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Week 17

Randy Robison & Blynda Lane

Matt Chandler

"Becoming Like Jesus"

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

MATT CHANDLER: It has left the Christian imagination in the West that suffering is normal, and what feels like a loss to us might actually be a win.

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ANNOUNCER: Next.

[music]

RANDY ROBISON: Hey, welcome to "Life Today." We're excited that you're here. I'm Randy Robinson, this is Blynda Lane.

BLYNDA LANE: Happy to be here.

RANDY: We are here with a dynamic pastor, author, and kind of a great guy to talk to. His name is Matt Chandler, and he has a brand-new book out.

It's called "Becoming Like Jesus," yeah, okay, and there's a word on there, Blynda, I'm curious, holiness, the everyday, what does it say? The everyday journey to living a life of holiness.

What do you think of when I say the word holiness? Because I know there's a lot of different things going in people's minds right now.

BLYNDA: Set apartness.

RANDY: Set apart, that's good. I like that one, you're getting the root words here.

BLYNDA: I like that.

RANDY: Well, I wanna find out exactly what that means.

BLYNDA: What does Matt say about it though?

RANDY: Matt, welcome to "Life Today."

MATT: Oh, man, it's good to be back. It feels like moments ago we were here.

RANDY: Always good to see you.

MATT: I love that.

RANDY: And this is one of those hot words. I think it means different things to different people. What does it mean to you?

MATT: Well, I think it doesn't matter what it means to me, right? I think it matters how the scriptures define it, and holiness is certainly being set apart, and so God calls us to be a holy people, but it's also a word that scares the heck out of everybody.

BLYNDA: Take us through on becoming like Jesus. You're focusing a lot on the Matthew 5, the Beatitudes. Take us through kind of the heart behind the book and what you're--the message you're wanting to give.

MATT: Well, it's a book that I would argue is probably 23 years in the making. I don't think a young man should write this book. I've pastored the same church for 23 years, I've ministered in the same location to the same people, and I wanted to write an honest book about sanctification.

I just think most people think that sanctification is up and to the right, and then what happens is a significant disorientation when they realize that's not the way this is going to work, and so the way--

BLYNDA: And all the sudden God is now disappointed in some way.

MATT: That's right, and if you'll pay attention to a lot of, not all of, but a lot of the deconstructionists, their stories sound like that. They grew up in church, and they were following Jesus, and then their mom got sick, or then they lost their job, or then their friend was, and it's like it has left the Christian imagination in the West that suffering is normal and what feels like a loss to us might actually be a win.

I describe sanctification not as up and to the right, but think of a coil laid horizontally, where every high and low is actually still moving you towards something, and that something is to become like Jesus.

So, if you think of a horizontal coil moving forward, okay, then what is he doing? What is he up to? Well, I embed the book in the Beatitudes of Matthew 5, and I'm making the

argument Jesus didn't come to find these people, he came to make them, and so he's not looking for, like, to develop these eight character attributes in you, but rather through these eight character formation things, over and over again, he forms you more and more and more into the image of Jesus. And so that's kind of the framework.

RANDY: So, how--contrast those two in a way that I can grasp, right? Because I've always felt like, you know, if I wanted to be like Jesus, I just need to act more this way, right? That's kind of the--

MATT: So, you can do that, but you're not gonna be like Jesus, because Jesus, right? Is full of the Holy Spirit, connected to the Father, and so if you're watching Jesus live a life of discipline, the one that most frequently is in the scriptures is withdrawing to be with the Lord, right?

Now, you're not seeing the other ones come to the forefront, but if I ask you to study Jesus's life, and I ask you to--which part of this is requiring an alarm clock, which part of this is requiring, you're gonna say he's up early, he's up all night doing what? Connecting to the presence of God.

So, transformation happens in the presence of God so that the banner over our life should be I want to orient my life around the presence of Jesus. How do I keep moving towards him? How do I shrink any distance between me and the presence of Jesus?

