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Week 16

Randy Robison & Blynda Lane

Chad Prather

"Searching For Meaning"

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

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And I was living alone, I was in this big house all by myself. In my living room one night, the Lord showed up, and I began to weep, and I began to cry, and there was deep regret in me.

There was deep repentance and sorrow. That's that Luke 15 moment where you come to yourself and say, hey, what am I doing?

ANNOUNCER: An encounter with Jesus changed Chad Prather's life, next.

[music]

RANDY ROBISON: Welcome to "Life Today," I'm glad you're here. I'm here with Blynda Lane. How are you doing, Blynda?

BLYNDA LANE: Hi, Randy, so great to be here.

RANDY: We have another great guest today, and some of you already know who he is. If you know who Chad Prather is, you're probably here to see him on the program and hear his story. You're really gonna hear it.

If you don't know Chad, it's time you met him. He hosts "The Chad Prather Show" as well as a daily "Before the Noise" prayer and devotional piece online. He's also got a new book called "Born for Meaning." You've been enjoying this, haven't you?

BLYNDA: I have, actually, "Walking Through the Ashes Toward Unbreakable Joy," who wouldn't enjoy reading something like that?

RANDY: Yeah, and so, for some of you that know Chad, you're gonna hear something that you might not have heard up until recently. Chad, man, welcome.

CHAD: Thank you, thank you for having me. It's good to be with both of you.

That is not a book that I ever thought I would write. It's just not a place that I ever thought I would be as a man.

BLYNDA: Tell us why.

CHAD: Well, you know, I think that men, particularly men who wear a hat like this out of the western world, they don't wanna talk about depression or anxiety or grief or tragedy or trauma or any of the hurt, but they go through it, they just don't wanna talk about it.

And I went through a period of time in my life where that just kind of flowed out of me out of necessity. It was just like a baby I had to deliver.

And we could talk more about that story, but it's just out of that hurt, out of that painful season of life came these words of life, and it's amazing what the fruit that's come out of, it's tremendous.

RANDY: Yeah, walk us back a little bit. You actually at a young age pastored a church.

CHAD: I did, and when I was at the University of Georgia, I felt the Lord calling me into ministry, didn't know exactly what that looked like, and my pastor, Wade Trimmer, there in Augusta, Georgia, I went and sat down with him.

I said I don't know if God's calling me to preach or what he's calling me to do, but there's something going on. I was 19 years old, and so we would meet together, and then we traveled around the world together, and then I went to seminary and began pastoring.

And so I jokingly say I pastored for about 12 years. I say I was a great preacher, I was a terrible pastor.

RANDY: Why is that?

CHAD: Well, people like to have their problems understood, not so much fixed, and I'm a bottom line kind of person. So when people would wanna come in, I'm not one of those let me ask you how that makes you feel type of therapist or counselor, and so I discovered that the American church really doesn't want to let go of a lot of the trauma and grief and things that are going on in their life, because if they do, they'd lose their identity.

They wouldn't know who they are anymore. And so I wasn't the best in terms of the most shepherding pastoral roles, bottom line kind of guy.

RANDY: Sometimes you gotta kick the sheep into the pen, you know? To get them where they need.

CHAD: Well, our good mutual friend, Dudley Hall, used to say if you want a church to die, like if one needs to go away, just call Chad in to pastor for about 12 months, and he'll take care of it.

So out of that, I really went into a place of brokenness and went into--I went through a divorce, the mother of my children, and just a broken time. Like, I often say it was my cave at Adullam season for a number of years where I was done with church, I was done with church people particularly, continued loving the Lord, but I was done with particularly church leaders, men who'd call themselves pastors themselves, or even spiritual fathers. I was just done with all of it.

I said I don't wanna deal with it and began to search for reality in a lot of places, whether it was the bottom of a bottle of alcohol or the bottom of a bag of drugs. Wherever I could try to find that reality is where I was looking, and I wound up, because I do have a gift to communicate, although I was not in ministry obviously anymore, I wound up doing radio and then television and then live entertainment, went viral on social media.

I was the guy that people would see sitting in his truck with the dog in the back seat pontificating about life and trying to make fun of just things that I observed in the world.

