

7/13/21

Week 29: WFL

James and Betty Robison

Rosie Rivera

BETTY: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! Thank you so much for joining us. I'm Betty, and this is James.

JAMES: Let me just say, Betty and I, I wrote a book, and we'll send it to you, *Living Amazed*. I live amazed at God and so many of you. Many of you may be watching because you need to experience life in a more meaningful way today. You've heard that you might be able to be encouraged or inspired or lifted, and you will be because God lifts people with love. But those of you who watch who amaze me so much is how committed you are to sharing the life and the love of God in a way that totally changes everything for people.

Right now, we're giving people Water for LIFE, and I'm telling you, you bless people. You change their world. You not only give them life and health that many of them have never had in their families, but we also point them to a life of God in Christ. And they've already seen it demonstrated by you giving them Water for LIFE; they trust the water of life.

We have a guest today, Rosie Rivera, who really has experienced what you'd call serious knockdowns. Maybe really not just near-death experiences but in some ways a death experience where everything could be totally destroyed.

And *God is Your Defender* is the title of this book; "Learning to stand after life has knocked you down." Things in life knock us down; what we experience. There is a

deceiver, there is a destroyer, there is the father of lies and the murderer, and I'm telling you, too often, he is prevailing. But if you let God be your defender, and Rosie has learned that. She had a very famous singer, a Latin singer, that she lost. She was terribly, let's say, misguided into sexual immorality and various things that just captured her, all kinds of grips. But something happened that can happen in every life.

Rosie, I am thrilled to have you and anxious for you to share with our viewing audience the story and insights and things you want people to learn about how *God is Your Defender*. Take us on the journey of some of the challenges, and let's say, some of the times you were knocked down and how God lifted you up.

ROSIE: I think two of the biggest challenges of my life were the sexual abuse that started at eight. It was my sister's husband, her first husband. I didn't even know it was happening. I was so upset when a year later, I realized it was abuse. And I know that sounds maybe silly, but we didn't talk about sex.

JAMES: Children can be manipulated into where they don't actually know what they're doing wrong. And then if they find it was wrong, they think maybe they were the guilty one. Just all kinds of stuff that's heaped on you when you've been manipulated as a child.

ROSIE: It was called "a love game." So I thought we were playing a game. I knew love. My family, I was the youngest of six. Love ruled at the house. And when I finally spoke up, he threatened to kill my sister, and that just ripped my voice out. I was just so afraid to speak.

JAMES: You actually believed him.

ROSIE: Yes, because there was a lot of domestic violence between them. I used to watch them fight. So both of them were guilty of that. I said he will one day. And if she finds out he is sexually abusing me, she'll kill him, and we'll lose her to jail time, or my family will. So a nine-year-old, ten-, eleven-, twelve-, thirteen-year-old thought their lives are on

me. And that is incorrect. Thank God at 25, I learned Christ is the savior, not me. So that weight was lifted.

But the weight, the pressure, the stress, the shame by 13, 14, 15, I was lost in drugs, addicted to pornography. What I hated, my body was addicted to. I lost all my identity, and I didn't really truly know who God was. I knew he existed, and it wasn't his fault, thank God, and I knew he was real, but the enemy will tell you he doesn't really care. He's not doing anything.

But the Lord showed me as soon as I gave him my life at 25, my family was searching for this man. He was a fugitive of the law for nine years. They wanted to either hurt him or put him in jail. I didn't know what to do. I didn't want to hurt anymore. That's what I wanted. And I didn't want him to hurt, to be honest. I thought if he dies, then that's on me. So even then, you're kind of protecting your abuser. But I received the Lord in November, and by April, he was in custody. The Lord just said, "Just let me do it." When you finally said, put your hands up and said, "God, you do it." He accelerated everything. For nine years, we tried to do it, searching for him, and fighting, and asking around.

When I finally said, God, you will do what you need to do. Just heal me. I left justice in God's hands. Yeah, a year later, we went through the whole court process. And a year later, he was convicted 31 years to life. No possibility of parole. So when he is released, he will be 74. But even then, my prayer was, Lord, let him reconcile with you, and that was just the Holy Spirit. That was not my feelings. I had no love for this man.

But releasing that hate left room for peace. I finally could sleep again. I could finally love again truly. It released all that bitterness living inside me, and I became a better mother, a better wife. And that's where this book comes from. Like when I did not focus on healing because I was focused on revenge, and that just made me bitter. So I just really, really through the book and other situations, whether it's a little league game where they yell at my godson, and you want to sit there and fight. The Holy Spirit even has to help me there. So it's everything in-between. You know, a yelp review. An argument with your

husband where I accidentally stop feeding him because he won't clean the garage. It's really saying, God, I'm going to let you deal with it, and I'm going to focus on healing. That's what I really want to teach people with this book.

