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Week 34

Tammy Trent

Betty Robison & Ann Pretorius

"Reaching Africa"

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

ANN PRETORIUS: It was just overwhelming for us that this great man of God would come to Africa and look for us, and what he found transformed his life. God knit the hearts of two men together with a common purpose and a common goal, and 40 years later, that dream is still continuing.

TAMMY TRENT: I miss these mighty men of God, but if they were here right now, what do you think they would want us to remember?

[music]

BETTY ROBISON: Welcome to "Life Today," I'm Betty Robison. Yeah, I'm here with some good, good friends. Ann Pretorius, she's the wife of Peter Pretorius, our missionaries that we met many, many years ago, probably 30--

ANN: Almost 40.

BETTY ROBISON: Almost 40 years ago. And we're so delighted to have her. And then I've got Tammy Trent. We're gonna all join together today here and just share our hearts. We've all been through the same experiences. We lost the love of our life, and that's quite a jolt. I know it has been most recent for me, and Ann's been, what, eight years? And 25.

TAMMY: Twenty-five for me this year.

BETTY: But it's still a loss, I mean, you still look around and say, "Where are they?" You know, it's such a difference. It's a new way of life that God wants to show us. And no, God didn't cause it, and he didn't make a mistake, you know? But we've just got to trust him and know. And so I invited you here, Tammy, to kind of guide the discussion for us.

TAMMY: I'm glad you trust me to guide this discussion. You girls are in for it, because I've got so many questions prepared, so many. Yeah, we're gonna have such a great time together and a great conversation, and I think you're right.

Whether it's been a few months or 8 years or 25 years, the greatest thing that we have learned is the goodness of God, the goodness of God through the heartache, through the change, through the disappointment, through the unexpected, and the question of, what do we do now with this? And I think so many people are in that place in their lives, whether they've been through it, they're carrying it, or they will carry it, just that change that comes out of nowhere, and then you have to try to put the pieces back together again. We'll have a lot to say about that in the goodness of God, but what I wanna start with, and take you girls back, I'm fascinated with your relationship, and with the relationship of the Robison family and the Pretorius family, whom I've known, gosh, Ann, this is my first time meeting you personally, but I've known your husband Peter, I've done mission work with him in Angola and Mozambique, and your son Isak, who I love and is an incredible man of God and incredible on the mission field. So when I think about these families, these two families, how did this come about?

And like you said, almost 40 years ago, which I think, if I'm doing the math, maybe back in 1989, perhaps? You got two evangelists, this great guy James Robison and Peter Pretorius, that are just preaching the Word of God. Where did this idea or this heart come for missions in the middle of preaching the Word of God?

BETTY: I think-- you tell the story.

ANN: Can I do that? Oh my goodness, Tammy, it is such an amazing story, because James came looking for us. He had heard that my husband had been a part of restoring a pastor from the United States, bringing the whole family to Africa, because of Peter's heart.

So James came looking for that man because of his heart, but it's because James had that heart himself, and he just said, "What is the matter with us in this country that we can't restore our own? Why did it take a missionary from Africa to come and do that?" So it was just overwhelming for us that this great man of God would come to Africa and look for us, and what he found transformed his life. He's the one who said it.

And Betty and I were, we thought, in the shadows, but we were actually in the forefront of the experience of seeing something where God knit the hearts of two men together with a common purpose and a common goal, and 40 years later, that dream is still continuing. The men might have gone, but the mission has continued. Isn't that beautiful?

TAMMY: Yeah, almost--wow.

BETTY: And I don't think we had an idea of God's plan really then, you know. We met, we immediately became good friends, you know, we were the helpmeets of our husbands, you

know? We were kind of along for the ride, so to speak, you know, and that's all we wanted to be.

