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Week 43: Rescue LIFE

James and Betty Robison

Tori Hope Petersen

In the studio

JAMES: I'm so glad you joined us. Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm James Robison. Betty and I have a guest that has a book called *Fostered*, and she did grow up in foster care, foster homes, for a long time. Interestingly, she's Mrs. Universe. It wasn't something she ever really thought about. She became a track star because of a coach. And that coach became more than a foster parent, it was like he became like that Father. Interesting story! I'm really curious to know what Terry Hope Petersen wants us to hear in this story. "A woman's powerful story of finding faith and family through foster care."

Betty, you knew me when I was living in a foster home. We fell in love. And you know, you and I have an adopted son that gave us four grandchildren and a great-grandson now, and more coming, I'm sure. Maybe a whole bunch more, who knows?

But the point is that this is an incredible person. I want to welcome Tori Hope Petersen to *Life Today*. I want you to tell us your story in a way that you want those viewers right there to know if they wanted you to come and help them in some way in their community, if they want to hear the story, what do you want them to know about you and your journey and your understanding of what it is to be fostered?

TORI: The second time I went into the foster care system I was an adolescent, and I entered with my sister who is ten years younger than me. I felt like this was our opportunity, it was our chance to escape the abuse. I thought we were going to have a family. And I was honestly excited to go into the foster care system. But within a month of being in that home, we were separated. And I went to go live in a residential group

home and then I moved to ten more homes. I felt like I wasn't accepted, I wasn't loved. In each home, I was trying to make the family want me, want to keep me long-term but it never happened.

JAMES: What was the feeling like when you thought maybe this family would keep you and they didn't? Did you feel a real sense of rejection? What happened to you?

TORI: Yeah, I just always felt like I didn't belong. At school, there was that feeling too because I had friends' parents who wouldn't let them hang out with me because I was a kid in foster care, and there were a lot of stigmas and stereotypes that come along with that. So it was like everywhere I go, nobody wants me. That was kind of like the continual feeling.

I emancipated the foster care system the day I turned 18. And like 20 percent of foster youth, I was instantly homeless. And we know that the statistics for youth in foster care are really sad. Like 60% of human trafficking victims have been involved in the foster care system. Only three percent go on and get a bachelor's degree or higher. So I had all these statistics spoken over me and it was very scary. I think that I did think I was doomed for those, but I had a track coach who came into my life and he said, "Tori—

JAMES: What grade were you in then?

TORI: He came into my life my sophomore year. I was running track, but I wasn't really good. And then we started to grow close to one another my senior year. So probably like three months after I emancipated before I had emancipated the foster care system.

JAMES: He helped you get good on track.

TORI: Well, he did. Yeah! He did. He helped me.

JAMES: And you won the state championship?

TORI: Yes! He was like Tori, I think you can go on to the state track meet. I think you can win this thing. I was like okay, I'm going to do that but if it doesn't work out, I'm just going to blame him because it was his—this is your crazy idea. So I did everything he said, and I became a four-time state champion. He welcomed me into his home and let me be a part of his family.

JAMES: Did he have children?

TORI: Yeah! He has two biological daughters. They just welcomed me in like I was their sister. They still treat me—

JAMES: Were y'all close to the same age?

TORI: One of his daughters, I'm the same age as, and then he has another daughter who I'm just a few years older than.

JAMES: Why did he do that for you? What caused him to do that?

TORI: It's so funny because I've like taken him to speaking engagements and people are like, "Wow! You're so amazing!" And he was always like, "Well, it was just the right thing to do." He thinks it is not a big deal at all.

JAMES: He knew you could run but did he know you could talk? But did he find out like you could talk later?

TORI: No. No, and that's what I say like there are these people and he was the main one, they started to pour into me. And they didn't know the end of the story, they didn't know that I was going to be talking about them at speaking engagements and on shows. They just loved me right where I was and there was a lot of—there was a lot of stigmas around who I was and what I was doing. There were people, he told me to this day people are

like, "You need to wash your hands of that girl, she's trouble." And what I love about him, people are like, was he a teacher? And he is a factory worker. He is the most ordinary man but when you submit to God, when you're obedient to what God calls you to do, you can do anything. And so he changed the trajectory of my life because he used what he had right where he was to love the person in front of him.

TORI: What do your kids think of him?

TORI: That's their grandpa. Yeah. They love grandpa.

BETTY: It sounds like God blessed him with the goodness of God's heart in him. And like you said, he didn't think it was a big deal. It was just what God showed him to do. It's just in him.

TORI: It is a big deal. But he still thinks it's not. Yeah!

JAMES: Okay. Tell me about what that all did to you. What about your journey now?

