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Week 13

Randy Robison & Blynda Lane

Jameson Reeder Sr. & Jameson Reeder Jr.

"Shark Attack"

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

JAMESON REEDER JR.: So I do a 360, and then I turn back to the boat to swim back to the boat, and that's when the shark attacked me.

JAMESON REEDER SR.: Just as a dad, you're witnessing, you know, your nightmare.

I'm holding my 10-year-old oldest son in my arms, looking in his big, beautiful blue eyes, and I just know he's about to breathe his last breath.

ANNOUNCER: A devastating shark attack left Jameson Reeder Jr. on death's door, his miraculous rescue and recovery next.

[music]

RANDY ROBISON: Welcome to "Life Today," I'm Randy Robison. Blynda Lane joins me, how are you?

BLYNDA LANE: Happy to be here.

RANDY: I'm happy to be here, and I'm happy that you're here, because you're going to hear a story that is hard to listen to at times, but in that you're gonna see how God walks us through our darkest moments.

So I don't know where you're at. My former pastor used to say if you're not in the middle of a storm, you're either coming out of it or you're going into it. And the good news is that God is in the storms.

Our guests are Jameson and Jameson, Jameson Sr., Jameson Jr., Reeder. Welcome to "Life Today," great to see both of you guys.

J.J.: We're glad to be here, thank you.

JAMESON: Thank you, excited to be here.

RANDY: Can we call you J.J. for the purposes of this program?

J.J.: Yes sir.

RANDY: So, they're here to tell their story. They have a book called "Rescue at the Reef." It's available wherever you get books, but it's an amazing story.

So, let's, no pun intended, dive right into this, Blynda.

BLYNDA: Yes, it really, what an amazing journey and story that you have. Here you are now, how old are you today?

J.J.: Fourteen.

BLYNDA: Fourteen, so this happened when you were ten years old, so four years of a story to tell.

Can you tell us, set the stage of where you were and what you were doing. For those who are watching, you have a prosthetic leg, and there's a story behind that. Let's hear about it.

J.J.: So we were 9 miles offshore at a reef called Looe Key Reef, and it was a beautiful day, clear waters, beautiful sky, no clouds, and we were just having an amazing time in the water, and it took us 45 minutes to get out there, so it took a while to get out there.

BLYNDA: So, you're swimming around, you're snorkeling with your family. It's not just you in the water, is that correct?

J.J.: Yes ma'am.

BLYNDA: And so then as you're snorkeling, tell me what then starts happening that makes you realize you might be in danger.

J.J.: So, we're on the boat eating lunch, and then I see a turtle surface the boat, and I'm like, "Hey, Dad, can I go grab the GoPro, and can I go follow the turtle?" And he's like, "Yeah," so I grab the GoPro, I jump in, and my dad jumps in with my little brother Nehemiah who is how old at the time?

JAMESON: He was three at the time.

J.J.: He was three at the time. So I jump in, and my brother and my dad jump in with me, and I start to follow this turtle.

And I start following this turtle for a while, and he keeps--and he slows down for me to get really close to him to where I almost I could touch him.

BLYNDA: Which had to feel really cool.

J.J.: Yes, really cool, really cool.

So, I am following this turtle for quite a bit, and then it starts to swim a little faster. It keeps swimming so fast that I can't keep up with it and then just swims faster than I've ever seen any turtle swim before.

So I'm like, okay, that's weird, because it's been letting me follow it, so I do a 360, and then I turn back to the boat to swim back to the boat, and that's when the shark attacked me.

BLYNDA: So, you didn't see it coming, just out of the blue? And I even kind of remember hearing that you never really saw the shark at any point, even when you were looking back.

So at that point, the shark, you feel the bite on your leg, and are you immediately able to call for help?

J.J.: So, it bites me right below my knee first, and then it lets go, and that's when I started to scream, and then in my scream, I say what the heck was that?

And then it goes, it bit lower, and then it started to shake. No, it didn't come back, it was still there. It just let go, and it bit lower.

And it started to shake, and then it jerked my head back, and I still didn't know what it was. And then that's when I knew what it was.

