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Week 35: CS&S

Tammy Trent

Rachel Faulkner Brown

Studio discussion:

TAMMY: Hello, everybody. Welcome to *Life Today*. I'm Tammy Trent, and I'm so glad you're here. It's going to be a great day.

But, you know, maybe today you're holding something heavy. Maybe you've been hit by loss that took your breath away. Or you love someone who's walking through the deep ache of grief. You're showing up. You're doing your best to keep going. But underneath it all, you wonder how healing could ever reach this deep. That's where you are. I want to remind you that Jesus sees you. He sees the tears you've carried in the quiet. The moment you said, I can't believe this is my life. And the prayers you've whispered with no words left. He's not just near, he's working even in the waiting, even when it doesn't make sense. Because grief touches all of us eventually. And today's conversation is for anyone who has ever loved deeply and lost, or longed to know how to show up for someone who has. It's about faith in the sorrow, strength in the unknown, and the beauty of being met by a God who restores.

Rachel Falkner Brown is my guest today. She's someone who has lived through the unimaginable not just once but twice. She's here to share from her heart in her brand-new devotional, *Widow's Might*. So whether you're a widow or someone simply looking for strength in a hard season, I believe this message is going to bring comfort, connection, and real hope for your journey.

So welcome, Rachel Faulkner Brown, all the names. I've got them all in there. I'm so glad you're here.

RACHEL: Oh, my gosh, it's such an honor! Truly! Truly!

TAMMY: I've known your name for a long time. We talked about that earlier, kind of running in the same kind of circles. But, you know, the first question out of the box for me, or the first statement I should say is, is the realization that you and I, we both became widowed within five, six days of each other in 2001. So we have walked out a journey that many have walked out, that gosh, Rachel, through the years of my own loss, I've gotten hundreds of emails as I've talked and spoken at women's conferences, done the interviews, done the books, whatever, I'll get tons of emails from people that will say, I saw you speak at Women of Faith 15 years ago, and I just lost my husband now but it took me back to that conversation.

So I hope that today will be the same. That it's not a setup for loss, but I think giving people tools and the understanding, or someone that's walking through it right now that feels really stuck and hopeless. Take us back to where your story started.

RACHEL: Well, in 2001, where you and I both were, I mean, it was just a normal life. We had been college sweethearts. Todd and I had been together almost eight years, and he went to play a game of pickup basketball after church. I mean, we truly like that day, we had gone to eat barbecue, we had started talking about having our family, and, you know, three hours later, I get the phone call from a friend and she says, Rachel, Todd's been hurt. And I'm like, okay, I'll be right there. He probably twisted his ankle. You know, he was playing basketball, normal stuff. And I get there and, you know, our doctor friend who was there was doing CPR and I was like, oh, this is not -- this is not a broken ankle. This is not, you know, anything like that. And I went to the E.R., Tammy, and, like -- we drove down there and and there he was. I went back, and they came in and said, "Mrs. Foust, we did everything we could." And I thought, I heard that on shows. Not like this isn't happening to me. 27-year-old picture-of-health men do not die. So this was just so shocking because of who Todd was and because, you know, we were planning our future that morning. So I think the shock of loss, the way both of us lost, it makes it -- it's so discombobulating.

TAMMY: Yeah, when it comes out of nowhere, I think, you've often said like, I don't know which is worse, which is better, but there's something that happens when it happens like that.

I didn't get to say goodbye to Trent. He got in the water, he went for a dive, and I thought, he'll be back in 15 minutes, and he never came back. Like I didn't get to say goodbye. It's just gone. It's final. It's done with. And then becomes the healing.

So you got that news. So what did you do? How did the healing begin for you?

RACHEL: Yeah, it's so -- I didn't know what I was doing. I did what I knew to do, and that was really worship. And I would sit in my floor and I would listen to Fernando Ortega's "Give Me Jesus." I don't know if you remember that song. So Anne Graham Lotz had the book, *Give Me Jesus*. In the back it had a CD and she did like a spoken word and Fernando would sing, and I would wail. I would wail in my room just listening to that CD. I would sing at the top of my lungs. I would command my soul because I knew it was the only place I felt better. Because nobody was going to therapy. I don't know about you, but I mean, I didn't go to therapy for 11 years. I was just -- I woke up kind of fine, I didn't really struggle with depression. But for me, I knew that was the only place that felt safe. Isn't that crazy?

