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Week 21

Randy Robison

"James Robison: A Journey of Significance"

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

RANDY ROBISON: Welcome to "Life Today." I'm Randy Robison.

As I sit here, it's been just a few days since the surprising loss of my father. I wanted to come in today, even though it's difficult, just to honor him. I know the impact he's had on so many people, and the social media comments have been wonderful. If you wrote one of those, thank you for your kind words.

There's a scripture in Psalm 116, says: "Precious in the sight of the Lord are the death of the saints," and that's a hard one. It doesn't make sense to our earthly minds. That almost sounds cruel. But when you understand what my friend Dudley Hall calls the story, what is the story of Scripture, it culminated in Jesus Christ who, when his birth was announced, was called by the angels Emmanuel, God with us. The story of Scripture is God reconciling his creation to him. That's his goal, that's his heart, that's his desire for every one of us. When you understand that, you understand that scripture in Psalms.

My father James Robison has been reconciled with his Father in heaven, and God says that's precious. Splendid is another word for that. Like a precious jewel, it's a beautiful thing. So today we take a look back at my father's life. We call it "A Journey of Significance." And I hope just even looking back at this, it will draw you closer to our heavenly Father.

JAMES ROBISON: Any of you that say tonight, "I'm gonna pray for brokenness," you've never been broken because if you've ever been broken you don't wanna pray for it again. But you'll be ever mindful that without it, you're useless as far as eternity is concerned because God uses broken vessels.

ANNOUNCER: It's the unlikeliest of journeys, one that opens in an unlikely place under unlikely circumstances. It is the story of a man and a God who takes broken things and shapes them into the unexpected, into a life of impact, of significance.

ANNOUNCER: Much of what forms a man is his childhood. The one James was handed delivered adversity, rejection, and insecurity that should have laid the way for a path of self-destruction.

Conceived as a product of rape, almost aborted, then born into abject poverty, the first real announcement of James's life on this earth came in the personal section of the newspaper. "Wanted: Loving Christian couple to raise newborn boy. References required."

The reverend Doyle Hale and his wife Katie answered the ad. They were all that James's mother could have hoped for. While James quickly came to know them as mommy and daddy, his happiness was short-lived. When he was just five, his birth mother, Myra Wattinger, returned to claim him.

Torn away from the only parents he had ever known, little James was pulled into a chaotic journey with a mother who was a complete stranger, a journey that began with him hitchhiking 175 miles to the first of many places James would never really call home.

The Hales desperately tried to bridge the distance to their beloved little boy with a stream of letters and gifts, but unknown to James, Myra intercepted and returned every one of them, leaving him feeling abandoned and rejected by virtually every adult in his life.

By the world's standards, James had little reason for hope. By the world's standards, he should have been aborted, but God had a vastly different plan, and each challenge James faced would help mold and prepare him for the ministry that lay ahead.

The next ten years were filled with poverty and the circumstances that often surround it: hunger, filth, danger, and the kind of isolation that comes from constantly moving. Often the outsider, he was so painfully shy that those who knew him could never have imagined him as the mesmerizing speaker that would later hold millions spellbound as few in history have.

By the age of 15, James had watched his mother struggle through multiple marriages. The final male figure to enter the scene was James's real father, who had 15 years earlier forced himself upon Myra. The hope that his blood father might be the one he had longed for was quickly dashed.

Little had changed, and this alcoholic drifter's abuse would pick up right where it had left off. James's life had hung in the balance before. It would again when one of his father's murderous rages sent James running in self-defense for his 30-06 hunting rifle.

As James prepared to pull the trigger, the sheriff arrived to haul his father to jail. That divine intervention was the first of many, and the experience prompted a trip back to visit his foster parents. The reverend and Mrs. Hale had never stopped praying for James, and they would prove instrumental in drawing him into a radical, life-changing encounter.

ANNOUNCER: James had returned to the Hales for the summer. The Reverend Hale pastored a small church in Pasadena, Texas. And while it was natural that he would participate in church activities, an added incentive was a sweet, pretty girl who had caught his eye.

Betty Freeman's background was the polar opposite of James. She had grown up in a strong Christian family and attended church several times a week. But the two teens had some things in common. Both were shy and insecure.

Many in the church were eager for James's salvation, but Mama Hale, ever the prayer warrior, was so confident James was going to find Christ, at one particular youth service she brought spare clothes for him to change into after being baptized.

