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Week 49: FMF

James & Betty Robison

Billy Wilson

Studio discussion:

JAMES: Well, I'm excited about today. I'm excited about every day because Jesus is Lord of every day. I'm James Robison. Betty and I welcome you to *Life Today*. I'm excited because I've got a guest; I just have to call him Billy, Billy Wilson. Billy Graham let everybody call him Billy. Well, this is Dr. Billy Wilson. He's the president now of Oral Roberts University. I got to be real close to Oral, which was quite an amazing thing for a Baptist to really become so close to a Pentecostal that even the Pentecostals were criticizing. Everybody's criticizing. His Methodist family criticized and Baptists are good at criticizing everybody. I went to Oral to ask him to forgive me, and he started crying. I said, "I think God told me, you've been lonely, Oral." He said, "You don't know how lonely." I said, "Well, I'm going to help change that." By the time I started helping change it, this guy right here, Dr. Billy Wilson, somehow, not too long after all of that, you and I met. What was the name of the organization you were heading up that was impacting the country?

BILLY: It was a group called the Awakening America Alliance, when we really started connecting a lot, James.

JAMES: And boy, that was beautiful. So we started working together. And then when I found that you were called to Oral Roberts University, I jumped in. I knew you needed money, and I didn't have any problem trying to work along with and encourage Hobby Lobby and David Green and his family, and they appreciated that. It was just amazing to watch it.

What you and I have watched is God bring his family together in ways we never imagined. I'm praying God will use us as we talk about the *Father Cry*. I didn't know you had such a bad father situation and fatherless situation, so to speak, in your family, as I did my whole journey.

But there is a tremendous father hole in this country. I don't know if there's a bigger problem in the country than fathers not being anything like the Father; not being the kind of fathers we desperately need. Would you agree with that?

BILLY: I agree, yeah. I mean, even sociologists say that fatherlessness is one of the great issues of America. Maybe the number one issue in America is fatherlessness.

JAMES: And I think it is.

BILLY: And even in the church, James, you know, we need spiritual fathers and mothers. I think the lack of spiritual fathers in the church is also a critical issue that I talk about in the book.

JAMES: No question. And you are so gifted. Betty, you've seen the journey with me. I've said that you did more to change my life than even any of the preachers or people I know; you're the greatest force of my life apart from the Holy Spirit. But the fatherlessness you've seen, well, you could agree, it's as serious as any problem.

BETTY: It's so serious. And to me, the father is such a part of the foundation of the family, along with the mother. So many times they're not there in the home, and the mother has the responsibility of raising the family the best way she can. But, you know, you were talking earlier about the different denominations and stuff. And, you know, I was sitting here thinking, we're all God's children. We're all his family. We're the ones that put tags and names on people and causes the separation. But we should realize that. I think we've come a long way.

BILLY: We've come a long way, Betty. Again, what the Holy Spirit's doing is bringing us, lifting us above our divisions into what I call "relational unity." Jesus' prayer to his Father was that they would be one, as he and the Father are one, which is relationship first, mission second, and then through the power of the Holy Spirit. But really, God's raising us to a relational connection. What happened to me, Betty, I was born into a preacher's home. At the age of five, my dad was a supervisor in the denomination he was serving in at that time in West Virginia.

He walked in one day and told my mom goodbye. My mom and my two sisters had to move out of the state parsonage within two weeks. So we moved to Kentucky with my grandparents on my mom's side. For 15 years then my parents were apart. They separated. They got divorced. Dad made a mess out of things, and mom backslid as well. They both got bitter, angry. I grew up with my dad being public enemy number one in my life in many ways. I had all the attributes as a young teenager of someone that doesn't have a father. I was looking for love. I was looking in the wrong places. I was a leader, but I led people in the wrong direction until I met Jesus. And then, God radically changed my life, and along the way began to radically change my dad's life again. He came back to the Lord. He actually got back into the ministry. God began to talk to me that if he could forgive me of my mess, couldn't I forgive my dad of his mess? And began to restore our relationship. Then miraculously, after 15 years apart, my mom got her heart right with God, got in a car in Kentucky, drove way down in Florida where my dad was trying to plant a church, knocked on the door of the trailer he was living in and said, "Alva, I need you to forgive me." He said, "No, I need you to forgive me." And two weeks later, they were married again after 15 years apart. And for the last 35 years of my dad's life, he was in full time ministry.

