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Week 45: Rescue LIFE: Last week

Randy Robison and Sheila Walsh

Jonathan and Kanika Evans

SHEILA: Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm Sheila Walsh here with Randy Robison. One of the things that I love that we get the privilege to do is God misses nothing. You, sitting at home, you've gone through suffering, you've gone through hard times. And one of the things I know now more than I've ever known is that God is a redeemer. He gives us the privilege of stewarding our suffering, and he brings things out that only he could.

And that's why, Randy, I'm thrilled for today's couple. We have Jonathan and Kanika Evans with us. You've written this great book called *Fighting Your Battles*: "Every Christian's playbook for victory." Now, when I read the title I thought, this is for my husband! But actually, no, I found that this is a book for every single one of us that makes a significant impact.

But I have to say, first of all, I watched the little video you did, and I don't know whether you were speaking in a church or something but you said something that I thought, I love that. You said you were talking about relationships are life. And you were saying, "If it's not good yet, God's not done yet."

JONATHAN: That's right! That's right! I mean all things work together for good for those who love God and are called according to his purposes. And so God works those things out. My mom always told me, especially before she passed away, told me, "You cannot quit in the misery because it is the misery that catapults you to the ministry." That God doesn't waste anything and uses everything.

So we've gone through a lot in our family. Most recent, and even in our family, specifically, things happen. My dad said, "You're either in a storm, or on your way to a storm, or you just got out of one." So we live that life as people so we've got to learn how to battle well.

RANDY: And people know your dad, Dr. Tony Evans, of course, Anthony your brother has been on the show, Priscilla, Crystal Evans. Your family has been sort of a powerhouse of ministry. How did you guys, when y'all came together, come into your own?

JONATHAN: That's a good question. We met at Baylor University. She took a lot longer than I was accustomed to, to come close to me. So I had to work hard. That was one battle in and of itself.

RANDY: And worth it.

JONATHAN: Yeah. Absolutely. But once we became one, there were things that we faced together where we had to learn how to grow together, how to work together, how to be a part of the team, to continue to progress in the direction that God wanted us to go. As we learned that team unity between the two of us, we were able to work that out in ministry settings, we were able to work that out in our family settings, and ultimately, teach it to our kids, which is what we're doing right now. So it is just a part of growing together. It is just a part of the process.

SHEILA: I wanted to ask you something, Kanika because my husband, Barry and I have one son who is now 26. But I also got pregnant one more time and we lost that little one. That's very much part of your story. And I don't think people understand how devastating miscarriage can be. Can you speak to that?

KANIKA: Well, I just feel like when you miscarry, and maybe you felt similar to this,

that you have all of these unanswered questions, you have these what-ifs. You're like, well, my baby would have been born this month. You think about all of those things. Or my baby would be this age now. We have five children and it's easy for someone to think, oh, well, you have five children so it's not a big deal. And we are very grateful that the Lord saw fit to bless us with more children but it still doesn't take away that feeling—like you always just know what that feels like.

SHEILA: Where did the miscarriages occur because didn't you have two children before? Because that seemed unusual to me and maybe it is not.

KANIKA: Well, it seemed unusual to us too. [Laughing] Yes, we had two children and then two miscarriages. And then we had two more children, two more miscarriages, and then our fifth. So it was unexpected, which I think also was part of the Lord teaching us that he's ultimately in control, and just because we decide we want to have another baby, it doesn't mean that it is just going to happen.

RANDY: Y'all talked about that during the time, and you had different responses. You talked about the comfort, you talked about the control. I'd love you to expound on what God was showing you through that painful process.

JONATHAN: No doubt about it. That's what we did in this book. We put the QR codes in there so that we can tell the story so that you can watch the videos. But a part of that is us understanding that this thing is higher than we think. God gave us victory and sometimes victory positions you for defeat in a way. Because you have victory after victory after victory and then you start operating independently from God because you get used to what God has done. It's like our children. Children do it all the time. They're like, dad will do it, dad will do it, and then they become irresponsible in it. So our first two children, we were praying for them. We were just excited, God bless us, all those different things. When it came to number three, I was just saying, all right, it is time again. Do you know what I mean? Those victories got me in a position where I was becoming more independent and not dependent on God. And God was reminding me, just

because I've given you victory in the past doesn't mean you don't need to depend on me for victory in the present. So we learned that. And we learned to, oh wait a minute, this is much higher than we think. It is not just downhill but this is a higher thing, we need to depend on God because these are his kids, they are not just our kids.

SHEILA: There is something very significant about baby number five and the timing and what God spoke into that situation. Would you tell our viewers?

