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Week 22

Randy Robison & Blynda Lane

Ruth Chou Simons

"Unburden Your Anxious Soul"

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

RUTH CHOU SIMONS: And I got the call that most moms would not like to get on a Saturday morning.

ANNOUNCER: A frightening accident taught Ruth Chou Simons what it meant to cast her anxieties onto God.

RUTH: As I slowed down and paid attention and rehearsed the truth out of 1 Peter 5:6-7, "Cast your anxieties on him because he cares for you," we can humble ourselves before the Lord and cast our anxieties on him because he cares for you.

ANNOUNCER: Next.

[music]

RANDY ROBISON: Welcome to "Life Today." I'm Randy Robison. Great to see you today. Blynda Lane joins me. How you doing, Blynda?

BLYNDA LANE: Hello, I'm good, Randy, how are you?

RANDY: It's good, okay, so I'm gonna say something that we--if you've been in church, and even if you haven't, you've probably heard it. "God loves you." We know this is true.

BLYNDA: This is a really good statement.

RANDY: Here's the hard question. Does it ever feel like, feel like, he doesn't care a little bit? I mean, do you ever wonder, like, "God, I know you love me, but do you really care about what I'm going through?"

BLYNDA: Okay, Randy, you're really--you're going there.

RANDY: I know, I know.

BLYNDA: You're going there. And this is a great question, because I think it's really valid, because we can feel God's love as a universal truth, but life comes in, kind of hits you, and you think, "How would a God who loves me let this happen?" And that can be really hard. So does he actually care for me is another question.

RANDY: It is, and we know he does, but it doesn't feel like--and I think the disciples went through this, you know, when they hit that storm in the boat and Jesus is right there with them. They were like, "Jesus, we know you're with us. We know you love us, but do you care what I'm going through?"

BLYNDA: He was sleeping peacefully. He was just fine.

RANDY: All right, but we're gonna talk about that. There's a new book out called "The Way of the Wildflower."

BLYNDA: And I'm sorry, I have to show it. It is beautiful.

RANDY: It is really pretty.

BLYNDA: It is such a pretty book.

RANDY: It's not just writing, it's art.

BLYNDA: It is.

RANDY: And the artist is with us, as is the writer. All one person, Ruth Chou Simons. Welcome to "Life Today." Great to have you back.

RUTH: It's so good to be here, you guys.

BLYNDA: I mean, truly you are so talented and gifted. I can't wait for people to get this book to actually see how beautiful it is. But the content is what we're really talking about today because it's so great. "The Way of the Wildflower." So what I love about that is it brings an imagery up of, I can see wildflowers kind of blowing in the wind.

RUTH: Here they're bluebonnets, right?

BLYNDA: Here in Texas? Yes, true. So why did you name the book this?

RUTH: Yeah, you know, I live in west--southwest Colorado, in Durango, and in the summer the wildflowers are all in bloom. We have different kinds of wildflowers, but it's, you know, growing up on mountainsides, and I think in some seasons where I've really wrestled with that very thing that Randy was just saying, where I don't know if I can feel God's presence and I don't know if I feel like he's taking care of things, I've taken these walks.

RUTH: And for so long I was taking these walks, noticing these wildflowers, and one of these times, I recall Jesus's words, "Consider how the wildflower grows. They don't toil or spin." And I know he was talking about spinning thread, but I was like, "Oh, I'm spinning," you know? I'm spinning.

RUTH: And so I really took it to heart and was like, well, let me consider how the wildflower grows, and I was noticing some of their ways, and pulled five different ones that I was noticing about how wildflowers live and exist, and started thinking, is this what you want me to understand about my life, God? Like, can I learn something about the way a wildflower is and realize how much you're caring and taking care of me as well?

RANDY: To consider doesn't just mean like, "Yeah, oh, they're over there." It means like, no, really think about this. So I love the fact that you've kind of drilled down into this whole idea that Jesus brought forth, to apply it to our lives. What are some of the, kind of just briefly, the key components that you saw? And then we'll talk a little bit about how you had to live it out.

RUTH: Well, first of all, I would just say, you know, that passage I'm citing in Luke 12, Jesus is talking about looking at the birds of the air right before that, right? He's saying, "Can anyone, by worrying, add an hour to your life? If you can't do that, why do you worry about the rest?"