And then I had a comedian friend of mine who said why don't you go do comedy shows? I said, well, I don't know that I'm a comedian. And he said who cares, if they buy tickets, just get on stage. And so that launched me into a career of touring and trying to make people laugh.

We incorporated music into all of that, and so then I got into political humor and then political talk and doing the media and on all the networks doing that and podcasting and one thing after another, I'm snowballing this avalanche of just so many things happening in life coming at you so quickly and involved with so many different things, you lose track.

I often warn my audience, I said the devil doesn't have to destroy you, he's gotta distract you. And when he distracts you, you drift. And we don't think about drifting, but you do.

You can love the Lord and continue drifting, and the next thing you know, it's like being in the water at the beach. You look up, and you're like, I'm not in front of my towel anymore, I'm a quarter mile down the surf. And that's sort of the way life was for me.

And went through a period of time of just not knowing the direction anymore. And I was very frustrated saying, okay, who am I right now? Because identity is such a powerful thing, and a lot of people just--they don't have a sense of it these days.

We live in a day and age where people are creating their identities, where historically your identity was inherited, or you were born into it, you knew where you came from, and I didn't have that anymore, so I got really, really lost and really, really frustrated, really, really alone and isolated, and that's a dangerous place to be.

BLYNDA: What was the turning point? Because I know a lot of times in life it's hitting rock bottom before we actually see what's ahead of us or see the light, if you will. What was that for you?

CHAD: I remember a conversation I had on the phone with our friend Gary Chapman a few years ago, and Gary said, you know, if you hit rock bottom, look around, you'll probably see my name scratched on the wall two or three times as well.

And so I have often described it as spending my adult life, I'm 53 now, of everywhere I step, stepping on a landmine, and you go through these seasons of, okay, I'm gonna try this now, that doesn't work. I'm gonna try that, that doesn't work.

Now, in the world's eyes it looks wildly successful, and it is successful, but in your heart, in that identity place, it's not successful. It's not bringing fulfillment. You know, we just--was looking at the political scope of things that are going on in the country right now.

Two, four years ago, gosh, four years ago, I was on the ballot running for governor in Texas. And I'm like what are you doing at this point in life? Like, you're trying to find meaning in everything and finding it in nothing.

So, to answer your question, I was living alone, I was in this big house all by myself in my living room. One night I'm watching a baseball game, and the Lord just walked through the living room.

The Lord showed up, and I often inappropriately say he turned me into a bubbling pile of goo, and I broke, and I began to weep, and I began to cry, and there was deep regret in me. There was deep repentance and sorrow for things that I had just--the things I drifted away from.

And in that moment I said, God, what do you want? I've described it as God putting his hands on my shoulders and pressing down with a very tangible weight, and I said, God, what do you want from me?

And he said, "I made a lot of investments in you as a young man. I'm gonna make some big withdrawals out of you." And I said, "Well, that's wildly inconvenient." That is wild--but you know, it's funny, the Lord doesn't really care how inconvenient it is.

I didn't know what any of that looked like, I just said--I was in that moment where I said, Lord, whatever you wanna do, I'm yours. I belong to you, I want to do it, I'm ready to come back, I'm ready to find that center again, come back to that place of identity and go back to pursuing destiny.

And so I always encourage people to say, you know, at 50, you know, 50 years old, it's not too late to start over again. God's always got a plan. You never know when the promise of God's gonna show up.

I mean, he did that throughout the scripture. You know, he tells Abraham as an old man, you're gonna have a son, and he's like you're kidding me, and he did. And out of that comes the promise.

It's never too late, and I say this to men specifically, because a lot of guys who think they can see the end from the beginning, and you break that script, and now you got a broken man. He doesn't understand anymore, because the narrative is broken for him.

But it's okay to let that narrative get broken. So, for me, it had to get broken. I had to get broken. I just don't think God uses anybody that hasn't been broken, and he's broken me a number of times. I've hit that rock bottom a few times, and it's okay to do that.

RANDY: I wanna ask you about something you kind of went by a little quickly, because I think it's important for a lot of people in our audience. You talk about getting to a point where you didn't like the preachers, you know, church leaders, and the problem is that you know people are flawed and, you know, being raised the son of an evangelist that everybody looks up to and he's on TV and everybody would call successful, and yet I know him at home, and I'm like he's just a guy, you know?