TAMMY: Has it always been a safe place for you? You were always like, were you quick to go to worship?

RACHEL: Absolutely! I think for me, you're either a word person or you're a worship person a lot of times, and I was a worship person. I mean, I'm both, but my number one is in the dark, that's what I do. I had a song after Blair died. I had a song after Todd died. It was just, I think for me, it was so comforting. Worship is comfort.

TAMMY: So you just said something there. You said after Blair died. So we just talked about Todd. So now you're saying this happened a second time? Can you transition in from as you are healing from Todd, as a young, in your mid-20s, you meet another love, get married and think this can't happen twice. I'm sure –

RACHEL: I said it out loud.

TAMMY: So were you ever fearful of like it could happen again? Or now I'm afraid of death? Did you ever have to deal with fear because of your first loss?

RACHEL: No, because I thought I've got the card. I mean, I have got the suffering card, right? I mean, I have done the hardest thing. The number one stressor for anyone is losing a spouse, and I was like, Jesus, I have paid the price. I think for me, I was like, well, I'm gonna get the pass for kind of the rest of my life. And that is not the gospel. In this world you will have trouble. And I think for me, I just thought, I've already had my trouble. I won't have any more.

TAMMY: Surely God won't give me something like that again.

RACHEL: Oh, yeah! I think at the end of the day, I knew whatever came my way, I could handle it. But I've already done the worst thing, so that will never happen again. And joked with Blair that that would never happen.

TAMMY: Yes! Well, okay. So tell me about that. What happened? Like how long in-between from your first loss did you have to walk that out by yourself? How many years?

RACHEL: Yes, it was two years in-between. I was 23, and I remarried again at 25. I was still just -- most people hadn't even married the first time by the time I got married the second time. Blair was ten years older, so he was 35. Loved the Lord. Was a fighter pilot in the Air Force. He wore a flight suit. I mean, come on!

TAMMY: Dreamy -- Top Gun!

RACHEL: I can't say that didn't have a big part in it. And he really loved the Lord, and I was just like, You need a wife. His in-laws were friends with my in-laws. It was really perfect. It was kind of meant to be. And so, we married and had just a beautiful life. Lived in New Orleans. He flew the A-10, which is the really dangerous jet, and he loved it, and I was selling pharmaceuticals. And we were living our best life just thinking, serving in our church and planning our family, again. I missed out on that the first time so I was like, all right, let's go.

TAMMY: Okay. So you had children with Blair?

RACHEL: Yeah. Two. Two children. He came home from Afghanistan. We had our first baby, and then our second little girl, we got blown out by Hurricane Katrina and we ended up in Columbus, Mississippi.

TAMMY: Okay. So tell me spiritually, where were you? Where were you and Blair, maybe even the last few months before he went to heaven. Where were you? Were you in a good spot? Were you in a great place together? Like, what did life really look like for you? You're carrying the loss of one. Did you feel like you were totally over that? And Todd moving into -- what? What was that? Paint a picture for us.

RACHEL: Well, the answer is yes and no. So spiritually for me personally, in November of 2007, I had this really interesting encounter in my car. I was in Columbus, Mississippi, and I felt like the Lord called my name. He invited me into this relationship that -- the only way I could describe it was he was inviting me to be -- he wanted to be my husband, which is so freaky. I was like, okay, how do you explain that to someone? But it was like, I want something more with you than we have right now. I called a friend. I called my friend Tina, and I said, "This just happened in my car." I didn't know anything about the manifest presence. I didn't know people who had encounters with God. I didn't know that language. And so I'm like, How do I put words around this thing that just happened to me? Because I feel like God's like inviting me. This was November 2007.

Blair goes, he ends up meeting with this mentor, and that mentor says, I will meet with you if you read the Hebrews Hall of Faith in Hebrews. And if you say, yes, that I will -- I will even surrender my job as a pilot for the cause of the gospel. Blair came home and he said, "Hey, Rachel. This is what this mentor said. I won't meet with you unless that happens. And I've got to really think about it." And I'm like, well, that's our insurance, that's your livelihood. I'm like the naysayer. I'm like, oh, come on, Jesus isn't asking us to give up the pilot job. And at the end of the day, Blair's like, I'm going to meet with him. And he died a week later.

