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Week 42: Rescue Life

Randy Robison and Sheila Walsh

Carlos and Heather Whittaker

Randy: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm Randy Robison. Sheila is with me as always. It's good to have you. You know what? We're going to talk about something that applies to all of us. That is the idea of redemption. Of God taking the mess in our lives and making something beautiful and glorifying him through the process.

We have a wonderful couple with us and I've had the privilege of talking to Carlos on *LIFE Today Live* but his wife is with us. Carlos and Heather Whittaker, welcome to *LIFE Today*!

Carlos: Thank you so much for having us.

Randy: So good to have you. I guess we should hold up this book. This has been out since the summer. It is called *Enter Wild*. You planned this to drop right at a time when people needed it most because you saw COVID coming.

Carlos: I saw COVID coming. I knew! I knew! I just appreciate Randy just your knowledge of my planning for this.

Randy: Let's start here and give people an idea and then we'll talk about some of the personal things. What were you trying to communicate here?

Carlos: Pre-pandemic I just know that my faith had gotten mild. My faith had gotten really mundane. My anxiety, my worry, all the things that I was struggling with on a daily basis landed me at about looking at John 10:10 and thinking that it said, "I have come that they may

have life and have it to 60%." And I just kind of was like maybe this is it. Maybe until I get to heaven that's what it is supposed to be, until I really started unpacking that verse and realized, actually, Jesus is promising me life to the full -- and abundance. And what did that really look like? I feel like that scripture has maybe been manipulated by a lot in Christendom and so I had some baggage with that. What does that mean? What does abundance mean? My life is a mess at some points like can I still have life to the full? Can I still have John 10:10?

And so what the book really is for me, and really my wife, she poured so much into it as well, is helping people understand that and get from a place of maybe not understanding the fullness of what the giftings of the Holy Spirit is and how incredible you can walk in miracles, signs, and wonders on a daily basis, and you can actually get there. It took me until I was like 40 years old to realize I've been missing all of this great stuff the Holy Spirit had for me.

When I was growing up, it was like Father, Son, and Baptist hymnal. Like Holy Spirit was like left out of the whole conversation. And I realized once I tapped into the power of Holy Spirit things got wild. My anxiety was healed, my depression was healed, all sorts of things that I thought I was going to have to drag into heaven. And some people may but I think if we can attach our hope in the supernatural and realize that there actually may be hope that complete healing can happen on this side of heaven, that's really what the book is about. It is helping my friends get to that space.

Sheila: I want to step back a bit because when I knew you were going to be our guests I went online and I watched everything I could and read everything I could. No, because it mattered. And I watched, I have to say I watched the whole of your message on "Killing the Spider" and I was so captivated by that. I spend most of my life with women, teaching women or speaking to women and something that you both walked through is very, very common. I wanted to hear from both your perspectives what it was like when what your spider was exposed.

Carlos: You want me to start?

Heather: Sure! Absolutely.

Carlos: And kind of pass it off? So here's the deal. The book is called *Kill the Spider*, that previous message. So people are probably wondering, what is a spider? What does that mean? How I defined a spider is an agreement that you've made with a lie. But what most people do is we don't deal with that because that is hard to get to. So we deal with medicating behaviors, pornography, alcohol, whatever those things may be, I call those cobwebs. And so a cobweb is a medicating behavior that brings comfort to the lie. So our story begins with -- not begins with -- ended up with at some point in our marriage.

Heather: It didn't start there.

Carlos: But with me, really, a lot of bad medicating behaviors in my life and what I was doing is I was trying to fix the behavior, Barnes & Noble self-help aisle, all the podcasts I could find. How can I stop doing this sin issue?

Well, the thing is, is that we're not strong enough to deal with those things on our own. And to be honest with you, my sin issue completely destroyed the fabric of not only my family but my friendships, my career, everything. And I lost my... spoiler alert! We're married still so God redeems things! But what you don't know is the trauma of I moved out of our house. We were talking about divorce. We were talking about... Our family was over the way we knew it before because of issues in my life.

Although I talk about how I killed my spider and found the spider, the part of the story that your viewers are going to get to hear today is Heather's part of the story by like how she was able to deal with the mess of a human that I was. So I'll just kind of [woo-psh] pass that to you.

Heather: God was so great in giving me a visual. I didn't know it at the time really what was he doing but he gave me this image of a person in a car accident. Right? They rush them into the emergency room, you see all the doctors coming and all of the sudden they're like bandaging this broken finger that is bleeding when really there was internal bleeding.

So often, we're focused on this broken finger when really, that doesn't matter. Get this, and this will fix itself. So for me, having that visual at the beginning was able to see Carlos and the fact that yes, there was damage right at this place but it came from someplace else. So being able to go back and really be able to just get my mind to the place where it's not this moment. I don't need to carry this issue and go back to his heart and where it got broken and why he is medicating.

