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Week 23

Randy Robison & Blynda Lane

Anne Graham Lotz & Rachel-Ruth Lotz Wright

"Not Left Behind"

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

ANNOUNCER: Coming up, Anne Graham Lotz and Rachel-Ruth Lotz Wright.

RACHEL-RUTH LOTZ WRIGHT: You know, we're never just thrown difficulty and God is just like, "Oh, let's just try that," but there's always a reason for what he's allowing in our lives, and it's important for us to see that.

ANNE GRAHAM LOTZ: Bad things happen to people that God loves, and I think sometimes when bad things happen you think God's not pleased, he's angry, he's punishing me, I did something wrong. But that's not necessarily so.

God allows bad things to happen to us, but he's not going to leave us there.

[music]

RANDY ROBISON: Welcome to "Life Today." I'm Randy Robison. Great to have you with us today. Blynda Lane joins me again today. How are you, Blynda?

BLYNDA LANE: Good, I'm really good. This is a really fun day.

RANDY: This is--it is. We have some wonderful guests today. Rachel-Ruth Lotz Wright is with us, as well as her mother Anne Graham Lotz, and they have written a new book. Go ahead.

BLYNDA: Oh, well, I was gonna say, I have to interrupt because--

RANDY: You have to interrupt, I know. Here we go.

BLYNDA: Okay, only because it's not often that the guests are actually like decades-long friends, but Rachel-Ruth and I were in college together, so it's so fun to have you here. Like, I'm gonna--

RANDY: Not just college.

BLYNDA: Oh, in a sorority. Yeah, when Randy goes--he goes, "Why am I not surprised?" But I mean, like, I have to--I'll be professional, you know, today, except what I really wanna be is like...

[laughing excitedly]

Ahh!

ANNE: Which you did in the green room.

BLYNDA: Which I did in the green room, I did.

RANDY: But this is good, because as much fun as you guys are having, and I'm glad you're having fun, this is a pretty serious topic, because the title of the book is "God Won't Leave You There."

And now, that's gonna hit some people, I know, because you're in a position right now where you're like, "Am I ever going to get out of this, and why am I here? And is there purpose in this suffering?"

So this is gonna be important for some people. So, welcome. Great to see both of you today.

RACHEL-RUTH: Thanks for having us.

RANDY: And let's get right into a little bit of the message and where this comes from and why it's important for people to hear today.

ANNE: Well, you know, everybody that Rachel-Ruth and I know, just about without exception, is going through a hard time, and it's every level, every area of their lives. It could be financial, it can be marital, it can be with your children, it can be with your church, it can be with your business, your broader family. It's just people getting slammed.

And I think it's more difficult when you're slammed by people that you had trusted, whether it's in your church or within your own family. And also it can hit you out of left field, just blindside you. Just one moment to the next, you were healthy and the next moment you have a life-threatening disease.

And so both of us have been through that ourselves. I found my husband that I've been married to for 49 years unresponsive in our pool, and three days later released him from life support and he went on to glory. That just--never had a chance to say goodbye, he was just gone. And then three years later my father was having breakfast, and he was gone. And six months after that I was diagnosed with breast cancer.

Nobody in my family's had breast cancer, I mean, or cancer, and just from one moment to the next, your life is not upended but just rocked, you know? And so, and Rachel-Ruth has had the same, and she can tell you about hers, but God was there with me, and at the sense, like when I was diagnosed with cancer, I had that sense that he had a purpose for me in it, and I wanted people to know that bad things happen to people that God loves.

And I think sometimes when bad things happen you think God's not pleased, he's angry, he's punishing me, I did something wrong, but that's not necessarily so. You could do everything right and then have something slam you, but God was with me all through that. He's guided me and he has brought me through. I'm seven years out of the breast cancer, and you never get over losing your spouse, but I know I'll see him in heaven.

RANDY: And Rachel-Ruth, as she alluded to you, you've faced some things too.

RACHEL-RUTH: Yes, yeah, so four years ago I had two rare heart attacks called spontaneous coronary artery dissection. I had gone in for a routine stress test that was a disaster and walked out, and I was like, "I think I pulled some chest muscle." I don't know what happened, I was crying and had passed out a couple times.

And four days later went to the hospital and they said it was a SCAD, it was a first SCAD heart attack where your, you know, artery shreds in your heart. And then the next day I had a way worse one. I was dying. I mean, Mom and my sister were in the room and praying over me, and God brought me back, miraculously, and then went to the OR, they put stents in my heart.

