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Week 6

Randy Robison & Blynda Lane

Lauren Burns & Bev Lambert

“Rescued”

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

LAUREN BURNS: J.D. went over, and he pried open those accordion-style doors, and my mom went over, and she spotted me.

RANDY ROBISON: Do you remember that?

BLYNDA LANE: You do, what was that moment like?

LAUREN: She tapped on that window, and it's foggy, and her hair is covered, and I looked at my mom, and I thought it looks just like her, but it can't be.

At that moment, it's like I went into shock. I thought I was dreaming.

ANNOUNCER: Lauren Burns tells her covert international rescue story, next on “Life Today.”

[music]

[music]

RANDY: Welcome to “Life Today.” We are right in the middle of one of the wildest and really inspirational stories, yes, Blynda?

Oh, by the way, I'm Randy Robinson, Blynda Lane's here. I'm just so excited, because I wanna hear the end of this story.

And, by the way, if you missed it, if you're like what are they talking about? All of our programs are at lifetoday.org so you can hear the first program with Lauren Burns and Bev Lambert.

But I wanna give you a little bit of a condensed version of where we're at, because Lauren was taken as a seven year old by her father, Ali, who was estranged, or divorced I guess, from her mother, Cathy.

He was from Jordan, her mother was from the United States. He was Muslim, her mother was Christian. And as a child, Lauren was taken against her will, against the will of her

mother, against the knowledge of anyone else to Jordan in the Middle East where he was planning on her spending the rest of her life.

Lauren's parents called some friends of theirs, Rick and Bev Lambert, to rescue their child. We're at the rescue point of the story, but that's where— They actually made a movie about this.

Did you see the movie?

BLYNDA: I never did see the movie.

RANDY: Like Hollywood movie.

BLYNDA: Mariel Hemingway, yes.

RANDY: Big kind of deal, but we've got the real people here, and so we're glad that you're with us to hear the rest of the story.

Did I cover the?

LAUREN: Fantastic job.

RANDY: Because there's so much going on, so I want people to see both programs, but when we left, you didn't know if you were ever coming back.

You're in school in Jordan, not speaking the language. Your mother's desperately praying at the behest of Rick and Bev, who are desperately trying to figure out how to rescue a child from the Middle East.

And a miraculous connection comes through with some people who knew how to.

LAUREN: That's right.

RANDY: Pick us up there.

LAUREN: So Dave and Don and J.D. were the veterans that said yes to going to Jordan, putting together a rescue mission to go bring me home.

They met my mom in Dallas. After meeting my mother and seeing the fierceness in her, she was going to go whether they said yes or not, they told her it's gonna take a lot of money.

The United States cannot help us. If we are captured in Jordan, all of us, all of our lives are at risk.

And my mom said, "I'll do whatever it takes." So they started to gather up the money to be able to pay. It cost over \$80,000 to pull off this rescue mission. That was in 1987.

BLYNDA: I have heard with inflation that would be like a quarter of a million dollars today.

LAUREN: Yes.

RANDY: And your mother didn't have that.

LAUREN: No, she had—my grandfather was murdered when I was a year old, and about the time that this rescue was about to take place, my mother had received \$50,000 of inheritance money, and my uncle also gave her some of his inheritance money.

So even that, God was providing the money for a single mom, not knowing that this was going to happen.

BEV LAMBERT: And the probate had just taken place months, maybe weeks before Lauren was taken. Had that been probated, you know, shortly after her father had died, the money wouldn't have been readily accessible.

All of us would have spent that money in a period of five or six years. So the fact that it had just—over this long period of time had just been probated and the money had just been dispersed and was readily available in the bank was also another God thing.

Because the finances were there, and without the finances the mission wouldn't have happened.

RANDY: It's almost like he knew, God knew maybe, you know? There's the element of free will, you know?

God orchestrates, a kidnapping of a child, but he also, we know he knew how to handle it. He knew how to line things up.

So, what happens in Jordan?

LAUREN: So, Dave was the first man that went over. His job was to try to figure out how, once they found me, how to get me out.