JAMES: When you lost your sister, can you tell us about that and the effect that had?

ROSIE: Oh, it was horrible. It was my life changing from one minute to another. I didn't only lose her, which was already devastating.

JAMES: She was a very well-known singer.

ROSIE: Yes. She was the only woman, a regional Mexican artist, to fill out the Staple Center, for example. Sold out -- the only one! So her being a woman and a mother of five and a little heavyset, she just broke every barrier. I'm so proud of her.

But I lost my best friend, my mentor, my guide. And then I lost my privacy. There were media outlets literally living outside of my home. I'm very private. Because of the sexual abuse, I was anti-social. I was hiding behind books. So it was very difficult for me to live such a public life and being scrutinized. My sister came out on TV, we counted them, 100 days after her death, every single day, and it was an attack on the family. "Rosie is not doing it right. Rosie knows nothing. Rosie is a girl. She is not even a singer." And just that scrutiny and scrutiny. I used to defend myself with my fists or with my tongue.

And Christ, he was in front of Pontius Pilate, didn't say a word. I just felt His grace, his strength. The truth doesn't have to be defended, is what I learned. The truth is the truth; I don't have to defend the truth. The Lord will do it. Everything comes to light.

But it's been eight years of biting my tongue. It's been eight years of humbling myself before Christ and allowing him to do it. It's been wonderful; I've gotten to know him as my defender. And he hasn't failed, not once.

JAMES: When you look at situations that people face that knock them down, and they're sadly, not usually one, not always just a few, but sometimes it just seems like it's a reality in the particular journey.

What counsel do you give that they can see here in light of different knockdown moments that you can share that even right now before they might read the book, which hopefully you will, what would you want them to hear when life has really knocked them down?

ROSIE: I saw my life kind of like the woman with the hemorrhaging. She was losing for 12 years -- just losing. You don't only lose physically. You lose people, you lose dreams; she lost her identity. So for a long time after so many knockdowns, after so much loss, you kind of label yourself a loser. I just lose. You kind of think, that's all that there is.

So when Christ met her, when she took that bold step, she pulled power out of him when she touched his garment. But when she spoke her story, she pulled power out of her, and that's where her identity came. So the internal healing, the physical healing came through the power of Christ. But there was power in her speaking up about her loss; in her analyzing it, thinking it, allowing Christ to be in that loss.

So when I get knocked down, when I feel like I'm losing, whether it's a person or a relationship or a job or economically, when you feel like you're losing, I've learned I'm going to take it to Christ, and I'm going to tell him. I don't have to tell 15 people anymore. There is good in venting but to one person. Before I even take it to my husband and put stress on our marriage, I'm going to take it to Christ first. I want to release it to him. And again, that's where he reminds me of my identity.

What I loved is, he doesn't call her the hemorrhaging woman that we call her. He calls her, "Child, you are made whole again." So every time, it can be once a day, once a week, whenever I feel that I'm losing, what I'm losing, he'll make me whole again. He will restore it. Or I just let it go. Okay, thank you, Lord. That was a good season. You make

me whole again.

Whatever happened, what we know is that when she left, she was going to have peace. Whatever happened, she might have lost again. I might lose again tomorrow, but I will still be a child of God and have that peace. And that is what I'm holding on to. Like I'm trying to get to the point, I'm not exactly there yet, it is a work in progress, but of saying, take everything but leave me Jesus. That's what I want.

So when you feel like you've been knocked down, it really sounds cliché, but it's the best time to pray, just on your knees, give it to God, release it. There are things he may be taking away to replace them with something greater. If I've lost anything at all but learned about God's character, he's been my father, my friend, my healer, he has been everything, learning his character as my defender has really been a pleasure. Because I was going to lose anyway, I just don't want to do it without God anymore.

BETTY: Well, I think what you shared about, we try so many times to fight our own battles in our own strength, and we get exhausted. But if we can see, just as you did, allow God to do that, rest in him, he says, "Give me your burdens and let me carry them for you. Let me fight those battles because it is not intended for you to fight them. You're in me, I'm in you, and you are my child, and I will give you..." And when we are weak, he is strong.

ROSIE: Yes! Yes! That's been glorious for my children. I was exhausted half the time, not only because I had a two-year-old and I wasn't sleeping, I was emotionally exhausted. I wouldn't allow myself to enjoy moments with them. I would be reading to my daughter, but in the back of my mind thinking, what am I going to do about this? Now I'm present. I really am. Where I am looking at my daughter in her eyes, and we're talking about things that matter to a seven-year-old, and not what am I going to... No! Living in the present has been great for me and them.