But then it left me for three years after that with just chest pain, heart pain, in and out of the ER, and so my life did turn upside-down in a second, because I was fit, I was healthy, you know, with my girls, doing all this stuff, and then my life changed. And it won't be the same, I mean, it is just, you know, it's different.

But God had a purpose in it, and just like Joseph, I think that's the thing that's so amazing, is that Joseph's life turned upside-down, and then he's on a route he's never dreamed of for his life. I mean, he had probably all these other plans, and then all of a sudden he ends up in Egypt as a slave and then on to prison, but God had a purpose in his suffering.

And God, in my suffering, was really taking me to a deeper level of trusting him. And so there's always a reason, you know? We're never just thrown difficulty and God's just like, "Oh, let's just try that," but there's always a reason for what he's allowing in our lives, and it's important for us to see that.

BLYNDA: So, how do you do that, though? Because, you know, I know that it can be good to hear, "God's in control, God's got this," you know, "he cares for you, he loves you."

But how do you walk that out, when all of a sudden your life is completely altered by losing your spouse, and now as a healthy young woman you now have to think about caring for

yourself in a way you never did, and God is with you, and that's beautiful, but how do you, every day, find the faith to keep going? What is that grounded in?

RACHEL-RUTH: Yeah, well, it's in my faith in Jesus, and I think, you know, after those heart attacks, a couple weeks later, the Lord gave me a promise in my devotions, and it said, "You will not go that way again," that was the verse, "You will not go--"

And so I knew--you know when you feel like the Lord's speaking to you, and your heart starts beating faster and you're just like, ah! And I knew God was telling me I wouldn't have it happen again, and then it's a matter of am I gonna trust him at his Word? No matter what the doctors are telling me, no matter how I feel. Because every time I went to the ER they'd send me home, "No, you're okay."

And so God's kept his Word to me, and I think we rely on God's Word. We have to be in the Bible reading it, listening to him, praying, having other people pray with you and for you, and then it's just a matter of making the choice, of trusting him. Am I gonna choose to trust him, or am I gonna choose to grow bitter?

And Joseph, he's the perfect example. He did not get bitter with all that happened. I mean, he could have just been like, "Forget you, Potiphar," you know, "I'm gonna sabotage your house," and he didn't. He didn't turn on God, he trusted him, and look at how God used somebody who just submitted to God's plan for his life, so.

ANNE: And I think there are two things also that Joseph did. One, God gave him dreams when he was a teenager back in his father's house, and in that day that would have been God's Word to him. And so you feel like he was falling back on God's Word, so what Rachel-Ruth was saying is a key, when you have suffering and you feel like, you know, you've been thrown a curveball, ask God to give you a promise.

Ask him to speak to you from his Word, and it's important that you have a relationship with God. So don't wait until you have a crisis and then develop your relationship with him. Right now, if you haven't done that, tell God you're sorry for the wrong things you've done, you are willing to turn away from them, you believe Jesus died on the cross to take away your sin.

You ask him to be your Savior and forgive you, cleanse you with his blood, receive the eternal life that he offers, which is not only heaven when you die, but a right relationship with him now, and then invite him to come into your heart. So you establish that relationship with him, and then he is in control of your life, and you develop that relationship every day through prayer, Bible reading, fellowship with others. And then as you grow in your faith, you're ready.

I think he times the things that hit us for what he knows we can take in our faith, and one thing that Joseph did also, getting back to your question, he thought about others. So when he suffered and he was in prison and he was enslaved, he wasn't so self-focused that he

couldn't be aware of the butler, the baker, the other people, and it's a beautiful picture of Jesus on the cross, you know?

When he was on there and he, "Father, forgive them, they don't know what they're doing," and then when he's hanging there, he forgave the thief next to him, he took care of his mother, and so he shows us how you can overcome suffering. Don't be so self-focused and pitying yourself to the point that you spiral downward, but that you lift up your eyes and you see somebody else that you can help, and that helps relieve you of the suffering you're experiencing. So Joseph was an incredible example of that.

BLYNDA: Okay, where he's also a really good example--this is a hard one for me, Randy, is he had to do a lot of forgiving. So it wasn't just choosing to not be bitter, but I can imagine when he's in that prison cell that he could ruminate on all the ways that people have done him wrong. And you speak a little bit about that in the book.

