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Week 29

Randy Robison & Blynda Lane

Donna Pisani

"Confident In Christ"

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

ANNOUNCER: After enduring sexual abuse as a child, Donna Pisani spent years believing lies about herself.

DONNA PISANI: There were two lies. One was, "It was my fault, I was too beautiful to resist," which then, that lie spoke to me, "Don't be seen," because when you're seen, there's pain attached to it. And the second lie was, "If you tell anybody, they won't believe you. You don't have a voice."

ANNOUNCER: How she broke free and found her voice, next.

[music]

RANDY ROBISON: Welcome to "Life Today." I'm Randy Robison, this is Blynda Lane. How are you doing?

BLYNDA LANE: I'm good, Randy! I'm doing really good.

RANDY: Having a good day?

BLYNDA: It has been--it's been a day, that's for sure. No, I came in today really like on a high. I've loved the shows that we're doing today.

RANDY: It is great. And let's just take you next level.

BLYNDA: I love that.

RANDY: Well, because we have a wonderful guest. Her name is Donna Pisani.

BLYNDA: And there's nothing about this next guest that stayed average. She's above average in every way, so this is great.

RANDY: Okay, well, let's show people her book. It's called "Entrusted to Lead," and here's my question for you. You've been waiting for this for a while, right?

BLYNDA: I'm ready.

RANDY: Is it okay to call her a pastor?

BLYNDA: Oh, I mean, you're--whoosh, you're going there. I mean, right into it, absolutely. Pastor, but also Dr. Donna Pisani is with us, yeah. Not just a pastor, but she's a doctor.

DONNA: Thank you.

BLYNDA: She's earned that D-R, so.

DONNA: Thank you. It's such an honor to be here today with the two of you.

BLYNDA: I mean, are you even ready? We're not even sure what this is today.

DONNA: I don't know that I'm ready, and I'm excited, that's for sure.

RANDY: Well, okay, and this is a little bit of a soapbox of mine. If anybody watches my online interviews, I've done this many times, because I was raised in a church where I was not supposed to learn anything from a woman, apparently, because they weren't to teach men. And, you know, and I get--I get that there is order in Scripture and things like that, but I learned a lot from my mom.

And I've even asked some pastors that preach that you're not supposed to learn from women, "You don't learn anything from your mother?" And they always did, you know? Where do you--I jumped right into the controversy.

I apologize for that.

DONNA: You're going deep real quick.

BLYNDA: He just took the lead. "And go!"

RANDY: Yeah, but here's why I do that. I do think that men have a responsibility to speak up so as to not hold women back from their godly calling and fulfillment.

DONNA: I love that, Randy, yeah. I'm super grateful because I'm married to a man who felt the same way that you did. And my husband from the beginning felt like if he was called to ministry, we were called to ministry together. And I was super shy, quiet.

I mean, I would rather hide in a corner than even pray out loud. But he insisted that I had gifts, and so he was confident enough in his own to pull mine out. And so, I love that. In the beginning, I wasn't super happy about it.

He would say, "I believe you have a word for people tonight," and I'd be like, "No, I don't." But he just kept inviting me into it. And at this point--we've been married 47 years, which in itself is miraculous, right? But at this point, I'm so grateful for a man who championed my gifting and my calling, because I don't think I would have moved into it otherwise.

BLYNDA: So just for the audience to know you a little better, you and your husband pastored a church in the DC area for how many years?

DONNA: For 30 years.

BLYNDA: Thirty years. And I love in the book that you say, "You don't really ever retire, you repurpose," and you are in the repurposing stage of your life.

So explain what does that look like, to go from pastoring a church for so many years to finding yourself repurposed, where you're actually writing a book about leadership?

DONNA: Well, I think too often, men or women, when we get to this age, we can almost disqualify ourselves or feel like we should just spend the rest of our life on a golf course, which is fine if you want to do that, but I think at this point in life, we have experienced so much of life, failures, successes. I mean, the cool thing about my age is now I get to call all of those failures and all those wins wisdom. It's a part of your life where you get to do that. And so, even if it's just encouraging somebody else along the way. And so my husband and I are firm believers that we weren't gonna retire.

We had far too much gifting. And here's the thing that we have to remember, is that gifting isn't ours to begin with. It's something that God's given us to steward. And so, in this part of our life, it's probably the most powerful time of our life to be able to speak into somebody else. And so we pastored for 30 years, but then we did missions for 12 years before that, so we backpacked Bibles in the Himalayan Mountains, we did crusades in Africa and India and South America.