MATT: So if we think through the Beatitudes, there's some--like, some theologians would say they actually work in succession, that blessed are the poor in spirit, there's your salvation. Nobody comes into the kingdom without being poor in spirit, they're not wrong, and then it kind of moves through a successive kind of flow. I think you can make that argument once.

Like, the first time you go through it is probably a succession of those things, but I don't think you could say once you've been persecuted for righteousness' sake, you're done.

I've been in, you know, following Jesus now 33, 34 years, do you know how many times I've had to learn blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God? Like, over and over and over again, but every time it's a different experience. There's something different about it.

MATT: And so when I'm being taught life circumstances from the hand of God or my own stupidity, I get invited into the presence of God to avail my heart to him and let the work of formation take place.

The way it's working now for most people is, oh, man, I made this mistake, I was judge instead of the merciful one, let me repent of that and just move on, but what we wanna be able to do is just go I want this moment to do its work in me. I want this moment to form me.

That's what God's committed to. He who began the good work in you will be faithful to carry it unto completion. When does that end? At the coming of the Lord. But in this space between, this already but not yet, every high, every low, forming, shaping, and if you don't see it that way, I think you'll lose heart, and I think you'll create distance from God.

BLYNDA: In this in between you speak about, I feel like--I think you've even referred to it before, we like things done more quickly, and we're in a long journey, it's like a marathon, not a sprint, and you even make the analogy that we we're a microwave society but a crock pot is our spiritual walk.

How do you encourage the believer who in this coil you're talking about, that's a long journey. You said you've experienced that poor in spirit over and over and over. it's hard, especially the older you get to feel like, man, am I ever going to arrive?

MATT: Yeah, here's what I think's required, deep work over time in community. So if you have that grid, now you know what you signed up for. So deep work, the sheer volume of surface-level triviality that most Christians walk in, like never get down to the heart, all above the line, strength and might, not heart and soul, like vulnerability, confession, deep work, and then the acknowledgement that I am not on some quick journey, I'm on a long journey home, and Jesus knew what he was buying on the cross.

Like, Jesus knew what he was buying on the cross. The reason it's so public and so graphic is because of me, and Jesus knew what he was buying on the cross, and he's not asking for a mulligan.

And so he is as committed to me in that journey as he's ever been since the foundation of the earth was laid, if you want to believe the apostle Paul in Ephesians.

MATT: And so deep work over time, one degree of glory to the next, but one degree over two decades is a great movement, great movement. And then deep work over time in community.

You cannot become like Jesus without the effects that come from community that's doing that deep work over time with you. If you have those three things there, and you'll lean into those three things, because they're gonna be times that the deep work is a little painful, and it'd be a lot easier just to kind of just leave buried what's buried and move forward in might.

There'll be time that the slowness of what Christ is accomplishing in us feels like there's a better fix somewhere else, and you'll do spiritual bypass. You know, you'll go off with some secondary theological thing, and you'll baptize it in the Holy Spirit, and it's called spiritual bypass.

MATT: Or people will bother you, and you'll change churches eight times, and you'll, you know, you'll be spring loaded with offense. It's called a belonging deficit, which is ironic.

The reason people run all the time is they have belonging deficits, and once you have a belonging deficit, you read rejection in a room that it's not.

Like, I had a young woman share with me that one of the reasons she doesn't like going to the church she goes to, she's not a member of ours, is because when she's there everybody's judging her, and I was like, well, tell me more, say more about how that plays out.

And then she told this story, I mean this is--I'm gonna rub my head. She was like, well, I walked in, and I went up, my husband doesn't go, so he wasn't with me, and everybody's asking me about my marriage, like judging me for my husband not being there.

MATT: I'm like, or they know you've been married in a newish marriage, and they're genuinely curi--but you see what a belonging deficit does? It makes her read offense where there's none. It's just people trying to connect with her, and she's not connecting because she has a belonging deficit to begin with.

But if you'll commit, and you'll dive in with people for the long haul, man, the Lord uses that in deep ways. He's used it in my own life. I mean, there--I don't even-- I'm not supposed to say this, there are people in my church I don't like, and what the Lord's taught me over time is that most frequently what I don't like in them is actually something in me, and so when I go to the Lord and begin to pray, he'll do work in me that changes how I see them.

