

2/2/26

Week 6

Randy Robison & Blynda Lane

Lauren Burns & Bev Lambert

“Abducted”

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

ANNOUNCER: Lauren Burns was kidnapped by her father and taken overseas.

LAUREN BURNS: She called my father’s house, no one answered. She called his restaurant, and they told my mom that Ali never showed up at the restaurant today.

Then her third phone call was the Royal Jordanian Airlines out of New York, and my mom broke down and said, “Please, I think my ex-husband’s taken my daughter.” So the woman came back on the phone and said, “Yes, we have a Lauren and Ali arriving in Amman this evening.”

[music]

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RANDY ROBISON: Welcome to Life Today, I’m Randy Robinson, Blynda Lane’s with me, good to see you.

BLYNDA LANE: Good to see you, thanks for having me on today.

RANDY: It’s great to have you with me, and you know, a lot of what we talk about here on “Life Today” is sort of rescue, right? God, whether it’s rescuing people literally from sex trafficking or rescuing people from their hopelessness, their addictions, those types of things, rescue and redemption is kind of a God story, right?

We got a crazy one today.

BLYNDA: We have an awesome one. Hold on, put your seatbelt on, it’s a good one.

RANDY: Yes, we do. Lauren Burns and Bev Lambert join us. Welcome, ladies.

LAUREN: Thank you very much.

RANDY: And you know, I could try to set this up, but it just wouldn’t do it justice. So, let’s—where do you—we’re ready to jump in with these ladies.

BLYNDA: I know, I mean, really, so Lauren, this is your story of your childhood, but such an interesting connection that your lifelong friend and a second mother, Bev Lambert, have had together.

Take us to the beginning of Lauren Burns, seven years old, or even before that.

LAUREN: Before that, so my—I always say my childhood started as a hot mess.

By the time I was six weeks old, my parents—my mom’s filing for divorce, because my father is from Jordan near Israel, he’s Muslim, and my mother’s a Christian from Florida, and they met in Dallas area working at like a Denny’s diner.

And Bev and Rick were my mom’s closest friends, they knew my father, they walked alongside that relationship for four years until my mom was pregnant with me, and when my mother was pregnant with me, my father was super-excited.

They were about to have their first child, and he told my mom that he needed to go to Jordan because his father was sick. And so he left her, and my mom was by herself for three months, not knowing if my father was going to come back.

She actually went into labor early because of all of the stress, about a month early. She was working with Beverly’s mother, Wanda, and my mom thought she just kept going to the bathroom, and Wanda said, “No, your water broke. You need to get to the hospital.”

BLYNDA: You’re having a baby.

LAUREN: So that’s how long Bev has been a part of my life.

And when my father did return, he looked different. He was in the traditional clothing that you would wear in Jordan, and he was praying on his prayer rug, and he told my mom he had gone to Jordan to make a home for us.

He wanted me to be raised in his tradition, in his culture with his beliefs, and my mom said absolutely not.

So by the time I was six weeks old, my mom was filing for divorce, and she found herself as a single mom with me to raise.

RANDY: That right there is a traumatic beginning, but it got even crazier.

How old were you when you saw your father at the time that changed your life?

LAUREN: So, up until that, I saw him every other weekend. My mom had full custody of me, but my mom let me see my father whenever I wanted to.

He had remarried, he had other children.

When I was 7 years old, 1987, it was Halloween weekend, my father asked if I could stay an extra night to go trick or treating with him, and he showed up, just him alone at the house.

And when I got in the car, my stepmother was not there, my siblings were not there, and he turned and looked at me and said, “I have a surprise for you. We are going to Jordan so you can meet your family for the first time.”

And of course I’m like, “My mom didn’t say I was going to Jordan. She said I was going trick or treating. Are you sure this is okay?”

But the more questions I asked him, the more frustrated he got, and I just stopped asking the questions, because I knew he was getting angry.

So we’re on our way to the airport, and my mom had no idea.

BLYNDA: And he was telling you, though, that she did know, so probably to keep you calm.

LAUREN: Absolutely, and so that Monday when she went to go have lunch with me—which I have to back up.

