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Week 17

Randy Robison & Blynda Lane

Ryan Leak

“Problem People”

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

RYAN LEAK: Way too many people live by the mantra that the world would be a better place if everybody else just changed, if everybody else was like who? Well, like me, no, that's a false narrative.

RYAN LEAK: The world would be a terrible place if everybody thought like me, and so at some point we have to step back as Christians to go, man, am I going to leave margin for somebody else's flaws?

ANNOUNCER: Ryan Leak shows you how to work with complicated people.

[music]

RANDY ROBISON: Welcome to "Life Today," I'm Randy Robinson. I'm glad to have you here today. Blynda is with me, I'm glad to have her.

BLYNDA LANE: Very happy to be here, it's an exciting show.

RANDY: It is, I'm glad to have our guest, which I'd like to tell you a little bit about, because our guest is Ryan Leak. He is an author, he's a speaker, he is an executive coach, and he has a book out now called "How to Work With Complicated People."

BLYNDA: We don't know any of those.

RANDY: Well, if you're thinking you don't, you probably are it, so.

BLYNDA: Oh, I have a lot of people in my life that would agree.

RANDY: And really, this is wherever you're at. I mean, it can be in the home, it can be in the workplace, in the church, in the neighborhood. We're gonna give you some life tools and tips today. So, Ryan, welcome to the show.

RYAN: It's an honor to be here. Thank you so much for having me.

RANDY: So, am I right about the complicated thing? Because I mean, how do you define a complicated person? Maybe we should start there.

RYAN: Perfect question. In fact, we did a national research study to better understand that very question, because complicated to you might not be complicated to you, and complicated to me not be might not be complicated to you as well.

RYAN: And so we asked thousands of people, hey, how would you define the word complicated? One person wrote the name Leslie. I said who's Leslie? I said who's Leslie, and what did she do to you? Do you understand the question? Another person wrote Nate. I said who's Nate, and what happened? Like, tell us--

RANDY: Nate and Leslie may be married.

RYAN: Exactly, very easily could be the case. And so what we began to understand is that sometimes we can definitely personify what is complicated to somebody else, and so part of understanding this framework is being able to take a step back and realize that we could be Leslie, and we could be Nate.

BLYNDA: In the book it even says it's a challenge to see human beings not as something to solve but as something to understand. How do we, not even just in the workplace but just in living life, in community, how do we seek to understand someone that just maybe seemingly on the surface is different than us or thinks differently than us?

RYAN: Totally, I think we've all been at a place in our life where we were misunderstood. Somebody misread our tone. One of my favorite things to do is to watch a group of women read a man's text messages out loud, you know?

RYAN: And then he said, it's like nobody talks like that, but it's like we took a tone that really wasn't the tone, and we've looked at an email, we've been in a comment section at a time or two in our life where we inferred what somebody else was saying that they really weren't saying, and what did we want in a moment when we've been misunderstood is we wanted somebody to ask one more question.

RYAN: We wanted them to sit there a little bit longer. We wanted them to remove a label and be able to say, hey, I'm a little bit more curious about your story, and I don't wanna make an assumption because you're on TV, and so what that means, and I filled in the blank with a whole bunch of stuff that may not actually be true.

RYAN: And so to be able to take a step back with our humanity to make space for somebody else's humanity, to go actually I wanna be curious about this person. I don't wanna make an assumption about them based off of where they live, the car that they drive. There's a story behind each and every one of our lives.

RYAN: And so one of the lines I like to say a lot is complicated people often have a complicated behind the scenes. And the reason I know that to be true is, is because what all three of us have in common is that, well, behind the scenes it's complicated.

RYAN: And so, and what do we wish other people thought about us? We thought--we wish that they would take a step back and go, wait, I'm actually gonna be curious. Like, is there something in your life that maybe we can't see underneath the hood?

RYAN: And so when you become the kind of person that is willing to say, hey, I realize that there might be more behind the scenes than what I see in this email, than what I see in this conversation, than what I see in this comment section, we become the kinds of people that actually seek to understand rather than seek to being the person that's always right in the conversation.

BLYNDA: I'm curious, what was your complicated that got you to a place where now you're speaking on stages and you're writing books and you're telling people about how to manage complicated people. What was your story of complicated?

RYAN: Well, I mean and this, you know, goes deep fast, but race and politics. I had so many friends who could not make space for somebody else in their life that they disagree with, so it was an instant I'm just gonna write you off, because you don't believe what I believe, and you don't see it the way that I see it.

RYAN: And I thought is that the best way to live? Is that the Christlike way to live, or can we not make space for one another when we don't see it the same way? And so I feel like my calling in life has been to build bridges between groups of people that normally may not even speak to one another, and so that was the impetus for even writing this book was I'm going, man, I wanna help people be able to have difficult conversations instead of just quietly ignoring each other or just leaving the group chat but really staying in those conversations to say, no, I wanna learn more about your background and why you believe what you believe and have an engaging conversation, and who knows if we can't turn a foe into a friend?

