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Week 29: WFL

James and Betty Robison

JD Greear

JAMES: Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm James Robison. Betty and I are thrilled to welcome the current president, who probably won't be when this airs because it is transitioning. He's already got an extra year, and that's JD Greear. He pastors in the Raleigh, North Carolina area, which has several campuses. I've been told about him for years and never really got to sit down and talk to him. I'm absolutely thrilled to be sitting here with him. And I'm thrilled to be sitting here with him because I believe he is a man that God is all over. I believe he is a man that wants God's will. And he may be the president of the largest say protestant denomination in America, and perhaps the world, but he realizes who big is.

He's written a book that I'm very excited about. It is called *Just Ask*. Betty, this is on prayer. *Just Ask*; "The joy of confident, bold, patient, relentless, shameless, dependent, grateful, powerful, expectant prayer.

JD: You need a few more words in that subtitle.

JAMES: JD Greear, we're thrilled to have you here. How's the Southern Baptist convention doing? Have they gotten exactly where Jesus wants them?

JD: Well, I don't know if I'd go quite there. But you know it's a family of churches, and like every family, you've got your high points, and you've got your low points. But it really is a group of people that--one of the things that's been most surprising to me as I've had this chance to serve as president is just the relative unity among rank-and-file Southern Baptists; of just wanting the gospel to be above all, and to come together for the great commission.

Don't believe everything you see on social media. Actually, the Spirit of God is really at work.

JAMES: Well, a Baptist pastor's wife at Memorial Baptist in Pasadena, Texas, a suburb of Houston, gave this fatherless boy a home. And then, in that situation in that church, they led me to Christ. I met her. I met this little girl right here. She kind of twisted things around for me to maybe hear God call me to preach by getting me exposed to where I might hear God.

But I fell in love with her. And she accepted Christ there in the church; I accepted Christ in the church. We got called to preach in the church, and we got married in the church. So Baptists have a big effect. I did 600 citywide crusades, of which I would say 75 percent of the support was among Baptists. Sometimes it's hard for Baptists to be willing for others to come in and work with us. Would you understand that?

JD: Absolutely!

JAMES: They would ask about who is going to be doing the prayer? Who is going to be taking the offering? Who is going to get all the cards for the people making decisions? Have you ever heard a Baptist ask a question like that?

JD: Listen. One of the stories my Dad told me is of going into heaven and the angels giving a tour, and there are groups of people. He's like, oh, this is Presbyterians. And then they walk really quietly by a group. And they're like, "Who's that?" "That's the Baptists; they don't know anybody else is here."

JAMES: [Laughing] JD, let's cut to the chase, *Just Ask*. What are you saying, *Just Ask? This is prayer. Why do you say, Just Ask?*

JD: You know I've had a difficult relationship. I have a Ph.D. in theology. I've pastored what some people would call a successful church for years, and I've had a difficult relationship with prayer. Mainly just because I'm always, things are getting in the way. Thinking about, am I praying the right way? Am I using the right words? Am I praying with the right--how does God

see my attitude?

Whenever you see Jesus instruct us on prayer, he is pointing us to be like children. And he is saying, *Just Ask*. Just approach your Heavenly Father like a child who doesn't always have the words; sometimes, it's just a look. And so I really wanted to communicate that whatever we're talking about, whether it's brokenness in your life, a sense of lack of spiritual power, disunity in the church, concerned about our nation, the first thing and the second thing and the third thing and probably the seventh, eighth and ninth is, *Just Ask*--just pray. Because prayer is engaging the Almighty.

If you look at why God's church surged in those first few centuries that we read about, the first few dozen years in Acts is not because they didn't have great organization. Honestly, it is not because they had great flawless leaders. But you just always find them on their knees praying, and prayer released what God can do.

JAMES: It is so important that we understand this. I'm going to touch something, and I want you to just touch, in case we didn't get to all the great points that are in here. But you say, "How not to pray."

JD: Yeah! Well, I always say, the only prayers that Jesus criticizes in the New Testament are the ones that are too long. So I tell that to every person who gets up in front of our church.

JAMES: Notice it is in public. Like he doesn't tell you you can't pray all day and all night. It's in public praying, like praying to be heard of men. Like, impress them instead of talking to God.

JD: That's right. He criticizes those, he criticizes the ones who use the language; and they're using all the theologically precise terms. And what he tells us is that there is a kind of praying that is more religious than it is gospel-centered. The religious prayers you think they've heard because of something you are doing. Or that God, his heart is changed by all the words that you just cover him with. What the Bible teaches us, to repeat what I said at the beginning, is that we're children who come to our Heavenly Father hopeless.

The forward was written by a guy named Paul Miller. Paul Miller says, "Prayerlessness--we should think of prayerlessness as a self-discipline problem." I don't pray enough for the same reason I don't read enough books or eat my alfalfa sprouts, which is that I'm not disciplined. He said, but really, prayerlessness is a disconnect from the gospel. Because if the gospel really has taken root in your heart, then you see, first of all, how powerless you are to do anything.