She’s a single mom, so for the people that know what it’s like to be a single parent, you don’t stop your day to go have lunch with your kid at school. You don’t have the time, but God.

God was already intervening. On that Monday she went to the school and to go have lunch and the teacher said Lauren never showed up at school, and so this is the ’80s, there’s no cell phone.

She went to a pay phone, she called my father’s house, no one answered. She called his restaurant, and they told my mom that Ali never showed up at the restaurant today.

Then her third phone call was the Royal Jordanian Airlines out of New York. She remembered the name of the airlines, because she had traveled there before they got married.

On the phone, standing at that pay phone, she talked to the woman and she said, “Do you have a Lauren and an Ali on your flight reservation?” And the lady said, “I can’t give out that kind of information.”

And my mom broke down and said, “Please, I think my ex-husband’s taken my daughter.” So the woman came back on the phone and said, “Yes, we have a Lauren and an Ali arriving in Amman this evening.”

RANDY: So you’re already on the plane.

BLYNDA: Panic had to have set in at that moment.

LAUREN: On that day.

RANDY: So, you land in Jordan, and your mom realizes something’s gone wrong. Is this where you come in?

BEV LAMBERT: It’s where I come in.

So we were in the courthouse, we're private investigators. We were doing some assignments at the Dallas County Courthouse, and my husband's pager went off, and it was Cathy's number, and it said 911.

So we went over to the desk phone, and we called Cathy, and she said—she lived in Richardson, which is probably about 30 minutes from the Dallas County Courthouse, and she said, “Lauren's been taken, she's landing in Jordan,” and this is like—there was no time for, you know, extra words.

“Lauren's in Jordan, come here now,” and we were like, we'll be right there.

So we did flasher—my husband was a police officer most of his career, and so he flashed us all the way to Richardson, and when we got there is when she completely fell apart.

BLYNDA: Well, yeah, because it seems like there was a good relationship as, you know, husband and wife exes, I guess, there was a good relationship there.

There were no red flags when you would be with him. You even knew him, so this seemed a little out of the blue. Plus, he has a whole another family, so he's now left as well to do this, so none of the pieces probably felt like they were fitting together to make sense at any point in this.

BEV: it was the conviction of his religion, which was completely opposite of how a Christian would behave.

It was cloaked in every kind of hidden—everything was hidden, and it just was so unlike it.

We've realized we don't know this person that we thought we knew, including Lauren, didn't know the the dad that she thought she knew.

RANDY: So, what was it like when you got there?

Do you remember, because you were what?

You're seven again?

LAUREN: I was seven years old, yes.

So my stepmother, I had a great relationship with my stepmother, and I had two siblings at the time, so I was a big sister.

None of them were there. It was just my father. my father had sent her and the kids away, so they did not even know what he was doing. No one knew what he was doing.

And the laws in Jordan at the time, Beverly found this out. My birthday is in September, he took me in October, and the Jordanian law was when a child turns seven, all rights go to the father, so he had timed everything, he had planned everything.

When I got to Jordan, it was just the two of us.

I was, you know, meeting my family for the first time. He has a huge family, 12 siblings, my grandmother and my aunts, they all lived in the same sort of building.

Everyone spoke Arabic. I didn't speak Arabic. I had never left—I'd gone to Florida. That's as far as I had gone, and so it was total culture shock.

And my father was different. He was not the loving dad that would brush my hair and put me to bed and take care of me.

It was—there was clear lines of it's the women's job to take care of you, not his job.

And so I was there without a mother, I was there not knowing the culture, not knowing the language.

The food, the bathroom was different. It was a hole in the floor instead of a toilet.

Huge culture shock, and I was scared.

And every time I asked, "When will I see my mom again?" I knew not to ask.

He would just shut me down, "Don't you like it here? Is my family not good enough for you? Don't you see it'll be fine?" Just sort of pushing me off day after day.

I knew things were wrong when I started going to school.

I knew it wasn't a vacation when I had to go to school to learn the language, to learn to read and write, and I was the oldest in the classroom.

