

**1/27/26**

**Week 5**

**James & Betty Robison**

**Scarlet Hiltibidal**

**“Fresh Hope”**

**MALE ANNOUNCER:** The following program is sponsored by Friends of Life Outreach International.

**SCARLET HILTIBIDAL:** And so I was just kind of reeling. I'm a pastor's wife. I'm a Christian author and speaker, and I'm like, I know what's true. I know, I know about this hope I can cling to, but right now I'm really sad, and what do I do with that?

**ANNOUNCER:** Scarlet Hiltibidal shares her personal struggle with deep sadness, disappointment, doubts, and weariness.

**SCARLET:** You have to keep going to the Lord. If you don't, it's not like he's gonna stop loving you, but you're gonna start believing the hopelessness lies.

**ANNOUNCER:** “Hopeful-ish” next.

[music]

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**RANDY ROBISON:** Welcome to “Life Today.” I'm Randy Robison, glad to have you with me. I also have my co-host Blynda Lane. This is the first time we've gotten to sit down.

**BLYNDA LANE:** I know, this is really fun. I've never gotten to sit here with you before.

**RANDY:** You've seen her with Tammy many times, and on other programs. So we're excited that you're here. We also have a wonderful guest today. I'm excited. You just—is this your first time to meet Scarlet?

**BLYNDA:** Totally first time, but fast friends.

**RANDY:** And she's—ah, I can see it. She's been on “Life Today” before, Scarlet Hiltibidal is with us. She has a new book called “Hopeful-ish,” and I think you'll understand that. Scarlet, welcome back to “Life Today.” Great to have you.

**SCARLET:** Thank you for having me.

**BLYNDA:** We're really glad you're here.

**SCARLET:** Thank you.

**RANDY:** We gotta start with the title.

**SCARLET:** Let's start with the title. What do you wanna know?

**RANDY:** I wanna be hopeful, not just, you know, hopeful-ish. What does that mean?

**SCARLET:** We want to be fully hopeful. Well, I wrote this because I was in a season which, I think a lot of us can relate to this. Post-COVID world, we all lost a lot. We lost people we loved, our prestigious careers kind of turned into Zoom with pajama pants that are Christmas-themed, you know.

You know, just a lot of pain, a lot of sadness, and I was kind of struggling to, as a long-time Christian, hold on to the hope I know to be true. Just struggling to hold on to joy and peace, knowing it here and just being like, okay, how do I do this?

And so honestly the original title was "Sad and Tired." I told my husband and he was like, "Sweetie, no, do not write a book called 'Sad and Tired.' Nobody wants that book." So I was like, "Okay, let's workshop this." But yeah, it's just what I have found to be true is that, as I wrote it, my husband prayed that I would write it from God's lap, because I was struggling with a lot of sadness.

And I just held on to that image the whole time, like, you know what, we're all being held, it's not about how strong our holding is, it's about how strong God is, and he's holding us. And so as I wrote about all these painful stories and walking with Jesus in the midst of them, that's what I was thinking.

**BLYNDA:** You talk about how sad is natural and hope is supernatural. And when you were in COVID, I believe that's when you had the death of a grandmother and a death of an uncle within a couple of weeks of each other. How did you hold that tension of, okay, this is really sad, but I'm going to tap into that supernatural hope?

**SCARLET:** Yeah, those—I mean, those were the events that kind of led to this whole thing, writing this book, because post-COVID, my uncle Jimmy, who was a father figure in my life, he helped raise me after my parents' divorce.

And I had just moved out to California, he was my only local relative, and he died by suicide three months after I got there. He had lost his job during COVID, broke an engagement, had a lot of hard things in his life, and was kind of living in isolation.

So that happened, and then his mom, my grandma, who was kind of a mother figure who also was huge in helping raise me, she died by COVID pneumonia 16 days later.

And so I was just kind of reeling. I'm a pastor's wife. I'm a Christian author and speaker, and I'm like, I know what's true. I know, I know about this hope I can cling to, but right now I'm really sad, and what do I do with that?

