

**8/25/2026**

*Week 35*

*Randy Robison & Blynda Lane*

*Ashley Willis*

*"Treating Anxiety"*

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

**ANNOUNCER:** Coming up, biblical counselor Ashley Willis highlights the complexities of anxiety.

**ASHLEY WILLIS:** And so, when it comes to treating anxiety, we need to see it as a multi-pronged approach, because it's something that we need to treat on a spiritual level, on the chemical level, the mental health level, and also, you know, relationally, we need to have people in our life holding us accountable, but also emotionally. I mean, it really hits on all of those sides.

**ANNOUNCER:** Hope for the anxious mind, next on "Life Today."

*[music]*

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

**BLYNDA LANE:** I'm good. It's funny when you start a show already laughing. I think the audience is like, "What was happening before the cameras rolled?"

**RANDY:** Yeah, well, you know, so here's the thing. I've had a lot of close friends tell me in my life I need to go see a counselor.

**BLYNDA:** And that's funny? Why are you laughing about that?

**RANDY:** Because we have a counselor today. We have a biblical counselor on the set, and so.

**BLYNDA:** What do you tell your friends? Do you tell them?

**RANDY:** I tell them, "Quit having anxiety about it."

**BLYNDA:** Oh my goodness.

**RANDY:** Well, welcome to the program.

**BLYNDA:** You might not want Randy around if you are struggling, but you know who you do want around if you're struggling? Our guest, Ashley Willis.

**ASHLEY:** Oh my goodness.

**RANDY:** How are you doing?

**ASHLEY:** I'm good, thank you so much for having me.

**BLYNDA:** We brought you into our chaos, so welcome.

**ASHLEY:** I'm here for it.

**BLYNDA:** We're so glad that you're here. And we're so thankful that you're here talking about anxiety, because I know that this is a pain point for a lot of believers because, you know, we, as Christians, and we know Scripture about peace and what the Holy Spirit can do in us, and yet that's probably really hard when all of a sudden we're still dealing with anxiety and it's like, "Wait, if I'm supposed to be living victorious, why do I feel this way?" And yet, this was a lot of your Christian life, struggling even secretly, some of the time, with this overwhelming anxiety in your life.

So let the audience know into your story a little bit about how you came to understand how to be free from this.

**ASHLEY:** Yes, no, it is, it's a big part of my story, and so I grew up as a pretty anxious child in really an anxious home. But, like many of us, when we grow up in homes we tend to think what we are experiencing is normal for pretty much everybody. And so I didn't realize that really for generations in my family, the women of my family have really not seen anxiety as something that you don't wanna have, but really it's seen as a way of caring. And so if you're not anxious about it, do you even care about it?

**BLYNDA:** Interesting, wow.

**ASHLEY:** And so it was honestly celebrated. Like, getting toiled up about something and being upset about it, it showed care. And so I followed suit, and I was a very anxious child. I developed a breathing disorder where I would get so anxious that I would lose the oxygen kind of coming in and I couldn't, you know, complete a sentence.

I remember distinctly in 5th grade where we were reading aloud a lot in class, I would really, you know, pray, like, "Lord, don't let her call on me," because I would have these anxiety attacks. I didn't know that at the time, but my breathing was disordered. And then, you know, fast forward to high school and then into college, I was still having anxiety, you know.

And what's ironic about all this, too, is that I felt very much called to speaking and singing and, you know, things where I would have to be in front of people, and I would usually--

**BLYNDA:** Which usually are anxiety-induced.

**ASHLEY:** Right, anxiety-induced, exactly, exactly. And so, you know, it's just the irony of it. But I really kept it locked down, because I was so ashamed that I was having this anxiety.

**RANDY:** Right, so I wanted to ask you about that, because we read in Scripture, be anxious about nothing, right? And so there can creep in this idea that my anxiety is a sin, and so nobody wants to go brag about their sins, and so you get more anxiety about it.

And in the church setting it can be this real kind of, I don't know, a trap that you just can't get out of, that just spirals down and down. How should we think of anxiety when we experience it? Are we in just disobedience to God?

**ASHLEY:** No, I feel like anxiety is just like a human experience, it's a human condition that we're walking through, and I think for those of us who have anxiety, it's a little bit different than worry. You know, in the Bible it says, "Do not worry," I think it says 365 times, right? So one for every day, there's a verse saying, "Do not worry," and that's because the Lord knows that we're gonna be prone to worry.