We were very-- I was very content in that, you know, I didn't wanna be up front. But I just saw James's heart go so after what Peter was doing out on the mission field with the children. James first said, he said, "We're moving over here. We're coming over here and we're gonna stay." Peter said, "No, no, no, you can't do that." He said, "You gotta go back and tell the people what we need to help.

We have the missionaries here. We just need help getting the children fed. We need help with the water."

TAMMY: Okay, what did that yes look like for you then? Okay, James wants to move there, Peter's saying, no, go back and tell everybody. Did you know at that moment what you were saying yes to?

BETTY: Not completely. I was saying yes to Peter because I didn't want to move over there.

TAMMY: Yes, we'll go home, we'll go home.

ANN: We'll go and do whatever you want us to do.

BETTY: But anyway, I had no-- I couldn't see the big picture. I just trusted my husband's relationship with God so much.

I thought he wants to expand what God's got us doing in evangelism into missions, too, and I think that's a good thing, you know. But I was pretty scared going over there on the first big mission trip, you know, I didn't know what to expect.

TAMMY: What was that moment like where you thought, "My life will never be the same again"?

BETTY: When I would walk out--when we were in those feeding lines and we'd see the children, and I looked and I saw the line, the line--we ran out of food. I thought, "What about the children in the back of the line?" And they were standing there so peacefully waiting, you know, for some food and I thought, "How are we gonna do this? We don't have enough food." And I thought, "We've got to go back and tell the people we gotta have help."

TAMMY: That's been the amazing part of this story is that you came back. 1989, you came back, then you went back, then you came back, then you sent somebody, then they came back, then I went, then Randy went, then Kathy Troccoli, whomever it was, you kept sending people to bring back the good news and the need also. But we kept showing up all these years, not just us, but the viewers that are watching today, began to partner with you because of the vision that you all had.

BETTY: I think one thing about it was God got me out of my comfort zone. I liked my home, I liked my family, I loved my children. That was my life.

Even before television, you know, I was fulfilled in that. And then James said, "No, let's go be on," you know, "I want you to sit there by me on television." And I thought, "Well, I don't have anything to say." He said, "I'll never put you on the spot.

I'll always cover you." And he always did. And then he said, "Let's go to the mission field." And I thought, "God, this is a world I never even knew about." These precious children, they're thirsty, they're hungry, they have no shoes on their feet, you know, they're being trafficked, all these things, and we didn't even realize-- that was another world apart from us. God said, "I've got so much more to show you, you won't believe it." And I would come away, yes, tired, exhausted, but in a good way, because I knew we were making a difference.

TAMMY: That's right, you've been making a difference for a long time. And Ann, when I think about you and Peter and the work you've done for so many years, I wonder if, especially early on, was there ever a time when you just kind of wondered, "How is God gonna provide?" Even when you talk about the last child or the 30 children in the back of the line that didn't get food, and the cry of like, "How is God gonna provide? How is he gonna do this?" Did you ever question God and question that and wonder?

ANN: I didn't question that God could do it, but the desire and the urgency for the impact that needed to happen. How do we reach the end of the line?

The only way to reach the end of the line is through partnership. It's through taking hands together and saying, "Let's knit our hearts with a common purpose. We can reach the end of the line." But the line keeps on extending, and the line just gets longer and longer.

And I have no regrets. I'm so grateful that 40 years later, we are reaching the end of the line, and at every opportunity we're expanded, over and over and over again because of that.

BETTY: And no matter how big your heart is to help these people, if we don't have the partners, the people-- you--to reach out to, then we can't do what God's called us to do completely. We're gonna run out.

TAMMY: That's right, then all we're doing is talking about, there's no action. So I think that's the beauty of the heart, and then we give a chance to talk to the audience and say, "We've got to take action, we've got to do something so we can reach the end of the line." It's incredible.

So I think about so many mission trips I've been on. I can't imagine, you know, kind of where you were and some of the stories you might have. I've got my own stories, girls, and they're great.