And so of course I talked, you know, the book publishing process, I talked to my publisher. By the time it actually was time to write the book, I learned my mom's cancer had returned, and I took a positive surprise pregnancy test after ten years since my youngest child.

And so it was, you know, I'm really grateful for all these things. I'm so grateful that I really had to depend on the Lord and his strength as I was writing about depending on the Lord and his strength.

And I keep telling people, this is my least funny, but like, it's my heaviest and most serious book, because I was wrestling with heavy serious things, but the Lord proved faithful.

How did I cling to these things? Honestly, as a long-time believer, the Lord just held me together through his people, through his word, through showing up when I didn't feel like showing up, and being reminded by his spirit and other people around me who have a spirit that he's real, and he's involved and we have this great hope to cling to.

**RANDY:** You mentioned the book not being that funny. I have to ask you this because my coping mechanism for stress and difficult uncomfortable situations is humor, and it does not always land.

**SCARLET:** You've already made me laugh, though, before the cameras went on, several times, so.

**RANDY:** And that's good, because I think we're kindred. Do you—is humor something that helps you cope?

**SCARLET:** It's so funny, because I have a lot of insecurity about this book because yes, my mom's a professional comedian. That's my upbringing.

And I didn't even realize that I put out these vulnerable books over the years, but I always feel safe because I'm like, oh, but there's jokes, so it's okay, because even though I'm sharing personal things, if you laugh it's okay.

And this one, it does have some humor, so I don't wanna scare you listener-watchers.

**BLYNDA:** I mean, you were chased by a donkey.

**SCARLET:** I was chased by—I do include the donkey story. We can get to that if you want, but yes, it's very—I definitely rely on humor. I don't know how healthy that is, but sometimes I think it's healthy.

**RANDY:** Yeah, I get that. And just for people who don't know, your mother is well-known, Victoria Jackson. You were raised on the set of "Saturday Night Live," so that's kind of baked in. But yet, I mean, how's she doing now?

**SCARLET:** So that's also her—she's the one, cancer came back.

She had cancer ten years ago. It returned about a year and a half ago. And it's stage 4, and so she's just living with it.

And she's also a long-time follower of Jesus, and so it's been really striking.

She is just the most joyful, hilarious, giving person.

And I, you know, as I was writing about this, she was like, serving me and loving me when she should be the one being loved and served.

Like, that doesn't–her maternal instinct was not going away.

There's a couple chapters in there where I talk about a pillow nest thing that I did where I would, like, be in a cocoon of pillows and when I was pregnant with my surprise baby, she's coughing because cancer got into her windpipe and she's like, going up the stairs to get this new pillow that she thought would make me more comfortable.

You know, like she's–

**BLYNDA:** Always thinking of–

**SCARLET:** Yes, she is comforting me when she is struggling with that.

So it's like, yes, as a family we've been sad, but it's the gifts of the Holy Spirit and just the eternal perspective she has that has just trickled into our family has been really beautiful.

**BLYNDA:** I remember you even wrote that you brought your kids over to spend time with her, and they said something like, "I entered thinking it was gonna be sad to be with Bam Bam," which is what they call her, but it ended up being so fun because she made a point to make sure that it was really light and fun.

**SCARLET:** And she's not being dishonest about it either.

I think that's the other beautiful thing about suffering as a believer.

Like, she's not saying everything's fine.

Like, she's wearing a shirt that says not dead yet.

Like, she's making–all the time.

She's got all these shirts, I'm like, okay, hi, well, here we are at Bam Bam's house.

So she has a sense of humor about it, but she's honest about the pain.

She's not hiding it from anybody, but she is really living like death is an event and then we're all gonna be together forever.

That's what we believe.

And so yeah, my oldest said that when the cancer had first come back and we were like, let's go visit her, and we were all nervous, like we were crying on the way over.

And then my mom had a balloon tied to her chair that she had bought for herself, because she's awesome.

And we just went in there and hung out with her.