RUTH: But I imagine him sitting there and going, "Okay, guys, don't worry about your life. Hmm, let me--how do I illustrate this for you? Look up, look as high as you can. See that bird? That bird is not worried about where it's gonna build a nest and how it's gonna take care of itself. And then, hmm, look over there, look at those flowers."

RUTH: And so I imagine this picture of him going, "See how God's already at work." So, in your life, you can look around and see how God is faithful, how he's taking care of things. And so I noticed that wildflowers are dependent, they are resilient. They're not in a hurry, they're unhurried. They are free, they're not all bound and nervous about staying in this one little spot. And ultimately, that they're also beloved, they're unique. And they're not trying to look just like another flower in the midst, you know? And so those were the five. I'm sure there's so many other ways of the wildflower, but for me those five really stood out.

BLYNDA: And what's, I think, important, the message we want to get there is that dependence and surrender that you see just in nature. I mean, I love that he has--nature mimics exactly what he wants us to understand about him, is if he will clothe them in splendor, won't he do even more for us?

BLYNDA: I mean, we're his children, and yet sometimes we let the worries of the world and anxiety bring us down, and we lose sight of who's really in charge, who we're surrendered to, and where our dependence lies. I feel like you know a little bit about this, because it's not just a book you wrote but you've had to live this out.

RUTH: Absolutely, I think all authors write books that are out of an experience or a journey, but you know, it's always kind of just like the Lord that as you write something, as you're working on something, he calls you to live that message out repeatedly, sometimes in the moment.

RUTH: And you know, it's interesting while I was working on this project, I always know what I'm going to paint, but I write first because I want the content to lead. That really is the most important thing. For me, it really was about drawing our attention to what God's Word says about these cares and concerns in our lives.

RUTH: But I was a little behind on painting, and when I started the painting journey, I was kind of in this deadline where I knew I needed to get these paintings done, and I got the call that most moms would not like to get on a Saturday morning. And my third son, I'm a mama to six boys.

BLYNDA: Six boys?

RUTH: I know, it's crazy.

BLYNDA: I need everybody to hear that, six boys.

RUTH: And the old--

BLYNDA: And you call them--

RUTH: Man cubs, I do. And the oldest is now 24. And so they're not all little boys anymore, but because I'm a mama to six boys I get calls like this, and I just wait it out and I go, you know, "Everybody okay? How's the scrape?"

RUTH: And my son had been on a mountain bike going over some jumps, and went over the handlebars and landed on his head. And I wasn't immediately worried because I thought, "Okay, is everybody okay, keeping him still?" But he ended up being evacuated out of the mountains, and one of his older brothers was with him.

RUTH: And by the time the ER doc said, "We're transferring him to a greater trauma unit, you're gonna have to get on the next flight," I jumped on a plane, and I gotta tell you, I had the wherewithal to stuff my paints and pens and paper in this bag, because I didn't know how long I'd be at the ICU.

RUTH: And wouldn't you know that the Lord would have me paint a forget-me-not, the flower that goes alongside the very first entry, "When You Need Someone to Care." When I was wrestling with this concept out of 1 Peter 5 of how we can humble ourselves before the Lord and cast our anxieties on him, because he cares for you. Not because I just need somewhere to put it, but because God cares, and he cares so much better than I could care for myself.

RUTH: And so as I was painting this tiny little flower that sometimes goes unseen, I was painting it from the ICU with my son in the OR waiting for him to return. I'm hoping and praying for a successful surgery, and at the time I just knew that all I could do is remind myself that this message wasn't for somebody else out there, it was the message that the Lord was bringing for me to apply to my own life right then and there.

RANDY: And when was this, 2024, 2025?

RUTH: This was 2024, fall of '24.

RANDY: So it's been a little time.

RUTH: Yes.

BLYNDA: And he's okay?

RUTH: Yeah, he's okay. And yet we're not done with the journey. As of right now, he's actually been in some pain, and in seeking out some answers he's had some CTs and MRIs and we've discovered that his hardware is loose and will require more surgery.

RUTH: And I share that because I think sometimes we think, oh, of course we can trust him when everything works out because yes, they wheeled him back in. The surgery took longer than expected. Here I was with this little watercolor painting on the side going, "Look what I accomplished in the last six hours," and feeling a little nervous, and when he wiggled his toes for the first time I just sobbed and I was like, oh, okay, you know? The doctors were worried. Is he gonna be able to move all his limbs?