KATHERINE HALE: I saw James as he sat near the back of the church, clinging to the chair that he--that was in front of him. And he was not making a move, but he was weeping.

I went back to him and took him by his hand and I said, "James, don't you wanna come to the Lord today?" And he said, "Yes, ma'am. But I'm so afraid, mama." And I said, "I'll walk down the aisle with you."

DOYLE HALE: I stepped down from here and met James as he came, and he looked up into my face and said, "Daddy, I trust the Lord as my Savior tonight." And there as he knelt, there he gave his heart to the Lord.

ANNOUNCER: Not long after, James shadowed a young minister over the course of a weeklong revival. As it drew to an end, James, to everyone's surprise, moved to the microphone and shared news that would change not only his life but millions of others to follow. God had called him to be an evangelist.



JAMES: Christ Jesus came to save sinners. If there's a sinner here tonight, Christ came to save you. It is by his mercy, his grace that we're saved, not by works of righteousness. You're gonna be saved by his grace.

Is there a sinner here tonight? Well, if there is, there's a Savior waiting, and he only waits for sinners.

ANNOUNCER: The year was 1963 when a 19-year-old James Robison began sharing the message of Jesus Christ across America.

JAMES: Get up out of your seat right now, whoever you are, and move to an aisle. Come and stand right here in front of me. Just come and stand right here. Face me and bow your head. I'm gonna wait while you just get up and come.

Right now all over the stadium, just stand up and come on. Don't wait on anyone else.

ANNOUNCER: From stadiums and colosseums holding thousands to youth rallies and school gyms, James began speaking daily anywhere people would gather to hear him preach the Word of God.

JAMES: I'm telling you the source of life is not religion. The source of life is God, and the way to the life of God is through the Son of God. There's only one way to heaven. It's through Jesus. He said, "I'm the way. I'm the truth. I'm the life."

ANNOUNCER: As time went on, the 1970s and '80s witnessed even larger crowds responding as James called the nation to repentance and salvation through Christ. In all, James would preach in over 600 citywide crusades, with a total attendance surpassing 20 million people.

JAMES: Friend, God loves you like that. He gave his Son for you. He loves you. He died for you on a cross that you might live, and it's a personal knowledge of Jesus and a personal relationship with Jesus that gives you life everlasting.

Would you come and trust Jesus tonight and know him? Come on. God says, "I'll forgive you." He loves you. He wants to forgive you tonight forever, give you new life. Would you come as a teenage boy or teenage girl, as a man, a woman, a mother, a dad?

Would you, Christians, turn to one of your friends and say, "I'll go with you," and you could bring them to Christ?

ANNOUNCER: Night after night, large crowds came forward to answer the call unto salvation. But within the sea of faces, God saw every single individual and heard their prayers just like he did for a young boy named James Robison, who gave his life to Jesus and was faithful to tell the world of God's love.



ANNOUNCER: Evangelist Billy Graham saw something special in James Robison, the fiery preacher from Texas, and felt strongly that he should be preaching on TV. James was humbled that a man of Billy Graham's stature and anointing would offer such supportive remarks. He agreed to pray about it, and after five sleepless nights, James felt it was indeed God's will that he minister on television.



♪ I want the whole wide world to know about the Savior. ♪

♪ I want the whole wide world to know that everybody needs him. ♪

♪ I want the whole wide world to know, ♪

♪I want the whole wide world to know, ♪

♪I want the whole wide world to know, ♪

♪I want the whole wide world-- ♪

♪yes, I want the whole wide world to know. ♪

JAMES: Welcome. "Get Together" is a program designed with you in mind.

ANNOUNCER: In 1971, the television program called "Get Together" began locally in Dallas, Texas. The 30-minute program featured music from John McCain.

♪Hand in the hand of the man who stilled the water. ♪

♪It is Jesus and me. ♪

ANNOUNCER: Jeanne Rogers.

♪For each tomorrow. ♪

ANNOUNCER: And Rhonda Robison.

♪Lasting peace he'll bring. ♪♪

ANNOUNCER: Other guests would join in from week to week to lift their voices in song. Betty would make rare appearances in those days and bring the children along. James would present a challenging Word to Christians and the rest of its viewers who needed Christ in their lives.

Soon, the message of salvation was being heard across the country as the television outreach quickly expanded to 96 markets.