But I wonder if you've got some fascinating stories. Okay, I'm gonna throw a line out to you and see if you had a story like this too where you've ever been on a mission trip and you have looked around for a bathroom or a toilet, and you just never found what you were looking for.

BETTY: Most of the time. I remember one time specifically, we landed at this little ol' bitty airport in this little ol' bitty plane, you know, and they had a bathroom, but oh my goodness, you didn't want to go in that bathroom. You could not even walk in it.

So Ann says, "Let's go over on the side of the building, okay? We can find some trees over there on the side, and it'll be real private." Okay, we're over there, we're taking care of business, okay? And I look up, and there's a whole line of people walking by, and what else could we do but wave?

TAMMY: I think that's the best--

BETTY: I thought, "That's privacy?"

TAMMY: That is the best. So many people think mission work is like, "Oh, this is exciting, let me go do it," but they don't realize how challenging it really is. I think my story was with your husband and the team that we went to, I want to say Angola, and I remember the first time they were like, "Tammy's gonna love this.

We're gonna be sleeping in tents on cots under the stars in Africa." Who wouldn't love that, right? And I was like, "I'm gonna love this," until I got there, they set it all up, and I said, "Where do I take my makeup off? Where do I wash my hands?

Where do I use the bathroom?" And they said, "Oh, you see that little tent we've set up over there? Just head on over there, and here's your shovel." And I said, "Here's my shovel?" That is when I learned, girls, that my bathroom, I had to make my own toilet. And so I remember, same thing, I was sitting-- I can't even believe I'm telling this, but I'm sitting, I found a log and I'm sitting on a log.

BETTY: Good.

TAMMY: Right, smart, brilliant, right?

ANN: Very good.

TAMMY: This is mission work, everybody. So I'm sitting there and I'm just like, my body's saying, "No, don't let go, just lock it all up," and I'm sitting there, same thing, Betty, I see this precious African family walking about 25 feet from me. What do you do, this blonde woman from America? And I did the same thing.

"Hi, everybody." That was a life-changing trip for me because I thought, first of all, you get out of your comfort zone. You get out of what the norm is for you, all the things I think I

need in my life. And God sets you in a place to see the needs of other people. And I think that's the heart of missions is seeing the lack and the need. People are suffering far more than I will ever suffer, even in the loss of Trent.

They are suffering deeply and they're dying every day because they don't have water, because they don't have food, because they don't have shelter, they have no shoes. I mean, all the things that we get to be a part of, there is such a need. So I think even in those moments, probably you can attest to this, where I'm thinking, "Gosh, I wish I had a better setup," the Lord says, "You've got such a good setup. These people need your voice right now, so go back home and tell people about the need, so that everybody can join in together to reach the back of that line, Tammy."

ANN: You know, I think one of the most important things is for God to have your heart, because when God works in your heart, he prepares you for whatever it is, and it comes from the heart, it comes from the commitment that comes deep inside of you, your love for God, your desire for the things of God, and your preparedness to fall in love with the people that are surrounding you. Whether it's waving at them as you're trying to go to the bathroom or whether it's actually leaning over a baby in prayer because this child is dying, there's a commitment that comes from the heart, and I think that's what was so beautiful for us as our hearts were knit together. We saw God knit Peter and James's hearts together, our hearts were knit, our family's hearts were knit, and so it's rolled out.

But it's definitely something that's come from the heart, and you've been able to portray that to your viewers. You've been able to say to the viewers, "You can partner with us, you can be a part of this with us, but we need your heart." We need your heart to have that commitment that says, "I'm gonna be a part of making a difference. I'm going to reach out, and I'm gonna give whatever it is I can give to be a part of transforming lives in Africa," in that incredible continent, where we can break the syndrome of poverty and the suffering of the people.

BETTY: And I think one thing, really, God got my heart in all of this mission work, was I would see the water well drilled and the excitement of the people. And these little children, they would just dance around in the water and you'd see them smiling. They hadn't anything to smile about. Why would you--I mean, over water?