RANDY: My wife and I moved a few years ago. I don't think they're watching, and I won't name them, but we have some neighbors, or close to our house, and when we moved in, some other neighbors "warned us" they're the only ones in the neighborhood that voted this way, right?

RANDY: And I laughingly but you kind of go, okay, and you know what, though? I've got to know--I didn't bring up politics, because I'm like we probably--I've been told we differ so let's just leave that. Great relationship, wonderful people, and I find that when we push past some of those things, and race is another big one, you know?

RANDY: We just lay the assumptions aside, maybe even lay the tone aside or the things we put on your words that we interpret that may not be what you're trying to say, right? And

you just go let me just get to know this person a little bit, those divisions kind of usually start to fall away.

RYAN: I believe so.

RANDY: In most cases that's my experience, but here's my question, though, why is that even important for--especially for Christians to make this a regular practice? Is it just so we can get along better?

RYAN: Well, two scriptures come to mind, one scripture about us having the ministry of reconciliation. It's like a part of our DNA. The second scripture that comes to mind is Colossians 3:13, one of my favorite versions says leave margin for one another's faults.

RYAN: Leave margin, and then at some point you gotta wake up and ask yourself have I done that? Have I left margin for my spouse to make a mistake? Have I left margin for my kids to make a mistake? Have I left margin in my life for people to have faults?

RYAN: The reason that's important isn't just because it's a Jesus's idea. The reason that's important is we need it.

RANDY: Yeah, we do.

RYAN: On our worst day, we're hoping to God that somebody in our life has gone, okay, I'm gonna have a little bit of grace in my back pocket for this person, because, well, I hope they're doing the exact same thing for me.

RYAN: For us to be able to walk into a room and believe that we've got it all together, and yet this other person, well, if they would just get their life together, way too many people live by the mantra that the world would be a better place if everybody else just changed. If everybody else was like who? Well, like me.

RYAN: Oh, come on, wouldn't the world be great if everybody was just like Ryan Leak? Oh my goodness, wouldn't that be--what a world that would be. No, that's a false narrative. The world would be a terrible place if everybody thought like me, and so at some point we have to step back as Christians to go, man, am I going to leave margin for somebody else's flaws?

RYAN: Or am I going to consistently bring their flaws up in every argument and remember when you said this and remember, and we can easily do what scripture talks about is keeping a record of wrong, but that's not what love does.

RYAN: No, love actually makes space for another person's faults ultimately because, well, that's what God did for us.

RANDY: Okay, I have to ask this question.

BLYNDA: Ask it.

RANDY: I have to ask this question. What is the difference, do you think, between leaving room for someone and extending grace to them and excusing sin?

RYAN: Ooh, phenomenal question. I think that there is a way that you and I can hold people accountable with kindness. A lot of times what difficult conversations come down to is I believe it's not what you have to say, I believe it's how you say it, it's the tone in which I come across.

RYAN: There is a tone that is very respectful, there's a tone that is very humble, there is a tone that is very also curious. I love using the phrase I could be wrong, but here's what I'm seeing. Is there another version of the story that you see?

RYAN: Hey, I could be wrong, but didn't you say you were gonna do the dishes? I could be wrong, but didn't you say we were gonna meet at 3? I just--in case I'm off, I wanna recognize the error that I could have, but I'm also making space for your story, so this isn't an accusatory conversation, this is an actual dialogue, not a monologue, a dialogue.

RYAN: Another phrase I like using is there's a story in my head that I could use your help with. There's a story in my head that I could use your help with. The story in my head that I could use your help with is that you're never here, you're always gone. Is that true?

RYAN: Because it might not be always, but it does recognize that, hey, I have a feeling, and I'm just letting you know I've got a story in my head that I could use your help with. Hey, I've got a story in my head that you're cutting corners. Is that true?

RYAN: So I'm not accusing you of cutting corners, I'm just going, man, when I read our emails, and I'm looking at our numbers, when I'm checking our bank account, it feels like something is off. I'm not saying that there is, I'm just--I got a story in my head that I could use your help with.

RYAN: What you're doing is you're taking a very difficult conversation and making it way more palatable to be able to say hey there's something off, you know? And we can get deep into some very, very difficult conversations when we start talking marriage and infidelity and as you said sin, well, things can get really dicey really fast.

RYAN: But if you enter into those conversations with a level of humility to be able to say, hey, here, here's what I'm seeing, here's what I'm sensing, is this true? Whereas if you accuse someone of sin and you find out that there actually isn't sin there, well, now they'll never forget that judgmental moment that they felt, and so I think allowing there to be a lot of humility and allowing there to be a lot of God in that conversation, I think makes that conversation a whole lot easier.

