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Week 38

Randy Robison & Blynda Lane

Dr. Tony Evans

"Kingdom Through You"

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

ANNOUNCER: Coming up, Dr. Tony Evans on aligning with God's kingdom agenda.

DR. TONY EVANS: When it comes to a kingdom purpose, it means, how does God want to use my time, my talents, my treasures, my gifting, to advance his name and his glory through the life he's given me? How does his name get advanced in this sphere? Once I ask and answer that question, I have kingdomized my existence.

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RANDY ROBISON: Welcome to "Life Today", I'm Randy Robison. Blynda Lane is with me this week, so good to see you.

BLYNDA LANE: It's so great to be here. Especially today's guest is just--I mean, our audience are going to love that he's back on with us.

RANDY: I always enjoy when Tony Evans is here, and I always enjoy the topic.

BLYNDA: I know.

RANDY: And he's got another book. He has a few books, how many books?

BLYNDA: I just found this out, 150 books. Is this what-- This is the stat that is blowing my mind. But Dr. Evans, it's just such an honor that you have joined us today, and you have so much wisdom, and you're just a giant in the faith.

And so, I know our audience is just honored to hear from you anytime they can. And this new book, it's called "Unleashed: Releasing God's Glorious Kingdom in and Through You". What does that mean, to release God's glorious kingdom?

TONY: Well, first of all, we have to understand that there's only one theme in the Bible. It's spoken of in a multiplicity of ways, and that is the glory of God through the advancement of his kingdom. From Genesis to Revelation, you will find that theme threaded throughout.

When you miss that theme, then the Bible can often appear to be disconnected, disjointed, independent events, personalities and stories that don't tie together. But when the king and his rule, which is what kingdom means, the rule of God, becomes the centerpiece, entering it through conversion but experiencing it through discipleship, to release it is to show God's rule operating in you. And then because his rule is operating in you, it is being manifest through you so that other people can see he's ruler of you, as you impact their lives, their environment, because of how it's being manifested through what I call kingdom discipleship.

RANDY: All right, that's a term that we don't really get outside of movies, because we live in a democratic republic, right, so you're talking democracies and things like that. The idea of kingdom though, it meant something definitely to the audience Jesus spoke to, they understood it, God framed it.

What do we need to know about the idea of kingdom when it comes to the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of God? What does that look like for us?

TONY: Great question. Kingdom of heaven is the location, kingdom of God is the personality, the head of the location. And God is not into democracy, okay?

That's because there isn't-- there are no competing voices to him. The idea of God's rule is that he sets the agenda for the covenants of life. There are four covenantal realms: individual, family, church, and government.

All of those, God has spoken as to how they are to operate, how they are to be defined, and how they are to be utilized. So what the King has said is, "These are my covenantal spheres. If you operate in them according to my guidelines, which are non-negotiable because this is not a democracy, then you will experience the King's rule in and through that.

However, if you choose not to operate them according to my governance, guidelines, rules, stipulations, and definitions, then you will not experience the benefit of the King and his kingdom in any of those realms." So the question is, who do you want ruling you, okay? Now we have to operate in the world without having ultimate obligation to the world, which is why the Bible makes often a distinction between the kingdom of God and the world, or worldliness, which means operating independently of the King who is over the world.

BLYNDA: So we understand the concept, but in the culture we live in, which is always vying for our attention, always vying for our loyalty, how does the believer navigate the culture with that kingdom mindset?

TONY: Great question. To operate in the culture with the kingdom mindset is, first of all, to evaluate what has God said about the issue that I'm facing? Whether it's the personal issue, the racial issue, the political issue, the social issue, the class issue, the economic issue, God has spoken, and there are two answers to every question: God's answer, and everybody else's, and everybody else is wrong, okay?

So once I evaluate what God has said about the subject matter, then I make decisions that are consistent with what he said, based on his Word, about that particular subject matter. You know you are a kingdom person and unleashing-- and experiencing and unleashing the kingdom by your decision-making, not by your emotions or not by your allegiances in the culture. Now, we are told to be in the world but not of the world, so we ought to relate to it, bringing God's perspective to it, not bringing the world's perspective to God, as though he's in a negotiating mood.

