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Week 12

Randy Robison

Dawn Cazedessus

"Patterns For Prosperity"

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

ANNOUNCER: Coming up on "Life Today."

DAWN CAZEDESSUS: I get to be on this assignment that the Lord has called me to.

So it doesn't matter where you are, it doesn't matter if you're a stay-at-home mom, if you're a retiree or a widow, it doesn't matter where you are, we're all on an assignment to be a kingdom builder, and when we look at it from that perspective, it changes everything.

RANDY ROBISON: It does.

ANNOUNCER: Author and entrepreneur Dawn Cazedessus broke free from poverty, overcame pain and heartache, and now helps women everywhere find their God-given purposes.

[music]

RANDY: Welcome to "Life Today" all of you leaders. Yes, you are--if you're a Christian, you're a leader, whether you know it or not.

And of course, if you're in the business world, you may have people that you're leading. If you're a parent, a grandparent, you're raising up those young ones, but in some capacity you are called to be a leader for the kingdom of God.

How do you do that? We're gonna talk about that, and my guest today is a leader in many aspects. She has a book called "Trailer Park CEO." It's written by Dawn Cazedessus.

She is the founder of an organization called 12 Stones Coaching, and she is a regional director for the largest single-brand realty company in the secular world in the United States, so she knows a little about leadership.

So, hang on, you're gonna get some valuable insight into how to fulfill God's calling on your life. Dawn, welcome to "Life Today."

DAWN: Oh, so excited to be here, so excited.

RANDY: So, you know, we discussed this when we talked online, but "Trailer Park CEO," some people think, oh, you own trailer parks. No, what is this? What is the trailer park?

DAWN: Yeah, you know, people think that because I'm in the real estate industry, so they're like, oh, so Dawn, you own trailer parks. I'm like, no, no, no, came from the trailer park.

And so really to unpack that and to have an understanding of why I wrote the book and called it "Trailer Park CEO," you gotta go way back. And I hope this provides hope for people today, because my mom was 15 years old when she became pregnant for me.

And she was sitting there, as you could imagine any 15 year old, a junior in high school with this decision of like, do I keep the baby? Do I give it up for adoption, abortion?

All of those things were racing through her mind as she was watching her future, and she made a bold decision and a courageous one to keep me, which also then landed us into poverty, because the statistics are there.

When teenage pregnancies happen, there's very little resources, especially when you're already coming from that much, and that was her background.

And so that landed us into the trailer park, and that became home for many, many years until actually I left to go to college. And so I left from a trailer to a dorm room was my transition.

It has been a journey that I am grateful for now at the age of 51 for that trailer park season of who I've become today. Wouldn't trade it of who I've become, but man, a lot of obstacles and challenges to overcome coming out of that season.

RANDY: No doubt, was God in the picture there?

DAWN: So, not in the beginning at all, but you know, as we get older, and we reflect on our life, I can see where God was there. I can see where he was grabbing me and holding me and protecting me.

In the trailer park, there was abuse and addictions and all the things that, you know, as a little girl, you sit there, and you're like you don't even understand the big world outside, and then you see these things, and God was protecting, and he was guiding.

It wasn't until I--my senior year of college that I finally heard the gospel message that then surrendered my heart and changed it. But up until that point, I knew there was a God, I believed in a God, and I believed that he was good, but I didn't really understand my situation with him.

God was not part of-- we didn't go to church. I actually started walking to a church because of a youth group.

RANDY: Oh, wow, interesting.

DAWN: So, when I--yeah, I was attracted to, well, one, fun. Youth group's fun, right? As you go, and it was a lot of fun, but I was attracted to what I was seeing that was different.

The people that were part of it, the kids that were part of it, they were just different, and it provided hope. And so I remember walking those gravel roads to go to that church. So I was dabbling in it but didn't understand.

RANDY: Yeah, God was planting seeds. And by the way, for all you youth directors and church leaders, keep doing what you're doing, because you're creating more Dawns out there.

So, what are some of the things that you've learned along the way that really are biblical principles but you've applied in the secular world that they work both places?

DAWN: Yeah, well, I will tell you the very first one that I actually called a stone in my book was how to fail forward.

