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Week 41: Rescue LIFE

Randy Robison and Sheila Walsh

Joanna Weaver

RANDY: Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm Randy Robison. Sheila Walsh is with me.

SHEILA: Hi everyone!

RANDY: If you're not checking out the daily live online interviews that I do called *LIFE Today Live* on Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Twitch, and Light Source, please join me because I have more opportunities than we do here on the broadcast show.

SHEILA: Yeah. No, you need to do that. It is really fabulous!

RANDY: And recently, I interviewed someone named Joanna Weaver. She's got a book called *Embracing Trust*. After that one I just went we have to have her on the show. Sheila, I mean, you know.

Joanna, it is a thrill to have you right here in our studio.

JOANNA: It's an honor. It is such an honor. Thank you for having me.

SHEILA: What's so fun is that you interviewed me on your podcast so now it is nice to be the one asking the questions.

JOANNA: I know!

SHEILA: And your new book is called *Embracing Trust*. What I found fascinating is that you say you've been waiting 20 years to write this book.

JOANNA: Yes!

SHEILA: Explain that.

JOANNA: Well, when *Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World* came out 22 years ago.

SHEILA: Which has sold over a million copies, I believe.

JOANNA: Well, this is the book I wanted to write. This was the message I just felt is so pivotal to our Christian walk. We say we love the Lord, and we do with all our hearts. We're in the faith but we don't always know how to have faith. I've come to believe that faith is a noun, but trust is a verb. I know when I'm trusting, and I know when I'm not. And so it has been a journey that the Lord has been taking me on.

It started with the working title *Letting Go and Trusting God*. And God kept saying no, you can't write it now. You need to let go and do something else. But it is grown over the years to become not just letting go, not just that fatalistic Christianity that whatever will be will be, but it's letting go in surrender so that we can hold on in faith. Because I think so often until we go all in with Jesus, it's kind of like okay, Lord, I love you but until you do what I want you to do I can't really trust you. Where letting go and surrender allows us to hold on to our forever faithful God. We have faith in him not faith in our faith.

RANDY: That's good. That's important. But how important, how pivotal is it that we believe God is a good God in order to trust him?

JOANNA: I think it is everything. I think it is everything! And so often I think the problem is, just like Adam and Eve, we eat from the wrong tree. It is the tree of knowledge of good and evil. We live life with the label maker of our understanding, and

so we label things good, we label things bad. We say that couldn't have been right. So we begin to distrust our Heavenly Father rather than realize he is our great redeemer. And so while the enemy wants to mean it for our worst, he's the God who can turn it for our best.

SHEILA: One of the stories that you told in the book because I enjoyed it, it's a great, great book. You talk about being at a camp and kids are being encouraged to throw lists in the fire, things you want to let go, and that hit you in a way that you didn't expect it to.

JOANNA: Oh yeah. I don't know about you but there are days I wake up where I'm all in with the Lord. I have faith. I can see miles spiritually. And then the next day I'm all fogged in with despair and I wonder if he loves me. And so on that particular day, and they called it "victory circle" they said if there is anything you need to commit to the Lord just throw it in the fire tonight after service. I remember walking back to the cabin. I was a counselor, and I was saying, O Lord, I'm just so glad that you and I are so tight right now. There is nothing that is standing in the way. When I got back to the cabin, I opened the Bible for my quiet time and there was a list that I had made outlining all the ways that my husband needed to change. And the Holy Spirit said I want that.

Now here's the wild thing. There is no way that I would have had that list in my Bible. I was pretty sure I had thrown it away. But God orchestrated it because he knew that those expectations that I was holding on to and saying, I can't be happy until you are this, this, and this. He boiled it down to this. He said Joanna, you need to trust me. I said well, I trust you I just don't trust my husband. He said until you trust me, that's the crucible moment. He said I want those expectations.

And I remember bawling at that fire that night with that crumpled ball in my hand thinking, I can't let go of this because some things had changed, like some of the things on that list were legitimate. What if throwing them in the fire meant that nothing would ever turn out the way I wanted it to? The Lord said I'm not making you any promises. I want that. And as I surrendered, one of many surrenders throughout my life, God began to heal my marriage in transformative ways. As I stopped praying Lord change him and

started praying, Lord change me, 41 years—41 years in just a week and a half. And it gets sweeter and sweeter, but we've got to let go and trust God.

RANDY: Do you think our expectations and lack of life, having our expectations met, feeds into this distrust a lot?

