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Week 45: Rescue LIFE: Last week

Randy Robison & Sheila Walsh

David, Karen, and Peter Eubank

RANDY: Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm Randy Robison. Sheila Walsh is with me. And what a program we have for you today. In fact, a couple of years ago online, I interviewed a gentleman, our guest today, from Thailand. And I was like is this whole zoom thing going to work from Thailand? It did! And not only was it a fascinating interview but it blew up. So I'm thrilled to have David Eubank back, his wife Karen, and son Peter. Welcome to *LIFE Today*!

DAVID: Thanks for having us.

SHEILA: I watched the interview and I thought it was fascinating. Actually, you're in it. You don't even know you're in it but you're getting a cup of coffee. So even as he's sharing I'm like I'm pretty sure that's the wife's arm!

[Laughter]

For those who don't know any of your stories, can you take us back to when this fire was lit in your heart to see the world through Jesus' eyes?

DAVID: Well, I was born in Fort Worth, Texas, in 1960. My parents, an oil man and a Broadway singer, left those businesses and went to Thailand. So I was nine months old and growing up in Thailand in a boarding school, because we lived out in the jungle. When I was seven years old I needed to know if God is real or not. I said, "Jesus are you real? Help me." Because mom and dad aren't there. That was the beginning. And then I went to Texas A&M

University.

SHEILA: Gig 'em.

DAVID: Gig 'em, Aggies, was commissioned in the army infantry, and then I was a Ranger and special forces officer for about ten years. But God gave me an opportunity to a tribe in Burma in 1993 that said, "Come and help us." Burma is the longest-running Civil War in the world, now 73 years, "Come and help us." Karen agreed to marry me.

SHEILA: Did you know that Burma was coming up?

KAREN: Yes.

SHEILA: So when he said, "Will you marry me, and do you want to go to Burma," what did you say?

KAREN: I said I'm not a translator or a doctor. What would I do on the mission field? Those are my only categories of missionaries. He said people just want to see if you live your life any differently as a Christian. Do you handle your problems differently? Do you deal with your joys and trials differently? Basically, live your faith. I thought, well, I could do that! So it really revealed why missions is everywhere. And so what happened in Burma was coming up.

RANDY: Before we get to that, you mentioned being in the military, and yet you talk about the missionary aspect. Is this something that's just been on your heart since you grew up as a—

DAVID: I grew up as a missionary kid. When I was five years old, my dad fought in the Korean war and he came back to the oil business. My mom was in show business and then they met. Well, I grew up in the jungle out in Burma and—I'm sorry, in Thailand, which is next to Burma. I remember when I was five years old I was up behind our house and I looked at this blue sky and I thought, one day I'll be a soldier and then I'll be a missionary. I thought: is that because I love my dad? Because I do—he's still alive! Dad's 93 and mom is 90; they're evangelists in

Thailand right now, 62 years. They don't stop.

But I had that feeling all along, even when I was in the Rangers, I thought about getting out and going to Fuller Seminary. But then my commander said we need people like you in special forces. Rangers and special forces are part of the special operations community, they have two different jobs. So I went to that.

But finally, that call just kept coming and I thank God for it because we get to do what we love, sharing about Jesus who heals us of everything. When we're in Burma or Iraq or Syria, I've never had a Muslim in Iraq—because we're in the frontline with them. I was wounded four times there. We've had our own teammates killed right next to me. My kids are there, everybody is there, my daughters are driving an armored ambulance, the wounded; and they see that and they go, "Oh, you must think that God believes that Iraqis and Americans are equal. You must think—you don't want anything from us, you have your family here. You brought your son, your most precious thing, I give you my country." You're like this. Any time in the world you share danger and sorrow with people, your neighbor, it is a bond forever.

So what I want to do is Jesus, help me to be a better evangelist and ambassador for you. And it usually goes something like this, we're here because Jesus sent us. This is not religion, this is a relationship with a supernatural God who sent his Son to be with us on this earth to show us our sins, to forgive us our sins, to give us purpose, to defeat the power of Satan and his demons, and lead us on, and one day when we die, which we all will, go to heaven. We can't afford to lose. That means we can afford to lose, you go for it. This is what we share everywhere.

SHEILA: So tell me, how did Free Burma Rangers, what is that? How did it start and who joined with you?