Jesus said, "Apart from me, can't do anything." You also see in the gospel the willingness of Jesus to help you. So prayerlessness is the result of not properly understanding and letting the gospel take root. So rather than just have one of our viewers say it is good. I'm going to pray five minutes a day. But rather than just think about the discipline, think about letting the gospel reshape your heart so that prayer becomes as natural and instinctive to you as breathing.

Paul's famous verse, "Pray without ceasing." It's like breathing. I've got some accountability partners, but James, none of them ever call me throughout the day and say, hey, JD! Just want to hold you accountable. Are you breathing right now?

[Laughter]

I mean, I breathe because I crave air. If I don't, my body begins to scream out, breathe! When our soul has been properly shaped by the gospel, then prayer comes as natural and instinctive as breathing. Because we long for the presence, long for the power, and long for those things that only the spirit can do.

When Jesus left his disciples after giving them the great commission. Now think about the great commission for a second. Has there ever been a larger assignment given to a less qualified group of people?

[Laughter]

Every person in every language on the planet needs to hear the gospel, and you guys are the only

ones that know about it. You only speak one language, so you don't even know how to travel. You've never been outside of your homeland.

If that had been any of us, been you and me, James, I have a feeling we're probably both go-getters. We would have gotten in the room, and we would have gotten organized. And we would have, you've got to do this, we've got to do this crusade over here. We got to do this. The first command that Jesus gives them...

JAMES: Pray.

JD: Well, yes! That was the rule. But the first command was, "Do nothing. Wait! Wait for the power that is on high."

JAMES: Yeah! Tarry, that's what he told him to do. Yeah!

JD: What they ended up doing is they prayed.

JAMES: And miracles happened to them. They actually became one. Hey! That can happen to Baptists! Whoa! It can. It can happen to the whole church. All the believers. We can be one.

JD: So they sat there in that room; Jesus said, "Wait!" With all these people that needed to hear the gospel, "Wait." And for ten days, because that's how long they were in that upper room before the Holy Spirit came, they did nothing except, to your point, all they did was pray. Did nothing but pray.

Then the Holy Spirit came, and Peter stood up and preached a sermon. That took at most ten minutes, and 3,000 people get saved. So they prayed for ten days, Peter preached for ten minutes, 3,000 people got saved. Now we pray for ten minutes, preach for ten days, and three people get saved. We need to rearrange our zeros, and we'll experience that kind of power.

JAMES: And they need to speak the language of the people. See, it wasn't, the other language is,

and they even had the dialect. We don't seem to speak the language of the people who need to hear the truth. We need to learn Holy Spirit will give us the ability to communicate his truth with anybody.

I wanted to say this about what I've learned as an older person in prayer. And here's what I've found when I pray, and I'm not exaggerating when I say this, 75 to 80 percent of the time is listening. He has far more to say than we ever imagined. So here's how you get him to really download clearly. Let him know that you know he cares about what's on your heart. He cares about your dreams, your desires. Delight in him. He'll even give you those desires, redirect them where they're appropriate if you'll delight in him.

Now, if you get to that place, if you'll listen to him, and here's when he really starts downloading, when you tell him, I know you care about my dreams, I want to see your dreams fulfilled, your vision. When God gets to talking to somebody who wants his dream fulfilled, he gets very conversational. Does that make sense?

JD: Absolutely! The man that taught me, the man who taught me more to pray than anybody else, was my dad. My dad has never been in ministry, never received a dime for any kind of professional ministry. He was a factory manager. Got up early, oh dark thirty, to go into the factory. I knew every morning I'd get up, I knew exactly where to find him. If I happened to get up at 5:15, 5:30, I'd always find him there on his knees with his Bible. And I never grew up doubting the presence of God or the reality of God because I saw it in my dad's life.

I asked him one time; I said, "Dad, where did you learn? Because you never miss a day. You're always there."

He said, "Well, believe it or not," he said, "When you were a young boy, I didn't pray regularly. I really struggled with that. And I kept hearing at church talk about doing a quiet time and time with God. I tried probably half a dozen times. Would do it four or five days, and it would just peter out."

He said, "Well, I got really convicted, and I said one more time. Like, okay, I'm going to set my alarm. I had to be up and out by 5:30. I'm going to set it so I can get up, spend 15 minutes with the Lord. So I set my alarm for 4:45, so I could do it." And he said, "The next morning," he said, "I woke up before the alarm, 4:30, bright and early." He said he looked at the clock at 4:30. He even said, "Lord, this wasn't the deal. You were supposed to help me wake up at 4:45."

And my dad said, "It was one of those moments in my life where the Holy Spirit spoke to me in a voice that was as clear as if it had been audible. He said, 'I know, but I couldn't wait. I couldn't wait to get started.'" And my dad said that changed it because before, it was like quiet time was something I was trying to do for God, as opposed to seeing that this was an invitation that my Heavenly Father wanted to spend time with me. And he had things he wanted to communicate to me. It was his desire for this relationship that was driving it, not my desire for him.