But anxiety is when the worry becomes prolonged, and a lot of times, you know, it's because of maybe the experiences we're going through, the families we grew up in, and maybe even chemically some things that are going on in our brain. And so for some of us, you know, we're really struggling with having anxiety and feeling guilt over it, but really it's our serotonin, you know, is not to the level it needs to be for us to really even have, you know, the chemistry of our brain right.

And so when it comes to treating anxiety, we need to see it as a multi-pronged approach, because it's something that we need to treat on a spiritual level, on the chemical level, the mental health level, and also, you know, relationally, we need to have people in our life holding us accountable.

But also emotionally, I mean, it really hits on all of those sides. And so, you know, one of those things I constantly I feel like was plagued as a lie from the enemy that I was believing is that I was the only one, is that I was now damaged goods, and that this is just who I am now, and somehow my cross to bear, as if Jesus wasn't enough.

And so you can see where the enemy really loves to mess with especially Christians who are experiencing anxiety, because we do, we end up doing what the enemy wants us to do. We we hold it back and we don't tell anybody. But really, you know, as we know in James, confession is actually one of those steps that leads to our freedom, right, that leads to our healing.

And so for me it really, you know, I obviously would bring this to the Lord, you know, every chance I got, when I was having panic attacks in the wee hours of the morning, which is oftentimes what most people experience when they're having panic attacks. And I would bring it to the Lord, and you know, his Word would, you know, that I had hidden in my heart, would not return void. Every time he would bring his Word to my mind.

And I remember one night specifically praying like, "Lord, I just-- I wanna be free from this." Like, "Help me be free from this." And I felt this really distinct prompting from the Holy Spirit that I needed to tell somebody. And you know, it was like, you know, "You've brought it to the Lord, but that next step, you know, Ashley, is you've got to tell somebody." And for me, the closest somebody in my life is my husband. And I had hidden this even from my husband, okay, this is for years that I'm going through this.

And I would like to tell you that I listened right away to the Holy Spirit's prompting, and I didn't. I was still so locked down in shame, and I was believing those lies, like, "He won't understand it. He's gonna think I'm crazy. He's gonna wanna leave me. You know, in fact, maybe he should leave me." I mean, all these lies. But when I finally, you know, woke Dave up in the middle of the night, bless his heart, he's a very, very deep sleeper. But I woke him up in the middle of the night and just got all this out, you know, and told him.

It was like something unlocked inside of me, and that anxiety that I had been so afraid of, like, which perpetuated more anxiety, it just-- it didn't seem as scary. And that was really the start, to me, you know, getting help with a biblical counselor and talking to my doctor and reading even more books that are, you know, biblically based that would just help fill my mind with God's Word. And little by little, it lifted, over time.

**RANDY:** That's very interesting because, you know, we were talking before, I do these-- I get a little uptight about words and original language and things like that, and I don't wanna put that on anybody, but, I learned things.

**ASHLEY:** Yeah, I love it.

**RANDY:** "Confess your sins," when you look at "sin" the word, literally it's an archery term that means to miss the mark. And so it may just be like, I wasn't trying to miss the mark, but we just miss the mark, right? But when you miss the mark, you confess that to one another, not so you can be forgiven. What does the Scripture say?

So you can be healed. So there's something, and exactly what you're saying, what the Holy Spirit was telling you to do, which is to vocalize it. I also think if we would look at anxiety the way we should properly look at temptation, right? Nobody chooses their temptation, and Jesus was tempted in every way but did not sin. Temptation itself is not sin.

It's what you do in response to it. I think anxiety is the same way, because I can feel anxiety coming on me, and I then have the choice. I didn't choose the anxiety, right? When that

plane goes "rrrr, ba-ba-boom" like that, anxiety happens. I choose what I do with it, and that's what I hear you saying you did.

**ASHLEY:** Yes, absolutely.

**BLYNDA:** And, well, it speaks to the idea that when you bring light into something, it loses its power, you know? I mean, that's where the enemy had a lot of power was because you were silent with it, and you were dealing with it alone. And then as soon as you brought someone into it, it kind of brought the light to it, and you have now another perspective and you had somebody praying with you, walking with you, and the power of it kind of diminished because-- you know?

And I think that's important for us to remember about our sin, when we miss the mark, how important it is to bring that to the light. So I'm curious, though, Ashley, how does somebody-- and we kind of talked about it, but what is maybe the benchmark for, "Okay, I have something happening that feels concerning, or I'm a little worried about it," versus, "This is a pattern in my life that needs help. I need to go to the next level." How do you discern between the two?

