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Week 31

Randy Robison

David Stine

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

DAVID STINE: They realized and diagnosed me with a rare strand of leukemia and obviously did not have a very good prognosis at the time, and they didn't have a whole lot that they could do for me, and--

RANDY ROBISON: So they were discharging you to, like--

DAVID: To go die.

ANNOUNCER: A devastating diagnosis proved to be a blessing in disguise. David Stine's journey to find Jesus, next.

[music]

RANDY: Welcome to "Life Today." I'm Randy Robison. Good to have you here today. If you haven't already figured it out, one of God's goals in our lives is to build endurance.

And if you've ever had to do that you're like, "Oh, I don't wanna do that." It's not an easy thing, but it's a very good thing, and there is some encouragement and some hope when you understand what God promises. So we're gonna give you, I think, a little bit of insight, some encouragement, for sure, but definitely some hope for whatever you're facing. And look, if you're not going through something right now where you need this, you will, so just go ahead and pack it away. My guest today is David Stine, and he has a book called "The Way of the Ox." What does that mean?

We're gonna find out. David was a longtime pastor up in the DC area. He's now down in Austin, the founder of Advance Partners, and helping a lot of people, and he joins us today on "Life Today." David, great to see you.

DAVID: So good to be with you, Randy. Thanks for having me on the show.

RANDY: Absolutely, so I love--by the way, I like the book, your style, and some of your stories I really connected with, so I enjoyed this personally. But we gotta just come out of the chute and go what are you talking about with an ox?

DAVID: You know, it is an interesting story. I was walking through HomeGoods one day, doing my husbandly duty of following my wife and hopefully stopping her from buying any of the trinkets and things, and we're just walking down the picture aisle, and she pointed at this one painting of this animal. And I was like--she said, "I think we need to have this in our living room," and I was like, "Babe, I don't even know what that is." And sure enough, we left with it that day, and I went home to discover what that was. I was just curious.

If something's gonna be hanging in my house, I at least want to be able to tell people what it is. And come to find out it was an animal that lives in the Arctic Circle called the musk ox, and I wasn't planning to do a bunch of research, but as I dove in, this animal has got some amazing qualities, and I think they really parallel the Christian life. And the one that stood out the most, initially, was that in the wintertime in the Arctic, instead of going south with all the other animals, the birds and everything, as we see here in the States, it actually goes north into the cold. It goes--actually, whenever there's a storm coming, it goes into the storm. And it's interesting, and there's a lot of aspects that I write about in the book of why the musk ox does this, but it's uniquely designed by God to be able to endure just this harsh temperature.

And there's all kinds of other benefits that it has as well. But I parallel that very clearly to the Christian life, and I believe there's just, Randy, there's some storms in life that I haven't been able to go around, I haven't been able to go under. As much as I'd love to pretend that they didn't exist, I had to go straight through them. And I believe that's where God really meets us in the storm.

RANDY: We'll come back to that ox, but I want to talk about your storm, because I bet when you read that, that meant something to you that the rest of us would go, "Well, that's just crazy," you know? But you probably went, "I have been there." Tell us what happened to you as a child.

DAVID: Yeah, that's a story that has given me the life I have today, actually. And as a young man, I was 15 years old, and I was a tennis player, and very involved and just wanting to be the best. I wanted to play at Wimbledon, you know? Like any other young tennis player. And I started to have these odd symptoms, and of course my parents were very concerned, and the local doctors couldn't figure out what was going on, so I ended up going--growing up in Louisiana, I went to New Orleans, to Ochsner Clinic, where they checked me out for probably a couple weeks. And about a week in, they realized and diagnosed me with a rare strand of leukemia and obviously did not have a very good prognosis at the time, and they didn't have a whole lot that they could do for me in the process.

And my grandfather was--my recollection of him as a kid is that he was reading his Bible every day. He was probably watching your dad too. So just consistently just this man of

God that I looked so highly up to. And he had visited me the day before I was to be discharged, and the following day after he left, he called, and I remember my mom answered the phone in the hospital room there. I'm still laying in the bed. I had lost probably 50 pounds.