RANDY: Jameson, where were you when all this was going on?

JAMESON: Yeah, so as J.J. said, we were in the water together, and my youngest was three at the time and so he's floating on a flotation device, and we dive with pool noodles so that as we're swimming looking down in the water and we see something we like we wanna explore we release the pool noodle, dive down, check it out, then come back up and have that little piece of flotation to, you know, keep us going.

So I was doing that, diving down, showing him on the surface, my 3-year-old, little Nehemiah, just what was going on down below, and as I'm watching J.J. have just this incredible interaction with this turtle, I am trying to keep little Nehemiah occupied so he doesn't splash around and spook the turtle, this interaction they're having.

And we're constantly looking for sharks, because that's an important part of the ecosystem, so they're there, there's no fences in the ocean, so sharks go where they want when they want.

And diving my whole life, we've had plenty of positive shark encounters so we weren't even just looking for sharks because we were afraid, we were looking for them because it's kind of, you know, fun to see them in their natural environment.

No sharks all day long, and when this attack happened, I had just surfaced from, and it's only 8 feet deep of water. As he said, wonderfully crystal-clear Caribbean water, I mean, as shallow as, you know, most pools are, right?

So, we're just like it's perfect and just hundreds of species of marine life, so it is amazing.

And when he's screaming, I'm thinking, well, we've already been stung by jellyfish, which is more of a nuisance, right? But then a man of war, that's an intense sting, I'm thinking maybe he's screaming because he got a man of war sting.

So when you don't see a shark you're not thinking shark, and he's not screaming shark. So I just think, man, you know what? He's right there, you know, I'm a fast swimmer, let me just get to him, but little Nehemiah is just gonna drift off in the in the Caribbean currents to the Bahamas if I leave him.

So, I grab him, get him on the back of the boat, we crank the engine and just bring the boat right to him.

He's sitting on his pool noodle, very buoyant, and Mary, my wife and I, as we approach him, we're looking, and we're saying why is he so--to ourselves in our mind--why is he so buoyant?

And what we believe was happening literally the hand of God, it was like he was in a chair, and he was just being held up away from the shark, not totally out of the water, but we still don't see his leg, which is below the water line.

So, I'm now getting pushed into the reef. It's getting really shallow, and the current, the wind are kind of pushing a little bit. I said, honey, you gotta dive in, grab him, bring him to the back of the dive platform, and I'll receive him from you.

And as I pulled him in, out of the water, we see for the first time he's essentially below his knees, his leg is gone, and then his foot is just attached to his tibia. His fibula bone, the outer smaller bone's gone, tibia bone just has shark teeth bite marks all over it.

And Randy and Blynda, I'm holding my 10-year-old, oldest son in my arms, looking in his big, beautiful blue eyes, and I just know he's about to breathe his last breath. He's bleeding out.

There is no, as he said, we're 9 miles offshore at the most dove reef in the state of Florida. There's people everywhere, by the way. It's really--it's far out there, but it's just--it's a beautiful location. Never a documented shark attack until now.

And as I scream in unbelievable denial, no, just no, this cannot be happening, he looks at me, and he says, what'd you say?

J.J.: And I said, "Daddy, it's okay. Jesus is gonna save me."

JAMESON: Amen.

BLYNDA: How did you have that kind of faith? What made you really feel so sure about that?

J.J.: I really didn't feel sure, but I just saw my dad--I just didn't--I've never seen my dad act the way that he was acting, and so I just wanted to comfort him at that moment.

BLYNDA: Wow, that's amazing. So was there a moment when he pulls you onto the boat, and you're at the same time realizing that it's maybe as severe as it was, what was going through your mind?

As they're trying to--you may not even remember much, but as--

RANDY: And the shock.

BLYNDA: Yeah, and the shock, as they're trying to get you to safety to a hospital, are you conscious, and do you have conscious thoughts about what--

J.J.: I do.

BLYNDA: What's happening in your mind and heart?

