

Week 37

9/5/11

James: Thank all of you! You're great. Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm James Robison.

Betty and I are thrilled to have one of the Women of Faith. She can handle it. She is ready. Luci Swindoll is here.

I'm glancing down at the title of one of the many really inspirational books. This one is called: *Doing Life Differently*. I can't imagine Luci doing life any other way than differently. You talk about the original nonconformist that would surely be a picture of Luci because she is not going to just get in line with what everybody says because she is experiencing life. The subheading: *The Art of Living with Imagination*, and I can certainly understand how she could do that.

We're thrilled to have Luci Swindoll back with us on *LIFE Today*. Would you give her a real good welcome?

Luci: Thank you!

James: Don't you just kind of miss not having all of your associates around?

Luci: I do miss them. I hardly know what to say but I'll think of something. You know they called before you got here and wanted to be sure that you didn't say too much about them. They were a little concerned.

Luci: And you let me on here anyway?

James: They wanted me to keep you in check.

Luci: Yeah, yeah, I know that group! I'm thrilled to be here. I really am. They wanted to come with me but I told them they couldn't.

James: That's why they called. How are the conferences going?

Luci: Well, really well.

James: And you actually are doing a divide now, you've got the east and west. You're finding that's a good idea?

Luci: I think it is a wonderful idea! It's new. I miss my buddies because they knew where the bodies were buried so I like to check with them when anything happens.

[Laughter]

But we're able to have 30 conferences a year with doing conferences the same weekend, and we're off in the summer, which enables us to have a life.

James: Well, you really need that. One of the biggest mistakes I made in my 600 city-wide crusade ministry was too many of them. Can you imagine I went eight days at a time speaking five and six times a day at least five of the eight days --.

Luci: Eight days a week? That's hard in seven days.

James: Sunday to Sunday -- we started on Sunday to Sunday.

Luci: Were you married to him at that time?

Betty: Oh, yeah.

Luci: That is a lot of --

James: It was terrible. It wasn't wise. People always said, "You have to come. You've got to come to our city. Our whole city is going to hell if you don't get here." You know how the church doesn't put much pressure on you. "If you don't get here, we're going to hell in hand basket!" So here we have to come.

But really, I started so young I didn't have a lot of wisdom and I really experienced burn out and it nearly destroyed my life. Thank God for the miracle of really freedom and deliverance and fullness and a little sanity that comes with fullness and freedom.

Luci: It comes with age -- trust me! I know!

James: I'm glad that you've got this great time during the summer. I think it is great. Tell me about this book.

Luci: Well, the book is sort of an addition to a book I'd written earlier called *I Married Adventure: Looking at Life Through the Lens of Possibility*. So in many ways this is sort of

an enhancement of that book with additional chapters added and it is the idea that to live an adventuresome life is really an attitude; it is not jumping off the Empire State Building or doing something stupid. It is just living your life fully every minute, looking for the joy and the fun and the pleasure that life gives you simply because you can breathe, you're alive, and you have the opportunity to live and move and share and love and be involved with life.

So the whole book has to do with doing that in the arts, in your faith, with your friends, with your family, as you travel; and I tried to cover most of the things that each of us does at some time in life. And so in places in there you can keep your own little journal; there is a spot for journaling. Some of my art work is in there and that was fun. So it's just sort of a picture of me and it is a good doorstep.

James: Everything you -- doorstep!

Luci: You know if you run out of doorstops.

James: Everything you do is inspirational. I have been watching, I think with interest, what I believe is an awakening of the church to stop just going to the church and really become the church. I think I found that a lot of people have been held captive by religious boundaries and limitations. And I've heard you reference and I think you do it so effectively, a legalism that a lot of religious people find themselves not only caught up in but trapped by and held captive in it.

Address that some because I don't think God wants us to live in that kind of confinement. I don't hear that as life with imagination. I don't hear it as the abundant life that Jesus came to offer. I find it some kind of a stagnant religious life that has no imagination. It doesn't even look like life, it looks like death warmed over, propped up in the pews and it is troubling to me.

Luci: I totally agree. I think the truth is that legalism is the worst thing that ever happened to the church because I spent a number of years being in a legalistic denomination that caused me to have to behave and look the right way and dress the right way and never miss Sunday school or I'd be condemned in one way or the other.

But when I realized that God deals in grace, he loves me simply because he loves me. He loves each of us because he cannot help himself; it is who he is. And in so doing, it set me free to be who I really am. When I learned that it's all grace and by grace alone, I could live my own way, I didn't have to be Chuck, my brother, I didn't have to be my

older brother, I could be me and that it was okay to be me. I used to try to be Chuck and somebody said, "Why are you doing that?"

I said, "Well, everybody loves him and he is just so marvelous." But I was worn out because I wasn't me.