Because like you said, I mean, if you're on a plane and there's turbulence, you're gonna have that. I wouldn't say, "Well, you clinically have anxiety," it's just-- so what is the difference between somebody who just might have a moment where they're carrying a little bit of worry about a situation, maybe a family member or something in their life, versus this has been an ongoing pattern? Or is that the benchmark?

**ASHLEY:** I love that question. I feel like it feels like a weight that you just can't escape, you know? I often equate it to this, like, especially when it comes to panic attacks or anxiety attacks is, you know, when we are getting ready to jump into water, you know, this is usually a fun occasion. We're gonna jump into the water and then we're gonna go down a little deeper, then we're gonna come up for air, and then we might get out of the pool and we're gonna do it again. But when you have anxiety, every day you wake up and it's like you have a weighted vest on, and you have to go jump in that water, you have to live your life, but it's like you jump into the water and you wanna come up for air, and you see the light, but the more that you allow that weight to bring you down, down, and down, you start trying to swim up, and you just feel like you can't.

And so the longer you live with anxiety, the more energy, it's just zapping energy from you daily, and it feels like even more weight is being put on you daily. And you feel like you can't just go through your normal daily tasks, I mean, it's like the old commercials for antidepressants where it had somebody with a dark cloud following them around. I mean, that seems kind of cheesy, but really it does describe how it feels. It's like, you know, I want to do these things in my day to day, but I just feel like I somehow can't. It's like the air is out of my lungs, the energy is out of my legs. I can't think clearly. It's often disordered thinking as well, and you can sometimes step back from it and say, "I don't even think that's right," but yet you can't shake it.

And that's why God's Word, his truth, is so essential in fighting the lies that come with anxiety, because they are, make no mistake, I mean, everyone who deals with anxiety is riddled with lies. But how do we fight the lies? We have to know God's truth, especially what he says about who we are.

**BLYNDA:** Absolutely, and, that brings up the reason-- one of the reasons we had you here is we were so appreciative of this devotional you wrote, "31 Verses and Prayers for the Anxious Mind and Heart". Did that come out of your healing journey? Is that how you wrote this book?

**ASHLEY:** It is. I'm telling you, you know, I remember talking to my husband about this, and he was like-- we were talking about like what other resource do we feel so led to write, you know? And they often say you end up writing what what you needed at some point in your life. And so when I was writing this devotional, you know, I wanted to keep it simple because I'm like, the last thing an anxious person needs is something that feels complicated, because it already-- even just normal daily tasks feel more complicated because you have this burden of anxiety on you.

And so I just thought, "Man, I wanna keep it really simple. I want it to be 31 verses, literally," you know, verses that have ministered to me and many others, especially when it comes to anxiety, because every day, you know, we need to meditate on his Word day and night and hide those words in our heart, because then in those moments when we're feeling anxious, we can fight those lies of anxiety with his Word. But I also included prayers, because sometimes, you know, I've heard people, especially in my mental health coaching practice, they'll say, "Gosh, I don't even know where to start with prayer." Like, "I know I need to pray, but I don't know what to say because I'm so just exhausted with the anxiety, you know, that's on my mind all the time." And so sometimes just having somebody else's words to start the prayer can lead to more, you know, prayers happening on your own and in your own prayer life.

**BLYNDA:** You also say to say the verses out loud. Why is that important?

**ASHLEY:** Yes, well, it goes back to what Jesus did when he was being tempted in the desert. You know, how did he fight those lies from the enemy? He spoke God's Word out loud to him. And I thought, man, I remember reading that story when I was riddled with anxiety and I thought, "Man, if Jesus did that, how much more do we need to do that?" And I remember reading books like "Battlefield of the Mind" back in those days, and I just loved it.

I mean, that book ministered to me so much, and I believe she talked about writing down Scriptures on, you know, little cards, and putting them in your bathroom, in your car, you know, on your bedside table, places where your eyes are naturally going to rest, so that you can keep on just reminding yourself of the truth of God's Word. And I remember doing that for a long season, and it just helped me so much to memorize those verses and really allow

his truth to replace those lies, right, to take every thought captive and replace it with his truth.