And if you look at the fifty-something one another's in scripture, one of them is tolerate one another. Like, the Lord just knew like there's gonna be brother, you just gotta tolerate that brother. Like, you ain't gonna be best friends, you ain't going on vacation, but you can tolerate him. And I've just learned people are so quick, they don't give belonging a chance. They go to church, but they don't really belong to one, and I think the biblical call to become like Jesus is to belong.

RANDY: Here's the problem, and because I hear the same thing too. People in church aren't perfect. Some of them don't even act like Christians or act like Christians are supposed to.

What do you say to the person who maybe have like genuine observations, like these people don't, whatever? Because a lot of them give up for some--I mean, the reason, the particular reason might be valid, but your greater point is scripture. What do you say to them?

MATT: Well, one, I would wanna make some distinctions. Like, if I'm sitting with them right now, we're having the--I wanna talk about what you're seeing. I don't want you in some place that's destructive or abusive or toxic. So if that's going on, get out.

Yeah, I don't care what other good thing might be happening there, abusive, toxic, destructive, not difficult, difficult stay, destructive go. And if that's what you're experiencing, I'm telling you to get out.

If you're just pointing at the normal hypocrisy of a human being, I would tell you praise God you would feel welcome there right? You're gonna feel welcome there.

RANDY: There's room for one more.

MATT: That's right, like, if you're out there, and you haven't joined the community because you can't find a perfect one, I would just say as soon as you showed up, you would ruin the perfect one. You better see yourself a little bit with a little bit more reality than maybe you are right now.

And so we're all, like who's batting 1,000 of us? Man, I'm not. You come too close to me, you'll see the Lord's still got--he's got some things he's gotta shave off this brother.

RANDY: And you're the pastor.

MATT: That's right, isn't that wild? And so like nobody, or even like biblically this is true, historically this is true. Like, I often think of Peter. So, you've got that Acts 10 moment at Cornelius's house, what? He's got the vision of the blanket, kill and eat. Brother had that pork sandwich for the first time, you know, broke out in tongues, and then he's at Cornelius's house, then he's a part of, like even states it's illegal for me to do what I'm about to do.

Then Cornelius and his whole house converts to Christianity. Now we've got our Gentiles moving, the kingdom of God fully breaking through. But Paul has to rebuke him all these years later in Galatia for what? For being a racist.

How? He had a vision from God, an angel of the Lord spoke to his face. He was there when Jesus was arrested, saw him crucified, touched his resurrected body, ate fish with the resurrected Jesus over a smoky fire, right? And then is used by the spirit, not just at Pentecost, but to usher in the Gentiles.

MATT: And then, you know, decades later, same old racism rearing its head in Galatia. Paul had to rebuke him to his face. Like, you're like, okay, great. If God can be patient with that, he can be patient with me.

RANDY: That's the progressive sanctification that you're talking about. All right, so what hope does the average person, me, Blynda, the viewer, have to become like Jesus?

MATT: Well, I think your holiness and you becoming like Jesus is fully paid for and available. I think it's fully--I'm not thinking your holiness. Both your positional holiness before the Lord and the manifestation of that holiness in your life, paid for fully by the

blood of Jesus Christ, paid for in full, past, present, and future, fully, freely, and forever, done, paid for.

Spirit sealed in you with the promise so that you now have the power to begin to live into. You just need to be patient with yourselves and repent quickly and lean into difficult seasons and suffering, begin to see them as normative, because they are.

They are for men and women in the Bible, they are for everybody else, and if we didn't live in a moment where we could project this curated image of ourselves, we would actually be more encouraged by just how much suffering is going on all around us.

MATT: Like, I pastor a church, there's so much pain out there, but nobody's willing to really talk about it. They cover it up, like I said, with a curated image of themselves on Instagram or TikTok or Facebook or wherever it is, but the reality is the world's filled with a lot of pain, and most people are carrying pain from something behind them or terrified of something in the future that they think's coming for them, and, man, if we could begin to do that deep work, what happened back here, right?