ANNOUNCER: And now James Robison presents "Attack on the Family." Tonight--

ANNOUNCER: Dramatic primetime specials were developed after the weekly program expanded. Of the five specials aired, "Attack on the Family" and "Wake Up America" received highest awards for quality programming from the National Religious Broadcasters. These primetime specials were responsible for over 400,000 responses by phone and letter, seeking spiritual help and trusting Christ as Savior.

PHIL: Please welcome Reverend James Robison, a man who--say hello to him and--

ANNOUNCER: James's outspoken concerns for America's moral decay brought invitations to speak on network television programs and interviews with national newspapers and magazines.

JAMES: I believe the Bible, Phil, and I believe that the Bible clearly teaches that some things are a sin, some things are wrong, and that when we indulge in those things, that it is an expense to us, to the individual, and to others, and I think that--

ANNOUNCER: In 1979, the right to preach the Word of God on the television airwaves was questioned by some. Out of that challenge was born the Freedom Rally held in Dallas. Twelve thousand people of every denomination packed the convention center to express their moral convictions publicly. Freedom of speech, the right to preach became the rally's cry.

W.A. CRISWELL: And while we remain standing for this moment, in the heart of the apocalypse, the sainted Apostle John sees an angel flying through the midst of the heavens having the everlasting gospel to preach.

If the wings of that angel are clipped and he can no longer fly, then, Lord God, give the message to James Robison and he will proclaim it to the ends of the earth. This is James Robison.

JAMES: I wanna tell you how to lose freedom, and I'm gonna talk to you about what freedom really is. "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." Freedom is truth. Truth is the Word of God. Truth is the Bible. Truth is Jesus Christ. Apart from God's truth, God's Word, there is no freedom.

A departure from God and his Word is the first catastrophic step to destruction. It matters not how often you say, "I believe in God." It matters what you say daily with your life for your life is a letter written in the fleshly tables of men's hearts and your life must say with every vibrant act, "I adore him, I worship him, I love him, I believe in him, I honor him, and I glorify him for he is my God."

ANNOUNCER: The 1980s and '90s would see several changes to the name of James Robison's television programming, but at its core the message remained the same: to share the good news of Jesus Christ with a lost and hurting world.



ANNOUNCER: During that same time, James and Betty embraced reaching out not only to the spiritually lost but also to those physically perishing as well. This desire to share the message of life and life more abundantly was soon reflected by the program's title change in 1992 to "Life Today."

JAMES: I am so glad you joined us--

ANNOUNCER: Three years later, the decision was made to develop a talk show format, and this time Betty Robison would help host the show by James's side. As Life's television outreach began its journey into the 21st century, the program continued to grow in its

outreach, becoming a huge success. James and Betty would interview guests with life-changing stories as well as testimonies of well-known personalities.

♪ There are three wooden crosses ♪

♪ on the right side of the highway. ♪

♪ Why there's not four of them, heaven only knows. ♪

GEORGE BUSH: The truth of the matter is love comes from a higher calling than government. I think it ought to be the prayer of the 21st century to remind us how blessed we are, but to remember to help others.

I do believe God has a calling for people. I believe much of what goes on in my life is beyond my control, and I ask for guidance and prayer personally as well.

ANNOUNCER: The impact the "Life Today" program has made has been recognized by the National Religious Broadcasters on multiple occasions for its outstanding contributions to Christian TV.

TIM CONWAY: So that's when I became funny.

♪ There are three wooden crosses ♪

♪ on the right side of the highway. ♪♪

♪♪♪

ANNOUNCER: The "Life Today" program continues to minister life and hope to its viewers, extending blessings not only to them, their friends and family, but opportunities to bless others in need around the world.

So no matter if you enjoy "Life Today" for its inspirational interviews with insightful, informative, and uplifting guests or simply find joy in helping others, James, Betty, and the outreaches of Life are blessed that you are part of the "Life Today" family.

♪ World full of love. ♪

♪ Like yours. ♪

♪ Like mine. ♪

♪ Like home. ♪♪

♪ Like home. ♪♪

RANDY: The unlikeliest of stories, but, man, that's what God does when we give our lives to him. And I know many of you are wondering, "Well, what now?"

Well, you know, what God started, it doesn't end with any one person. And what God started through my father as well as my mother, it doesn't end with any one man. It continues. You know, what God put on my parents's heart many years ago, and it's on my heart, it's on the heart of all the staff here, and I know so many of you that have supported the outreaches of Life over the years, it will continue.