RANDY: The whole topic, I've always loved talking to you about it, because you see it in all the parables, you see it in the Old Testament, in the New Testament, and you go, "Okay, Jesus talked about it this much, it must be important." When we look at the other questions of life, take, you know, "What's my purpose," right? One that everybody asks, inside the church, outside the church. How does a kingdom perspective impact that answer?

TONY: I love Acts 13:36, "David served the purposes of God for his generation, and then he fell asleep," okay? When it comes to a kingdom purpose, it means how does God want to use my time, my talents, my treasures, my gifting, to advance his name and his glory through the life he's given me? That's at home, at work, at play, with my relationships.

How does his name get advanced in this sphere? Once I ask and answer that question, I have kingdomized my existence.

And when you kingdomize your existence, because whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, you're doing to the glory of God, 1 Corinthians 10:31, then the King is involved in everything and is not being-- he's not being brought in on occasion or inconvenience, because even the most ordinary thing you do, eating and drinking, brings him into the equation. So there's no such thing as him being left out of anything, or as Colossians 1 says, that Christ might have first place in everything.

RANDY: Now, the world would say, "I'm gonna use my time, my talent, my treasure to make myself richer," or have more influence for even some, you know, good cause or things like that. And we would say no, but in the church, I think I might have seen a little bit of this as well. "I'm using my time, talent, and treasure to build my religious kingdom."

BLYNDA: Some people, yeah, some religious kingdom.

RANDY: I mean, do we--

TONY: That's because the church has been misdefined. The first use of the word "church" is Matthew 16, verse 18, first time it's been used, and never been used in the Bible till that passage. When Jesus said, "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it," then he says, verse 19, "And then I will give you the keys to the kingdom." The church exists for the kingdom.

The church does not exist for the church. So the moment the church exists for the church is missing the kingdom, and Jesus is not interested in a non-kingdom church. So the church is supposed to exist to advance God's glory, God's name, and God's greatness to its membership and through its membership, to a watching world.

When it's only building itself it's like the individual who only wants to get rich for themselves. They're not kingdomized, they're culturalized, which means that they are idolatrous. So you can be an idolatrous Christian going to an idolatrous church.

RANDY: We've seen that, we've seen it. Okay, so you know, here's the thing, you keep throwing these other scriptures in there that sometimes, out of context or out of my understanding, don't quite make sense, like, eating, drinking, right, okay, you know. With your kingdom thread through everything, as you've said when you first started the conversation, it makes a lot more sense.

The whole Bible does. And even God's truth, like, do it his way, because I mean, he knows how to build his kingdom and how we flow into that, as opposed to the world's way, which is never gonna work.

How have you seen the kingdom-- not fully understand it, because I'm not sure we fully will. Even like you, I'm working on it, I've been working on this for years.

TONY: Well, it's an eternal kingdom, so you're gonna be working for a while.

RANDY: I feel better now, okay. But it's having the awareness and implementing and practicing that. How has that changed your life, your family's life, your church's life, because it does change everything?

TONY: Well, once I came to realize the comprehensive nature of the kingdom and its King, which, by the way, I'm gonna throw this in and answer your question. In the book of Acts verse 3, it says the 40 days between Jesus's resurrection and ascension, he taught them about the kingdom of God. The last two verses in the book of Acts said, "Paul received all who came to him, and he taught them about the kingdom of God and the Lord Jesus Christ unhindered." So the beginning of Acts and the end of Acts is all about the kingdom, and the word "kingdom" is threaded through Acts.

So, when I came to see the comprehensive nature, it erased something. It erased something people do not want erased, and that is the illegitimate division between secular and sacred. Once you become kingdomized, there is no such thing as secular.

Everything has now become sacred, because everything is to be underneath the rule of God. And one of the reasons why we're not seeing God-- it has allowed me to address issues politically, socially, racially, easily, because now I don't have to go to all this other stuff and find out what everybody else thinks. I have a sure word, a final word, a kingdom word on every subject.

