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Week 43: Rescue LIFE

James and Betty Robison

Havilah Cunnington

BETTY: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! Thank you so much for joining us. I'm Betty and this is James.

JAMES: Interesting title, *Do Boundaries*. This is Texas, folks, we understand the importance of borders and boundaries. Some people don't. Let me make one really quick, very important statement. God set boundaries in place like the shoreline of the oceans. A hurricane or a tsunami ignores the boundaries and goes over them in devastation. Every time you cast aside the boundaries God says are important, which are not prison walls, they're walls of protection. They're a hedge of protection which he calls His Word is a hedge of protection. Ask Job what it is like when the hedge comes down. Well, we have actually ignored it, we have cast it down, we've mocked it, and when there are no boundaries devastation follows.

Well, Havilah Cunnington has an understanding of the importance of boundaries that she teaches that I think is really going to bless you. Because she had a horrible battle with depression, a significant depression. And so you can start wondering, how did she get boundaries into this battle? Well, let's let her tell you. Havilah, am I saying that right?

HAVILAH: You're saying it perfectly.

JAMES: That is good—Cunnington. I want you to take off. We're just so glad to have you on *Life Today* because we're trying to give life to everybody. We know the life. Tell us your story.

HAVILAH: Thank you for having me. It is an honor to be here. And you are heroes of the faith, and it's such an honor to sit here with you.

And so I did not set out to learn about boundaries. I was a young mom. I had one child and then nine months later got pregnant again and had another child. And I was an ordained minister, I was the worship pastor at our church.

JAMES: Where were you at the time?

HAVILAH: I was in California, Sacramento area, called Roseville, and I was living my best life. I had said yes to Christ at 17 and I had waited for my husband. We got married when I was 26. I had done everything in the way that God had lined up for me to do it. And I was very—I thought I was living my best life.

And when I had my second son I wasn't okay and I didn't know what to do. I thought I was tired, and couldn't get it together. I'll never forget going to a pediatric appointment, I took my son to the doctor, and she said to me, "How are you doing?"

I said, "I'm having a really hard time."

She said, "Well, you seem like a pretty competent person. It sounds like you might have postpartum depression."

Now when she said it, I'd never really heard of it and I'm a Christian so I'm thinking depression? I don't have depression. I don't know what you're talking about.

But she said, "I think you should go talk to somebody."

So I was not okay. When she said it to me, my eyes filled up with tears. I immediately had this thing that resonated, you're right, something is not right.

So I had a friend whose mom was a Christian counselor. I walked down to my car, put the kids in, picked up my phone, and called this counselor. I knew if I didn't do it then I would have chickened out. So I call her. She calls me back, in a very short period. I thought she was being kind but she was concerned about postpartum depression and postpartum psychosis, which is when the baby is vulnerable.

So I go into her office the next day. We sit down and she gives me just a clear test to see if I had postpartum depression. And at the end of it she said, "Well, out of the 14 answers, you had 13. Yes, you have postpartum depression."

I love the Lord and want to do what I need to do. So I said to her, "What do I need to do?"

And she said, "You've got to come back and see me."

So I go in and begin to see her, with the partner of a doctor and her and my husband and my family, I start to walk out of this season of postpartum depression into feeling like myself again. So at the six-month mark—

JAMES: Tell me some of the negatives you were feeling in that depression.

HAVILAH: I was feeling almost like—you know when you're trying to run through water? I was trying to move and nothing felt, it almost felt like the world was happening around me but I couldn't engage with it. I remember sitting at my parent's house and my dad and my husband are talking and my mom is playing with the little one and I'm holding the baby and it feels almost like I'm having an out-of-body. I can't engage. I only feel the lows in life, I don't feel the highs. I just feel overwhelmed. I can't take a shower. And I'm somebody who doesn't live like that; I don't live that way.

JAMES: Were they telling you too that this is typical of postpartum?

HAVILAH: Yeah. Very much so.

JAMES: So they were able to see the identification pretty quick. In other words, this is very common what you're going through.