TAMMY: He died a week later. So the surrender happened in his life, you're saying a week later. He's like, I surrender all. I give my whole life, everything I have to Jesus. Whatever he wants is his. I surrender it all. And one week later. How did you reconcile that?

RACHEL: Well, all I could think was what happened in November had something to do with this. Like, there is no doubt – oh, I've got chills. I mean. You know, the Lord was preparing me. I don't know how to say it any other way, but there was something more. I really thought it was about Blair's funeral. I thought, oh, his funeral, all these people are going to come to know Jesus at his funeral. I could have never known that it was so much bigger than just a one-day event -- your life, my life. I mean, God was writing a story that I could have never imagine, and honestly, probably didn't want to, let's be honest, in the moment. I mean, I just wanted God to be glorified at his funeral and my kids to be okay. I mean, let's be honest. And he was doing something so much more. But I know that I know, that I know that his funeral would not have been, and honestly, my life would not have been what it was without that surrender and without that encounter in November. Because it just cracked the door open that there was more to God.

TAMMY: Always more to God. All these encounters are life-changing. They're almost unexplainable sometimes. But you just, you know, you know that you know that it's God. But, you know, there might be someone that's also watching that feels like I've never had that encounter with God. I've never had that. I want it. I don't even know what it looks like. Maybe it's not for me. How does somebody find an encounter with God? Do you just say, okay, God, I surrender. I'm open to an encounter. How do you know it's an encounter from God? How did you know? But what would you say to someone that just feels like I'm ready for that? I just don't know how to get there.

RACHEL: It's as easy as sitting with quiet space, eyes closed, asking Jesus to bring up a joy-filled memory and see it, smell it, taste it, feel it, hear it, go through all your senses, and then invite Jesus into that memory. That's an encounter, and it changes everything. I mean, everything changes when you know, the definition of trauma is feeling alone, right, in your

pain. And that is what most people that go through life feel alone in their pain, and Jesus comes in and changes it. Changes the script.

TAMMY: I love that. I remember hearing you say that in an interview. I was like, for a widow myself, I thought, that is so good! It also helps me on days when I feel, maybe just a little stuck in the moment and I'm missing, and I'm just, maybe grief or just whatever still kind of just punches me. My loss, still after all these years, will, sometimes, I'm sitting at the top of my stairs and I'm just.

RACHEL: Yeah. Sad. Absolutely.

TAMMY: I'm -- just missing something so great. And I think it reminds me that even for any of us that feel the same kind of pain and loneliness, of just missing somebody knowing where you are, I think it brings you back in those moments. Instead of sitting at the top of my steps and sitting in it for too long because there's danger, I think, in sitting in it for too long, I give myself permission to be in it, to feel, to experience that encounter with God. I think that's the key -- allow yourself to feel. Be in it and expect an experience, an encounter with God. When you close your eyes and you do go, you think on something lovely, something that brings you joy, something that'll make you laugh. You think of a memory. I love that tool. It's a practical tool. Because I think also, if we go back and we also realize what God -- and we remember what God has pulled us through, what he's done in our life, exactly what he's done, everything he's given us, the joy, the hope, I think we're reminded of that. Then we believe he will do it again. I can expect more than this because of who God says he is in my life, my identity, and what he wants to do. Amen! And that's what you've done. That's what I love about -- you know, you say also that, I love this, that pain is a superpower. How can pain be a superpower? Because people feel like, uh-huh! That is not my superpower because it hurts so much.

RACHEL: Well, I remember being in Israel in 2019, and I will never forget the bus driver saying, The crops only grow in the valley. I thought, oh my goodness! Is that not true? The fruit is grown, the fruit of our lives is grown in the valley. It's not on the mountain. Right? On the mountain, you get to look out and see what God has done. Yes, it's beautiful, but you don't learn

on the mountain. You learn in the valley. And I think for me, I've told my kids this their whole life, I'm like, your pain will be your superpower because you know things that other children do not know. I hate that every day, Tammy. I hate it. I loathe it. And at the same time, it's made them, it's made me, it's made you, it's made everybody listening, I hate to say it, but you don't learn in the good times, you learn in the pain. You can either let it defeat you or you can let it empower you. There's two choices.

