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Week 12: Rescue LIFE

Randy Robison and Sheila Walsh

Penny Maxwell

SHEILA: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm Sheila Walsh here with Randy Robison. Today we're going to be talking to a beautiful woman, her name is Penny Maxwell, and she has written a book called *Setting Broken Bones*. Penny, welcome to *Life Today*!

PENNY: Thank you so much for having me. What a joy and honor to be here today.

SHEILA: You start with a pretty interesting story. You talk about a friend who broke their nose and there is such a profound lesson in what you extract from that. Tell us about it.

PENNY: Well, I was having dinner with, I'm sure a lot of people would know, his name is Darrell Strawberry. He is a great friend of ours. We were having this whole conversation and I said, "Dee, man, you and I have been through so much stuff in life. How come we're on the other side of the story when so many Christians are still struggling with the same things they've been struggling with 10, 20, 30 years or more?"

And he said to me, "Because most people don't want to deal with their pain."

I said, "Aah! You're right!"

I have a friend who had a skiing accident and she broke her nose. She just kind of let it be and it healed improperly; and because it healed improperly, I mean it was a little crooked

to look at. It wasn't anything horrific but she struggled at night to breathe properly. She struggled at night to get the amount of sleep she needed because it was just hard for her to breathe.

I was like, "Go get it fixed!"

And she was like, "Absolutely not! That means I'm signing up for pain, and I would rather not do that. I would rather stay the way I am than have to sign up intentionally for pain."

RANDY: A lot of people relate to that but you especially, can you tell people a little bit about some of your pain so they can understand the healing?

PENNY: Yeah. So between my mom and my dad, there were eight marriages. I've been married to my husband for 30 years -- same man all in a row!

SHEILA: Well done!

PENNY: So that was something big that I had to overcome. But also, as a young girl, I wasn't protected, I wasn't looked after, and so I was sexually abused my entire childhood. On top of that, growing up with a narcissistic mother. When people ask me, what does that mean? I would pretty much say it is kind of like *Mommy Dearest* but without the coat hangers. It was bad; it was money covers everything. You don't acknowledge, you don't admit what's going on. You're controlled every single aspect. So it was very difficult growing up.

There were a lot of things -- people say, "Was the hardest thing you went through the sexual abuse?" Because that was ten straight years by my grandfather. I say, actually, it wasn't. It was growing up with a mother that you didn't know if it was Dr. Jekyll or Mr. Hyde. With my grandfather, it was predictable. I knew it was going to happen, I knew when it was going to happen. With my mom, I would wake up and I didn't know, is this

the day you're going to be praised and told you're a great child and a dress on your bed for the way that I treated you the day before? And it was so -- it developed some things in me that weren't healthy.

SHEILA: When I was reading your story there is so much that is really horrific. You describe your childhood home as joyless. Where did you discover, what's your earliest recollection of a relationship with God?

PENNY: When I was about four years old, this was before my mom had married her second husband, which took us out of, actually, it was her third husband, which had taken us out of being poor and in the community where the bus would come around and pick and take us up to church if we wanted to go. Well, I actually would go to church on this little Baptist bus; they would send it through our apartment complex. And at four years old I was allowed to go --

SHEILA: By yourself?

PENNY: By myself -- they would go and take me away to church. I'd come back to the apartment complex and there was something safe about God's house. There was something joyful about God's house. I remember learning different scriptures. Back then there were flannel graphs, but to me, I was all about it. I just loved being in God's house and it was so different than my own home. I appreciated being able to go to church.

Unfortunately, because of the narcissistic abuse that would be held over me, any time I would show joy in something, I would try to stuff it in because I knew it would be used to be taken away. So I tried to make it like, yeah, it's okay. Going to church is okay because you didn't want to show too much excitement because then it was a tool used to manipulate.

RANDY: Being a teenager is difficult, teenage girl, especially difficult. But having this dual world going on where you're seeing some good and felt some joy in the church but

your home is a nightmare, really. What did that do to you? How did you even cope with that?

PENNY: Well, as a teenager there was a lot I didn't figure out. I knew some things were wrong in my house but someone that's a really good narcissist, and I say my mom was a fabulous one, it is so confusing. There is a bait and switch and you really, at times you think, I'm the problem. It's me. Things were always said to me. Like, "If you weren't in my life, my life would be great." But then when I did leave home things with her were still a mess.

And so I think as a teenager, there was a lot that I didn't understand that I honestly wasn't capable of being smart enough to put together in the moment. I think it was when I was in my early 20s, I was married to my husband, and I had somebody that was a psychologist say, "Well, you know what's going on here, don't you?"

I was like, "No. Could you please tell me? I've tried to figure this out for years and years and I have not been able to figure it out."

