

3/24/22

Week 13: Rescue LIFE

James and Betty Robison

Mattie Jackson Selecman

JAMES: We're so blessed. We just have wonderful people! We don't ever bring anybody that won't just pour God's love and blessings out all over you. I'm James Robison. Betty and I like country music, and we sure like praise music. Some of it kind of gets a little crazy for Baptists that are finally learning you don't have to do your hands like that, you can do them like this. You know you can fall on your face and worship God as much as you can shouting. When we say we like country music, we really mean it. They're kind of stretching us out of the boundaries a little bit that kind of disturbs us.

But we've known a lot of country and western singers and had a lot of them on here. Well, Alan Jackson happens to be one of our favorites. We just told his daughter that "Let There Be Christmas" is one of the greatest ones. We keep hearing about it. I thought it had reached us all a long time ago.

Well, his daughter Mattie is here, and she is beautiful. Mattie, we're really glad to have you.

MATTIE: Thank y'all for having me. I've learned so much from you in five minutes of just talking with you. I feel like I should be interviewing you two.

JAMES: Well, does your dad tell you how pretty you are?

MATTIE: He has. He always has.

JAMES: Has he been telling you since you were a little girl?

MATTIE: Listen, he's the youngest of five. He's got four sisters and three daughters, and he builds us up and he makes us feel so loved.

JAMES: Isn't that important to a little girl to feel pretty?

MATTIE: Yes!

JAMES: Okay. You met somebody you really, really loved. How old were you when you met the dream?

MATTIE: Ben and I met, we were 25; so it was shortly after college. Though he's a Tennessee boy, as well. But yeah, we were both Tennessee grads and met when we were 25, shortly after college, he was in law school. And just one of the most joy-filled, just charismatic, lovable men I've ever known -- lovable people I've ever known. Even in our early days of dating, I say it even more now when I'm sharing our story with people is that he truly had this childlike faith that Jesus taught about. Not that it was simple, but that it was pure, and it was trusting. That was such a draw to do life with him. So we had a very fast romance and dated for a year and were engaged for a year and married just shy of a year before he suffered a freak brain trauma and ended up passing away three weeks before our first anniversary.

JAMES: But I mean, you talk about *Lemons on Friday*. Did Friday have anything to do with the day?

MATTIE: Truthfully no. I don't know that anyone has ever asked me that.

JAMES: Well, the lemons had a whole lot to do with the reason for the whole book.

MATTIE: So the whole metaphor is when I, after Ben passed, and I had truly never faced anything tragic. We'd both just turned 28 years old and obviously, my family has been abundantly blessed in every way throughout our lives and have just lived a pretty easy life. So when this happened, I had no idea how to deal with things like despair, and hopelessness, and depression, and all the things that happen when a tragedy strikes, especially so suddenly.

I've always loved writing, obviously, dad is a songwriter, my mom had a New York Times bestseller many years ago; and so I just journaled to try to process with myself what I was feeling with God, what my fears and questions were.

JAMES: Did you start that pretty quick after?

MATTIE: It was pretty quick. I think it was probably a few months. And then I just realized that I needed someplace that was an outlet just for me and the Lord; and was in counseling and obviously, had a wonderful support system as well. But in that, which was the foundation of everything that's in this book, after probably a year or so of just grieving and journaling with no agenda or plan, I sort of felt the Holy Spirit say, let's see what this story can do for other people, and started to go back through those journals.

For some reason that was something that he put in my heart was this idea of the old adage, "If life gives you lemons make lemonade." I remember writing in one of those very early journals, like that's impossible with this. There is nothing I can do to make good come from this. And if any good is going to come from this then it has to be in God's hands; that's my only hope. So that's where the lemon part kind of came from.

And then I remember feeling like how do I hold on to all these beautiful promises that Jesus gives about restoration and redemption and peace and hope that I know are true but don't feel true right now? And thinking this had to be what the disciples felt on crucifixion Friday. They didn't know Sunday was coming, like we all know now. So we call it Good Friday. But I remember thinking, there is no way they felt good about this.

So that's sort of both sides of where that came from is how do we live in a life full of lemons that we can't make sweet? And also, in a life that feels more like Crucifixion Friday than it does Resurrection Sunday often, how do we navigate that?

JAMES: We lost a daughter at 40, a mother of three teenagers. She was our miracle baby.

