

Week 17

4/18/11

James: Hey hey! Thank you! It's a joy to come into your home or wherever you happen to be watching *LIFE Today*. We welcome you. I'm James Robison. My wife Betty and I are thrilled to have Craig Groeschel and his wife Amy. He has written a book called "Weird." It is a –

[Laughter]

You might think well, what is that? Well, the Bible called the believers, New Testament, "peculiar people" and weird is actually a reference that was I think -- it related to each one of them being weird is kind of how they get together, and they were weird for all the right reasons. Craig is the pastor of Life Church TV, which is one of the largest and likely to be the largest church in America, over 30,000 people attend their various satellite churches and Craig is preaching to them, and then they have campus pastors and overseers in all the various locations but also on the Internet, as many as 100,000 every week are actually tuned in, who are actually in some way communicating so that they know that they're not just checking them out and passing it on but have actually become involved and interested in what's being said and in many instances become a part of the outreaches of Life Church. Would you welcome Craig and Amy back to *LIFE Today*? We're thrilled to have you. Good to see you!

Craig: Glad to be with you.

[Applause]

James: I want you to go ahead and tell everybody how in the world it is that anybody would call the two of you weird because you're two of the neatest looking people I've ever seen. You have a great family. There is nothing really -- to me you look normal in what would be the appropriate sense of normal. So what is this weird bit?

Craig: Well actually, the way we met, believe it or not, when I became a Christian in college I went from being kind of a wild party guy to immediately being you might say weird for Jesus. So there was a girl that was making fun of me and saying, "You're

so weird! You're so serious about God." -- And just kind of harassing me. Well, she came back a couple of months later and said, "I met the perfect person for you. She is weird like you."

[Laughter]

That's honestly how we met. She said Amy was overboard for God. She was too serious about spiritual things and she was weird like me. So we've kind of made a marriage of being weird and hopefully --

James: Did that come up in your early conversation when you heard the introduction that that was what brought it about, you're both weird?

Amy: Yes! Absolutely! I think it is so much because we are serious about God, that's what makes a believer weird and peculiar is that we are not following the patterns of the world, the principles of the world, but we take God seriously, we take his word seriously, and he changes you as you know him. So we're hoping to become weirder.

[Laughter]

James: When you saw her, did she captivate you with all her weirdness right off the bat?

Craig: I'll tell you, this is kind of crazy because she is just a knock out, obviously, but I met her over the phone and we talked and developed a friendship that way before we ever saw each other in person. So I had never seen her; then when I saw her, I kind of had a revival and worshipped God like wow!

[Laughter]

She makes fun of me because she said I had this big cheesy smile when I saw her. It was like oh, yeah, this is good! This is good! Real good!

[Laughter]

James: What was your read on him when you first saw him?

Amy: I thought, he thinks he's going to marry me because really, the Lord showed both of us before we met that we were the ones for each other, which is weird.

[Laughter]

To hear the Holy Spirit speak to you and say, "You're talking to the guy you're going to marry" on the phone and so almost audibly that I'm like okay, but you're interrupting him, he's talking. It was so loud like that. That's just so weird. That's never happened before. But it did happen where I just heard it so clearly. So when I saw his face I thought he knows too. He knows what I know but we didn't talk about it until later.

Betty: But when you say people describe -- your friend described you as weird, you didn't necessarily think, oh, somebody who believes the way I do?

Amy: I loved it! I loved it!

Betty: It was right!

Craig: The subtitle of the book is called "Weird: Because Normal is not Working." Especially if you just take dating relationships that move toward marriage, when you look at marriages today, normal is unfortunately, divorced. Normal is mistrust. Normal is poor communication, fighting, tension, fear, worry and such. On the front end of marriage quite honestly, normal is sleeping together before you're married, breaking up, doing that many times. And so in a sense the normal thing is to pretend like you're married and then when things don't work out you've already practiced divorce so many times you just end up doing what you did before. So even in the foundation of our friendship we really tried to be different because we wanted a different type of marriage and didn't have a whole lot of great examples to say this is what we would like to have. So we really did, we made it a goal to say let's try to be as different as we can from what's not working. Let's try to see what God's word says and be as close to that as we can. And then hopefully, we will have something very different than what most have and something far better.

James: When you communicate with people today, do they think you're weird even in your church or are they excited about the weirdness and the difference and what is actually the right normal? Do they see something as they listen to you communicating? Are they saying, "I think he is on to something, and they are on to something and we want to know more about it." And you find that they're actually attracted to this weird couple and this weird system of belief?

Craig: Yeah, I think obviously, you'll have people who will criticize and say, "That's just too serious about God." And I think that's part of it. If you don't -- I think if you're not criticized for your passion for Christ then you're really not following him.