JOANNA: I think it really does. Because again, when we eat from the wrong tree we think we have superior knowledge; that we know how our life should go. So when it doesn't go that way, I feel like a lot of times we keep God on parole. We convict him on circumstantial evidence, things aren't going the way we think they should. So either something is wrong with God, or something is wrong with us. Something is wrong with our faith. Maybe we just need to work up more faith to get the outcome that we want not realizing that we're not called to have faith for an outcome, we're called to have faith in God.

And when we can get that perspective switched, when we can stop leaning on our own understanding but acknowledge him, we give him room to work. I feel like otherwise, I've got him handcuffed, and I say you can only do it my way. But when I say, "Thy will be done," that opens up all kinds of possibilities.

SHEILA: I find it fascinating that your book is kind of divided into two sections: "Letting Go" and "Holding On." My last book was called *Holding on When You Want to Let Go*. [Laughing] It almost sounds contradictory, but it is not, is it?

JOANNA: It really isn't. I think it's two sides of the same coin. Because again, if we don't let go and surrender, well, our hands are too full first of all for God to fill them, but also, we're holding on to the temporary and not the eternal. And yet, at the same time your book is just as true. Until we hold on and refuse to give up and refuse to remain faithful, then once again we're still just kind of short-circuiting God's plan for our life.

RANDY: That's hard a lot of times.

SHEILA: Yeah, it's hard but I feel honestly even just talking here, I feel like this is huge. I feel like this can change the life of every believer if we understood that God is trustworthy.

RANDY: How do we handle our own fears you think? Because the fear you know, that—

JOANNA: I know, I know. Again, it goes back to the garden, right? The moment that the enemy was able to convince Adam and Eve that God wasn't quite as good as they thought he was, that they really should seize control and they should take over, well, the same temptation is for us today. Something slams into our life unexpectedly and we feel like: how can this be? I've got to fix this. I've got to do something, and we secretly believe my prayers weren't answered. Maybe God doesn't care. Maybe he isn't as good as I thought he was. So being willing to take those fears to the Lord.

I've come to believe that when something happens and fear comes up, rather than letting it trigger panic, what if we let it trigger trust instead? David says it in the Bible, "When I am afraid I will put my trust in you." So rather than giving in to the fear, what if we let that be the pivotal moment where we choose and declare. Now, trust isn't a feeling it's a choice. And it's a choice we have to continually make. I'm trusting and retrusting when necessary.

RANDY: And embracing itself is a very strong verb.

SHEILA: It is intentional, yeah!

RANDY: Right. So there has to be intentionality I think that you're trying to communicate. You've got to hold on. You both said it.

JOANNA: It's true. That's the wild thing about the Christian life, isn't it? So much of it is

dependent upon the Lord, and yet so much of it is unlocked by our willingness to cooperate with grace. And so what I've learned to do because I am a fellow struggler when it comes to so many things. Nothing about the Christian life has come easy to me even though I was raised in a grace-filled home, and a grace-filled church. It has been a discipline. But I think I found the Lord in a sweeter way in the wrestling through the fear, in the choosing to believe even when everything shouts to the contrary than if it had come easily.

And so I think just even bringing our fear to the Lord, and I love the will old hymn "'Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus," and that last line, "O for grace to trust him more!" And asking the Lord, I know where I need to be but I don't know how to get there, so Lord would you give me grace to trust you more?

SHEILA: One of the things that you talk about that I think gosh, if there is ever a message that is a word for this moment, you talk about becoming unoffendable. Everybody is offended these days. How do you do that? How do you position yourself to be unoffendable?

JOANNA: Well, here's the thing. I think if we trust and first of all, this can be difficult, really trust that nothing touches our life without God's permission, that that can be hard, messes with some of our theology. But here's the deal: unless I make sure and build my faith on that then God's absent or God doesn't care. But if I understand that he allows some things, he works all things together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose, then I think I'm able to make room for the mystery. Make room for the mystery, those places where I don't understand and where it doesn't make sense. But hold on in faith to his goodness and his faithfulness and just know that in his timing, in his way he's going to turn it for good.

RANDY: Yeah. Some things should offend us in a sense or at least offend our sense of right and wrong, yet we have the choice of responding in a right or wrong way. I think a lot of times, that's the key to not carrying offense even when something is offensive.

JOANNA: Yeah. I think that's—you're right. I mean we shouldn't just go, oh that doesn't matter. Because some of these things are so wrong. I've talked to so many people as I've researched, and even just as a pastor's wife, there are some things that honestly, if you take God out of the equation, there is no other option than to be deeply offended, to be destroyed, because that thing, that situation, that obliterated any hope for happiness.