RANDY: How to fail.

DAWN: How to fail, because--

RANDY: Okay, yeah, this is-- wait, we're not supposed to fail, we're supposed to succeed, right?

DAWN: Yeah, well, and I had a fear of it, because I was scared that when I would fail, it would put me back in the trailer park. So I had left the trailer park physically when I went off to college and was the first one to go off to college.

But I remember, you know, getting in my car and driving and looking in the rearview mirror and seeing the trailer behind me, but it took years to mentally leave the trailer park, and a lot of it is because of fear of failing.

I was so scared that it would send me right back and that I would not want to take risks, but then, also, I wouldn't even take a step forward sometimes in things that I was doing, because I was like, wait, but what if that doesn't work out? And what if I can't make it, then what will I do?

And so it wasn't--and I believe it's the Holy Spirit, obviously, that gives us the courage to overcome. And finally, I was like, okay, I cannot stay where I am, and I have to mentally change, otherwise I can physically be removed, but mentally I will always be crippled. And so I had to make a decision to start failing forward.

RANDY: Okay, you have an acronym that helps us get through the failure in a good way, because failure doesn't have to be the end, right, unless we quit, right? So, walk us through how to fail the right way.

DAWN: Yeah, I had to create some way to kind of almost do like a mind hack of like, okay, in the moment, think about when you're in a failing moment, the emotions, especially when you have limiting beliefs or scarcity mindset, right? You're sitting in it, and you're almost like, I don't know how to get out of it.

And so I had to do this mind hack, and it was an acronym, and so I took the word fail and I said how do I reframe it to where my brain doesn't go into survival mode when I'm in it, will allow me to become into a thriving mode, right?

And so if we break it down, the F stands for forgive. And the reason is, is because when I would have failing moments, sometimes I would look at it as almost sin. I would be crippled by it, and I would almost like have shame and then like, Dawn, why did you do that? Why did you allow that to happen? Why did you make that mistake, right?

And so I knew that I had to start forgiving myself that sometimes I just didn't have the resources. Sometimes I just didn't have the knowledge, right? And so it wasn't a sin, it was just a lack of, and so forgiving myself.

In order to go to the next letter, A, which is accept, I had to forgive, because you can't accept something if you're literally sitting there in it and not understanding it, right? And so I would then accept it, and I would be like, hey, I can't blame it away, I can't blame others.

I can't blame the trailer park, I can't sweep it underneath the rug, I say we do this often in our lives. We go through these moments and we want to sweep it under a rug, and then eventually that rug becomes a tripping hazard.

And so I was like I have to accept it for what it is so that I could do what I say is the hardest thing for me is the I, it's inspect. And the reason that's so hard is because to inspect something means you have to relive it.

I have to go back into it, okay, rewind. Why did I make that decision? Why did I act that way? Why did I go and do what I did? Was I hangry? I was really hungry and needed food. Or did I not have enough sleep? Did I not seek wise counsel? Did I not, you know, get resources that I need? And so inspecting it helped me break patterns in my life.

Because for most of us, and, you know, even if it's not ourselves, we sometimes see it in other people. We see people doing the same thing over and over again, and we're like, why are you doing that? Why do you keep making the same choices in your life over and over?

There's a pattern, and I think it's because we don't take time to inspect those patterns so that we can, L, learn from them. And then once we've learned from them, now we get to make a decision, do I go a different path? Can I change the pattern? And the answer is yes.

RANDY: Yeah, that's helpful. And you know, you've got to learn. And what's interesting in scripture, you talk about, you know, trying to figure out is it sin? Is it--missing the mark is the literal translation, archery term, of sin, and there is a difference between sin and transgression and then iniquity, and as a believer, like, you have the Holy Spirit.

Sin still happens, we miss the mark. Sometimes it's--we don't even realize it. There's a difference between transgression where you're doing something you know to be wrong.

And the sin, I don't wanna downplay it, but Jesus has it so covered that you can do exactly what Dawn's talking about, which is forgive yourself, because Jesus has forgiven you, except that it happened, take a look at it, and then learn from it.

That's a process that we need to go through, and you're saying that that's not only helped you in your personal life, but it's helped you in business?

