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Week 14: Rescue Life

Randy Robison and Sheila Walsh

Jack Graham #1

RANDY: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm Randy Robison. Great to have you. Sheila is here, of course. And Sheila, you have a special relationship with today's guest.

SHEILA: I am excited you have tuned in today and I know you will be afterwards. I feel as if in many ways, I'm holding this book called *Reignite* and it was written by my pastor, Dr. Jack Graham. I feel in many ways I got to live some of this book before it was even put into words. But it is one of the best books I've read in a very, very long time. So pastor, welcome to *LIFE Today*!

JACK: I'm glad to be here. Always good to see you both. Thanks for the good word about the book. I think it's coming out about right now.

SHEILA: It comes out today, actually which is phenomenal. But the thing, I've read almost all of your books I think but the thing about this, it is so transparent. It is like you broke open your life and made it available to us. What was the Genesis for this?

JACK: That was the plan. I have done books and they're typically either Bible studies or messages that I want to create, communicate but this I wanted to really share my life from top to bottom. It is not a biography by any means or an autobiography, but it is a bit of the story of my life. And in particular, an episode in my life in 2009 when I had prostate cancer surgery.

Following up with the prostate cancer surgery I had a huge bout with anxiety and depression, something I had never known before. I just went through a very rough time for about a year really, of recovering from that surgery and the subsequent, the aftermath

of that surgery. And so I never even realized that I could get that low. I figured that I could rise above most anything in my life but when this hit me it really knocked me off of my feet.

I spend quite a bit of time in this book at the outset sharing that story. It is not a woe-is-me kind of thing. I want to encourage people because so many people battle issues of mental health. It's been a struggle for Christians to talk about it at times. Sheila, you know that well. You've been on the forefront of helping people come to grips with issues of mental health. So I wanted to be a part of that discussion.

So I just opened up in the book and told the story, the good, the bad, the ugly. How I dealt with it. How I responded to it. Sometimes I did well, sometimes not so well. But in God's providence and healing he got me through it and I believe I'm better for it, stronger for it. As the scriptures says, God is the God of all comfort and with the comfort that we are comforted, we comfort others. So now I know better how to comfort people who are facing issues like this.

RANDY: Just as a follow-up, now a decade later, over a decade later, physically you're doing well?

JACK: Yeah, absolutely. The great news is the cancer was dealt with. And we didn't know exactly at the time, that was part of the problem. They were saying, "Well, we don't know if we got everything or not." That's what kind threw me. When I was going in, I was super confident and just saying, "Well, this won't be a problem."

And as a matter of fact, I was in the pulpit, this is how silly I was, I got in the pulpit 11 days after surgery. I'm up there trying to be Superman. But I'm realizing not everything is right. But then about that time they said look, there could be... the pathology came back, and it didn't look great. And that's when I started spending some sleepless nights. That's what happened first; just the insomnia set in as I'm sitting there at night thinking about this cancer may be creeping through my body and killing me. And then

from the insomnia just came the other problems. And it was all anxiety-driven, fear-driven. As a pastor, I should have known better, I presume but I just didn't know how to deal with those feelings at that point.

RANDY: Would you say it was more physical, medical or spiritual or emotional or psychological or just everything?

JACK: All of the above. We're body, soul, and spirit and so the body and the mind effect the spirit and vice versa. So yes, it was all of that. At some point you feel like it is a satanic attack and spiritual warfare, which I do. But also, it was a physical problem, and I was dealing with that. But then it became an emotional struggle when I did not handle the physical side of that well and the potential diagnosis of more problems. I was at the time 59 and relatively thinking, I shouldn't be having...

And you're talking about a guy who had never had a cold hardly. To this day I don't think I've ever had the flu. They say you would know it if you've had the flu. So I don't think I have. I just don't get sick. And now the first thing I have is cancer? Are you kidding me? So I just wasn't prepared for that. It knocked me off of my feet.

SHEILA: When I got to the end, I had the privilege of reading the book before it was even--comes out today--even before it came out. But when I got to the end the thing that was so clear to me is how God is a great redeemer. I thought of Joseph, "You intended this for evil, but God intended..." Because I have to say as one of your congregation, I've always loved your ministry. I've always been blessed. But your ministry seems deeper to me and this huge empathy. Do you feel that when you preach?