Amy: You need to worry.

Craig: You need to worry when you're not being criticized. But I do think that normal is so messed up today that when people do see something different in a good way there is a hunger, there is a craving. And more than saying hey, they've been married for 20 years and they're happy, what we want is for them to see beyond that and say why is it? What do they have? What is it that makes them different in this sort of way? And then point them to Christ, ultimately, who can take them off the broad road where all the normal people are traveling toward destruction. Put them on the narrow road where the weird people are, at least a life, and help them be weird in a God kind of way.

James: You know I've been in ministry right at 50 years; we've been married 48. We're still crazy about each other and I think you all have watched us from a distance and watched us on television.

Craig: You're pretty crazy about each other. It's the real thing.

James: We are crazy -- and crazy about each other and crazy love for God; no doubt about it. But what I have seen, Craig and you are a pastor and you've got a lot of people who are part of your church, and a lot of people tuning in on the Internet. If they wanted to tune in to the church on the Internet and they wanted to check out "Weird," how would they go? What would they go to?

Craig: Well, you can go to LifeChurch.TV and we have over 50 live church online experiences where you can go and talk to people from all over the world, from 180 different countries will be on there, and then you can just go to LifeChurch.TV anytime, anywhere and download every message we have for free, all sorts of resources we can give to people. So we try to make the word as accessible to as many people as we can for their use.

James: If they wanted to download by topic or subject they can do that?

Craig: Absolutely.

James: I want to give all of our viewers and I really hope that you'll go to the web site. There it is on the screen, you can see it, and check them out. Because see, I am really -- and everybody that really knows Christ and has a relationship with almighty God, you are a part of his kingdom now. Even though there is a future kingdom in which there really is no stress, no competition. I mean there is no game to win -- game over, life on with no obstacles. No death, no disease, no sickness, all of those things -- no enemy! See that's future kingdom. But in the kingdom now, it's a kingdom of conflict but you can win. So you see, I'm a part of this and God's inviting you to be a part of it. I mean it is really like getting suited up to win the biggest game of your life every day and you can win! Because you can be more than a conqueror, you can be an overcomer in this life. You know this ministry, you all have supported us for a long time; you liked what we did. Thank you! Thank God. Thank you. You see what we do. You've been a part of it, I'm talking about as a couple. Not merely a church situation but as a couple. You really are excited about generosity. You know we have a pastor, Robert Morris who believes the blessed life is to be a blessing -- certainly what we believe. There is nothing more exciting to us than being blessed -- and we are blessed! But we are not controlled by the things we are blessed with, we are compelled to be a blessing. Touch on this situation because it has to do with money, it has to do with how we spend our life and how we invest our time in what we have.

Craig: Yeah, even before we start with that, I think we take one step back and realize, I think the world has been sold a bill of goods, which the lives, more things will make you happy. So many people are in such debt and such bondage that they don't feel like they can give. So the first -- we can spend our whole time talking about how we tried to be weird financially, which is living way beneath our means, becoming completely debt free and really, I think if the body of Christ could get that message, that would be a powerful, powerful thing. All the way on the debt-free journey we believe that you give. And then when you are debt free, you don't dare limit yourself to a tithe 10% or 15% or 20% but we're striving to live with radical generosity personally where giving way, way, way above that.

James: How did your -- you have a lot of young people in your church. This looks to me like a big old tough pill to swallow, how do they handle that?

Craig: I should think that when they see an example of if we are debt free look what we could do, look at the freedom it brings you and that you don't have financial tension, look what you could do to make a difference in this world. The younger generation is so cause driven; for example, what you do, they would love to be a part of. Most of them, giving \$15 or \$20 a month would be a big deal. Well, if you've got no car payment they could give \$300 a month into your ministry to help people around

the world, and so when it is couched in that way they get really, really passionate. And just as a family and as a church, particularly even as our church, one of the driving forces of what we want to do is be generous with all of our resources, giving away Bibles by the millions online, giving away resources to serve tens of thousands of churches around the world, and we really believe we should leverage what we have to make a difference; not try to consume more but to give more.

James: How do these young couples because your average age is going to be somewhere 25-35, surely below 40, how do they respond to what you're saying to them because they've been living on credit card debt, most of them. Betty and I, really - you talked about "live below our means," that's where we've lived the whole time. It doesn't mean that we don't owe anything but we can easily pay it rapidly or pay it off, that's where we live. But we started that way when we were 20 years old. When we first began our journey together, we didn't know that you didn't pay a credit card immediately. We thought it was a plastic check. We couldn't believe people would wait to pay it out. So how do your viewers and the people who attend, how do they accept this? How do they handle this wonderful truth, which it is, but how does it hit them?