And I don't--I mean zero disrespect, right? It's just that we're complex, none of us are perfect. What was it that kind of got to you that made you not like church people?

CHAD: It was a false expectation, and you--a working definition in my mind, someone said to me years ago, they said, you know, don't become cynical, and a cynical person is a person who's a passionate person, but they're tired of being disappointed.

And when that passion keeps getting disappointed in you, and you've put somebody up to be something they just can't fulfill or be, you're gonna grow cynical towards them, and that's what happened with me.

Some great men, great men who invested in my life, and I'm still in great relationship with them to this day, they did nothing wrong. I wanted them to come and fill a certain void that was missing in me as a young man who was trying to find his way in ministry and in life and try to work out those identity issues, and they were just being men, and I was expecting them to be more than men.

A lot of times people will do that. I've noticed that, you know, as a person who tries to use this platform in these days to promote the kingdom and push the things of God and really try to bring people back to a place of truth, you'll have people inevitably who look at you and say, wait a minute, but we know you. We know how you really are.

And I say, okay, exactly. I want you to know me. I want you to know me feeble. I want you to know me fallen. I want you to know me frail, and that's okay. But just like everybody else, we're working out this salvation with fear and trembling just like everybody else.

And so I think we put leaders, and we've done this particularly in the American church in a big way, we put leaders on a pedestal they were never were designed to be on. The problem is when leaders believe they're supposed to be there, we know what happens with that.

But we're at fault for putting them up there in a lot of ways, and then they get to a place where they rise above accountability, and then there's a lot of men who don't want to lead, because as someone said a long time ago, we gut shoot our preachers and then shoot them for not having any guts.

And so now they're afraid to be bold and strong and be leaders. And so you have, you know, this is why in the scripture, oftentimes like John's epistles, he talked--he addresses the fathers, and then he addresses the sons, and he addresses the fathers, and he addresses the sons, and we're looking for fathers who have that wide field of vision, because the sons a lot of time have that laser focus.

A laser can be used to heal or hurt, and without the fathers and their wider field of vision, we don't know how to teach the younger--the sons how to control that laser vision that they have.

And so it's an important thing, but it's sort of tricky, and without the Lord's help and guidance, we're gonna miss that, because we're inevitably gonna become those cynical people that are disappointed.

I had gone a couple of years not even talking to my spiritual father, Wade Trimmer. We traveled the world together. He loves me like his own biological son, and my dear, dear--and I said I went two years, and I didn't want to talk to him. I didn't want to talk to anybody.

But it wasn't me putting something on--it was not their fault, the issue was I didn't want what was going on in me to be revealed. Because to see them, to talk to them, to have that communication relationship was going to reveal something that was happening in me, and ultimately what it was was rebellion.

It was rebellion. We can candy coat it, we can call it drift and distraction, it was rebellion, and I didn't want to deal with that.

BLYNDA: You even speak about in the book that you call them self-inflicted wounds, where some of--where somebody can find themselves in a tough spot. It could be outside, you know, things happening, but a lot of times it's these self-inflicted wounds that we do to ourselves almost self-sabotaging what God has for us. Speak into that.

CHAD: We love our scars. We love--you get a group of men together, and you get them telling stories, and they're all gonna try to one-up one another with their stories. Oh, that happened to you, let me tell you where I fell off a 30-foot building.

BLYNDA: The scar's this big.

CHAD: Yeah, yeah, I go back to that scene in the movie "Jaws" where they're out on the boat, and they're showing their scars to each other. Yeah, well, you know, a shark bit my leg off, and so there-- men wanna one-up each other. We're proud of our scars.

We live in a day and age now where people are manufacturing oppression. They're coming up with victimhood, like they've lived a perfectly great first-world life, you know, they've had the red carpet rolled out in front of them, and it's like, well, if I don't have some type of scar in my life, I need to come up with something, because we identify one another by our wounds and our trauma and our tragedy and our grief and our angle.