BETTY: Yeah, I was sitting here listening to your story, and even though it was your husband that you lost, we lost a daughter. So the heartache is still there in each situation. And just like you, I started journaling immediately. I still do to this day; it's been over nine years but there is something that God has done so tremendously in my life. It's been part of the healing doing the journaling, and just writing down what was really being expressed in my heart when I had no words to speak it but I could write it down.

So I think for some people that is just really important to be able to feel like you can just sit down when everything looks wrong and you say, I'm a Christian, I'm supposed to have joy. I'm supposed to express that joy. Well, at that moment or even nine years later, there are moments in my life where I don't feel very joyful. I don't know -- I still weep. And so that doesn't necessarily go away.

But there is something about that walk with him because he never leaves us nor forsakes us. When we feel like we're away from him, he's not away from us. He's ready to wipe our tears and to pick us up every time we fall down.

So you're on a journey that you didn't ask for, but allow God to always, and it seems like you are, to say, God, what do you have for me to be a blessing to those that are out there that are walking maybe a similar journey that I am?

MATTIE: I love to hear you say that too because some people, I would want them to hear me say, you don't have to be a writer or love writing. This is about working things out with God. And truly, I remember when we started working with a publisher and just

being so prayerful over what this would mean and thinking that if all this is is a record of God's goodness in the middle of a really awful story for me and our family, then that's more than enough. And if it gets published, then that's great. But I can look back at this and see God being kind to me in the hardest days of my life, and I know you understand that.

JAMES: One of the things you touched on and I want to ask you to make two or three points, plus, what you hope the book does, but you talked about the difficulty of looking at the marriage and knowing, I'm going to be a mother and all of the sudden I'm a widow. How did you handle that?

MATTIE: Not well, on a lot of days, honestly. We were, as I said 28, and had only been married a year but even then, you start to plan and forecast your life together. And so just being in that season of life and being at that age, I was surrounded by people who were either constantly getting married or constantly starting families. It is just this inevitable, continual reminder of what you've lost, and what I haven't gotten to have yet. I say yet because I still claim and believe that God has that for me. But it was really difficult.

I think what I am grateful for is incredibly grace-filled generous friends who walked that with me and were able to hear, "Hey, I'm going to be there, but I might need to step out and it's going to be really hard for me. I love you and I will love your child but my heart's broken right now. We've got to figure out what this balance is together."

But ultimately, I tell of a moment in the book which really was a singular profound moment of studying the book of Job with some girls that I've done a Bible study with forever, and of course, we know the story. But I don't know that I'd ever read that opening first chapter, the first paragraph of Job.

I was going through it and all I could hear was when I was reading the conversation between God and Satan, and Satan basically telling him, "He's only faithful because he's had an easy life."

And God essentially says, "Okay, you have free reign; just don't take his life."

And being so angry thinking, is that what happened to me? Was that the conversation you had about my husband and my marriage and why? Why would that have to be? Why would you allow that? It took that moment to be really honest about how angry I was that the miracle I asked for didn't happen and that God's hand was in that. But where it eventually left me was the sweet little whisper reminder from the Holy Spirit that was like, you're mine -- above all else you are my daughter, you are my beloved, you're my chosen, and for the rest of your life, you have to keep that above every other label and every other role and every other blessing that I'm going to give you.

It really became more of this understanding of identity in Christ over the identity in all the other things that are going to be a part of my life. It didn't fix that pain and that hurt in my heart immediately as people kept starting their families but it kind of changed my perspective of my value and my worth and what makes my life rich and full of joy even now is because I'm yours, and everything else is a beautiful addition to celebrate.

JAMES: Every person watching us right now either has a family member or a friend who is going through a very serious weight and wondering why. We never get a satisfactory why in this lifetime. We have to ask God, what do you want to do with this? See we preached effectively that God wants to set us free, and I've been really blessed to see people set free; the shackles of the enemy broken, people in bondage set free. But after we lost our daughter, man, I'm telling you what, she's the most perfect --

God spoke to me when I was talking to her daughter with her first little granddaughter from her daughter, she now has four, our daughter in heaven has four grandchildren. I said, "It's hard to believe that mom wouldn't be just as happy right here as she is in heaven." And the little daughter, little granddaughter for us said, "Papaw, mom's really happy."

And the Lord spoke to me. He said, "For your daughter, it will be close. Because for 40 years she brought the kingdom of heaven and my will on earth as it is in heaven." That's powerful.