I was only about 100 pounds, as a 15-year-old guy, you know? And he said over the phone he said, "David, I had a dream about you last night." And this is a great man of faith. And he said, "Yeah, I saw you just as I saw you the day before in the hospital bed, and that hospital bed went up into the clouds." And he paused for a second, and Randy, honestly I was like, "This is not an encouraging call. I'm basically going to heaven." But he didn't stop there. He said, "You came back down out of the clouds, and you were dressed like a normal young man." And he said, "David, I believe that this dream means that God has healed you," and he said, "I believe you're healed." And it was in that moment that it was like I was hearing from Jesus himself that I had been healed. Well, I felt no different in that moment, but the next day I was to have a bone marrow test before they discharged me to go home, and that next day, had the test, and packing up to go home, without any other plan other than that I was gonna, you know, be on some medicine before I passed, and--

RANDY: So they were discharging you to, like--

DAVID: To go die.

RANDY: To hospice or something, like?

DAVID: No, it was basically gonna be a slower thing under care of my doctor back home. And the doctors come in, and this is the classic moment for me that we often hear of whenever God intervenes and takes physicians off guard, but the doctors came in the room for the discharge and they said, "We also have some news for you about the bone marrow test.

And evidently, David, you don't have any leukemia in your body any longer. You don't have leukemia."

RANDY: So they saw it, and then they didn't see it. Did they say, "Uh, we think we made a mistake"?

DAVID: "We can't explain it."

RANDY: Oh, "We can't explain it," is that what it was?

DAVID: It's the classic phrase. We don't know how to--I mean, they were honestly talking with my mom and dad, and I was just sitting in the bed. And they said, "Yeah, you know, we don't really know how to explain this, but your son does not have leukemia."

RANDY: Did you say "I know how to explain it"?

DAVID: I did not.

RANDY: Did you connect it with your grandfather yet?

DAVID: I did, but at that time, and this might be surprising to your audience, but I was actually not a follower of Jesus. And it wasn't until six years later in undergrad, in college, that I accepted the Lord as my Lord and Savior.

It was in that moment, though, that God went from this God who's far off to a God that's actually interested in me. And that was a huge part of my testimony today.

RANDY: Okay, so I was going to ask you, did you ever wonder why, you know, God didn't give you the dream, but instead to your grandfather? But then when you tell me that you weren't even a follower, it's like--God was like, "I'm gonna show this guy," yeah.

Because you instantly go from, you know, "God's that nice guy on Sunday or Easter, Christmas," to, "Wait a minute, he's real and he's important and he just healed me." And then your grandfather was the connection to put it all together. I mean, would you reflect on that whole how God brought you to him process?

DAVID: I tell you, that's probably the thing that's most amazing about God for me still today, is that we don't serve this God who is just ethereal or a far-off God, we serve a God that is not just able to heal us, but he's actually interested in intervening in such a way in our life, that he would reach and be able to correct something that we could not do ourselves. You know, Scripture says, "He cleanses us of our infirmities, and he heals us of our diseases." The thing I love about that Scripture as it was for me is, a disease is not something we can get over on our own, so he heals us of the thing that we cannot do for ourselves.

And he's just been so faithful in that way.

RANDY: I love that you're able to share it with other people, because it it does get people's attention. Okay, so back to the ox, because you know, in that moment where you desperately need that healing, I mean, that's difficult. We wanna run away from those storms, no doubt about it.

But we talk about this musk ox and going into the storm. It's one thing in your book that I picked up on, and I can actually see a lot of different applications, so I'll let you tell your version of it. But the one thing that's unique, as far as I know, about this particular--I'm looking at the cover, right, this particular ox, for people that can see it.

He's got layers, right? That's what enables him to survive these storms. What did you see when you saw that?

DAVID: I tell you what, Randy, this animal, just the more I learned about it, and there's not actually a lot of information out there on them, and what information I could find was just

another layer and another layer that parallels with our walk with the Lord. But the layers, they call them guard hairs on the outside, and they're thick and actually hollow, and they have those year-round because they live, you know, in the Arctic. It's freezing cold in the summertime as well, you know. But the interesting thing is as the musk ox heads into the storm, into the further north, into the winter cold, it actually grows another layer underneath those guard hairs, and it happens really like clockwork every year. It's called qiviut, and it's this gray wool that grows underneath those guard hairs.

