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Week 33

Randy Robison & Blynda Lane

Micah E. Davis

"Redeeming Your Pain"

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

MICAH E. DAVIS: My dad came home from preaching one Sunday and told my mom, "I'm done. I'm done with you, I'm done with church, I'm done with God.

I'm having an affair, it's with your best friend," who was also our kids' pastor at the church. And that was sort of the genesis of this succession of father figures in my life who failed.

ANNOUNCER: How God became the father figure Micah E. Davis needed, and helped him learn to forgive. Next, on "Life Today."

[music]

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

BLYNDA LANE: I'm doing really good. Yes, I'm doing good because--

RANDY: You're only on two strikes?

BLYNDA: I'm only on two strikes! That's exactly what I was gonna say. We have an awesome guest, Micah E. Davis, and he wrote a book called "Three Strikes, You're Forgiven," and I've literally thought all day about the title, like, "Okay, three strikes, I'm forgiven. I'm never out."

RANDY: Right, well, and that's the play on it, right, because we do feel like that forgiveness is just one of those unreachable, kind of unattainable, or undeserved things. I mean, it's a tough topic.

BLYNDA: It is a tough topic, and I appreciate Micah E. Davis for being here. Thank you for joining us. We weren't just gonna talk the whole time about your book. We're gonna talk to you about the book.

MICAH: Sure, it's such a joy to be with you guys. Thank you so much for having me.

RANDY: So give us, since we're kind of running right into the title here, explain exactly what that means for you.

MICAH: Sure, the title was born out of a teaching on pain. So I wrote my first book entitled "Trailblazers: A Journey to Discover God's Purpose for Your Life." That came out in the fall of 2023, also at Tyndale House Publishers, and I was invited to the headquarters in Carol Stream to give a teaching to basically the entire staff of the organization, and I came with a teaching entitled "Three Strikes, You're Forgiven."

And one of the executives pulled me aside after I gave that teaching and said, "I think that's your next book." The irony of it is I had about 17 other ideas for books, and one on forgiveness was not one of them, but as they started to tease that out, I realized actually forgiveness is a very big part of my story, and so I've spent the last 2 1/2 years putting it together.

RANDY: Are you on the side of needing to be forgiven or needing to forgive others, or a little of both?

MICAH: All of the above, absolutely, as we all are.

BLYNDA: That's a big part of your story, but you had 17 other things to write about. It makes me think that maybe you didn't--you wanted to avoid it. Was that actually part of the hesitancy there, is "I don't really want to touch this"?

MICAH: Yeah, you know, as I shared, the book came out of a teaching on pain, and I was sort of scratching the surface of my story, but there's many layers to that. I'm happy to dive into that.

BLYNDA: Yeah, let's--in fact, even before we opened up the show, I asked you because I'd seen the title, "Micah E. Davis," and I said, "Oh, am I supposed to call you Micah E. Davis or just Micah Davis?"

And you said, "Well, actually." Let's talk about that, because there's a reason you kind of go by the Micah E. Davis.

MICAH: That's right, yeah. Everyone asks me all the time, "Why Micah E. Davis?" It's pretty presumptuous to include your middle initial. You're not Michael B. Jordan or Samuel L. Jackson, right?

But you know, my story begins when I was ten years old. I'm the son of two church planters. My parents had planted a church in Indianapolis, Indiana, in the suburbs in 2003. Started with 12 people in an apartment complex clubhouse, and within three years we had over 700 people attending. It was sort of this up and to the right story. In October of 2005,

my dad came home from preaching one Sunday and told my mom, "I'm done. I'm done with you, I'm done with church, I'm done with God.

I'm having an affair, it's with your best friend," who was also our kids' pastor at the church, and sort of just in a moment decimated our family, our church. And that was sort of the genesis of this succession of father figures in my life who failed. So, a few years later, my parents reconciled their marriage. That's a whole other story for another time, but a few years after that, it came out that my paternal grandfather was living a double life, that he was engaged in all of these scandalous escapades with other women. And in that conversation, it also came out that my dad was actually adopted. It was a secret that had been hidden from our family for the first 35 years of my dad's life.

BLYNDA: Oh my goodness.

