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Week 23

James Robison & Betty Robison

Billy Wilson

“Finding A Father”

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

BILLY WILSON: For 15 years, then, my parents were apart. They separated, they got divorced. Dad made a mess out of things. I had all the attributes as a young teenager of someone that doesn't have a father.

I was looking for love. I was looking in the wrong places. I was a leader, but I led people in the wrong direction, until I met Jesus, and then God radically changed my life.

ANNOUNCER: After his father abandoned the family, Billy Wilson was left with a lifelong wound he describes as a father cry.

[music]

JAMES ROBISON: Well, I'm excited about today. I'm excited about every day, because Jesus is Lord of every day. I'm James Robison.

" I'm excited because I've got a guest. I just have to call him Billy, Billy Wilson.

You know, Billy Graham let everybody call him Billy, even though he had lots of doctorates degrees. Well, this is Dr. Billy Wilson. He's the president now of Oral Roberts University. And I got to be real close to Oral, which was quite an amazing thing for a Baptist to really become so close to a Pentecostal that even the Pentecostals were criticizing, and everybody's criticizing.

His Methodist family criticized, and Baptists were good at criticizing everybody. And I went to Oral and asked him to forgive me, and he started crying. And I said, "I think God told me you've been lonely, Oral." He said, "You don't know how lonely." I said, "Well, I'm gonna help change that."

And by the time I started helping change it, this guy right here, Dr. Billy Wilson, somehow not too long after all of that, you and I met, and what was the name of the organization you were heading up that was impacting the country?

BILLY: I was leading a group called the Awakening America Alliance, when we really started connecting a lot, James.

JAMES: And boy, that was beautiful. So we started working together.

And then when I found out you were called to Oral Roberts University, well, I jumped in. I knew you needed money, and I didn't have any problem trying to work along with and encourage Hobby Lobby, David Green and his family, and they appreciated that.

And it was just amazing to watch it, and what you and I have watched is God bring his family together in ways we never imagined. And I'm praying God will use us as we talk about "The Father Cry."

I didn't know you had such a bad father situation and fatherless situation, so to speak, in your family as I did my whole journey, but there is a tremendous father hole in this country. I don't know if there's a bigger problem in the country than fathers not being anything like the Father, not being the kind of fathers we desperately need. Would you agree with that?

BILLY: I agree, yeah, it's one of the--well, I mean, even sociologists say that fatherlessness is one of the great issues of America. Maybe the number-one issue in America is fatherlessness.

JAMES: I think it is.

BILLY: And even in the church, James, you know, we need spiritual fathers and mothers, and I think the lack of spiritual fathers in the church is also a critical issue that I talk about in the book.

JAMES: No question, and you are so gifted, Betty, that you've seen the journey with me. I've said that you did more to change my life than even any of the preachers or people I know.

You're the greatest force in my life, apart from the Holy Spirit.

But the fatherlessness that we've seen, well, you could agree, it's as serious as any problem.

BETTY ROBISON: It's so serious. And to me, the father is such a part of the foundation of the family, along with the mother.

And so many times they're not there in the home, and the mother has a responsibility about raising the family the best way that she can.

But, you know, you were talking earlier about the different denominations and stuff, and you know, I was sitting here thinking, we're all God's children, we're all his family. We're the ones that put tags and names on people, and cause the separation. But we should realize that, and I think we've come a long way.

BILLY: We've come a long way, Betty, you know. Again, what the Holy Spirit's doing is really bringing us, lifting us above our divisions into what I call relational unity.

You know, Jesus's prayer to his Father was that they would be one as he and the Father are one, which is relationship first, mission second, and then through the power of the Holy Spirit. But really God's raising us to a relational connection.

And you know, what happened to me, Betty, I was born into a preacher's home, and at the age of five, my dad was a supervisor in the denomination he was serving at that time in West Virginia. And he walked in one day and told my mom goodbye, and my mom and my two sisters had to move out of the "state parsonage within two weeks," and so we moved to Kentucky and with my grandparents on my mom's side.

And for 15 years, then, my parents were apart. They separated, they got divorced. Dad made a mess out of things and Mom backslid as well. They both got bitter, angry. I grew up with my dad being public enemy number one in my life in many ways, and had all the attributes, as a young teenager, of someone that doesn't have a father.

I was looking for love, I was looking in the wrong places. I was a leader, but I led people in the wrong direction, until I met Jesus, and then God radically changed my life, and along the way began to radically change my dad's life again. He came back to the Lord. He actually got back into the ministry.