We could understand that it's gonna take time to unravel and renew me, and then I need to find people who want this as bad as I want it, and then I'm saying yes to them, and I know they're gonna bother me, and I know I'm gonna bother them, there's gonna be something in the sparks of that that produces transformation.

So, I don't care who you are, I don't care if you don't know a theological term, or you don't know where to open in your Bible, if you are a Christian, your holiness has been paid for, and I want you to walk in the victory of it, and I want you to walk in the joy of it, because holiness brings these pictures of like sullen ashen faces, but like holiness, you should be dripping with the oil of gladness, like dripping with the oil of gladness.

RANDY: That's encouraging. We just have to let him do what he came to do, which is to make us more like him.

MATT: Yeah, move near the fire. That's the way I would often-- if I was preaching it, it's not the way I wrote on it. The way I would preach it is like how far are you from the furnace?

Like, the only thing that I'm telling you to do is to get close to the furnace. And the closer you get to the furnace, the more the things that you want to change will begin to change.

Like, you've been around recovery, you've been around things like that. You know, an alcoholic who manages the behavior but hasn't been transformed is going to be miserable and in a fight the rest of their lives, but the former alcoholic sealed with the spirit, in love with Jesus, intimately situated there, not only has the discipline of not having the drink, but has been given a new heart.

RANDY: Doesn't want it.

MATT: Yeah, and that's the freedom, and this is Jesus's beef with the Pharisees. This is why he says to 'em, "You have heard it said, but I say," why? Because he wants us, right? Not just physical behavior.

We're not moralistic deists. It's not what we believe. The the thing that makes us unique is we're indwelt with the spirit of the triune Creator God of the universe and that he loves us and is committed to transforming us over time.

RANDY: That's great, that's great, and he's committed to you, he's committed to you, to me, he's committed to you, and if you want a little bit of just pushing you towards the furnace, you can pick up "Becoming Like Jesus."

In fact, I'd love to send it to you, and there's a way that we can do that. It involves you kind of doing what Jesus did, which is caring for the poor, caring for those who are hurting, bringing life where there is death.

So if you'll watch this, we'll show you how you can be involved in something that is very Jesus-like, and then we can also tell you how to get Matt's book today. So, check this out and pray how you can become a part of this blessing of life.

[music]

[music]

ISAK PRETORIUS: So many times I've sat with mothers all over Africa, many times mothers in a malnutrition clinic with a child who's suffering, and I've asked them what is their hope? What is their dream for their child?

Most times that answer is very similar to what you would answer as a mother, "My hope is that my child will be healthy. My dream is that I'll be able to provide for my child, give them what they need."

But the reality is that across our continent right now, those hopes are being dashed, and those dreams are being crushed.

[speaking foreign language]

ISAK: While we were not able to get here in time, we were too late, but the good news is that we can be there for the next mother. We can be there for the child that right now is lying in a malnutrition clinic fighting for their life.

We can be there for the child that is out in a rural village with no food, but we cannot do it without you, and that's why I need you to open your hearts today, and I need you to be a part of restoring life to communities, of restoring hopes and dreams to mothers, of giving a child the life they deserve by giving them that bowl of food each and every day.

RANDY: I don't know if there's anything harder than kneeling down next to a child's grave. Children are hit the hardest, and you know, it's overwhelming a little bit when you're in the field like that, the emotions, obviously, even the problem, because there's a lot of children that are in desperate need.

I wouldn't be able to do it, Blynda, if I didn't know that we have and we can continue to provide the solution.

BLYNDA: You know, I think about Matthew 25, and Jesus is saying, "When I was hungry and you fed me, and when I was thirsty you gave me a drink," and they say "When did we do that, Lord?" And he says, "When you did it to the least of these, you did it to me."

Every time that the generosity that's welling up in you, every time you put action to that, you're doing it to the least of these, you're doing it unto Jesus.