But that's life to them. And then I would put a pair of shoes on a little child and they'd just grin. That does something to my heart. I thank God I'm in the right place at the right time. And that's what I feel like you've been doing with us.

When you join with us and we do this, we drill the water wells, we feed those hungry babies, they put a smile on their face immediately when they get their need filled, and it's such a joy. Thank you so much for, if you've continued to do this for a long time, God bless you. We thank you. Let's don't stop now, and I know we've all lost our mates, you know, but God is not through yet, and we're not through, we're gonna continue.

ANN: Thank God, thank God. And I must tell you, for me personally, even though it's eight years already, the passion for what we do hasn't waned at all. In fact, it's grown, it's increased.

My dedication, my commitment to the cause to transform lives, what a privilege. What an honor it is. It's enhanced my life, because the fulfillment to me, the fulfillment in life is transforming the life of another.

It's not a selfish reward. It's a reward of seeing lives transformed, changed, and to see hope for the future that's being birthed in them. Oh, what an honor.

TAMMY: It's taking-- everything you'd said before, taking our eyes off ourselves, even the comforts of a mission field, not having it, it's take your eyes off yourself, put it on somebody else, even in our pain, where God has used our pain to help minister to someone else as well, where we've learned to take our eyes off of ourselves in that moment to minister to someone else. So it's the same thing you're saying, Ann, is the heart.

He's after the heart, our heart posture, and being in a place to always look at the needs of somebody else, because I think when we do that, it also somehow takes my own thoughts off myself and all the things and the disappointments and things that aren't met right now, but if I can help meet the need of somebody else, offer them hope, offer them life, somehow something shifts. And I think that's what I'm hearing you say, too, is that heart alignment with Christ, he will set up appointments and assignments for you. Everywhere you go, you will have opportunity to change the world.

So if James and Peter were here right now, whew. I miss James.

BETTY: I do, too.

TAMMY: I miss him. And Peter. I miss these mighty men of God. But if they were here right now and could speak to us, what do you think they would want us to remember? What do you think they would want our viewers to remember?

BETTY: Well, first of all, I thank God when they entered heaven and saw Jesus, he said, "Well done, thou good and faithful servants," and now God has passed the mantle on to us to go forward, and they're saying-- they're cheering us on. I know James always said, "Betty, anything God wants you to do, you can do it. I believe that with my whole heart.

Look at my life," that's what he'd say. God has done so much, and God wants to continue with this ministry to do so much more than we could ever imagine. We just gotta follow him. And that's what my heart says now.

I'm gonna follow God, whatever direction he leads me, through this ministry that he gave James many, many years ago, and James changed the name of because he didn't want it to be tied to him, and so he wanted it to be free. It's no longer James Robison Evangelistic, it's Life Outreach International. And that says the whole thing, Life Outreach.

TAMMY: That's beautiful. It's totally beautiful, and you don't even realize, but you set up this next piece that we're going to show. You set it up with your words right there, legacy.

The legacy, the vision, the heart of James, and we're gonna go back. Let's watch this precious video together of James Robison, beautiful legacy here at Life Outreach International, and the love that he had for people that began so many years ago. Take a minute and watch this.

JAMES ROBISON: You know, it's hard to believe that these children here are actually drinking this water. It's absolutely filthy.

As a matter of fact, you can see the cans here that are floating in the water. This is what they were drinking out of when we walked up here. I mean, I want you to look how dirty that water is.

This is what they're drinking. Now, if you can see that when I pour it out, I mean, it's just absolutely filthy.

ANNOUNCER: Many years ago, James and Betty witnessed firsthand a deadly problem that still plagues over 2 billion people today, lack of access to clean drinking water that results in waterborne illnesses and oftentimes death.