BLYNDA: It's a lot of language of benefit of the doubt, kind of it's--and it reminds me of the scripture that says it was his kindness that led us to repentance, and it's approaching someone with benefit of the doubt.

BLYNDA: Do you think, though, in our world, in our society, do we have too high of expectations of people, that we're always--that the reason that we're always having to have these conversations or why someone is always rubbing against us in some way is because we just put too high of expectations? Where does expectations fall into calling somebody complicated?

RYAN: It's everything, and we found that in our research that most people actually have expectations of humanity that are very unrealistic. And the other thing about expectations is most of them are unspoken. We've never actually said them out loud.

RYAN: In fact, most of us have expectations of others to be two things that they rarely are, simple and perfect. Yet, most of the time we get complicated and flawed. By the way, those are your only options for working with people, marrying people, dating people, raising children. Those are your only options. You're only gonna get complicated and flawed.

RYAN: I wish to God there was perfectpeople.com, and we could all go to that website--

BLYNDA: Randy's on it.

RANDY: I own that, yeah, that's mine.

RYAN: And hire those people, marry those people, raise those people, but we wouldn't be on the website, that's the problem. And so while we're expecting people to be amazing, we're just not, and that's a hard thing to realize that somebody else, we think, and most of our relationships, we think the other person is getting the better end of the deal. Always, like lucky them. It's like, that's not true.

RANDY: With my wife I know I'm getting a better deal, I will say that. But you know, it's interesting that you say that, because I actually told a younger, someone that I had mentored many years ago who had grown up, gotten married and was having some marital issues, and I heard him out, right, and I looked at him, I said, "I don't know that this is the best advice, but I'll just tell you what worked for me."

RANDY: I said, "You need to lower your expectations for your wife." And he went, "What?" And I told him what I had done. I expected my wife to be, you know, lover, mother, best friend, I mean, all these things, and it's like that's just not scriptural.

RANDY: You know, as men, I think, I believe we need godly men as friends, because we can talk to them in a different way than, of course, you know, you can talk. I need someone to unload on when I to vent to, and it doesn't need to always be my wife, you know?

RANDY: And when I realized, okay, I need to accept her for who she is and admire her strengths and where God's put her and quit putting all these ridiculous expectations on her--

RYAN: No question about it.

RANDY: It changed me, right? It didn't change her, it changed me, and that's what was needed. And so I think we even do that, and I have a story in my head, right?

BLYNDA: That's such a good tool, that's such a good tool.

RANDY: It is, but no, and I mean it seriously, but I do think a lot of Christians can put expectations on God that aren't scriptural and then end up frustrated and disappointed. I mean, is this--how do we get past that?

RYAN: Yeah, I think what you just said is so important, because what I often encourage people with is that you should see complicated coming a mile away. The phrase we keep hearing over and over as it pertains to relationships is this phrase, I can't believe.

RYAN: I can't believe they would say that. I can't believe he forgot. I can't believe she texted that. I can't believe she hit reply all. I can't believe they said that in front of my boss. I can't believe, I can't believe, I can't believe.

RYAN: At some point we go when are you gonna start believing, then? You've known this person for 5, 10 years. You've been married to this person for 30 years, yet you're so shocked. And so we actually train people to say, hey, on a Monday morning you should be expecting complicated. You should walk in going is it gonna be you today? Is it gonna be you today? Which child is it gonna be and why?

RYAN: If you are expecting complicated, you can be prepared for it. Now, how should you prepare for complicated? The same way God prepared for ours, with grace in your back pocket, to be that kind of person that is willing to say, you know what? I am expecting there to be flaws today.

RYAN: I get to travel and speak all around the world, so I get to go to the place every other day or so to the number-one place where the angriest people go every single day, DFW Airport. Let me tell you something, okay? You're not gonna find more angry people all in the same spot at the exact same time than an airport, and then they have a great idea that says why don't we get on a metal tube together and see how that goes, right? And let's just see if we don't fall out of the sky.

RYAN: And so what I have done is I've just said I'm expecting delays. Mmm, wha--guys, can you believe that our flight's delayed? Yes, I can believe that our flights are delayed. It's called American Airlines. It's called DFW Airport. It's called Florida Weather. It's, guys, this is a part of life, but yet because we were expecting something else, it throws us off, and so I think we have a grand opportunity to walk about our lives to go you know what?

RYAN: I'm not expecting my kids to be perfect, I'm not expecting my spouse to be perfect, and honestly, I'm not expecting me to be perfect, so what does it look like for me as a believer and as a person to make the decision that says you know what? I'm gonna leave grace in my back pocket for just about everybody, and I'm not gonna be shocked when their humanity knocks on my front door?