They told me, "She's classic textbook."

A bell went off. There wasn't an internet back then where I could look it up but they did let me read their thesis paper and they'd done their thesis paper on my mother.

SHEILA: Wow! That's amazing. I want us to get to this whole umbrella over your whole book about the fact that so many in the church have not experienced healing because they don't want to go through the pain. I remember somebody saying to me at one point, "When the pain of remaining the same is greater than the pain of change, then you're ready to change." Why do you think we resist it so much?

PENNY: Well, think about the skiing accident that happened, right? Here she is, she is going down a slope. She is having fun and life just happened. Like so many of your

viewers, life just happened and in the course of life just happening, there are breaks that we experience. But those aren't breaks that we anticipate. The difference with us choosing to heal is this is pain that we're signing up for. We're saying, I am signing up for pain. I am choosing pain.

I remember her words to me. It was why would I sign up to deal with something that I already felt before? I know what that now feels like, and I can anticipate that is one thing. To get broken accidentally, it is a whole other. To say I'm choosing to be broken, knowing what that feels like, knowing there is a process that you're going to have to walk through.

So most Christians, and I would say most people in general go, "I'm not touching that. I would rather limp through, I would rather breathe improperly. I will go through my dysfunctional marriage, I will have these dysfunctional relationships, I will have these issues that I'm just going to hold on to, this fear, this whatever because I don't know what Pandora's box will look like. I can't control that. This happened to me accidentally. This -- I'm having to choose to be on the operating table and I'd rather not.

RANDY: And yet, you did.

PENNY: And it wasn't easy. It made me have to acknowledge things about myself, about my journey, about my past, about my present. I think it was pretty much my husband that... I was 20 years old when we got married. We've been married 30 years now, so I'm 50. I remember him calling me out on the carpet about some of my behaviors that to me, and I think that's what's so important for people watching today need to understand, we have made certain things normal because they were our normal but they are not God's normal, they are not God's highest and best.

So I remember one day very clearly, I was rummaging through my husband's briefcase, this is back when men always had a briefcase; everything wasn't on your phone. I was rummaging through his briefcase and he wasn't at home. I remember the Lord just saying,

what are you doing? I'm like oh, I'm cleaning it up. It's a little messy. It's a little dirty, he just needs a little help keeping it tidy. And the Lord's like that's not what you're doing. And this was me internally having a conversation with the Lord because he was really hitting my heart. I was like, yeah, yeah! I'm just like being a good wife and cleaning things up. He said, no, you're suspicious. You're suspicious because of what you've been through. Listen, I have given you a gift of discernment but the gift of suspicion cannot be found in the fruit of the spirit. There is not one, and you are suspicious because of what you've walked through.

You're looking for something. What are you looking for? I'm like oh! I don't know, a picture, a number, something so I can have an "aha" moment. I caught you! Instead of ever being caught off guard because I was constantly being caught off guard.

SHEILA: That is so, so hard. What do you think the role of pride is in not wanting to deal with our stuff?

PENNY: Pride is just an unwillingness to yield. I think we have to be willing to yield and say, God, I give up the control that I'm trying to have over this situation. Because what we do is develop patterns of hyper-vigilance. And it is one thing to be smart and be vigilant, but hyper-vigilance is excess. So I remember my husband just saying to me one day. He's like, "Hey! You need to know I'm a great husband but I make for a lousy Jesus. And you are trying to put me in a place that I do not belong."

And I was sabotaging the relationship because I was demanding this perfection. You can never hurt me or I'm going to put you in this box and move you. I didn't have the capacity to deal with pain. I had been ignoring it. So God made me go back to where I was broken and healed wrong. He said this is going to hurt you.

But I learned something the Bible refers to as "evil foreboding." And it basically is talking about where you're waiting for the other shoe to drop. I remember doing that with our kids when we first started having kids. This beautiful gift that God had given me, I

was unable to fully enjoy it, just like with marriage. This beautiful gift God had given me, I was unable to fully enjoy it because I was always afraid something was going to happen; the other shoe was going to drop, this evil foreboding.

So with my kids, I would go in at night, are they still breathing? Are they still breathing? And something that was supposed to bring joy wasn't as joyful as it should have been. This marriage that is supposed to be joyful and here I am wondering, is he going to do to me what every other person has done to me? Because think about every adult in my life; my mother had betrayed me, my grandfather had betrayed me. My father, my biological father died an alcoholic. My stepfather was a very kind and gentle man, but he never stopped any of the stuff that he could have. My grandmother when she found out about the sexual abuse from my grandfather, the first thing she did was blame me. And so every person that was supposed to look out for me or care for me or be there for me wasn't trustworthy. So that was sown into my heart and had I to pull that out by the roots.