God began to talk to me that if he could forgive me of my mess, couldn't I forgive my dad of his mess, and began to restore our relationship. And then miraculously, after 15 years apart, my mom got her heart right with God, got in the car in Kentucky, drove to way down in Florida where my dad was trying to plan a church, knocked on the door of the trailer he was living in and said, "Alva, I need you to forgive me." He said, "No, I need you to forgive me." And two weeks later they were married again, after 15 years apart.

And for the last 35 years of my dad's life, he was in full-time ministry. And the book is really about, James, what I found in my own heart, of crying for a father, longing to have a dad present, and then what I have heard in this generation of a cry for both physical, real fathers in the home, but also spiritual fathers, the cry of a generation for someone to be there for them, to mentor them, and to be someone they can depend on.

And so I sort of correlate my own journey and my cry for my father, our restored relationship and how our relationship with our Heavenly Father gets restored. God ultimately brought my dad and I together. Just as he brought Mom and Dad together, he brought our family together, healed my heart, which was a work of the Holy Spirit, and

helped me realize along the way that God is my true Heavenly Father, and that God will not forsake us.

I had a problem, and James, I know you probably had the same kind of problems without a father, of trust issues, and also of being a good father myself and understanding what it takes to do that.

JAMES: Who do you admire close to you? Who do you seek to be like, because you've been inspired by who they are and what they do? They just weren't there. And it was a big hole in my life.

BILLY: I had a grandfather and he was a provider, but it just wasn't the same as a dad. It's just not the same. And so, I had to find God as my Father, which was actually awesome, okay?

And then my trust issues, I had to realize that God as my Father would not be exactly like my earthly father. He wouldn't leave when it got tough. He wouldn't leave when it was difficult. He would stay with me, and when I was being blessed, he wouldn't pull the rug out from under me. He really loved me enough to keep blessing me, which has been an amazing discovery in my adult life.

And God healed my heart, and he healed our family. And by the time my dad passed away, he was my number-one friend in the world and my best cheerleader, and we were together in Jesus. It was amazing.

JAMES: Well, I never got to say that about my real father, who raped my mother and got her pregnant, and came back into our life later when I was a teenager, and somehow my mother let him stay around.

He turned our life into literal hell, and then tried to kill my mother.

When I was 14 years old, he told me he was gonna kill me. And he didn't know I'd bought a rifle. And I went and got it and pointed it at him, and if he'd have moved, I'd have killed him. And I told him that. I said, "If you move a finger, I'm gonna blow a hole in you." And thank God he didn't, and I called the operator and told him to get the police here quick, and they came within ten minutes.

They had him arrested, prison seven years, never knew him. I did witness to him. I did tell him, "I never knew you, but I loved you," Betty and I. We couldn't let him come in our mobile home. We were living in a trailer, 50 foot wide trailer, but we put a chair outside, and he slept in it. I couldn't trust him in my house with my wife and my daughter.

But the point is that I said, "I don't know you, but I love you." I did my best to help him, but I never saw a change. But I'm telling you, those are big holes in my heart. And I see the whole nation with that father hole.

And here's what I want to say to all of you, please hear this. I began to glimpse him in people, but I actually met him through Jesus, and really through the witness of just this woman that was my wife, loving Jesus so much I could see the Father in her. And she didn't have a perfect father, but boy, she knew that one.

And anyway, we just began to grow, but boy, I mean, her influence on me, it's amazing how a woman can fill some of the holes where the man didn't fill them.

BILLY: Well, same with my wife, Lisa.

JAMES: But here's the thing: this father cry is the cry of the nation, and it's--let me say to all you women, God bless you.

Just pray that God will make the man that you love and perhaps marry, God, I'm praying that right now, do something in his heart to make him wanna love and lead the way you want us to love and lead, in Jesus's name.

Look, ask the Father to become your father through Jesus. This Father can teach us how to be a father. I'm really seeking to spend the rest of my life, and I know you are. You're the president of Oral Roberts University. You're already impacting thousands of students. I really believe that you are sowing seeds there at Oral Roberts that Oral and I prayed before he left. He wanted that school to become greater than he ever imagined.

BILLY: It is.

JAMES: And he talked about how much he missed the fellowship of the family because of the way denominations separate. I wish we could learn this, and I'm gonna try to help the church see this.

We can have serious disagreements in life, serious disagreements in marriage, serious disagreements in our family and in the church, and not get a divorce, or not amputate or hurt one another. We don't need to do that.

I mean, we can be convinced we're right, they're wrong, but we're all wrong, and he's always right. And he loves us with perfect love even when we're wrong. And we can learn to pour that love out on others, and I've learned to do it, and Billy, I know you have. We as fathers should be leading the whole family the way the Father wants to lead his family.