All right. I glanced at some titles here. You say you get this because there are a lot of broken hearts and they're asking why. What does God want to do with it? What he said to me when I was looking at that broken heart, he said, look at the first phrase in Isaiah that I quoted about setting the captives free, and the kingdom of heaven being at hand. The first line, "I came to bind up the brokenhearted." That's a pretty strong assignment. There's a lot of brokenhearted people. That's why you wrote this. You want to show them how to make lemons out of lemonade -- you can make lemonade out of lemons. That's hard to make lemons.

[Laughter]

You can make lemonade out of those.

I want you to give us two or three things because you want this to comfort the brokenhearted and know where the source of comfort comes from. And I think you want them to share that comfort with others because the Holy Spirit looks better dressed up in somebody.

MATTIE: I love that!

JAMES: Isn't that right?

MATTIE: That's good. So good.

JAMES: It's so nice when somebody can give you a shoulder to lean on. Here's what I say to our viewers, you can become a shoulder for someone to lean on. Adjusting my vision, where is my hope? Head up, hands-off, how do I accept the loss? God nods and

trees stand, where's God? First steps, will I always hurt this much?

What do you want people, when they read this, when they get through reading what do you pray has happened to them?

MATTIE: It's kind of a twofold thing but my whole prayer for this is and it took me a while to learn this balance, but my whole prayer is that this will offer people permission to hurt as deeply as they need to hurt. Because I think there is -- I've experienced a tendency, even with very faithful people to use that faith as a reason to not have to get in the depths of their pain. And we watch Jesus Christ, right, you quoted Isaiah, he is a man of many sorrows, right? Grieved for us. And so I think that I want them to hear me say feel the depth of your pain and don't be afraid to really work through that hurt. Don't just try to push it aside.

But also, with the hurt, hold on the other hand the hope that is Christ, and the redemption that he works not just eternally but as you all have experienced too, in our healing on this earth he is an active part of that. And the way that we break the isolation of tragedy, or heartbreak, or struggle is, to be honest about it in community and with God, with ourselves, and let there be a balance between the honesty of your hurt and the honesty of the hope that God offers. And that is a day-to-day thing.

Early on it is a moment-by-moment thing and it is just inviting God constantly into that pain and saying, give me the courage to feel this but also give me the faith to trust you and not let the pain have the last word.

JAMES: Amen! I want to ask you if we could just pray with you and for you, and for all of you. Get the book, it's in the bookstores; it's online. I pray you'll get it. As a matter of fact, today as we're giving away some gifts, which includes a book, a devotional book, it actually includes a Bible -- beautiful! But to go with the devotions. But we'll send you this you'll just help us heal the broken hearts of those who are being trafficked, sexually trafficked -- little children many of them. And our overseer just told us that in the last

months we have set 1,000 girls free, many of them very young. So when I say we, that's you.

I want to pray for you if you'll let me and Betty pray for you. Father, Mattie is beautiful. Her life is not by any means finished. She is making a whole lot more lemonade. I want you to fulfill her dreams, but I want her to discover the joy of fulfilling your dream -- you have dreams and we're the only family, your family that can fulfill your desires. I pray she'll inspire people to do that and will see that as she loses her life in your dreams, in your kingdom purpose, she will find fulfillment of every need and desire of her heart by fulfilling your dream, your kingdom purpose in her life.

I pray that you will let her become a mother with a spouse that will love her the way Ben loved her, the way Ben is in many ways interceding with you, Father, and with you, Jesus, at his right hand, the best for Mattie in every way. And she trusts you. She didn't have you on a timetable. You hold every part of her life in your hands and that's what she wants. She doesn't want it any other way. She just wants to inspire people to put their lives in your hands, your healing hands, your comforting hands. We just ask you to bless her.

Thank you for mom and dad. I'm so glad Alan loved her the way a little girl wants to be loved. And a girl that hurts, and mom, and family; in Jesus's name.

Well, you know we can all be family, his family. We can be the family of a perfect Father and I know that's what you want to be. That's what you want to be.

I want you to listen to Sheila Walsh. Sheila Walsh has marched into hell, now with *LIFE Outreach*, I guess almost for the last ten years, it's been many years now. She is as brave as I've ever seen. Listen to Sheila! She knows what she is talking about. And she said, "James, never in all of my life, all of my journeys have I seen such powerful demonstrations of love and compassion and transforming power like I've seen in the missionary's lives that *LIFE* supports, the miracles." Listen to Sheila!

On the mission field

Open Captions

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." Matthew 19:14

SHEILA: God's Word tells us that Jesus cares for and values little children. Well, statistics tell us that human traffickers couldn't care less for them. The only value to them is the money they can make from the traffickers who exploit them for sex and forced labor.