So all of that, behind the scenes, did we do it perfectly? Absolutely not. We haven't done really anything perfectly, because there's only one perfect, and that's Jesus. But to be able to apply the experience and encourage somebody else, that there's a seed inside of you that God wants to use.

RANDY: Yeah, and just a side note, you guys served alongside, for a while, Peter Pretorius, our mission partner in Africa, his son now running for Africa, so yeah, we've been in the game together, right, for the Lord. But when some viewers hear that, especially women, I think, oh my goodness, a pastor's wife, having to speak on stage, hiking, what did you say, the Himalayas, right?

I mean, that's a great story. But how do you see most women being called to lead?

DONNA: Mm. Well, I think it's discovering your gifts. And again, you've been entrusted with those gifts. It's nothing that we're entitled to. And I think that's--we have to be super careful

that we don't feel like, "Well, I've got a gift so I'm entitled to a position." The gift doesn't mean anything other than you've been entrusted by God, at great cost to him, to function in that specific area of strength. But I have to go back to the original calling, and I think sometimes we can forget that Jesus did a lot of things counter-culturally.

In fact, he empowered women. He championed their intelligence. He talked to them. And when--the first person that has an eyewitness account of a resurrected Lord, it's the fulcrum. It's like the core of our faith. The first person to see Jesus when he's resurrected is a woman, and it blows my mind. I missed this for years, Randy and Blynda, that I forgot, Peter and John had just been there.

It wasn't like God was having coffee and he's like, "Oh, man, I missed the moment. I guess I'll just show up to a woman." No, that was intentional, because I believe that when Jesus showed up to Mary, he was redeeming thousands of years of blame and criticism, that we were the reason that the Fall took place. He was very intentional. And then he said to that woman, "Go tell my brothers that I've risen from the dead." And that was a commissioning from the head of the church for women to have a voice.

RANDY: Well, and that's one of the things that you talk about in the book. You say, "Go tell, even when no one's listening." And I think that's important, not only just for women, for anyone to hear.

But I do think women tend to feel a little less heard than men, or at least more sensitive to it. Some guys can go talk and nobody can listen, and they don't even notice, right? But what would you say to someone who is maybe a little timid, who is like, "I've always felt like God's wanted me to do this or say this or, you know, move in this way, or this gift that I feel like's been buried for most of my life," what would you tell them to get out and exercise that, even when no one's listening?

DONNA: Well, the practicals of that, yeah. And I do think as--maybe men feel this as well, but I do think as a woman, I often felt like I wasn't being heard. Now, my husband would give me a microphone and say, "Here, you have the message this morning," or "You're gonna lead the leadership meeting." But in my own home, I could tell my kids to pick up their clothes. Nobody was listening, you know? So I think you can kind of wrestle with, does anybody hear my voice? Is there any value to it? And I think for me the initial understanding of that this was a God entrustment.

So how that starts is in prayer. I have to believe that he hears me in prayer. When I pray over my children, when I make those declarations of what he's already spoken over my family, over a city, over a friend, I have to believe that he hears me. And then I have to keep using it. So it also, I think, is really important as women that we understand our posture and our tone, right? So I can feel like I have a word from God, and I felt a caution about something that one of my kids is gonna do. But if I don't have a tone of humility, but I come in angry or I sound entitled, then nobody's gonna hear me. But I think humility opens a lot of doors.

And I think the other thing to remember is that God never--I kept waiting for my voice or my gifting to look like an oak tree, you know? Like, "I want it fully established and mature. And once it looks like that, then I'll use it." But God never gives it that way. He always gives me an acorn, and I'm like, "That doesn't look like enough." He's like, "You gotta use it." And you're gonna be using it imperfectly along the way. But when you start sowing it, it'll start growing so that when you're my age, you feel like there's a little bit of fruit that's developed through the years, because you've been willing to do it, even fail a few times.

BLYNDA: So do you think that, thinking about kind of personalizing it to my own life and times that I have maybe sensed a gifting on my life, or wanting to step out in leadership, is it always just, oh, culturally that doesn't feel right?

Or is the enemy--I mean, is there a real effort to keep women and hold women back, do you think, in kind of the enemy's plan in that, that we don't reach our potential?

DONNA: I do think that there--yes, because we believe there's a harvest right now, that God is moving across the earth, and I think you need all hands on deck. And so if we try to silence half of the body of Christ, or maybe it's more than half, I don't know what the demographics are of men and women, then we have restricted the gift set. So my husband and I have completely different gifts.