TAMMY: There's always two choices, I think. Don't you think? What do you think is the most important moment or piece of recovery from grief?

RACHEL: Wow! That's a great question. I think the moment is when you hit rock bottom, what you decide to do in that place. Because you can stay there or you can ask for help. And I believe more than anything else, because I've seen it time and time again in our groups across the country, but you cannot heal outside of community. You cannot heal outside community, whether that's with a therapist. I believe it's more than just a therapist. I believe there's so much more than just talking behind a closed door to someone who knows how to talk to you. And I think there's the telling, confess your sins one to another so that you might be healed. Not that grief is a sin by any means, but that confession, Jesus did the work, but we have a part in it, right? In that confessing, I'm struggling. I'm struggling. I need help, it like, literally unlocks your whole life.

TAMMY: Totally. And I think you said it there, Community. The opposite of community would be isolation. We cannot isolate. So, if you're watching today, I pray -- I pray that there was something in this quick amount of time that we spoke about grief and about loss that there was a takeaway for you. Maybe it's just that sitting at the top of your steps today and asking God to have an encounter with him. Just do something in my heart today, Jesus. Like, stir something. I don't want to be stuck here. I don't want to carry this. Or I'm always living in fear of loss.

I think God wants to do a work in your *Life Today*. I pray that this has been a blessing to you. But don't isolate, find community, whatever that looks like for you. But just keep moving.

Just keep moving. Set yourself up for success. Set that alarm every day and wake up and put your feet on the ground, and say, I did it! I got through another day. I'm here. What do we do now with this day, Jesus? With this day, with this moment? God has got great plans for you and a great purpose for your life. This is not the end of your story. So start living. Start living big.

And I'm telling you right now, there's some incredible children that I got to meet in Central America not too long ago, and we were really living. We were having the best time together because I got to go over there with Life Outreach and I got to give them some Christmas shoes. It was so exciting for me.

So this is our campaign of Christmas shoes and smiles. Take a moment, watch this, and we'll come out on the other side, and I'll wrap things up with Rachel.

Transition roll-in: [More Than Shoes]

TAMMY: These are tough conditions. These people are living in absolute poverty. I'm sure it is hard to provide for your family. I don't know what they have. I don't know what their need is. But I love that I don't have to figure it out, God just sends us. He sends us, and he says, Show up.

It's what I do love about *LIFE Outreach*. For the many years that I've traveled with them around the world, wherever we see a need, we just jump in. Whatever it looks like, we're thinking of kingdom-minded things. We're thinking of saving a life, but saving their very life, their soul. To me, that's the gospel, what it's all about -- spreading the love of Jesus Christ and sharing the good news of Jesus.

You know, James and Betty started this *Christmas Shoes and Smiles* years ago. I think their heart was absolutely about just showing the love of God, especially to these children all around the world. And it's so, so wonderful. The joy they feel getting something brand-new! Gosh, it just could change everything for you! Oh, my goodness, baby, you need -- you need these shoes.

These shoes that protect their feet will keep them from danger, will keep them from infection, from injury, from hookworm that ultimately could lead to death. This is an important need right now all around the world.

So if you've given before, thank you so much. If you've never had a chance to give to this ministry, this part of it, *Christmas Shoes and Smiles*, then I would encourage you to make the best gift you possibly could. We want to keep putting shoes on children all around the world. We want to do it all. It's been a great year, it's been an incredible year of ministry, whether it's been water, whether it's been food, or whether it's been shoes. Right here, we're so blessed to do kingdom things. And together, we are changing the lives of people all around the world. We couldn't do it without you. We love you, we appreciate you. Thank you so much!

Studio appeal:

TAMMY: Honestly, I'm sitting here, feeling emotional. Sometimes, because of the joy that I feel. I can't stop smiling every time I watch our Christmas Shoes and Smiles campaign. It's one of my favorite outreaches we do here at *Life Today*. Why? It's because there's so much joy that's wrapped in the gift of a brand-new pair of shoes, especially when I get to sit down and personally put them on the feet of these precious children all around the world.