DAVID: Well, in '93 we were invited to Burma, the Civil War. So we go in extralegally. Where we go in the fighting, no one is going to allow you to go in there. And as we're there with the people, number one, sharing the gospel, number two, trying to help humanitarian, anyway we can, food, water, whatever we can do, people joined us. Came to us and said, "Can we go with

you?" These are ethnic people. We're in their hands. It's not, oh, I'm an American. I'm going to go into a foreign country and run things. No way. They run their own thing. You're in their hands. But can we join you?

And the first people I got, I got the champion kickboxer of Burma who drank a ton and had many other obvious sins, and a phenomenal medic. I had an agnostic/atheist video guy who was scared of everything. I had a murderer. What I mean by a murderer, he ran guns and one time with a truckload of guns he ran over a pedestrian at night and then backed over him to make sure he killed him. And then I had a spirit worshipper. These are the first guys to join me. Tough as nails though, all of them. They're like little hobbits, like Daniel Boone, Davy Crockett, little hobbits.

We're in the jungle and one by one they became Jesus people. The spirit worshipper said, "Jesus keeps coming to me in dreams telling me to cut my spirit rings off and follow him. What should I do?" Do it, man! Up to you.

And then Monkey, he is our chief chaplain, he challenged God, are you real or not? And he has his own funny story of how he becomes not only a follower of Jesus, our chaplain.

And then Ilya, the kickboxer, changes his life because of Jesus.

And the murderer, he said, it took him a year to even go to church; he wasn't worthy until Jesus purified him.

That's who we started with. The ethnic leaders in Burma because there are many tribes in Burma fighting the dictators said, "Can you make teams like this?" Because they love people, they have no rules. If there is fighting, they go. We've lost about 40 of our team killed which is heartbreaking.

You know one thing I learned in Fuller the first day from Chuck Craft: You can live well with sorrow, you can't live with sin. And Jesus takes away our sins, and then we help share each other's sorrow because that's about love. So I have a lot of sorrow. I could cry easily. But that's

how we started because the people invited us. Later on, when Isis started in the Middle East people said, hey, you guys don't have any rules about frontlines, can you bring your Burmese people and help us under attack in Iraq in Syria? And that's how we went.

RANDY: How many countries have you been in now?

DAVID: Well, we only work in Burma, Iraq, Syria, and then when Afghanistan fell apart, we went to Tajikistan to help the Afghans.

RANDY: Well, just the worst of the worst.

DAVID: And Sudan.

RANDY: Okay. Karen, how do you handle that? How do you take your family into these very dangerous areas?

KAREN: You know I think God opened up a way for us to go as a family in the very beginning. It was through relationships because we met people who invited us into their lives. And so bringing our family was sort of like going to a family's house, going to a family reunion. And then as the kids got older, I felt God said, these are amazing opportunities I have to teach your kids. If you can put them in this ministry, compassion and hospitality and generosity and simplicity, it was as if God said these are amazing things. Don't look at the danger, look at the amazing things I have for you. So it was never a childhood of deprivation, it was look at these amazing things I can give you.

SHEILA: The thing I think that's incredible about that is that by bringing your whole family you're saying, we're all in. So Peter, 16 years old, talk to me about what that life has been like for you.

PETER: It's been a very gifted and wild life in Burma, riding my horse through the jungle with my monkey.

[Laughter]

SHEILA: Just like any other 16-year-old.

RANDY: First time that's ever been said on *Life Today*.

PETER: Helping drive Humvees in Syria and Iraq.

SHEILA: Are you ever afraid?

PETER: Oh yeah! When we get shelled or the Burma army is coming or when you're in a situation and you don't know whether it's going to be good or not, you just pray to God that he will help you.

SHEILA: Your dad talked about at five years old looking up and having this clear picture of what God was calling him to do. Have you ever had any of that in your own life?

PETER: I have not. I've had an idea to replicate my dad and go to Texas A&M, in college, and then probably the army, and then back to being a missionary with my family. But still praying about it. I don't know yet.

RANDY: And you've got your driver's license and a Humvee now.

PETER: Yes, sir. Driver's license counts for most vehicles.

RANDY: I've got four children, Sheila has a son. I struggle just letting them drive on Texas roads; you want to protect your kids. How do you—how do you have peace in the middle of war knowing your children are there?