So he traveled up to Syria and thought Syria is a no-go, that's a war zone. He went to Aqaba, thinking he could—there's a stretch of water between Jordan and Israel.

He thought once they found me, he could put me on his back and swim me a mile across, but once he got there, he thought there's no way.

There were soldiers everywhere with machine guns and barbed-wire fences. So the next best escape route was the King Hussein Bridge between Jordan and Israel.

So he found the escape route but still could not find me.

So Don and J.D. came into Jordan, and they were there for about two or three weeks searching for me all over and could not find me.

And J.D., I got to talk to him and interview him on my podcast, and he tells about the day that he was like, "Lauren, I did everything I need to do in my experience, but I stood on the streets of Jerash, and I began praying."

And as he was standing there, Don was a couple feet away from him, a school bus pulled up, and I look like most—I have the Middle Eastern dark hair and the dark skin, but I have bright blue eyes, and so that was the distinguishing feature to try to find me.

So that bus pulls up, and J.D. turns and looks through the window, and there I sat looking through the window right at him, and he just—

BLYNDA: With your bright blue eyes.

LAUREN: Yes, and he ran over to Don and shook him by the shoulders and said, “I saw Lauren, she’s on the bus.”

And Dan was like, “How do you know?” And he goes, “I know it’s her, I saw her eyes, she’s on that bus.”

But by that time the bus had already driven through, and they couldn’t follow the bus because it was so narrow, they couldn’t capture it.

So then they radioed my mom, they called my mom. She was waiting in Cyprus, and they told my mom, “Cathy, we have found Lauren, but we can’t find Ali’s home. We need you to come and help us find the house.”

So she flew into Amman. Dave and J.D. were driving the car. She was sitting in the front seat while Don was driving.

She covered her—had her hair covered in disguise. As she drove into Jerash, she was very confident thinking she would remember where my father’s home was, but nothing looked the same.

The dirt roads were now paved, the little buildings were now big, everything was overgrown, and that fear began to come over her again.

She got down in the floorboard of that car with her eyes closed and began to pray out loud, and she didn’t care if the guys thought she was crazy or not.

And as she was praying, it’s like God was showing her where to go. She began saying turn left, go straight, turn right, and finally when she looked up, she saw my dad’s white Mazda on the streets with Texas license plates.

He had had his car shipped. He maxed out every credit card and had his car shipped to Jordan.

So she froze, she couldn’t get the words out of her mouth, and finally she said to Don, “I saw Ali’s car.”

So Dan said, “Cathy, hide your face.” And they drove back around, and when he turned back around, he saw my dad step out of the building.

So, again, not until people began praying, God showed up and showed him where the house was.

RANDY: And what, they—do you knock on the door and say give me the little girl?

[laughing]

BEV: No, I wish it'd gone that simply.

They devised a new plan, we're gonna follow the school bus, we're gonna take her off the bus. There will be no enemies on that bus.

There'll be one driver and then one like a nanny sort of person who just makes sure the children are safe back there.

He said we're gonna be dealing with two people instead of a household.

So they followed the bus.

LAUREN: Yeah, the house was right next to a police station, and they thought that's not gonna work.

So there's a little farmhouse on the outskirts of town, and the day of the mission, the code word was the sun is shining, but the sun is S-O-N, not S-U-N.

So just every piece of the story—

BLYNDA: He's woven in.

LAUREN: Every piece, so that morning there were two cars.

Dave—and they called him old man, he's the oldest of the group, he's 85 now. He was—his job was to watch the house so I actually got on the bus.

They didn't want to hijack the bus and me not even go to school that day.

So once he saw that I was on the bus, that car drove over. He drove over to where my mom and Don and J.D. were and said mission's a go, Lauren's on the bus.

As soon as the bus passed Don's car, he drove, and he parked right behind it.

So as the bus was parked, getting the other kid onto the school bus, Don jumped out and went over to the driver's side window and was speaking in English to distract the bus driver.

J.D. went over, and he pried open those accordion-style doors, and my mom went over, and she spotted me.

RANDY: Do you remember that?

BLYNDA: You do, what was that moment like?