And another highlight for me is always praying with the families. They had so many needs when I was there. I remember that. Just so many, so many asking, and can you help? And just being in those spaces, just wanting to pray with them. Yet, they were so grateful. We simply just showed up and gave everything we could to lighten their load. And right there, in those sacred moments of prayer, listening to their hearts, it made the simple act of placing a pair of shoes on a child's feet feel even more powerful. Because you realize this isn't just about shoes, it's about hope.

But it's also about saying this, when you're kneeling down to put shoes on a child's feet and you notice an injury or an infection, it hits hard. My heart always aches in those moments because I know how dangerous it can be to walk around barefoot in those places with broken glass, nails, disease, parasites.

I remember one Christmas Shoes and Smiles trip that we did where we put shoes on hundreds of children, and afterwards, those kids said, hey, do you want to come and see our playground? Well, you know you didn't have to ask me twice. I'm all about the kids. I want to play with the kids. I want to be with them. So we raced behind a broken-down home and I stopped in my tracks. Their playground was a junkyard. And suddenly, some of the injuries I'd seen earlier made sense to me. I felt it then, and I'm feeling it again right now that we have to get more shoes out of there. We've got to move on this. We have to do whatever it takes, because this is a simple need that doesn't cost much to meet, but it could cost so much if we don't. It could cost a child their health or even worse, their lives.

So here's what that would look like right now if you can help. To manufacture and deliver the shoes, it costs \$3.60 a pair. That means your gift today of \$36 will help provide ten children with their very first pair of shoes, \$72 will provide 20, and \$180 will help us secure and ship Christmas shoes for 50 children just in time for the holidays.

And on top of that, we're also seeking to provide much needed cleft lip and cleft palate surgeries for children around the world. So would you consider giving \$500 to help provide a child with a corrective surgery and give them a brand-new smile? Or maybe \$1,000 to help change the lives of two children for the rest of their lives? If that's you, and I believe it is, come on, we can do this together. Go online or call today with your gift. Because every day without shoes is a day that a child is at risk. Let's make this Christmas unforgettable by spreading the love of Jesus one pair of shoes and one beautiful smile at a time.

CS&S Cause 2025:

ANNOUNCER: *Poverty is a killer, and because of it, children needlessly suffer not only from lack of food and clean water, but also from a lack of things we take for granted, such as a healthy smile or a protective pair of shoes.*

Far too many children living in extreme poverty have never owned a pair of shoes. And while that may seem minor, walking with bare feet puts them at risk of painful infections, injury, and life-threatening diseases.

But this Christmas, you can bring hope and healing. Your gift today will help provide new shoes for 150,000 children in time for the holidays. And for some children, a beautiful new smile. Your gift of \$36 will help provide shoes for ten children, \$72 will help provide for 20, \$180 will help provide shoes for 50, and a gift of \$500 will help provide a cleft surgery, restoring a child's smile forever.

As a thank you for your gift of support, be sure to request the beautifully crafted yellow crystal shoe ornament, a treasure to display each Christmas. With your gift of \$100 or more, you may request this keepsake set featuring four of LIFE's colorful crystal shoe ornaments. Finally, please consider a gift of \$1,000 or more to help provide over 275 pairs of shoes or two children with corrective smile surgeries, and you may request the beautiful bronze sculpture, "Lion of Judah."

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

Studio good-bye:

TAMMY: I hope you're going online and giving the best gift that you can give. You must know it will make an eternal impact on the lives of so many right now today.

Rachel, I have truly, truly loved my time with you. It's been a long time coming for us girls to just sit down. I'm already crying again, but just to have a really good conversation; it went really, really fast. But we've been through it, and God is going to take us a long way still,

because we've got a lot still to talk about. And you have incredible ministries that you're doing. Tell us where people can find you.

RACHEL: Well, NeverAloneWidows.com is where they can get connected in groups for community. Come to our conference. Come to retreats. And then through the book, obviously, you can find the book there or on Amazon.com.

TAMMY: Make sure to go pick up a copy of *Widow's Might*. It will bless you so much. Thank you so much for being here. I love you, I appreciate you.

I love you, and I appreciate you guys. Thank you for watching. We'll see you next time on *Life Today*.