And then when we left my daughter was like, oh, like, she made me feel better just by how she was acting.

And it wasn't ignoring the issue, it was just, hey, we're here.

I think I put in there one of her text messages is like, "Of course I'm sad to miss out, but I'm gonna be with Jesus and I'm here now, so let's party."

Like, that was the end of her text, like, "Let's have fun."

So yeah, what a gift, right?

**BLYNDA:** What a gift.

**RANDY:** So ,you know, grief is one of those things. It is very real, denying it doesn't help.

And the Scripture says that we grieve, but not as those who have no hope.

And that's what I hear you saying and trying to live out.

How are you doing with that grief?

**SCARLET:** It's, you know, it's really been so instructive to me to watch my mom do this because it's like she's kind of going before us and showing us, this is how to live.

If you're suffering as one with hope, this is how to live.

And it's not perfect and she's not, you know, she doesn't have a smile plastered to her face all the time.

But yeah, it's different and it definitely informs how I live and how my kids view everything.

It's like it kind of takes the sting of death away.

Everything that God's Word says that you hope is true when you're actually living it out and you find it to be true, it's like, oh, this is real.

God is real and he's active and with us, so this actually works, you know?

So yeah, we're sad and we have bad days and big cries, but we love each other and we are reminded that this world's not our home, and that's a gift and a blessing, so.

**BLYNDA:** Okay, I wanna talk about, in the pillow nest chapter, one of those because I think it ties into this.

You talk about that you built this kind of fort pillow nest and you use it to be comfortable.

You have a neck pillow, you have your blanket, you even get your scrolling your TV–your, you know, phone or whatever to scroll on.

But there was a part of you that realized this was some sort of coping mechanism.

And it made me think about people who, to numb the pain, to not have to feel it, to not have to do the grieving, to not all of those things, they have their own pillow nest that they build.

Whether it's actually with pillows like yours or if it's something else that they use to numb the pain.

And–because they're not feeling hopeful in those moments, whatever it is, and because we have the hope of Jesus we have that, but a lot of people don't.

And even some maybe watching are feeling so hopeless right now.

How did the discovery in your own soul of, okay, this pillow nest is a little bit a counterfeit comfort than the comfort I really need, how did that help you?

**SCARLET:** Well, I'm grateful that I wrote this from a place of remembering and re-remembering, you know.

Because I think all of us, whether we are feeling hopeless or whether we are people who have discovered that we can live with hope, we are forgetful.

And we cling to our pillow nests naturally every day if we're not disciplining ourselves to go to the Lord.

Like if we're not–sometimes in my pain I will kind of retreat and I don't wanna pray and I don't wanna read the Bible and I don't wanna go anywhere, you know.

I just wanna hide in a pillow nest.

**BLYNDA:** That's real.

**SCARLET:** But you have to keep going to the Lord.

If you don't, it's not like he's gonna stop loving you, but you're gonna start believing the hopelessness lies that the enemy throws at you.

Because if you just look out at the world and look at your phone, and your mom has cancer and everybody is sick and sad and dying, like, this is a broken world, then of course you're gonna be overwhelmed by hopelessness.

But if you have–if you force yourself, okay, I'm gonna go to church, I'm gonna be with other believers and I'm going to be reminded of what is true.

Okay, I'm gonna open my Bible because it is living and active, and the Holy Spirit is going to remind me of what is true and I'm gonna experience him there.

And so yeah, I mean, I was writing this from a place of, like, feeling like I was just being held and like, clinging to what I knew was true when I didn't feel it.

And so yeah, I think that that is—I don't have any good advice except what Jesus says, which is to read his Word and do what it says, not to earn anything, because he earned it for us on the cross, but just so that we can remember what's true and live with joy and peace, you know.

**RANDY:** Yeah, not to quiz you too much, you do use a lot of Scripture, and you reference Psalm 119 in that particular chapter, but are there any scriptures that jumped out at you or that you continue to carry you in these difficult ones, or?

**SCARLET:** Yeah, let me see.

So, we were oppressed but not crushed, persecuted but not abandoned, struck down but not destroyed.