And finally the Lord said to me, "Just be you, Luci."

I thought, oh, gosh! No telling where this will lead. "Just be you, just talk to people like you're visiting with them in your living room."

I remember about eight years later a woman came up to me and she said, "I so loved today." She said, "It was like I was sitting with you in your living room and we were just chatting." And so I think when we are ourselves we can be genuine.

The truth is when my feeling is when God redeems us through his son he justifies us, he makes us righteous even though we're still sinners. And so what we are will never change but who we are will never stop changing. That's when he brings us to maturity, those difficult lessons and things that we go through, that he takes us through so that he can grow us up.

Betty: Don't you think we put the stops and limits on our own life as Christians, a lot of times? Because we think if people saw who we thought we were, they wouldn't like us. So that's when we put all the pretending on, because I was like you in so many ways, I wanted to make sure I could check every little box on that envelope that I filled out every Sunday at church, perfect attendance, read my Bible every day, studied my lesson. All those little things but I wasn't happy inside.

Luci: Well, yes and we always think if people really knew me they wouldn't like me. And the truth is, if they know you they'll like you better because you are just like them. We're only open -- we want to tell somebody our hurts or our problems but we're only open to the degree we are received. The minute we are being judged we shut up because we don't want somebody to judge us. And God doesn't, he loves us. He receives us.

And so that's really our story at Women of Faith, to talk about the grace of God and the change that it can make in a life that already belongs to the Lord but is bound by this religion. Religion is a horrible thing but relationship is everything!

James: Absolutely! We have substituted relationship for a religious association or affiliation or even a membership, and it is really, costing us life. Religion, I really believe one of the ugliest things on planet earth is what I call rotten, godless religion that really destroys any possibility of a true expression of meaningful life. That really is what it does.

Jesus said that you were like the ones Isaiah talked about. "You honor me with your lips and you do service with your mouths but your hearts are far from me."

A friend of mine, Jim Hylton put it this way when he was talking about the Kingdom of God. He said, "It is more like churches have become like great orphanages and the pastors are the keeper of the orphans. And the orphans are never able to be secure, never able to live at peace because it is a life of uncertainty, a life without trust and without a family." Even in churches we have membership, often times you don't have a family relationship. It is more like you felt, judged all the time -- and Betty felt, I'm not measuring up.

Rule keeping, Jesus said, "Unless you're righteousness" -- think about this -- "exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees." As far as religion goes, you can't keep the letter more perfectly and yet they were some of the most mean-spirited people on planet earth.

And Jesus said, "Unless your righteousness exceeds those," which means it is more than rule keeping. It is a righteousness. What you just said, it is something growing in us, this true grace. If you've really experienced this grace, this forgiveness, that grace that works -- not works but grace -- grace works in us. It is like you said a moment ago, you keep changing the who, him in you, keeps changing the who we are. We keep growing.

Here I'm -- Betty and I have been married 48 years so we're up in years. We didn't get married in elementary school. We got married young but we've been married a long time so we're up in years but we're continually changing. I just keep being open to God to do something because I'm excited about the changes he makes that are meaningful, they're positive.

Luci: I always think of this verse in First Timothy where it says, "God has given us richly all things to enjoy." He didn't say, "Richly all things to accumulate... All things to achieve," or as most Christians talk who are in a legalistic church, "all things to correct." "He gave us all things to enjoy" -- to just laugh at.

James: Excuse me, I do!

Luci: I do too! That's what I want to convey with the way I live and Women of Faith and with my life because I think the people who are caught in legalism and don't know it are miserable and don't know why. They don't know what to do. But they've missed grace.

You know Christ was born under law, lived under the law, died under the law, was raised into the law, he is now seated at the right hand of the father making intercession for us -- that's grace. We didn't deserve it but he just gives it. So I think, give it -- I'm ready! I want to encourage people to get out of that bondage because that's a sinking ship.

James: Doesn't it break your heart when you look at people who with great dedication and determination or whatever, they show up at the meeting house and yet there's no appearance of joy. There is no life there.

Many of the women who come to the Women of Faith conferences, they're really coming to see faith that works and grace that works and they get excited when they hear women who have been on difficult journeys, who have had battles with disease and sometimes divorce and sometimes other issues, and death in their family with people they love, and who have had challenges and have failed and who open up and say, "Here is who I am. Here is who he is and able and anxious to be in us." And it is just like it energizes them. Am I right about that? Do you find yourself this is the way they ought to be able to go anywhere in a church and find life like this.

Luci: You are right about that. I think the most frequently said comment is, I love it here because it's real. You are real; you get up and you're not afraid to say what went wrong and what you felt and how hard it was because then I can identify. Then we simply tell our stories and how God met us in those stories and I think, if we're honest and open, then it helps other people as you said to be honest and open.

