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Week four: WFL

James and Betty Robison

Lee Strobel #2

JAMES: Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I've got a big grin on my face. I'm James Robison; by the way, I grin quite often. I weep a lot, too. You know that. Betty and I are thrilled to have Lee Strobel here with us. We love him so much he's going to stay all week.

He's written a book. Now when he gets something on his mind, like wanting to prove that Jesus wasn't real, he goes out to prove to his wife and everybody else that they believed a lie -- very skeptical. But then he wrote *The Case For Christ* because he said it's irrefutable. Well, he's written a whole lot about the case. So it seems like if you've got an issue or a challenge, well, just get ready, Lee will have a case study for it, and he'll give you the reason.

A Case For Heaven, where he answers the questions people are asking. I need to know this because all of us, intelligent, wise, sensitive people, love pets. We love our pets. It's easier to love pets than people; have you ever noticed that? And they do love unconditionally. Well, the question, one of them, will there be pets in heaven? So don't get ready to throw something at the TV. Let's find out what he says. Keep cool. Lee Strobel, welcome back to *LIFE Today*.

LEE: Thank you! Great to be with you.

JAMES: Are you troubled by the pressure that can be put on you to try to answer the question and live to tell the story again?

LEE: The joy of what I do is I'm a journalist. So I just seek out really smart people with

credentials and a bunch of letters after their name, and I asked them the tough questions I've got. And then I'm the guy who puts the cookies on the bottom shelf so that everybody can understand it. So I just find smart people, generally, scholars with Ph.D.'s, ask them all these questions and then share it in a way that is easy to understand. So that's what journalists do.

JAMES: Does that include Bible scholars, too? Are you not afraid to ask Bible scholars and preachers, and Bible teachers these kinds of questions?

LEE: Sometimes they're the most ornery. Because they'll go back and forth; I think on this hand, what about this hand? Yeah, I interview atheists, skeptics, Christians, scientists, philosophers, theologians. I try to ask the kind of questions I have as a skeptic. I tend to be a skeptic. My background is in journalism and law. So you can imagine, put those two things together, what kind of a jerk, a skeptic... And so that's my nature.

JAMES: Let's get to the question, the pets. We have three little dachshunds, two of them are in heaven, and we have another one. I hope I outlive my present dachshund; she's four. But pets in heaven?

LEE: I think so. We don't know for sure biblically. It is an open question biblically; the Bible doesn't specify. We know there will be animals in heaven because Isaiah and Revelation both mention animals. So there will be animals in heaven because they were part of the creation before the fall. So they were part of God's perfect creation, and so forth. So I believe there will be animals.

But is my dog Nikki -- I had this giant dog when I was a kid. When I was in high school, he would put his paws on my shoulders and look me in the eyes. He was awesome! I loved this dog. Will I be reunited with Nikki in heaven? You know there is a split among theologians. Some say no. Now, biblically speaking, animals do have souls. But they're not made in God's image. So we have a more complex soul. We can be redeemed, and so forth. So anyway, we will be in heaven; those who follow Christ will be in heaven.

Animals will be in heaven. Will Nikki be in heaven? The only thing you can really point to is that God is loving and gracious, and kind.

Joni Eareckson Tada said to me, "Wouldn't it be just like God to allow you to be reunited with a pet you love?" Now that's not biblical, I can't point to a verse, but that certainly would be in character for God. And so, people like Joni Eareckson Tada and many others believe there will be pets in heaven.

Other theologians say because I can't specify a verse, I can't cite chapter and verse, I'm not going to say, or I don't believe. But I think there is a good chance.

JAMES: You know, one of the things God has shown me is one of the main focal points in my life's journey, and my ministry now is to help bring the family together in the supernatural unity Jesus prayed for. You've got to believe it is possible and important if he prayed for it near the end of his life. And literally, that's what happened in the upper room. When they came out in supernatural power, they then made the kingdom impact that kingdom-minded people can make on planet earth. They affected people everywhere, every part of the planet: Academics, entertainment, the arts -- everything -- politics. All the leadership, all of it, they did it. The church has no business as kingdom representatives of the King of kings and Lord of lords to be ambassadors and more than conquerors in his name and for his glory to check out of any place of responsibility on this planet. So we've got to literally keep focused on that.

There are too many people, I think, that are trying to find a way to escape it. One of the things the enemy is getting us to escape is an assignment of kingdom impact power by keeping us divided against each other. I don't know that there is any practice in the life of a Christian more important than supernatural unity, so the family really looks like the healthy body of Christ rightly connected together and submitted to the head.