LAUREN: She—she walked over to the school window, and she tapped on that window, and it's foggy, and her hair is covered, and I looked at my mom, and I thought it looks just like her, but it can't be.

My mom's in Dallas, that can't be her.

At that moment, it's like I went into shock. I thought I was dreaming, because I just thought I'd never see her again.

So she got on, she pried her way onto the bus, because I wasn't moving, and like every good mother, she gets on the bus, she gets me and she gets her—my backpack for whatever reason.

And the lady chaperone jumps on my mom's back, she has to let go of me long enough.

She turns around and punches the woman in the nose. The only person that threw a punch was my mom, and there's blood coming out of this lady's face, and I'm just really in shock.

BLYNDA: Mama bear was in full activation mode for sure.

LAUREN: Yes, so they got me into the car, hid me.

Dave and Don saw what was going on, they took care of the chaperone, and we got in the car and sped off.

And about two blocks later we switch cars with Dave. Dave had the most dangerous part of the mission.

He took the car that we just used to hijack the bus, and he went back to the city to be a decoy.

We went on with the other car towards Israel, and during that drive, the fog was so thick that you could barely see the front of the car.

It was about a 45-minute drive from where we were, and as we're driving, my mom asked Don, "What is that bright light in the distance?"

And Dan goes, "Well, Cathy, that's Israel. The sun—the sun is shining over Israel."

So, again, it's like, God's like, "Cathy, I'm not going to leave you."

The whole time she's praying, and I'm in a fever, I'm not speaking, I'm in total shock, and it's just so much fear going on.

And at that moment, we didn't know Dave had gotten pulled over in the middle of Jerash, surrounded by Jordanian police.

They were tearing apart the car looking for evidence of us.

They brought the school bus driver to the car, and the school bus driver's saying in Arabic, "That's the car, but I don't know who the guy is."

Because remember, Dave wasn't at the hijacking.

So for 30 minutes he's being interrogated.

BLYNDA: Which is great, it's giving you guys more time to get across.

BEV: But at the same time, they're shutting down all the airlines.

LAUREN: They're shutting down the airport.

BEV: The bus lines, the train, every form of transportation is shut down.

Now Cathy's the criminal for coming to get her child.

RANDY: No, yeah, but what about the King Hussein bridge?

LAUREN: So, the way that Dave got out was on the radios, those—the Jordanian men, the soldiers, they hear Alia Airport, Alia Airport.

They left Dave on the side of the road, and they all went to the airport, because like Bev said.

BLYNDA: Thinking that's where you are.

LAUREN: They were shutting down the airport, so he was able to get away.

BEV: Because they were certain they were gonna be flying out. We're Americans, that's what we do.

LAUREN: So, at the bridge, we get there.

You have—back then you have to leave your car, give all your paperwork and passports and visas, and then you get on a bus, and you sit on the bus.

And then the bus, once you get cleared to go, in the middle of the bridge, there's a little a shack with this Israeli soldier and the Israeli bus driver.

So as you drive and you see the flags, the Israeli flag, that bus can only go so fast.

And then once you're in the middle of the bridge, the Israeli soldier and the Israeli bus driver, they switch, and they take you on over into Israel.

We sat on that bus on the Jordanian side for about 30, 40 minutes waiting for the bus driver to come on.

And there are big towers with machine guns, with soldiers everywhere.

We finally start to go, and we cross over and see the Israeli flag, and about the time we go over into Israel, there's a big commotion behind us.

They had just realized that we were on the bus and not the airport, but it was too late.

We had escaped, and there's nothing they could do.

BLYNDA: Praise God.

LAUREN: So we get off that bus.

My mom is crying, kissing the ground, and there's a group of women there going, "What is going on?"

She goes over to J.D., and it's like, "Is the woman okay? Is the daughter okay?"

And J.D. tells them that they had just rescued me. I've been gone for three months, and they just brought me home.

And so the women are jumping up and down going, "Praise you, Jesus. We've come to the Holy Land, and we've seen a miracle."

And so they come and they start to, you know, pray and cry with us.

RANDY: Whoo!