Well, you think you've been through something, let me tell you what I've been through. And so we start self-inflicting these wounds. We all have enough woundedness to go around. We all have a father wound. We all have a father wound with God. We have a father wound physically with our own physical fathers or the ones we knew or maybe didn't know.

We have those wounds, but now we're out creating things, which goes back to the identity thing, where I said we used to be given an identity based on our lineage or heritage or your namesake or--so people are now, they're coming up with these fluid identities.

Well, that doesn't free you, that frustrates you, and at the end of the day, it's gonna just feed into the fallen nature, and so now we're self-inflicting, and we're wounded people. The problem is we don't wanna admit that. Men are the worst about it. We don't wanna admit that.

RANDY: So let me ask you what happened, because, you know, we kind of covered a lot of territory. Whether you're bringing your identity issues, your wounds, your frustrations, your disappointments, all that stuff, even your own failure to God when he walked in that room with you, what did you sense from him?

Because most people, fear, condemnation, shame, all the negative things that we just reflexively try to avoid. Is that what you felt when God's presence came into your room?

CHAD: I don't have the words to describe it. You wanna say you're embarrassed in that moment that you get it together, pull yourself up, dust yourself off, that's the man way to do it. But I said, no, I'm just gonna let the Lord heal me in this moment, because I was so broken, I was so alone, I was so isolated, I had so much, as I said, regret, you know, I felt like I had failed my now adult children.

I had not, but I felt that I had. I had regret there, having gone through divorce, rebellion against God, chasing a path that I knew was not what God had for me for a number of years, you know, looking for the world's success.

I mean, I turn around, I wake up one day, and I'm in Hollywood, and I'm writing, you know, comedy shows for sitcoms, and I'm out there in that world, and it's just a crazy thing, and I'm like I'm just a--you know, I grew up so deep in the country in Georgia, I got a cousin that

got arrested for, you know, selling chicken salad sandwiches at a chicken fight. I mean, just didn't have a food permit. I mean, we were country, you know?

I mean, we grew up in a mobile home where, yeah, you know, we're so down in the woods, I said, but when I went to the University of Georgia, they said that fraternity house is haunted. I said I don't know what that means. They said it's got a ghost. I said I don't know what that is.

And they said--I said where I grew up our houses didn't get possessed, they got repossessed, you know? You die in a mobile home, you're not coming back to that. I mean, we were country folks, and now I'm out in Hollywood rubbing shoulders with these Hollywood celebrity folks, and I'm doing all this stuff, and I'm like, okay, this is what life's all about, I've made it. I hadn't made it at all.

Because when you step across the threshold from the father's house, and your heart is destined for the far country, that one step across the threshold, you're in the far country, and the far country feels good for a little while. It feels like the world's success, and then you wake up in the pig slop one day, and you go, you come to yourself, and that's what that feels like.

That's that Luke 15 moment where you come to yourself and say, hey, what am I doing? I've hired myself out to slavery, to bondage. What am I doing? I'm gonna go back to my father's house.

RANDY: And the father, open arms when you came back?

CHAD: He comes running. The beauty of it is when that sun comes over that horizon, and the father says he saw him a long way off, which means the father's on the porch watching for him, and it says the father ran.

It's the only image we see of God running in the scripture, undignified for a Jewish man to show his ankles, right? He cinches up his robe and he takes off running.

And I've told a lot of men, because this is what I heard the Lord say to me in these moments, as I said, if you move towards the Father, he'll make up the distance. He'll make up the distance. And that's what he did for me, and it was the most refreshing, liberating--

And I said to the Lord, I said, Lord, what does this mean? Like, I have this whole career, I've got this whole image, I've got this whole platform, all these things I'm doing, what does this look like, Lord? I go out and tell jokes for a living. Does this mean I can't be funny anymore?

And the Lord said, "Well, you know, son, you were never really actually that funny to begin with." So we're not sacrificing a whole lot, really, and it's been good, and we can unfold that in another conversation, but the Lord has blessed me so much by bringing me back to that place where he said, "I invested in you as a young man, now I'm gonna make some withdrawals." And and as inconvenient as it sounds, it's gonna be good.

RANDY: All right, we're gonna talk about that on another program. You'll stick around?