BLYNDA: I just—I'm trying to imagine your seven-year-old little heart not understanding what's happening, not being able to talk to your mom, just the confusion and the fear that could have come over you and not knowing if all this, you know, now as an adult because you've been able to listen to cassette tapes and hear stories, but at that moment you had no idea if she was ever coming for you again.

LAUREN: You have no idea, and looking back now as an adult, that's a big part of my story.

No matter what storm you're going through, divorce, issues with finances, issues with children, God is moving in ways you might not ever know when you're in the midst of the storm.

I had no clue that they were fighting for me day and night, and there was about to be a huge rescue mission to come get me.

I had no idea, but God.

He was working because of the prayers that they were praying when I was clueless.

BLYNDA: Okay, so pausing, she's in Jordan, not really knowing all that's going on, but you now, y'all turned it into turbo mode.

You've had to basically put your private investigation firm on hold.

BEV: We did.

BLYNDA: What was the—how did you even know what the next steps were to take?

BEV: We didn't, but we were far enough along in the private investigative journey that we had worked for some pretty heavy-hitting clientele.

So we were able to get into the offices and get on the phone with some powerful Dallas-based people, H. Ross Perot's office, we were able to actually get a, you know, a meeting and a phone conference.

There were some avenues that we were able to open that probably if we hadn't been in that field, we would have just said, well, like, call the police.

But we were able—we knew about some other missions that had taken place as well, so we got in touch with those entities, but it was a dead end at every turn.

No one ever said, oh yeah, here's what you do, or have you thought of this?

No one said anything like that.

So at that point there was only one thing to do, pray, because we were just getting shut down everywhere we looked.

RANDY: I mean, what you do, do you call Jordan back then? Do you call like some office in Jordan?

BEV: Well, we actually had some people suggest that they would contact King Hussein in Jordan, and we were like don't do that, because we're planning a rescue.

The last thing we want is for the Jordanian government to see us coming, so we're laying low.

RANDY: You assume that they were not going to be of help, especially when their law was on your father's side.

BEV: Yes.

RANDY: So you went for a rescue.

BEV: We—there was no options.

The thought of not getting her back was not in any way in our thought processes.

It was going to happen.

When you're in the private investigative field, you learn how to do it by hook or crook, if you know what I mean.

RANDY: I think I do, but I'd love to hear more about it.

LAUREN: Well, the turning point, so Rick had told my mom go to RadioShack and put a recording device on the phone.

So every time they called Jordan, my mom would call and beg, and I've listened to all these cassette tapes, hours of conversations.

BEV: It's horrible.

LAUREN: Which is very hard and emotional to listen to.

BLYNDA: I can only imagine.

LAUREN: But I hear my mom calling begging, and people are answering, it's my aunts, speaking only Arabic, and my mom was like, "Please, you have to bring Lauren back. I am her mother. This is not right. I will not prosecute Ali. I just want my daughter back."

Day after day, all day long calling, and they kept saying Lauren's not here, Ali's not here in broken English, and all these days of not eating, not sleeping, the amount of depression, you can imagine what that house was like.

Beverly—and I have this on a recording on a cassette tape.

I believe I have it because I know God wanted me to hear it because they were living together.

BEV: We had just moved in.

If Cathy needed to go to a meeting, my job was to say, "Oh, Ali—" if he called, "she'll be right back. She's in the shower. Let me have her call you back."

We didn't want them to ever know Cathy was missing, because it might give them the notion that she was on her way to Jordan.

So she was always around the corner.

She was not out of pocket ever.

BLYNDA: You had two steps ahead all at all times.

BEV: Yes.

RANDY: Okay, so your mother was heading to Jordan.

LAUREN: Well, but this phone call, she—so Beverly called my mom and said, "You have got to get away. You've got to pray and fast," and Beverly talked to her about fasting brings you the closest to God.

And my mom said, "You're right, I have got to get away and fast."

BEV: There was a lot of noise, a lot of voices.

Everyone had an opinion. That wasn't God's opinion.

I'm tired of listening to these ideas and these, you know, suggestions.

We have to know it's God.

We have nowhere to turn.

Go away, and don't tell me where you're going, and I want you to get on the ground before God and fast and pray until you do have the answer.