So something that I thought about a lot while writing this was how as a long-time Christian you can know that I'm not crushed, but you feel crushed.

I know that I'm not abandoned, but I feel abandoned.

And so what do we do when our feelings don't match what we know to be true?

Well, we do the things I just said, which is the boring-sounding things, which is what Eugene Peterson, in "A Long Obedience in the Same Direction," he was like, just keep walking with the Lord, just abide, just cling to the vine.

**RANDY:** I like your reference to Psalm 118, which is very long, but this particular Scripture, I think it's 28.

"I am weary from grief. Strengthen me through your word."

And so, you know, you're right.

When all else fails, you know, when the world is pressing in, when you can't deny the pain and the suffering around you, going back to the Scripture, there's that life there.

You've also—you're a Texan now.

**SCARLET:** I'm a Texan now.

**RANDY:** You're a Texan now, so welcome.

**SCARLET:** I'm a brand-new Texan. Thank you.

**RANDY:** Yes, it took you long enough, but.

You know, the other thing that we often overlook especially, and the Texans are guilty of this, I am one of those, right, because we're independent, right?

We were designed for community.

What are you learning when it comes to dealing with grief and finding hope about community?

**SCARLET:** Man, I must have always been a Texan in my heart, even though I just got here a few months ago to live here.

Yeah, because I definitely tend to be, I'm independent, I don't need any help, I got this.

But just, you know, getting older, I've just learned the beauty of, you know, God tells us to be united with other believers and to be—don't neglect to meet together.

And it doesn't matter how independent or self-sufficient you think you are, when you're actually in the pain of life, you need each other.

And I've just been the recipient of love enough times that I was like, oh, wow, not only am I missing out if I isolate myself in pain, but it's just such a beautiful thing when we are real people who are really struggling with hard things but exalting the name of God, not trying to exalt ourselves and look how well I'm walking through this trial, but like, just reminding each other where our hope comes from.

Like, that's what it's all about.

So I'm very grateful to be a Texan, and I've already experienced the warmest, beautiful community here, so yeah, it's like I've always been here.

**BLYNDA:** What's interesting, though, about the community aspect is if you wait to build community until you're in pain, it's almost, you don't have anything to draw from.

It's like you—we need to be reminded that we have to build that, we have to make that a priority to be with God's people, to find a church, to get in community so that when pain comes, which we know it will, you have this group of people supporting you, not waiting for the pain to try to find those people.

That's gonna be much harder and you will feel more isolated.

**SCARLET:** That is so true.

**RANDY:** And by the way, if you're watching right now and you're like, "I don't really have that, but I'm going through some difficult things."

We have some people who will pray with you.

They are believers.

That phone number on the screen is a place for you to call if you're just at a point where you just need to talk to somebody, you need someone to encourage you, someone to lift up your needs, your grief to God.

Please take advantage of that.

Don't isolate.

It's the worst thing you can do.

God is with you, but so are other believers, even if you don't see them around you.

So that number's there for you.

We've just got a few minutes.

I think we probably should hear the donkey story.

You know, we teased them with that.

**BLYNDA:** We did say a donkey attacked you.

**SCARLET:** I can talk about donkeys.

What you wanna know about the donkey?

**BLYNDA:** So you had just moved—because you've lived a lot.

I've heard you say Miami, California, and Tennessee, and this was when you had moved to Tennessee, and now you're kind of becoming farm material, farm girl material.

**SCARLET:** I was, yes.

We've tried two times to be farmers.

It has not worked out.

In fact, as we moved away from this last farm that I wrote about, my mom was like, "Scarlet, I don't think you guys are good farmers," and I'm like, "I know, that's why we're giving up. We've tried twice."

The donkey story.

Well, the donkey story is, we had tried to be farmers with like, chickens.

That's not real farming.

That was our first—

**BLYNDA:** It is for me. It passes, for sure.

**SCARLET:** It is?

Okay, well, listen, we tried that and then we moved away to California for a little while.