JACK: I do. You can't go through an experience like that as many people have, and many have gone through a lot worse than I have with this. My depression experience with this was episodic and it went away. And there are others who live chronically with these issues and, as Christians, struggle with this for a lifetime. That's very, very tough. It's hard for me to imagine. But for me, it became a year of recovery and reigniting. That's

why we call the book because I felt like my fire was gone. I was just kind of crawling into the pulpit.

The church had given me a two-month sabbatical about that same time so I took it; and my plan was, and this was, I write about this in the book. I think it is the biggest mistake I've ever made and that is when I was diagnosed, we got together as a family and said, "Let's just don't tell the church. Let's don't tell anybody. Let's don't..." I'm saying, "Look, I'm going to get through this. I'll be fine. Let's don't upset the children. Let's don't tell anybody." I even went in the hospital under a different name so people, you couldn't find my name in the hospital. Went in there because I'm thinking, I'm in, I'm out, and we're good to go. And as I said, I was up 11 days later.

And then when it hit me, when the fatigue began to set in, and the anxiety and the depression hit me a month or so later I knew I was in for a long ride.

And Deb, my wife who was great through all of it, she said, "Look, this is going to take you a year."

And others said, "It's going to take you a year to get over this."

I said, "A year? Are you kidding me? I'm Jack Graham! It isn't going to take me a year. Maybe half a year."

But it was about a year.

[LAUGHTER]

Our wives are right, aren't they? It was tough.

But what I was going to say, so I didn't tell anybody until later and I didn't ask people to pray. I really feel like hindsight, if I had been under the covering of God's people and

God's praying and the church, I would have been much better off through this. We eventually had to say look, I'm going through something. I'm out.

But the good news is, talking about redemption, when I came back, talking about things being different, when I got back in the pulpit three months later, about, I was still not ready. I was still, I was just exhausted. I kept thinking, why can I not get myself going? Where is my fire? And so I was just kind of going through the motions, crawling into that pulpit every week, standing up there getting through it. I really wasn't able to prepare that much because I couldn't concentrate that well.

So I just did some sermons on the promises of God. And I took great promises that I'd believed all my life from Proverbs 3:5-6 to Isaiah 40:31: They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength. I really needed that one. And Romans 8:28. And so I did like a little miniseries because it was kind of easy preaching. I was just preaching out of the overflow of me just clinging to the promises of God. Again, they weren't really good sermons, but they were raw and they were real. So we did that.

So later on, this is the glory of this, when those sermons on the promises of God went out on PowerPoint, which is our radio and television ministry we got the biggest response of any sermons I'd ever done. So when we are weak, he is strong. And even through the airways, I think my vulnerability, and even though people didn't even know what I was going through, something in me was different. Something through me was different.

RANDY: So you were at the church during that time. What did you see in him?

SHEILA: Well, I remember when it was made available to us that there had been praying for you but what I saw was, you've always been a humble man, but I saw a different kind of humility, a kind of "My grace is sufficient for you in this moment." And there is something about--I always say it is a beautiful thing that God will do with a broken life if you give him all the pieces. I think the light of Christ, the healing light of Christ just shown through that. But I'm thinking, even as I read this, I'm thinking, 2020,

COVID, I mean this book is so relevant. Not just if you've walked through a journey with cancer but how many believers are wanting to *Reignite* their faith.

JACK: Of course, one of the big problems with COVID has been not only the physical crisis but the mental health crisis that's going on across America and I presume the world as well. But I know here in America we have a Life Recovery ministry at Prestonwood, and we've been working overtime with that ministry. So you've got marriages falling apart. People have got quarantined in and decided they didn't like each other, I think. Divorces are happening. And then you've got alcohol and drug issues, you've got anxiety, depression, loneliness, separation. I don't think in my life as a minister I've ever seen as much pain and suffering.

It's amazing that in the year that we've been doing this thing, now a little over a year, it has raised... It was like we had this huge snow storm here and the pipes started breaking because of the ice and the pressure. In the pipes where there were there were flaws or where there were fissures or whether there was already a weakness there, they broke.

So many times when we go through crises in our life, whether it is illness or a relationship crisis or just a personal crisis within, that exposes what's already maybe broken in our lives, right? And then the problems. So we have to get healing from God. This is a book about redemption. It is a book about reignment and redemption because I do believe I'm stronger than ever before because I've been through this and it builds faith muscles and spiritual muscles.