How do you, if you are wanting to walk with the Lord and you're wanting to fulfill the purpose God has for you, yet you struggle with letting go of forgiveness, maybe even reconciliation, the idea of that?

RACHEL-RUTH: Yeah, I mean, I think we've, like you said, we all have situations where we've had to forgive greatly, or where we need to forgive somebody, and it's not easy because we wouldn't forgive them if they hadn't done something that really hurt us. And so I think Joseph's example is just mind-blowing.

I mean, just both of us were in tears writing it, thinking about Joseph, and when those brothers end up walking in after all those years and he sees them, he could have had them killed, he could have sent them to prison. But he chose to forgive them over and over and over again, and I think God used him so greatly because he was so forgiving and so focused on God. No matter how lowly his position, how great his position, it was all about the Lord.

And so, when we have people that we have to forgive, it is a choice, and if we don't, it will harm our bodies. Like, it will hurt us, and it actually does more harm to us than the other person, you know? But Joseph, I mean, look at how God used him in such a powerful way, and the Lord wants to use us, you know, in that way. And if we hold on to that unforgiveness, we could be missing out on something God has great for us.

ANNE: And I've said before, if you refuse to forgive the other person, it's like drinking the poison hoping they'll die, you know, because like you said, it really hurts yourself. And so forgiveness is a choice, and you choose to forgive not because that person deserves it, which I know they don't, you know, if they've hurt you that way, but you choose to forgive because God in Christ has forgiven us.

And so your decision to forgive that person becomes an act of worship. And so you're just saying, "God, I love you and I thank you for your forgiveness, and therefore I forgive this person."

Reconciliation takes two people. So you see Joseph going through that, almost like he's playing a game, you know, where he sends them off and then they find the cup and then he sends them off and they bring back another brother. But he was bringing them to the point they would admit and recognize their sin, that he was reawakening the guilt within them so that they could confess it and want to make it right, and then they were ready for reconciliation. So it's not something you--you can't reconcile with somebody who's not willing to meet you in that forgiveness. You can forgive, but--

BLYNDA: But I always love that part where, in my mind how I see it playing out is like, Joseph has to kind of excuse himself and just have a moment where he just weeps, because it's that moment of I can have this reconciliation with my family if I choose it, but I've been done so wrong. This is painful.

ANNE: It shows you how bad it hurt all those years. That was almost like 30 years. And so, even though he forgave and did everything right, he was still deeply hurt 30 years later, you know?

RANDY: You know what's also interesting about that is that he had that dream from God about who God wanted him to be, that great leader, right? The unforgiveness would have stopped him from being able to fulfill that God-given dream. And so as hard as that is sometimes, I think we have to go back to, you know, our calling, our purpose, and even broadly, is who God wants us to be, and say, you know what?

I'm not gonna let unforgiveness, as justified as it may feel, I'm not gonna let it get in the way of who God wants me to be. So, I mean, beautiful lessons all the way around.

I do wanna go back to one thing, though, and so for people that don't know the story of Joseph, it starts with his brothers, after that dream, with some jealousy. It's not their plan, you know, for their younger brother to be lord over them in the, you know, social sense. So they dig a pit and they throw him in that pit, right? Then he's sold into slavery and he goes to Egypt.

The title of your book, "God Won't Leave You There," those pits that we get into, they're sometimes dug by someone else. I know in my situation, I'm usually the digger of the pit that I'm in, right? And so I really deserve it, you know? So somebody else can put us there, we can put our own selves there. Sometimes life is just the pits, you know, we all say sometimes. Where do you get that promise that God won't leave you there?

ANNE: Because that's his nature. If you're his child, if you belong to him, like when Rachel-Ruth was little and she was growing up, if she was playing with the neighborhood friends and they got into a situation, I would send the neighborhood kids back to their parents, I'd take care of her.

And so when you put your faith in Jesus and you're born again into God's family, God takes responsibility for you. And so when you're thrown into a pit, and we've all been there, or dug

one for somebody else, but God still, as Rachel-Ruth has already said, God has a plan and purpose for everything.

And I remember when I was diagnosed with cancer and the radiologist came and he brought me a box of Kleenex and he said--you know, and I didn't weep. I knew God was in control, you know. That was a surprise for me, I mean, it was a shock, but not for God. You know, God is the one who has a plan and purpose for my life. And so whatever he allows to come into my life comes through Jesus first. He's my shield. And then if he's allowed it to come into my life, then I know it's for a plan and purpose.