We function completely different. I don't know, Randy, do you and your wife think the same way?

RANDY: Oh gosh, no. No, thank God.

BLYNDA: We only need one Randy.

RANDY: I wouldn't be presentable for television if she didn't dress me this morning, so yeah. Yeah, no, there's definitely--we need each other, I think is the bottom line. And we need to be open to learning and listening to each other.

You know, Blynda touched on the lies, and we all confront those, because the enemy's a liar. It's the only weapon he's got left, right? You defeat an enemy, but ne-ne-ne, right?

Did you struggle with some things that you had to recognize, "Oh, those are lies," and then deal with them and get rid of them in order to get to a place where you could?

DONNA: Yeah, I did. I mean, something that I just found that was fascinating is that when you--first time you actually see God speaking with quotations, and the first time you see the enemy's voice with quotations, both are asking a question. Isn't that interesting? They're both asking a question. So the enemy approaches Eve and he said, "Did God say?" So he's making us question the goodness of God. But then the first time we hear God speaking, he said, "Where are you?" Now, he's been speaking before that for Creation, but it has quotation marks. God asks questions for us to relocate our hearts. Have we been listening to a lie?

And that "where are you" is the Hebrew word "ayeka," which is this tender, loving--not that he's lost us geographically, but he's inviting us back to him. You're hiding in shame. The enemy's told you to hide that gift. He's told you that you're not enough. So God is consistently, daily saying, "Wait a minute, why are you hiding that? This is an invitation from me." So when I was between the ages of three and four, my parents lived on the second floor of an apartment building--an old Victorian house, it wasn't an apartment building. And below us was an elderly couple, and the man was a grandfatherly-type man, and so he would invite me down to have tea with him. So my mother would dress me up and put frilly socks on me, and I remember walking down those steep steps once a week. And he would sexually abuse me when I was down there.

So between the ages of three and four, when my parents--the moment they suspected this, they immediately moved out of the apartment. It was back--I mean, I'm 67, so it was many years ago, before--he was very influential in the community, and they weren't sure what else to do except for to remove me. Well, you can move furniture quicker than you can move the lies. And so those lies became embedded in me, in my heart and in my soul, and there were two lies. One was, "It was my fault. I was too beautiful to resist," which then, that lie spoke to me, "Don't be seen," because when you're seen, there's pain attached to it. And the second lie was, "If you tell anybody, they won't believe you." So the second lie that attached itself to my life was that, "You don't have a voice. Nobody wants to hear what you have to say."

BLYNDA: So stay hidden and stay silent.

DONNA: Exactly, which is what shame does. So it became the underpinning of my life. So I was in ministry, still feeling--I would say something to you and I could apologize for saying it. "I'm so sorry, but this is what I wanted to say."

Because you don't realize how strong shame is. But what I discovered is, is that when there's a lie that attaches itself to your life, first of all, you have to identify, "That's a lie." And the second thing is, you have to realize that that lie is actually an indicator, not an intimidator. So where the enemy used it to intimidate and shut down the gifts in my life for years, maybe I still function in those gifts, but I would always second-guess it and feel bad later.

Well, what I realized was, if that lie was so strong, the enemy definitely knew there was something on my life, something. He didn't know what it was, so he wanted to keep me silent and hidden, because behind that lie, was a calling and a gifting that I wouldn't see otherwise. And so now, anytime that lie pops up or any lie pops up, immediately I'm like, "That's an indicator, that behind that God is moving, and so I'm not gonna let the lie hide or the shame hide what God has." And so--

BLYNDA: Is it also--I was gonna ask, is it also an indicator that possibly is there something--not just an indicator that God has something more, but could it be an indicator of, okay,

you know what? Like, for me, I might go maybe I need to spend some more time in prayer, or a little bit of time in the Word.

Like, possibly I'm a little weak right now in my spirit that I'm listening to the lies again. Is it ever an indicator of that?

DONNA: Yes, yes, 100%. And that's why I think we need to pay attention. Think about what we're thinking about, right?

Because we can be thinking about things over and over again, ruminating on the wrong things, and that the Word of God is so powerful. You know, I love--Hebrews 4:12 says, "The Word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword," which I've read that verse forever, but recently I looked it up in the original language, and that word "two-edged" means two mouths. Did you--is that powerful?

BLYNDA: Wow.

