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Week 29: WFL

James and Betty Robison

Nicole Crank

JAMES: Well, Betty and I, James, welcome you to *LIFE Today*. You have no idea how much it means to us to be able to share with you. I don't know where you are on your journey, but I know God wants to be right there in the middle of your journey. He wants to be the shelter and the shadow you live in. Betty and I do our best, knowing how important it is to have comfort, how important it is to have peace only God can give, to try to be sure that you not only have it but that you realize God can share that love and that life and that peace and that the comfort through you. And so when we bring a guest on, we bring someone on that we believe you can identify with; people you know and love and care about can identify with. They can be a help to you.

Our guest today is Nicole Crank. She's been very blessed and been very successful but also been really hurt. She wrote a book; interesting the way the publisher put the cover, *I Will Survive* as kind of semi-blocked out, and then down here it's *Thrive*. So there is a difference in just surviving the crisis and the pressure and thriving in it. It is not like living in a make-believe world or living in a make-believe world but reality. A reality of peace and direction and comfort that not only God can give, but he is anxious to give.

Nicole, thank you for being with us today. I want you to tell us because you've got some ground to cover. Just take us on the journey that you want people to go on with you, and actually with the great God that is able to lift you out of any pit of despair or defeat or hurt or pain that you didn't initiate. Just take us on the journey.

NICOLE: I think a lot of times when people see somebody speaking at a conference or on a TV show, they're like, "Oh, silver spoon! They've probably had this easy life." I didn't get born with a silver spoon. Have you ever been to Kentucky Fried Chicken? Seen those little plastic sporks there? I got a spork, and it was broken and dirty. That's what I was born with. I was born in Canada, given up by my dad before I was born, and adopted in the U.S. by my stepdad when I was three years old.

I didn't really know any of that until I was in fourth grade, and fourth grade was a really big year in my life. I was saved in fourth grade. I met Jesus on my living room floor with a little wordless book my mom read to us. I found out I was adopted in fourth grade because I found a picture in my parents' underwear drawer. So never, ever hide anything in your underwear drawer. First place your kids look. And then that's the year that I got molested by somebody in my neighborhood.

One of the questions that somebody asked me through writing this book, and this book coming out, James and Betty, was, why do you think you got saved the year you got molested? How could God let you? I didn't even have to think of the answer. The answer to that just welled up on the inside of me so fast. I said, "What do you mean how could God let me? He wasn't going to let me go through that alone." He said, "I will never leave you. I will never forsake you." I honestly believe the reason I am alive today is because God said, "You're going to have to know me, and I'm going to have to be with you through this, or there is no hope for you are. Because he is my hope; he is my rock; he is my foundation. He is our healer; he is our savior.

So I went through this thing, and I didn't tell anybody about it for about a year. Then, when I was in the fifth grade, I told one little girl at my school who was my close friend. I didn't think of what a little girl does when she tells a secret. Any guesses, Betty? She tells. So she told everybody.

Then I didn't know what bullying was when I was a kid, that term but I didn't have anybody to sit with at lunch. I didn't get invited to birthday parties. I wrote a chapter in the book, chapter four; I call it "The Bully Bus" because when the bus would come down the street and I knew I had to get on there, and it is unregulated, the kids are just mean and cruel.

And so I can really identify with people's shame and labels, and they tell you what you are, and rumors turn into these wild things. And I know what it is like to feel alone in a room full of people. I think what that's done for me is if I'm in a group of people, I don't necessarily gravitate toward popular people; I just see the outliers. And I immediately start grabbing them and pulling them in because I was that outlier.

And I was surviving; I was making it, but I wasn't really living. So when I was 13 years old, when I was in eighth grade, our junior high had this program that did community service in our school. So a guy doing community service in our school raped me when I was 13. He said, "I've heard about you. I've heard what you do. I've heard these rumors." And took what was not his to take.

We moved not long after that to a new city, a new school district, and a new county to a new opportunity. Not until I wrote this book did I realize (from the things that had happened to me) that I felt like my "no" had been taken away. "No" meant nothing. "No" got me nowhere. "No" did not protect me. And when I got to this new school, I didn't realize people were going to invite me to their party or ask me to do something. And I became a people pleaser as a coping mechanism.

That's what I talk about in the book a lot. So I take people into what happened in my house, what happened in my living room, what happened in our home because I want it to be so honest and so raw; I want to meet people in their pain. When I wrote this book, I read a part in the book to my mom. Because I'd never sat down and had a conversation with my mom about this. And I told my daughter because I didn't really talk with her about it. I said I felt comfortable with pen and paper because pen and paper don't ask questions that you're not ready to answer.

