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Week 12: Rescue Life

James and Betty Robison

Holly Christine Hayes

JAMES: Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm James Robison. Betty and I, with no exaggeration can tell you *LIFE Today* is a program of miracles. Most of the miracles come because of God's love through you, the viewers. Betty and I spend our life really trying to get God's arms around a too often overlooked world and trying to inspire the church to become the arms of Jesus.

Right now we're trying, with your help, rescue those who are trafficked, sexual trafficking, terrible, real slavery. We have a guest today, Holly Christine Hayes who was trafficked. The book is just fabulous. It is called *From Basement to Sanctuary*. She literally spent a lot of time in not only a basement, but basements--been trafficked. I will simply tell you this. She had multiple abortions but now she's got a baby and that has to be a miracle. And she is a very beautiful lady with a beautiful testimony. She is setting the trafficked free and teaching them a trade to make some of the most beautiful jewelry you'll ever see.

So we welcome you, Holly Christine Hayes. Betty and I welcome you to *LIFE Today*.

HOLLY: Thank you for having me.

JAMES: You are a radiant person. But you started being trafficked very young. Just tell us about how you ended up in that situation; give us a little bit of your journey.

HOLLY: So I grew up in sort of a normal middle-class home in California. Did not grow up in a Christian home. But there was some sexual abuse in my childhood. I think from

that moment that really imprinted on me. It was a trauma that I didn't know I was carrying. But it affected every choice I made from that moment on. And then as I got into my teen years my parents went through a divorce. So the combination of those two traumas really set me up for just desperately wanting to escape. And because I didn't know my value or my true identity, the ways I found to escape were in drugs and alcohol and in sexual promiscuity. And really, all the things the world tells you to escape into; right? Being a high school student it was normal I thought to do the things I did. It was normal to go to the parties. It was normal to get into sexual behavior.

And having that trauma, I didn't have a normal reaction to it. For me, when I did those things, I took them to the extreme because I was so desperately trying to get out of my own head, and so desperately trying to escape that pain. So that spiraled downhill really quickly for me. By 15 I was drinking and using drugs every day. By 16 I had my first of five abortions and dropped out of high school. By 18 I was getting arrested all the time and ended up in multiple abusive relationships.

JAMES: Were you arrested because you were doing drugs or selling drugs?

HOLLY: Yes.

JAMES: Both?

HOLLY: I was actually never arrested for selling drugs, but I was selling drugs, and had run-ins the cops that actually helped me to kind of stop selling drugs. I got scared enough to stop. But I was engaged in those behaviors, even though I was never actually caught for them. If there is anybody watching now though they're going to, you realize they're going to come after me now.

[LAUGHTER]

By 18, I was in and out of jail and really living so far in the margins of life that I was

being overlooked in a lot of ways. My parents had pulled out of my life, really making a decision to do some tough love and let me hit bottom. And at 19 I met my trafficker. I thought he was going to be my savior. He was charming and he was charismatic. He had lived a life like mine and had a past like mine and so he really understood me. He developed a very intense, a very fast bond with me and very quickly the relationship became violent.

JAMES: Did he seem to have resources too?

HOLLY: He did, yeah!

JAMES: Where you felt like there was some success there?

HOLLY: And he seemed like he was better at life than I was. Here I was failing all over the place and he seemed to kind of have it all together. And so I thought this was someone who could take care of me. I was very attracted to that because I was at that point really not capable of taking care of myself. And very quickly I learned he had other women and that I was just going to have to accept that. And so that was a real heartbreak but something about that competition actually put me in a head space of wanting to please him and want to be his favorite, wanting him to choose me over the other women. And ultimately, wanting him to take care of me.

About a year into the relationship he started suggesting that I was so valuable and didn't know how valuable I was. A lot of times when you hear about trafficking situations, they're making their victim feel like they have no value but in my situation he actually was saying you do have value, it's what a man will pay for you. So for me, it actually felt like a step up because I had believed I had no value and here he was saying no, you do. You have value. These men will pay for you and you're so special.