JAMES: I wish everybody listening would understand how much God wants to talk to you. How much he wants to hear your heart. But here's the next step. Like I said, I'm learning fairly fully now how much he wants you to know his heart. A lot of you think, maybe, God likes to talk to Betty. JD and I--everybody understands God likes to talk to Betty. People sit here and watch television because of Betty. They put up with me because Betty is sitting here by me. But Betty, as much as God loved to talk to you, and you love to talk to him, he wants that for everybody out there.

BETTY: He absolutely does. And I have found freedom in my relationship with the Lord. It's through prayer time with him. I used to think it always had to be something planned, a certain time, for so long and all that. I found out that God is always listening, and he's always eager, like you said, to have conversations and time with him. I can be driving in my car, and all of a sudden feel him present. I want to talk to God about something. He's right there every time. He'll never disappoint you in that way. He says, "I'm listening. I'm listening."

And like James said, a lot of it should be us listening to him because he has so much to share with us. His heart is so full. Why? He created us. He loves us. He wants fellowship with us. And I need the fellowship with him.

JD: What a friend we have in Jesus, right?

JAMES: And that's what we're talking about right here, this pray without ceasing, this conversation. In conversation, you're not doing all the talking; it goes back and forth. There are periods of silence, but it is relationship.

We have a few more minutes. Tell us some of the points you want people to get. I know that this man shared in this book what can lead you into this relationship we're talking about with prayer, to where he always hears you, but you also begin to hear him more clearly. Share a couple more thoughts about how you want people to pray.

JD: Well, I have a burden, James and Betty, for seeing the church in the United States revived, to see us begin to succeed in those places that we know God has wanted us to succeed, that he's called us to. He didn't call us to kind of cuddle up and manage a slow retreat. He called us to charge the gates of hell. The gates of hell will not be able to keep us out.

JAMES: It's the only force the gates of hell cannot stand against, the church moving in the power of the spirit.

JD: Go back and study the history of awakenings in our country; every single one happened in prayer. The greatest missionary...

JAMES: And we need one desperately, an awakening.

JD: Absolutely. The greatest missionary to ever be sent off from church, the Apostle Paul, it wasn't a mission sermon that did it. Acts 13:2 is when the church was assembled in prayer that God said, "Separate Barnabas and Paul."

Prayer for us is something that we try to sprinkle in. Sometimes the only prayer in a worship service is to change the set between the worship and the pastor. But you see a different spirit at

work in the book of Acts and in those times when God has really moved in the church. In Acts six, when Peter and the apostles appointed the first deacons because meeting the daily needs of the widows has gotten too difficult. What Peter and the apostles explained was we've got to devote ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the word.

Now, most pastors know how to do that. Like I've got to focus on the ministry of the word, but we think of prayer as just the support for the ministry of the word. But the way that it is written in the Greek, prayer, and ministry of the word, it's like they're put side by side as they are both ministries of the church. Prayer is not what we do to prepare for the ministry; it is the ministry.

So to see the church again begin to say, what is going to characterize us? It's how Jesus described the church: My house should be called a house of preaching? No, a house of prayer for all nations. That that becomes what defines us. I think when that happens, we're going to see God begin to do some things in our country that the greatest preachers and the greatest leaders alive can't do because it is what the Holy Spirit is able to do.

JAMES: I'm saying that I believe this man can help bring health and healing to the whole church of the Lord Jesus Christ; he can lift us beyond our differences, as iron sharpens iron makes us keener. If we don't stop meeting like this, then we get duller. That he can raise the family of God up to look like the perfect Father.

JD: Amen!

JAMES: I believe you're anointed to help do that. I believe that with all my heart. I'm going to beg you to do something. I want you to get this book because this is God's man. I'm telling you, he knows things we, the church, need to hear. He put it in a very compact package. And even while we're talking, God is talking to him and blessing JD like blessing me. I think we're going to be friends until Jesus comes.

Here's the deal. I'd love to send it to you. JD, I'm going to ask everybody to help us give water to the thirsty; and they love doing it. We're giving them a couple of books. My son wrote one; I

wrote this one. It's been written through my life. Amazing, really what God's done. But we'll send you this one if you'll just help us give water to the thirsty and touch the least of these. I want you to have it.

So what you're going to do is you're going to give life to somebody, and we're going to give some more life to you. 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: I just can't express thanks enough for saving all the lives you've saved; that love never fails. But also, I want you to know, as excited as I am about that, I'm excited about JD Greear being here. I'd heard that he was especially anointed and especially gifted, but I hadn't been around him. God said more powerful things about this man to me than all the people have ever said. So that's why I want you to read what he wrote. I feel this book on prayer is important to all the people that I know who love others. And I want you to get it. So we'll send it to you.

Father, I want you to bless JD beyond anything he ever dreamed of. I want your dreams to be fulfilled because of his ability to hear you and to respond to your direction with joy, conviction, courage, compassion; in Jesus' name, amen.

Thank you for being here, buddy.

JD: Thank you, brother. Thank you for having me.

JAMES: Thank you all for watching *LIFE Today*. Tell your friends to watch and tell them to share *LIFE Today* every day, not just a program, life! God bless y'all.