TORI: So I was able to go to college on a full-ride scholarship and become a part of that three percent of foster youth who graduated college. And then I got married soon after college. I have two biological children. My husband and I have the great blessing of being foster parents. We offer kinship care to that sister that I once was separated from. And now I do—I run a ministry where I help youth in foster care tell their stories because I think our stories have great power. Genesis 50:20 says: What the enemy meant for evil God can use for good, the saving of many lives. So I like to show youth who come from hard places that the worst things that have happened to them can be used for God's glory.

JAMES: If people wanted to know about your ministry or even have you come somehow and help them, I don't know all the different ways you can help them, you might show them how they can be effective in inspiring foster care or in foster care, or they wanted you to speak, how would they find you?

TORI: So my website is ToriHopePetersen.com. And my nonprofit website is BelovedInitiative.org.

JAMES: All of that will be on the screen. And we will have it in the phone center if you say, maybe at the end of the show, I want her to come to our area. We have something we think she can help us with. She would be very, very glad to do it.

I think it is important for our viewers to know that one of the reasons why you were kind of like a stigma in different places, is you were born into difficult circumstances. Your mother didn't lay a really good track. Can you share a little bit about what you were exposed to and the difficulties that really could have totally destroyed your life?

TORI: Yeah, my mom grew up in a very difficult situation, both of her parents had passed when she was young and she got involved in drugs and alcohol, just unhealthy things. And I was conceived out of abuse, but my mom gave me a life that I'm so thankful for. And I think, you know, we know that hurt people hurt people and that's the reason we can have empathy and that's allowed me to forgive my mom in the way I understand that. But she can never really heal. We know that healed people help heal people. My mom, I don't know if she had the capability of that. So the abuse in our home just got worse and worse and worse. There were many beatings and just unpredictability. So when I was going to school, teachers were seeing scratches and bruises and that's when human services were called, and I had to go into the foster care system.

BETTY: How did you come to know Christ? Was it through this coach?

TORI: And so I was in a home, a foster home, it was my 11th foster home, and the foster parents proclaimed the name of Jesus, and they were doing devotions at the dinner table every day, took me to church. But then behind closed doors, they abused their children. So I was understanding that God was loving and kind and faithful, but I felt like in his believers there was some kind of contradiction, and I was trying to understand that. They

were caught in their abuse. I moved homes and I went to a foster home where my foster mom did the same thing. We did devotions every night, she proclaimed the name of Jesus and took me to church, but she was so sacrificial, and she was so loving and so kind and I felt like God—

JAMES: Probably in many ways different from the other group.

TORI: Yeah. It was a juxtaposition. And I felt like God gave me that vision so he could show me; like you can proclaim my name and you can proclaim being a Christian. There are two different ways you can do it. And one way is going to hurt a lot of people and one way is going to heal a lot of people. I had decided at a young age that I wanted to be a healed person; that I wanted to love people well and that I didn't want to be like the people who had hurt me.

So actually, even though that was a hard thing to go through, I'm very thankful to God that he showed me this contradictory image of what it meant to proclaim his name. It was like God, if you love me so much, we kind of got over that hurdle but then I was like if you love me so much why don't you give me a dad? Because that would maybe have solved a lot of my problems. I was in church and the song, "Good, Good Father" came on. And the lyrics are: You're a good, good Father, it's who you are, and I'm loved by you, that's who I am." And I was like, oh! Like I got it. You're my father. Like you are the daddy I've always been searching for. You have been loving me, protecting me, preparing me and I just gave my life to him. I said, "I'm your daughter! Do what you want with this life."

BETTY: That's great!

JAMES: Don't you wish everybody could understand just how much he loves us? And not because of our perfections but our imperfections. So you feel like you met that Father, and he doesn't have any orphans, he doesn't have any foster kids, he wants to adopt all of us. As a matter of fact, we showed our son Randy, Randy was about six years

old when I knelt down by the bed and I took the Bible and showed him how we're adopted as children of God. And that this is the greatest thing God can do for all of us is to adopt us. And then we talked about the great joy we had in adopting him as our son. It is such a beautiful, beautiful picture. So praise God that he adopted you.

And this coach shows you all of this and it is just an amazing thing. So what do you feel like God is going to do with the book, *Fostered*? If you said to somebody, you read this book, I think it will do what?

TORI: Well, like I said, I moved from home to home, didn't feel like I belonged, didn't feel like I had a place. But as I came to know the Lord, I understood that all these people that had kicked me out of their home, that there might not be a place for me on earth, but God has created a room for me in the kingdom. And that trumps anyone who doesn't want me.

And people are going to say, yeah, I don't want her to be my daughter. Maybe people are saying, I don't want to be your friend but I don't want you to be a part of our family, but God says you're a daughter of mine and that just trumps everything. So that's what I hope that people get out of it whether they're looking at their children who have come from hard places or whether they're looking at themselves so that they know that they are children of God.