BETTY: Yeah.

NICOLE: But people do. So I wrote a part to my mom and said, "Mom, it might be the part of the book that you don't want to read. But whatever happened to me, it's not because you weren't there. It's not because you could have done anything. It's not because you could have stopped anything." Because I don't know if you guys know the statistic, but one in three females are molested before the age of 18.

JAMES: So sad. So sorry.

BETTY: Unbelievable!

NICOLE: One in five males are molested before they're 18. I was actually speaking at our church from the book not long ago about what had happened to me. One of the guys that

volunteer on the security team at the church, they keep the church safe, everybody comfortable, 50-some-odd-year-old guy. I come off the platform, ex-military, and he is just bawling. And all he could choke out is, "It happened to me, and I haven't been able to tell anybody."

And that's the kind of pain that people are pushing down on the inside of them. The enemy tells you this happened to you, so you don't qualify. This happened to you, so you never could. Or this happened because of you. You dressed the wrong way, or you did the wrong thing.

A girl who read the book D.M.'d me on Instagram. She said, "I got raped when I was a teenager. I didn't tell my mom for a couple of years." She said, "I finally came out and told my mom. And when I did, my mom said, 'Where were you? Where was he? How did you meet him? Where were his parents? I told you never to...' " She said, "By the fourth question, I shut down, and I've never been emotionally available to my mom again." And this woman is grown.

JAMES: That's sad.

NICOLE: So in the book, I really talk about fear. I talk about having the courage to look your giant in the eye. I talk about anger. I have a chapter called "Happy Hell-a-days." And how anger is the root word for danger; it's just got a D on the front of it. And the danger of anger. If somebody pushes the wrong button and you start blocking them off. You get angry, and you flash mad, and we destroy or lose relationships.

Another coping mechanism is building walls. I wrote a whole chapter about how I built these walls in my heart in junior high that I didn't realize not only kept the pain out and manageable, survivable, but you can never thrive because I could never feel happy. And so that's where I don't want people living this gray life because it is taboo to talk about the things that happened to me.

Life had failed me through high school, but in high school, I failed myself.

Because I started people-pleasing, started overachieving, another coping mechanism is to follow these things if you're unworthy, people don't love you. We try to please these ghosts of opportunities or parents' past. Like a father who never bothered to look at me. Like why didn't you want me? I didn't even get a chance to make you mad. And spend your life trying to please somebody who is not even looking or prove your value.

So in high school, I just kept saying, do you want to go to a party?

Yeah! We're going to drink a little bit? Okay. You want to go on a date? Yeah. You want to kiss? Yeah. And at 17, I was a pregnant unwed mother. I was so, just disappointed. Because I thought, well, how am I going to prove my worth now?

You know what is hilarious? God says, "I can work all things together for your good." And my son, who was born to me when I was 17 years old, is 31 years old today. He pastors one of our campuses in Florida, he's the Executive Director over all of our Florida campuses, and he's sold out for Jesus. He is sold out to leading people to the Lord. And the very thing that I thought was my biggest mistake, God turned into the biggest blessing of my life. People think because of what happened to me or what happened because of me, like why could I get on this show? And God has given me a TV show; why could I lead a TV show? Why would people listen to me talk at a conference or at Faith Church? This resume stinks. It's not a good resume. But God says, "I use the foolish things of the world to confound the wise."

JAMES: And all things work together for good. They're not all good, but a great God that's good can work them for good, what seems impossible. As I've listened to you, and by the way, you really do take us on the journey. And you really put healing hands and healing words and thoughts and sentences in what you're sharing. As I was listening, the tendency it seems when we've failed or are miserable, there is a shame that's just around us. And then we heap some of it on ourselves, or we blame ourselves pretty quick, and the devil is certainly there accusing us all. A lot of times, it causes us to kind of isolate and pull away. How important do you think it is that we not move into that mode of pull away or, like you said a while ago, "people-pleasing?" But we try to find someone that we can share. We actually need one another. I feel, even in your ministry, that you and your husband must be wanting to meet the needs of the brokenhearted, the people who are shattered. Am I right about that?