JAMES: Was he trying to show you that you would make money or was he just thinking about himself?

HOLLY: Well, at that point, yeah. At that point he was presenting it like this is going to help you out. But I'd also, he'd encouraged me to stop paying rent on the apartment I was living in, so I had gotten evicted from that apartment and he'd asked me to come live with him. So at that point I was living with him, he was paying for my food, he was keeping me high. He was taking care of all of my basic needs. And I didn't have a bank account. I didn't have identification. So at that point, really, any money I made I knew was going to be going into his hands because I had no way of actually handling money. I didn't have the bank account or the structure to even take money.

JAMES: Let me ask this question. I see where you are and you were attractive and so he was using you, building his account. Did you know he was using the other girls the same way? It wasn't just you being trafficked; they were being too?

HOLLY: I actually didn't even know I was being trafficked. At the time... First of all, this was 20 years ago, so this was all happening before there was really language around trafficking. I was so confused and manipulated in that relationship that I thought he was my boyfriend and I thought he was helping me out. And I thought he was cheating on me with the other girls and I had no idea what he was actually doing.

JAMES: But was he trafficking them?

HOLLY: I actually don't know if he was trafficking the other women that were around at that time.

JAMES: But he was making money off of you.

HOLLY: Yes. And he later went on to actually to build a massive trafficking ring between New York, Rome, and Puerto Rico. I know now, today, this was when it was in its infancy and now it's grown to a full-blown operation.

JAMES: Where do you get *From Basement to Sanctuary*? Give us an understanding of why that title is important to you.

HOLLY: Yeah. So on February 10th of 2001, this man had actually kicked me out, because I stopped showing up for the jobs that he was lining up for me. I hated it and it was humiliating and awful and so I kept getting drunk and high and not showing up. So I ended up homeless. I was on the floor of a public bathroom and I was watching my tears hit the floor and I just said three words. I said, "God help me!" And I'd never believed in God. I didn't know any God people. I'd never seen this show. I had no idea who I was crying out to. But that very night I ended up meeting someone who got me into a recovery program. I've been safe and sober since that day; that will be 20 years on the 11th.

JAMES: You actually went to AA; correct?

HOLLY: Yes. And it was in the basement of a church. So this man actually took me to a church basement, and here I thought a church would burn down if I walked in. But we were able to sneak in the back door and down a flight of stairs into this sort of dark dingy room and I thought, this feels really comfortable. And the cement walls, and some posters sort of haphazardly hung on the wall that had some clever sayings.

And so I walked into that place and I was dirty. I had whiskey stains down the front of this blue sweater I'd been wearing for days. I knew I smelled. And yet, every single person there smiled and welcomed me. They pointed me to some stale Chips Ahoy in the corner. They said I could eat as many as I wanted. And they told me to keep coming back and that I was welcome there. At that point I hadn't been welcomed anywhere in a really long time. And so I met the Spirit of God in this basement in that moment. Had no idea who it was. Didn't know it was Jesus yet but I knew that I had found that safe place. I knew I had found the hope I needed.

BETTY: Did you see that this love and acceptance that you received that night was

different from what you thought it was before with the other guy?

HOLLY: Absolutely! I think the best thing about it was that I had been given it in the absolute pit of my darkest moment. I knew it had come so freely as a gift; that I hadn't done anything to earn it or deserve it. I hadn't asked for it, even, other than that simple "God help me" and here I was just plucked out of the pit and given this opportunity for a whole new life.

JAMES: So your life was changed in California; right? You're in Texas. How long have you been in Texas? Of course, this is kind of the Promised Land.

[LAUGHTER]

It's the entry to it.

HOLLY: Well, so I spent several years in San Francisco, grew up there. Then moved to Paris, France actually. So I was living in Paris, France working for a church there. And then my husband and I started dating and he was living in Austin, Texas. And so when we...