Now, I love the fact, and if I can just say this, at the Last Supper, when Jesus was, you know, conducting that with his disciples, and he took the cup that represented his blood, and the worst the devil could do to him. And he gave thanks for it, you know? And it's a powerful moment because he knew the cup that represented his blood, the torture, the crucifixion, the death on the cross, he took it from his Father's hand.

So God allows bad things to happen to us, but he's not going to leave us there. Three days after that, God raised him from the dead. So he didn't leave him on the cross, he didn't leave him in the tomb, he raised him from the dead. And so even if the hard thing lasts our entire lifetime, this life is temporary compared to eternity. And when we step into eternity, God's going to take us to be with him forever in our heavenly home, so he's not going to leave us in this life forever, and he's not going to leave us in that pit.

RACHEL-RUTH: And sometimes, if I can just add, sometimes it is long-suffering. I mean, it's just suffering long, and that was 14 years basically for Joseph, and sometimes it's a lot longer than that for some people. I have people I'm praying for that have been suffering with health issues for longer than that, and we just have to hang in there, because there's always hope in the Lord.

And we live in a fallen world, we live in a sinful world where it stinks, a lot of times, you know? But we just have to always trust in the goodness of God that he has a purpose and a plan for everything we're going through, and that one day, like Mom said, this is such a blip compared to eternity, that all that will wash away and this is almost like a boot camp, you know, before we get to heaven to what we're really gonna be doing.

But Jesus comes alongside of us in our long-suffering and is just the comforter, encourager. I mean, he is just my best friend. I just--I couldn't do the hard things I've been through without him. And so if you're in the pit, just cling to the Lord.

ANNE: And I think also, Joseph didn't waste that time. So when he was in Potiphar's house, he learned--you know he learned the Egyptian language, the culture, he learns to manage the house and the fields and all the things he'd have to know later. When he was in prison, he learned--because it was Pharaoh's prison, so he would've learned something about Pharaoh's court and the political system, and all of those things prepared him then to be elevated to second-in-command in Egypt.

So if you're suffering in the pit and if God has put you in a hard place, don't waste it. Look for what he's trying to teach you. Ask him to show you. Maybe it's just to teach you patience or, you know, the long-suffering and just to trust him when you're suffering a long time. But it's important not to just waste that time, and Joseph didn't, and he was ready when God took him out.

And when you say 14 years of suffering, that was Potiphar's house in prison, but then it was another 7 years of prosperity that he ruled Egypt and then 7 years after that, so however that--14 and 14 is 28?

RANDY: A lot of years, yeah.

ANNE: That's 28 years maybe before he was reconciled with his family. That's a long time.

RANDY: Yeah, no, but I think it's very encouraging when you say, when you find yourself in that pit, look for the opportunity, whatever there is, even growth, even letting patience be developed in you, long-suffering, because those are godly qualities.

Also look up, because if you just focus on yourself, that's an isolated, lonely place to be. Look up to where your help comes from, Scripture will tell us. But then also, look for opportunities to serve others, because again, it takes the focus off yourself, and when you need a blessing, you can be a blessing.

ANNE: That's exactly right.

RANDY: Actually, right now we're in a situation where people need something desperately, and I know you might as well. But I would like you to take a look at a place where you can be an answer to someone's prayer, you can be a blessing to someone's life, you can fulfill that need right now.

And today, if you would like to request a book for some encouragement, you can request "God Won't Leave You There." We'd love to send it to you. But most importantly, I want you to just look up a little bit and look at this opportunity to bless someone today.

PETER PRETORIUS: You see the thinness of his hair.

PETER: You know, the Bible says, it's with the measure that you give.

JAMES ROBISON: To me, the reward is seeing the lives saved, seeing people learn about the love of God.

ANNOUNCER: In the late 1980s, Peter and Ann Pretorius met James and Betty Robison of Life Outreach International, sparking a lifelong partnership that started with feeding 5,000 starving children in war-torn Mozambique, to what is now 350,000 children a day in several countries on the continent of Africa. Today, the sons of Peter Pretorius and James Robison continue this legacy, saving lives through Mission Feeding and the gospel of Jesus Christ.

ISAK PRETORIUS: Hallelujah, amen.