RANDY: What did that look like? For anybody who might be watching who is maybe relating to some level, they know they've got brokenness, whatever it looks like, what was the process of resetting it so it could heal properly for you? Counseling? Conversations? What did it look like?

PENNY: So it's a myriad of things. I think first and foremost for people watching today, I think the first thing was if you go to the mall and you walk in entrance C and you want to get to Nordstrom, I mean who doesn't want to?

SHEILA: As one would! Yes!

PENNY: The first thing you have to find out is, you have to look for the "You are here." Where am I? Because I can't get to where I want to be unless I figure out where I am. I think that's the first step, is figuring out where am I? What am I willing to sit down and acknowledge? And usually, that will come through a relationship.

My husband always says, "Marriage isn't meant to make you happy, it is meant to grow you up."

[Laughter]

And so here I was growing up by the conversations and him putting his finger on things that just weren't healthy in me and I'm having to acknowledge that.

And then I think another step is having a counselor. Now for the men who are watching, I don't use the word *counselor*, I say "coach."

[Laughter]

SHEILA: Better! Way better! Smart woman!

PENNY: Because men tend to go, I don't -- don't take away my man card. I don't need fixing. But if you use the word *coach*, which is what I had to do to get my husband to go, then it is like, oh yeah, everybody needs a coach -- every great athlete, every great golfer. Every great you know, gym member, a coach is great! Get a coach. Get somebody that can push you to do more reps than you would want to do on your own, to get you to lift more weight than you do on your own. Get you to show up when you don't want to show up.

And the step after that is, and in conjunction with the other two is allowing the Holy Spirit's spirit voice to get turned up, the volume to go higher. Because it is not like the Holy Spirit isn't talking all along, it's we learn to tune him out.

SHEILA: So true. You talk about the fact that everyone who you should have been able to trust, you were not able to trust. I have to tell you the one part of your book that I just, I found myself racing through because I had to find the answer is Colby's accident. The huge question that God asked you that night. Tell us about that.

PENNY: So I'd gotten a call that my son when he was 17, and he's 24 now, but he had been in a really bad car accident. I didn't know just how bad it was. I get there and I see my son's car is flipped over, the windshield has broken everywhere. I see people getting taken away in an ambulance. And I'm just trying to find, locate, where is he amongst all of this? Is he okay? Is he in an ambulance? What is going on? And I look over on a hill and there is my son and he's standing there. I went over to him and the police officer said, "Ma'am, we don't have accidents here where we don't also have to call the coroner. This is called 'Dead man's curve' and your son is very, very lucky today."

Now I knew he was blessed, that God had had his hand on him but I'm standing up on the hill while the officers are interviewing him. He had airbag bruises but that's all that was on his body and his car was totaled, destroyed. Here I am, standing up on this hill and God says, do you trust me? I'm like duh! Look what just happened. Of course, I trust you. What kind of question is that? And he's like, no, no, no. Do you trust me? And I'm thinking, first of all, do we need to have this conversation right now? Like I'm still covered, there is glass everywhere, the lights are going, the traffic's -- could we talk about this later? It would be great. He's like no, I need to know, do you trust me? Do you trust me even if your son wasn't coming home with you today? Do you trust me? In other words, he was saying, is your trust built on that the outcome was in your favor? Or do you trust me because I am God? I sat there for a second and I'm like, really? Can you let me think through this? He's like, no, you need to decide this right now standing on this grassy knoll on this hill because you're going to be faced with this every single day when your kids -- because I'm looking at this mess. And I've got three children and he's like, I need to know right here and right now, do you trust me? I said, yes, God, I trust you. Even if it wouldn't have turned out the way I wanted. God, I trust you, not because of your hand for what you can do, but because of your face, because of my relationship with you.

SHEILA: Powerful!

RANDY: We're just about out of time but before we let you go, on the other side of the re-break, if you will, and the healing, what is it like for you?

PENNY: Well, I think, first and foremost, just being able to share my story. So many pastors or spiritual leaders don't share their brokenness or the reality of how raw things have been. I think that's a travesty because I think people need to know. So I think that's a big thing.

The other thing is just being able to walk through life without fear. People would tell you that I'm bold, I'm courageous, that I will look fear in the face but it wasn't always that way. There was a little girl that was afraid of the other shoe dropping. I think that for us to literally walk in the confidence that God is king, that God is our protector, that God is looking out for us, he's providing for us, that I think there is a safety that we can walk in that we're not ever going to know in human relationship.

SHEILA: You're going to want to read more of Penny's story for yourself. We'd be happy to get that to you. But do you know that at this very moment, the same atrocity that was happening to Penny when she was just a little girl is happening to little girls across the world right now. Would you watch?