Don't call until you have the answer.

RANDY: Why was that so down in your soul?

Because when you think we need to go rescue a child from another country, we're not gonna have the cooperation of that other country, you don't normally think that means let's just pray.

People feel like they're not doing anything, right?

BEV: There's a difference in saying I'm going away with you, God, and I'm gonna wait until than saying let's all pray, let's join hands and pray.

There's a difference.

RANDY: What's the difference?

BEV: But also, this was a spiritual battle.

This was Christ, Christianity against his faith.

So there's no way to fight that except prayer.

LAUREN: In that motel room on the third day, she went to Fort Worth, and in the motel room the third night after fasting and praying, God gave her the scripture Daniel 10:12.

Daniel was fasting 21 days over the Israelites, and the angel Gabriel came to Daniel and said, "Because you've humbled yourself before your God, your words were heard."

And my mom just wrote it and said there is—it took 21 days because there was a battle in the heavenlies over the Israelites.

There was a battle in the heavenlies over me.

And so God told my mom in that motel room, you have got to lay down your cigarettes, because she was smoking nonstop.

You've got to forgive areas of bitterness and anger and forgiveness and surrender them, and my mom did.

She prayed, she wrestled with God.

She walked out of that townhouse and went back to the townhouse with Bev, and Bev opened the door and said, “You don’t look the same.”

And my mom said, “I’m not. I’m going to get my child back.”

And that’s when everything changed in our story.

BLYNDA: Which is so amazing.

You know, it makes me think, just like you said, Randy, that there’s a feeling that we might have that by pausing and praying and fasting it’s like we’re not doing enough, how do we do that?

Yet, in your story, that moment was actually what kind of allowed the Lord to do the supernatural thing that we could never do in our humanness.

And so what actually—what doors opened after that?

What happened with your mom and the rescue mission from there?

LAUREN: So, after that, so Rick had got an appointment at the Dallas County Courthouse, so my mom to stand before the grand jury.

It was one of those checking the boxes.

He warned her, “Cathy, there’s nothing that they can do, but they might be able to get a warrant out for Ali’s arrest.”

So if Ali comes back, they can arrest him and then try to figure out where I am.

So she went to the courthouse, she told her story before the grand jury, telling them that I had been taken.

They told her, “We’re so sorry, there’s nothing we can do.”

And then my mom broke down and said, “We spend billions of dollars in foreign aid every year, and you’re saying you can do nothing to help me get my child back.”

And they all shook their head and agreed with her.

And one man stood up.

His name is Al Zapanta.

He gave my mom his business card, and he said, If you’re not happy with the State Department, here’s my card. I work for the State Department. Give me a call and I’ll see what I can do.

So she put that in her wallet and walked out, and that’s when she went and prayed and fasted.

So when she came back home, she pulled out that card on a Monday, and she called Al.

Al told my mom one week before he was the foreman at that grand jury, he was in Washington DC meeting with one of his friends by the name of Everett Alvarez.

Everett Alvarez was the second longest-held POW.

He was held for 8 1/2 years.

Everett, during this lunch, was telling Al about a group of men, ex-Green Beret, Delta Force, Army Rangers, they had just started a company called CTU in North Carolina.

Their mission was to go to the Middle East to rescue hostages, not children, but hostages.

BLYNDA: But still, yeah.

RANDY: Wow.

LAUREN: That is how God works.

God was already putting everything in the right.

Like, Al was the foreman that day in the jury?

And so that was the catalyst, my mom praying and fasting, and then everything started trickling down.

So my mom said, "I want to talk to these men."

RANDY: All right, we're gonna have to just say a little time out to you guys and put this on pause, because we're gonna have to finish this another program.

And I know, you know, I hate to do that for you guys, and if you're not able to watch it, you know, as it's scheduled, DVR it, whatever, you can always go to LifeToday.org for all of our shows.

We will come back.

You will find out what happened and not just with the rescue, but with Lauren over all these years that she's had to process it and deal with the trauma and the broken relationship with her father and the trust, but you're gonna hear some miraculous things when you join us again next time on "Life Today."