But when we understand that we've got an amazing redeemer, right, and anything we place in his hands. But the thing that I've also just been asking the Lord is, would you give me your unoffendable heart? Because Jesus prayed that prayer on the cross, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." And so when he died, he not only released grace to forgive our sins, but I believe he released grace for us to be able to forgive, even in those situations where it's "Father, forgive them because they know exactly what they did." [Laughing]

RANDY: Right, right! But the Bible says don't take offense which tells me that it's a transactional thing. People are going to give offense, but we don't have to take it.

JOANNA: There you go.

RANDY: We don't have to take it. In fact, I think a lot of times that thing that is offended was our pride, others may be idols in our lives? And you address that we have to smash any idols. What did you have to go through in that regard? [Laughing]

JOANNA: Oh my goodness! Well, on October 3rd—[Laughing] You know I think the funny thing about idols is, sometimes idols can be good things. Good things can turn into small g god things if we're not careful, and legitimate needs can turn into obsessive desires. So I'm constantly having to bring a heart check before the Lord and say, is this meaning more to me than it ought to?

I think that's part of the reason why I spent the first half of that book calling us to

surrender because honestly, we've all just given Jesus our heart but the rest of us are going out with other guys: we're like you can have my heart, I want heaven, but I'm going to have control of my life here today. Then, oh man, idolatry is all around us. Because if we think that we must have that thing or that situation in order to be fulfilled, without realizing it's probably become an idol of the heart.

SHEILA: And you talk about contentment. And our culture always seems to be striving, you need more of this or more of that or I need that to be happy. What does contentment mean to you?

JOANNA: You know Psalm 131 is one of my favorite chapters in the Bible: I have stilled and quieted my soul like a weaned child at its mother's breast. Just this idea of rather than frantically looking for sustenance, rather than believing that my significance or my happiness lies in anything or anyone other than the Lord. And just to be able to sit on his lap and I just picture this two or three-year-old sitting on his lap, sitting on his mother's lap looking at life outward, fully content, at peace because they know mama is going to take care of me. I think that that's really for me.

Whenever I feel that franticness or that drivenness or I've got to fix this or I've got to make things happen, or if I just had that or if I was just there then I could be happy. Well, that's when discontentment comes. And discontentment was what got Adam and Eve to rebel against God, and it was distrust that got them kicked out of the garden. But I believe this trusting that God is good, that he loves us, that if we've completely surrendered our life to him, he takes care of his own, then I can rest content knowing that he has his very best in mind for me.

RANDY: Yeah sure. Just on a practical level, when you feel yourself trying to take control, or you're just struggling because fear has crept in, or whatever it may be, what do you do with it? Just pray? Do you get more scripture? Do you cast out the demons of idolatry? How do you get there on a daily basis?

JOANNA: That's such an important question and I kind of wonder if it won't be a little bit different for each one of us. But for me, just interrupting the fear spiral or those detours of doubt, or even just the catastrophic thinking that I tend towards where I immediately go to the worst-case scenario. I don't ever think, oh how could this turn out? I bet this is going to be great! [Laughing] I come up with my worst fears.

But when it comes to that, in some ways, being willing to go to the end of my worst fear and see God there, can be powerful and say even if. But on a practical daily level for me it is declaring out loud, I trust you, Lord. Just not feeding the fear, not entertaining self-pity. But saying, Uh-uh, Lord, here it is. I commit it to you, Proverbs 3:5-6: Trust in the Lord with all your heart, lean not on your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge him. And he, if we'll do those things, he'll make our paths straight. I can just see all of those rumples, those impossible mountains and obstacles, he'll just, if we'll trust him in his time, in his time, which is hard, and in his way, he'll make the way where there seems to be no way.

SHEILA: Well, I want you to be able to get your copy of *Embracing Trust*. As Joanna says, we want to remain as believers unoffendable but there are some things that we should be deeply offended by. And one of those is the way that young girls in different parts of the world have their freedom snatched from them. But you and I, we can do something about this. So I'll tell you how to get a hold of Joanna's book, but please, would you watch this first?

On the mission field

SHEILA: This is the hardest trip I've been on with *LIFE*. The situation in Southeast Asia is getting so much darker. We have been out on the streets at night, and we've seen these little girls being forced into sex trafficking. And yet, to balance that I have seen real hope.

ANNOUNCER: *Human trafficking is one of the darkest evils in this world. The*

depravity it takes to kidnap, to sell, and to rape a child is matched only by the virtue and strength needed to oppose it. Fighting such systemic evil requires a prayerful strategy.