**RANDY:** Yeah, and science is catching up with you in a lot of ways, or catching up with Scripture in a lot of ways, even to the point of they will say, if you hear something, the retention can be low, if you read something, the retention's higher, but if you write it, your memory retention is exponentially higher than just hearing something. And then of course the neuroplasticity in the brain, where you start to create new--

**ASHLEY:** New pathways.

**RANDY:** Like, you change your brain. You can use your mind to change your brain. And what better way than God's Word to line it up? So as a proud Oral Roberts University graduate, we know body, mind, and spirit, right? When you approach anxiety, for someone who may be watching, your approach with the Scriptures and stuff is very much from the spirit kind of angle.

What do they need to know about some of the other aspects of it, because there are situations where you need to address obviously like a physical, physiological issue as well?

**ASHLEY:** Yes, that's why I think it is a multi-pronged approach, like, talk to your doctor, you know, make sure, too, like, physically that you're okay. For some people, they may need to get on medication in the short term, in the long term, and if they don't want to have traditional, you know, antidepressants, I understand. There's actually increasing research that things like saffron can be just as effective.

**RANDY:** Oh, there's tons of things.

**ASHLEY:** I mean, SAM-e, I've had clients, that's been effective for them. So it really-- there's a lot of resources out there that people don't know about. Again, talk to a doctor. This is just coming from me as a biblical counselor. But I think also, get outside. I mean, I'm telling you, don't underestimate God's creation.

Just getting sunlight every day, breathing in fresh air. Don't turn on your music, like, just listen to the birds chirp. Like I was coming in, you know, going on a plane this morning, and my husband and I were walking in and I was like, "I just love listening to the birds chirping," like, that's so peaceful just to hear the birds just proclaiming God's glory, right?

And also just move. Movement is so good for not only our bodies but for our minds, and that could be just walking. Just walk every day.

**RANDY:** Just get your heart rate up.

**ASHLEY:** And get your heart rate up, right? I mean, lifting heavy weights, just, you know, there's something called the law of exertion. Like, as we move towards that, we're actually

improving our neuroplasticity, we're improving our mental health. And so we need to make sure we're hitting it at all angles.

**RANDY:** And of course it's good for your mental health, I think, to watch "Life Today."

**BLYNDA:** We heard that that was part of your story.

**ASHLEY:** You guys, I'm so glad I have an opportunity to share this. Like, this is a true story. In the depths of my anxiety and depression, which I went through for-- well, diagnosed, for about four years, okay, for me. I think it had actually been longer, but I just didn't realize it. But I remember in those wee hours when I would be having these horrible panic attacks, I'd cry out to the Lord and oftentimes I would turn on Christian television, and one of my favorite shows that really got me through some tough times was "Life Today." And it would be like the perfect guest they would be interviewing that would give me just a word of encouragement to hold on to.

I mean, your parents, time and time again, have just touched my heart in ways I can't even describe, and I know you hear that over and over again, but it truly got me through those times. And so I would encourage people, do that. Like, you know, even if you don't have a friend you can call quite yet, which everybody needs a friend they can call, a Christian friend they can call, you know, you have people here who can act as those friends, who can encourage you. And that's what this program has done for me.

**BLYNDA:** In fact I wanna just say right now, yes, we've got them right now. There's a number on the bottom of your screen, and if you need prayer for anything, if any of what we've talked about today and your heart is racing and you're thinking, "I do need to talk to somebody, I need someone just to pray with," right now we have prayer partners ready to answer your call right now. Call the number on the screen.

**RANDY:** Love it, and Ashley, just to kind of end it, what would you say to that person that feels like they're never gonna reach the surface? What can they take with them today that you needed back when you were watching "Life Today," but just some encouragement for them?

**ASHLEY:** Yes, I would just say, listen, you are not the only one. Do not believe the lie from the enemy that you're the only one, that you can't talk to anyone about this, that you are somehow damaged goods and this just defines your life now, because those are lies. God loves you, he is for you, he will use this for your good and his glory in his time, and this is not a forever situation for you.

Reach out for help. Reach out to a trusted Christian friend and don't feel like you need to bear this burden alone. You know, God designed us to have healing within the context of community. You will get through this.

**RANDY:** Yeah, yeah, you will, and that's the message that we like to share, and we wanna share it with you today. That's why we have this program, that's why Ashley's here, and that's why we go through the effort to communicate you, to encourage you. There are others who have difficulty in their lives that does cause anxiety, in fact, life-and-death anxiety.

And just like we wanna encourage you today, we wanna invite you to encourage someone else who needs to just feel a little bit of God's presence. They can do that through you. Watch this, and you'll understand.