It's a long story.

Then we came back to Tennessee and we were like, “Really, we’re gonna be farmers this time.”

We got two donkeys, two pigs, legitimate.

Like, when the pigs and the donkeys came, we were like, okay, now we’re real farmers.

So there was a time when the donkeys had arrived and we didn’t have a gate to keep them by the water source.

So I was like, I’m a farmer, I’m MacGyver, I’m Old McDonald.

I’m gonna build a temporary fence, and I used extension cords and moving blankets, and I made a gate and I was so proud.

And it worked for a second, yeah, and then it did not work.

And then they, one of them escaped, the mini, which was—we got a big one as a livestock guardian and a mini for cuteness purposes.

The cuteness purpose one got away.

So we went to go get her and then she started charging at us, like, yee-hawing loud like a cartoon, charging at me and my youngest daughter.

It was actually really scary.

We like to laugh as we reflect on it.

But we, like, jumped the fake fence and everything was fine.

But anyway, that whole chapter is about “Fake Farming, Weary Worship, I Want the Real Thing.”

I think that’s the title of that chapter.

And I’m talking about being a fake farmer and being a real farmer, and how if I don’t feed these animals that we have now, they’re gonna die.

And similarly, it’s not that we’re gonna lose our salvation if we are not clinging to God’s Word every day, but we are going to, you know, our souls are gonna believe lies and we’re gonna feel pressed or, you know, crushed and believe, “I am crushed. I am abandoned.”

So yeah, that’s what I was talking about, but while also sharing failed farmer stories.

**BLYNDA:** Which I love what you do.

You are very good at taking real-life stories and turning them into spiritual, applicable things.

And so that's why I think your book is so helpful, because it's enjoyable to read but it actually really is full of hope.

**RANDY:** I love it, and we need hope.

And if humor is the method by which the hope comes, that's great.

But I want you to see an opportunity where some people desperately need some hope and it is very real, and we can be the solution to that.

Watch this.

[music]

[music]

**ISAK PRETORIUS:** So this mother would walk three to four hours a day to go and collect water, knowing that the water that she was collecting was dirty and contaminated.

But it was the only water available.

But two of her children got really ill.

She tried to take them to the closest clinic.

The closest clinic is more than a 12-hour walk.

She said if you leave before the sun rises, you'll get there just when it gets dark.

Unfortunately, though, by the time she got there, her two children had passed away.

This story is so hard for me, because actually we've come here, and we've put a water well in this village, not far from the very home we are sitting in.

As much as that well is solving tomorrow's problem, it didn't solve yesterday's one.

I asked her, "What would you say to those who made it possible to bring the clean water to your village?"

She would say thank you, and she's so grateful, but then she became very urgent in what she said as she said, "But there's many other villages around here, many others that don't have a water well, that don't have clean water yet. Please take water to those other villages."

She said, "There are many children dying in those villages because of the contaminated water that they have to consume."

And that's why from my heart, a broken heart today, I'm making a call directly to you, and I hope that it is directly to your heart, to say please, please support Mission Water for Life.

Please make it possible for us to put wells in all of the villages in this area.

Please make it possible for us to do it now.

Now, it's an urgency.

You understand, when you listen to Catarina's story, the urgency of getting that well there now.

Not next week, not next month, not next year, but now.

Because maybe, if it's next year, maybe another woman loses children in the meantime.

That's a price no mother should pay, and it's a price that I can't bear.

**RANDY:** I know those stories can be very difficult to watch.

Blynda, as a mother, what do you think when you see that kind of situation?

**BLYNDA:** I mean, your heart just breaks.

You look at it and you think no mother should know that pain.

No mother should have to go through that.

And I sit here and I think, you know, somebody watching may be thinking, "I can't go there and actually help. How can I help?"

And two ways come to mind.

You can pray.

You can pray for them.

And you can give.

And sometimes I think we get overwhelmed with the idea of, "Well, I can't give a lot, so is my little bit going to make a difference?"

