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Week 44: Mission: Rescue Life, Last week

Jonathon Seidl

Randy Robison & Tammy Trent

Studio discussion:

RANDY: Welcome to *Life Today*. I'm Randy Robison. This is Tammy Trent.

TAMMY: Hello!

RANDY: Do you enjoy pain? That's an odd question. That's a bad way to start a show, isn't it?

TAMMY: How do I answer? Pain? Do I enjoy pain? No, I hate it. You know, pain is like, what kind? Like a heartbreak kind of pain? Hate it. You want to stick a needle in me and draw my blood? Hate it. So, no, I don't like any pain.

RANDY: We don't. None of us like pain. You know, there's two ways we can go with that. One's good, one's not bad, but one's easy and one's hard. We're going to talk about that today. Our guest is Jonathan Seidl. He's the author of a book just out called, *Confessions of a Christian Alcoholic*. Jon joins us to explain a bit of that and talk about the pain. Welcome!

JONATHON: Randy, thank you so much. It's great to be back here again. A lot has changed since I was here last time.

RANDY: Well, okay. That's one of the questions because the last time we had you on the program and then this.

JONATHON: Yeah, right! And so last time, I'm talking about mental health and faith, and it's a great conversation. I kind of joke that that was part one of my story. I didn't realize that was part one. Then, I wrote that book. I had encountered a lot of hard times in life. And then I

encountered even, the greatest, hardship of my life. I thought I was prepared for it and I wasn't. That's in a sense why we have this book.

RANDY: Walk us through some of that.

JONATHON: Yeah. I think it's interesting. You write a book, and I think a lot of people think, oh, my gosh! It's like the greatest experience in the world. It is a great experience. Right. But you pour out so much of yourself into a book. I had a friend who had written a couple of books and he said, Hey, you need to be careful. You're going to publish a book, and no matter what, you're going to feel a little let down. Sure enough! The book comes out, and you have great conversations, but I realized I also had unmet expectations. You know? That was really the first time the devil then started using -- he used that to whisper lies. Lies and things that went back to even childhood. That was the first domino to fall.

The second domino was I had a business at the time where I was doing some consulting work, and I had secured an amazing consulting client. And then two weeks before Christmas, they come and they say, Hey, we're going in a different direction. I'm like, I have no -- I have no other client. Like what?

Then you fast forward to the spring, and my son, four-years-old at the time, he starts just limping around. We take him to the doctor, and, it's kind of one of those, the initial appointment is he's fine. My wife's mama-intuition says, No, he's not fine. It's kind of like before you know it, you're at Children's Hospital and you're meeting with an oncologist and they're like, he's got a bone tumor. While that did end up being benign, it was that process and finding out. So I tell people it was a slow fade. How many times have we said it or heard people say, oh man, I could really use a drink, right? That turned into one, and two, and five, and ten.

It just slowly stacked up until May 2023. My wife and I go down to Miami, our anniversary is around Memorial Day weekend. And so, we always kind of have a three-day weekend built in. We go down and, she has this night where she says, "Hey, I just kind of want a night in. She's a reader, you know? She's like, Go do whatever you want. I was like, no, I was never a party

drinker. I need a drink to escape. What I would come to find out later is that ultimately, my addiction is not to alcohol, but it's to escapism, right? So that night, I say, I'm just going to go down to the hotel bar. There is a NBA playoff game. She looks at me because by now it's starting -- I think I'm hiding it really well. She still didn't know the full extent but she's starting to realize it. She looks at me as I'm leaving the hotel room and she says, "Don't get drunk." I said, "I'm not going to get drunk." I was not planning on getting drunk.

I go down to the hotel bar and the first drink turns into, I don't know how many. By one a.m. I am just drunk. I'm like, I cannot go back. So I stumbled down to South Beach, Miami. It's so interesting. I tell people, you don't realize how busy South Beach Miami is at one in the morning. All kinds of people –

TAMMY: I was going to say you blended right in.