See, you've already shared, even in the first little topic we just touched there, all these different ideas. But you spoke with respect toward them. You didn't make any of them be

an item of the idol, the best example. You just said what they shared. And you said it with respect. So you didn't make an idol out of your point of view. So don't you think we'd get healthier if we could lay it aside? Does what I'm saying make any sense?

LEE: Absolutely. I think we have a source of truth; it's called the Bible. If we can't rally around that, if we can't implement that, if we can't make that the focus of our life, if we can't study it and make it the pattern by which we live day by day, then we're only left to opinions. You've got your opinion, and I've got my opinion, and guess what? We're going to clash on a bunch of different things. We have a source of truth. Let's go to that. Now where the Bible doesn't speak, it is important that we look at biblical principles and how those principles play out to see if we can come to a conclusion.

The great commission was given to all of us. It is the responsibility of every Christian. It is not the pastor's job, only -- it is for all of us! When culture sees healthy families living in a God-honoring way, it is salt, and it is light. Jesus said, "I want you to live like salt." Which means to make people thirst for God. "I want you live like a light that shines my message of hope and grace and love and redemption and eternal life, that shines it in dark areas of despair." When we do that, it points people toward God. It makes people's eyes drift heavenward toward the heavenly Father who motivates us against the grain of this me-first world to put other people first.

JAMES: And when we do that, it is supernatural unity and looks like the healthy body of Christ. It is magnetically attractive. It is the city that can't be hidden.

LEE: The city on the hill that cannot be hidden.

JAMES: And I long for that; I believe he longs for it. We pray to that end because when he talks to all these people with different views, I marvel at the way he comes away with respect and admiration even when there is a difference. He doesn't slice them off, cut them up, or put them down. This is a healthy example of how Christians can relate to one another and honor God by honoring one another. Pray it happens.

Will there be will rewards in heaven?

LEE: This is an interesting question. If heaven is a place of ultimate joy, how can there be more joy for some people -- ultimate is ultimate. If you're full of joy, how will someone be rewarded with a joy that is even more joyful? So how, there are passages suggesting that God will reward followers for their role in the kingdom in this world in spreading his word of love and grace and hope, and so forth. But what does that actually look like in heaven?

I have a theory about this. It is not something I came up with, but I think it may have some relevance. That is that if you study music and you know a lot about music. You listen to Beethoven; you listen to all the great classical music. You appreciate it and play an instrument and so forth, and I know nothing about music, frankly. I'm like you, okay. But you would, if we both heard an orchestra, you would appreciate it at a higher level than I would. I would love it. It's like, wow, that's awesome. But you would go, oh --

JAMES: Not me, now! Point at her!

[Laughter]

LEE: So there may be a similar thing that happens in heaven that those people who have lived a life of full devotion to God, and have served him, and pursued kingdom purposes in this life where God might reward them in heaven with a sense of experiencing heaven that goes beyond what maybe somebody else might experience. We'll all experience it in great joy and wonder and adventure and satisfaction and fulfillment, but you might feel it on a deeper level than I would. But I would never know that. We would both say, "Isn't this awesome!"

BETTY: Couldn't it be a little bit like here on earth our different gifts? I mean, I do know the gifts God gave James he didn't give to me. But he did give me gifts that were just as

important. And so, he allows me to live by those gifts and work those gifts through me. But I can have a great appreciation for the difference.

LEE: Yes! It is important people understand that salvation and heaven is a gift of grace. We can't earn our way to heaven by doing good stuff in this world. So people don't get to heaven by being better than others, and so forth. They get to heaven because they've received this free gift of salvation, this free gift of forgiveness and eternal life that Jesus purchased on the cross when he died as our substitute to pay for all of our sins. And he offers it as a free gift.

But then, Christians live different kinds of lives, and some are fully devoted, and some make an impact for the kingdom. I don't think in heaven there will be distinctions where I'm going to be held out as I'm going to have a bigger room because I did this. Because you would be depressed for all eternity saying, I wish I would have been a more devoted follower of Jesus. I wish I had his room. No, I think it might be that kind of internal reward that I may experience things differently than somebody else. Does that make sense?

JAMES: It makes sense. It's hard to explain it as perfectly as one's mind might seek. He asked the question about Betty and me. We'll someday not too far in the too distant future, less than two years, we will have been married 60 years. I like this girl!

[Laughter]

I'm blessed that she loves me. It's hard for people to believe that I'm 78; people believe that, but they don't believe...

BETTY: I'm 77.

JAMES: At the moment.

BETTY: At the moment.

[Laughter]

But the point is she's just radiant. It's beautiful. Will we be married in heaven? I just know I'm going to know her in heaven. So please don't tell me that I'm not!

LEE: This is a great question. And there's a controversy about this because there is a passage where Jesus talks about this. The way he talks about it is that he says -- I'm doing this from memory -- but he says basically, people will neither be married nor be given in marriage in heaven. There will be neither...