JAMES: Where did you meet him?

HOLLY: We met in San Francisco. So we met in a Bible study in San Francisco. I moved to Paris, he moved to Austin. And then he asked me out.

JAMES: You stayed in touch?

HOLLY: Yeah. We stayed in touch. He sent me little gifts and cards in the mail but he never asked me out. And then finally I was back visiting San Francisco, and he was back at the exact same time. I was in town for a wedding, he was in town for a funeral; and he asked me out on a date. And we had one dinner together and completely fell in love at

that dinner. And he started pursuing me. And he actually moved to Paris to pursue me, but he was still working in Austin. So when we got married, we made the decision to move to Austin together.

JAMES: Let's go into how you got into setting people free. You saw the horror of it; you knew firsthand, you knew the pain. How in the world, is this something you and your husband started doing? What do you call the ministry now? What do you call it?

HOLLY: Sanctuary Project.

JAMES: Sanctuary Project. By the way, is the jewelry you have on your wrist, did they make that?

HOLLY: Yes. Everything. Yeah! I can only wear my jewelry because if I'm wearing anything else people will ask.

JAMES: They make it like this is beautiful. Everything, I don't think you can appreciate it. It is absolutely fabulous.

HOLLY: And it's meant to inspire that feeling of sanctuary, the stained-glass windows of old cathedrals.

JAMES: Tell us where you do you go to rescue the girls?

HOLLY: Well, so backing up a little bit in just how it started. So I spent a lot of years working and volunteering in the anti-trafficking world doing really similar stuff to what you guys do in Southeast Asia. I was visiting ministries there. There was an organization there in Thailand that was bringing girls out of the brothels and training them to make jewelry.

I saw this really beautiful community of women sitting together in a circle who all

understood what they'd been through, and all day long they were making beautiful things. They would finish a piece and hold it up and the other girls would say, "Oh it's so beautiful!" I could see the sense of self-esteem and joy and pride whelming up in them as they made beautiful things all day long.

I started to dream of doing this here in America. Because the trafficking that we see here in America looks really different but it's happening here. This is not an over-there problem. This is happening everywhere. It is happening right here in all of our cities.

And so when my husband and I got married and moved to Austin, I started looking for anti-trafficking organization to volunteer with in Austin just to offer my story, my experience, my mentorship and really couldn't find one. And so at that point the Lord put it on my heart that it was time to build this place.

So most of the time I'm meeting our girls through mentorship relationship in our county jail. I make first contact with them there. A lot of times they've been arrested for prostitution but it's actually a trafficking case. So we're able to advocate for them and help them maybe press charges against their trafficker or get their charges reduced or released. And then we're bringing them, hopefully getting them into safe housing, to a safe house in our community, and then we're bringing them in and training them to work for us.

JAMES: I think this is just an answer to prayer. Thank you, God,! If our viewers say, well, how do we find out about, maybe we know a girl that might need to learn what you're training. How's the best way for any of our viewers to contact or communicate with you or at least find out firsthand how they could either be involved or help you do what you're doing, or they know somebody who needs help, where do they go?

HOLLY: So you can visit our website at SanctuaryProject.com. You'll find all the information about us and the work we're doing and how to contact us. If there is someone in your life you know who is being trafficked, I think the first step would be to reach out

to the human trafficking hotlines so they can get all the resources they need. So please do reach out to us and let us know as well.

JAMES: Well, we have that address there; you can see on the screen. The book is *From Basement to Sanctuary*; the sanctuary right now you have a church there that's like a home church. It's in Dripping Springs. What do you call it?

HOLLY: Kings Porch.

JAMES: Kings Porch, that's pretty cool! It has that informal feeling. A lot of people feel like they're sitting in the kingdom porch when you come watch *LIFE Today*. So obviously people might find out what you're doing, expand what you're doing. Let me just say this to you. The book you can get online, bookstores too, I'm sure. But we will gladly send it to you. We are giving away several books today because we're asking you to help us put God's arms around those who are trafficked and set them free. But you can also ask for the book.