RUTH: And if I'm being super-honest as a mama, I'm sitting here right now with this conversation and I'm a little tender about it, you know? I don't know exactly if he's gonna have pain for the rest of his life. I don't know if he's always gonna have some nerve damage. He's already a little behind with his college work. I have, you know, all the mama feels of like, I want--

BLYNDA: And you carry all of that as a mom.

RUTH: And so every time this rises up in me, and I think more surgery, more unknowns, I go back to the lesson that I was learning as I was painting it, which was--and it wasn't--the magic wasn't that I was painting a certain flower, or it wasn't because the Lord spoke through my watercolors, it was that as I slowed down and paid attention, and rehearsed the truth out of 1 Peter 5:6-7, "Cast your anxieties on him because he cares for you," he knows he's got the right and proper time for all things.

RUTH: And so as I rehearse that truth, it's interesting that the very book I wrote is actually being part--it's just part of my story where I'm rehearsing that same truth back to myself. So you all can pray about that, that's upcoming, and we'll be seeking the Lord's answer in that.

RANDY: It's interesting because, you know, to take an extreme case, and we all pray that your son has all his feeling and walks and does all the things that, you know, we want everyone to do, but Joni Eareckson Tada spent her life as a quadriplegic, and one of the most profound things ever said to me was by her, when she started talking about how thankful she was because she understood how dependent she is on God every single day.

RANDY: And she said, for everyone else, you know, you start to feel a little independent or you just kind of forget, like, every breath we take is dependent on God. And I just--I remember that and I thought, Lord, don't ever let me forget. How do you walk through--because it can be hard to breathe sometimes, right, in these situations?

RUTH: You don't wanna sign up for those things.

BLYNDA: You didn't sign up for it.

RUTH: You're not like, please give me the life experiences that require more dependency. Like, I'm not asking for that at all, right?

RUTH: But right this minute, we're going through that and a potential cancer journey with my mom, a tumor removal that has to happen, all at the same time. So it is more than I can handle, but it's that exact space that you're talking about. It's the place where I'm remembering, you know, going back to this idea of what I was observing as I was looking at wildflowers, you know, that wildflower that's growing up, you know, at the side of the road in any town or behind the gas station, or in my area in the crack of a rock here on the mountainside, it is not fed unless God feeds it, with rain, with nutrients.

RUTH: It's literally exactly where God supplies it to be. And that flower is super-dependent. It can't just decide that it's gonna thrive here. It relies on its Heavenly Father to care for it.

BLYNDA: I even like in one of the chapters, you're talking about being overwhelmed, and you even say that we have to learn how to exchange our management for his mastery. And I liked the way you said that, because it is so true what you were saying, Randy, is we kind of become our own self-managers.

BLYNDA: You know, yes, we can, in our own strength, kind of do the day to day, but what I loved about the word "mastery" is his ways are always higher and better. His thoughts are greater. Like, even though we think we're doing okay on our own, his mastery is like, "If you give it to me, I will do more with what you give me than you could ever imagine on your own."

BLYNDA: And we can think of that in the big things of like, "Lord, I wanna--okay, I wanna give this big thing to you," but do we do that in the day to day? And I loved that you used that wording because I was like, okay, I do try to self manage, but he's the master.

RUTH: And I think that's the point, and I'm so glad you said that because it's not just about how capable he is, it's about who God is. And I think one of the things that I tried to do in all

my books, but especially in something where I hope to meet people right where they have a messy situation in their lives, is that I think a lot of times it sounds really nice to trust the Lord.

RUTH: It sounds really nice to live dependent and free and resilient and all these things, but I think we spend a lot of time focusing on how we're gonna overcome things, when really I think what causes us to struggle in our dependency, struggle in trusting the Lord, is that we don't have a higher view of God, and we don't realize that we don't because we're not practicing it every day.

RUTH: A.W. Tozer said, "What comes to your mind when you think about God is the most important thing about you," because whether you think of him as a grumpy father, I mean, if you think of him that way, you won't come to him. If you think of him as being far off and not in the details, you're gonna be like, "Oh, do you care?" If you think he's not willing to listen until you get caught up in your Bible reading, that's gonna keep you far away, right? So it really depends.

RUTH: You have to have an accurate, gospel-driven, Bible-fueled understanding of the character of God and his attributes and who he really is, and that's why it's really important for us not to soothe our worries and anxieties with just, "God's got it, it's gonna be okay. You're the girl for the job. You're doing great. Everybody's gonna be fine." I mean, that might last for a few minutes, but where you and I are going to find real comfort, where our viewers here are gonna actually know true relief and true peace, is if our hope is squarely put on the only one who is greater, more capable, sovereign, all-knowing, unchanging. Those aren't things that I can say about myself.