But also in other ways I'm more vulnerable and weaker than I've ever been before. Because when you've never been sick, now I've had tragedy in my life. My father was murdered when I was 20 and I've told that story in the past. So it wasn't like I'd never had tragedy but to be personally in the middle of this storm in my life I'd never experienced anything like that personally.

So I think maybe what you could have seen, Sheila, maybe, hopefully our church is I was

always this guy coming in strong and coming in hard with the gospel and with the message but maybe there is a greater tenderness in my life now because of this.

RANDY: You're a pastor so people come up to you with their life and death issues all the time. How has it changed how you relate to them?

JACK: Well, just on the issue of cancer, and in particular prostate cancer with men, it happens all the time. We're finding it more and more and more, prostate cancer. We found mine, there were no symptoms, most of the time there are not any symptoms. We found ours, there is a P.S.A. test you can get; it is a blood test. And every man out there, do a favor to your wife, your kids, your family, your grandkids, your friends, do yourself a favor and go get your P.S.A. test done because it saved my life. Because when you catch prostate cancer early you can deal with it and it is one of the most curable cancers of all.

So I would say for that I've been able to say, now any time now I hear in the church that a man is dealing with this, they're going to get a call from me. And we're going to talk about it. One of the things I say is prepare for about a year to get over this.

Really, when you think about it, you do a knee surgery it takes a long time. Any surgery is tough but it's kind of like one of the doctors, in fact, the person, I actually went to a counselor to talk through many of these issues. I talk about it in the book. I took medication to help me get leveled out in the middle of this. So one of the doctors, my counselor said, it's like you've been hit by a bus and you're lying in the ditch right now. And that's kind of the way I felt. But it was so descriptive to me.

And another thing is one of my doctors held up a water bottle and it was half full because I kept saying, why am I not getting over this? What is wrong that I can't get my energy back, that I can't get my go back? He held up about a half full water bottle and he said, "When most people get up their water bottle is full, that's your energy, that's your day. You're getting up and it is about half full and you're using it up pretty quick." So I

thought that was a pretty good illustration.

So back to your question, Randy, it's physical, for sure. It's mental. It's psychological, spiritual, it's all of the above. That's what...

RANDY: I think it was important that you realize that because yes, you were praying, you were going to God's word, you had your church around you, your family around you, you had the spiritual support, but you weren't afraid to talk to a counselor, to seek medication for your body. Is there anything else that you did specifically that maybe somebody in your position is wondering, hey I've done that, I've done that, what am I missing here?

JACK: Time. I do talk about some of the things, the medical response, but time is a great healer. You can go through lots of long times of struggle, but I do think ultimately time is a healer if we're looking to God and finding our strength again to burn again for him and not lose hope.

I remember we have a big clock at our house, and I would just sit there in my chair and stare at that clock trying to get it to move faster. Thinking, if that clock will move faster, I'm going to get out of this faster. I don't know, is that crazy? But I'm thinking, come on! Come on! Come on! And you can't, you have to let the healing take place. You've got to give God time and yourself time to heal.

SHEILA: Well, I'm very grateful that you have been gracious enough to say you'll come back and do another program with us this week. Because what you're going to want to know is yes, there is tremendous honesty and vulnerability in this book but then keep turning the pages because then comes where the fire comes back again. And how you and I, even though we've come through something desperate can suddenly fall more in love with Jesus than we ever were before.

So we're going to tell you how to get a hold of this book. But what we'd like to ask you

first of all is we're very concerned at *LIFE Today* about the number of young girls in Southeast Asia and different parts of the world who have been trafficked and who feel as if nobody hears their cries. Well, God has heard their cries and he's sent us to be there. So Randy and I would like to ask you to watch this and when we come back, we'll tell you how to get a hold of Pastor Graham's book. Please watch this.

On the mission field:

ANNOUNCER: Streets like these create an illusion of pleasure and good times. But as you delve into the back alleys and rooms hidden away you discover another world, one where children and young girls are being abused and sexually exploited by human traffickers. Anjali knows this all too well.

Open Captions:

>> She would hit me with a big stick on my head and arms. I still have the scars today even though it happened many years ago. The lady would abuse me and force me to make it with men. I would scream and cry and didn't want to sleep with them.

ANNOUNCER: Breaking down their victims emotionally and physically are just some of the horrendous techniques the traffickers use to keep the girls under their control.

Open Captions:

>> There was a girl whose breasts were cut off and another girl I saw that had her throat slit. Seeing all of that torture terrified me so that I was scared and would do the work I had to do.