Betty: It feels so good, I know the freedom that God has brought in our lives, it feels so good not to get up and try to fulfill all the expectations that have been put on us but it's free to be who God created us to be.

Luci: And I don't want to -- I don't want to get up and say something like "I'm dressed this way" or "I act this way because this is what I know God wanted me to do." I think people should -- if they want to go to church with a beanie their head -- where are the

beanies anyway? I think that's a great idea! I just think, be you -- be yourself then you know what you're getting, know what you're talking about.

James: We really so often build bondage, we build a prison. One of the things our viewers say, Luci, and I think probably all the Women of Faith have been here and God knows we just had this whole platform covered, it is a hoot. But they've said that you all enjoy being with us because you sense a genuineness. It is obvious I'm a mess -- and pray for Betty, God bless Betty has to be with him.

Luci: She keeps you sane.

James: She absolutely does. Everybody says, at least they're vulnerable, they're honest, they don't pretend to be strong when they are weak, they just bare their soul and people like that. I think that's what you're talking about. People want to get around people who are honest, would be like family, like children, this is who we are. We need God's help but we need one another's help. Let's be family.

Luci: Don't you want to be with people who are real because then it means you can be real. You don't have to fake it. You don't have to be something you're not. We can relax. Otherwise we just get home and we're worn out and we think, gosh, they were so hard to be with because they expected something that I'm not. But I'm too old to do that anymore; you know I'm about to turn 110, so shoot -- just be you Luci -- just be you!

[Laughter]

James: Betty is not that comfortable with us talking about how -- I can tell how old I am --

Betty: You are!

James: That's correct. And then when I follow and say -- "but Betty is just a month younger." That really is --

Luci: But is she really?

James: She is, really.

Luci: She looks considerably younger than you!

[Laughter]

James: She looks much younger than me. That's why I tell people, she is only --. I'm trying to let you know I'm not nearly as old as I look.

Luci: Well, you and I wear our hair alike. Mine's just a little bit more spiked than yours.

James: We have this color put on. Right?

Luci: This is not my real color. My real color is red.

[Laughter]

James: Here's the book, Luci tell us if anybody wants to know, they know how they can go to the bookstores but if they want to go online and find you but find out about the Women of Faith. What is the web site? Best place to go?

Luci: You go WomenOfFaith.com and you can see where the conferences are, the dates, all of that; who is in the lineup, where the events are, all sorts of other information that is going on.

James: Now do you have a separate web site in case they want to get some really good stuff?

Luci: I don't. I was thinking about it once but some people told me not to do it. I said, okay. So just go to Women of Faith and you can see all you want to know about me and everybody else.

James: Would you say thanks to Luci Swindoll? She is here representing faith -- and of course, the Women of Faith. There's the web site on the screen and the book, *Doing Life Differently*. It is really -- if you do it his way, Jesus' way, it will be abundant life and it will be different from what most people reveal because it is real life. And you know we really have fun, Luci, giving life, sharing life because we believe life is a river.

Luci: I love being on this show because you're both idiot -- I mean you both are -- you both so wonderful!

[Laughter]

I love that!

James: Well, don't you like the fact because I know the neat thing is you have all supported us in what we're doing. Don't you like the fact that we join with viewers and don't just talk about life and love but we demonstrate it?

Luci: Yes, absolutely! You live what you say or I wouldn't be here because that's what I want to do. You back up what you say.

James: Well, we're going to ask our viewers to join us in something they've been excited about and that is giving shoes and smiles for Christmas. I want you to watch this closely. I think you're going to be blessed. Watch.

On the mission field:

Isak: We provide food, we provide shelter, we're doing all of these things, water -- that are really matters of life and death for children and yet, at times it feels so nice just to do something out of the ordinary, just to do something that is a little extraordinary and to be able to give children something like a pair of shoes.

[Laughter]

The shoes for life program is not just providing shoes for children like these precious children here in Africa, it is providing shoes for children all over the world, children who desperately need shoes. So I want to ask you to give these children and children all around the world a special gift, a gift that is a luxury, not to you and I, but a luxury to these precious little children... a gift of a pair of shoes and put a smile on a child's face.

>> Thank you, James and Betty!

End of clip

In the studio:

James: "Thank you, James and Betty!" You need to hear that to you! That's a "thank you" to you.

Betty, as I was watching the children there, I saw two little girls with Isak Pretorius, one of our lead missionaries on the continent of Africa, walking with two little girls, I guess they were sisters but they were dressed almost identical; you can see them. And I then looked at the other children there and these are children obviously that had

been in the feeding programs and been cared for, likely had a water well drilled nearby, so Isak is comfortable now talking about doing something that is not just life and death but something additional, a little gift that is special.