J.J.: So, as-- Listening to my dad, he's driving the boat to other boats to get help, because it took us a while to get out to the reef, and we are trying to find a boat that was faster.

And so I'm just listening to my dad, and I look at my leg every once in a while, just like, wow, that is--that's crazy what has just happened. I felt a lot of pain during while the shark was attacking me like a lot, but then I'm not really feeling as much pain anymore.

So, I'm looking at my leg like holy cow, that's crazy. So, I'm just waiting until the next thing happens, and then my dad drives over the reef, and he--we think we find the fastest boat on the reef, and so my dad says, "Do you know where Dolphin Marina is?"

And he said--and the captain on the other boat says yes. And so my dad said, "Will you take my son there?" And so while this is happening, another nurse from another boat hears shark attack, child, and he comes--and she comes and swims onto our boat, not knowing that there was a shark in the water still.

So she comes onto our boat. My mom is like, "Who are you?" And she says, "I'm a nurse, let me help." And she didn't really--she couldn't do anything. She just swam over with a medical aid kit, is that what it's called?

JAMESON: Like just a medical marine first aid kit, and we're just sensing, man, the Lord is just with us, even though, like J.J. said, there's nothing she could do, let alone a hospital in the Keys.

This is why we're eventually airlifted to Miami, but it was just God saying, look, I've got people perfectly positioned all around this reef, just be patient, have hope, and believe that even though this looks impossible, I'm right here. I'm right here with you.

BLYNDA: There were so many miracles along the way that got him to where you are today, that moment of time, even just the nurse coming on and helping stop the bleeding a little bit, I think that probably saved your life as well.

J.J.: Yes, she--Dad tied--you took off your rash guard, right? And you tied a tourniquet on my leg, and then she took that off, and she tied a real tourniquet on my leg.

And then during that time, my dad passed me on to the other boat, and the nurse was gonna go back to her boat, but then my mom said, "You can't leave me." So she jumps on to the other boat along with the nurse, and my dad kisses me on the forehead, not knowing that he was gonna see me again.

RANDY: Okay, I got it, all right.

BLYNDA: Yeah, that's a tough one.

RANDY: I have four kids. Yeah, yeah, what-- how do you let go?

JAMESON: Oh my goodness, Randy, just as a person, a human being, let alone a dad, you're witnessing, you know, your nightmare. Your nightmare is happening in real time, being a waterman my whole life, of course you're-- you would think about sharks plenty, and you just can't believe it's gonna be you until it is, and then it's your son, and you just as a parent feel absolutely helpless.

And it just--it was a moment--so he mentioned we get to the faster boat, which is a miracle. We find the fastest boat on the reef that day. I wasn't even thinking fast boat. I was just thinking find people, find, you know, people equals help in this moment when you're 35-plus you know, minutes from shore, and the first boat we happened to go to, happened, right? The Lord led us to the fastest boat.

So as we're at this moment, I'm going--we're on the phone with 911, and they're saying this is where an ambulance will be if you can get there. And I'm going, well, you've got the faster boat, I don't. You have to run him in and save his life.

So this is a stranger, and this guy's like I'm just trying to enjoy a fun day at the reef with my family, and now all of a sudden I'm the rescue boat, and in that moment, I just sensed the Lord just say, not audibly, but just these exact words, "I will hold him until you get here."

And I thought that meant eternally, that his soul was secure, and we had prayed. I knew he was near in my mind the age of accountability. We had prayed when he was six on our bed in Fort Lauderdale that, you know, Jameson's always been deeply--just he's had such a tender heart from a young age, and when he was born, I just put my finger out to touch him for the first time, and his tiny little hand reached up and grabbed my little pointer finger, and I just felt this electric current go through my whole body.

And I've just had just such an unbelievable deep love and relationship with this young man, of course all of our kids, but he was our first, and so in this moment I'm watching what I think to be my first go to heaven.

RANDY: So, let me ask you this, because you talk about the miracle of the nurse, you talk about the miracle of the speed boat and the medical care and all the things that happened to save his life.

