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Week 15

Randy Robison & Blynda Lane

Jameson Reeder Sr. & Jameson Reeder Jr.

"Fierce Faith"

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

JAMESON REEDER SR.: And as they ran in at 70 miles an hour, ripping through the wind and waves, my wife leans down and hears something, J.J., what are you saying?

And he starts singing, "Here I am to worship, here I am to bow down, here I am to say that you're my God."

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

ANNOUNCER: Jameson Reeder Jr.'s fierce faith helped him survive a horrific shark attack, next.

[music]

RANDY ROBISON: Welcome to "Life Today," I'm Randy Robison, this is Blynda Lane.

We are back.

BLYNDA LANE: Yes, we're back.

RANDY: On a two-parter, sort of.

I mean, so if you didn't see the first program with the readers, Jameson Sr. and J.J., his son, you can go back and watch that at LifeToday.org at any time, but if you missed it, stay tuned, because you'll get it.

The short end of this is that J.J., welcome back, by the way, guys.

JAMESON: Thank you, great to be back.

RANDY: We've had such a great conversation this, all right.

Okay, so J.J., though, was attacked almost four years ago by a bull shark, lost his leg from around the knee down, traumatic but yet miraculous.

God walking you through it and, you know, again, the details are in your book, "Rescue at the Reef," but aside from the physical aspect of it and the attack, there's a lot that goes with that.

Oh boy, where do we even begin? You had some more questions about the attack.

BLYNDA: Well, I could spend like hours on all the details, because it's such a miraculous story.

I mean, from everything that we talked about in the last show that had to happen to get you to safety, to get you to the hospital, so many miracles along the way.

And then you're in recovery in the hospital, and I'm--and that's what I wanna unpack in this show is what happens from that point.

But I do wanna go back to that moment when you are realizing I've been bit by something, you didn't know exactly, because there was no sign of a shark. You didn't know it was a bull shark, and you're with your other son, so you're not quite understanding what's happening.

At that moment, did you have anything inside of you that felt my life is in danger in this moment? Or were you just like, hey, somebody come help me, I've kind of been--I'm hurt? Did you know that your life was in danger?

JAMESON REEDER JR.: Yeah, I did not know it was a shark at first until it jerked my head back, and then I saw that it was a shark.

RANDY: Okay, so you did know at that moment.

You were the only one that was able to kind of see the shark, okay.

JAMESON: Once this incredible, crazy thing happened, and we now get him to this other boat, and they're running in, I'm thinking any moment my wife's gonna call me and say he's gone.

But yet, as we talked about in the last piece, I just felt the Lord say, "I'll hold him until you get here."

But what I didn't know that meant but hoped it would mean, I knew eternally his soul was secure and that the Lord would hold him if he was gonna die, but what I hoped it also meant was that the Lord would manifest himself in such a way on that boat ride in that that would save his life and the Lord would literally hold him, and that's exactly what happened.

And as they ran in at 70 miles an hour, ripping through the wind and waves and the engine roaring, my wife leans down and hears something, J.J., what are you saying?

And he starts singing, "Here I am to worship, here I am to bow down, here I am to say that you're my God."

He's losing all of his blood, he's barely alive, and he's worshipping the Lord, and the reason he's doing that is because something crazy happened.

Why don't you tell 'em what you saw on that boat ride in, son?

J.J.: So, I felt really tired, because I lost all my blood, and so I kept closing my eyes, and my mom kept tapping me on the head, and then I opened my eyes, and I'm like I gotta keep myself entertained.

I gotta do something to keep myself awake, so I'm thinking, and then right after that, what appears to me at first is a man on fire floating right above me.

And then the fire kind of fades away, and it turns out to be Jesus, and he's not saying anything, I'm not saying it saying anything. He's just there, and he's just giving me peace and the comfort and the courage to sing a song called "Here I Am to Worship." And I sang that throughout the whole way to shore.

BLYNDA: I mean, this is like the faith of like a, you know, a warrior in the faith, and you're ten at the time, like it's amazing.

RANDY: No, it is, and you know, the reality is you could chalk it up to a hallucination or a manifestation, but regardless, scripture tells us that Jesus will never leave us or forsake us.