JAMES: I told you in a conversation that we have 25 grandchildren, three children, 11 grandchildren with 14 great-grandchildren, and a whole bunch more coming. What I'm trying to help people see, and I think on your journey, if you can help people see it, we know we have the kingdom to come but Jesus came, and the redeemer came to Zion. And Jesus said looking at the people, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." Which means present.

Then later he said, "The kingdom of heaven is in you." And then he said, "I have given you a spirit of the power of the king in you." This means my will, how did he tell them to

pray? Thy kingdom come. He said the kingdom has come. The kingdom is in you. Thy kingdom come. Then what's the next phrase? Thy will be done. Where? On your earth, on earth, his earth as it is in heaven, and we can do that.

If people can see that because that's what that coach showed you. He showed you the kingdom of heaven by showing you the Father and the King of heaven and showing you, you can be adopted into that family, and you can live with joy, you can be Mrs. Universe, you can win state championships. Were you a sprinter or a distance runner?

TORI: I was a sprinter.

JAMES: You were a sprinter. Did you run the 100 and 200?

TORI: 100, 200, and then in college I did the 400.

JAMES: You anchored the 400. Well, isn't that just fine? Isn't that great? I'm just so happy for you. You know what I found by moving around. I moved, and when my mother took me from my foster home for ten years and lived in hell, 17 times we moved and didn't face streets. I moved all the time, and I was the best athlete in every town I moved into, but I never got picked. They would pick teams, and nobody knew me and I'm still standing there. I did learn that if I'd bring a nice ball, they'd pick me because I brought the best ball. But that's the only way I could get picked because nobody knew me.

Did you realize that your talent and so forth, it was like nobody had even noticed the significance of it because you moved around, and did you have some of that feeling of not being accepted?

TORI: Absolutely. That's a huge problem in the foster care system. Kids don't have opportunities right because they're moving from home to home to home. And I was a really good cheerleader, my jumps were great. I knew how to tumble. But then when I

went to another school the tryouts were over, and it was like who are you? You can't just hop on the team. So it's really sad because foster youth, we lose a lot of opportunities for that reason.

I love what you said about the kingdom being in us. Like when people come to me and they're like, I can't be involved in the foster care system. It's like, yeah, you can! Like if you're a believer, you have the Holy Spirit that dwells within your very being. That means that we have the power to step into the most corrupt and broken places and bring healing and wholeness to them. And so I think that fear that's in us has to be acknowledged and trumped and taken over by the acknowledgment that we have the Holy Spirit that dwells within us.

JAMES: I want all of you to pray for Tori. Here's her address there on the screen again. And do you go and speak in different places where they want you to? Do you ever go and talk to foster people, foster kids?

TORI: Yes! I get to go talk in group homes, I get to talk for foster care agencies, nonprofits, and churches.

JAMES: You ought to go talk to the athletes.

TORI: Yeah! I haven't gotten to talk to very many athletes. I would love that.

JAMES: I want you to go get the book. It's in the bookstores, *Fostered*. This is just a beautiful person. Hey coach, thanks. Thanks for showing Tori the Father. Thanks for making a kingdom impact right now.

Father, I just thank you for Tori. I want you to really bless her. And bless everybody who gets her book. And thank you for our beautiful, beautiful viewers; in Jesus' name.

I want you to know that when Betty and I tell you how much we love you it's an

understatement. We can't—I'm supposed to be a pretty effective communicator. I can't put enough power behind that statement. You literally—now please hear what I'm saying—you put God's loving arms around people who thought nobody even knew they existed and if they did know they existed could care less. All of a sudden, they've seen God's love. That is what Betty and I took to the mission fields.

But even more than that, that's what we found on the mission fields where people had left their homes, their country, taken their children, Betty, and moved into the very pit of hell, in many instances, it was just indescribable, with their children teaching and doing homeschool where there were even no schools for these kids. That's one of the things we've been able to do. We've helped start schools where kids get their health back.

But here's the thing, you've become a miracle in the lives of so many. What you're about to see was birthed by a viewer who came and said, "James, do you realize what's happening?" And we showed you, and we thought we'd show you one time and you said, no! We want to help save them from that. We've got to stop that kind of bondage and slavery. We can do it! You watch what you can do, what his love through you can do because you're going to want him to do it. Watch closely.

On the mission field

ANNOUNCER: Tonight there will be children in various parts of the world who will not be tucked into a warm bed by a caring loved one, who will not experience the security and safety of a permanent place they can call home. Instead, they will be found in streets filled with drugs and violence or down alleyways teaming with strangers who could harm them. And for some, they will find themselves trapped in broken homes of grinding poverty and despair.