What do you want them to grasp? When they go through your book, what do you want to happen to them when they read it?

HOLLY: I think the biggest thing I would hope for is that those in the church would have a better understanding of how to come alongside women and men who are coming out of trauma and suffering. That's one thing that those basement meetings did so well was just wrap their arms around me with the love of Christ. And sometimes in the church we want to look like we have it all together and we don't always know how to walk alongside those who are hurting and the broken and coming out of trauma.

And so I hope it can be a bit of a training manual in that for those who maybe haven't walked through trauma. And if you have walked through trauma, I hope it can be an inspirational story. I hope it can be something you can look to and say, I might be here right now but I'm believing that I can be here.

JAMES: Well, you know you've really got the glory of God on you, Holly. Father, I just pray for Holly and this ministry. I pray for the crafts they're doing with the beautiful jewelry. And Lord, these young women and these people who have been trampled down, they are beautiful jewels. And Holly has become a gem in your kingdom for kingdom purpose, so you bless them beyond measure; in Jesus' name.

Let me just talk to our viewers a minute and just say, now there again, if you want to communicate with Holly in any way, support her, we could very easily send her a gift here, we do that all the time. When we see something effective, we encourage them. Let me make sure you understand this. James and Betty are kingdom witnesses all the time everywhere. God has given us access, and really in my instance let's say rather unique, Betty. He's given me access to people that most people could never talk to: national leaders, church leaders, business leaders, people so often overlooked and yet God has given me the access. Now what you need to understand is you're the reason that I'm able to go delivering the good news, the gospel.

How in the world are they going to believe in whom they've not heard? How are they going to hear unless someone tells them--preaches, shares, the witness? But the bottom line, don't miss this, how shall they go unless they're sent? You have sent us as a messenger of the Lord around the world to deliver the good news of the gospel. Not just in word, but in demonstration. That's what we're doing right here.

We've shared Sheila Walsh with you for a long time. She's been coming here way before she came to be a part of *LIFE Outreach* full time. Well, you're going to hear the heart of God through her just like every time you see her. Thank you for the way you love her, encourage her, pray for her. Pray for our son Randy, all of our staff and missionaries.

Listen to what Sheila shares. But then know this, you are the answer to the concerns she points out, the miracle that is needed. Watch closely.

On the mission field:

SHEILA: There is a little trick that's helped me through some of my darkest days in the field with *LIFE Outreach International*. I smile. I smile not to trivialize the unimaginable despair of those who are suffering but to remind everyone, including myself that a little kindness can bring some light to a dark world. And it can be such a dark world!

The sexual abuse of children has been industrialized and brought to scale in what I believe to be one of the starkest examples of demonic activity on earth today.

I asked her, "Who do you have who is caring for you?" She has no one. She started out trying to sell cookies and she couldn't make enough to live on. So she ended up having to sell her own body.

Now I'm no stranger to the plight of a desperate soul but the young women I've spoken with, young children have left a mark on my life that will stay with me forever. This precious girl was begging for money on the streets when she was first abducted at the age of nine. Her captors raped her and forced her to sleep with up to four men a night.

Open Captions: I'm scared when I have to go out at night. I just want a good home with food to eat and a place to sleep.

SHEILA: It's horrific to think of the unspeakable torment that children face and I'm grateful when they survive it. But survival is a far cry from healing. God has given you and me the sacred power to help reach, rescue, and restore a precious life from the evils of human trafficking. Right now the choice of whether to exercise that power is ours to make.

In the studio:

JAMES: Boy, you just want to take that precious little girl in your arms and just love

her. That's what we do with Rescue Life. That's what Holly has been doing with the rescue, and really restoring by teaching a trade and making jewelry.