Okay, wow, I can't wait for the book to come out when you finish that. Please finish that.

I look forward to that, because I mean we've heard a lot, but there's so much going on.

Let me ask you this, though, Lauren, because, I mean, that's great, that's a wonderful story and God's faithfulness.

But that is—that can create some issues for—especially for a little girl, just the trauma of being taken, the feeling of abandonment and thinking you're never gonna see your mother again.

Your father who probably thought in his mind that he was doing the right thing.

What did it do to you long-term?

LAUREN: And thank you for asking, because that's why I would say this is where my story begins.

I was very angry at God, and you might think how can you be angry at God?

He just rescued you.

I had to change my last name. We had to live in hiding. I moved 14 times by the time I was in high school.

I had a lot of anger, and I actually lived with Beth and Rick and Miranda and Luke in the house that built me, the song that Miranda sings about that.

That was where I—my journey of healing began.

I had to surrender. I had to go before God and say, "I am mad that you allowed this to happen to me."

"I didn't have a childhood. I don't even have a father. I don't know what the love of a father sounds like."

God's word talks about you are a heavenly Father that is so good, and that song we sing, you're a good, good father, it's who you are.

I couldn't sing that song, because I didn't know what that felt like.

And God's like, "Lauren, if you just trust me, if you just surrender before me and allow me to show you how to forgive."

So in Life Group, in Prairie Creek Church in Lindale, Texas, is where I had my healing.

It's like God was peeling the layers back like an onion of all those wounds.

And when I could allow God to show me forgiveness does not mean forgetting.

Forgiveness does not mean what my dad did was okay.

Forgiveness is I surrender to you, God. He's not mine to be mad at anymore, he is yours.

And that's when my healing began.

And so being able to be redeemed and restored is walking through that journey of healing.

BLYNDA: Which probably never ends.

I mean, it's still something that you probably walk through.

RANDY: I really strongly believe that forgiveness is not abandoning justice but saying, "God, I trust your justice over mine."

BLYNDA: That's good.

LAUREN: That's right.

BLYNDA: That's really good.

RANDY: He is a just God.

LAUREN: That is right.

RANDY: He is a just God, sorry.

BLYNDA: No, no, I'm so glad you said that.

So, in this—because that Life Group moment, you were still a teenager then.

So now all these years later, you're married and you've got children.

How—did you ever have a restoration and relationship with your dad?

When you say forgiveness doesn't always mean restored relationship, what did that look like for your life?

LAUREN: Great question.

My father—and my mom showed me how to forgive.

My father went to my high school graduation in Lindale, Texas.

My father came to our home. My mom cooked a meal for him.

This was a lot of steps I'm skipping, but she allowed me to write letters to try to have—I wanted to know who he was.

Every child wants to know who their father is, no matter what situation they've been through.

Rick Lambert was my dad when I didn't have a dad.

My mother remarried, and my stepfather was amazing.

He's the one that walked me down the aisle, because little girl wants to know who's going to do that.

And so it was a journey of healing and knowing the good father.

And so now today, I don't have a relationship with my dad, because I needed those healthy boundaries.

But God allowed me a couple months after my stepfather passed away, my dad tried to find me again.

And we had a phone conversation, and I got to tell him, "Because I believe in Jesus Christ, I forgave you a long time ago."

"I no longer have anger or hurt, but I did have a father that raised me that was there when my boys were born, that was there that walked me down the aisle."

And it was just that closing chapter, because I had to grieve my father more than once.

I grieved my father when he took me, and then I grieved my stepfather when he passed.

BLYNDA: Yeah, you have The Redeemed podcast.

LAUREN: I do.

RANDY: Is your heavenly Father a good, good father?

LAUREN: He is a good, good father.

RANDY: You can sing that now?

LAUREN: Yes, I can sing that song.

RANDY: Have you seen redemption?

BEV: Yes, many times over with her and walking the whole journey, and ooh!

BLYNDA: And for those who may not know, you are the mother, and Rick is the father of Miranda Lambert, who is the award-winning singer-songwriter Miranda Lambert.

BEV: Yes, yes, we're blessed to have that job.