Real quickly though, there are some people right now who are in a situation where they need that rescuer, they need someone to come in and save them oftentimes from death but definitely from sickness, and our enemy is not flesh and blood in this case, it's contaminated water.

Watch this, and we'll show you.

We'll show you how you can be that rescuer today.

[music]

RANDY: Why would anybody drink this?

This water is so polluted by animals and people and runoff and environment, I don't even want to touch it, much less drink it.

I certainly wouldn't give it to my children.

But you know, for many people, they don't have a choice.

A water source like this is the only water they can find, and it's deadly.

JAMES ROBISON: You know, if you were thirsty in Africa, or in many of the remote parts of the world, you'd walk up to a stream like this, you'd say, oh, I've got great water, but what you don't realize is in this area alone thousands of people got cholera, serious severe diarrhea, many people it cost them their children.

[speaking foreign language]

BETTY ROBISON: And they can't do anything about it, because it's all the water that they have.

I just can't even imagine.

This little baby is so precious, so beautiful, her mother loves her so much, and I wanna see this little baby live healthy because we've given some fresh water to them.

RANDY: As we give water for life, we give life to so many people.

They're asking us, they are begging us, if you could just give us fresh, clean water, we wouldn't be so sick, we could work to grow our crops, we could take care of our families, and it starts with you.

Let's give water for life so people can live.

RANDY: You are the answer to the problem.

We can give them clean water.

We are prepared in over 20 nations to drill 350 wells or more, I hope this year.

But we're relying on viewers just like yourself, and you need to know that there is nothing too small.

Saving one life, two lives is huge.

Let me give you the breakdown real quick so you understand.

The average well for us costs \$4800.

There are some places that are very difficult to reach, there are some places where to get to actual clean water, you have to drill quite deep.

But we go in, and we make it a well that will last for an average of 70 years.

It's totally enclosed.

This is truly water for life, because it is clean drinking water.

It changes a village, it changes a region.

We believe we have impacted nations through this, but again, it's all because of you.

Some of you can drill an entire well, and I would encourage you if you can do that, please do that.

You'll bless so many people.

Some of you can join with others, \$48 will help provide clean drinking water for a lifetime.

For an average of 10 people, a gift of \$144 would do the same for 30 people.

But here's the important thing, and Blynda, I know you know this.

I know you believe this, when we go in and we give someone clean drinking water, it's a good work, but when we go in and we give clean drinking water and we preach salvation in the name of Jesus Christ, it's a God work.

BLYNDA: It's a God work, and it makes me think.

You said something a minute ago about even if it was just one person.

You know, one person can't do everything, but every person, every person can do something, and that something that you sow into this ministry will change someone's life.

It will save someone's life.

RANDY: It is, and I've seen this.

I've been blessed to go to a lot of places where we have drilled a water well because of viewers just like you, and I've seen the difference it makes.

It changes the health of a village.

It changes the sort of the temperature of the spirit, I would say, of a village, because those who are so brokenhearted because they've lost children in the past, they know that death has been pushed away.

And we tell them, everywhere we go we tell them we are here because of God's love for you, that God has put a love in our hearts that we want to express to you through this simple act.

So, again, I would invite you to join us to share God's love in word and deed through Mission Water for Life.

Go online, go to the phone, make the best gift you can.

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 5 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 and going on the phone right now.

Make the best gift you can.

You can be that rescuer.

You can share God's love with someone in desperate need.

And you wanna hear the rest of the story.

Blynda, do you wanna hear the rest of the story?

BLYNDA: Well, I'm like on the edge of my seat.

Tell me more.

RANDY: Lauren, Beth, can you guys come back?

And let's find out what happened and see what God's done in your life?

LAUREN: Mm-hmm, please.

RANDY: All right, we hope that you will come back too.

Don't miss "Life Today," we'll see you again next time.

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[music]

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[music]

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FEMALE ANNOUNCER: Visit lifetoday.org.

Dive into your favorite "Life Today" programs.

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LAUREN: At that moment, it's like I went into shock.

I thought I was dreaming.

MALE ANNOUNCER: Lauren Burns tells her covert international rescue story.

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