ANNOUNCER: It is easy to understand why young girls like Anjali cannot escape such extreme situations. As for Anjali, it would have been easy for her to simply give up had it not been for a kind word from an unlikely source.

Open Captions:

>> A girl my age named Rada was very encouraging, she told me don't worry, God will take care of us and get us out of there. I was encouraged to have someone in there who was a friend to me.

ANNOUNCER: It was not long after that encounter with Rada that *LIFE's* mission partners in South Asia were able to free both of them.

Open Captions:

>> I pray before more girls die, we get them out so they can have a hope and a new life like me.

End of video

In the studio:

SHEILA: So often when we think of sex trafficking, if we ever do, we think of a certain type of person who may be involved with that. But I've had the privilege of actually walking those streets. That little darling girl with a green shirt looking out the window, I held her and prayed with her. She wanted to receive Jesus Christ as her Savior.

And I want you to know, these are little girls like your daughters, like your sister. They didn't come into this world thinking that's the life they would live. So many of them, their parents are gone. That little girl in particular, her dad left, and her mother is in prison. She's the head of the family, just 12 years old. She has three younger siblings.

If we don't come in Jesus' name, who will? The traffickers are organized. It is a multibillion-dollar industry, but we are the church of Jesus Christ. We know that there is redemption, that there is hope, that there is healing but we need you to take our hand and join with us. I can't wait until all travel restrictions are off and I can finally be back in Southeast Asia and bring good news, but they need it right now. And Randy, each one of us can do something to help.

RANDY: We can. And have you ever heard any of those children say a prayer or see them pray to a statue or to a candle? They don't even, oftentimes, they don't know who they are praying to. They're just saying some sort of desperate prayer for help. I want Christians to be the answer to that prayer. I want you to be the answer to that prayer.

Here's how it works. We go in, we reach into these areas, we rescue these girls whether it is pulling them out or stopping them at the border where they'll be going into a country where they're going to be trafficked and we restore, we give them hope, we give them training, we give them skills, we give them a safe place and we give them the love of Christ. That's what we do. But we only do it with your support.

We have friends right now that have pledged \$320,000 towards Rescue Life. They've set that aside to match whatever you give today. So instead of \$128 being the average cost for rescuing a child it's \$64 because yours is being doubled. We are really appreciative towards those donors that have said they would do that, but we just pray, we ask for your support.

I ask you to go online, go to the phones, make the best gift that you can because this is the gospel. This is living out the gospel. This is going in in Jesus' name just like that girl, Sheila, that you saw and saying, I don't know who you've been praying to, maybe you don't know who you've been praying to, but we know the answer. Will you be that answer today? I pray you will.

SHEILA: The great thing is, Randy, this book by Pastor Graham is going to light a fresh flame in your heart, your faith is going to be ignited. Let's take the light of Christ into the darkest corners of this earth in Jesus' name. So for any gift you give at all today we'll be happy to send you Pastor Graham's book. Please, go to the phone now. Make a difference in Jesus' name.

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**

Sheila: Honestly, I don't think anything quite prepared me for this trip. I sat down and talked to a young girl who was basically sold into trafficking by her mother and father.

When they need more money, instead of them finding a way to get it, they turn to their daughters. One of them is 15 now and the other one is 17. They have been basically sold every night in a karaoke bar where they have to persuade these men, these clients to drink a lot and then they have to be willing to go and sleep with these men.

When I look into the eyes of these little girls, they're just little girls. This cannot be their future. I feel that once we know something, you can't unknow it and that's why we're here on behalf of *LIFE Today*, on behalf of *LIFE Outreach International* because we have to reach these girls before we can rescue them, before we can restore them. That's our commitment to these girls, "Not only do we want to sit down and talk with you, we want to get you out of the place where you are and put you in a safe place so that you can begin the healing process of being restored." And we're doing it all in the name of Jesus.

End of clip

In the studio

RANDY: Please do go online or go to the phone and make the best gift you can. You will be rescuing a life. And today, if you request it, you can get *Reignite*.

SHEILA: Yeah! It's so great. Pastor, on the next program, will you talk us through the journey of that spiritual, awakesness may be a big word but a refiring of your faith. Would you share that with us?

JACK: I'd love to. Look forward to it. Because there is a great promise on the other side of everything we face.

SHEILA: Absolutely! So thanks so much for being with us on *LIFE Today*. For Randy, I'm Sheila, and we will see you next time!

RANDY: Bye-bye!