Randy: Where does that come from? Because here's the reality in a relationship, and especially in a marriage is whatever damage he's got he's acting in ways that's hurting you that is damaging to the relationship. For you to transcend the pain and the damage that he is doing to respond the way you did, to see beyond that is not normal. In some ways it doesn't even make sense. It's like no, you've got every excuse. He's out of the house? Good! He needs to be out of the house! Right?

Carlos: Well, you got all those emails from people. Everybody was like, you're free, Heather! You're free of this anchor.

Heather: I felt free though. I will say that. When we were separated, I felt free. I felt woo! I ran that race and I am free. And yet, I specifically remember the first time that we actually talked after that, I specifically remember God saying we're doing this again. And so that was like okay! But that was from God so there was like no Heather in that. And so...

Randy: How did you respond?

Heather: Just day by day. Obviously, my heart was guarded for some time. But I also, like so many people, women will come and talk to me and be like, "Can you give me advice? How do I do this? How do I help my husband?"

The advice is you have to help yourself first. You have to get into that conversational intimacy and just that connection with God, and Father, and Holy Spirit and Jesus. If you don't have that, and he's not speaking to you, guiding you, giving you counsel, then it is going to be a battle. It is

going to be hard.

So for me, I had to become whole and holy and really hear God's voice to get to that place of walking it out without any of that other baggage.

Sheila: One of the things I love about your story is what God was doing in both of you in different ways but kind of at the same time.

I wondered, Carlos, I know that sometimes when somebody gets exposed for something, the immediate response is kind of panic and then, God, where are you? Were you able to shift your focus from please make Heather come back to please heal me?

Carlos: Yes! Oh my gosh! I spent like two straight months where there was no conversation and I would beg her on text message every single day. I was texting her these long things.

Heather: I didn't read one.

Carlos: You ruined the punch line! So I'm sending her these every single day thinking like she is reading these truths from my heart. She's deleting them before she even sees them. So I had a friend of mine that are friends with both of us that said, "Hey..." They're the ones that actually told me. "Actually, you can stop doing that." Like Heather isn't...

And I realized in that moment you know what? I'm trying to save my marriage instead of saving my soul. And so suddenly there was a perspective shift. And suddenly I was now gazing, okay, God. The marriage actually I may lose but First Peter 5:10 says, "The God of all grace who calls you to his eternal glory in Christ Jesus will personally restore, establish, strengthen and support you after you have suffered a little."

Now here's the thing. It doesn't say it will personally restore, establish, strengthen and support your marriage. The promise wasn't to restore my marriage, the promise was to restore my soul. And when I realized that, you know what? This, if I can get my soul restored, then I don't know

what is going to come of my marriage but at least I'm actually going to have a greater connection with God than I've ever had.

And suddenly, when that happened, and I think when she saw that, now I was no longer looking at the damaged marriage, I was looking at Jesus at that point.

Sheila: Of course! That's beautiful! And the thing that I love too is that I think within the church, and within the evangelical community we tend to categorize sin. There is the big one and then we've got these little ones which is just ridiculous.

But I love the fact that you talked about you had cobwebs of your own that you were looking for. And I totally got this. I need people to like me and think I'm doing okay so I can feel okay about myself.

Heather: I would host these parties because I love to host parties. Like I love that. But really, behind it it was to make sure that they would continue to love me, to continue to have these relationships opposed to just doing it for relationship, there was a hidden agenda. I didn't realize it at the time, like Holy Spirit had to bring that up to me and I was like, oh yeah. Sorry about that.

Sheila: Excellent point!

Heather: But I think Pinterest sins are out there. Like they look really pretty and they're cleaned up but you know!

Sheila: That's a great way to describe it. There's a T-shirt.

[Laughter]

Randy: When God had done work in Carlos and God had done work in Heather you reached out and wrote a letter; am I understanding this right?

Heather: I actually wrote the letter the first night.

Carlos: This is actually important. The night I was exposed and the night our marriage fell apart, the night everything happened was the night she wrote that letter. So she actually wrote a love letter to me that I got the next day and it was the most beautiful and gutting letter I had ever received. Because it was all the reasons why she loved me, all the things she's admired about me, the way I'm a great father, all these things but at the end it was like but I know that this relationship is no longer, I needed to write down all the reasons why I loved you. So why did you write that?

Heather: Yeah, I think there is just power in words. So although he had a broken side he was still Carlos, he still has God in him. He still has beautiful and loving attributes to him. So being able to express that was freeing to me. I'm not carrying just this weight, like I'm carrying the good parts away as well. So I think that was it. I think I came from a very broken family that had lots of like this side versus this side and I wanted him to know there will never be that.

Carlos: You wrote that in the letter too.

Heather: Yeah. Like I will never say a bad word about you to the kids. We are for Carlos. And so just kind of setting it up.

