. So yeah, you figure it out.

Randy: So your book is titled *Relentless*, and obviously, you sort of had that in you. What do you say to other people who are having a hard time just looking at circumstances, looking at their situations, and thinking, how am I going to do what this guy did; right?

John: And listen, I'm not the sunny guy every morning when I wake up. But what I realize, and you know, it's interesting, journaling is really, it's a great time to be

journaling. And this is the ultimate journal when you write a book that's 80,000 words. When I look back on my life I realize a couple of things. One was that whenever good things happen to me I was working a process and the process was something that my band teacher taught me when I was seven years old which was persistence and grit and faith, but also risk, always taking risks. He said you have to fall in love with the process and not think about the goal.

So here we are, because we've been going through now this time where we've been quarantined and so many people, not even sure what they may have a new goal, they're not sure what it is. But if you keep working the process, it is almost like what the Navy Seals do. Admiral McRaven, who led the Navy Seals for years trained them in California, he has a great book out called, *Make Your Bed*. It is one of those things where you have to have a win every morning.

My process is, I'm up at 4:30, I'm working out for an hour every single day, even if I just don't do anything I'm walking in circles. I call it a work out. But having that process and having that routine is really, if there's any success for me, I look back and I saw that that was working that same process.

Sheila: I wonder, John, reading through some of your story and knowing what a huge impact Connie has also been in your life in terms of faith, how is your relationship with Christ this side of cancer different than it was before you walked into that.

John: It's amazing. Part of the book, is an amazing love story because she just dropped everything. You know my wife is a famous actress and a grandmother and a mother of

two, and we've been married for 28 years. She just stopped everything and became my advocate. But the other thing that happened for us was that we became equally yoked in our belief that God wanted me well, that God didn't put this sickness on me, that God's true nature was healing, that there really was something in First Peter 2:24, "By his stripes you were healed." And Isaiah 53, Isaiah 54, "No weapon against you shall prosper." So we believed together and we prayed together with that understanding. And it's easy for me to say but it is the truth, that if I hadn't had Connie Concetta in my life, I wouldn't have made it. Because there were many times and there is one I mentioned in the book where I would look at these kettle bells in the backyard next to the pool and wanted to say, let's strap these to my ankles and jump in the pool. Just because after a while the suffering, it just wears you down.

I know many people have been suffering now. We talk about the healthcare workers, the nurses and the doctors, just the relentless pursuit of that disease creates an enormous amount of suffering. I'm very familiar with that at my own level.

Randy: Well, for those who are facing that sort of suffering, was there anyone particular thing when you were at that low, low point that really just brought you out that you can share?

John: Cat videos. No! I'm kidding.

Randy: Well, laughter is a good medicine so I actually...

John: It really is. It really is. I would go on YouTube and I'd watch like old Conan

O'Brien episodes and things like that. Michael Jr., who is this great Christian comedian. It helps. But just really, there is a big difference, as you guys know, there is a big difference between having faith and having too much unbelief and that was the thing that I really concentrated on was renewing my mind. I kept myself away from reading about cancer. I kept myself away from seeing anything negative or talking to anybody at a dinner party, who would say, "Well, how are you?" Those kind of people where I worked as hard on getting the unbelief out of my head, as I did having faith that God wanted me well.

Sheila: I think that's actually a huge point because I think even during this COVID-19 crisis, I think what's bringing a lot of people down is the endless news coverage, the updates every day, that the kind of negative proclamations. I think what you've learned in your cancer struggle is very pertinent to what we're facing right now.

John: Yeah, yeah. You said it really well. There is a friend of ours, Dr. David Katz, who is the head of the Yale Prevention Medicine Center in New Haven and he talks about how you really need to... one of his big prescriptions is you need to concentrate on looking away every now and then. You have to be careful what you let in there because even if you see the same news, we know this, even if you see the same news report five times, it registers as five different events. So yeah, looking away and even, what I do is I read the news. I grew up in local news and network news and I know that when it bleeds it leads. That's the way those decisions are made. You have to titrate what's getting in here. So good point.

Randy: I'm a firm believer that a lot of times we don't, we all die at some point but a lot

of times when we face sickness God has a purpose in it and it is not to destroy us but it is because he has something he's called us to do that we haven't competed yet. So we have this mission in life.