BILLY: I interviewed my mom and dad years after they'd been back together. I have a television show and so I decided to interview them, and a bit selfish on my part because I got to ask them questions I'd never asked them before. And so I asked Dad on TV.

I mean, we were taping. It was live to tape.

And I said, "Dad, what happened? Why'd you leave? Cause so much pain, hurt so many people?" He started crying on the set. He said, "Well, it's pretty simple, Billy." He said, "I

got selfish." He said, "I got selfish." Divorce happens because people get selfish, James. Good fathers are not selfish. That's the key. Our Heavenly Father's not selfish. He's a Father that always gives.

And if we as fathers, earthly fathers, could learn to give, to love as our Heavenly Father, we would heal a whole generation, because what's happened, because of the hurt family, because of bad fathering all over the world, even in families that are intact, fathers that are not giving, that are selfish, hurt their children. And so you've got people growing up with this father wound in their heart, and so their view of the Heavenly Father is distorted because their earthly father distorted their view of fatherhood.

Now, God is not your earthly father. I wanna say that to those that are watching. God is not like your earthly father. However good he is, God's better, okay? God always loves. He's always there. He's always faithful. He always cares. His arms are always there. He will never leave you, never forsake you, and he wants an intimate relationship with you called Abba. Abba, Daddy, Father, that you can be in his arms and he can be your daddy and father.

But for those of us that are earthly fathers, and I wanna talk to a few earthly fathers right now. If you're selfish, you're hurting your family, get yourself to the cross of Jesus Christ and give up and surrender to him, and let the love of God fill your heart, even for your family and your children. Your words, your deeds, everything you do as a father is influencing your family and future generations. Your grandchildren and great-grandchildren will be influenced by your response. Selfishness brings pain. Love brings healing.

JAMES: I've been watching this man for 40 years, and I've watched God, literally, in many ways, not only use him to transform others, but God to transform his life, to change him, to where he leads a truly great university. He's gifted to write.

This "Father Cry," listen to this, "Healing Your Heart and the Hearts of Those You Love."

Billy, I believe the way you write, what you wrote, the truthfulness of your own journey, what you saw even in Preacher Daddy and the failures, what you have seen in people you've ministered to now for many years, I believe what he has written here about the father cry could heal, literally, the fathers in this nation, if you would take this truth.

I wanna ask all of you to get it. You can go online and buy it. You can go to Amazon, you can go to the bookstores. But I'll tell you what. If you will help us feed and save the lives of some children that are literally starving and in Africa now, because all the feeding basically has pulled out. We're one of the immovable ones that will not move, we together.

If you would help us reach out and put God's arm, the Father's arms around these children that are starving to death and their families, we can do that. So if you would just help us, right now, feed more children than ever, knowing even more will come, please God, raise

up people to say, "I'll help 1, 3, 5, 10, 100, 1,000, I can." God, please, I ask you, touch the hearts of those listening. You just help us get God's arms around the starving.

Billy, I wanna see America read this book. I believe God brought us together to help bring his family together, and the best way to do that is help everybody know that Father, and become the family he desires. And we can inspire that. That's what I think we do as ministers. That's what we do as fathers in our own homes. So please, please give it a shot. Billy, I really do love you and appreciate you.

BILLY: Love you, James.

JAMES: And don't you believe this "Father Cry" is going to experience a move of God?

BILLY: Yeah, we are in a move of God, James. Generation Z is in revival. God is moving in young people today like never before.

They are blessed, but they're also broken. They're on fire, but they're also frail. And they need men and women of God to be their spiritual moms and dads and put their arms--or put us to put our arms around them and love them through this journey.

Lisa and I see ourselves as spiritual parents at ORU, and it's the honor of a lifetime.

JAMES: Well, it is, and Betty and I see ourselves as just--

BILLY: Well, you're spiritual parents to hundreds of thousands of people.

JAMES: Yeah, we're great-grandparents and grandparents to an awful lot of people, millions of people all over the world. And what we say to those of you who watch us, and we go and show you the legitimate needs that can be effectively met by the love of God.

The only way you get the Father's arms, God's arms around people, is for his family to do it. The family is his body, it's his church.

I want you to look in. I want you to look in real careful. I want you to listen to a young girl with what she sees looking at some little children. But I want you to see what she sees the way she sees it. And you are the answer. Watch this prayerfully.

ANNOUNCER: This is a clinic for mothers whose children are suffering from the effects of malnutrition.

Kiera Pretorius, daughter of Isak Pretorius, is seeing for the first time Angolan children struggling to survive the consequences of not having enough food to keep them alive.

ISAK PRETORIUS: So you can see the other signs. I mean, you can see how his ribs are just sticking out.

You see how, I mean, look how little his arms are. I mean, his arms are like the size of my thumb, you know?