JAMES: When you know people are going to get the book and start reading it, and they

get to the end, what do you find yourself hoping and praying takes place in their life by reading this story?

ROSIE: I really pray that they search for healing. We get so caught up in the injustice, and this isn't fair. And I'm so mad, which are valid feelings, but then they get stuck in living in anger. My hope is that they can really have that moment with God to say I surrender. It is not easy but surrendering is not losing. It opens up your world for healing.

So when we allow God to be our defender, and you just know it to be true, you can meet him as your healer. I really want people to be healed. I've been healed by Christ from what the world told me wasn't possible. And when they meet him there and focus on the healing, which is our responsibility. Even if the injustice wasn't our fault, healing is our responsibility. And then, when they are healed, it will change your whole home. Your children will live healthy lives. Your marriage.

So I really pray that they let that go. God, it's up to you. You handle this. I take off the robe of a judge; I get off the seat. I'm not even the attorney. I'm just your child. And then really focus on healing, which is a whole different journey.

JAMES: Jesus forgave. They didn't accidentally drive spikes in his hand or accidentally put thorns on his head. And yet he said, "Father, forgive them. They don't know what they are doing." They were under the control of the god of this world that blinded their eyes. They couldn't even see the light of glory; they couldn't see anything. And Jesus said, "God, forgive them. They're under the control of the spirit that I've come to break the power of." That's what you're talking about. You're talking about getting to know that God.

ROSIE: Yes. Well, the way the Lord helped me forgive because I learned forgiveness isn't an emotion. I never woke up thinking, I want to forgive. But I read Acts where Jesus tells them, "And you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Samaria, Judea and on." I was ready to travel the world. Said wait a minute, let's work on your home, forgive...

JAMES: He said to start in Jerusalem, which is home.

ROSIE: Yes. In his home. And then we saw, I looked up, what does witness mean? It is a martyr. I said, Lord, do I have to die? He said, to your emotions, to your feelings, to that bitterness.

JAMES: To your kingdom and lose your life in his kingdom.

ROSIE: Yes! So then I saw it in Stephen, who was the first martyr, and he said, "Forgive them. Don't even hold it against them." I said, Lord, how do I do that? And in that story, it is so gorgeous, he saw the glory of God. And I said it is worth it. I don't know how to do it, Lord, help me do it. And in both verses, it is the power of the Holy Spirit. I said, okay, Holy Spirit, help me do this.

So from November to April, when I finally saw him, the Lord was working. It took me months to forgive him. It was being in his presence, crying. One day it was talking about the physical abuse; the other time, it was the emotional. But by the time I saw him, I knew, I don't know if he changed, I changed. I had no hate; I had compassion. And I know that that's the Holy Spirit.

JAMES: And that's what God wants. Father, I pray for every person listening to see if there is a root of bitterness and unforgiveness. And it does take your supernatural grace and help; impart it to the people watching and listening so that they can forgive and have the relationship with you as their defender that Rosie talked about. In Jesus' name.

The book is online and in bookstores. We'll be glad to send it. We're going to ask you, and Rosie, we ask our viewers to share the life of God, not just in word but in deed, in action. You've been helping us put God's arms around the least of these and the overlooked for a long time. I think right now, you're going to be moved to become the miracle somebody longs for. Watch closely.

On the mission field:

ANNOUNCER: Clean water changes everything! Few know this better than those living in the thousands of communities where *LIFE Outreach* has drilled fresh, clean water wells. And with no exaggeration, we probably say they have many of you to thank.

But the gratitude of these communities starts with our missionary partners who serve them. This is Aimable, a godly pastor in Burundi who serves as one of *LIFE's* ambassadors to his people.

Open Captions:

>> What they're drinking is polluted water. I can even smell it. It's very smelly.

ANNOUNCER: Aimable has shared in their joy, as well as their pain.

Open Captions:

>> I had six kids, I now have four. One died last year; the other in March 2021. Their symptoms were the same: Bloated feet, stomach, and cheeks.

>> So drinking this water, I can tell you, equals drinking death.

ANNOUNCER: The power of clean water is undeniable. But triumphs of the past offer little comfort to Marie, who's already lost two children to filthy drinking water. Because for Marie, it's either dirty water or no water at all.

>> It would be a blessing to help these people with clean water. Really, really--they really need help.

ANNOUNCER: You can help radically transform the lives of Marie and so many like her right now. Help us bring them the gift of safety. The gift of hope. Help us give Water

for LIFE!