HAVILAH: More so, and they didn't talk about it very often, so this is something that was brought into the light and it's much more brought into the light. But what I didn't realize is that sometimes depression is not a mindset, it is a lack of serotonin. It's a lack of your body producing serotonin. And I'd been on bed rest for ten weeks. My body had fought hard to have this baby and then I had an emergency C-section. So my body was done, depleted, and I had no serotonin levels.

JAMES: Can you get serotonin naturally?

HAVILAH: You can through exercise and getting those endorphins up. But sometimes you need help and your doctor can help you with that. And at that six-month mark, I felt like myself.

Here I was, I'm back to church, I'm back with the kids. I went into my counselor's office, and I said to her, "So I'm good to go."

She said, "Do you want to know what I think?"

I said, "I do."

She said something that made me want to punch her in the face. She said, "You know you would have been in here eventually, the baby got you here sooner." And she said, "Your life is not set up for longevity, you don't understand healthy boundaries, you don't understand what belongs to you and what belongs to someone else." So she said, "I'm willing to teach you but it's going to require you to come in every Friday with a group of about six women in the city, anonymously."

We were only allowed to know each other's first names but we were leading churches and companies. And we sat for a year and a half and she taught me what healthy boundaries were.

JAMES: I want to know when this word *boundary* came up in your conversation.

HAVILAH: Well, she said to me, "You know, God doesn't have to abuse you to use you." And that was something I'd never thought of. I had always assumed I was laying my life down.

JAMES: And he has no intention of abusing us.

HAVILAH: He has no intention. And so I was raised to be a good girl and to do what everybody needed me to do. And I thought for sure that I could keep people happy, that was within my power if I lived the right life and said the right things.

So she began to talk to me about the difference between a boulder and a backpack. And in the book of Galatians, it says we're to bear each other's burdens but we're also to carry our own load. And burdens in the Greek means a crushing load like a boulder; if we have to carry it on our own we would be crushed and we will die under the weight. But when it says each of us should carry our own load, in the Greek that relates to a backpack, a daily toil.

So what I didn't understand is that it wasn't godly for me to be carrying around other people's daily toil, and it was disobedient. Because the reason God wants us to carry our own backpacks is that when we have someone who is in crisis, loss of job, health crisis, or loss of a loved one, we as the church can reach out and help make that load bearable. But when we're all busy paying our kids' cellphone bills and managing our husband's happiness or our wife's joy or whatever it is we think we're powerful enough to manage, then we actually won't have the space to be what God called us to be.

So I had to understand the difference between boulders and backpacks, and I had to say no, is that someone's backpack or is that a boulder? Do I need to watch their kids because I'm watching my kids? Is that beyond their capacity or is it their capacity? And there are even viewers today that are watching this that are faced with: I'm still taking care of my adult children. And I'm saying is that what God has asked you to do? And could that funding, that money, that resource,

time, talents, and treasures that you're giving your adult children or the people around you that can do it for themselves, you're robbing God from being able to sow your time, talents, and resources to people that have a need, right? Because that's the mandate that we have.

So I began to learn what it looked like to carry my backpack. So she began to teach me the three areas which I carry every day and I own, they're within my yard. So you said it well, boundaries are the yard that is around, it is kind of the space that we manage. And in the world, “boundaries” is a hot word right now. Like I know how to say no. I've got good boundaries. I block and delete, I've got boundaries. That's kind of worldly boundaries.

But biblical boundaries are about what we are saying yes to. Because when we know what we're saying yes to then our no becomes automatic. When I'm saying yes to being married, when I'm saying yes to taking care of my kids, when I'm saying yes to health, when I'm saying yes to the kingdom, then those things are automatic nos. I can't say yes to both. I only can say yes and no.

So she started talking about what was in my yard and there were three things. First was my feelings; so my feelings are in my yard. And feelings are not bad; there's no moral component to a feeling. The Bible says to be angry and sin not. Two different actions in one space. So we've said don't be angry, that's sin. But no, the Bible says you can be angry but it is what you do after that matters.

JAMES: Don't let the sun go down on that wrath.

HAVILAH: Exactly! That is a choice. So your feelings are like lights in a dashboard. They tell you what's going on on the inside of you that needs work, healing.

JAMES: Needs attention, needs to be addressed properly—properly!