The Holy Spirit is with us always and in us as believers.

Where did this faith even come from? Because you got a foundation that's pretty solid at this point.

JAMESON: Well, we, you know, as parents, you always ask yourself are we doing all right?

You know, you never feel like that's, you know, fully true. And when you're in it and you have moments like this, you know, faith isn't, you know, conjured up in a moment like that, it's revealed.

And so by the grace of God, my wife and I, you know, we just knew at a young age that it was our job to teach our kids the scripture. It wasn't a church or a youth group or a children's program, it was us, it was our job.

And as an ordained pastor and minister for, you know, really my whole career, I've just loved the Bible, and at a young age, we just--I mean, his first 30 days of life, I held him in my

arms and just read the Psalms over him and just began to just early on sow into them the truth of who the Lord is and what his word is about, so.

RANDY: Do you think that helped prepare you to go through this difficulty?

JAMESON: I do.

RANDY: This not sure if you're gonna lose your son and now the--because he--things aren't easy on a day-to-day basis now, are they?

JAMESON: No, no, plenty of challenges still.

He'll still have surgeries. He's growing, so his bone will grow. The little bit of bone that he has below the knee will grow right out of the bottom of his leg if we don't keep basically amending that bone.

So, that will continue to happen. And we don't know how many surgeries he'll have.

RANDY: You're laughing.

J.J.: Your face.

RANDY: Are you okay with this? My face, yeah, it is a humorous face, I do get that. But are you okay with this?

J.J.: Yeah.

RANDY: Okay.

JAMESON: Show 'em what's on your leg.

J.J.: I got a great white shark on my leg right here.

BLYNDA: That's awesome, that is awesome. I love that, that's so great.

RANDY: I mean, has this hindered you, you think? Or just made it a little bit harder than average for, I don't know, the things you wanna do, surfing or baseball or whatever.

J.J.: Surfing is my favorite thing, so I love surfing. I'm playing baseball right now.

RANDY: Do you feel like you can do whatever you want to go do?

JAMESON: Yeah, no limits, right? You don't feel like anything holds you back.

BLYNDA: I wanna go back for a second to the hospital, and you had to stay two, three weeks?

JAMESON: Three weeks.

BLYNDA: In the hospital, and was it immediate? I know by what we've described that it was probably immediately known he was going to lose his leg, but I remember seeing in the book that there was actually a moment there where you wanted a second opinion.

JAMESON: Yes, I did.

BLYNDA: Just maybe some hope, but was it a pretty easy decision to do the amputation, or was that, you know, left up to you having to make that parental choice?

JAMESON: Yeah, there's something in the book we write that's probably an an oddly-comforting thing as you read it, but we-- I'm in the lower Keys still with my three youngest, because they get airlifted, and bottom line, I get a call saying he's on the emergency operating table, and you know, we've come out to let you know we're gonna have to amputate, and I'm like, okay, well, hold on, you gotta wait till I get there, and like, well, Mr. Reeder, we're really not asking your permission, we're just kind of telling you we'll give you 5 minutes.

So immediately we called a few doctor friends, another two doctors in Fort Lauderdale who are surgeons, trauma surgeons, and understand this world very well, and as we were explaining all the details and then even the doctors came in and began to give kind of the, you know, the doctor analysis, Dr. Daniel Chan, said, "Jameson Sr., I can't imagine as a father, you know, what you're feeling like, but I want you to know you don't have to make this decision, the shark made it for you."

And in that moment with not being able to be there made me realize, okay, this is what has to happen, and he wouldn't have survived a kind of a reconstitution. He would have had to cut them all over to get the material, you know, the tissue to build the leg. They would have said probably two months later they would have had to amputate even then, so that was crazy.

RANDY: Yeah, no, that, that's hard for a parent, and again, that's why your foundation of faith really plays into it.

And that's why for anybody, if you're watching, you need to build that foundation now, because difficult times come, won't look like this, but difficulty is coming, and so I really think it's amazing.

Here's one question, though, I do have. I don't think I'd go back in the water. That was not even a question for you guys.

JAMESON: Man, what a moment.