MICAH: Fast forward five years, my godfather is leading one of the fastest-growing churches in America, and he ends up having an affair with his assistant, ends up leaving his wife and kids and blowing up that church, blowing up his family. And then finally, at age 25, I'm sitting on my parents' back porch, and it feels like a deja vu moment as my mom tells me that she had just found out that her father was not her real father.

It was a secret that had been hidden from her and her dad for the first 50 years of her life. And so, father figure after father figure failing, well, my middle name is Edward, and I'm named actually after both my paternal and maternal grandfathers, who are both named Edward.

And so this book and my pen name came out of this realization I had one day that what Satan meant for evil, God can actually use for good. And so, rather than choosing a pathway of bitterness and resentment, we chose to pursue the pathway of forgiveness and reconciliation, and this book is the product of that.

BLYNDA: What was the beginning of that? Like, where was it that you realized, "I'm not going to be able to live whole and free if I don't conquer this forgiveness issue"?

MICAH: It's such a great question, and it's hard to pinpoint. I mean, there's many moments, of course, but I think the first conscious moment I have is actually something that I didn't do myself, but something my dad did for me, which was he gave me the space to honestly process my emotions. I'll never forget the first time that I saw my dad was a week or two after he had left the house, he was staying at one of the elders' houses of our church at the time. My mom and him were on such bad terms that she wouldn't even take us to the front door. There was like this half-mile-long driveway, I remember her dropping us off at the top of it and just having this long walk, and seeing my dad on the front porch and just wondering, "What in the world am I going to say to this man when I see him?"

I was ten, my brothers were seven and three at the time, and so we're all walking up to the house, and I'll never forget, we dropped our bags off in a bedroom upstairs, and I looked at

him and I just said, "Dad, I hate you. I hate you so much. I cannot believe that you would do this to us." And in that moment, he had a choice, right? As the father, he could have said, "Be quiet, you don't talk to your dad like that, that's disrespectful."

Instead he just said, "I'm so sorry, and I don't have any excuses, and I hope that I can receive your forgiveness." And just being able to be given the space to actually authentically show up in the pain and in the grief, I realized was actually the genesis of the process of forgiveness, which I tried to delineate in the book between the practice of forgiveness and the process of forgiveness. That was the genesis of that journey for me.

RANDY: Did you ever have any resentment, maybe, towards God for letting all these father figures fail?

MICAH: Yeah, you know, I think many people, and I think this is both a gift and a hard part of being human is our Heavenly Father, kind of how we imagine him, is very intertwined with our earthly father. And so, having so many poor experiences with earthly father figures, certainly there were opportunities to be able to question him or, you know, be mad at him, and that's actually part four of the book is entitled "Forgiving God." And a lot of people squeam at that, you know, because they're like, "Well, you can't forgive God, God's perfect," and I say, "Absolutely," right?

So, theologically speaking, no, God does not need our forgiveness, but you know, I've been in pastoral ministry now for over a decade and I've sat across the table with enough people who have similar stories to me, stories of pain, stories of hurt, who are asking that big question, "Can a God who allows suffering be trusted?" Right, that's the crux of that conversation in forgiving God. God, you let this happen to me, or you allowed this to happen to me at least, can I trust you?

And I think the solace that I've found is when I read the Scriptures and the Gospels specifically, we find a God, a Savior incarnate in human form who suffered, who experienced God's seeming silence and absence, who experienced this seeming abandonment on the cross, who went through all of the pain, who incurred the wounds in his hands and his feet, with holes in his body to prove that, right? And so, in those moments of pain I've remembered, God, you've gone first in this. You actually intimately understand this, and you're with me in this, not against me in it.

RANDY: I think the other--the thing that accompanies that, that projecting an earthly father image onto a heavenly Father, right? I mean, you said a couple of words. Silence would be one of them, you know, when we don't hear from God when we really want to, or we don't recognize it, you know, oftentimes. The abandonment, if you have a father who abandoned you. So many of those people feel like God's distant from them. Or a father who's imperfect, which would be all of us, right?

But in such a way as yours where, you know, they've let you down in a way which would even make you question their authenticity, or even Christianity itself. When we project that

onto God, we get all these warped ideas of who God is, or what his character's like. And ultimately, I think it comes back to goodness. Do we really--so I mean, just to be transparent, when you pray for your father to be healed and he dies, you go to that place of is God good? And I have stood, I'm like, "You know what? I know he is."