JONATHON: Yeah, doing all doing all kinds of things. I get down there and pretty soon after drinking so much, I have to go to the bathroom. Drunk Jon says, Well, you've got the world's biggest toilet in front of you. So, I wade in with all my clothes on. I start going to the bathroom. I'm neck deep I just have this moment of like -- I look up and it's like, what has your life become? That next day my wife asked me about it. I say it's kind of my Peter moment. I lie to her three times. Finally at dinner that night, I say -- I mean, I am just a wreck. I say, Hey, babe. I've gotta let you know. I did get drunk last night. She breaks down and she goes, I don't think you know what that does to a woman, so easily, so quickly. Like what else could you be lying about?

I start making, you know, we pay our dinner bill, we walk down to the beach, and I'm making all the promises, I'm never going to drink again, I know I need help, like something's wrong. She looks at me and she says, "Jon, I don't care if you never drink again. That's not my goal. If you never have another drop of alcohol, whatever. I need you to get to the root of why you're drinking the way you do. Why you're turning to this. Because even if you never drink again and you don't do that," she's like, "it's just going to be something else."

I kind of am like, Can we go back to the not drinking part? Like, that would be easier. Because there was traumas from my childhood, things that had happened to me growing up, and just stuff that I never dealt with and didn't want to deal with. But I looked at her and I said, Okay. I pulled up a Christian trauma therapist that we had been talking about. I literally typed in, I include this in the book the actual email that I sent. I typed it up and say, "Hey, I think I got some issues that I need to work through. I'm coming back from Miami. When can I see you?" That started the healing process.

RANDY: So what your wife said has so much insight that I don't want people to miss it. Because, when I opened talking about pain, we don't like pain. We all like to escape the pain somehow. But in a lot of arenas, even in church arenas, we go for the behavior modification. Right? And then we become people who, well, we don't do those things that are destructive. And so we go, Oh! Well, it's good. But that root --

JONATHON: It's so important! I think that's why I even I say this to people, and some people look at me weird. People who come to me with a problem and they're like, I need to stop drinking. I'm like, Okay. We talk, and then finally I'm like, I don't want you to be sober. The goal is Jesus. Because when the goal is Jesus, that's when he can heal and root out -- You know, I talk about the parts of ourselves in the book. If you think about it, we're all made up of different parts. It's kind of like that movie, *Inside Out*. It's like there are parts of ourselves that we give to Jesus. The healthy parts of me wrote a bestselling book on faith and mental health, and that was great. But then there were these other parts of myself that Satan started whispering to me about, starting in the Fall of 2021. Those parts, I'm not talking about that! I'm keeping that hidden and buried. Those are the parts that you drink away. I knew that if I was finally going to get it to the point where I knew it needed to be, I needed to do something different. It wasn't just getting sober. It was inviting Jesus into those parts of myself that I had hidden and buried. Once I invited him into those parts, that's when I got sobriety thrown in.

RANDY: It's easy.

JONATHON: It's like it's like the C.S. Lewis quote. I love C.S. Lewis; I named my son after him. In *Mere Christianity*, he says, "Aim for heaven and you'll get the earth thrown in." Aim for Jesus, you'll get sobriety thrown in. So many times, we aim for sobriety, and it's like, maybe you white-knuckle it for a little bit. I met a guy last week, 22 years he white-knuckled sobriety. And then, when he couldn't white-knuckle it anymore, it led to 17 years of pain of going back to the bottle. When I speak on this, I ask the audience and say, Who here knows a miserable sober person? They bus AA groups and people in, to hear me talking, and they raise their hands. I'm like, great! Guess what? The world applauds them. The world says, as long as you're sober, it's good, right? The message that I'm trying to bring to people now is, I don't want you just sober. I want you having the most fulfilled, flourishing life that then sobriety can't help but be there. So aim for Jesus, you'll get sobriety thrown in. Aim for heaven and you'll get the earth thrown in.

TAMMY: You talk about root, okay, and you getting to the root. Were you always aware that there is something here, and I'm trying to escape it? Because I think that there are people that also feel like, do I have a root problem? I've had things in my own life. I've written a new book, and in part of it, I even go through some things. I talked about walking into my marriage, not realizing I had a root problem in this area of my life, and it affected the early years of my marriage because I was unaware that I had a root problem.