JAMES: That is what we're after. And that water will soon be clean, a steel-cased well. But this is life. This is water for life right here. Millions of people are dying for lack of clean water and because of waterborne diseases. Let's give them clean water.

ANNOUNCER: "Let's give them clean water." Those words have been the heart cry that inspired our mission teams to locate people in countries throughout the world who do not have access to clean water. Places like Eastern Europe, in isolated regions of the Amazon river of South America, into the highlands of Central America, then to countries in the far reaches of Asia, and finally back full circle to the region of the world where our mission first began, Southern Africa.

RANDY ROBISON: Hey Mom and Dad, I'm here in Burundi with John and the whole crew, because another well is going in the ground to give people fresh, clean drinking water, and it's so exciting. I wanna say thank you to you for starting this, for being so faithful to it, and to all the viewers who have made Water for Life possible in so many desperate villages just like this one.

ANNOUNCER: Because of James's vision for people to have clean drinking water, Life Outreach and our partners have drilled over 9500 wells, serving nearly 10 million people. And yet, the mission is far from over, knowing that people are still suffering and dying simply because they lack clean drinking water. But with your continued support, we can reach millions more who are in such desperate need.

[music]

BETTY: So many, many beautiful memories as I watched that. I was there for a lot of them, most of them, and I wouldn't trade anything for those times when we could see the children jumping up and down in the water and just rejoicing because they had clean water.

I remember one time specifically where the water was getting ready to come out of the ground, and James and I were standing so close that it blew us back whenever the water came out. But it was a joyful moment, because I knew how many people that water well was gonna be able to fill.

TAMMY: No, it's true. All the places that y'all have sent me, I have seen some incredible, devastating places where the water is just muddy, mucky, filled with animal feces, filled with frogs, just filled with so much contamination that you know is going to kill these children if they're drinking it, and yet it's their only source of water, so if they don't drink it, they may die. If they do drink it, they may die. So it's that Russian roulette feeling of, what do you do? And when I think of the mothers especially, like, how do you hold that tension in your heart? Like, what do I do for my child? So to think that we can go in and drill this entire village a water well, which usually, girls, which you probably know, it provides water for up to almost 1,000 people in a village, so you think, this is gonna change their life forever.

These wells will last well beyond their lifetime, so an incredible gift of life that we get to be a part of. And I have loved that part of missions on the side. There is a desperate need right now, a desperate need to reach these families, to reach these villages right now with water. And I'm going to tell you what it's going to look like. For \$48, you can provide water for 10 right now. For \$144 you can provide water for 30. And check it out.

For \$4800, you could provide an entire well for an entire village that would change their lives forever. Now, I know that seems like a lot to some people, but think, if you could pull in \$1,000, your neighbor could pull in \$1,000. Reach out to, like, if you could pull it all together, you could reach this incredible moment together, I'm telling you, it will change the life of so many people. Right now, we are wanting to put in over 350 wells in 20 nations. Do you know that it is-- there's 2 billion people that are lacking access to clean water, 2 billion people? So it seems like it's a lot, but we can go in and reach these families one child at a time. And I don't know about you girls, but I'm up for the challenge.

ANN: Oh, wow, and we serve a big God.

TAMMY: Yes, we do.

ANN: We can't ever out-give or think bigger than the God who loves those children so much and cares for them and wants to provide for them. And he does, but he needs each and every one of us to be a part of it.

TAMMY: He does, so go online right now and give the best gift that you possibly can give today.

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.

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.

BETTY: I hope you were truly blessed today. I was, just being with my friends.

Ann, thank you for being here, and Tammy, thank you so much. And we're gonna be back, so don't miss another show, you know. It's gonna be great, and we're gonna share our hearts with you.

We're gonna hopefully encourage you to go on with God, even in the circumstances you might be in right now. God bless you, we love you very much.

[music]

TAMMY: How do you embrace the future when it doesn't look like anything you thought it would?

ANNOUNCER: Continuing forward amidst loss, 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.

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