Amy: I think for a lot of them they are fully grasping it and hungering for it. They want the whole package of being different following Christ in every area of their life and walking in obedience. I think there is a generation coming up of believers that really hunger and thirst for the whole thing; not just the Sunday compartmentalized Christianity but their whole lives to be totally, radically transformed. So we see a great response in the body where we are and the people, the younger generations and their hearts. They're almost to a fault wanting to live on nothing but -- I just believe that their hearts are just to please God; they're just so passionate and pure to please God. So you almost need to be careful in what you advise them because they are ready to just take it like it is signed in blood and they're just going to follow the marching orders. But they need to listen to the spirit of God because we're all called to a different way to manage our finances and a different way -- a different lifestyle to live. We're not all called to be a Mother Theresa or to give everything that we own to the poor, we all have a different calling and I think they need to hear that. They read a book and think, oh, we've got to go live with the homeless. And we don't all have that calling but they're buying in.

Betty: That is the key, is to find the direction where God is leading you as a family. Because Craig, let's face it, finances is one of the big deals that breaks up homes a lot of times.

James: But you find them gravitating toward the message. It's let's get things in order. You find an excitement about the possibility and they're willing to pay the price to adjust because to me, in today's world, it is an adjustment.

Craig: For so long, kind of the emerging generation felt very entitled, which is I want the same lifestyle that my parents have even though I'm 25. So many of them went out and borrowed to get it and realized they're still empty, that doesn't fulfill anything. So I think there is a massive hunger. And the good news is when you catch somebody before they make the big mistakes you can grow up without -- that's kind of what we talked about -- a car payment is normal. A house payment is normal. Well, normal is not working when you've got no car payments and you've got no house payments and you don't owe anybody anything, you're not a slave to anybody else, you're free to give like you never have been before. So it's shake that bondage and see what you have as something that could bless others, could expand the Kingdom of God. And they run to that message like crazy and really, really want to impact other people.

James: We live our whole life -- and I think, to me, this is what you're saying -- we live our whole life not only to receive the blessing of God's oversight and direction in our lives and his management and his wisdom but in being able to share everything that God has enabled us to touch or have or be a part of, and that is exciting. This is what you actually see young people and the young couple said, "Hey, we'd like to go that route! We don't have to dig this ditch of debt and despair; we can actually live with the wisdom of God directing our steps."

Craig: I really encouraged them not to be afraid to be really, really, really weird. For example, people made fun of us the first ten years of our marriage because of the things we couldn't do. We didn't -- how many years were we married before we started buying new clothes? It was kind of embarrassing the way we looked.

[Laughter]

Amy: A long time.

James: Was it because it was less expensive to buy them off of a rack?

Craig: It is because we didn't want a house payment; we didn't want any kind of payment.

James: What made you think that way? What made you so weird?

[Laughter]

Craig: I don't know -- I think that I watched the people I know and love struggle financially forever. And to be quite honest, we wanted to be able to do ministry without having to have the financial burden on a church or such. And so early on we just decided, we're not going to be driven by who can pay what. We wanted to be able to have a lower income to be able to go where we needed to go. And thankfully, she's what I call a very inexpensive wife because a lot of them are --

James: I got one too!

Craig: But the great news is, I cast vision for her to the future when we don't have these payments, think about what we can do. She's the one that's been giving to your ministry forever because she has a giving budget -- because if I don't give her a budget she would give it all away. So she does have a budget that she can give anywhere any time. So she's had a heart for your ministry for I don't know how many years.

James: Thanks, Amy!

Amy: Oh, yeah.

James: Don't you want to say thanks to Craig and Amy?

[Applause]

You can get the book in the bookstores. There again online, if you want to check out the LifeChurch.TV and we're going to actually talk to them in another program about all the ways they can help you, your church and help you and people all over the world. But we will gladly send you the book "Weird" if you would help us do something amazingly weird, and amazingly wonderful and that is rescue precious children who are being sold into the sex trade like animals. I want you to watch. I plead with you not to turn away. Would you not want to give a cure to a child that had a disease if you knew what it was? We got the cure and you're the one that can make it possible to rescue these precious lives. Watch.

On the mission field:

>> Actually she -- the old lady took her to the room and let the men rape her and then sold her to other men, one after the other and never gave her money.

>> At a time when she felt so disgraced for herself that she was sold and then when she was beaten all of the time she would think it is better for her to be killed.

>> They beat them and then locked in the room.

>> And they also put a spike in her leg.