So how was yours? I mean, did you always feel like you had one, or did you have to find it? Like, let me dig through all of this to find, there it is. Now, I can address it.

JONATHON: Yeah. So I think it's a both/and, right? I'm sure in the early parts of your marriage, there were little triggers. There were little hints of it. Right? Maybe your husband would say something, or something would happen, and you just start reacting a certain way, right? Now, that's a hint that there's something below the surface. But so many times, we treat the symptom. So for me, it's like I knew I was getting those little indicators, but I would always, in a sense, treat those symptoms. And listen, symptom treatment can work. It can work. But then, when you hit the hardest point in your life, when all those things start going -- when, after 13 years of marriage, it's like you can't just live off of the feeling of the wedding vows. For

some people, that takes six years, and for some it's 26, right? Like, you start realizing, oh, my goodness! There is something bigger and deeper here.

And so, for me, I started finally paying attention to some of those things and realizing, there's something greater here. I've tried this way to deal with it, I've tried this way to deal with it. I've gone to therapy and counseling. Do you know what I mean? It's like, this keeps coming up. Things keep happening. I'm still trying to, this conversation leads to me feeling this way, and then it's just real easy to be like, I just want to have a drink. That's a lot easier than trying to be like, Let me sit with this for a second.

TAMMY: I noticed that with this. I won't to escape it. I don't want a solution. I don't want to fix it. I'm upset. I'm offended. I'm just done. Give me a drink. Yeah, and that's probably where you were. You found yourself every single time. I love that you broke free, brother. Yeah. Love it. Do you still struggle?

JONATHON: Yes and no. Right? There are some people who miraculously, they never have a --they smell alcohol and it probably makes them want to throw up. Praise God for that. But because my ultimate addiction is really to escapism, it's like this side of heaven, I don't think that's ever going away. I'll have a tough conversation with my wife, I'll have a tough season with my kids. And it's like, yeah, I want to escape that. Do you know what I mean? And guess what? Alcohol is a cheap, easy way to do that. I'm not the first person to say that. It's like alcohol isn't my problem. Alcohol was the solution to my problems.

RANDY: And then it becomes a problem.

JONATHON: Exactly! Exactly! And then there's physical. I would always play the comparison game and say, Well, I'm not acting like this, or I'm not feeling this way. Then you stop drinking. You're like, oh, just because I didn't have the shakes? I guess I did have some alcohol withdrawal symptoms. So the physical aspect kicks in. But so, in that sense, I still struggle. It's not that I'm sitting here thinking, I could really go for a drink right now, but the escapism.

RANDY: Do you have a yard?

JONATHON: Yeah.

RANDY: Do you mow your yard?

JONATHON: Yeah.

RANDY: Do you have weeds?

JONATHON: Yes.

RANDY: Did you know, perhaps you know this, I discovered this years ago. If you mow often enough, the weeds will look okay. Your neighbors won't file a complaint against you.

JONATHON: It just looks like the grass.

RANDY: But until you get -- I asked a guy who had a nice yard one time. How do you have such a nice yard? And he's like, no, you got to get the weeds out by the roots! But that's hard work. What I hear you saying, and tell me if I'm hearing you right, is that no matter what the issue is, if you're just mowing the yard, you're just surfacing it, it's always going to come back. You've got to get the root. Am I hearing you right?

JONATHON: 100%! Absolutely. There's a whole chapter in the book called, "Root Versus Fruit." Right And so, are you going to get to the root, right? Because the easy way is to just mow it. Sometimes, you can even just get weed killer. Right? But you really need that stuff that again, gets down to the root.

RANDY: You do. You do. I know that for me and it's frustrating. Yeah, you've got to get to it.

TAMMY: And there are a lot of people, don't you think, Randy and Jon, that are struggling with something. Your book, when I think about this, is it just for somebody struggling with alcoholism? Who'd you write it for? Is it for maybe a family that they're watching someone struggle with some kind of escapism and this would help them to understand? Or is it really just for the person that needs to find breakthrough in their life?