Such was the case of two little girls, Abini and Belli who were five and seven years old when our mission partners in south Asia rescued them. Abini was living in the brothels with her mother who was a sex worker. Her pimp was allowed to molest little Abini.

Belli was found in a remote village with a madame who was selling her off to an old man who was already abusing and using her for himself. His next step would have been to sell her off to the local brothels in a major city. The good news is *LIFE Outreach*, along with our mission partners is rescuing trafficked children through education in their villages, SWAT team raids literally knocking down doors to brothels, and one-on-one ministry outreach efforts.

Both girls are now loved, safe, and cared for in our LIFE Center getting an education, learning about the Lord, praying, and singing as little children should be doing. Stories like these would not have been possible without the help of our viewers! But there are still thousands of children around the world crying out for someone to rescue them.

At *LIFE Outreach*, we have partnered with missionaries on the ground to reach, to rescue, to restore these children of all ages caught in the grip of human trafficking. The

only way we can continue this work is with your help and the time to act is now.

End of video

In the studio

JAMES: It is -- right now! Some of you have a broken heart. They have a broken life; their future is death without a miracle. You're the miracle. You really are -- that is not wishful thinking. Betty, it is reality. You see that incredible place, Destiny House? The people that are built that, we built it, you built it, they were the biggest power providers for Hollywood, the generators, so they could do lighting everywhere. The lady had a seven-carat diamond ring. They were rolling.

They watched us on television, they saw missions, they got a mission heart. They rented houses to rescue kids. They didn't tell us. We found them and we saw what they were doing. We said we're going to fulfill your dream. We're going to start building whatever you want to build. We mean you. We started building. That's the most fabulous place you will ever see.

Many of the kids that you rescued are now teachers, professors in college, and leaders in that wicked sex capital of the world, transformed by the power of love! Just like that Hollywood couple that has never gone back to Hollywood! God sent them. You keep them there. You put the oil in the lanterns.

Please, Betty, I don't know of -- we don't do anything that's not what's on God's heart and we do it well because you love well, not just the missionaries, not just that couple who left Hollywood and their comfort to give comfort to the most broken people, perhaps on the planet, but you make it happen. You built that place! And many more, in many different countries.

Please, I want you to go get a bank card, I want you to make the greatest gift, perhaps

you've ever made -- it's life. It takes \$128, Betty, to reach one of those trafficked, get them out. Sometimes they have to break in but we head many of them off when we see them out in the public place totally abandoned. We find enough of them -- many of them are left by a parent. Many of them are sold for a radio or a TV or \$10, literally! We went and we saw it. But when we see that happening, we can cut them off because our rescue workers are more outnumbered than the guy that just bought them for \$10. And we get them there, instead of taking them into prison, bondage.

Would you right now get a check? Make it to *LIFE* because that's what you're giving, get your bank card, call that number or go online, \$128 is what it costs to reach, literally rescue, and then restore. We have a matching gift for what you give today will be doubled. It's a matching gift of \$320,000. Where did that come from? People like you said we want to challenge people. We so believe in this we want to challenge you.

So would you please, if you can give \$128 you didn't rescue one, you rescued two? I ask people, rescue ten, \$1280. A lot of our viewers can. Well, now it is not ten, it is 20 that you rescue. Whatever you can do, please do it. We have some gifts to send you to say thank you and to bless you.

Would you please, right now, call that number? Many people may be calling for prayer, but you get through, you become an answer to prayer, you become someone's miracle. Please! Or you can go online, or you can put it in the mail but call us and tell us what you're giving. It will be doubled.

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

JAMES: I feel like we're so blessed to be here with you and with our guest. Wow! A year, dream gone? Have you ever lost a dream? Broken heart? I tell you what, you just reach out and touch some of these we're trying to help, your support the outreach and you say, "Would you send me Mattie's book please? I've been challenged."

Mattie, we're glad you came!

MATTIE: Thank you so much. I appreciate it.

JAMES: Our prayers are with you, and you know that.

MATTIE: I do.

JAMES: Now you let us know how it comes out in the next years. And when you're going to be a mama, call us.

MATTIE: I will! Will you throw me a baby shower?

JAMES: I'll encourage one! I'll send a gift! God bless all of you. You're such a treasure to God and such a blessing to so many that never thought anybody would even notice them -- the least of these. Jesus said that's the sheep. If you ever wonder, that's the sheep. God bless y'all.