As a dad, I'm just leaving the hospital to go like pick up a toothbrush, realized I haven't brushed my teeth in three days. All of our stuff is scattered everywhere. We're just in the

hospital taking care of our boy, and it's, you know, it's in the evening, I get a call from my dad, my parents are by his side, my wife's by his side, and I go, "Dad, is everything okay?"

And it's J.J. whispering on the phone like, hey bud, what are we whispering about? He goes, "I'm hiding under the sheets in the hospital bed. I don't want mom to hear me." And I go, "Okay, what's about to happen here?"

And tell 'em what you asked Dad.

J.J.: So I asked my dad, "Hey, Dad, will you take me back to the same reef, same spot where I got attacked by the shark?"

RANDY: Why?

JAMESON: And I'm like, yeah, why? I'm like, what are we talking about here?

BLYNDA: Every adult in the room, why?

JAMESON: I know, I know, and in that moment he says that--

J.J.: So he said, "Sure, but why?" And I said, Because I don't want the shark attack or the hospital to be my greatest fear.

BLYNDA: Oh, wow.

JAMESON: And he won me, right? As a dad, I'm like this is my boy. And yet at the same time, how am I gonna tell my wife? And that's why he was whispering.

RANDY: What about the doctors? Could you even get back in the water?

JAMESON: So, we had to wait for the doctors to clear us, because his leg was just so raw.

And so we were--this was day four out of three. Three weeks in the hospital, four surgeries, three weeks in the hospital, this was day four. He'd only had one of those four surgeries.

BLYNDA: Could this have been maybe the drugs talking a little? That's crazy.

JAMESON: I know, I know, it just feels so not real, and yet it's exactly what happened.

So we, ten weeks to the day later we returned to the reef. We got clearance from the doctors, dove back in. Before we dove in, we went out there on our boat, and I said, "All right, we returned to the reef. We don't have to dive in, but how are you feeling?"

And he goes, "Dad, I'm scared." I'm like, "It's okay, man. I am too." But what did you wanna do?

J.J.: And I said, "No, Dad, I wanna go all the way."

So I jumped in, and for that split second while I was underwater, it was like a whole shark attack, like a flashback through the whole shark attack.

But then right after once I popped back up, I just heard my friends and my family, and we all just had a great time at the reef.

RANDY: How long were you there?

JAMESON: Several hours, and then we had to pull him out. He didn't wanna get out. He did not wanna get out, man.

And it was a powerful--it's like a moment of worship going back and reclaim what the Lord wants us. I mean, in the early chapters of Genesis, the Lord tells us to be stewards of the birds of the air and the fish of the sea. Well, how can you steward something you're afraid of?

And so we just reclaimed that and just began to find joy that we always had had and wondering if we'd ever have it again, and the Lord gave it to us.

And yet at the same time, we know that there are still the very real presence of sharks, and everyone's got a shark in their story, whether that's, you know, anxiety, depression, whatever that fear is, and we just felt like on that day it wasn't the size of the shark that mattered, it was the strength of the savior that counted.

And when the shark starts circling, the question we ask people is do you have a savior mighty to save? Because they're coming, they're there, they're out there, and we have to be able to move forward by faith, and that's what we did.

We were able to recognize the fear. It wasn't the fear was diminished or minimized, it was really there. Sharks can go anywhere. Fortunately on that day we didn't see them, but as we've returned to the reef, we see them pretty much all the time, and this last trip we saw quite a few.

But that doesn't stop us, because we know that we're more than the conquerors, and we're not gonna be stupid, right? We're not gonna be careless, right? We're we're gonna be very, very aware of our surroundings, but at the same time let's not stay on the boat in life. Let's dive in, and let's move forward by faith, not letting fear control us. Let's find the freedom that is ours in Christ.

RANDY: So J.J., no fear?

J.J.: No sir, no sir.

RANDY: But wisdom, you don't go out there throwing, you know, chum in the water.

JAMESON: No, we don't hand feed sharks.

We have a--we met a friend, Manny Puig, who is an unbelievable, like waterman, and he's done some crazy things, and we've met him through this, and he's a strong believer now, and he's just said, "Man, you know, I don't know that I would ever be able to go back in the water, doing all the things that I've done."