I'm not moving from that. And that helps you through every hard situation, every disappointment, every unanswered question. And you know, the obvious answer in my case is that God's desire is to bring us into his presence and to bring us into wholeness, and that's what he did for my dad recently. And so I go, "Well, of course a good God's gonna do that," but I think questioning his goodness really throws people onto some terrible, destructive tracks. Did that ever come up with you?

MICAH: Absolutely, yeah, I mean, but I think the beautiful thing about God is that he gives us the space. Like, God is big enough to be able to receive us in that place, you know? And I think, you know, the Psalms are such a beautiful example of that.

I mean, you read Psalm 76, 77, 78, you're like, "Who's writing these?" Like, this person is so depressed and clearly at rock bottom, and yet, those are holy Scriptures. That's God saying, "Hey, you have the space and the place to be able to process these emotions, and I'm still with you."

RANDY: Yeah, and I'll tell you, okay, you're bringing up the Psalms, you're singing my song, no pun intended, but some of them start out like dark. Like "God, how long are you gonna abandon me? Is it forever?" Yeah, "Am I ever gonna hear you?" Here's the beauty of it, and this is what I think we have to do, what you had to do, what I've had to do, we all have to do, is yes, you can voice that.

God gives you--you're so right, he gives you that space. He's not afraid of it, he's not ashamed of you or condemning you, right? But there is that point in the Scripture, in those Psalms, where it goes, "But I will put my hope in you. I will put my trust in you."

MICAH: That's right.

RANDY: "I will sing a new song. I will trust your goodness," right? "I will sing of your mercies forever." All those--you've done this. Is there healing in that?

MICAH: There is. You know, I found so much comfort in, honestly, the Garden of Eden story. I think Genesis 3, right, after Adam and Eve have sinned, what's the first question God asks? "Where are you?" And I read that Scripture growing up as this, like, thundering father storming in the room, "Where are you? What have you done?"

But that's not--God knows where they are. He's God, he knows that they're hiding. And I think that--I reread that story now as, that's God extending this invitation to Adam and Eve to say, "Where are you?" Like, "Come out of hiding, I'm here." You know, admit, confess, repent. And then what do they do?

They start blaming, and you know, and then of course there's consequences for those decisions, but what's the first thing God does after that? He clothes them, and that word in Hebrew is kethoneth. He actually takes these animal skins, and most scholars believe that's the first sacrifice in all of the Scriptures, that's God foretasting this idea that he's going to send his Son as a living sacrifice for all of humanity to reconcile us back to him. So in the book of Genesis and in the book of Revelation, from end to--from beginning to end in all of the Scriptures, it's a story of forgiveness, it's a story of reconciliation.

BLYNDA: I just think right now, I just think about the viewer who's watching, who--even when you were getting emotional, it makes me emotional thinking about your dad and the impact that he had, and how we would have loved for him to still be here. And I think about the person who maybe didn't have a good earthly father, and who has felt the abandonment, who has felt the pain of rejection. I just wanna say to you right now, first, let me remind you, we do have prayer lines for you.

We've got a number at the bottom of the screen that somebody can pray with you right now, somebody you can take that burden to the phone and let someone--share that burden with someone, let them pray with you. But I wanna encourage you right now, that where somebody on earth has failed you, you have a God who will never fail you. He will never forsake you, he will never leave you.

He knows you intimately, he created you intimately, and he loves you. And if you've never felt that unconditional love from an earthly father, I want to encourage you today to receive that love from your heavenly Father.

RANDY: So good, so true. You talk about, in the book, these self-made narratives, and I think a lot of us get stuck there.

Can you give us a little, just briefly an idea of maybe what some of those were for you, but more importantly, how do we get out of those things to get to God's truth?

MICAH: A couple that come to mind. The first one is middle school is cruel to many people, right?