RUTH: So, yes, I wanna manage everything, because I have such a high view of myself. But I exchange that for his mastery because he's the master, and when I list off all of his attributes, I'm not one--I'm not like him at all. And so I think, for all of us who might be going through times where we go, "This doesn't make sense to me," and maybe if we're whispering kind of in the corner, "I deserve better. I shouldn't have to go through this. This is not fair. This hurts. I worked so hard. Why is this happening to me?"

RUTH: For all of us going through these kinds of situations, if we stop and go, the character of God, and why Jesus would say, in the worries about your life and the little things, and in the big things, start looking to Jesus. Start looking to how God takes care of all of his creation. It's changed my life.

RANDY: You said a couple things there that I just want to hit, because I think most of us, we sometimes instinctively, if you grew up in the church, you instinctively are like, "Oh, I've got this big situat--I got a surgery, I got a loved one who's going through this or whatever, I'm gonna take that to God." But you said little things, and you said details. How detailed is God's care for us?

RUTH: So, for example, I've learned that I need to lay in bed--when I wake up, my first instinct is to immediately take this deep breath and go, "Oh my goodness, I gotta take care of all these things." It might be really tempting to grab my phone and see if there's any notifications, I have to check right away.

RUTH: But I have learned that he's so in the details that I can lay there for a good five minutes, ten minutes, and just talk to the Lord about my day, but that's not too small. I'm not just going to him in some big, you know, planned out prayer time, or just in passing, I can say, "You're here at the start of my day." And maybe in the details where as you're doing the dishes, if you're like, "Mm, I really don't want to deal with the sink full of dishes," in that engaging with him and considering why this is a privilege, it's a moment to care for the very things that God's giving you care for. The details matter, and meeting him in there.

BLYNDA: In Matthew 11 when it says, "Come to me, all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest," I feel like that's what you're talking about, is a rest that can only come from him, a rest that is supernatural, to take away the anxiety that we would like to put on in the world that says we have to do it on our own.

BLYNDA: How did you come to--I mean, I'm thinking about you have a ministry that you run, you're an artist, you've got six kids. I mean, this is a--how do you find rest in him?

RUTH: You know, it's something I've had to really fight for and I don't do it perfectly, but in daily ways, weekly ways, and seasonal ways, I have to find true rest. Now, that rest, it's wonderful if that rest sometimes comes from being able to take a vacation or take a sabbatical, or be able to turn my phone off and have the luxury of being up in the mountains all day. Those are wonderful things.

RUTH: But sometimes life doesn't give you a lot of margin, and there are times when you care for people that you didn't expect, "Oh, I have to care for a sick parent and a child," and you're getting up in the middle of the night to nurse a baby. There may be a million different things going on where you go, "There's no margin for rest." And even there, it's a soul rest that Jesus is talking about. It doesn't mean that there's not physical rest, but rest in Jesus ultimately leads us to the kind of rest we need everywhere else too.

RUTH: Even surrendering something, like, "I am not going to try to get one more thing done. I'm not going to multitask my way to exhaustion. I'm gonna rest and remember." And so I love that you mentioned that Matthew 11 passage, because what Jesus offers there, did you notice that he doesn't say, "Come to me and I'm gonna give you a formula," or "I'm gonna give you a successful way to deal with your life."? He says, "Come to me and I will give you myself." He's the rest, right? And so, I just keep remembering that I need to turn to Jesus when I really am needing that rest.

RANDY: So good. I love the subtitle, "Unburden your anxious soul," because again, we all need to do that. And by the way, if you want someone to pray with you, we have a prayer

line. Pick that up, call. We'll just come together with you before God and say, "Lord, we're dependent on you and take our burdens, give us rest."

RANDY: So if you would like Ruth Chou Simons's book, request it today when you join us in this beautiful outreach. Watch this.

JOHN YEATTS: Hello, thank you for letting me come to your house. Hello, mama.

JOHN: As I told you earlier, our friends at the medical clinic shared a little of your story with us. And so we wanted to come and pay our respect and our condolences. Can you tell me, your baby that you lost, what was the baby's name?

[speaking foreign language]

JOHN: As I've sat here today and listened to Christina's story, it's a story of so many mothers here in Angola, and so many of the other countries that we work here in Africa. Valentine was sick and you took him to the hospital. What did the doctors tell you?