And this is a Job kind of question, I get it. I would be reprimanded in scripture for asking this, but I know people that are going through tough things right now, they're kind of wondering, okay, but wouldn't have been easier if God had just not allowed a bull shark to show up on the scene?

Do you ever--have you ever gone down that road of like, why does this even happen?

JAMESON: Yeah, oh, for sure. Yeah, there was probably, almost two weeks after the attack after I knew he was not only gonna be okay, but he was already talking in ways that were blowing us away about facing his fear and going back to the reef.

I know we'll eventually get to that, but as I eventually knew that we would learn to walk again, play sports again and all that, I'm starting to kind of feel for the first time, you know, you kind of just suspend your feeling. As a parent, you're numb, you just try to take everything around you.

So, we were in the hospital, and I knew everything was gonna be okay, so to speak. This is our new normal, and I just sat down one morning with the Lord and I just said, what is going on? How did this happen? Why did this happen? Is this my fault? How can I let this as a dad happen? You know, you just start looking around, going what is it?

And people were saying to us, because you're more likely to be struck by lightning five times than attacked by a shark once.

BLYNDA: I've heard that stat, it's a crazy stat, yeah.

JAMESON: So, nobody knows what to say, because they don't know anybody struck by lightning probably once, let alone twice. So the shark experience is just so unique. The hospital had never seen anything so damaging.

So people are saying stuff to us that makes us feel kind of beat down. I'm so sorry this has happened to you, I'm so sorry this has happened to you over and over again. And that made me start looking down and in, down and in.

And that morning, the Lord took me to Psalm 121, "I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come from? It comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth." And in that moment he said stop looking down and in, look up and out, not at the pain, but at the purpose.

And he said this too. He said, "This is not what has happened to you, this is what I'm gonna do through you."

BLYNDA: Amen.

JAMESON: And that was just a profound moment to say, okay, you're doing something here, I trust you, and I have to just continue to believe even in the midst of so much challenge and fear and doubt.

BLYNDA: And we've seen so much of that. I mean, you've been on multiple, you know, very high-profile shows to be able to tell your testimony, here today getting to tell your testimony.

I mean, these are all things that would not have happened had it not happened. So, are we glad it happened? No, but look what the Lord is doing in you to get to share his gospel, his hope, his love with other people.

What a privilege and honor that you get to do that and that you get to carry that, but you have been through something really, really hard.

J.J.: Yes ma'am.

BLYNDA: And you're an inspiration, how courageous and brave you are.

J.J.: Thank you.

RANDY: So, you guys went back.

JAMESON: We did.

RANDY: To the exact spot, and that is all in the book, "Rescue at the Reef." Can you guys stick around for another program?

I really wanna delve into the idea of facing the fear. I mean, because I already have-- I mean, you know, I go, I snorkel and stuff, but I have my fears, and I don't know if I'd ever go back again. I'd love for us to really kind of explore that.

JAMESON: Let's do it, we'd love to.

RANDY: So, I don't know where you're at watching right now. And yeah, we do wonder why we go through a lot of things. If you want somebody to pray with you, to be your rescue boat just for a moment, we have a telephone number.

Pick up the phone and call. Someone would love to just pray with you, and we can't answer all your questions, we can't give you all the why-s, what we can do is point you to the one who will be with you. He will never leave you, never forsake you.

But if you want someone to come alongside of you, we need that sometimes, and we'd love to provide that for you.

Right now there are some other people who need someone to come alongside them. There are some that we have come alongside, and it has changed their lives, but it presents a great opportunity to reach out to those who are facing difficult circumstances who may be asking, Lord, why? Well, we can at least give them some hope, show them God's love. Watch this, and you'll see how.

JOHN YEATTS: Hi, I'm John Yeatts, director of World Missions for Life Outreach International. Although rare, Blount's Disease is a reality for thousands of children worldwide that causes the knee and the leg to bow outward. It's very painful, and I want you to see a young man named Plasdus, how his life was dramatically changed through corrective surgery.

KAFWA SICHILIMA: I met Plasdus, he was a shy guy, reserved at the time, you know? And I asked him a simple question, how has it been for you?