The book is really about, James, what I found in my own heart of crying for a father longing to have a dad present. And then what I have heard in this generation of a cry for both physical, real fathers in the home, but also spiritual fathers. The cry of a generation for someone to be there for them, to mentor them, and to be someone they can depend on. So I sort of correlate my own journey and my cry out for my father, our restored relationship and how our relationship with our Heavenly Father gets restored. God, ultimately, brought my dad and I together. Just as he brought Mom and Dad together, He brought our family together. Healed my heart, which was a work of the Holy Spirit, and helped me realize along the way that God is my true heavenly Father and that God will not forsake us. I had a problem, and James, I know you probably had the same kind of problems without a father of trust issues, and also of being a good father myself, and understanding what it takes to do that.

JAMES: Who do you admire close to you? Who do you seek to be like because you've been inspired by who they are and what they do? They just weren't there. And it was a big hole in my life.

BILLY: I had a grandfather, and he was a provider, but it just wasn't the same as a dad. It's just not the same. And so, I had to find God as my Father, which was actually awesome. Then my trust issues, I had to realize that God is my Father would not be exactly like my earthly father. He wouldn't leave when it got tough. He wouldn't leave when it was difficult. He would stay with me. And when I was being blessed, he wouldn't pull the rug out from under me. He really loved me enough to keep blessing me, which has been an amazing discovery in my adult life. And God healed my heart, and he healed our family. By the time my dad passed away, he was my number one friend in the world and my best cheerleader. We were together in Jesus; it was amazing.

JAMES: I never got to say that about my real father, who raped my mother and got her pregnant, and came back into our life later when I was a teenager. Somehow, my mother let him stay around. He turned our life into literal hell, and then tried to kill my mother. I was 14 years old, he told me he was going to kill me. He didn't know I had bought a rifle. I went and got it and pointed it at him. And if he had moved, I would have killed him. I told him that. I said, "If you move a finger, I'm going to blow a hole in you." Thank God he didn't. And I called an operator and told them to get the police here quick. They came. Within ten minutes they had him arrested; prison seven years. Never knew him. I did witness to him. I did tell him I never knew, but I loved you. Betty and I, we couldn't let him come in our mobile home we were living in, a trailer 50-foot-wide trailer. We put a chair outside and he slept in it. I couldn't trust him in my house with my wife and my daughter. But the point is that I said, I don't know you but I love you. I did my best to help him, but I never saw a change.

But I'm telling you, those were big holes in my heart. I see the whole nation with that father hole. Here's what I want to say to all of you. Please hear this. I began to glimpse him in people, but I actually met him through Jesus, and really through the witness of just this woman that was my wife loving Jesus so much I could see the Father in her. And she didn't have a perfect father,

but she knew that one. Anyway, we just began to grow. But boy, her influence on me, it's amazing how a woman can fill some of the holes where the man didn't fill them.

But here's the thing. This Father cries the cry of the nation. Let me let me say to all you women, God bless you. Just pray that God will make the man that you love and perhaps married, God, I'm praying that right now, do something in his heart to make him want to love and lead the way you want us to love and lead, in Jesus' name.

Look, ask the Father to become your father through Jesus. This Father can teach us how to be a father. I'm really seeking to spend the rest of my life, and I know you are, you're the president of Oral Roberts University. You're already impacting thousands of students. I really believe that you are sowing seeds there at Oral Roberts that Oral and I prayed before he left. He wanted that school to become greater than he ever imagined. He talked about how much he missed the fellowship with the family because of the way denominations separate.

I wish we could learn this, and I'm going to try to help the church see this. We can have serious disagreements in life, serious disagreements in marriage, serious disagreements in our family and in the church, and not get a divorce, or not amputate, or hurt one another. We don't need to do that. I mean, we can be convinced we're right, they're wrong. But we're all wrong and he's always right, and he loves us with perfect love, even when we're wrong. We can learn to pour that love out on others, and I've learned to do it.

Billy, I know you have. We, as fathers, should be leading the whole family the way the Father wants to lead his family.

BILLY: I interviewed my mom and dad, years after they'd been back together. I have a television show, and so I decided to interview them. A bit selfish on my part because I got to ask them questions I'd never asked them before. So I asked Dad on TV, I mean we were taping. It was live to tape. I said, "Dad, what happened? Why did you leave? It caused so much pain, hurt so many people." He started crying on the set. He said, "Well, it's pretty simple, Billy." He said, "I got selfish." Divorce happens because people get selfish, James. Good fathers are not

selfish. That's the key. Our Heavenly Father is not selfish. He's a father that always gives. And if we as fathers, earthly fathers, could learn to give, to love as our Heavenly Father, we would heal a whole generation. Because what's happened, because of the hurt family, because of bad fathering all over the world, even in families that are intact, fathers that are not giving, that are selfish, hurt their children. And so you've got people growing up with this father wound in their heart, and so their view of the Heavenly Father is distorted because their earthly father distorted their view of fatherhood.