**RANDY:** In so many places around the world, we see people that don't have water, any water to drink. If they do, they're scraping it from the worst places possible. But in some places like where I'm at right now in Burundi, there seems to be an abundance of water, but the water is not safe.

*[speaking foreign language]*

**RANDY:** It was this water source where she would come and get the water every day in these jugs and take back to her children. And it's this water source that took Stella's life.

*[speaking foreign language]*

**RANDY:** I don't want Jacqueline to have to go through this again. She has other children. She's doing all that she can. Are we doing all that we can? We can change this. We have the power. It's within our power to give them clean drinking water so that she doesn't get to the point where she wants to die.

That's why it's critical that we do something right now. You and I can do something. We can come in and we can put a well in this village, and they will have clean water. And there are so many other villages just like this, so many other mothers that are experiencing the same pain that Jacqueline is feeling.

We want you to join us in reaching around the world to places like this and giving them clean, pure drinking water. Will you do that? Will you give life? Will you give water for life? When you do, you will be changing the lives of mothers like Jacqueline all over the world. Do it today.

**RANDY:** You know, Blynda, Jacqueline's village has a well now, because our supporters responded.

**BLYNDA:** Thank you.

**RANDY:** And so yes, absolutely, thank you. But you know, when you're sitting there, these mothers, especially in Africa, but really in any place where death is always at their doorstep, they maintain their composure a lot better than I think a lot of us would with the loss of a child.

**BLYNDA:** It was interesting, though, as I watched her, I didn't know if the stoic nature was that there's a little bit of Christian spirit as well.

**RANDY:** Absolutely. And that's the thing, when you get them talking about their children and their losses and their pain and what they face every day, they have to have-- that's a protective thing, right? But every once in a while, when we we're talking to them, you'll see that crack a little bit.

Maybe you'll see a tear, maybe they'll break down and finally get to express the hurt that they carry.

**BLYNDA:** She said-- and one of the options that she thinks could be a good option is to die, because it's so painful to watch her children--

**RANDY:** It makes feel like she wants to die, right? But at the same time, the mother instinct, they want to save their children.

**BLYNDA:** Because she has other children that she wants to save.

**RANDY:** So, I could not go there and sit and talk to a mother like that. I couldn't see the footage that our teams bring back, if I didn't know that we weren't able to come here right now and say to you, will you help us? Will you give clean water to the mothers like that who are in pain? The pain's very real, the danger is very real, they face it every day. They live with death at their doorstep. But they don't have to. You can change that, and that's the beauty of Water for Life.

This is the last week we will be on the air with this, so I hope you'll respond, simply by going to the phone or going online and just do what God puts on your heart. It's different for all of us, I understand that. You may be able to provide clean drinking water for 10 people for life. That's what a gift of \$48 does. Maybe you can provide clean drinking water for 30 people. That's what a gift of \$144 does. \$4800 would drill a well. If you can do that and God puts it on your heart, do it.

If you can do \$10, \$20, \$30, it doesn't matter. What matters is that you see a situation where there is pain, and you reach out in love and say, "I wanna help." Well, this is how we help today. Will you join us? Will you say to those mothers, "We'll give you clean drinking water, for you, for your children, for your family, your village"? I hope you will. 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." This is the last week. Please call, write, or make your gift online.

**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.

**RANDY:** I do hope you'll go online or go to the phone. This is the last week we'll be talking about this campaign on the air. We need to just wrap this up. We need to let everyone know in the field that yes, help is coming, and that help comes from you, so please do that. Ashley, I appreciate you being here. The website for you, [ashleywillis.net](http://ashleywillis.net).

**ASHLEY:** That's right.

**RANDY:** Has the book and some other things. What can they get there?

**ASHLEY:** Absolutely, you can--I have resources there, I have ways that you can get in touch with me as well and where I'm gonna be speaking. So yes, check that out, [ashleywillis.net](http://ashleywillis.net).

**BLYNDA:** Well, Ashley, thank you. We've loved having you, and thank you for all the insight. It's been great, and we've loved being with you today. Can't wait for you to join us again on "Life Today."

**RANDY:** Bye-bye.

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*[music]*

**DAVE WILLIS:** This is too important to ever get on cruise control or autopilot, because anything left on autopilot is gonna crash.

**ANNOUNCER:** Tomorrow.

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**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.

Gifts are considered to be without restriction as to use unless explicitly stipulated by the donor. The ministry is a member of the ECFA.