HAVILAH: Exactly! So that's what a feeling is. So if you dismiss it, it's like not getting fuel in your car or not getting your oil checked. I didn't know, my husband used to say, "Havilah, how much fuel is in your car?" I would say, "Well, plenty, the lights not on." He goes, "No, no. Some

people monitor the fuel gauge." So I've learned that you don't get your oil changed if the light goes on. You should have a rhythm of it. So feelings are yours and they have no moral value and they help you know what's going on inside of you. And to understand them is to be disrespectful to yourself but to let the Holy Spirit help you do that.

The second is your attitude. Your attitudes are what you think about life. So if your feelings are what you feel about, your attitudes are what you think about life. And what you think about life usually comes from your caregiver. So whoever you were raised around, they taught you how to think about life; some of it is good and some of it is bad. And you have to challenge that. But you can't just tell someone, Betty, get a good attitude. Well, she might change for a minute but she's not going to change. Only if she goes into the deeper part of her attitude. Your attitudes come from your values and your belief systems. And so that's within your yard as well.

And then lastly, are your choices. So what you do with life. So not what you feel about life, what you think about life, and what you do with life are within your yard and they're your responsibility. And this is how I like to say it. How you choose to respond says everything about you and how I choose to respond says everything about me. And when I get clear on what's mine, and you get clear on what's yours, we live a very happy and unified life.

And so someone might say, and I'm sure some people are watching that are thinking, someone says, you made me angry. No, I'm not powerful enough to go inside of you and choose anger. You did that. That's your anger. So you have a lot of options about it, feelings and attitudes, and choices that you have, but until you take full responsibility for your feelings, choices, and attitudes you will not live a powerful life. You're giving your power away to everybody else.

JAMES: Go ahead, Betty. [Laughing]

HAVILAH: I know, it is a lot. Sorry!

JAMES: No, it's good.

BETTY: As I was listening to you, you brought this up. Sometimes it's hard for us to say no to something. We want to please, it is in our nature to want to please everybody. I grew up that way, wanting to please everybody. But that wasn't always best for me and what God wanted for me. Also, I heard you, I just heard God's Spirit as you were speaking, be still and know that I am God, and I will show you those boundaries. You will do better for what I have called you to do if you recognize those boundaries. We can't do everything for everybody.

HAVILAH: No! We can't. You know what? Instead of just saying it doesn't work for me, what if you realized you're being disobedient? That when we say yes to everybody, we're being disobedient to what Christ asks us to do. We are. And ultimately, it's a false sense of power that says I'm so powerful that if I do the right things, say the right things, act the right way I can keep you happy. And how many of you have met people where you've done it all right and they're not happy? Why? Because you can't control how they feel or how they think or what they do with their life. And the sooner we figure that out, the more at peace we are in our life.

JAMES: You know you said something a moment ago along the same line, though, when you were talking about if you'll learn to say yes to God, to say what he says matters when you're saying yes to him, you're saying no to other things. A lot of times we want to say no to something that is an unhealthy attraction, potentially an addiction, and we keep wanting to say no. But if we will say yes to all the things he told us to say yes to, it's amazing how small that gets.

I want to know how you translate all of what you're saying because you've talked about several things. But I want to be sure I understand how you imply a boundary having an effect here. Explain that to me.

HAVILAH: Sure! This is the *I Do Boundary* book, and it's a 15-day study where we teach people how to discover what a healthy boundary is and then how to walk it out. So we unpack where am I getting stuck and what is mine and what's yours? A lot of people don't know what belongs to them. They think it's kind or godly to do a lot for everybody and they don't know that it is not serving them. They're overwhelmed and they're burdened and they don't know why.

What we want to do is unpack that the Bible says my yoke is easy and my burden is light but it doesn't feel that way when you're doing everything for everybody. And so what we try to do is explain what God holds you personally responsible for, because he will, how you feel, what you think, your attitudes, and your choices. When you get to heaven, he's not going to say did you keep your husband happy? He's not going to say, did your kid like you? He's going to say, did you steward your yard well?