And amazingly enough, this animal, scientists say that it can handle up to -167 degrees and be fine, which is amazing. But this qiviut, the other thing I learned about it is, come springtime, the qiviut actually falls out. It's almost like God has built it in such a way, designed this musk ox where whenever it doesn't need the layer, it just drops off. Well, that qiviut today is actually the most valuable wool on earth, and you can tell the supply is not very much because there's not a whole lot of musk ox on planet Earth, but it's actually worth more than cashmere and other types of wool, which to me made it kind of like a silver lining, almost, that God was doing in the process.

You know, Scripture tells us that he's trying to--his goal is to make our faith worth even greater than gold. And it's so often that in the storms of life and in the more challenging seasons, that's really where our faith is refined, that refiner's fire, you could say. You know, oftentimes I've felt in my own life, as I go through challenges and God builds something in me, that I'm convinced he's more interested in my heart and my faith than he is in my comfort. And that's probably not encouraging for your audience to hear today, but the encouraging side of that is that whenever we're going through a challenge, you can know that he's actually building something on the inside of us that's even greater than the challenge that we're going through. And then of course he's with us in whatever challenge that we're in, just lockstep.

RANDY: Yeah, and you know, when we start to go into the storm, usually we're like, "I can't handle this." We feel overwhelmed and we're like, "I don't even know what to do," you know? And I think when we lean into God in that process, we grow that qiviut, you know? He's like, "I will give you what you need to survive this. Without me, you may not." But he promises that he will be with us in those, and he does that, and then we don't always see it in real time, but looking back, we can see it.

So, okay, you know I didn't even get to--I've got these five steps to face adversity that are in your book, and so to really dive into this, you're gonna have to get the book. And it's worth getting, and we'll tell you how you can get it here in a second. But real quickly, the steps that you do cover: hope, faith, relationships, passion, and prayer. And yes, we all need--we need hope, and that's what I think--I hope we're giving people hope today.

And then faith is the thing that underpins it, absolutely, at all--because without Christ, you can do nothing. Prayer is the active part of that, and then the relationships, we do need community. I wanna ask you about the passion portion of that, because when I first just

saw the word I'm like, "Well, that means different things to different people." How did that work for you? What was the passion that helped you face adversity?

DAVID: You know, I think-- let me say this first. I really believe that God desires us to thrive, even whenever we're experiencing challenges, and I think a missing piece oftentimes, particularly in Christendom, I've found, is that individuals would sacrifice that passion piece whenever they're going through a challenging time, and I actually think it's one of the things that launches us forward and really allows us to thrive, even if we are having, let's say, a financial challenge, a health challenge. Maybe there is a relationship challenge. But God has wired us in such a way to really have passions for living and the things we put our hand to, the people that we surround ourselves with, and those are often the things that should not be set aside but really be forefront to really pull us forward.

I know one of the things with the musk ox, but here we are again, Randy, but, you know, the musk ox, it stays in relationship. They stay with the same group their entire lives. The young are taken care of by the old, and whenever they're going forward into the winter--so they've got the relationships, and then they've also got, really, I believe, the passion in front of them is that in springtime is whenever their young are born.

So if you think about the nature of God and the heart of God towards these animals, it's in the springtime that they're having their young. Well, since they've gone north, these young are born in a place where there is the first to the green grass. They're also without any predators around, because all the predators went south. So they're really able to grow up in a real kind of green pastures, if you will, as Psalm 23 tells us all about.

RANDY: So the thing that the musk ox naturally loves is what points them to go through it in the endura--I like that. I like that a lot.

DAVID: And it's how--I really think if we can have kind of that 30,000-foot God's vantage point and know that he is doing something more significant than we can see in our current challenge, that will get us not only to face the storm but to know that on the other side, God has really great things for you and I.

RANDY: So good to hear, so good to hear. I hope you're taking this to heart, and if you would like to get David Stine's "The Way of the Ox," we would love to send it to you today when you help us with some people who are going through a storm right now.

So watch this and pray about how you can be a part, and when you support this outreach, you can request this book. We'd love to send it to you.

[music]

ANNOUNCER: For 68-year-old Menpei, this is just one of up to four times a day she must make this journey to retrieve water. Her only water source: a hole in a river bed.