One of the things I notice that you do is your Intelligence for Life radio program, and then of course there is family. I'm sure there is a lot of things on your plate. But what is it that you think God has called you to do that John Tesh has not yet accomplished?

John: To speak in a secular world. I love, we're like-minded. I love having these conversations. But you know, I've been on FOX News with FOX & Friends and with Martha MacCallum and Hannity and all those guys, and when you bring up something like this, when you bring up divine healing, which is what we're talking about, of course, it's amazing how... you can almost see it in their eyes. I'm really glad... I cannot bring it up, John, but I'm really glad you brought it up. You know, that kind of thing.

So we play 30 concerts a year in secular venues but the last 12 minutes of that is me telling my story and showing pictures of me during chemo and telling the stories about Mark 11:23 and be brief. PBS special is coming out in June and that scripture is right there behind me because it's a testimony. I'm not a preacher, I'm not a pastor but I do have that healing testimony which a lot of people take as being powerful.

Sheila: Yeah. And one of the things during this whole time that I'm finding really powerful is every single morning my husband and I will go out on our balcony and we will read a Psalm out loud. There is something so great about your ears hearing what your eyes are reading because there is power in the words of God.

John: Yeah! That's so important because really, that it comes out of your mouth because you guys probably know Dr. Caroline Leaf, you know, a neurologist, and she studies what words, the impact that words have at the subatomic level in your body, and down all the way past the blood and the corpuscles and the veins and vessels, but all the way into the waves that are in your body.

So again, you'll have what you say. One of the great Psalms for me is Psalm 118, "You will not die but live and declare the works of the Lord." You could walk into my house any time when I was sick and you would hear me yelling that out.

Sheila: Wow! That's beautiful! That's powerful!

Randy: There is a few people I think that are watching this show right now that are just on the edge. They're like, I wish I had that faith. I wish I could keep going like this guy did. Address that person right now who is right there on the edge but they're just struggling with being relentless and really having the faith that God wants them to have. What would you say to them?

John: Here's the good news. I'm closing in on being, I'm 68 years old. I've done the work for you. I've literally tried everything. I tried forging a professor's signature. I went through one failed marriage. I was in New York City drinking too much, doing drugs while I was still doing the news. I tried that. I tried blaming God. I tried begging God. And when I finally got to what the promise was already in the Bible and here's the metaphor that you can use, the analogy, is that the power company comes and they hook

up all the power, the electricity to your house. They don't come in and turn on all the lights for you. That's your job. You've got to do that.

So the power is there. It's ready for us. Holy Spirit, his power will come upon you. All you have to do is reach out and say, okay, I understand this was done for me. When Jesus went to the cross, he did this for me. And to beg him would... It doesn't make any sense that you would do that, just receive it. And again, if it worked for me it can work for you.

Randy: Boy, that's encouraging.

Sheila: That's really powerful! One of the things you know we here care very much about is being able to get some real help to some real people in Jesus' name. One of the practical things that we are doing at the moment is we have a commitment for 350 water wells. I want you to watch this and then we'll come back and let you know how you can get a hold of John's book.

On the mission field:

Randy: Our hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. It's a tenet of our faith. But as a believer, I can tell you I view my hope with a new perspective when I encounter people who have lost what they hold sacred, their children.

I want you to understand something about the people here. They tend to have quite a few children, up to seven in some of the families in some of these villages we've seen, and

they typically will not all grow into adulthood. They will lose them and they're losing them the same way.

One of the most profound lessons I've learned from my parents is that we are blessed to be a blessing. At *LIFE Today*, we find people around the world in desperate need of a blessing. Many of them lack one of life's most basic needs.

To you and me this is just dirty water. But to countless people around the world this is the only source of water -- the only thing they have to drink. And for far too many, this is death.

Life and death, it could not be simpler. Our hope in Christ challenges us to fight for life and in this case our path is clear.

This water is clean. It's drinkable. It's beautiful. It's nothing like the water we've seen around the world in places where children, especially, are dying of waterborne diseases. When you give this clean, pure water you give them a chance at life. Let's give Water for LIFE.

End of video

In the studio:

Randy: The difficult part about that for me is when you go to these places, the water is really bad. You look at that and my western mind says, okay, boil it or filter it or do something. Believe me, when they have those options, they are. But in so many circumstances they just don't have a choice. It is the only thing they can drink. And so they drink it. We'll walk up in these cases sometimes and we'll see them dip it and then they'll take a drink and you want to reach out and say stop! Don't drink that! Don't drink

that! But that's what they do every day. They just don't have a choice.