All of this becomes a breeding ground for the unimaginable, human traffickers who will target these children, kidnap, and force them into the sex slave trade. For most of these children, the sexual abuse will produce physical and emotional scars that will haunt them

for the rest of their lives. For others, they may either die in captivity or simply disappear never to be heard from again. These are the realities that no child should ever have to face—but they will.

Every minute, two children will be exploited by a sex slave trader somewhere in the world. Who will be the next victim?

End of video

In the studio

JAMES: Betty, we know we can save those children's lives. What happens in your heart when you see that and then you know what we've seen love do?

BETTY: You know I was listening and watching, and they talk about it being unimaginable—out of sight, out of mind. But it is not for those that are going through it. Not for these precious little ones that are living in these horrible, horrible situations in which they're being abused, and they're abandoned, and they're not shown love and care and respect.

Please help us make a difference with these precious children. They don't have a choice, they're taken, they're entrapped, and they're captured and they have no hope unless we reach out and say, we're here, God's here, we're going to help you.

JAMES: You know I've told you that you, the viewer in many ways determine what we do. You not only determine what we're able to do but you oftentimes direct our steps. See, we found the hungry and we found the dirty water and we brought the reality to you of what love can do about it, and you stepped up, you showed us a miracle of love. But people like you came and said, we can give them shoes. Someone came and said, why don't you give these kids a heat-resistant bowl so when they get through so they don't have to have a hot can or a plastic bag and everything? The missionaries said, no, we have to feed them. We can't pay for bowls. And our viewers said we'll pay for the bowls.

We don't want those little kids to burn their hands. And you did it. Well, the same with shoes.

When we first showed you sex trafficking you know who showed us this reality? One of our viewers came and said, do you realize this? And they showed us video. This is happening all over the world, and we can do something about it. So we showed it to you thinking we would never show you again. We didn't think our viewers would want to see anything that referred to that kind of ugly. But you insisted and you said we're going to do something about it.

Think about this, this is the only thing we do where every time there is a gift, a matching gift upfront, \$320,000, viewers said, we're going to give that every time you do it, we're going to match. Turn \$320,000 right up front. It takes \$128 on average to reach, rescue, and begin the restoration process. Oftentimes, it just means giving them a home, giving them education, and job training, but we've got to reach them. But it is an average of \$128 for one. Could you give that? Well, right now if you gave \$128 it would be doubled and you'd be reaching two.

And I always, Betty, you know, I'm going to try to get people to think far beyond what they might think. I want you to think big. Could you give \$1280 and reach ten children, to rescue them and get them out of this trafficking, give them a home, give them a future? Well, it will be doubled, and you'll reach 20. It is all because of viewers like you who said we can do this. Look at what love can do.

Well, would you right now, would you not just bless *LIFE Outreach* and give us the joy of doing what God's called us to do? Would you bless all these children and all these people you're going to set free and give them a future? Would you do it? Would you go online, or would you dial that number? Take your bank card and use it like a check and make the best gift you can. We have some beautiful gifts to send you to say thank you because we always want to bless you because you're becoming the greatest blessing someone ever imagined. You're giving them life and you're giving them freedom. Thank

you so much for doing it!

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

On the mission field

KIRIE: James and Betty, just earlier today I watched several girls be rescued. I can't imagine what would have happened to them had these heroes not been standing right there where they are. They are fighting the very last line of defense for these children to prevent them from being taken into a life of slavery. It happens right here, right here on this line.

But that doesn't happen without our support. So I'm asking you to once again go to your supporters who are so faithful and present to them another need, a need that is great! It's so much easier to restore a life that hasn't been broken than to rebuild a life that's been crushed. If we can stop it from happening here, just think of the joy in those families' lives. Think of what joy a child would have to not have to walk through darkness. Please, James and Betty, let's do what we can. Let's raise the funds that we need to keep these people standing guard.

End of video

In the studio

JAMES: Well, I hope you were blessed by seeing what your love can do for those precious, precious children. Thank you so much for being a blessing. I hope you were blessed by what Tori Hope, that's what she offers, shared. You know some people who need to understand what it is to be adopted and what it is to be fostered or to actually be an effective inspiration like coach was.

If you'd like to have the book, it will be in the bookstores or online, but I'll tell you what, you help us love those children we showed you, get God's arms around them, give them a loving place, reach them, rescue them, restore them, and we'll be glad to send you the book if you ask us for it.

I want you to pray for Tori too. If you need her contact information, just ask the phone center, they'll tell you. Tori, you have been a blessing to us. I pray God's blessings on you and through you for as long as you are on this earth and this kingdom, make a kingdom

impact.

TORI: Thank you!

JAMES: God bless you. Thank you for watching. Thank you for helping us make a kingdom impact for the glory of the King. God bless you.