I'll never forget being at the middle school lunch table, and I'm sparring back and forth with a couple of friends who are Jewish, you know, and so I have a different faith than I do at the time, and we're sort of debating, and I'll never forget getting really passionate in kind of my defense of Christianity and following Jesus as Lord and Savior, and they stopped me in that argument by yelling, "Freak out, Micah!" And it felt like the whole cafeteria just stopped, and for the rest of that year that became my nickname, Freak Out Micah.

RANDY: Really?

MICAH: Yeah, and it created this this narrative inside, I call them scripts, you know, that like this script that rewired my brain basically just said, "I can't be passionate about

anything." And so for years I sort of suppressed my gifts and my wirings, because I thought, who wants to actually hear, you know, what I have to say?

It's really fascinating now that I get paid to write words on a paper and hold a microphone in my hands, right? But I think that's the lovingkindness of God, that that's the journey I've had to go through of uncovering, actually, what man says does not define me, it's what God says that defines me.

And I actually found that by taking those things to him, and so, you know, I would just invite anyone who's--and there's tons of scripts we could go into that we don't have time for, but I would just, anyone who's dealing with those scripts, you know, bring them before the Lord, bring them to Jesus, bring them before trusted community and allow those scripts to be rewritten, because there are truths about who God says that we are that are found in the Scriptures, and they're true for all of us in different ways, and they're there, waiting for us.

RANDY: So, again, in the book, you go into four forgivenesses, forgiving others, obviously, being forgiven by others, forgiving God, which we understand is not the theological, it's just the way we feel, God doesn't need forgiveness. And then forgiving ourselves, which I think in a lot of ways can be the hardest, at least it is for me. How do we even approach, sometimes, forgiveness?

Because it's easy to say, it's hard to do. Do you have any insight into how we just even move towards that place, even if we're not fully ready to commit?

MICAH: Of course, yeah. I start where Jesus started oftentimes, which is with curiosity, so I just try to get really curious with myself. Jesus was the master question-asker. Martin B. Copenhagen wrote one of my favorite books of all time, it's called "Jesus Is the Question." The subtitle is "The 300 Questions Jesus Asked and the 3 He Answered." Copenhagen goes throughout all the gospels and basically points out how Jesus has this 100 to 1 question to answer ratio, and so we as followers of Jesus should be really curious.

And so, when I'm coaching people on how to begin that forgiveness journey, I say, "Start with curiosity." There's three questions I ask. Number one, what needs reflection? So like, what lies is Satan trying to implant into me right now about that person or about this situation, and what are the truths that I need to start pulling out? So, first, what needs reflection? Secondly, what needs rewired? I literally go before the Lord and I say, "King Jesus, these are the lies that I'm believing about that person or this is the narrative that I'm creating."

I need you to rewire me in this moment with your truth, with your grace, with your wisdom." And then finally, what is required, right? Because if it just lives in our head but we don't actually move it into our heart, no change is actually going to take place, and so, what's the required action of me coming out of that time spent with Jesus? It may be sending that text or writing that email, or going over to that person's house, right? Whatever the situation is, whether it's asking for forgiveness, receiving forgiveness, forgiving ourselves, or forgiving

God, there is an invitation that Jesus gives to all of us, but it comes, it's birthed out of curiosity.

RANDY: I love it, and you're so right. You can't just be a hearer of the Word, you have to be a doer. Your faith without works is dead, it's worthless, right? We're about to show you a situation and tell you a story about an outreach that we are actively involved in, many of you have been as well. But it's not good enough to just go, "That's nice," or, "Oh, I hope someone else helps." We have to see a need and address it to fill it.

We don't pass by, like the parable of the Good Samaritan. We don't wanna be the one that just passes by someone in need. So I'd like to show you something, and if you will help us address that need today, you can request Micah E. Davis's book "Three Strikes, You're Forgiven." It will bless you, it will bless others. But most importantly, we'd like to invite you to be that blessing that someone else needs.

DON: My name is Don and I am a cameraman, producer, and editor for LOI.

RACHEL: Hello, my name is Rachel, and I work in the missions department. I've had the privilege to travel on a few trips now.

ARIKA: My name is Arika and I'm one of the videographers on the missions team.

MANAL: Hi, my name is Manal, and this is my second trip. Part of my job is to come take photos and document and capture stories of people, go on these adventurous trips, see different parts of the world. But what you can't imagine is some of the suffering that we get to encounter.