KANIKA: So we had four children and Jonathan was like, "All right, that's great!" [Laughing] And I did not feel like that. I was like, "Babe, I don't know. I feel like we're supposed to have one more." And he was like, "Are you sure?" [Laughing] So we prayed about it and we were like Lord, just show us if we're supposed to have another one. And I mean immediately he just started showing us situations we were like, okay. It was very obvious. And so at that time when we said okay, we feel like the Lord wants us to have a fifth that's when we had the two miscarriages. So we were like it's just not yet.

JONATHAN: And we had an unfortunate death in our family. Winter Pitts passed away. It was July 24th, 2018.

KANIKA: Which is his first cousin.

JONATHAN: This is my first cousin.

RANDY: Right. They'd been on the program.

JONATHAN: She is also the person that was praying for our fifth baby. She's the first person you told, right? The first person you told. So she's praying for this baby, praying for this baby.

RANDY: After two miscarriages.

JONATHAN: Exactly. So she's praying for us, praying for us, and of course, the baby makes it and Winter doesn't. So Winter passes away. Six months later this baby is born. The baby is born on December 21st, which is the first day of winter—that's the first day of winter.

KANIKA: And we said if it was a girl, that we were going to name her after Winter because we never found out what we were having. And so we found out in the delivery room it was a girl.

JONATHAN: We never found out what we were having. So we found out it was a girl and we named her Jade Winter Evans. And Jonathan Pitts, Winter's husband comes to the hospital and holds the baby on the first day of winter, six months after Winter passed.

So God was doing something in his timing. He was teaching us but he was also winking at us, at Jonathan Pitts, at the daughters. I mean he was doing so many things in his sovereignty all at once, even through our heavy hearts and our loss, and Jonathan's loss that he's in control.

RANDY: Because Winter, that was unexpected, she was young.

JONATHAN: Yeah, 38.

RANDY: That didn't make sense to us and probably, I'm sure to you guys too. How did that impact not just Jonathan but the other children?

JONATHAN: Yeah, it's tough because not just Jonathan's daughters, even though they were heavily impacted, obviously, but all of the kids in our family because that was a part of a string of losses that we had. We lost eight family members in two years. So it's like every four to six months. And so the kids, even now, when we talk about somebody either getting injured or being hurt, they're just sitting there thinking, but does this story end with someone dying? They're very—

KANIKA: And they'll stop us in the middle of a story. They'll say, "Just tell us, is everybody okay?"

SHEILA: Oh wow! Wow!

RANDY: So how did it, when you had Jade Winter and all those things lining up because that's kind of crazy. She had to be conceived at the exact, a day early, a day late, it wouldn't have hit exactly. It could have been a boy instead of a girl. How did that impact them when they saw that? Because that's pretty amazing.

JONATHAN: Well, you know, Jonathan did a great job. You can jump in. Jonathan did a great job even when Winter passed away. I remember him saying, "Girls, she's with Jesus now." That day, "She is with Jesus now. God's got her. We just have to continue to do what she taught us, continue to do what God has taught us to do." As they're in tears, he's saying, "God's got us." When they were holding Jade Winter they looked at each other and said, "God's got us."

RANDY: That's beautiful!

JONATHAN: It all came full circle when God gave them that wink and it was an obvious wink. They recognized the favor of God, the blessing of God in the birth of Jade Winter. Because they knew for this to happen on that day at this time with this gender.

KANIKA: And they had moved to Nashville, so that was the day they came into town. The day she was born was the day they came into town for Christmas break.

JONATHAN: So they were not even here, and they planned to come here long before so—

RANDY: That's just too much. Right?

SHEILA: When you walk through that kind of loss and that kind of suffering, how has that impacted you as a woman?

KANIKA: Wow! It just obviously reminds you of your mortality. It reminds you to cherish each moment with your kids. And so a lot of things, just being a mom of multiple children anyway, trying not to sweat the small stuff and do things that have meaning for the kids and for the family and making memories. I feel like we're just kind of more like let's just do it. Just trying to enjoy the moments that we have together as a family.

SHEILA: And you grew up in a household of faith. Your dad is very much loved and respected here. But I wonder, walking through so much loss and praying for God to do something and then God not answering the way that you want, how has that shaped you?

JONATHAN: Well, it's shaped, it's cemented my faith even harder. And the reason why is because when I was the angriest at God—see, when my mom passed away, I went before God with an unveiled face. Now, let me tell you, I was angry, I had doubt, I was all the emotions you can think of, and I went after God. We were walking around the house like Jericho. We had people praying all over the world. We did everything that the scripture commands—and to see it not work out.