>> A spike? Like a metal railroad spike? They put that into your leg? And here she is, she is caught in this trap and she doesn't see any way out. People have owned her and forced her to perform many sexual acts, ten men a day. You can look at her face and tell she doesn't want to do this. She hates it! She hates what she has to do again and again and again. I want to stop it.

End of clip

In the studio:

James: Because someone like you contributed to make it possible for us to rescue Shrayon we've been able to do that. That very girl -- and that just happened a few weeks ago, that scene. Here's some pictures, Betty, of her in training now to learn how to have a craft. We've gotten her totally out. That pimp that you saw talking so casually and indifferently about how he would be cruel to her, having his friends rape them, they led him to Christ right there. God's kingdom presence showed up. He was led to the Lord. He is not doing that anymore. Those girls have been rescued because someone enabled a couple that left Hollywood where they served the motion picture industry with all the power generators out on location. She sold a seven or eight karat diamond ring to pay her own way over there and they moved in rented quarters and started rescuing people. Our ministry had touched them and inspired them. And now, lo and behold we find them doing the work and we began to enable them, and build an incredible *LIFE* Center. When I say "we," I mean we -- you the viewers all over the world who said, "I want to have a part in that." It is so beautiful to see these children, Betty, now they're singing and praising God and learning how to make a living and they're no longer trapped and we're able to rescue children before they're sold because of the poverty they live in, parents will let someone take their children, not knowing they're going into sexual slavery, being told they're going to go take them into town and teach them how to get a job and go to school. It is pathetic! We've been up in those areas in the remote mountainous areas there in Thailand and we work in many other countries, in Cambodia and other places we can't even mention and we've been

able to rescue these children. Here's what we're asking you to do. If you will make a gift of \$128, that's what it takes, that's the average to rescue one of these precious children, you will enable us to do that. We need to hear from every one of you. This is our last week and we're praying every single one -- some of you have already helped, we still need help. The only limit in how many we can reach is whether we have the ability to do it. Thousands have been rescued; we're reaching out now to thousands; will you take one? Is there any way you can help us rescue ten with a gift of \$1280? We have gifts to bless you as you give the great gift of God's love and His life. Please make that call. Use your bankcard like it is a check, that's how you use it. Or you can go online, *LIFE Today* and make your gift. If you write a check, make it to *LIFE* because that's exactly what we're giving. Father, I pray every person watching will move to the phone or online and make the gift you put on their heart. In Jesus' name. Thank you. Remember it is the last week in this emphasis right now to rescue life. Please help us.

Begin video clip:

Announcer: Human trafficking... it's hard to believe it is happening! But at this very moment innocent children, many very young are being sold and forced into sexual slavery and exploited in every way imaginable and someone must save them! With your support of mission rescue life you can help rescue more than 5,000 children from the horrors of the sex trade in parts of Thailand, India, Cambodia and other targeted nations. Together we can reach vulnerable families and children by providing much needed food and relief. We can rescue those already ensnared by offering them a way out and we can restore their hearts, minds and bodies to enable them to enjoy life as God intended. Your gift today of only \$128 will help rescue a child and change their life forever. And with gifts of \$64 or \$32 we will combine your gifts with others to help rescue one more child from the shame and pain of this lifestyle. As our way of saying thank you, please request "The Butterfly Effect," how your life matters. The story of this book reveals how you were specially created by God to make a difference and have the power to change the world. As a special challenge, please prayerfully consider a gift of \$1280 to help rescue ten children. With your gift be sure to request our beautiful new bronze sculpture, "Heart of the Father." This is the last week so please call, write, or make your gift online!

End of clip

In the studio:

James: If you can help us rescue ten of those precious girls and those precious children, the "Heart of the Father" bronze, it is a great, great collectible. Thank God for these artists who really dedicate themselves to helping us say thank you for helping us put God's arms of love around a broken world. Today, if you'd like to have Craig Groeschel's book "Weird," we'd be glad to send it to you. I promise you, it ain't weird,

it's great! But boy, it is inspirational. I called it one of those easy reads, Craig, you can go right through it. It is written to, I believe, touch the average person who is just saying, "Show me some help and give me some insight." It is absolutely fabulous. I found myself going through it, rapidly being inspired by the impact, just like you're talking to us. So we'll be glad to send it to you, you just help us rescue these precious lives. Would you join Betty and me in just saying thanks to Craig and to Amy? LifeChurch.TV. Check them out! We're going to talk to them again about how you can reach more people through your church by taking the opportunities that we've got today.

Announcer: Tomorrow, the founding pastor of LifeChurch.TV, a pace-setting, multi-campus church that is leveraging technology to change the world, shares his passion.