And why that's so important is because we're all, in America especially, you know, we just take it for granted that we can have food every day, that we can have drink every day, yet we want to make a difference in the kingdom, and we think how do we do that? How can we make a difference? And here's an opportunity where just you being--giving out of just the generosity of your heart literally saves a life. It saves a life.

RANDY: It does.

BLYNDA: And we see, because we just saw the video, lives are ending because of lack of food. It's said on that video, hunger kills.

RANDY: Hunger kills.

BLYNDA: It really does, and yet we can stop that.

RANDY: We can, and it does, and you know, it's interesting, because the new gift that we have, it's a book from my dad called "The Father's Heart," and it's so appropriate, because this is, I believe, the heart of the father, it's to right the wrongs, it's to feed the hungry, it's to express his love through his people, because if you look in scripture, God always partners with his people, as flawed as we are, and my dad likes to say God uses imperfect people to accomplish his perfect will.

And we know from the words of Jesus, we know from the scriptures, old and new, it is his will that we are generous to the poor, that we remember the forgotten and mission feeding goes in. Yes, we solve that immediate need by solving the hunger problem for today and for tomorrow with your gift, but we also minister to these people.

We don't just go in and give them food and leave, we tell them about Jesus, we tell them we're demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ as we do this, so they they hear it, and they see it. It's sharing the gospel in word and deed. We're asking you to do that right now.

RANDY: Thirty dollars will help feed three children for several months. Fifty dollars will help feed five. A hundred dollars right now would actually help feed ten children. That's ten children that that won't have to be victims of we were too late.

Some of you can give \$1,000 to help feed 100 children. Some of you can give far more than that. I ask you to do what God puts on your heart, because I know God's heart is to help those in need.

And that's why it's a privilege to come to you right now and say join us. Will you join us today? Will you go online or go to the phone? Make the best gift you can. I don't like seeing the graves of those young children, and I know that with your gift and your love, we'll see far more experience a hope for a future than to be buried too young. Do something right now.

ANNOUNCER: Right now across the continent of Africa, children are suffering, facing severe malnutrition and even death. With food reserves critically depleted and many areas experiencing devastating famine, we urgently need to replenish supplies to keep feeding the 350,000 children who are counting on us every single day.

Through Life's mission feeding outreach, your gift of love can be an answer to a prayer for a hurting and hungry child in their time of need.

Call now with your life-saving gift of \$30, \$50, or \$100 to help feed and care for 3, 5, or 10 children for 3 full months. With your gift we'll send you "The Father's Heart" devotional. Drawing from Scripture and his past, James Robison takes you on a 90-day journey to help you experience a deeper, more personal relationship with God as your loving Father.

ANNOUNCER: With your gift of \$100 or more, you will receive The Father's Heart bundle. This stationary set, paired with the devotional, is a thoughtfully-designed collection created to help you share encouragement, prayer, and the love of our Heavenly Father with those you care about.

Finally, with your gift of \$1,000 or more, which will help feed 100 children in desperate need, request Life's beautiful bronze sculpture, The Good Shepherd.

So, please call, write, or make your gift online today.

RANDY: I do hope you'll go online or go to the phone right now. We need to hear from you. It's so close to my heart that these children eat every day, and it's because of you. Thank you, and please continue.

And today, if you would like Matt Chandler's book, and I would highly recommend it, "Becoming Like Jesus," you can request that with any gift, we would love to send it to you. And Blynda, I know it's gonna bless people.

BLYNDA: Thank you, Matt, for joining us. This has been--it's so good, and I'm so excited for this book to come out.

MATT: Thank you.

RANDY: And we appreciate all of you guys joining us. Join us every time, tomorrow, yesterday, because you can go online and see old shows, and we'll see you again next time on "Life Today."

[music]

[music]

♪ Oh, you can't hear me cry ♪

♪ See my dreams all die ♪

♪ From where you're standing ♪

♪ On your own, it's so quiet here ♪

♪ And I feel so cold ♪

♪ This house no longer feels like home ♪♪

RYAN LEAK: Way too many people live by the mantra that the world would be a better place if everybody else just changed.

ANNOUNCER: How to work with complicated people.

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