DAWN: Oh, yes. Well, in business we have to make decisions all the time, and especially now I have a lot of people that I get to lead, and I'm honored to get to lead them.

And so in those moments, sometimes you're sitting there like I have all these decisions to make. How do I make the right decisions with the information that I'm given? You know, even as a mom--

RANDY: I was gonna say, that sounds like our--

DAWN: Oh, for all of our moms out there, you know, when I look at raising the kids and the time, the season of homeschooling, and all the things, you're sitting there, and you're like are they gonna be in therapy when they're 25 years old because of the decisions that I'm making, right?

And so you're looking at those things, and it's like, okay, I have to give myself permission to fail forward in these decisions, right? So that I can learn from them.

And I actually even write in my book that as my kids were growing up, I wanted them to have failing moments. I wanted them to go through some things that they can learn at an early age how to reframe it and make the mistakes now so that you don't have these big patterns in your life later on that don't serve you well.

RANDY: Yeah, that's true. Okay, so in that, how do you maintain a sense of optimism? Because it's real easy, I mean, I've been, you know, you try to do something, you keep making the same mistake, you're like I'm a terrible sinner, you know?

And you can get pessimistic real quick, and I think that's a dangerous place to be. How do we hold to the hope that God will finish the work he has started in us through even the failures?

DAWN: Yeah, well, I had to reframe optimism as well, because I was always told optimism meant a glass half full. Well, if you look at it from that, well, then the opposite means if you're pessimistic, it's a glass half empty. And so that was the two definitions I was sitting with, and I was like, okay, but where does abundance come in?

And Ephesians 3:20, it tells us that he'll do immeasurably more than we could ever imagine. And I was like that sounds like a glass overflowing. That's abundance, right?

And then I remembered early on in my leadership, and, you know, I was starting to get more responsibility and leading more people, and I remember looking at this, and sometimes my glass was full, but it wasn't enough, because things were happening in the world, things were happening in the organizations, personal things in my other leaders' lives, and you're sitting there, and you're like, hey, my glass is full, but I can't loan any, like I can't give any.

And so I reframed it. It's like, as a believer, we need to have a glass that's overflowing.

RANDY: That's scriptural, yeah.

DAWN: Overflowing, so that when we're in these situations, and we're sitting with someone that's going through a hard time or they're being hit by life, right? Because life happens, we are able to give them this dose of hope and optimism.

And so every day after not just fill my cup up, I gotta make sure I'm in the Word, and I'm filling myself up so that it's overflowing, because I don't know what's gonna happen that day. I don't know who's gonna come into my life that might need just a little bit more.

RANDY: Yeah, boy, that's good. And you know, that translates to whatever leadership role we're in, even if it's, you know, an older person who's semi-retired or, you know, widowed, widower, you're still interacting with people.

And that's what I love about "Trailer Park CEO" is that, yes, it applies to women in business very specifically, but it also applies to just normal people.

And I think in order for us to be able to continue to grow and to learn to forgive ourselves, to fail, to stay not just optimistic as the world describes it, but over-abundance, I think a key component, and tell me what you think, I think it's humility, because, well, lots of reasons. Does that resonate with you?

DAWN: Oh, 100%, Randy, because I have to remind myself today, like every day, you're given all of these responsibilities, and sometimes when things go really well, you're like, hmm, I kind of did good on that one. Look what I did, right? That's our flesh.

And then I have to sit back and like, okay, but did you forget about the mess that you made the other day? Did you forget like where you didn't do so well?

And so I have to wake up every day and be like, Lord, first of all, forgive me right now for any time that I think that I'm in control of any of this, because I know that you give and you can take it away.

And so humility is the only way that you can have a glass that's overflowing, that optimism that's overflowing, because I know it's not of me. I know the joy that I have is not because of Dawn, it is because I'm allowing that Holy Spirit to come in and be filled up regularly every single day to be able to go out there and tackle all the things that is happening in the world today, because they're happening. Turn it on, right? And you see it.

RANDY: One question I do have, because you are in a secular business environment every day. You know, as a regional director, you have a lot of people under you. How does that--

how do you balance the sensitivities that you have to have in the secular world with your overflowing?