DAVID: Well, Karen, you can fill in, or Pete. When before we had any kids we were already in

Burma in the fighting. And when Karen was pregnant, we thought can we live with ourselves with each other, with God if we bring our child to Burma and they die? Sickness is the most likely. Them getting shot is actually second. We thought, no. Not without Jesus, we can't. And then Karen said, we shouldn't be led by the what-ifs that can happen. They're all real but they are what-ifs. What are the opportunities God gives you? And I think for all of us in the world we're always scared, at least I am, of the what-ifs. They're real but what is the opportunity?

In the 23rd Psalm, the Lord is my shepherd, all the good things are happening. Then he's going through the valley of the shadow of death. He gets through it. Now he's at this table with all these good things but it is the presence of his enemy. So they're still there. God doesn't take our enemies away. So it means to keep your eyes on Jesus, keep your eyes on what God gives you. That stuff is real, that's not your focus, you just drive on.

I remember once in heavy fighting in Syria because we also work there, we were asked and we do this a lot. Hey! Three guys are shot there across—but Syria has no trees, at least not where we are. Go help those guys that are shot. Well, it's open ground and they have antitank systems and machine guns and ba-ba-ba-ba. You're like, I'm going to die going there. I pray and I think, O Lord, help me. Protect us. Help us do this. And I felt God say, Dave, calm down, get used to it. You're going to ask me for help again tomorrow. Don't act like this is the only time. You know, how it is. Like God, help me just this one time! No, you're going to need my help every day. Just ask for it. If I send you, I'm with you. Go. I was like okay. But I still, my faith is that thin.

But what I've seen, is when we say Jesus, I want to do this but give it up, what do you want me to do? Then it is going to be risky; but it is not gambling. Because I'm not saying, God, I'm going to do this, bless me. It's like I think this is what you want but I'm giving it back. And we do that as a family. And so as the kids were born and carried into Burma with us, the ethnics were like, it's no big deal to them because they have their kids there. Every war, war is not video games, tattoos, ah! That's not war. War is always families involved—always!

So our kids have grown up seeing people shot. How do they react? What if that was your mommy or daddy? What if it was your brother or sister? I better pray for them. It's not uh! So if

you're in Dallas or anywhere in the U.S. and you see someone in a car crash or a homeless person in trouble, if you just stop and pray, Lord, should I go? Because you don't know if you should or not. Should I go? What if that was my sister? What if that was my brother? That love will go, oh, I can go! So that's how our kids have grown up. And I thank God they're alive. I haven't been tested that way although all three almost died on missions, which was brutal! But I thank God they weren't.

RANDY: There is a rescue of a six-year-old that was a touching story. I'd love to hear it. Love the audience to hear it.

DAVID: So this story is the battle of Mosul. Burma is our main area but we've taken our ethnics from Burma into Iraq. Well, the only reason we can work with the Iraqis is because they let us. And I remember the Iraqi commander, he first saw me, he hated me because I'm American. We fought those guys. And later on, he said, "You know I asked God to save my country. He sent the worst two things, an American Christian." And then he said at the end of the battle, which was almost nine months, he says, "Go back and tell the Americans we love you. Please love us. Thank you for showing us what it means to follow Jesus." This is a Muslim general.

Anyway, because of these relationships, we're on the frontline with the troops. Karen and the kids are back at a casualty collection point, out of the direct fire. They didn't get mortared but they're out of the direct shooting. My daughters are driving an armored ambulance back and forth. I'm in the front with my team, which one of them died and four of us were wounded. So it costs. I lost 30 close Iraqi friends killed. I felt this cone of sorrow.

Well, towards the end of the battle, ISIS was forced into what is called the old city and one little part of the northernmost bridge, and that's all that was left. They're like a snake lashing out. And now they're killing civilians. We came around the corner of one street and there is shooting, and I see what turned out to be 150 dead people. People in wheelchairs, getting shot in a wheelchair, babies with bullet holes in their heads. I mean swaddling clothes, like a month old. Every man, woman, and child—all dead. We see these bodies, you can't get to them.

And then we see movement, hey, there's kids. There's actually seven kids. One by one they're killed. We can't even get across this road. Anybody that gets across is shot. How do you save this kid? I'm praying and I call back to my chaplain, Paul Bradley, "Hey pray!" And then he prays. My daughter is next to me bringing the ambulance, she prays. I felt this is the power of prayer, I felt something break and go, we're going to do it. I don't know how but we're going to do it.