RANDY: This, to me, is the model I wish everyone would adopt, and of course the gospel be an essential part of it. But this is salvation in every level.

RANDY: All of this started decades ago with your father, my father, seeing a need, and out of it, countless lives have been saved. Through the generations, Isak, I want us to expand, to continue, save even more lives, reach even more people with the gospel. Will you stand with me if I stand with you?

ISAK: If you will stand with us, we are here, we're gonna do this. Our commitment is there to not just continue the work, but to do the work on a broader scale, on a deeper scale.

RANDY: Where it's needed. They need it, they're dying.

ISAK: Let's dream together of the day where we're not just saving lives, where we actually don't even have to do that anymore, because we've had the level of impact that we need to have in our generation.

RANDY: We're standing with each other. Will you stand with us as we stand for these children?

RANDY: You know, for so many years now we have made an impact and we have saved lives, and we have changed lives. We have changed communities, countries even, and it's a huge thing, but wow, it's a big thing. It's an honor to be a part of this kind of thing.

But it's only happened really for one reason, and that's you, the viewer, have been a part of it. And I've seen it for years. What do you think when you see that? You're making--I know you're kind of watching my dad through the generations.

BLYNDA: I love seeing the generations, but what it tells me is there's never a point where all the food is there and now we can stop the work. It never stops, because there's new generations being born and they all have the same needs.

So even though we can celebrate the decades that your dad and your mom have been able to do this, it has to continue. We have to all continue banding together to do it for the work to continue.

RANDY: Yes, absolutely, and you know, also there's seasonal things in there. There are failed crops in areas, and that's not always the same. There's drought, or sometimes a flood will come in and destroy a crop.

So the situations vary, and that's why when we say that we feed an average of 350,000 children every single day, only because of you, the viewer who supports Mission Feeding, the numbers are a little fluid because we'll have success, and we'll be able to to move from

an area that's been stabilized, and we do. Our goal is stability. And then we'll go to another place where there's a more urgent need.

And because, as Isak said there, they're on the ground, and because we've been doing it for so long, we are able to go out quickly to the areas of need, if we have all the supplies that we need, if we have all the funds that we need to continue the Mission Feeding into these emergency areas. And don't forget the clinics. The clinics are so critical. Unfortunately, when people don't have food and their children get to a critical point, they have to come into a clinic. We want the clinics to be stocked. We want the staff to be there and ready and available.

And again, you have saved so many lives as you have supported Mission Feeding over the years. Let's not stop. I would love to see it expand as the needs expand, but right now we're coming to you saying, look, we need to continue. We need to stock the clinics. We need to put the food onto the trucks. We need to get the food into the bowls, into the schools, into the villages so these children can eat, they can have a hope and a future.

Here's how we do it. Your gift of \$30, \$50, \$100, it will help feed 3, 5, 10 children for the next several months. Some of you could give more, for example, \$1,000 would help feed 100 children, \$2,000, 200 children. You can see the math. The need is great, but the solution is right in front of us, because the solution is you. Will you go online? Will you pick up that phone? Will you make the best gift you can? I can promise you we will do our part. The people on the ground, the missionaries there will do their part. We need to come together. Let's save lives. Let's give them a hope. Let's give them a future. Let's tell them about the love of God, and let's show it to them.

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.

RANDY: What an opportunity. You really can be a blessing to someone, and you can help save lives today, so I hope you'll do it. Go online, go to the phone, make the best gift you can. And if you would like that encouragement, you can request this book, "God Won't Leave You There."

BLYNDA: And aren't we thankful for that, Randy?

RANDY: Oh my goodness, I need to hear that every day.

BLYNDA: I know, God won't leave you in that pit, in that prison. Rachel-Ruth and Anne, thank you so much for joining us.

RACHEL-RUTH: Thanks for having us.

BLYNDA: Where can someone find more? Are you on Instagram? Are you--where can they find you?

ANNE: annegrahamlotz.org, and then Rachel--

RACHEL-RUTH: Rachel-Ruth Lotz Wright is the Instagram, so, and she's got an Instagram with her name, too, so.

ANNE: And the website, you can find everything on the website.

RANDY: Great, such great encouragement. If you wanna follow them, we would encourage you to follow them, and we'd love to see you again next time here on "Life Today."

♪ 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 ♪

♪ Ooh-ooh-ooh ♪

♪ Ooh-ooh-ooh ♪♪

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