JAMES: Like the marriage expression is not happening there. The experience and that commitment are not happening.

LEE: Exactly. Some people say, oh, he's saying there is no marriage in heaven, no marriage relationship in heaven.

JAMES: I believe there are families in heaven who went as a family. Do you want to see your family members?

LEE: Exactly. When you look carefully at what he says, he says people neither -- this is what he said. People will neither marry nor be given in marriage. Well, that means there will be no weddings in heaven. Okay, I get that. But I believe that marriage relationships will continue in some way in heaven.

JAMES: You won't be having babies in heaven, but there will be children in heaven.

LEE: I think there will be children in heaven. I do not believe we will have new children in heaven. But I believe children will go to heaven. So yes, I believe. Now, some people disagree.

JAMES: We know we're going to know each other.

LEE: Some people disagree and say the Bible talks about... used as a metaphor, marriage, to talk about a relationship with God. And then in heaven, yes, we'll all be married, but in a sense metaphorically, we will be married to God, married to Jesus. People teach that. Okay, but I think when you look carefully at the words of Jesus, people will neither marry nor be given in marriage that means people aren't going to get married in heaven. That doesn't mean that after 60 years plus of a marriage relationship that it's not going to endure in heaven. We're in our 50th year of marriage. I love Leslie dearly. I want to have a special relationship with her through eternity.

JAMES: I'm confident I am going to have.

LEE: I do too.

JAMES: I believe we'll see our daughter again. I will know it's her. David talked about seeing his son. Couldn't bring him back, going to go be with him. Who was he talking about? Said he was going to be with him.

LEE: I'm with you.

JAMES: I wish everybody in the Bible discussion business would be as nice and friendly as we are. See, we're not starting another denomination or another point of view. Neither one of us have enough confidence in either one, me in him, or him in me or even ourselves that we think we've got it all figured out. Why don't we all step down to a level of humility and say we're learners?

And really, this guy who is studying all this stuff and talking to all these people doesn't just get down and write and say, let me tell you what I think because we need to get this settled -- we need to get this thing settled. No, that's not what he does. He goes, and he

seeks, and he finds and searches and discovers the treasure and shares it. That's what this book is about. I'm telling you, there are ten very specific questions that you will ask, would you please just give me your point of view? Obviously, more than anything, Lee wants to give you God's point of view or his perspective or wisdom, which he says he'll share with us. That's what he wants to do.

You have discernment. God said through John, in the second chapter of First John, you don't even need anyone to teach you because you have the anointing of the Holy Spirit. That doesn't mean teachers aren't important, gifted, and gifts to build us up. It just means that you have a teacher living inside of you. Jesus is in you, and he will guide you to all truth. This book was written searching for truth to share what he discovers and hears and what people feel and believe. And likely, Lee, what has actually blessed them by believing it and experiencing it.

You help us drill a well, you make a gift toward that, and you want Lee's book, we're going to send it to you. Lee, you made a very interesting statement yesterday after we showed our viewers the joy of giving a child a drink of water, fresh, clean, non-contaminated water; giving a mother water for her children when she (the one yesterday) had lost five children. And the moment we got ready to close the show, you said you and your wife wanted to drill a well. What made you say that?

LEE: You know, I love how you said to give a cup of water; this is what the Bible talks about. To give a cup of water to those who are thirsty, that we're not just called in this world, we are called to share the gospel, but we're also called to help people and to serve people, to love people, and to make a difference in their life. When I heard the story of this woman who lost five children, my heart just went out and said, I can't imagine the pain and the despair that must come with that. What can -- my soul said, what can I do? What can I do to help avoid that in other people's lives? And then when you said, "You can drill a well." Count me in! Count me in! We're in!

JAMES: You became an answer to the prayers of many. If you want to be blessed, be a

blessing. Let the blessings of God flow through you. Not to be blessed but to bless -- and blessing others blesses us. It is just an amazing gift.

And when you give life, you give the greatest gift there is. And when you give Water for LIFE, it opens the door for us to tell everyone it is because of the water of life that we want to give you water for your life and your family. That's what you're doing.

I want you to look in and listen to Sheila for a moment. And then watch, as Betty and I share an experience and show you the magnificence of what your love does. Watch closely.

On the mission field

ANNOUNCER: Water! Earth's most abundant natural resource: yet out of this abundance only a tiny fraction of it is suitable for drinking. And suitable is a loose definition.

Sheila: This is the water, this is the only water that is available to this village. You probably see it is absolutely filthy. There's animal waste all around. All this into the same water. This is unspeakable agony to me. Because the thing that I've seen on this trip is these people are doing absolutely everything they can. They walk as many hours as they have to to find some water and it is not clean water. They cannot do anything else. I wouldn't let my dogs drink this water and this is all these children have.