So, because nothing is secular anymore. I will give the secular what the sacred says and let it decide whether it wants to adjust.

BLYNDA: Wow, okay, so I remember a story that you wrote about in there about you went to New York, and there was a hotel and all the lights, I guess the power went out in the city except this particular hotel didn't go out because of the gas generator, and they said they had been preparing from the beginning of building that hotel for that moment where everybody else's lights go out. So what you're talking about, changing from the secular to only the sacred, how does the believer exist with that light inside them that's always ready for when the darkness comes, when the world gets darker?

What is that, how does the believer do that? How is that established in them?

TONY: Well, Romans 12:2 would say it is through the renewing of the mind, which means there must be a shifting of thought. Because we live in a world that wants us to be divided in our mindset, or what James 1:5 calls "double-minded," to think secular sometimes and to think sacred sometimes, once you have that division, you have kept the light from coming on, or you've kept it at low wattage, because it's not gonna shine bright when you're shifting back and forth. In fact, James says, "Let not that person think they will receive anything from the Lord." So you have insulted God when you are visiting-- when you have a dating relationship and you don't wanna get married, okay?

You have insulted him, so the mindset has to change. Once the mindset changes, that I'm going to integrate God's point of view as a lifestyle and not as an event, he then becomes more active inside of you because it's affecting all your decisions now. Because you're making a million decisions a day, and it's not that you're having a formal study on every subject, it's that you have a mindset, "God, I want to know what you think about this," which helps you to pray without ceasing, because now God is being brought into everything.

BLYNDA: So good.

RANDY: I know, right? This is such practical living, and life-changing.

BLYNDA: That's it, it's not--it's--what is it? It's simple but not easy, possibly? Like, it's simple to understand, but it's not easy to do, always, because--

RANDY: We can't do it on our own, and that's the beauty of it.

BLYNDA: That's right, that's right.

TONY: The whole point of this is we're supposed to be reminding ourselves and reminding our kids, and reminding those under our influence to think this way, but because we're not thinking this way, we're not reminding other people to think this way, so it's not spreading. The idea is to inculcate it so you're spreading it. Salt of the earth, light of the world, so everybody around us.

In fact, when Matthew 5:16 says, he says, okay, "Let men see your light and glorify your Father," not their Father, "your Father who is in heaven." In other words, it's supposed to be public. So if you're a secret agent Christian, spiritual CIA representative or covert operative, God's isn't answering because you're keeping him-- you're keeping him silenced, you know. Everybody else is coming out the closet, we might as well come out too.

RANDY: So I wanna ask you about that, because the title, "Unleashed", implies that there's something ready to go out that has-- you know, I think of some sort of power, whether water or like, some kind of force. Is that what you're suggesting happens?

TONY: Yes, it is. The force is embedded. James 1:19 calls it the embedded--1:21, calls it "the embedded word".

So there is an embedding, but the embedding is always in seed form. So when you plant something in seed form, it has not been unleashed yet, but it's all there. It just has to be taken care of properly so what's there explodes.

And the environment-- okay, it's like, if you wanna pop popcorn, you know, if I'm watching the Cowboys, I'm chaplain for the Cowboys, so, you know, so I'm with them a lot. And if I happen to be watching a game, an away game, for example, and I put popcorn in the microwave, I turn on the microwave and something happens, because every kernel of popcorn has moisture in it, so the microwave heats up the moisture. When the moisture gets hot, steam rises.

When the steam rises, it presses against the shell. When it presses against the shell, you hear pop, pop, pop, pop, pop, pop, pop, pop. That is the shell unleashing or releasing what was hemmed in it, because the environment facilitated it, so that now, all that--you would have never thought that hard outside kernel held all that soft stuff hostage, but it did, until the environment shifted it.

So the microwave of the church and the microwave of a kingdom mindset will unleash what's already there. You don't have to look for the kingdom, the kingdom is within you, but it's in you with seed form.

BLYNDA: That's amazing, and that's also what I love about you being here is you're just-- Scripture is just coming out of you, and it reminds me that that is where we should start, is we've got to get in the Word. We have to get the Word in us.