DAWN: It's the hardest thing.

RANDY: Really?

DAWN: It really is the hardest thing, because I have so many people that don't believe the same things that I believe, live different lives and things like that. And so here's what-- how I look at it.

I'm on an assignment. We have missionaries that go out to the field and do great work, but I also believe that we're missionaries right where we're planted.

And when I wake up every day, I get to be a missionary in the workforce, I get to be on this assignment that the Lord has called me to, and so when I look at it from that perspective, I can take sometimes the persecution, because I often say I'm unapologetic about my faith, right? And they're, you know, those welcome persecutions, they do, right?

But I get to take all of those things, because I'm on an assignment, so it doesn't matter where you are. It doesn't matter if you're a stay-at-home mom, if you're a retiree or a widow, it doesn't matter where you are, we're all on an assignment to be a kingdom builder, and when we look at it from that perspective, it changes everything, changes everything.

RANDY: It does, you know, it also enables something else that you talk about that we love around here, that's generosity. How key has generosity been?

Because I know, especially when you're around a bunch of people who don't believe the same way as you do, they can't deny true generosity from the heart. What's it meant for you?

DAWN: You know, whenever I was writing the book, it wasn't originally gonna be included in the book. It was like afterwards, we're sitting around and talking about it, and we were in just conversations with people, and I was like talking about the generosity that's been given to me in my life.

You know, when you were growing up, when we were growing up in the trailer park, we didn't have money for Christmas. The community, the church adopted us, and those presents came from them, right?

And I write about in my book about now, like my teachers in high school that saw that I was having a hard time and gave me the money to go to a leadership conference, right? And throughout my life, I've had it, lots of people just stepping up and filling into the gaps of the financial needs that were needed.

So money was supplied but also time. In my life I've had a lot of people show up with their-- the most precious asset they have, their time, and be generous to me to teach me something to grow.

And so I decided to call it the Lagniappe stone, because that's a good New Orleans term. It means a little extra, it's like the Baker's dozen. So it's actually the 13th stone in the book, and it talks about generosity.

It's like as believers, none of it is ours. None of it belongs to me, and so it is for me to give and to be able to grow the kingdom.

And so I love the perspective of generosity is taking the fruits that we have harvested from the gifts that God has given us and then using it for his kingdom. That is what we're called to do.

RANDY: You're so right, so right. And God blesses that.

DAWN: Amen.

RANDY: He says when you're generous to the poor, in Proverbs, that he is basically indebted to you. He will repay you is what it says. And I just think, wow, God, you don't have to do that, right? But out of that abundance.

All right, I would love to generously send you Dawn's book called "Trailer Park CEO." You can read it for yourself and then pass it on, because these are great principles for wherever you're at.

And the way we wanna send it to you today is to offer you a chance to overflow, to be generous to people who actually are in desperate need. So, watch this and pray and just ask God, God, how--what would you have me do? Because this is a need, a very, very real need, and you are a part of filling it. Watch this.

JOHN YEATTS: I had the privilege of visiting one of the hospitals of our medical mission partners in Africa. While there, I met some of their staff who were making their rounds.

A meaningful time for me was being with some of the families and their children who were recovering from surgery.

Each and every day their medical staff see children who are born with serious physical conditions. Many have never been able to walk normally because of having club feet or windswept legs or bowed legs.

Other conditions they see range from cleft lip, cleft palate, childhood injuries that impact bone growth and physical appearances.

If not corrected in time, these children are destined to lead a life of misery and suffering, but that's where these gifted surgeons step in in a very unique way.

KALOMBO KAZADI: We are servants of the Lord. The Lord can do anything that you want to do without--even without us, he can do, but he has chosen us so that we can help to do his work.

JOSEPH THEURI: And that's why even as medical people, we really have to depend on him. We have to pray for them who are the patients. Pray for them when we are doing the operations.

Just because we know that we are just the hands of someone who is actually doing the work. You're just doing that small part, and then God does the rest.

KALOMBO: And it's a great joy that he's going to use me as one of the tools to make his work perfect again.