But what I was thinking is all those children also had clothes on that were given. Do you know where most of the clothes come from? They come from the European nations because the shipping costs are so much less. We don't even ask you here in North America to give clothes for the children because the shipping costs would actually make it easier to just buy it over there and give it to them, but the European people are giving these children those clothes.

But now we never thought about it, until a few years ago, we never thought about giving shoes for Christmas and I think it is exciting!

Betty: It just brings joy to my heart. You know I can remember our oldest daughter, she loved her shoes. She used to sleep in her shoes. I used to have to take them off after she had gone to sleep and put them back on her before she woke up.

But I think about these precious children, they've never had their first pair of shoes and it will mean so much more than they even realize. It will protect their precious little feet from cuts and bruises and disease, James. And they can run, and you saw the little girl dancing around, I mean it is just so precious! I can be a part of that and you can be a part of that. Let's do this for the children. Let's give them some shoes.

James: You know, it really does stop disease. I know earlier, Betty when we were watching this clip from Africa just now with you, when that toe that was so abscessed and infected you turned toward me. You turned away and that's a normal response.

But if you turn away and then you don't look back and do something, then you don't get to see what I heard you laughing and smiling about at the end of that clip and that was when the little girls were happy and when the little child was dancing. You went from "Oh no!" to "Oh, that's wonderful!" And what made the "wonderful" is someone gave them shoes.

Would you do the wonderful? Would you express the one whose name is wonderful, counselor, mighty God? Would you express the love and life of Jesus by dialing that number that is always there if you want someone to pray for you because your heart is broken?

Always there -- even today, 80% of the calls will be for prayer. I'm asking you to be part of the 20% and even raise the number of calls who will say we're going to give shoes. Could you give 40 children shoes? They cost \$3.60 a pair -- \$3.60 a pair. \$36, ten children pairs of shoes. \$72, 20 children. \$144 and I will always ask you stretch your faith, stretch the love, put arms around as many children as possible, could you help 40 children? Could you do that?

Dial the number, use your bankcard like a check, please? Or go online at LifeToday.org. Would you do that now? We want to get the necessary support to give 200,000 pairs of shoes, 200,000 children, we want to be able to give it to them, everywhere it is possible by Christmas. We've got to get it ahead of time so the missionaries can deliver them.

We're also going to give smiles, surgeries for cleft palate, facial deformity and give children a smile. Those surgeries cost \$500 each. Could you give a surgery, smiles? Could you give two of them? Would you do that? Could you give shoes? Could you do some of both?

We're asking you to simply do what God puts on your heart but do something because it will mean so much if it is ten children and a love gift of \$36, it has a big impact. Thank you for making that call! Thank you for your help. We have some gifts that will bless you but you're giving a wonderful gift of God's love.

Begin video clip

Begin clip:

Announcer: Poverty is a killer and because of it children needlessly suffer, not only from a lack of food and clean water but also from a lack of things we take for granted such as a healthy smile or a simple pair of shoes. For most of these children they've never owned a new pair of shoes and while that may seem minor in the light of all their needs, walking with bare feet puts them at risk of life-threatening infections that could lead to crippling consequences, disease, and even death.

LIFE Outreach International has developed a durable all-terrain shoe especially made for the harshest conditions in children of all ages. By responding today you can help life immediately secure and begin shipping Christmas shoes to 200,000 children around the world just in time for the holidays!

Your gift of \$36 will help provide 10 pairs of shoes. A gift of \$72 will provide 20 pairs. And a gift of \$144 will help provide 40 pairs of Christmas shoes for children in need.

In appreciation of your gift be sure to request the bestselling inspirational devotional by Sarah Young, *Jesus Calling: Enjoying Peace in His Presence*.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1,000 or more to help provide two children with corrective cleft palate surgeries and you may request the heart of father bronze sculpture.

Please call, write, or make your gift online today!

End of clip

In the studio:

James: We're real excited about giving the shoes but we're also excited about *Jesus Calling*. This is a fantastic devotional book. Betty actually reads one of these every day, 365; Sarah Young. I want to meet her. She is still alive. I understood recently that she's ill right now. I want to meet this beautiful missionary lady; from my understanding, a missionary family, she has truly talked to Jesus and you will be in on those conversations. It is absolutely awesome! We want to send it to you to say thanks.

I want to say thanks to Luci Swindoll, her book, *Doing Life Differently* is in the stores; the Women of Faith conferences, attend them. Would you join us saying thanks to Luci?

Luci, always a blessing! Thank you so much for being here. Tell all the ladies hello and the musicians in both the conferences.

Thank you so much for watching *LIFE Today*. Encourage your friends to join us.

Announcer: Tomorrow, a high school football team made up of convicted criminals discovers hope when the opposing team's coach and community expressed God's love in a unique way.