I just saw tears started rolling down his eyes. And he opened up and started saying, "My friends actually laugh at me. And it's been so difficult for me to just handle this."

ILHO MOHO: It was a bit of a complex operation, but it went well. In 6 months, he has progressed very, very well. So the smile and the encouragement Plasdus gave us, it was so promising.

JOHN: Wow, how amazing it is to see Plasdus running like nothing had ever happened to him. This is a result of the dedication of our God-gifted surgeons who performed the life-changing surgery for Plasdus.

Without this medical mission outreach, he would suffer the rest of his life. I encourage you to partner with us and help provide surgeries not only for Blount's Disease but a whole range of pediatric disabilities.

Because you give, we can keep smiles on the faces of not only Plasdus, but children just like him. God bless you.

[speaking foreign language]

[music]

RANDY: That's just one story, and gosh, what a great story it is, I love that.

BLYNDA: I mean, at the end when he says I feel good now, I mean, how life-changing for him. The trajectory of his life is different.

RANDY: It does, it changes everything.

BLYNDA: It changes everything, and it's so amazing that a gift that we give can have that kind of impact on--that's not just one life, it's hundreds of lives.

RANDY: It is, because here's the thing you need to know. I want you to know this.

Every child that comes in there is met first by a chaplain. The families receive prayer right there on the spot, and many, for you know, many of them, they come from miles and miles around, even countries around to this facility in Zimbabwe, and they haven't heard the gospel necessarily, they haven't seen it in action the way that we're showing it to them, they haven't been told you don't have to pay for this life-changing surgery, but that's what we tell them.

They haven't been told that your child can have a different future, that they can have hope, but that's what we tell them. They may not have heard about Jesus, about the one God who loves them and what's good for them, but that's what we tell them, and then we show it to them, the dedication of the doctors there and the nurses, the whole staff, it's beautiful. That's why we are partnering with them.

But that one story was just one of many and even a smaller fraction of those who are waiting right now to receive a surgery that will change their lives, perhaps even save their lives.

And so, Blynda, when I look at this one story, I celebrate it, but when I look at the long line of children needing medical attention, I'm both grieved and also excited at the opportunity, because I know people will respond. That story will be repeated again and again and again.

BLYNDA: And I think if we understand that our response actually makes a difference, then I think it does, and I think if we can do something, we should. I think it's that simple.

RANDY: No doubt, let me break it down for you, because right now what we need to do is expand that facility there in Zimbabwe, the operating rooms, the recovery areas, and we

need to give those doctors and nurses the ability to take care of all the children that need care.

So what we're looking at is a \$600,000 project to restore, to expand, to renovate so that more people can hear the gospel and see it in action, and we're asking you for that.

You know, Blynda and I, my parents, we're not doctors. We need those surgeons there in Zimbabwe to do the actual work, but you know what? They need us to enable them to do the work, and we need you to accomplish this.

We have various gifts for different levels of giving. Maybe you can give \$100 \$1,000, \$10,000, whatever God enables you to give will be sufficient, because he'll multiply it like the loaves and the fishes, and he'll bless it. He'll bless your obedience.

Will you partner with us today? Will you help us reach out and say yes, we want to help more children? Pick up the phone, go online, make the best gift you can and know that you will be sharing his love and his life around the world.

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 right now. Let's do this. We can do it, but we have to do it together.

We've got more from the Reederers, and by the way, "Rescue at the Reef" is available wherever you get books, so you can go pick that up.

Is there another resource where we can catch up with you guys?

JAMESON: Yeah, bravelikejameson.com or also on social Instagram, @BraveLikeJameson.

RANDY: Wonderful, love it.

BLYNDA: It's been awesome having you, and you are brave.

J.J.: Thank you so much.

BLYNDA: We're glad you're coming back.

RANDY: And we appreciate you guys being with us. Come back on the next program with the Reederers right here on "Life Today."

[music]

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JAMESON: He's losing all of his blood, he's barely alive, and he's worshipping the Lord.

MALE ANNOUNCER: Jameson Jr.'s story continues tomorrow.

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