DONNA: But it was so powerful to me because what that means is that one side, one mouth is what God speaks, and when I repeat what God speaks, that cuts asunder the soul and the spirit. So it's a powerful thought.

RANDY: Yeah, well, you know, when you talk about, as the subtitle says, "Cultivate your gifts, build your confidence, and discover your God-given influence," you want this for everyone, but I do think that culturally, and maybe a bit in our nature, you know, men--I don't have to have confidence to go out and try something, right? That leads to disaster many times. But I think women tend to--I know my wife, she would tend to be a little bit more reserved, a little bit less prone to just kind of step out in blind, dumb faith like I will.

And what would you say to the woman who's thinking, "I've always thought there was more for me," or "I know there is, and I'm afraid to step out"? What encouragement would you give her today?

DONNA: That's good, Randy. I think--I spent too many years defending who I wasn't rather than being curious to who God had called me to be. In fact, I'm a firm believer, if you keep arguing for your limitations, guess what? You get to keep them. So I just think there comes a point where you're just like, enough is enough.

And you have no idea the people whose lives will be transformed and touched by a simple yes, and just stepping out. The Bible says on't throw away your confidence. It's very clear. Because on the other side of that is a reward. It's not just about us, but it's about our children, our children's children.

And if that fear has been fighting you that hard and you're watching today, I would just say there's definitely something God is inviting you to do, and is it gonna be bigger than you? Most likely. Might it be in hidden spaces? Probably. But just say yes.

RANDY: Yeah, and then I think the other part of it is the first word, and you've said it many times as we've had this conversation, "entrusted." Not just trusted, but this is something that God, he calls us to, he has given to us.

And really, if we wanna reach our full potential and wholeness and obedience in him, we have to trust that he put it there for a reason and walk in it.

BLYNDA: But also a good reminder that it was him who gave it. It was him who gave it. So we don't get to take credit for it, but we also can't hide it in the ground.

DONNA: Yes, exactly.

BLYNDA: He's trusted us to do something with it.

DONNA: Yeah, exactly.

RANDY: So what's the payoff? For someone watching, male, female, we don't care. Young, old. But they feel like, you know what? I'm gonna step out in confidence with what I think God's given me, or given to me, what's the payoff? What's the reward?

DONNA: There is no greater joy than allowing God to use you to see somebody else's life touched and changed. And it may just be a word of encouragement, and it may be a prayer that you're gonna pray for somebody. But I love that we've had over 40 years of being able to say yes.

And here's the thing, Randy and Blynda, sometimes you don't see the results immediately, but you get to be part of God's greater story. So I can't--I feel like my whole life right now is just cheering men and women on. Use what God gave you, even though it's the size of an acorn.

Don't feel like you're entitled to more before you start, but realize you've been entrusted with more than enough, because you're partnering with him.

BLYNDA: Okay, Donna, I actually just feel like, could you just pray for those that are watching? Pray that over them?

DONNA: So, God, we are just so grateful for those that are watching today, and I just thank you that you are present, that you're close. Lord, there are some watching right now that have consistently felt this nudging, but fear has paralyzed them and shut them down. So I speak to that fear right now, and I silence you in the name of Jesus. I thank you, Lord, that today, somewhere in the conversation, that they felt courage to step out and to say yes. I thank you, Lord, that they will see that they are valued, loved, seen, that they have more invested in them than they could ever imagine.

And Lord, we're so grateful for the cost that you paid. We thank you for the price of your life on the cross. And today, Lord, I thank you for peace. I thank you for incredible

opportunities to use what you've given us, even though it's the size of an acorn. Open the doors that need to be opened.

Open our eyes and our ears. Use us, in Jesus's name. Amen.

RANDY: Amen. Thank you so much for that. You know what's interesting is we talk about our mission outreaches, which is stepping out in obedience to meet practical needs, and really saying to God, "I'm trusting you with what you've given to me," oftentimes financially.

But you guys have had experience in the mission field. What does it do when we go the extra mile, whether, you know, physically, literally, or just in our support of those who are on the front lines, when we meet those practical needs?

DONNA: It's massive. In fact, we talked earlier how Dennis, my husband, was on the board with Peter Pretorius and all that he's doing, it's phenomenal. Like, we are very spoiled in America.

And I think when you go overseas and you realize people that are in Third World countries that really have nothing, and you can--maybe you don't feel like you have enough to sow, like, large amounts, but every little bit of a seed that you can sow actually can change a life. And when you're there and you see lives change from just a couple of dollars, and people who don't have water or don't have sustainable food or education. You're in America.