I think about Genesis when he walked in the garden with Adam and Eve, and I think what it looks like as a godly person is we walk around our yard, and he challenges us. He goes that attitude is not going to serve you, that feeling needs to be healed, that choice, that's not a great choice. But it requires his lordship in our life to go this is what is going to serve us.

So what I try to do is teach—teach people what is theirs because I didn't understand this. Like I was a church girl. I was working my butt off and what happens is it kind of came to a crisis where I was leading worship and I'd brought my infant son. I was rehearsing with a bunch of people. I'd come in early and someone asked if they could take my little son out of the carseat, which I knew the woman, we're a small church. She grabs him and she's carrying him and I'm leading rehearsal. And then I see her walk over and give the baby to her dad, who I don't know and he walks out of the room with the baby.

And I'm standing there rehearsing with all these people that have come in early to rehearse, and I'm trying to honor their time and they have the baby. I froze. And I would love to say that I got off that platform and went and got my baby but I didn't. I sat there. I was paralyzed with what they would think of me and what I thought they would feel about me rather than understanding what I was stewarding.

And I committed that day, I went home and told my husband, I said, something is off. I'm not understanding what it looks like to steward my life well. And thank God he was safe. He came back in and the baby, he doesn't remember, he's too little. But it was a turning point for me where I realized you don't have to have boundaries when your life isn't pushed but you do have to have boundaries when you start to realize that people want a lot from you.

So the Bible says: Like a city whose walls are broken down is the man who lacks self-control. So what we want to do is understand that there is a lot of demand on all of our lives right now. Media is coming at us, text messaging, emails, we're getting a lot coming at us and if we don't know what's ours, we will live overwhelmed and burned out. There's always a responsible person in a relationship and an irresponsible person. And I always say, if you don't know which one you are, you're the irresponsible person because you usually know if you are responsible. So understanding whatever side you land on, then that's how you start to live a healthy boundary.

JAMES: You know, I didn't understand it and I was gone 30-40 weeks a year preaching eight-day crusades—not three days, not five days, eight days. And I was giving more time to other people's families and children than I was to you and our children. And a lot of it was I think bad theology, Jesus is coming back in six weeks when Jesus told his disciples, you don't know when he is coming. Don't get hung up on that and do what I left you here to do. We still need to get around to doing that. And it is not fighting each other it is becoming a healthy family and making a kingdom impact on planet earth and overseeing God's kingdom here because the next one is cared for, it's toast, it's done, it's finished, it's ready but we can do a whole lot here.

And if we don't understand boundaries, and you began to understand, and it changed your life. And you're trying to help others understand the importance of boundaries—not barriers, not prison walls, walls of protection. God's Word is a hedge of protection.

If you'd like to have the book, it's online. We'll be more than happy to send it to you if you'll become a miracle. And listen to me right now, I want you for just a moment 'cause God is talking to you, and you know that prayer line is there. Do you need prayer? It's right there for you because we love you. We're here because God loves you and he loves you through us and our guests. We love you as much as we love the least of these. You may feel like you're one of the least of these. Well, I want you to see the least of these and I want you to ask God what can I do to be a miracle? What can I do to be the answered prayer that's being prayed by that person or that child or that family? 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 teeming 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

In the studio

JAMES: God, I just pray it would be one of the most overwhelming responses we've ever seen, in Jesus' name. You know how desperately we need boundaries to protect us. Well, we do need them in our personal lives. Dear God, help us! I think Havilah will help you. If you'd like to have the book, you reach out and touch these children we showed you, the kind of kids we're trying to help, and you say could you send me that book, I think it might help me or somebody I know, we'll be glad to do it.

Havilah, Betty and I want to say thank you so much for sharing your journey. And blessings to all the people in your church. Redding, California has a special place in my heart. Robert was there with me when he was kind of a kid really, traveling with me. And that's the first time Robert ever went to play golf, and I took him out to try to show him how in Redding. And he lost all the golf balls I had in two bags. [Laughing] A loaner bag and my bag, he lost them all. But he does like to play golf and he pastors Gateway. Thank you, Havilah. Give our love to people there in Redding.

HAVILAH: I absolutely will. Thank you for having me.

JAMES: God bless all of you. Thanks so much. Thanks for sharing his love.