RYAN: So that's something you talk about in the book you call pre-decisions. I'd love to explore that. We just don't have time right now, so I have a question for you, and you know, I'm not expecting it, but could you stay for another program and let us go into it? Because there's several things I think are really critical I'd love for people to hear. Can you stick around?

RYAN: I'd be honored to do so.

RANDY: Okay, that'll be fine. Do you have all your questions answered yet?

BLYNDA: Oh, no, I have a lot of questions, but we'll do the next show.

RANDY: Okay, well, we're gonna answer those on another program, so you have to come back, and LifeToday.org is where you can go.

RANDY: But right now we want to bring you something that we have great expectations for, and I think they're godly expectations, and that is to continue an outreach that is saving lives. And I'm hoping today you will be a part of that outreach. Watch this and see what you can do with your involvement, your gift, and your love.

[music]

[speaking foreign language]

RANDY: I know that's hard to watch. Blynda, I mean, you're a mother. What do you think when you see those mothers?

BLYNDA: The heartbreak is--it's just unspeakable. I can't even, like, fathom how a mother--the biggest fear a mom has is that they would lose a child, and this--these moms have experienced losing multiple children, and it's so avoidable.

BLYNDA: I think that's the thing that when I watch it I think oh my goodness, if we could just get there to help. The urgency that is there, that if we can just help them, we can bring the aid that they need.

RANDY: Yeah, and she expressed, one of the mothers, you know, if no help comes, if there's no help.

BLYNDA: And I think of it, and I think the desperation. You could hear it in her voice, the desperation was there, saying I don't--I cannot lose another child. It's just--it's so painful to

sit in that space and think that she's had to experience the most pain a mother could ever endure.

RANDY: Yeah, and you know, they've--the desperation is there because they've done everything they can do, they've worked, and they've worked the fields, their children often usually work as well. They've exhausted every ability they have in these situations where we go into it, and oftentimes it's drought a lot of times, you know?

RANDY: It's just the weather has turned against them. It's crops that have failed for various reasons. They've worked hard to plant, and they expect that harvest. They go--and it doesn't come. And when they say if no help comes, we're afraid that we won't be here, we won't exist, that's the reality that they live in.

RANDY: But here's the good news, help is coming. We feed over 350,000 children across Africa every day. How do we do it? I say we. I don't mean just Blynda and I and my parents, those of us in the ministry, I say we as in you, the viewer.

RANDY: So many of you have helped feed these children over years, and it's not necessarily the same thing over and over and over. The mission feeding program is designed to get children out of the desperate situation, to give them an education, to give them a future, but right now they're in a situation that they have to hear from us. If no one comes, they are in serious trouble.

RANDY: We're asking you today to come alongside of us and give them hope by giving them a simple bowl of food, and it breaks down like this. If you wanna help feed a child for the next several months, \$30 will help feed 3 children, \$50 will help feed 5 children, \$100, 10 children, you see the pattern.

RANDY: A \$1,000 gift today would help feed 100 children for several months, and that's how we get them out of this cycle of desperation and poverty to give them a hope and a future.

RANDY: So, yes, I'm asking you to give them a bowl of food today, but I'm also asking you to give them hope for tomorrow, a future for next week, next year, and I've seen that come to fruition. I know it works, I want you to be a part of it. Go online, go to the phone, make the absolute best gift that you can.

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.

ANNOUNCER: 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.

ANNOUNCER: 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.

ANNOUNCER: 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.

JAMES ROBISON: Just remember, we are able to feed, the missionaries are able to be here because of the love of God, not just in their hearts, but in your heart.

JAMES ROBISON: Those of you who support Life Outreach and respond to "Life Today," why don't you go right now to the phone or go online and make the best gift you can? Help us feed three, five, or ten of these children. I mean, if you could help feed 100, we'll do that.

JAMES ROBISON: We are feeding kids because of the love of God expressed through people. And it's very important that you pray that everyone who can will respond. Don't just pray, be the answer to a prayer. Respond and make the best gift you can.

RANDY: I do hope you're going online and going on the phone right now, make the best gift you can. I can tell you from personal experience you will be impacting lives, probably saving lives. But, wow, you will be demonstrating God's love to people that really need to hear it and to see it, so I hope you'll do that.

RANDY: If you would like to request this book by Ryan Leak it's called "How to Work With Complicated People," and we've just gotten into it. You can request that today, but Blynda, we've got a lot more to go.

BLYNDA: So much to go, and I wanna remind people that the book, even though it talks about work, it's so good for-- in relationships with a spouse, relationships with family, friends, in your church, it's for everyone.

RANDY: Yes, absolutely, so we've got much more, so we'll see you again soon.

RYAN: Sounds good.

RANDY: All right, and we hope to see you guys again soon. Come back next time for more "Life Today."

[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 ♪

BLYNDA: How do you then walk out I've chosen joy when it--life can be really, really hard.

ANNOUNCER: Tomorrow.

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