The water is there. God has put it there in the ground. It's just a matter of accessing it. That's why we're here drilling water wells. That's what we're asking you to do to join us. To me, it is kind of like the gospel. The gospel is there for everyone but how will they know if they don't hear? Well, the water is there but how will they get it if we don't help them? And that's, Sheila, why I look at this and go, major problem, easy fix. And we are the solution.

Sheila: I know! Absolutely, Randy. As long as you and I, as the body of Christ are on the planet at this moment, we can make a difference. It's one of the things I love about James and Betty, about their vision. They will find out what's going on in the world, who is God using to fix it and how can we underwrite that and help them?

And so many of you have done that through the years. This sweet lovely lady wrote to me the other day and she said, "I put in one water well last year and I'm going to do it again this year." That's amazing! That \$4800 will actually put a well in a village that will last for a lifetime. And I've been to the villages where the water is filthy. There is no access to clean water and children are dying. It is like playing Russian roulette with your children's lives every day and you don't have a choice.

But in the villages where there is a well, and I couldn't contain myself when I saw, "Given by the partners of *LIFE Outreach* international." I just did a happy dance. You've helped us do it. We're asking, will you help us to do it again? There is a level you can all come in. \$48 will provide ten people with clean fresh Water for LIFE! \$144 will give 30

people clean Water for LIFE. Now if you're able to do a whole well, I mean what a legacy to leave! To be able to say, somewhere across the world, we've been able to put a water in that gives a whole village clean water.

So please, will you do it now? Will you go to your phone, dial that number on your screen and give the very best gift possible. Together, let's bring Water for LIFE in Jesus' name. Go to your phone, make the best gift you can.

Begin video clip

Announcer: Dirty, diseased filled water! How desperate would a mother need to be to consider giving this contaminated substance to her child? For many mothers and their families living in extreme poverties, this is their only choice.

With your help, they won't have to make this choice ever again. Mission Water for Life provides clean disease-free water for thousands of children and their families, giving them a life free from the fear of death.

With your gift today, you can help drill and establish the final 150 water wells this year. Your gift of \$48 will help provide water for ten people. \$72 will provide for 15. \$144 will help provide life-giving water for 30 people for a lifetime. And a gift of \$4,800 will help sponsor a complete well, serving up to 1,000 people.

With your gift we'll send you Today is a Good Day, seasonal devotional sets, broken out into the four seasons of the year. This beautiful set features a daily scripture, inspirational thoughts, and a place for you to journal your own thoughts, prayers and insights from God's word.

With your gift of \$100 or more, request the leather-bound life-giving Proverbs Journal, filled with wisdom and daily encouragement from Proverbs, including lined pages for your personal notes.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1,200 to help provide water for 250 people or a gift of \$4,800 to help sponsor a complete well. And you may request “A Mother’s Strength” bronze sculpture.

Please call, write, or make your gift online!

End of video

On the mission field:

Ralph: I travel all over the world as the director of Missions for *LIFE Today*. I continue to hear some of the same stories -- death. Why? Simply because they don't have clean drinking water.

These mothers who wanted to give life to her children, she wanted to bring health to her family by bringing water home, but she ends up bringing contaminated water -- if she can find any! And it brings death to her children. None of us would ever want to bring death into our living room but that's what these mothers did. They didn't want to do that. They didn't mean to do that. But either they can't find water or the water they do have is so contaminated it just brings disease, and even to the point of death.

So please help us bring clean water. Let's drill some wells that will give these villages and these people water for the rest of their lives. Clean, life-giving water! Please help us today.

End of video

In the studio:

Randy: I hope you'll do what you can to help us reach that goal. In fact, I want to surpass that goal because the reality is the more of you that respond, the bigger that you respond, there's more that we can do and we're happy to do it. Everything is in place to do it. So thank you as you support Water for LIFE.

And I also want to thank, Sheila, our guest today. And we have a nice gift for people who will support.

Sheila: Yeah, for any gift at all we will send you John's book, *Relentless*: Unleashing a life of purpose, grit, and faith. John, thank you so much for being with us! God bless you. Give our love to Connie and keep going strong, brother!

John: It was my pleasure. Thank you so much!

Randy: Thank all of you for watching. Join us next time on *LIFE Today*.