RANDY: Well, the people have to know the song to catch that reference, but what I want people to hear today are two things.

We do have a good, good father, and I don't know what kind of father you've had, it probably hasn't been as crazy as Lauren's story.

We do have a good heavenly Father, and he does redeem, he does restore, he does heal.

If you need someone to pray with you, that phone number that's on the screen is a prayer line where someone will just stop and join with you to go before our good Father wherever you're at.

And the other thing is that we are the expression of God's goodness.

That's how he chooses to work.

He uses, as my father says, he uses imperfect people to accomplish his perfect will, and his perfect will is to help those in need.

You can help someone in need right now, today.

You can express the heart of a good, good father and show them what Christian love looks like.

They need to see it.

Watch this, and you'll see how.

ANNOUNCER: Across rural Africa, families depend on rivers like this for their daily water, but behind each drop lies a difficult truth.

What does that mean for their quality of life?

Anabela is a nurse from the rural clinics in the area.

She has dedicated her life to helping families in the surrounding villages.

[speaking foreign language]

ANNOUNCER: Severina is just one of many mothers in the area that has no choice but to rely on this water for her family.

[speaking foreign language]

RANDY: I can't even imagine, you know, I'm a father, I'm a grandfather now, and I'm a man, I wanna go in, and I wanna fix the situation.

Which is why I get so excited about Water for Life, because I know that we can make a difference.

We can go into those situations, and we can give them clean drinking water.

BLYNDA: Yes.

RANDY: What does it do to you when you see the pain that these mothers go through?

BLYNDA: Well, it is, it's so heartbreakin.

And even as we've seen today, there's no limit a mom will not go to to protect, to provide, to help your child survive.

And yet these moms are helpless.

They have the same desire I have as a mom to want to protect my child, and yet they can't.

Without our help, they can't, and they have to watch their children get sick.

I can't even imagine.

If my child has a fever, I will do anything I can to figure out how to help that child, they're helpless.

RANDY: They are, and you know what's interesting is having been there, they do what they can.

They will try to filter the water. They will try.

It's hard to boil sometimes if you can't build a fire and you don't have something to boil in, it's very difficult.

That's why when we go in, we just say, look, we have the solution, we have the ability, we have the capability and the means to solve this problem of clean drinking water.

And if you have the power to do something good, don't you want to do it?

I know so many of you do.

Let me tell you how it works.

\$4800 will on average drill one water well that will last, on average, 70 years.

That's water for life, clean drinking water.

Just be a part of it.

There's no part that's too small.

A \$144 gift will provide the same clean drinking water for 30 people.

A gift of \$48 will do that for 10 people.

Here's where I come from, just so you know.

We're in a position to save lives.

We represent Christ on this earth.

James, the half brother of Jesus, says that faith without works is dead.

We're told that we were created for good works.

This is our opportunity.

Every crisis we face is an opportunity to say let me show you what goodness looks like.

Let me show you what hope looks like.

Let me show you what God looks like, and it's very simple.

BLYNDA: And if we can do something, let's do it.

Why would we not?

It's an expression of God's love to someone else, and that's why we're here.

RANDY: It is, and it's simple.

That's why I invite you to be a part of Mission Water for Life.

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

Let's be the love of God in people's lives today.

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: You really can be the love of God in someone's life today.

So I hope you'll go online, go to the phone, make the best gift you can.

Give them clean water as we share the water of life, which is Christ with people around the world.

And Blynda, hoo!

BLYNDA: I know, it was like drinking from a fire hydrant to get that whole story.

Thank you, Lauren, thank you, Bev, for joining us today and the program before to fill out this whole story of your life and what God has done.

And the great theme of it is redemption.

RANDY: It is, and it is redemption, not just in their case, but in all of our cases.

So come back for more encouragement.

Again, all of our programs at LifeToday.org.

We'll see you again next time.

[music]

[music]

[music]

[music]

NICK VUJICIC: Eighty-seven countries, 3500 speeches, half a million hugs, my arms fell off.

ANNOUNCER: Nick Vujicic tomorrow.

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