We seem so far away. But I'm just telling you, there's nothing greater. Thank you for what you guys have been doing for years.

RANDY: Oh yeah, absolutely. You know, it's largely women that support these outreaches, and it is so true. So, all right, we're gonna show you what we're talking about, because you have an opportunity right now to impact someone's life with God's love. Watch this, and you'll see how.

[music]

JOHN YEATTS: What if this was the best you had to offer? We can make it sure she has better.

FEMALE: And who's this sitting with you?

[speaking foreign language]

JOHN: In today's world, I still stand shocked and appalled that anyone should have to use this type of water. But the fact is, this is where these families get their daily water source. And you and I know that there's no way to drink this water on a consistent basis and not deal with some type of sickness.

This beautiful little girl and her family, if you'll help us, will never have to drink that kind of water again. It'll come out crystal clear and cold, and when a neighbor stops by thirsty, they won't be offering them a cup of death. They'll be able to offer them a cup of cold water, in Jesus's name.

RANDY: Hmm, you know, Blynda, people always wonder, why would they even drink that water? But as John pointed out, they don't have any other choice.

BLYNDA: They don't have a choice. When I saw that child drinking the water, and I think it's just, drinking that, we know that as that child drank that, it could be harming them, and it's painful to watch.

And then I'm reminded that there's 2 billion people in the world that don't have access to good drinking water. I mean, it's just mind-boggling.

RANDY: It is, but you know, when you see that one child, you go, agh, well, if I could help that one.

BLYNDA: If I could help that one. And I think that helps take it from this big number to what can I do? I can help one.

RANDY: Yeah, and you know what? You can help one today. In fact, a gift of \$48 will basically give clean drinking water to 10 people today, because the average cost of a water well is \$4800, wherever we go, over 20 nations that we work in, and we've been doing this for years. But we've only done it with your support. That's why we can say, hey, a gift of \$48, you will give clean drinking water for an average of 70 years, we call it Water for Life, to 10 people. A gift of \$144 would serve 30 people.

Maybe you can give a gift of \$4800 and provide that well. That will become a focal point for that village. I can tell you from experience, I've seen this. The average is about 1,000 people that will come to that well. When there's no water to be found, they will get that cup of water in Jesus's name that you provided. You know, some of you could provide more, and I would just say just do what God puts on your heart.

God loves obedience more than sacrifice. But as believers, we are called to be his hands, his feet, around the world. We're asking you to reach out right now in love, and meet a practical need. Please go online, go to the phone, make the best gift you can.

ANNOUNCER: Every day, far too many lives are lost to waterborne disease, and tragically, children under the age of five are the most vulnerable. Through Mission Water for Life, you can give desperate mothers hope and precious children a future by helping provide clean, life-giving water before it's too late. Our goal this year is to drill 350 water wells in areas where the need is greatest, but it won't be possible without you. Today, your gift of \$24 will help provide clean water for 5 children.

A gift of \$48 will help provide for 10, and \$144 will help provide life-giving water for 30 people for a lifetime. In thanks for your gift of any amount, we'll send you "Prayers for My Spiritual Health." This beautifully-crafted prayer book will meet you in the places where anxiety, grief, and spiritual weariness run deep, guiding you through prayers for inner peace, emotional healing, and intimacy with God. With your gift of \$100 or more, you may request the "Your Life of Prayer" bundle.

This collection includes "Prayers for My Spiritual Health," along with "Prayers for My Physical Health" and the "Life Prayer" journal, three companions to help strengthen your walk with Christ. Finally, please consider a gift of \$1200 to help provide water for 250 people, or a gift of \$4800 to help sponsor a complete well, and request our inspiring bronze sculpture, "The Good Shepherd." Please call, write, or make your gift online today.

RANDY: Please do go online or go to the phones, make the best gift you can. We need to hear from you. Let's reach out. Let's share God's love. Blynda, been a wonderful program. I hope you've been encouraged as a woman.

BLYNDA: I have--no, I was just going to say that. It was such a great program for me personally as a woman, to remind myself that I am entrusted with a lot of gifts, and I wanna use them. So thank you, Donna, so much for joining us.

DONNA: Thank you for having me. It was such a huge honor. Thank you.

RANDY: Great, and we appreciate you guys being here. Come back, we'll see you again next time on "Life Today."

[music]

MALE: And we were a welfare family, very poor. He was just a blue collar laborer. And then in the middle of all that, he got cancer.

ANNOUNCER: 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.

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