NICOLE: God told me that I would have to use my pain as my platform because it was the one thing I said, "I'll never tell anybody I was raped," because of what happened the last time when I told what happened to me. God, just let me know. This is what I want to do with you. You're going to use your pain for other people's gain. I take people from the pain to the promise faster because I'm honest about what happened to me. I'd love to tell you at that point, life got better,

but it got worse for a minute. Because James, I did isolate. And what happens is we start thinking that we're not worthy. Therefore, we lower our expectations for every area of our life. And that's not God's plan. Like getting through, getting your next meal, just making it, getting through COVID, that's not God's plan, that's survival, that's the enemy's plan.

But thriving in life takes faith. Without faith, it's impossible to please God. So we have to have faith to believe God has a bigger plan. He's not asking us to be worthy because we never were in the first place. He is just asking us to be willing, which can be really hard. So instead of building those walls, God asks us to tear them down and be vulnerable, be humble. He is like, okay, the way up is down. You're going to tell all your junk, but... And then when you do, there is just this freedom that comes.

We go through life thinking we're covering things up. Like well, I have this pain from my past, like the guy who was on that security detail, and I'm covering it up, but it affects our relationships. Other people can see that something is going on. And so we have to go ahead, in the chapter about having courage, to look your giant in the eye and say, "Enemy, you have tried to slay me with this thing." But God, he says, "The enemy might bruise your heel, but you're going to crush his head."

One of the lines I write in the book is that the depths of your wounds do not equal the height of your future. And God showed me this, like a slingshot, like David on the field. He said, when you pull the slingshot back just a little bit and let it go, things don't go very far. He said, but when you pull it back far, I've committed to you in my word when the enemy came against you, I would make him pay seven times. And if he bothers my kids with pain or hurt or burden, then it comes to me, what I do is pull that slingshot back to the depths of their wounds before I release it. And therefore, I turn all things together for their good. And you go further, faster than you ever could have on your own. So if the devil messes with my kids, I make him pay.

JAMES: You know you've got just a -- Nicole has such a story that you pretty well have to put it in a book. There is a zeal in what the Lord has done, in spite of all the enemy did to damage, and you've turned merely surviving into thriving. Have you found the people who have read the book reporting back to you that they learned, and they made a move from surviving to actually overcoming beautiful life?

NICOLE: I get teary-eyed immediately because I get D.M.'s. every day from people just pouring out their stories to me. So I want to tell you, if you read the book, buy a box of Kleenex because you're going to need Kleenex. But I also try to pepper it with humor because I'm just quirky and weird and outgoing. I've learned to embrace the weirdness. I put that in there, too, because the purpose is healing. When you meet Jesus, your spirit, you get saved, but your soul might still be wounded. And until you're willing to open the door to that hurt to God, he's not going to heal what we won't talk to him about. He's a gentleman. He doesn't come in and force his healing. So we have to say, okay, God, there is this really deep, dark, scary part of my life that I have pushed down, but I'm going to give it to you.

JAMES: Thank you, Nicole. Let me just say, many of you are identifying with what she's talked about, and you just want God's healing touch.

Father, I pray for every person right now that's been moved by your spirit or by their own past pain or challenges. I want you to show them how mighty you are, how loving you are, to lift them up out of any pit of pain or defeat or failure or sorrow. Lift them up. Let them fix their eyes on you; in Jesus' name.

You know we always offer you blessings because just being here is a desire for Betty and me and *LIFE Outreach*, *LIFE Today*, to bless you. So we will send you something to bless you if you want Nicole's book.

What we ask you to do is put God's arms around someone else in a very direct, effective way.

Right now, every viewer of *LIFE Today* has always communicated with us when they could, Betty, "Nothing we enjoy more, and we like everything you do on *LIFE Today*. But giving water, a cup of water, a well of water is one of the most fulfilling things in our life."

I want you to listen to God through Sheila, through our mission director, and you're going to become the answer to the heart cry, the prayer, and the need. You really will be the miracle. Watch.

On the mission field:

SHEILA: Do you want to translate so she can understand? Lord Jesus Christ, I pray for my sister. I cannot imagine what it is like to lose a child. But I ask you to comfort her heart.

ANNOUNCER: A lack of drinking water can be a death sentence. But in our experience, and the data bears this out, it's not the scarcity of water that causes most fatalities. After all, desperate people are resourceful in finding at least some water. Rather, what most often leads to water-related deaths is the water's condition. As our mission team witnessed in Zambia, it is a problem that's all too common.

RALPH: We're walking through another gravesite here. Heard a story today about a little boy, died very young, very small. This seems to happen too often. In fact, here in this country, we're in Zambia, and they're in their dry season. They can't even find water many times. But then the water they do find is so contaminated.