Betty, didn't you just want to take that little girl? Imagine someone wanting to take those children and then that little girl getting trafficked when she's just trying to make a living out on when you saw translation and the words up that all she wanted was a home, a place to sleep and some food. And that... That's what we're doing with Rescue Life. We're giving them a miracle that that little girl said she's longing for.

BETTY: And she said, "I hated to go out at night when I know what's going to happen. I'm going to be abused. I'm going to be taken advantage of. I'm going to be thrown aside like a piece of meat." There is no easy way to say it. And then yet, all she wanted was something to eat, and this is a little nine-year old girl, and a safe place.

Well, honey we have that place for you. With our friends of *LIFE Outreach*, we want to show you that safe place. We want to give you food to eat, and we want to nurture you and give your heart, bring healing to your heart and mind.

JAMES: And that's exactly what we've been able to do. When I say "we" that we is you. Betty and I faithfully give to every outreach we have. We actually pray many times, Lord, I pray we can give as much as is possible to give by anybody. But of course, we can't do what some of you do. Just like the wonderful people that so believe in this outreach that they put up a matching gift of \$320,000. Now that's, I don't care who you are, that small group of people said we so believe in this outreach, we so want to rescue these precious girls, precious children and that's what we do: We reach them; we rescue them; we restore them. Just as Holly Christine does, teaching the trade. It's beautiful!

Would you right now please, would you that each out and say, we're going to rescue one of them? The average is \$128 per person. It will be doubled: \$128 will now rescue two. \$64 will be matched and rescue one. I don't know what level you can come in at but I'm praying every single one of you watching would be moved by the Spirit of God to put

God's arms of love around someone that's been trafficked like a slave. We can totally set them free, give them a new future all over the world, and yes, right here in the states.

Please! We have some gifts to send you that will bless you. One of them, the great story of God's refuge as a journal and then the incredible nutrition, the cure that comes from the various oils and so forth that we use. Jordan Rubin has done a great job.

Please! Go get your bankcard right now, would you? Go online or dial that number and make the gift God puts on your heart knowing it will be doubled. Thank you so much for doing it. Praise God for his love through you.

Begin video clip:

Announcer: Human trafficking is one of the world's darkest sources of criminal activity and money. As a result, children and young people are being abducted and sold at the hands of violent predators into a never-ending nightmare.

Through Mission: Rescue Life you can reach out to warn children who are at the risk of being trafficked, rescue those already enslaved and restore young lives giving them a future. With a generous \$320,000 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 today, 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 the *Jesus My Refuge* journal and pen set filled with scriptures reminding you of God's covering in times of need. You'll also be reminded to pray for those seeking refuge from the horrors of human trafficking.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1280, which will now help rescue 20 children! And you may request our inspiring bronze sculpture, "Divine Servant."

Please call, write, or make your gift online.

End of video

On the mission field:

>> How do we deliver people who are in the hand of the wicked? It's us. It's God's people. So I'm asking you to partner with us. You may never go to these countries but when you give to this cause, you are partnering with us to get children and women out of the hand of the wicked.

This is a tremendous opportunity that you have to partner with Rescue Life and make a massive difference, massive impact in the lives of women and children who are crying out for help. And God is looking upon us to be his hand and to be his feet. When you partner with us you will be helping us rescue hundreds and hundreds and more.

Would you ask the Lord what he would have you to do? And give the best gift today.

End of video

In the studio:

JAMES: Thank you so much! Let me just say this beautiful jewelry is on Holly's website. If you get some of the jewelry, it actually helps sponsor some of those you are reaching out to. It's amazing.

HOLLY: Yeah! 100 percent of the profits actually go into our job training and employment program. And every single person we employ at sanctuary project is a survivor of trafficking violence and addiction. So it's just incredible. Not just the girls

making the jewelry but the women in our operations department, our program manager, our social media manager, every single level.

JAMES: I promise you, you are going to be a part of what Holly's doing. Thank you so much! Thanks for the love of God you allow to flow so freely through you. Glad you watched *LIFE Today*. Glad you share *LIFE Today*.