Now, God is not your earthly father. I want to say that to those that are watching. God is not like your earthly father. However good he is, God's better. God always loves. He's always there. He's always faithful. He always cares. His arms are always there. He will never leave you, never forsake you, and he wants an intimate relationship with you. Call ABBA, ABBA, daddy, father! You can be in his arms and he can be your daddy and father. But for those of us that are earthly fathers, and I want to talk to a few earthly fathers right now. If you're selfish, you're hurting your family. Get yourself to the cross of Jesus Christ and give up and surrender to him, and let the love of God fill your heart, even for your family and your children. Your words, your deeds, everything you do as a father is influencing your family and future generations. Your grandchildren and great grandchildren will be influenced by your response. Selfishness brings pain. Love brings healing.

JAMES: I've been watching this man for 40 years, and I've watched God, literally, in many ways, not only use him to transform others, but God to transform his life, to change him to where he leads a truly great university. He's gifted to write. This *Father Cry*, listen to this: "Healing your heart and the hearts of those you love." Billy, I believe the way you write, what you wrote, the truthfulness of your own journey, what you saw even in preacher Daddy and the failures, what you have seen in people you've ministered to now for many years, I believe what he has written here about the *Father Cry* could heal, literally, the fathers in this nation if you would take this truth.

I want to ask all of you to get it. You can go online and buy it. You can go to Amazon; you can go to the bookstores. I'll tell you what, if you will help us feed and save the lives of some

children that are literally starving, and in Africa now, because all the feeding basically has pulled out, we are one of the immovable ones that will not move. We together, if you would help us reach out and put God's arms, the Father's arms around these children that are starving to death and their families, we can do that. So if you would just help us right now, feed more children than ever, knowing even more will come, please God, raise up people to say, I'll help one, three, five, ten, 100, 1000 -- I can! God please, I ask him touch the hearts of those listening. You just help us get God's arms around the starving.

Billy, I want to see America read this book. I believe God brought us together to help bring his family together. And the best way to do that is help everybody know that Father and become the family He desires. We can inspire that. That's what I think we do as ministers. That's what we do as fathers in our own homes. So please, please give it a shot.

Billy, I really do love you and appreciate you.

BILLY: Love you, James.

JAMES: Don't you believe this *Father Cry* is going to experience a move of God?

BILLY: Yeah, we are in a move of God, James. Generation Z is in revival. God is moving in young people today like never before. They are blessed, but they're also broken. They're on fire, but they're also frail, and they need men and women of God to be their spiritual moms and dads and put their arms, or for us to put our arms around them and love them through this journey. Lisa and I see ourselves as spiritual parents at ORU, and it's the honor of a lifetime.

JAMES: Well, it is. Betty and I see ourselves as just —

BILLY: Well, you're spiritual parents to hundreds of thousands of people!

JAMES: We're great-grandparents and grandparents to a lot of people, and millions of people all over the world. What we say to those of you who watch us, and we go and show you the

legitimate needs that can be effectively met by the love of God. The only way you get the Father's arms, God's arms around people is for his family to do it. The family is his body; it's his church.

I want you to look in. I want you to look in real careful. I want you to listen to a young girl with what she sees looking at some little children. But I want you to see what she sees, the way she sees it. And you are the answer. Watch this prayerfully.

Transition roll-in: [Don't let this be normal]

ANNOUNCER: *This is a clinic for mothers whose children are suffering from the effects of malnutrition. Kiera Pretorius, daughter of Isak Pretorius, is seeing for the first time Angolan children struggling to survive the consequences of not having enough food to keep them alive.*

ISAK: So you can see the other signs; you can see how his ribs are just sticking out here. Look at how little his arms are. His arms are like the size of my thumb.

KIERA: And just skin. Like, no muscle.

ISAK: No, it's just skin and bone, really. Because that's the state at which its nutrition is at. It's so weak and so malnourished that literally the body starts to shut down.

KIERA: Do you think you'll recover?

ISAK: Chances are that he will survive, that we will be able to save his life. But there are so many children in this state that don't leave clinics like this. That's good! It's good to cry. It's okay.

KIERA: I've grown up knowing many of these stories and seeing the photos and hearing all the heart-wrenching stories of young mothers with their young children that want to do the best for them, but genuinely just don't have the resources. Every time I see or hear these stories and

being here today, it affects me deeply. It hurts my heart. So I'm asking you to not let it become normal to you. Don't let it -- don't let it become something you become immune to.

ISAK: I ask you to hear that appeal from a 19-year-old girl who knows what happens if you look away. Who knows what happens when this starts to become normal. When we shut our hearts down, when we try to think through this with our heads, instead of just listening to our hearts. And so I'm asking you today to listen to your heart. Listen to the heart of Kiera. Listen to my heart. Listen to your heart. Because our heart cry is the same as this mother's, and I believe yours is too, and that is to do everything that we can do to save this little boy. Everything that we can do to give this mother what she needs for her child.