Our teams on the ground work alongside local law enforcement to rescue girls who have been trafficked into the sex slave trade by conducting raids and arresting the criminals involved. Survivors of sex trafficking have often spent years in captivity and their minds and personalities have been altered. To restore these girls, we provide them with shelter and offer them the hope and healing only found in Christ's love. It's been said an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

SHEILA: As I watched these kids today, I thought, this actually could be the most important day in their life. This could be the day they learn what human trafficking is all about. This is the day that they get equipped to know what to look out for, and what to say no to.

ANNOUNCER: *In another part of the world there is a girl entirely unaware she is about to be kidnapped and sold. But if we can reach her before the predators, we'll save her from a horrific future and completely shut the traffickers down. Reach, rescue, restore, more than words, this is a fight against hell itself.*

SHEILA: God is moving in the darkness and saving lives one life at a time. Please keep helping us! It's changing the world.

End of video

In the studio

SHEILA: I will never forget my first trip. I thought I understood a little bit about sex trafficking, I knew nothing! So many of these girls that I was spending time with are 12 and 13. And they're just young innocents. Some guy will go to their village and say, hey, would you like to come and see? We've got some little puppies in the van. Or if you come to our village, we can feed you a really good meal. And they're innocent! They're like,

yeah, thank you! What happens is they drug their meal, and that child wakes up hours later with some man beside her who has raped her. And she's just a child.

And honestly, after my first night, my first day and night there in Southeast Asia, I remember going back to the little hotel where we were staying and literally laying on the floor and just sobbing because it felt so overwhelming, it felt so hopeless. But I felt the Lord say to me, Sheila, get up and dry your eyes and do something. And that's our commitment. It's a three-part thing, reach, where we go into the villages and we teach these children what to avoid, what to run away for. And then we literally are Christ's boots on the ground. We will go in at midnight and kick down those doors and bring these young girls to this place. We've got a beautiful place. One of them is called "House of Destiny" where they're told you are not a number to God. You have a hope and you have a future.

But we're asking you to help us. Randy, if we all do our bit, we can change the world for these people.

RANDY: Oh, yeah. And for those of you who are wondering, yes, we do also have operations here in the United States where we go in and break up these rings. We have safe houses for women. This is a global effort on our part because we think it is that important.

But we can't do it without you. And you guys, so many of our viewers have been so faithful. In fact, many have stepped up in this campaign and said we want to provide a \$320,000 matching gift which means, normally the average cost of all of our operations and the results, it costs an average of \$128 to reach or rescue or restore one child, one young adult. But through this matching gift that means a gift today of \$64 will achieve that. Your gift of \$128 would help reach, rescue, or restore two children. Maybe you have the means to do that for 20 children, a gift of \$1280.

Whatever it is that God has enabled you to do and puts on your heart to do, we just ask

that we all join together. You with us, our partners in the field, and let's make a difference; let's go into these dark places all over the world, shine the light and the love of Jesus, and shut down this evil.

Will you go online or go to the phone today? Make the best gift you can and know that we will be rescuing and reaching and restoring lives with your help today.

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, and restore young lives and give them a future. With 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 "I Hear His Whisper." Each entry in this beautiful 365-day devotional will encourage you with words of comfort, joy, and love as you encounter God's heart and hear his gentle voice.

With a gift of \$128 or more, you'll receive "What Does Your Jesus Look Like?" This captivating book by sculptor, Scott Stearman shares compelling stories and beautiful images revealing how we can be the image of Christ to a watching world.

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 hope you are going online or going to the phone right now. Give the best gift you can. Let's reach, let's rescue, let's restore! And today, with any gift toward Rescue LIFE you can request a wonderful book.

SHEILA: Yeah, this *Embracing Trust* book, Joanna, you said it was 20 years in the making and I think God's timing is perfect. What is your hope and prayer when people read this book?

JOANNA: I believe God wants to help us build a platform of faith. You know the foolish man built his house on the shifting sand. And when we're waiting for our circumstances to line up, when we're waiting for everything to go our way, well, that's not going to happen because this isn't heaven. But if we'll go down to the bedrock of who he is and who he wants to be to us, then I believe he's going to give us that unshakeable trust, that unshakeable faith that won't be easily moved. Just that last final thought is Jesus said, "when I return, will I find faith on the earth?" Well, it is my prayer that this book can be a little piece of building that deep, deep faith.

SHEILA: Absolutely! I believe that, too. And we love you so much here at *LIFE* and we'll see you next time. Thank you, Joanna!