Here we have another little boy who just died senselessly simply because they could not find safe water.

SHEILA: These people are doing absolutely everything they can. They get up at four or five o'clock in the morning. They walk as many hours as they have to to find some water. And it is not clean water. I wouldn't let my dogs drink this water! And this is all these children have.

They need water wells. It's a privilege, not an obligation to change their lives. Let's do it, in Jesus' name.

[Laughter]

End of video

In the studio:

JAMES: I don't know, Betty, how many of our viewers actually transitioned in that moment from seeing the mother by the grave, and Ralph, our mission overseer, by another grave of a child. To there at the end seeing all these little children. They're as excited as if somebody took them to the park, and they're getting water. It's so much more than water. It's life -- it's "feel better."

Betty, it was all provided for those little children to move from the grave, from death and pain to joy because somebody, like the people watching us, said, I'll take seriously what Jesus said, I'll give a cup of water in his name. And Jesus said, "And you won't lose your reward." I always try to tell our viewers, you don't determine the award or reward. God just says I'll bless you when you bless others. I've blessed you to bless others.

Here's what our viewers found, and we found. Once we give the cup of water, watching what it does, like those little children, I don't need any more reward than that.

BETTY: We don't. I'm sure as I'm sitting here watching these children at the end and their laughter, you can't help but smile when you hear the laughter of a child. I see pictures of our great-grandchildren just laughing and having fun, and I get the biggest grin on my face. Well, these mothers have a sadness in their hearts because they have to give their children the only water they have to drink, and that's contaminated water, knowing that it could possibly kill them.

Let's continue to make that difference. You've probably helped many, many times. So let's do it again. Let's drill the water wells, and let's offer a cup of water to those precious children, and let's put a smile on that mother's face as she watches her child be happy again.

JAMES: You know, Betty talked about watching our children with their grandchildren, or our grandchildren, their children, and now then their grandchildren. And we see them playing with their children, and they just love them. We don't have to wonder, are our children's children, grandchildren, now great-grandchildren, are they going to be happy? Sure! Because they're just surrounded with the blessings of love. And Betty, what love does, as they could see right there, it just changes everything. Love gives life. It's the only way to life. It's only love that never fails.

So because of love, when you help us complete the 350 wells that we said to the missionaries, we'll drill in those areas -- God, I pray for the miracle -- somebody watching gives a well.

Someone makes a gift toward it, prays others join. God, give us the wells! Give us the life, in Jesus' name.

\$4800 to drill a well. Some of you would say, I can. I can do it. \$48 gives ten people water for the rest of their life. \$144 -- 30 people water the rest of their life. Would you become that miracle that is not only longed for but prayed for? If you'd go right now, get your bank card, go online, or dial that number, use it like a check. If you write a check, make it to *LIFE*. But call us. As some are calling to give card information, you call to tell us what you're mailing in. We really need your support in order to drill these wells. One place at a time, but it changes many lives, thousands -- ultimately, millions! Thank you!

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

On the mission field:

Randy: The water behind me has already taken the lives of two children that we know of. I know because I just left their parents and their younger remaining sister in the graveyard. It is not right that children should die. It is not right that they should die with a waterborne disease that we can so easily stop. Let's give them fresh water. Let's give them water that will not kill them. Let's give them water that will bring them life. Let's give these children a hope and a future by giving them clean drinking water.

Go to the phone, go online, do it right now. Make the best gift you can. Help us bring this village and so many other villages like it a source of fresh clean water. Let's give them Water for LIFE. Let's give them a hope and a future. We can do it with your help.

End of clip

In the studio:

JAMES: Well, we just say thank you so much. And *Living Amazed* that talks about all the unique people, miraculous encounters. *Upgrade*, Randy, our son, took all of Proverbs, broke it into seven distinct parts to show you the wisdom God offers. If you'd like to have Nicole's book talking about really thriving rather than just surviving, well, you ask for it. The Bible we will send you is as beautiful as I've ever seen.

We just want to thank you for sharing *LIFE Today*. It's not only a title of a program it's what we do. And Nicole Crank, thank you. Bless you and your husband and Faith Church. We just thank you for sharing your witness.

NICOLE: You know what? God is so good, and I'm just so thankful for what you guys do. And your hearts, and how you bless everybody just through your television program, but then your hearts are so big they wrap around the world.

JAMES: Well, it is the viewers that make it happen. The members of Christ's body get his arms around the world. Thank you all for watching *LIFE Today*. Don't miss the next program. And thanks for giving life.