TONY: You have to get in the Word, but the Word also has to get in you. James says, "Unless you act on it, it will not be an experience." So the Word doesn't become alive to you until your feet join it.

As long as it's in your heart and it doesn't get to your feet, it'll stay dormant inside your heart, but it won't move inside and through your life. It won't be unleashed.

RANDY: Wow, and you know what? Here's--I think the beautiful part of it is we strive a lot on our own, even to do good works or to do God works, you know.

We genuinely want to do good things. But the striving doesn't compare with the unleashing, right?

TONY: The issue is how you're defining the striving. The striving should be to make sure I'm pushing the kingdom forward. It shouldn't be, I'm trying to force something to happen.

You know, God, one of the great kingdom passages everybody knows, Matthew 6:33, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and all these things," it says, "will be added," meaning you're not striving. You're striving--here's where you're striving, at the first part of the verse, "Seek ye first." See, there's certain things, people don't know, God can't do. There's certain things God can't do.

The Bible says, "By two immutable things, it's impossible for God to lie," he can't lie. It says, "God is the same yesterday, today, and forever," he can't change. There's another thing God can't do.

He can't be second. So the moment he's no longer first, you're no longer kingdom.

And the moment you're no longer kingdom, the addition stops. So you have to make it happen on your own now, 'cause he's not involved, 'cause he's not first.

RANDY: It's--okay, I love it. I think this is just core to how we live out the Christian walk, right? And there's something key you said, and I wanna go back to it.

Doing it, right? Not just hearers of the Word, doers.

The doing is where it happens. And that's why I'm excited about what we do, and you know what we do.

TONY: I know what you do.

RANDY: Oh, we do the doing. But the doing means you involved in the doing, building God's kingdom, not building the kingdom of Life Outreach International or Tony Evans. It's us together, building God's kingdom, how?

By expressing his love in word and in deed. And we're doing it again, and I want to invite you into it. Watch this and you'll see how.

ANNOUNCER: As the world celebrates the birth of Jesus this Christmas, Life Outreach International is once again celebrating this good news in a very special way: with shoes. Yes, shoes! We, along with our mission partners located throughout the world, have provided millions of children with the gift of shoes, children who in many instances have never had a new pair of shoes.

ISAK PRETORIUS: We all celebrate different holidays around the world, but a holiday that's pretty common to most of us is Christmas, and that's what it feels like here today. It feels like Christmas for us, because we're getting to do one of the most incredible things, and that is to bless these children with a pair of shoes.

ANNOUNCER: It's because of friends like you that we have been able to reach into remote areas every year, providing the gift of shoes and sharing the good news of Jesus. This year we want to once again see children's faces light up with smiles as they receive a new pair of shoes.

Unfortunately, there are children who can't smile, because they suffer from a condition known as cleft lip or cleft palate. The good news is our annual Christmas Smiles outreach allows us the opportunity to minister to some of the world's poorest children who have no hope of correcting their condition with surgery.

DR. ANDREW HODGES: But thanks to Life Outreach International, we're able to make lasting changes in children's lives through corrective surgery.

ANNOUNCER: Life Outreach has partners who work with some of the world's most skilled surgeons, who have performed thousands of corrective surgeries for children. These surgeries not only protect them from health-threatening issues, but provides the gift that lasts a lifetime, the gift of a smile. So this Christmas season, as you gather with loved ones and friends to celebrate the birth of Jesus, demonstrate his love for others by providing shoes and smiles to children in need.

RANDY: Please go online or go to the phone, let's give shoes and smiles. Your gift of \$36 today will provide 10 pairs of shoes. That's 10 children that will receive a special gift this year because of your love.

Or a gift of \$72 will provide that for 20 children. A \$180 gift today will help provide 50 pairs of shoes, and you know, if you're able to give a gift of \$1000, that would provide two corrective surgeries, which are about \$500 each. By the way, no charge to the parents, the families, for those corrective surgeries.

This is a gift. It's the time of gifts and giving freely, and that's what we want to do.

But we can't do it without your help. I just love seeing the smiles, you know?