But it's like God is the great multiplier, and what he does is he takes my little bit and your little bit and your little bit and multiplies it together to actually make a huge difference.

**RANDY:** Yeah, you know, the boy in the Bible that gave what?

A fish and some loaves depending on the translation you're looking at.

He didn't give a lot.

He didn't give enough to feed all those people.

What he gave was what he had.

**BLYNDA:** And God did the multiplying.

**RANDY:** And God does the multiplication.

And you know, we talk about praying for them.

Don't underestimate the prayer.

Please pray for all those people in need.

But they're also praying.

That's the beautiful thing.

They are praying and yes, many times they are praying, "God, send us some clean water, send us something so that we don't have to face death on a daily basis," or, "Heal my sick child."

Here's another aspect of prayer I want you to consider.

You can answer that prayer.

It really is that easy.

When we look at our outreach, to drilling wells in some countries where you have to drill quite deep to get to clean water, and it can be very difficult to get to some of these remote areas.

But the average well costs \$4800.

Some of you can just do that.

You can give a well.

I pray that you would.

You will change lives.

You will save lives.

I know, I've been there, I've seen it.

I know what a difference it makes.

Others of you could give \$144, which on average would give 30 people clean water for life.

If you can give \$48, that will give an average of 10 people water for life, 70 years.

These are not just wells that reach down into water.

These are wells that are built to last and to keep contaminants out.

It truly is an outreach of life.

We have some wonderful gifts that we'd like to share with you, one of which I want to point out because it's a book.

It's called "A Life of Compassion."

I love this because it has so many of these images that remind us of the situation where we've gone in and we've been that answer to prayer.

But most of all, will you give generously, give as God directs, and know that you are giving someone life today.

Together we can do it.

We can be that answer to prayer.

**ANNOUNCER:** Every day thousands of lives are lost to waterborne disease, and nearly half of those are children under the age of five.

Through Mission Water for Life, you can give mothers hope and children a future as we provide clean, fresh drinking water, free from the fear of death.

With your gift today, you can help drill and establish 350 water wells this year.

Your gift of \$24 will help provide clean water for five children.

A gift of \$48 will help provide for 10.

And \$144 will help provide life-giving water for 30 people for a lifetime.

With a gift of any amount, we'll send you "Discovering the Joy of Reading God's Word."

Whether you've read the Bible for years or are just beginning, this book invites you to experience Scripture in a fresh, more intimate way.

With your gift of \$100 or more, you may request "A Life of Compassion" coffee table book, capturing Life Outreach's heart for the world.

Each page pairs timeless Bible verses with vivid mission field photography, making God's word visible in action.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1200 to help provide water for 250 people, or a gift of \$4800 to help sponsor a complete well and request Life's beautiful 2026 bronze sculpture, The Good Shepherd.

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

**RANDY:** I do hope you're going online, going on the phone, make the best gift you can.

We've got some wonderful thank-you gifts, so please avail yourselves to those.

But most of all, let's be the hands and feet of Jesus.

We can do this, but we need your help.

What a wonderful, hopeful program.

Scarlet, it's been so much fun.

**BLYNDA:** "Hopeful-ish," it's great.

**SCARLET:** Thank you for having me.

**BLYNDA:** We're so thankful you were here.

**RANDY:** Where can people connect with you?

**SCARLET:** If you just go online, scarlethiltibidal.com.

Scarlet—I joked the other day with someone, if you just type Scarlet, do your best with my last name and some negative emotion, you'll find me.

I've got "Anxious: The Bible Study."

I've got "Afraid of All the Things."

Scarlett Hiltibidal.

**RANDY:** We appreciate you sharing hope with us today and with our audience.

We appreciate you guys being here.

We'll see you again next time.

[music]

[music]

[music]

[music]

[music]

**MARK MODAL:** And the more information we have, the less wisdom we have. And with the advent of AI, it's about to get a whole lot worse.

**ANNOUNCER:** Tomorrow.

**ANNOUNCER:** "Life Today" is made possible by the supporters of Life Outreach International.

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