[speaking foreign language]

JOHN: There's so many things, whether it be drought, whether it be floods, so many variables that affect their lives that are so fragile already that just one little change can bring destruction, one little change can bring death. Do you think about Valentine often? What was he like? I know it's hard, I'm sorry. It's okay.

JOHN: When I asked Christina about Valentine, she can't hardly talk about it. And she's able to talk about this brand-new baby, and boy, when I asked about her daughter that is still alive, she brightened up and she wanted to talk. But the fact is a mother's heart cries out for the one that is lost. What do you believe would help your village?

[speaking foreign language]

JOHN: How does that make your heart feel?

[speaking foreign language]

JOHN: She said, "Many people talk about the solutions, but they never come." And the reality is we do have the solution. We have the solution with Mission Feeding, because Mission Feeding provides food for children in school, high-protein, high-caloric diet that will give them everything they need to learn so that there is a future and a hope for them. So I'm asking you, would you please help us with Mission Feeding? We can, together, put a hot meal in every Mission Feeding bowl, every day for a child's life.

RANDY: You know, Blynda, that's so, so tough to watch, and there's several things that I want people to notice in that. And one, that the culture there, they are so used to death, they have--everybody they know, if they themselves haven't lost a child, they know

someone who's lost a child. And so they try to just accept it as best they can, to ignore it, but it always leaves a vacancy in their heart.

BLYNDA: And a desire for change. I mean, when she said, "It's gonna always be the same," I mean, they live with this feeling that nothing's ever going to change, because they can't see how it could.

RANDY: Now I've been to so many places where they've said, "Please come back. Will you come back? Will you--you know, will you come back?" And that's hard to hear.

BLYNDA: And she's holding this new life, and we're having to watch her tell her story about a life that was buried. I just think, can't we just give her the hope that it doesn't have to stay this way?

RANDY: And here's the thing. I've been there. I've been on both sides of this, the villages where there is great need and loss and suffering and pain like you just saw. And then I've been to the villages where Mission Feeding has been active for months, sometimes years, and what you see is a hope and a future.

RANDY: People go from not worrying about where their next meal will come from for themselves and their children, and then we see people a generation later who are helping with the Mission Feeding, oftentimes, or they're pastors, or they're teachers or lawyers or policemen.

BLYNDA: They have children of their own that are healthy.

RANDY: They have children of their own. This is changing cultures, and it only happens because of you, the viewer, the viewers that have been with us for years that have gotten us to this level where we're at, where we're now feeding 350,000 children every day. They have made this happen. We have changed villages, we've changed countries.

RANDY: And why do we do this? We do this to share and to show the love of Jesus Christ. That's why we do it. We applaud others who do the good deed, but we strive for the God deed. We want you to be a part of that. We need you to be a part of that. So your gift of \$30, \$50, or \$100 will help feed 3, 5, or 10 children for the next several months. We can intervene. We can show them God's love. We can give them a bowl of food. We can give them a hope and a future.

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 stationery 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.

RANDY: I do hope you're going online or going to the phone now. Make the best gift you can. You really can help someone in desperate need. And if you'd like to request Ruth Chou Simons's book "The Way of the Wildflower," do it. I promise you'll be blessed. It's beautiful.

BLYNDA: If they get this book, what will they get out of it?

RUTH: You know, I lovingly wrote the book but painted all 30 of the wildflower studies, even included little facts about the wildflowers. I think the beauty of artwork is that it captivates us, it takes us from our busy days, our distractions, helps us put our phones down and go, "Okay, the Word of God is worth my time to linger long, to see how he's faithful." And my prayer is that this book would drive you back to the Word of God.

RANDY: So beautiful. Thank you so much, and yeah, I hope you'll do it now, do it quickly. We'd love to hear from you right now, and we'd like to see you again next time, here on "Life Today."

[music]

ANNE GRAHAM LOTZ: So God allows bad things to happen to us, but he's not going to leave us in that pit.

ANNOUNCER: "God Won't Leave You There," tomorrow.

ANNOUNCER: "Life Today" is made possible by the supporters of Life Outreach International. Your gift will be used exclusively for the exempt purposes of Life. The ministry features specific outreaches as examples of the programs it supports and conducts. Gifts are considered to be without restriction as to use unless explicitly stipulated by the donor. The ministry is a member of the ECFA.