DON: This is my third trip with LOI, and when I started, I did not know what to expect.

ARIKA: And I've seen a lot of dirty water sources, from rivers to hand-dug wells, to this pond you see behind me. It is heartbreaking to see these mothers and these grandmothers and these children going to collect water to drink, and it's always dirty.

DON: In Angola, we went to a river where I saw families dipping water where cattle were up the river just a short way. Down the river were mothers and other children getting water to drink.

RACHEL: It's still shocking just to see how much people are suffering every single day, and they're thinking about their children who are getting sick, they're vomiting, they have diarrhea, they have fever, and they're helpless.

ARIKA: To hear those stories is really painful when it's their only choice. You know they're doing all they can, and their kids are still dying.

MANAL: As we sit with people and hear their stories, we're not just professionals who are documenting and capturing moments, but we get to sit with them, we get to be in their pain with them.

DON: We go back to the same villages that we go to to hear the stories and the need of it, and we go right back and give those villages those wells that we said we would try to do. And we stand behind our word, we actually do that.

ARIKA: And Life Outreach partners with people all over the world that digs them a clean water well. They last for a lifetime.

ALL: A cup of clean water!

MANAL: Jesus said to love the least of these, and I think it's our responsibility to take care of that and to help as best as we can.

RANDY: You know, Blynda, I enjoy seeing that because I've been out in the field with so many of these people, and there are so many others, and for you as a viewer to get to see these people that, if you saw them, you know, at your church or in a restaurant, you would have no idea what they do literally helps to save lives.

But the reality is it takes all of us.

BLYNDA: They're using their gifts.

RANDY: They're using their gifts, they're using their resources.

BLYNDA: What God gave them, and it's the same, it's the same for each of you. You might not be sent to photograph on the mission field, but you have resources that you can send to make sure that these wells are being drilled.

RANDY: And you know, I will say this. So many of you as viewers, I mean, you've just stood behind us so wonderfully all these years. You give us your prayers, and I wanna say, never, ever underestimate the power of prayer. So we would ask you right now to just say, "Lord, what would you have me give?" And if the Lord says, "Pray, pray for those who are hurting. Pray for those who are in the field, pray for those doing the work," then please, we want your prayers.

And if God says to you, "Hey, a \$48 gift right now," we know that would serve 10 people water for life based on the numbers, then I would just encourage obedience. It is a sacrifice, to a level, but God, he wants obedience over sacrifice. So if it's a prayer, if it's an action, whatever God tells you to do, let's step out and do it. We are asking that you would help us reach our goal, 350 wells across 20 nations. Perhaps you could drill a well yourself. \$4800 is the average for that.

Whatever it is, we just ask that you be obedient. That's what we want. We want people who hear God's voice and act on it. And Blynda, I don't know the dynamics of all that goes on with prayer and with action and the problems so big I can't solve it all, you can't solve it all, but what I do know is when we bring what we've got to Jesus, miraculous things happen.

BLYNDA: When we just make our sacrifice of praise, whatever that is, whatever God tells us to do, it does something internally to us to know that we're partnering with Jesus to change lives.

RANDY: Absolutely, we do have some wonderful gifts that we would love to send you, a prayer journal for your spiritual health, your physical health, just reminders. But most of all, we ask that you will join us in your heart, in your prayers, and your actions, because you and I are called to be God's representatives to those who are hurting.

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: I do hope you're going online, going to the phone, make the best gift you can, because your participation today will help save lives, and that's what we're about, sharing God's life and love in word and in deed. What a great book, Blynda. We've got a great recommendation today.

BLYNDA: We were just talking about, like, everyone understands the three strikes, you're out reference. Even if you're not a baseball player, you just know it.

RANDY: Many more strikes on my part.

BLYNDA: Many more, but the idea that there is just unlimited forgiveness is so great. So Micah E. Davis, thank you so much for joining us.

MICAH: Thank you so much for having me. It was a privilege to be with you guys.

RANDY: So good, we'll see you again on "Life Today."

[music]

DARIN KINDER: And as I looked up, again, about 80 or 90 yards from the base of that tower, Tower Two started to come down right on top of me.

ANNOUNCER: Surviving 9/11, tomorrow.

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