Carlos: It was still very final.

Heather: It was final! That's what it was. This is it but like...

Carlos: The marriage is over but I want you to know why I loved you while we were married.

Randy: How are you here today?

Heather: Lots and lots and lots of hard work. Like it wasn't overnight. And there were like... We're still working through things.

Carlos: Still! A decade later.

Heather: And I think we will forever. We are two sinful people living together so there will always be a learning process but yeah.

Randy: You talk about the cobwebs and I think those are the things that we think, okay, I can deal with this. It's that spider that we can't kill and for you was a lie. What was the lie?

Carlos: So if my medicating behaviors were say pornography or artificial intimacy, it could be anything, right? The lie for me was I felt like God had abandoned me. So that was the agreement that I'd made with a lie. So since I'd made this agreement with a lie that God had abandoned me, well guess what? I guess I can do whatever I want to do because God is not listening to me. He is not around. He is not answering me. All these lies that the enemy was in my head.

And so I would tell people again that sure, it's really easy to find out what your medicating behavior is. If you don't know what your cobweb is, ask your family member and they will tell you what it is. But you can't ask your family what your family member what your spider is. You're going to have to hear from Holy Spirit.

And so this point right here where I actually heard from Holy Spirit exactly what it was, I realized, wait! He does speak on a daily basis to me. And then the more I stepped into conversational intimacy with Holy Spirit the more connected I am with him, the more wild things began to get in my faith. And so that's the connection. That's from spiders to cobwebs to okay, our marriage is 60% better, things are okay to like no! Guess what? You can actually have this incredibly wild, and I think some people, some Christians may be scared of wild because they want to be safe. They want to live in this nice...

I just challenge Christians to look at the gospels, look at how Jesus ministered and there was nothing safe about his ministry. He ministered in a wild way and that's what we're called to live.

Sheila: Because you divide this great new book into to rest, war, and wild. You say it is important to never forget for a second that there is a war going on.

Carlos: Speak on that.

Heather: Yeah! I think for us, it was such a transformational season for us when we began to unpack that and learn about that and be able to step into who we are and fight it. I think for us, prayer starts with learning to hear from God and being able to hear what he says.

Carlos: That's the rest.

Heather: Yes! That's the rest. And then it's the actual like hearing what we need to be, what his will is in our life and then it is to apply, to bring heaven down here on earth and let's start to... and I think we miss that so often. I feel like the devil was for the murders and like the big sins, like you were saying. It wasn't that Satan was in my everyday whispering lies to me and that was something I had authority to be like, "In Jesus' name, no!" So like that was just missed in some of my theology as a new Christian. So for me, really learning that and understanding that has been life changing space for us.

Carlos: And that warfare isn't, again we're just talking about these big deep... It is a daily thing. So I give in the book very practical ways on how to use the weapons of warfare that we've been given. So praise and thanksgiving. Praying the promise instead of praying the problem. All these things that we have a tendency to do. When I'm struggling with anxiety or through depression my prayers used to be, O God, I'm so depressed! O God, I'm so anxious! O God, I'm so overwhelmed! And I feel like the enemy was looking at me going like, "I love this prayer! This is great. Keep making an agreement. Keep saying those things that keep you in bondage."

And instead now my prayers have gone from I'm so worried and overwhelmed to finding the truth in scripture and saying, I'm the body of Christ. Satan has no power over me. I overcome

him with good. I'm a god. Greater is he that's in me than he that's in the world. I will fear no evil. You're with me, Lord. Your word and your spirit they comfort me. Over and over and more and more, suddenly even right now as I'm saying these things I'm feeling his presence because the truth of God's word praying the promises of God that is warfare on a daily basis.

Sheila: I love that!

Randy: I have one last question. I know what your answer would be.

[Laughter]

But Heather, given that he hurt you, he failed you, he deserved to be kicked out of the house and final letter written. Has it been worth the work to restore it?

Heather: You know what? I love the mountains. I love hiking. There is a thing called a gondola. It can take you to fast track on top of the mountain and you get the same view at the top. But for me, the climb, the blood, the sweat, the tears, the blisters, that is worth the view so much more than when I ride the gondola up. So I would say yeah.

Sheila: Yeah, that will preach. That's phenomenal! We're going to let you know a little bit more about how to get a hold of the book *Enter Wild*. But one of the things you know that we care very much at *LIFE Today* are young girls who are being trafficked and taken from the safety of a little village to a world that they never thought they'd be part of. We're going to tell you how you can make a difference after this.

Begin video clip

Giselle: My story really starts from the age of seven. I was left alone at home a lot and a lot of predators really came through the house; specifically, a very distant uncle. He would be there to take care of me but then he started to do things and they were things that I really didn't

understand at all. My childhood was really cut short by really being abused and molested by this man. It really tormented me.