CHAD: Yeah.

RANDY: Okay, well, first of all, I wanna say anybody who is out there, whether you are in the position Chad was in, you know, where you know you've kind of made a mess of things, take that first step. I've got a first step for you if you don't know what to do.

Yeah, you can say a prayer. God may walk in your room during a baseball game like he did for Chad, but if you wanna pick up that phone and call somebody, we've got somebody who will pray with you, and that's an easy, great first step.

If you've got a Chad in your life, maybe it's a husband, a son, a friend, and again, you wanna pray for them and just kinda ask God to kind of break them so they'll come back to you, again, we care about you guys watching, the audience. Everybody that calls here, you know, you've blessed us, we wanna bless you, we wanna pray with you.

We also wanna bless some other people right now, and you know we do this, we reach around the world. We've got a great opportunity where there are broken people, literally people with broken bodies that can be fixed. So the restoration that we want for you and your family we want for others, and we invite you into this. Watch this outreach.

This is the last week we'll be on the air with this, but watch this and consider being a part of the healing of someone else.

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]

BLYNDA: It would be hard to watch that and not feel some sort of emotion. I think about when the surgeon was asking Plasdus, how has this been for you? And with tears streaming down his eyes, he starts talking about how classmates have been laughing at him because of how he walks, and I think how many pain points in our life if somebody just were to ask how has this been for you?

That feeling of being seen, of somebody caring, of somebody giving hope, it changes everything, and we see at the end that he says, "I feel so good now."

It is such a blessing, Randy, that we get to be a part of that sentence, I feel so good now. It changes him not just physically, but it's changed him spiritually and emotionally for his life.

RANDY: Absolutely, you know, it is a privilege to be a part of this, and you know, it's only because of viewers like you that we can even do this, which is why it's a joy to ask you to be a part of this.

And we're coming up to the end of this campaign on television, \$600,000 to renovate that Children's hospital, to expand the operating rooms and recovery areas, and then give more of those life-changing surgeries like you just saw to families that desperately need it, and it doesn't cost them anything.

This is the generosity that we talk about on this program so much that God loves to see, he loves a cheerful giver, and I'm just thrilled to be able to be a part of this. But I gotta tell you, we can't do it without you.

We need your support today, and whatever--you may feel like it's insignificant, but God values obedience over sacrifice. So if you sacrifice to be a part of this, just do it out of the obedience and know that God sees it.

He sees our pains, he sees our needs, he will supply all of our needs according to his riches and glory he promises. So, just listen, go to the phone, go online, we ask you to make the best gift you can, but I think the best gift you can is the one that's made out of obedience, and it may be a big dollar amount, it may be a small dollar amount, but the obedience is big to God.

And if all you have to offer today is your prayer, we value that, just know that. So do what God puts on your heart. I think that's the right way to ask.

But man, I wanna tell those doctors that have dedicated their lives to those complex surgeries that changes the lives of children, I wanna be able to tell them, yeah, we're doing it, we did it, our supporters stepped up, they reached the goal, be ready to do more surgeries and bless more people.

Will you be a part of that? We've got some nice gifts we'd love to send you just to commemorate your part of this children's hospital, but we need to hear from you today. Right now go online, go to the phone, make the best God-obedient gift that 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.

This is the last week. Please call, write, or make your gift online.

RANDY: I do hope you're going online and going on the phone right now. Make the best gift you can. Let's get this thing done. Let's continue blessing lives, and we have been blessed today.

We want you to come back. Chad, you're coming back for another program, right?

CHAD: If you'll have me, I'll come back.

RANDY: I really--I wanna get into "Born for Meaning" a little bit more of the lesson there, where's that available?

CHAD: It's wherever you get books. You can go to bornformeaning.com or you can go to ChadPrather.com. It's a one-stop shop. You can find everything there.

BLYNDA: Awesome, well, thank you for being here, and we're looking forward to another show with you.

CHAD: Thank you.

RANDY: We'll see you next time here on "Life Today."

[music]

CHAD: So we think of pain and suffering as being a curse. It's not, it's a blessing. We are taking our suffering for granted. God uses suffering.

ANNOUNCER: Tomorrow.

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