I believe in the biblical principle of multiplication. I believe the ministry and the missions of Life Outreach will multiply. We will build on what my father started, but I wanna take you back just for a minute so you can see how some of this began so that hopefully you will catch the vision that we have here to continue this work of sharing God's love in word and in deed.

JAMES: God and give him your life tonight. Would you do it? Only way to God's through Jesus.

ANNOUNCER: It was the 1980s, and James was right where God had called him.

JAMES: Would you come and say, "I'm gonna leave here and let God be first in my life?" I hope you will. Let's bow our heads together.

ANNOUNCER: Preaching the gospel so that lives could be changed forever, but God had plans that would transform James's life when he and Betty met another evangelist, a South African named Peter Pretorius. Peter showed them the immense suffering people in Mozambique were going through because of the civil war.

PETER PRETORIUS: You see the thinness of his hair and the color of his hair? That's a sure sign that he suffer much malnutrition.

ANNOUNCER: James knew he would never stop ministering the Word of God to the poor in spirit, but now he would do everything he could to help those who were physically perishing. Thus, Mission Feeding was birthed between James and Peter and in time, as faithful supporters began to help, feeding efforts expanded into war-torn Angola.

The challenge that lay ahead for the Mission Feeding program was trying to keep up with the need in crisis areas where food shortages were critical. Children under the age of five were dying at an alarming rate due to the ravages of a silent killer known as malnutrition.

JAMES: I have never seen so many children buried in one small place. More than 1,000 bodies here around me right now. And I'm praying, dear God, please, please stop this.

I just kneel right here and there's a fruit jar, and there is the little child's picture in that jar. Somebody's baby. Dear God, help us to save these children.

ANNOUNCER: By the grace of God and with the support of faithful partners of Life Outreach International, food factories were built in Mozambique and Angola and began turning out a vitamin-enriched soup mix. A fleet of trucks now deliver the processed food mix into remote villages.

This has allowed the Mission Feeding program to expand into other areas, including South Africa and South Sudan. Currently, over 350,000 children receive a daily bowl of this soup mix through both the school feeding and crisis feeding programs.

This bowl of food not only has helped stop the death cycle in hundreds of villages, but it provides an incentive for the children to remain in school.

JAMES: They want a future. They wanna go to school. They walk a long way. They're trying to learn. And I don't know anyone that would look in these faces and not say, "Well, let me help those children that obviously want a future."

ANNOUNCER: The Mission Feeding program that started over 30 years ago helping families in war-torn villages has literally saved over 18 million lives according to government sources.

The challenge now is to maintain the partnership which will allow us to continue turning out the soup mix for the school feeding program and for meeting crises like the prolonged drought in Angola and the devastating floods in South Sudan.

Together, we can ensure that lives will be saved and the children will have the opportunity to fulfill their God-given potential.

RANDY: As you can see, there is a lot of work still to be done. In fact, since that piece was produced a few years ago, they're telling us now that it's around 22 million lives that have been saved.

The point is that the work that my father began will continue. The work that many of you have supported over the years will continue. God's love will continue to be poured out on those who really need to feel it the most. So I hope you will continue to stand.

By the way, my mother wants you to know she appreciates every single one of you. As you can imagine, she is going through some heavy grief right now, but I told her I wanna go speak to our viewers and honor my father, her husband. And so we're doing that today.

If you'd like to join us in honoring him, we do have a website set up because so many people have asked. It's JamesRobison.org, and you can go there. Some of you have asked about memorial gifts. And that's not my purpose here, but there is information there if you're looking for something to do.

My heart--look, my heart is you wanna honor him, continue the work that he has supported through the mission outreaches now through water wells, through rescuing children from

sex trafficking, giving away shoes at Christmas, and so many other wonderful outreaches. My father's heart was to reach people with the love of Christ. He preached it. He did it, and it will continue.

By the way, you may see some programs upcoming with my father on it due to the sort of the programming distribution and program selection. We will be airing a few of those. We know he would want you to see it because they're programs that show his concern for you, the viewer. So understand that as you see those.

RANDY: We hope you'll stand with us as we continue this journey of significance together. I'm gonna miss my father. I know you will, too. He's with his heavenly Father, and it's going to be all right. We'll see you again next time.

♪♪♪

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.

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