Announcer: While the problem here is serious, the solution is surprisingly simple, and it's already been implemented in this Central American village.

Betty: This is a time when I don't mind watching them stand here and pour water over their head because I know it is good water.

James: That's right! This is a place for which we give great praise to God in gratitude. But we need to drill hundreds of wells like this all over the world. And you can see, if you can't look at these children, look at their faces, look how happy they are, and understand the importance of clean water, it becomes the center of life; schools spring up. We want children to get an education and we want them to come and get healthy, clean drinking water. [Cheering]

End of video

In the studio

JAMES: I can't begin to explain adequately how miraculous a gift of love and life is expressed by water. "You give a drink of water in my name, you don't lose your reward." What reward? Well, let God determine all of that, what that looks like to him. But what greater reward could we experience than to give a child life? Give them a chance at life? Give them hope in life? That's what you're doing; that's what water does.

You think about this. Betty, we saw those children playing in fresh, clean water. Our viewers drilled that well.

You did it! Maybe one person watching said, I can drill a well; it costs \$4800. Do you realize people can do that and do it joyfully? Do you know that our viewers have begun to think of support, when we're doing stuff, in \$4800 terms? That's amazing to me sometimes. We'll be talking about something totally unrelated to water, but these \$4800 gifts come in.

I asked the Lord, what's going on here?

He said they have learned the power of \$4800 changing everything in a community or a village. They see something that needs to be done, and they're able to do it because I've given them the ability to do it. I've given, really, the wealth of America to people that are

over 60. And 50% of all the wealth in America is controlled by people over 70! And I have shown them, you can be overseers of what I entrusted to your watch care and do kingdom work with it for kingdom purpose and change everything for people. And you leap at it. Thank you.

We're asking you right now if you can drill a well, drill one. We have targeted 20 nations, 350 specific areas where we know there is water, but we need to drill the well. And we need your help to do it. Could you do that? Could you give toward a well? Maybe \$2400, and some may join you? Pray, I'm making this gift, God. Give another person the ability to give the other \$2400. Could you give \$1200 and pray for three to join? I believe if you can, you will. I really do believe that.

Our viewers, Betty, amazingly seem to seek the mind and heart, and will of God. You're an amazing group of people. By the way, I want you to really join your hearts and start praying for the healing of our nation. For freedom as we've known it and experienced it to be spared a horrible death. Please, because if we come together, we can see people's lives changed and set free. And it's sharing God's life and love that literally draws people to the life and love of God.

Would you do what most people do who help us drill these wells? Let me give you an example. \$48 gives ten people water for the rest of their life. Where could you better put \$48 and change everything for ten people? At whatever level you can help, please do. We have some beautiful gifts to send you. We have beautiful throws about the rest that God gives us. We've got *Bible Promises For Life* -- the life that he offers. You're going to love this! This is one beautifully laid-out book on the promises of God. We just want to say thanks. And also, Lee Strobel's book on heaven. You help us drill a well, you make a gift toward that, and you want Lee's book, we're going to send it to you.

Right now, go online or dial the number, get your bank card, use it like a check. Please do it! If you write a check, make it to *LIFE*, but we need to hear from you because we count on you to make it possible to give life in all these areas. Thank you for doing it. God

bless you. And he is!

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 *Bible Promises For Life*, the ultimate handbook to everything God guarantees you in his word. A powerful resource that will give you the confidence to face life's troubles. With your gift of \$100 or more, please request the "I Will Give You Rest" throw. It is a reminder of our Savior's promise of rest to those who trust in His grace and love.

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. You may request our new, inspiring bronze sculpture, "Let the Children Come."

Please call, write, or make your gift online.

End of video

In the studio

JAMES: Well, as sincerely and as directly as I can, let me just say thank you. I just feel like you put God's arms around a lot of precious people, and you gave them hope; you give them life.

The Case For Heaven, you want it, you help us drill a well, you make a gift toward that, and you want Lee's book, we're going to send it to you. We're going to have Lee on again this week. We're going to talk about what we're going to refer to, the first book that became quite a miraculous bestseller, *The Case For Christ*, when he set out to prove that Jesus was not real. It captured him and changed his life; and became a movie. This is the movie edition of it. But we're going to talk about why he, as a skeptic, went on that journey. And we're going to talk about something that people need to hear to change their life to understand that Jesus is not just a story in the past; he's a very real, living person today who could live his resurrected life in us. So we want to be talking about that in the next program. Don't miss it.

Lee, thank you for being with us. Look forward to talking about that search to prove Jesus is not real, and we'll talk about it. Don't miss it. Thanks for your help.