It is not only a source for water, but also a source of sickness and disease. Menpei fears for the health of her grandchildren when they drink this water, because she has already seen what it has done to her son, Tei.

His stomach and ankles are bloated and swollen, all signs of a urinary tract infection, or worse. They have no money to see the doctor, but even if they did, it would not change their water source.

[speaking foreign language]

ANNOUNCER: Unfortunately, Tei is often unable to work due to his illness.

ANNOUNCER: Life is hard for Tei and his mother, Menpei. By simply introducing a clean water source, so many of their hardships could be alleviated, and with it, hope restored to their village.

RANDY: You know, when you see stories like that, the individual people and how they are impacted in various ways by contaminated water, you start to understand that Water for Life, this outreach that we do, that we've done for decades now, to drill a clean drinking water source, putting a water well into a village, you realize that it's more than just an act of charity when you do it from the standpoint of Christ, meaning we're doing this because we believe God has put us here to alleviate the suffering of others and to preach the good news of the gospel. It takes on, I believe, a whole new meaning when you see the individual stories. Their story is difficult. There are other stories that are just tragic, you know? I've knelt next to graves of children who died from waterborne diseases. I've seen the pain of the parents, of the grandparents, who have lost oftentimes numerous children or grandchildren because they have the same water source. Until a solution comes to them, they will just cycle. There will continue to be death and illness and a lack of production, as you saw just now. What do we do? We come and we break the cycle.

We break the work of the enemy. It's a spiritual act as much as a physical act. So when I tell you that \$48 will help give clean drinking water to 10 people, yes, it will. But it'll do so much more than that. A gift right now of \$144 goes towards the water wells, and it will basically serve 30 people, because the average well is \$4800. That's based on the 350 wells that we drill over 20 different nations this year alone. And we've done this for several years, so we see the benefit of it. A typical well will last about 70 years. That's why we call it Water for Life.

It'll serve about a thousand people. But what you do today, your gift today, while meeting a practical need, while staving off sickness and death, it reaches beyond that. It becomes a spiritual act. What a blessing, what an honor. I hope you will be a part of this today as we give Water for Life, we give the water of life which is Christ. So here's my question to you. What would God have you do? Pray about it, and then do what he puts on your heart. It'll be a blessing to others and a blessing to you. 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.

ISAK PRETORIUS: We've just watched mothers coming down from this village to the water source here, and mothers in this area, mothers like these, have been explaining to us how this is their only water source. This is where they wash, as they're doing now, wash their dishes. Just over here, they try and collect water where they can keep it a little bit cleaner. But they've explained to us how this water is actually contaminated. The children get sick, they get sick, they get diarrhea, and they've even explained to us how children have died here because of that sickness.

We know what that is. That's waterborne diseases that are in this water. This is unclean water. But it's the only water that they have.

Can you imagine having to take contaminated water back to your children, knowing that it will make them sick, and that it possibly will cost them their lives? That's why we have to keep Mission Water for Life going. We have to keep drilling wells, we have to keep putting the pumps on those, we have to keep bringing fresh, clean water. And so, what we need you to do is we need you to open your hearts and to respond, and to give the best gift that you can give, because that gift today is a gift of water. It's a gift of life.

RANDY: We do need to hear from you. We need to hear from you today. We can help people, but we must do it together. So please go online, go to the phone, make the best gift you can, and request David Stine's book "The Way of the Ox" if you'd like it. We would love to send it to you. David, it's been a real pleasure. I appreciate you being here.

DAVID: Thank you so much for having me on.

RANDY: Are you done with your storms or you're still walking into them?

DAVID: I seem to have storms still regularly, you know? I think there's more things God wants to build in me.

RANDY: I believe it's true, but endurance to thrive is what we can have. davidstine.com, you can find him. Of course, you can find us at lifetoday.org. And just come back. I look forward to seeing you next time here on "Life Today."

[music]

KATHIE LEE GIFFORD: Hey everybody, won't you stand with everyone here at Life Outreach International in their magnificent Water for Life program, helping people all over the world, millions of people, have clean water. That's what Jesus would want us to do.

HOSANNA WONG: Some of us think that we have to get our whole lives together before we can have an encounter with God.

ANNOUNCER: Uncomplicate your relationship with God, tomorrow.

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