And God, it was a dialogue and he said, well, the reason why you're acting this way, feeling this way, even though there is justification to it, you're missing my victory. You don't understand the nature of my victory. You think the nature of my victory is only embedded in the thought of humanity but really, the nature of my victory happened 2,000-plus years ago when my son Jesus Christ died on the cross for my sins. You asked for your mom to be healed, she's healed. You asked for your mom to be with family, she is with family. You asked for your mom to be well taken care of, she's well taken care of. You asked for your mom to be resurrected. She is not resuscitated, that's to die again, she's resurrected. So what I gave you was a greater victory than what you prayed for. But your mind is stuck on the here and now, and you don't understand that what you prayed

for, I gave you at a higher level than you could ever imagine in your life. This is what real victory looks like even in the midst of loss.

RANDY: Is that a little bit of what you're talking about when you talk about stewarding the battles?

JONATHAN: Yeah. No doubt about it. I think that we have to understand, and this is a big thing that helped me, that we think stewardship is just when it comes to money and materialism and our family and that nature. But Second Chronicles 20:15 says that the battle is not yours, it is the Lord's. So he is saying the trouble you are facing and dealing with, that belongs to me too. And you're taking the ownership of it which is why you're carrying all of the burden of it, which is why you're sitting in all of these emotions, sitting in a dark room, sitting in depression, sitting in anxiety because you're trying to be the one to manipulate the outcome. I'm the one over the outcome. I'm the one who owns this. I'm just asking you to steward it because as you steward it, I will grow you, I will teach you, and I will use you the way that I made you. But I own it.

So the Bible says, "Come to me, all ye who are weary and heavy-laden. I will give you rest. Cast your cares upon me. I will sustain you. Trust in the Lord with all of your heart, I will make your path." So God is trying to take responsibility but he will not take responsibility from someone who is satisfied being God themselves.

RANDY: Oh, wow!

SHEILA: Wow! Your book is called *Fighting Your Battles*: "Every Christian's playbook for victory." What's your prayer when somebody finishes your book, they take away from this?

JONATHAN: The thesis would just be we've already won but I want you to experience the win that you've already won. The victory has already been given to us but we have to understand that we are not fighting for victory, we're fighting from victory. So when we

understand that and understand the nuances of how to think and how to go through our battles, then we can trade God prayer and supplication for his peace, and we can finish well.

RANDY: This is all solid biblical truth and very applicable. I know it is not always easy. No doubt about it. What's—either one of you, what's the hardest part sometimes of maintaining a regular focus on these kinds of truths and applying them as you're just going through life raising kids and doing the things.

JONATHAN: No doubt about it, I think the hardest thing for most people, and it was for me, is differentiating my feelings and the truth. Because when you're going through the battle, your emotions have a lot of control. For most people they are all-encompassing, they have control and then they begin to govern your movement. The truth no longer governs the movement, my depression governs the movement. What happened to me governs the movement. My history, what this person did to me governs my movement. The battle that I'm in is governing my movement. And I'm letting the battle take me away from my training but it is the training that gives you success in the battle.

So when we learn how to allow the truth to lead then we have to let God let the feelings catch up to how we're walking versus the other way around.

SHEILA: I was just wondering, for women who are watching and who maybe have recently gone through what you have walked through, what would you say to them when they just feel like this pain will never ease?

KANIKA: Well, I feel like, in the midst of my first miscarriage, the Lord was so gracious to give me peace, although I definitely felt all of the emotions. And some of it is because I'm from a medical background—

SHEILA: So you would know the signals.

KANIKA: Exactly. Like even whenever they came in and did the sonogram, the sonographer was very quiet. And I was like, I looked at Jonathan and said, "That's not good." Yeah. But God gave me peace in the thought that if something is wrong with this child and they're going to suffer their whole life trying to overcome medical issues and stuff like that, who am I to say I want this baby to be here when the baby could be with the Lord? And the other thought that the Lord brought to me, was if this child is going to grow up and not know you—

JONATHAN: We'd rather them be with you.

KANIKA: Yeah. I'd rather them be with you. So for me, obviously, as I said, it didn't take the pain away, but it did give me peace during that time. Like God knows what he's doing. Yeah.

RANDY: You tell a story in the opening of your book, about a young man you call J2.

[Laughter]

I'd love for you to share that with our audience.

JONATHAN: Yes, so J2. Okay, he's Jonathan the second, we call him J2 just to throw a little swag on it. So J2, I put him in football, and he did really well at flag football. He's fast, he can catch, he's got natural abilities, something like his dad—okay, maybe his mom. And then I put him in tackle football. And once I switched him to tackle football, boy, he was out there thinking, man, look how big they are. Look how they catch. So he's looking at them externally and he's forgetting about his ability. He's forgetting about all the training that we did before. He's forgetting about everything because he is looking at the size of his opponent, not the size of his training, the size of what he's gone through, and all those different things.