Announcer: A traumatic experience can profoundly shape one's worldview. For *LIFE's* missionary partner, Giselle Meza, childhood trauma has left her heartbroken for victims of sexual abuse and human trafficking in South Asia.

Giselle recently connected over the internet with our mission team to share the story of a child we'll call Devna.

Giselle: We had gone into this village and we had found this little girl, Devna on the side of the road in conditions that you could never imagine. She had been taken by her trafficker and then along the way he decided to rape her multiple times and leave her to die alongside of the road.

Devna's story is one where we rescued her from one of the worst situations and now that she's in our home, and has had four years with us now, she has blossomed into the most beautiful, precious, little girl that now has developed her personality. She's safe. She loves to dance. She loves to sing...

Announcer: Rescue efforts like these are the direct result of compassionate support by *LIFE Today* viewers. Shortly after we spoke with Giselle her team rescued another child from traffickers who was just four years old.

Human trafficking does not stop for global crises and with your help neither will our fight against it.

End of video

In the studio:

Sheila: Can you imagine such a thing? A four-year old little girl who should be at home playing with her sisters or brothers and her mom and dad, and maybe playing with her

puppy -- but she is left at the side of the road to die. There's so many of our missions that we're involved with, whether it is mission feeding or Water for LIFE, those are problems that happen that we immediately want to move in and do something to fix.

But let me tell you, Rescue Life, this is demonic. Literally, the powers of hell going in and trying to take these young girls, and let them know they have no value, they're not even a name, they're just a number. They are very well organized. It is a billion-dollar industry. I've walked those streets in Southeast Asia and it's devastating.

But here's the deal, we are the body of Christ on the planet at this moment and we have a commission. We are on mission 24/7. And so we're going in there in your name to reach kids in the villages before anyone ever gets to them to prepare them for what could happen. Then when we're a little late on that side we go in and knock down doors at midnight and rescue these girls and then take them to a place where they can be restored.

Let me tell you, some of these young people that are restored that give their lives to Jesus, become the most radical disciples I have ever met. They understand the difference between darkness and light, and they become beacons and fierce warriors for Jesus. But we can only do it if you will help us. And it is very doable, Randy.

Randy: It is. Sheila, you know the darkness and the light is absolutely what is going on here. This is a very dark thing and it is not just overseas, it is here in our own country -- it is where you're at. But we are that light. Jesus is the light and then he turns around and says you are that light. We reflect his light but only when we let that light shine.

Now how do we do that? Through our Rescue Life program we reach into these areas all over the world, we rescue people out, sometimes literally taking them out. Other times just making a way and working with governments, working with local officials, whatever we have to do. And then we restore because it is not just about getting them out of a bad situation, it is putting them on that path that God has for their life; giving them practical skills, giving them whatever they need to become whole again, always with the gospel as that bedrock foundation.

So we reach, we rescue, we restore. Here's the break down when you look at it from a cost standpoint because it does cost money to do these things, to put this program in place. Normally it averages about \$128 to reach, rescue and restore one child. Right now we have a matching gift. What does that mean? That means we have some large donors that have come together and said, "We will match whatever you raise on television through this campaign."

That means your gift of \$64 today will enable us to reach, rescue, and restore one child -- \$64. That's why we ask you happily, boldly to go to the phone, go online, make the best gift you can. If you can make that gift of \$1280 because God's blessed you that much, that would rescue 20 children. Do whatever God's put on your heart. I'm just asking you to be that light in this dark world. Let's shine and let's rescue some lives.

Begin video clip

Announcer: Behind the bright lights there is 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 \$250,000 matching gift now your gift of \$128 to help reach, rescue, or restore one child can be doubled to help two children. Your \$64 gift will be matched to help save one child from the horrors of human trafficking. And a \$32 mission rescue gift will be doubled to \$64.

With your gift we'll send you *Natural Remedies*. This beautifully illustrated and essential book explores ancient nutrition and the health benefits found in God's creation, a valuable reference with biblical insight to help you live your best life.

With your gift of \$128 or more, you'll receive this beautiful prayer box inscribed with the words

from Philippians 4:6. This wonderful keepsake includes pencil and paper to write down prayer requests you want to give to God.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1280 which will now help rescue 20 children. And you may request "A Mother's Strength" bronze sculpture.

Please call, write, or make your gift online.

End of video

In the studio:

Sheila: Thank you so much! If the lines are busy, please keep calling. Let's do this.

Randy: Absolutely! And I want to thank Carlos and Heather for being here and sharing with just the story of redemption. I want people to get this book. We want to send this book to you with any gift towards Rescue Life. So you can do something good for children around the world and do something good for yourself. So call right now.

Thanks again for being with us.

Heather: Thank you.

Sheila: Thank you so much and we'll see you next time on *LIFE Today*! God bless you. We love you!