JOHN: It is wonderful seeing children walk and run and play with smiles and laughter in ways they never could before. Life Outreach's medical partners are restoring dignity and transforming lives of precious children through these reconstructive surgeries.

I invite you to join us in supporting Life's medical missions outreach with your prayers, your love, and your financial support so that even more children can experience healing, hope, and lasting change.

[music]

RANDY: What you're seeing there is a biblical principle that I wanna stress to you right now, and you can go all the way back to God using Moses to deliver the Israelites. God could have done that without Moses, but you know what he chooses to do? He chooses to bring us into his plan, not because he needs it, but because we need it.

You're seeing that right now in Zimbabwe at that hospital with those doctors, and wow, what a testimony, those doctors saying we are tools in God's hand. Their skills that they have given to the Lord to help these children whose lives would be much more difficult without those surgeries, and you know what? Their skill, their time, their expertise, they give freely.

Those children, the families of those children, they don't pay a thing for those surgeries. Their lives are changed because of the love of God and the support of people just like you, and we need to do more. Partner with what God is doing. You will find blessing there.

You know, Proverbs says that if you're generous to the poor, then you're loaning to God, and he will repay it. I mean, God doesn't need your loan.

God is trying to give us a principle by which we can live that says if we will remember the poor, if we will be generous to the poor, if we will help those in need, then God will step in and bless us in ways that we can't even measure. That's that partnership.

We have a need right now at that hospital in Zimbabwe. It's going to cost \$600,000 to renovate that. That means expanding the operating rooms.

It means giving more places for those children to recover and those families to stay and for those doctors to work.

It means touching more lives, correcting more of those conditions, enabling more children to run, to smile, to play, and more importantly, to live a normal, productive life. You can give that to them. You can give that to them today.

In fact, we need to hear from you quickly, because this is a one-time thing, this is not an ongoing thing, this is we're going to expand it, and we're going to bless more children, but we need to hear from you right now. Whatever gift you can make today will make a difference.

Some of you can give more financially towards that goal, but the most important thing is that you pause for a moment, you say, Lord, would you have me partner with you on this? And then you obey whatever he says. He will bless you however he wants to bless you, which is typically in the way you need it most.

But don't give to get, give because God has put it on your heart to be generous. That's the starting point. And make the best gift you can.

If you're in a position just to renovate that whole place by yourself, do it. I know most of you are not. But let's come together, let's be a part of what God's doing. Let's step into his plan to bless others. Go to the phone, go online, give the best gift you can.

ANNOUNCER: Many children in Africa are born with severe deformities or suffer life-altering injuries, conditions like club feet, windswept legs, and untreated fractures force them to live in pain because help is out of reach. But you can offer healing today.

Our mission partner in Zimbabwe runs a children's hospital now at capacity and in urgent need of renovation and expansion. With a \$600,000 goal and only a short period of time to raise the necessary funds, your best gift today helps children receive the surgical care they need at no cost to the families.

Together we can heal precious lives and reveal the love of Jesus.

With a gift of any amount, we'll send you the "Global Impact of Life" Journal, featuring inspiring photos from Life's outreaches. This beautiful journal is a reminder that your prayers and partnership are making a global difference.

With your gift of \$126 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 \$1,026 to help with the expansion of operating rooms so children are no longer turned away and request Life's beautiful bronze sculpture, The Good Shepherd. Please call, write, or make your gift online today.

RANDY: I do hope you're calling or going online. You are desperately needed, and you will reflect God's love in action, and those missionaries will continue in that space we build for them, so please be a part of that.

Request "Trailer Park CEO," we'd love to send it to you. Dawn, it's so good. Thank you for sharing just a portion of this today.

DAWN: It's an honor. It was an honor to be here, an honor to share my story, because that's why I wrote it, to provide hope and that optimism that people are looking for today.

RANDY: Ah, so good, so good, and so true, and you know what? You can provide hope and optimism to others, so please do that and come back. We've got more for you here on "Life Today."

[music]

MALE: I'm holding my ten year old oldest son in my arms, and I just know he's about to breathe his last breath.

ANNOUNCER: Next week.

ANNOUNCER: "Life Today" is made possible by the supporters of Life Outreach International. Your gift will be used exclusively for the exempt purposes of Life.

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