KIERA PRETORIUS: And it's just skin, there's like--

ISAK: No, it's just skin and bone really, because that's the state at which its nutrition is at. It's so weak and so malnourished that literally the body starts to shut down.

KIERA: Do you think he'll recover?

ISAK: Chances are that he will survive, that we will be able to save his life, but there are so many children in this state that don't leave clinics like this. Just do it. It's good to cry. It's okay.

KIERA: I've grown up knowing many of these stories and seeing the photos, and hearing here the heart-wrenching stories of young mothers with their young children that want to do the best for them, but genuinely just don't have the resources.

Every time I see or hear these stories and being here today, it affects me and it deeply hurts my heart.

So I'm asking you to not let it become normal to you, don't let it--don't let it become something you become immune to.

ISAK: I ask you to hear that appeal from a 19-year-old girl who knows what happens if you look away, who knows what happens when this starts to become normal, when we shut our hearts down, when we try to think through this with our heads instead of just listening to our hearts.

And so I'm asking you today to listen to your heart.

Listen to the heart of Kiera. Listen to my heart, listen to your heart, because our hearts' cry is the same as this mother's, and I believe yours is too. And that is to do everything that we can do to save this little boy, everything that we can do to give this mother what she needs for her child.

JAMES: Peter Pretorius and I started more than 40 years ago together, and Peter and I stood real close to each other for, you know, 35 years, I guess, and he left us.

And I'm so glad that Isak has picked it up and now that beautiful little 19 year old, looking at those little children.

Please listen to me. I want you to look at them. And look what it did to her heart. But you see, that's what it did to my heart the first time I saw them.

And Betty, when I saw the graves of 10,000 of them, most of them less than 4 years old, they were 2 and 3 and just little graves and no markers, maybe a little picture of a child or a little toy, I just said, "God, please." And we sold a bunch of stuff the ministry owned because we didn't know if our viewers--we didn't know if people would help missions.

Oh boy, but you did. When we showed you the reality of what they face, and we showed you the love of those missionaries that move their families across the ocean and plant their lives in the midst of death, and they said to me and to Betty, "Please go home, see if you can get us some help so we can stay here and not be empty-handed, so we can stay here with more than a broken heart."

And Betty, we came back and did our viewers help?

BETTY: Oh, they absolutely have, James. And one thing that really struck me that Kiera said, she said, "Don't become immune, because you've seen scenes similar to this before." They're still there. They're still needy. Different ones, but they're needy.

So I want you to know that my heart was so deeply touched. I thought, God, don't let me ever become immune to a need like that. We've been over there many, many times through many, many years. I never felt on any of the trips that, "Oh, I've seen this before." No, it was always fresh on my heart, and I pray that it'll stay that way for you as you let God speak to your heart.

JAMES: Well, I pray that Betty and I believe--I know for a fact we're as faithful supporters of the mission outreaches as any of all the thousands of people that do help us, and I just pray God everybody would be that faithful and even more faithful.

Please, did you realize that for \$30 you can feed 3 children, for \$50, 5 children, for \$100, 10, \$1,000, 100? Did you know there are many of you who could give part of your estate, who could give large gifts? And right now we're being told, as people are moving out of Africa to feed, that there's gonna be the highest starvation rate in history on that greatest continent that has so much to offer, and if only God's people would put his arms around those desperate suffering people.

We have beautiful gifts to send to you, and one thank you is the "Father Cry" book that Billy wrote. We would love for you to have that.

But please, right now, would you go get your bank card and use it like a check? If you write a check, make it to Life, but call us and tell us what you're putting in the mail. And we need a miracle response. Please, don't put this off. Go online with that card, call the number, make the gift. If you get a busy, be determined to get through. And let's put God's loving arms around these desperate children. We can give life to them by the millions. We've done it together. Please help us. The need has never been greater.

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. 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.

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: And we will also send you not only the other books we talked about, but "Father Cry." And that's the Father, Billy, that everybody needs to cry out for too.

BILLY: James, I wanna say on behalf of the Spirit-empowered world, believers all over the world, thank you for having a father's heart for children that no one else cares about. And you've done this for years, expressing God's fatherly love for kids who are dying, and saving their life.

That's what a good father does.

JAMES: Amen, that's what the Great Father does through yielded fathers and yielded people. And we wanna thank you, because you are the key to life for these precious children whose mothers are praying desperately for them, thank you so much.

Billy, thank you, and God bless you.

BILLY: Great to be with you, James. We love you guys.

JAMES: And bless ORU.

BILLY: Thank you.

JAMES: Thank you so much for your help.

♪ This house no longer feels like home. ♪

[music]

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