In the studio:

JAMES: Wow! Betty, you know this man, Aimable, he's a missionary led to Christ, amazingly speaks English so well. But you can just see what he's talking about. He is saying this is death. Betty, the name of our program is *LIFE Today*, and we really come hopefully, prayerfully, to offer life to you. During the pandemic, more people kept coming to *LIFE Today* because they were getting life today; they were getting ministry. They were identifying with our guests. They saw how much we want to help all the members of the church of the Lord Jesus; all who know him live like his family, and how much we want to help others. And how much we help the helpless. And all who would view would say, this works!

That missionary is an expression of the life of God, and he's appealing for life. And Jesus came that we might have life and have it more abundantly. And those of you who watch realize if we give somebody water, we're giving them life! We're giving what Jesus came to give now and for all eternity. This love never fails.

And Betty, we win millions of people to Christ on the mission field. I just got a report from the missionary that they had 368,000 people saved in just the last few weeks. That's what you're doing. But now we're talking about saving lives by the millions, Betty, with the 7,000 water wells that we'll soon fulfill. And boy, what an answer to prayer.

BETTY: It really is. And what greater joy can you even have than to know that you are giving life to these precious little ones? I heard that mother talking about that mother had six children, now she has four. I can tell you personally, losing one is too much. But many of them lose more than one, most likely, several children.

So let's make that difference. Let's offer life to these children through the water wells and through the cup of water that we can so freely give them.

JAMES: You know, Betty, we're going to give you, this is the nicest easy-to-read print, comfortable-to-carry Bible we've ever given. We're giving you God's Holy Word, which is life. And *Living Amazed*, I want to send that to you. It's like we're sending you a library. And Randy took the Proverbs and said you can *Upgrade* seven moves in seven weeks from the Proverbs to have a new life.

We're doing this to just give you spiritual life and encouragement. We do it not to get you to give but because we want to give life to you, spiritual life. But you're actually giving life to these children and their families. You become the absolute, never-to-fail miracle! Because Water for LIFE changes everything and gives them life. And we point them to the abundant life, the relationship, and eternal life through Christ.

Would you right now help us complete the 350 water wells? God, we need a miracle response today. Somebody drills a well, \$4800; somebody gives towards that, and others join. Everybody do something, in Jesus' name.

Remember this: \$4800 for a well; \$1200, three join you, a well. \$2400 and pray, God, give me another, we've got a well. Most of the support comes \$48; it literally gives ten people water the rest of their life. Think about this, \$144, 30 people water the rest of their life. We've put a well in the center of their habitation where they live.

Would you right now go get your bank card, use it like a check? Go online, call the number, make the gift God puts on your heart. You really are giving life. Thank you so much!

Begin video clip:

ANNOUNCER: Waterborne illness is a killer that strikes the most vulnerable. For many

impoverished families, the death of a child is the tragic result of having no choice but to drink contaminated water. But with your help, they won't have to make this choice ever again. Mission: Water for LIFE provides clean, fresh drinking 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 350 water wells this year. Your gift of \$24 will help provide clean water for five children. A gift of \$48 will help provide for ten, \$72 will provide for 15, and \$144 will help provide life-giving water for 30 people for a lifetime!

With your gift, we'll send you James Robison's book *Living Amazed* full of inspirational true stories. You'll learn how divine encounters can change your life. In addition you'll also receive Randy Robison's brand-new devotional, *Upgrade*: "Seven moves in seven weeks to a better life."

With your gift of \$100 or more please request the N.I.V. Thinline Bible with easy-to-read large print. Finally, please consider a gift of \$1200 to help provide water for 250 people or a gift of \$4800 to help sponsor a complete well. And you may request our inspiring bronze sculpture, "Divine Servant."

Please call, write, or make your gift online.

End of video

In the studio:

JAMES: Well, on behalf of every mother and father and family, for the sake of those they love so dearly, thank you. And if you've helped us drill a well and we've got to finish 150, so you just do what you can.

If you'd like to have Rosie's book and you say, James, I think it will really help me, you just give a cup of water and just say, will you send that as a gift along with the other

books? And the Bible that we'll send to just say thank you and to bless you, we'll be glad to send it. Rosie, thank you. Thank you for letting God work in your life. Thank you for letting God lift that load; become your defender. I pray you'll just keep being a witness for him. Thank you for sharing with us.

ROSIE: Thank you. Thank you all for having me.

JAMES: Thank all of you. Let me repeat, you're helping us get God's arms around the most overlooked and the least of these that Jesus talked about. He said, "When you help them, you do it to me." Thank you for loving Jesus. Thank you for loving others. God bless you.