On the mission field

ANNOUNCER: These are the faces of those who once were. Once were happy. Once were safe... loved... cared for. Now they are vanishing at the hands of predators... abducted... misled. To distant cities they are taken. In foreign lands they are held captive. Their childlike innocence is erased, freedom forgotten; their spirit and will broken under abuse -- under torture.

Open captions

>> If the girls won't sleep with our clients, we beat them with a bat or electrocute them until they obey.

ANNOUNCER: Not only do these girls vanish, all that they were disappears too. Nowhere is there a darker evil than that perpetrated so viciously on the victims of sex trafficking. It may be the greatest evidence of Satan at work on this earth and it isn't going away without a fight.

Our Rescue Life partners are in place and ready to reach those who are most vulnerable, rescue those who have already been taken and restore the precious lives of those who have survived the wickedness of human trafficking.

End of video

In the studio

SHEILA: It's one of the most appalling things that I've witnessed in my life, sitting with some of these young girls in Southeast Asia and hearing their story. So many of them have no one who looks out for them. No church buses are coming to pick them up. They're left in the dark, darkest of darkness all the time.

Some people, one or two of you have written and said, "Why don't they just leave? Why don't they just escape?" It's so complicated. These little girls are told, hey, we'll get you a job in the city and you can send money home to your families. When they discover that's not the reality, they've been drugged and now they're trapped in this life, they're told if you try to escape, we know where you live and we know you've got younger sisters. So it's your choice, you stay here or we go get them. It is an absolute nightmare.

I've sat with these girls sobbing on my shoulder talking about what it is like to have to have sex with these older men over and over. And some of these girls are 12, 13, 14 years old. We've had the privilege of sitting there and praying with them as they give their lives to Christ but they need another kind of rescue.

Randy, we've been doing that for a long time and the need is greater now than it's ever been.

RANDY: It is. And a lot of them don't have any place to go. But for 15 years now we've been giving them a place to go. That's what we do when we reach, rescue, or restore these young children, mostly girls, but some boys too. This is so big in our hearts, Sheila, that we know we can't stop. The need is great.

Over the years we have averaged out the cost of this outreach and it boils down to about \$128 to reach, rescue, and restore one child. Now we have a great opportunity right now because someone, some of our faithful friends have stepped up and said, we're going to match the gifts during this campaign. So your gift today is doubled in its effectiveness and its power.

So for \$64 that will effectively reach, rescue, and restore one child. What does that mean? The bottom line is it means whatever you can do today is going to make a difference in someone's life. You're going to give someone that place to go. You're going to give them hope and a future, which we know is the heart of God.

So whatever you can do today, if you can give a gift of \$1280, that will help reach 20 children; a gift of \$128 will reach two, rescue, restore. It will turn things around. It will give them an out because that's what they need is an out. And we always do this in the name of Jesus Christ. So we give them the ultimate hope.

So I am hoping now that you'll take action. Go online, go to the phones, give the best gift you can and join Sheila and I and all of those here at *LIFE Outreach* as we rescue these lives. Do it now!

Begin video clip

ANNOUNCER: Innocent children and young people longing to be loved and cared for are being abducted and sold at the hands of violent predators, forced into the evil industry of human trafficking.

Through Mission: Rescue Life you can reach out to warn children who are at risk for sex trafficking, rescue those already enslaved, restore young lives and give them a future.

We have a generous \$320,000 matching gift. Now your gift of \$128 to help reach, rescue, or restore one child can be doubled to help two children. Your \$64 gift will be matched to help save one child from the horrors of human trafficking. And a \$32 mission rescue gift will be doubled to \$64.

With your gift today, we'll send you the *Prayers For Life* Journal, a perfect book to write down your prayers as you reflect on your relationship with Christ. With your gift of \$128 or more, you'll also receive the N.I.V. Thinline Bible, along with 365 days of *Prayer For Life*, a beautiful devotional filled with scriptures and key thoughts for each day of the year. Keep all three resources close by for your daily prayer time as you meditate on God's Word.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1280, which will now help save 20 children. And you may request our inspiring bronze sculpture, "Let the Children Come."

Please call, write, or make your gift online.

End of video

In the studio

RANDY: I pray you will give the best gift you can and know that we will rescue these children with your help. And today, Sheila, we would like to offer them this.

SHEILA: Yeah, for any gift at all we would be happy to send you *Setting Broken Bones*: "Let God heal what hurt you" by Penny.

Penny, thank you so much for allowing God to use your pain to bring freedom to so many

other people.

PENNY: Thank you for the honor to be here.

RANDY: We appreciate you guys watching. We'll see you again next time here on *Life Today*!