And so we've learned so much, yet at the same time we're still exploring, still learning, still finding kind of just that childlike faith and childlike wonder that Jesus calls us to have.

BLYNDA: And shouldn't we all have it?

I mean, I look at you and I think if you can at your age, ten at the time, face fear like that and really overcome it with faith it, can't I? Is there anything in my life that's too big that I can't hand over to the Lord and just say, okay, I don't wanna hold on to fear anymore?

I just feel like if that's you right now, if you're watching, and you're like I'm so gripped by fear, today is the day you don't have to hold on to fear anymore.

What overcomes fear is faith, and I've always said this, Randy, that when my son would come, and he would bring all of his kids, all of his friends from high school, and they'd all want me to feed them, because I was the house that would feed everybody, so they'd all come, and I would always say, well, they come to the house where they're fed.

You know, in a lot of ways fear and faith are the same thing. The thing that you feed will grow, you know? And so we have to remember we have to feed our faith through the word of God, that you, the foundation, but if we don't feed our faith, fear can grow. But I'm so proud of you.

J.J.: Thank you so much.

RANDY: Yeah, so what do you say?

Because you're getting a lot of unique opportunities, whether it's a secular television show or working with other amputees, you know, people that have been through difficult times, what-- two-part question for you.

What do you think about the platform that God has given you as a family, as a minister? But also what do you say to people who are stuck in the why and the how do I go through this and how do I deal with the fear? What do you do with those?

JAMESON: I love and struggle with that question, because I know it's the right question, and yet sometimes it changes the way that I deliver that when I'm looking at somebody's eyes, because, you know, where they are in the depths and in the throes of that fear really matters.

I don't ever wanna just be like preachy and just kind of like here's just a pat answer, because everyone's going through something deeply personal, deeply wounded, and so--

but what we always believe is that there's 8 billion people who have one thing in common on the planet, and that's hurt. It's the human experience to hurt. Out of that hurt, we all desperately search for help.

But what often is found is what we call the hype cycle. The world gives us this version of do more, try harder, do more, try harder, but Jesus says here's the hope and healing. "Come to me all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

And I know that was true for us in that moment. We just needed the Lord to just put his arms around us as parents, as a whole family, and just hold us until we can learn to walk again.

And I mean that quite literally as he learned to walk again, as I learned to be a dad of an amputee, of a young man that said I'm not not gonna let things hold me back, I'm gonna move forward by faith. Dad, I need you to walk and run with me when I'm ready.

And so we know that this book that mom and I wrote that you are all in, and it's all about you, it's all about the Lord, but what do you say, Jameson Jr., what do you say to people when we say you gotta face your fear? How do you tell them that?

J.J.: I say if I can face my fear and return back to the reef, then you can find a way and face your fear too.

BLYNDA: It's beautiful.

JAMESON: And we know this platform is a privilege, and we just want to steward the story, and we believe that everyone is hurting, as we already said, but your story, wherever you are, wherever the people are listening, you have people near you that need to hear your story, and Satan wants you to believe the keep it private trap, we call it in the back of the book.

We write a section called "Stewards of the Story," and everyone that's working through their story, maybe it's not even through, but you're still in the middle of it, as you mentioned you're either coming out of a storm in a storm or about to go into one, and in that moment the Lord is with you, and when you move from a private story to a personal story to a public story, that's where the power is.

Because the truth, when Jesus is greater than your sharks, when the savior's mighty to save, and you begin to speak that, it just sets people free, and that's what people need today. They need to be set free, and I believe that the Lord is doing something in these days that when the people of God bring words and go public with their faith, it begins to change the immediate world around them, and then net that across the country and the world, and we begin to see the Lord do something miraculous.

RANDY: Great, I love the power of story.

I thank you for sharing your story so boldly. I think though you are a man of faith, that watching your son go through this has really encouraged your faith.

JAMESON: It has.

RANDY: And that's a beautiful thing to see.

JAMESON: It deeply has. **RANDY:** Yeah, I love it.