JONATHON: So, it's definitely for all of those. So, obviously, the person who finds themselves struggling with alcohol. But I also talk to people who's like, you may think, oh, I don't think my relationship with alcohol is bad, right?

TAMMY: It's not the worst sin.

JONATHON: I would encourage you to read chapter two in the book. I'm not out here -- it's funny, I had someone who didn't like the book -- shocker! Say, "You're just trying to convince everyone that they're an alcoholic and you don't want anyone to drink."

I said, "Neither of those things is true." Right? But here's what people don't understand.

Anything that is misordered in your life is disordered, right? So, especially as Christians, it is not about quantity. Even the world right now changed the definition of alcoholism in 2013 and how they diagnose it. It's not about quantity. Quantity is a factor, but it's one of many factors.

Right? So what I tell people is, if you want to try to figure out if there's something misordered in your life, or you keep butting up against certain things in your life like this, the book is going to help you, right? It's going to help as well the family members who want to understand it. It's

Confessions of a Christian Alcoholic, but alcoholism is just the vehicle for any of those misordered/disordered things in our life. So maybe it's confession of a Christian scroller, right?

Someone that's always on the phone. Or your issue is food, or work, or your kids, or your spouse. This one, your ministry! How many pastors are out there that even their wives will joke, He's married to the church. Right? We think, oh, well, that's an okay one. That's an okay one. Yeah. Right. But again, anything that is misordered is disordered.

RANDY: That's true. So, when you talk about getting to the root it's interesting because that's what we try to do in our mission outreaches. Because there are a lot of great things we can do to help people, and we've seen some success. But Tammy, we know it's a spiritual root.

TAMMY: It is, Randy, and we have had the privilege to be able to go into some incredibly dark places. But seeing the light of Jesus just push through it all and bring life to these children especially. I just came back from Southeast Asia and I cannot tell you how life-changing a trip like that is for me, but I cannot express how much we need you to come alongside us to continue this great and mighty life-changing work of God all around the world.

Please take a minute and watch this. Carefully watch this, and then we'll come out on the other side to wrap it up with Jon.

Transition roll-in: [Safe Room]

ANNOUNCER: *Children should be protected, nurtured, and be able to live in a safe environment. But there is a dark and evil presence that shatters that reality for literally millions of children. It's called "sex trafficking."*

DAVID: These are kids that are forced to work all sorts of hours of the night and day. These are kids that have been forced to have sex with people. They're being abused and they're being photographed and doing things that no child should ever have to do.

ANNOUNCER: *To combat this evil force, Life Outreach has partnered with ministries who are committed to reaching, rescuing, and restoring the lives of children and young girls who have been trafficked.*

Recently, Tammy Trent and John Yates visited our beautiful LIFE Center in Southeast Asia. It is a safe haven for children, many of whom have suffered at the hands of child predators. Our team had a chance to play with the children and to join them in their praise and worship. While

at our LIFE Center, John and Tammy learned how the healing process begins for children who have suffered the horrors of being trafficked.

JOHN: So, as you can see over my shoulder, Tammy is in a room with a caregiver and a child. But this is not just any room. This is a very special room for children who have suffered the trauma of child sex trafficking. These children are brought into this safe place where they will be able to tell their stories to a therapist who has built trust over weeks of periods of time. Those children's stories will be able to be utilized to bring justice inside of a trauma that no child should ever have to face.

Because of your generosity, we've been able to build some of the most state-of-the-art facilities that are tools in the hands of missionaries to bring healing and hope, and restoration to the heart of a child who has suffered in a way that no human should ever have to suffer.

ANNOUNCER: *There are thousands of children who are suffering right now at the hands of sex predators, and we need your help to continue our work of reaching, rescuing, and restoring the lives of these precious ones.*

Studio discussion:

RANDY: It's an amazing outreach, an amazing work, and it's only possible because of viewers like you. But, Tammy, I want to ask you, what's it like to sit with a child that you know that has been so abused?