RANDY: And with pads and everything—

JONATHAN: Yeah, with pads, everything changes. So I put an old video in front of his face before the game and I showed him scoring all these touchdowns and reminded him of where he's been. So my goal was to let me show you your testimony so that you can have more confidence in your next test. And he went out there and played well. And so a lot of times when we see the size of what we're going through we forget what God has brought us through. And we need to be reminded about what God has brought us through so that we can face what he is taking us to.

RANDY: I love that story. There are so many good stories in his book. I hope you'll call and request it today. But we're going to ask you to help us fight a battle today, one that can be won, that we look at the past and has been won in many cases but still needs to be fought. Take a look at this and you'll see how you can join us in winning this battle.

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

SHEILA: I remember when I was in school, I was probably about 12 or 13, and there was a girl who liked to pick on me because I was shorter than her. She was quite—I was actually afraid of her. And then one day another girl in the class stood beside me and said to her, "If you want to hurt her, you're going to have to come through me." And it changed everything.

And that's what we want to do for these girls that are being trafficked all around the world. They're just little girls, so many of them. They're 12, 13 years old. They're suddenly kidnapped and they're drugged and they wake up discovering some man in a room with them and they're told if they try and escape, some of them have showed us the scars on their back where they've been whipped if they tried to escape or not do what they're told to do. What they need is somebody to stand beside them and say, "If you want to get to her, you're going to have to come through me."

And that's our privilege as God's sons and daughters on the earth; that we get to speak up for those who don't have a voice. We get to speak up for those right now. I mean right now these girls are crying out saying if there is a God, will you please, please help me?

And Randy, through Rescue LIFE we have the privilege of making a difference. We get to go in literally sometimes at midnight, kick the doors down, have the traffickers arrested, and have these girls brought to a place of hope and freedom. If you'll help us we can keep doing it.

RANDY: Yeah, it is hard to watch those pictures, those hellish pictures. But Sheila, we had a guest on a while back, I forget who it was but he said, whatever you do, you're

either bringing heaven down or you're raising hell. Let me tell you, there is hell in this world. You don't have to look far to see it. But we're here, you and I, we're here to bring heaven into that situation.

How do we do it? Well, we've got a team. We've got people on the ground, we've got people ready to go to step in, literally to step in as Sheila said between some of them and saying, you're not taking them across the border or they're leaving here today. But it is very complex in a lot of situations. But we've been doing this for years and we're wanting to do even more. But we have to have your help. You guys provide the finances and the prayer, and I think both are hugely important to continue to do this, to reach, to rescue, and to restore.

Now, normally it costs an average of \$128 to do this for one child just when we look at all the programs and the training and kicking down doors or whatever we're doing in different parts of the world, including here in the United States, by the way. But we have a wonderful matching grant right now that will enable your gift to be doubled in impact. What does that mean? That means your gift today of \$128 will help reach, rescue, or restore two children. Many of you could do more than that. \$128 is wonderful for reaching two but if you can give \$1280 that will reach 20.

Now, this is the last week we'll be on the air, asking for this during this campaign. So I'm realize asking you right now to make the best gift you can. Some of you can reach that \$1280 level, we want to say thank you for that. But whatever you can do, we want you to jump in and fight this battle with us because the victory is the Lord's but we need to fight and we can do more. So go online, go to the phones, and give the best gift you can.

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." This is the last week! Please call, write, or make your gift online.

End of video

On the mission field

RANDY: What you're seeing behind me right now are some villagers who are learning how to not be lured into sex trafficking. We know for a fact that some girls have disappeared from this area and have not been heard of again. It is critical that we reach into areas like this and educate them so that they will know what to look for. So when the sex traffickers come back to this area, no more will be taken.

We're doing all that we can to reach into places like this, to rescue the girls that have been taken and to restore their lives, and to restore their families, and restore their villages. I

hope you'll go to the phone right now, go online, do what you can. The Rescue Life program is making a huge impact in areas that really need the love of God. Do what you can. Thank you so much!

End of video

In the studio

SHEILA: Thank you so much. If the lines are busy, please keep calling. This is the last week. When we go out there and spend time with these girls, we promise we will come home and not just tell their story but will make a difference. For any gift at all, you can request your own copy of *Fighting Your Battles* by Jonathan Evans.

RANDY: And Jonathan, Kanika, we appreciate you guys sharing such great wisdom. It's so good! Thank you for being with us.

JONATHAN: We're glad to be here. Thank you so much.

RANDY: Is there a website where people can follow you?

JONATHAN: Yeah, JonathanBlakeEvans.com. And Instagram and Facebook are the same, Jonathan Blake Evans.

RANDY: Excellent! That's so great. Appreciate you sharing. Appreciate you guys being a part of it today. Share this with other people and come back for more *Life Today* every day.

SHEILA: See ya! Bye!