RANDY: Okay, listen, there's some people out there right now who need some encouragement. They're going through their difficult time, and they need someone to reach out and rescue them, and we know Jesus is the ultimate savior, but God has a pattern of partnering with his people.

This is the opportunity for you to partner with God in alleviating some suffering. Watch this, and you'll see how.

ANNOUNCER: For some children, life begins in the shadows with challenges most people will never have to face. Born with physical disabilities, their days are filled with pain, limitation, and silence, not because they lack courage, it's because their body stands in the way of their dreams.

But suffering does not always have to be the end of their story. Life Outreach's medical mission partners provide hope in the form of corrective surgeries.

Skilled hands of surgeons reconstruct twisted limbs, allowing a child to walk normally for the first time in their life. A repaired cleft lip or cleft palate restores a smile that never existed. Prayer and a caring, Christ-centered staff is important to these children's well-being and their physical restoration.

MALE: So, let's pray.

[speaking foreign language]

ANNOUNCER: This is what it looks like when God uses willing hands to bring healing, restoration, and hope.

And for the countless numbers of children still waiting for corrective surgery, it will take willing, compassionate people to support this medical mission.

Be a part of restoring and renewing hope for precious children like these.

RANDY: Ah, look at that smile. Don't you love those smiles? You know, they go--

BLYNDA: The stories never get old.

I know, you see an embarrassment in the deformity, if I can use that word, to a smile, you know.

BLYNDA: I know, it's amazing to--the transformational, the before/after that you see, the insecurity that turns into confidence, you know?

The maybe despair that turns into joy and hope, it's just so beautiful to see, and these are people who have been affected by the generous giving of our--of the people watching, but also we're in such need. Like, the need is now greater than what we have.

RANDY: You know, there's an interesting thing in a lot of those cultures in Africa, a lot of them are very superstitious, they have different non-biblical beliefs, and one of them is that those children who have the bowed legs or maybe the cleft lip or whatever it is, that they are cursed.

And you know what we say, the before and after? We say, no, you are blessed, and that's only because of Christ, and we preach in a gentle and appropriate way to everyone who comes through there--we just love them in Jesus's name.

And you know what it costs them to have these surgeries that they can't afford? Costs them nothing, you know why? Because of people just like you.

Right now we have the opportunity to have more before and after stories, to create more smiles, to have more children going from that limp to a run if you will participate.

It costs \$600,000 to renovate and to expand that facility right there, because there's a long, long waiting list. Children come from all over, not just Zimbabwe, but many countries around there, they need help. And our doctors are dedicated. They are doing as much as they can. Our mission partners on the ground are just the best.

They need us to come alongside them, not literally to go live in Zimbabwe, though, you know, if God's calling you, go. They just need us to support them by expanding the facilities, by offering more surgeries at no cost, and that's why we're coming to you today.

This is a what we call a one-time project. It's not like the ongoing things with Mission Feeding. This is a one-time thing.

Can you jump in and give 126, 1,026, maybe 100,000, whatever God has enabled you to do, whatever he's put in your hands, are you willing to give that back and say yes, I wanna support those people in the field, I wanna share God's love and life with people who need to hear the gospel and to experience it?

I believe we can do it, but I know we can only do it with your help, so I would invite you into this wonderful work, this wonderful expression of God's love.

Go online, go to the phone, I say make the best gift you can, but you know, the best gift is the one made out of a cheerful heart and out of obedience. If that's you, join us.

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: We do need to hear from you.

We need to hear from you today if possible, if you go online, go to the phone, make the best gift you can. We need to meet this goal so we can help even more children and create more great stories.

Blynda, I'm very excited. The book, let's see.

BLYNDA: "Rescue at the Reef," and also where can they find you, on Instagram? BravelikeJameson.com or Instagram, @bravelikejameson.

RANDY: Wonderful, All right, get the book, get more of the story, and if you have missed the other program, go to LifeToday.org, you can see all the programs.

We'll see you again next time.

[music]

STEPHEN MCWHIRTER: At a very young age, my earthly father and my heavenly Father became the villains in my story.

ANNOUNCER: Stephen McWhirter, tomorrow on "LIFE Today."

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