Studio appeal:

JAMES: Peter Pretorius and I started more than 40 years ago together. Peter and I stood real close to each other for 35 years, I guess, when he left us. I'm so glad that Isak has picked it up, and now that beautiful little 19-year-old, looking at those little children.

Please listen to me. I want you to look at them and look what it did to her heart. But you see, that's what it did to my heart the first time I saw them. Betty, when I saw the graves of 10,000 of them, most of them less than four years old, they were two and three in just little graves, and no markers. Maybe a little picture of a child or a little toy. I just said, God, please! We sold a bunch of stuff the ministry owned because we didn't know if our viewers or we didn't know if people would help missions. Oh boy, but you did when we showed you the reality of what they face. We showed you the love of those missionaries that moved their families across the ocean and planted their lives in the midst of death. They said to me and to Betty, "Please go home. See if you can get us some help so we can stay here and not be empty-handed. So we can stay here with more than a broken heart." Betty, we came back and did our viewers help?

BETTY: Oh, they absolutely have, James. One thing really struck me that Kiera said. She said, Don't become immune because you've seen scenes similar to this before. They're still there. They're still needy, different ones, but they're needy.

So I want you to know that my heart was so deeply touched. I thought, God, don't let me ever become immune to a need like that. We've been over there many, many times through many, many years. I've never felt on any of the trips that oh, I've seen this before. No, it was always fresh on my heart. I pray that it'll stay that way for you as you let God speak to your heart.

JAMES: Well, I pray that Betty and I believe -- I know for a fact, we're as faithful of supporters of the mission outreaches as any of all the thousands of people that do help us. I just pray, God, everybody would be that faithful and even more faithful. Please! Did you realize that for \$30 you can feed three children, for \$50, 5 children, for \$100, 10, and \$1,000, 100. But did you know there are many of you who could give part of your estate. You give large gifts. And right now we're being told as people are moving out of Africa to feed, that there's going to be the highest starvation rate in history on that greatest continent that has so much to offer. And if only God's people would put his arms around those desperate, suffering people.

We have beautiful gifts to send to you. And one thank you is the *Father Cry* book that Billy wrote. We would love for you to have that. But please, right now, would you go get your bank card and use it like a check? If you write a check, make it to *LIFE* but call us and tell us what you're putting in the mail. We need a miracle response. Please, don't put this off. Go online with that card. Call the number, make the gift. If you get a busy, be determined to get through, and let's put God's loving arms around these desperate children. We can give life to them by the millions. We've done it together. Please help us. The need has never been greater.

FMF Cause spot 2025:

ANNOUNCER: *Right now, across the continent of Africa, children are suffering, facing severe malnutrition and even death. With food reserves critically depleted and many areas experiencing devastating famine, we urgently need to replenish supplies to keep feeding the 350,000 children who are counting on us every single day.*

Through Life's mission feeding outreach, your gift of love can be an answer to a prayer for a hurting and hungry child in their time of need. Call now with your lifesaving gift of \$30, \$50, or \$100 to help feed and care for three, five or ten children for three full months. With your gift, we'll send you "Happy, Healthy and Free." A powerful 31-day journey to help you embrace God's promises for healing, wholeness, restoration, peace, and joy. Step into the abundant life God has prepared for you.

With your gift of \$100 or more, please request 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, this is the last opportunity to request our 2025 majestic bronze sculpture, "Lion of Judah" with your gift of \$1,000 or more, which will help feed 100 children in desperate need. So please call, write, or make your gift online today.

Studio goodbye:

JAMES: I'm really praying that every one of you watching will make the largest gift you can. By the way, a gift over \$1,000 and we send you the "Lion of Judah" bronze with the cross. This will only be available now a few more weeks. It is beautiful. And that beautiful, beautiful blanket, that beautiful throw is the prettiest I've ever seen. We will also send you, not only the other books we talked about, but *Father Cry*. That's the Father, Billy, that everybody needs to cry out for to.

BILLY: James, I want to say on behalf of the spirit empowered world, believers all over the world, thank you for having a father's heart for children that no one else cares about. You've done this for years, expressing God's fatherly love for kids who are dying and saving their lives. That's what a good father does.

JAMES: Amen. That's what the great Father does through yielded fathers and yielded people. We want to thank you because you are the key to life for these precious children whose mothers are praying desperately for them. Thank you so much.

Billy, thank you, and God bless you.

BILLY: Great to be with you, James. We love you guys.

JAMES: God bless ORU. Thank you so much for your help.