TAMMY: Gosh, Randy, when I watch these stories back, of course, we said it, it takes me right back there. I remember being in that room with that little girl. It is such an interesting emotional feeling that I get. It's almost sometimes of anger, to be honest with you, of just like, who did this to you? Who did this to you? And you see the innocence of this precious little girl you saw in that room where I just got to play with her for the longest time, and we had shells and sand in that box.

But to see her coming back to life again because of the atmosphere that she was in, of healing, safety, protection, it's a hard place for me to be because I cannot believe, and I'm so upset that they're even there. But I know how effective this ministry is, and I know that it is turning things around. So in that sense, I can sort of, I'm carrying tension with me so I can feel the hope and I know it's real.

RANDY: The reality is, we know who does this to children, ultimately, on a spiritual level. This is straight out of the pit of hell. My question is, who's going to restore them? We know the answer is Jesus Christ. But, it's interesting because God always sends his people to do his work on this earth. That's what this outreach is. For those that we can prevent them from ever being in position, like that little girl is, we want to reach them. For those that are in that situation, we want to rescue them. And for those like this young girl, that have been horribly, horribly traumatized, we want to restore them. That is the work of Rescue Life. That work only takes place when you join us. A gift of \$128 right now will help start that process of reaching, rescuing, or restoring that child. Some of you can reach ten children, maybe even many more. All of you can be a part of completing this beautiful facility that we want to raise there in Southeast Asia to house more of these, mainly girls, but some boys too.

This is the last week we'll be on the air talking about this. So please, will you join with us right now to build something special? I'm a father. I'm now a grandfather of a little girl. I would do anything. Anything to get one of my children out of that situation, to restore them. Anything! And I'm just a human father. God's a good Father. He wants to restore them, but he wants you to be a part of it. So please, go online, go to the phone, make the best gift you can. We can rescue these children. We can show them the love of God. They can be restored. Do it today.

RL Cause Spot – 2025 Fall, Last week

ANNOUNCER: *Innocent children, longing to be loved and cared for, are being abducted and sold into the evil industry of human trafficking. Through Mission: Rescue Life, your gift today of only \$128 will help reach, rescue, or restore a child and change their destiny forever. Gifts of*

\$64 or \$32 will be combined with support from others to help rescue one more child from the shame and pain of sexual slavery.

Currently, our LIFE rescue centers in Southeast Asia are at maximum capacity. More space is urgently needed, and we must complete and renovate a new rescue home immediately. Please consider a very special extra gift as we urgently need \$1.25 million above our normal budget to complete and renovate this place of hope.

With a gift of any amount, we'll send you Power, Provision and Peace: Bringing together the life-changing truths of Acts, Romans, and First and Second Corinthians in the Passion Translation. These books come alive with fresh revelation and timeless power. With your gift of \$128 or more, you'll receive the beautiful and soft "Perfect Peace Blanket," bearing the words of Isaiah 26:3 as a meaningful reminder that those who trust in the Lord are never alone. Finally, please consider a gift of \$1,280, which will help save ten children, and you may request our inspiring bronze sculpture, "Lion of Judah."

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

Studio goodbye:

RANDY: We do appreciate your support because we desperately need your support. This is the last week we'll be on the air talking about it. By the way, if you want someone to pray with you, whatever it is that you haven't gotten to the root of, we have a prayer line that's for you. Because yes, we care about people in desperate need around the world. We care about you as well. So feel free to call that number. Someone will gladly pray with you.

It's been such a good conversation.

TAMMY: It is a good conversation! Jon, thank you so much for being here and for confessing. I love it! I love the book. Where can people find it? Where can they find you?

JONATHON: Yeah, that confessing aspect, there's four steps that I took to break free and that's one of them. So they can go to see the book and the podcast and all that stuff. They can go to ChristianAlcoholic.com. ChristianAlcoholic.com made it easy.

TAMMY: So you're at home privately, like googling. I love it! You've been a blessing to us today. Thank you so much for being here. And thank you for being here. We'll see you next time on *Life Today*. Bye-bye!