And I called the Americans, that's a whole other story, I have relationships, why would the Americans give an ex-army guy, out of the army now almost 20 years, on my unsecure cellphone, smoke? He said, "I'm a Jesus guy first. Follow Jesus first, America second, army next, me last. We're going to do it."

So they dropped high—I mean they dropped high-content white phosphorous; huge smoke but it can burn you too. It's dangerous. They dropped it and made a screen. I asked the Iraqi commanders for tanks. They said no. So I grabbed this ham, I said, "Please tell this commander what to do. I don't know what to do. Tell him what to do in Jesus' name, Yeshua's name, Messiah's name, Isa's name. He goes, "One tank."

So we ran behind that tank. We get there and the whole time I thought, I'm dead, I'm dying today. But my wife and kids will understand I did it for love. I run out and I grabbed that kid. I had to pull her off her dead mother. She's the only kid that lived because she is hiding under her dead mother. We get her out. Her name is Demoa, it means tear. And we're able to get her out; it was a huge team effort.

The Americans dropping smoke, the Iraqis trusting us, and risking their lives and that tank. My team around me, my family just outside that, people praying. We got that little girl out; later reunited her with her grandmother. And she said, "I was in Bagdad, I knew my family was in trouble and God showed me a vision." This is a Muslim. "And I saw my granddaughter dead under my daughter" which is how it was, "and everybody is dead in the street. And it was an evil stream between them and the land of the living. And a gigantic being, a man with flashing eyes, a white robe, and shining hair, stepped across that chasm and picked my granddaughter up."

And I said, "That was Jesus and he sent us."

You know whoever watches this, Jesus will send you and go with you. You don't have to be anything about obedient and willing. So it wasn't our power, it was Jesus' power, and all of us together are able to be part of something. Someone said, "Oh, you are superheroes." We're not superheroes! There were six other kids killed, we couldn't even save them. We got one with God's help and everyone else's. So that's that story.

SHEILA: There's so much more to your story. So how can people get in touch with you if people want to contact your family, and support your family, how do they get in touch with you?

DAVID: Our website FreeBurmaRangers.org. Contact y'all.

SHEILA: And there's a movie.

DAVID: There is a documentary you can get on Amazon.

SHEILA: Yeah! You can get it on Amazon prime.

RANDY: Stories of rescue.

SHEILA: Wow, yeah!

DAVID: Do you have a word you want to put in?

KAREN: Thank you. Yeah.

PETER: Thank you for having us.

SHEILA: Oh gosh. What an honor—absolute honor! You know here at *LIFE* one of the things, one of the words that are most important to us is "rescue." And as Randy mentioned, we work

with sex trafficking to help those children who think there is no hope. But we know that where Jesus is there's always hope, and you can help us. I want to ask you to watch something and then I'll tell you how you can do that. Watch this.

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RANDY: I do hope you're going online or going to the phone right now. Together we can do it. We can rescue so many but we have to have your support.

Sheila, you know today has been just eye-opening. I love these members of our team to help people.

SHEILA: Karen, I just wanted to ask you because I'm thinking about kids, jungle. It's just like, it's not your normal kind of scenario. Do you have any memories that stick with you more than others?

KAREN: I do; and I think it was from a time when the situation was difficult in a village that we visited very often. It was sort of another family village per se, and we spent many Christmases there. But at this point Burma army was active and you could hear mortars going off in the distance. And I had three little kids, and I never quite knew what the situation was, it just felt precarious. And I remember praying: Lord, I just wish I could bubble wrap my kids and protect them from anything that might happen.

And I felt him say, well, you could and then you would insulate them from me as well. Don't I have a chance to call out to them? Don't I have a place in their heart where they can come to me with their fears, their concerns? You've done everything right. You've done everything that I called you to do. This is a situation that's out of your control.

I think we can all relate to that as moms, like how did I get here? And then he says, this is where I step in. Do you really want to solve all their problems?

And you realize, no. Jesus is the answer. And then that they would take that knowledge that Jesus is with them into every situation that they have, as well as all of us, even in America. So I pray that for my kids, I pray that for all of our children.

RANDY: What a testimony. What an outreach. Karen, David, Peter Eubank, thank you for being with us.

DAVID: Thank you.

SHEILA: And don't forget FreeBurmaRangers.org.

RANDY: Yep! And we'll see you again next time!