BLYNDA: Oh, the smiles, I know, and I loved when I heard the doctor say-- something about him saying "lasting," like, what we're doing gives them a lifetime change. Like, it's pretty amazing that for \$500, a child's life is changed forever. And you know--

RANDY: And their health.

BLYNDA: And their health, because there's actually a lot of really bad things that happen when that's not corrected.

RANDY: Right, right, right. We don't think about that here. It happens in our country, we don't think about it because it's corrected.

But they don't have the ability to do it, but we have the ability to step in and do something good. So yeah, I love that. And you know, of course, all of our outreaches, they are--either overt or just through the process, we take Jesus Christ into the picture.

We don't require conversions or things like that. There's no coercion here.

It's all done with the love of Christ. And that's, again, why we come to our audience, because we know you want to share the love of Christ and express that love of Christ.

BLYNDA: And you are the hands and feet of Jesus.

RANDY: Absolutely, yeah. Let's reach out. Let's be Christmas to some children around the world this year.

ANNOUNCER: Poverty is a killer, and because of it, children needlessly suffer, not only from a lack of food and clean water, but also from things we often take for granted, such as a healthy smile or a simple pair of shoes. Far too many children living in extreme poverty have never owned a new pair of shoes, and while that may seem minor, walking with bare feet puts them at risk of painful infections, injury, and life-threatening diseases. But this Christmas, you can bring hope and healing.

Your gift today will help provide new shoes for 150,000 children in time for the holidays, and for some children, a beautiful new smile. Your gift of \$36 will help provide shoes for 10 children, \$72 will help provide for 20, \$180 will help provide shoes for 50, and a gift of \$500 will help provide a cleft surgery, restoring a child's smile for a lifetime. As a thank-you for your gift, please request the first-time-ever dual-color crystal shoe ornament with beautiful green and red accents.

With your gift of \$100 or more, you may request this keepsake box set, featuring five of Life's colorful crystal shoe ornaments. Finally, please consider a gift of \$1000 or more to help provide over 275 pairs of shoes, or corrective smile surgeries for two children, and you may request the beautiful bronze sculpture, "The Good Shepherd". Please call, write, or make your gift online today.

JOHN YEATTS: So I'm here in South Sudan, and it is a rugged place, rocky, thorny. If it doesn't bite you, it will stick you. And all of these children are barefoot.

Today is a great day for them, because we're in their village with Christmas shoes. But there are still so many villages around the world that need Christmas shoes that we wanna bless. As you know, for years now we've been giving hundreds of thousands of pairs away, but there's still a great need, and we wanna be a part of just sharing a little bit of joy and a little bit of Christmas love with children around the world.

It's going to change the way they walk. It's going to help with infections on their feet. We've seen so many children as we've come through, their feet are infected, their toes are infected, they've got cuts on their ankles, and so we need your help.

It takes just a small amount to help with each child. \$3.60 will put a pair of shoes on each one of these kids' feet. So whatever you can give, maybe it's small, maybe it's great, but whatever you can do, would you please help us?

Would you go right now to your phone or online or in--write a check? However you give, would you please help us give Christmas shoes, just as a simple way of reminding children that God sees them and that God loves them?

RANDY: I do hope we'll hear from you today if possible. We're going to make Christmas special with your help for so many children this year. And today, I really hope you will request "Unleashed" by Dr. Tony Evans, because it's good.

BLYNDA: I mean, think about having that what you just saw in your living room by reading.

RANDY: Well, and to be able to digest it. In fact, Tony, if there's someone who wants to really dive into this, all the resources you have, what's the best place?

TONY: tonyevans.org. It's a whole litany of kingdom material.

BLYNDA: We heard earlier, 150 books are probably on there.

RANDY: Yeah, but you know, this is something that grows in us every day, so it's ongoing. So yes, unleash the kingdom in your life.

You can check out the website, and you can come back for more here on "Life Today". We'll see you again next time.

BLYNDA: See you soon.

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TAMMY: Where are you, God, in this, in this moment, in the hurt, in the heartache, in the disappointment?

ANNOUNCER: Tomorrow.

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