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Week 39

Betty Robison & Randy Robison

Tammy Trent

"Never Alone"

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

TAMMY TRENT: I remember being in the bathroom just weeping, just crying out to God, just, "Do you see me? What do I do with this change? What do I do with this shift?

Do you see this girl? Where are you now, God? Where are you in this?"

BETTY ROBISON: But I also know it, I've asked those questions. "God, where are you? What are you up to, God? Because I wasn't expecting this."

ANNOUNCER: Tammy Trent offers hope for those who have experienced unimaginable loss, next on "Life Today".

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RANDY ROBISON: Welcome to "Life Today", I'm Randy Robison, here with my mother again. How are you doing today?

BETTY: I'm doing well.

RANDY: I'm excited today because our guest is not really a guest, a friend.

BETTY: Yeah, not really a new fr-- she's an old friend.

RANDY: Well, now.

TAMMY: Hey, careful how you say that!

RANDY: A long-time friend. Welcome back, Tammy.

TAMMY: Thank you so much.

RANDY: Congratulations on your book that is out now. It's called "Where Are You Now, God?" and I'm excited to be able to talk to you about this. I know we've talked about a lot of these concepts, but I'm just curious where you kind of go, maybe for those who don't know all of your story, what is sort of the overall theme of this book?

TAMMY: Yeah, you know, I think, first of all I think so many of us have asked that question at one time in our life. If we haven't, you will. Like, "Where are you, God, in this?"

In this moment, in the hurt, in the heartache, in the disappointment, in the unmet expectation, in the unanswered prayer, where are you? I can't find you, things feel silent," like, all the questions we've ever had, when life shifts, when life changes. So for me, that big shift was in September of 2001, and my story really goes back to meeting this kid in my youth group when I was 15 years old, falling in love, and we dated for 7 1/2 years.

I went off to Bible college, came back, married the love of my life, thought, "I'm ready for the great adventure. I know right where God is." And I married him and felt like the greatest days of my life were ahead of me. And we were married for 11 years, I'd signed a record deal during that time, and started traveling the world and ministering full-time, and he traveled with me and I felt like everything felt so great, like, perfect, life was going well.

I didn't have a lot of unanswered questions for God. Everything was smooth sailing, until it wasn't. And I took off to a trip to Jamaica, a missions trip, we went together.

And I will never forget standing on the edge of the water, and my husband was gonna go off for a 15-minute free dive in the Blue Lagoon, and he said he'd be back in 15 minutes and come back, and we'd go hang out and do something I wanted to do. And 15 minutes turned into 30, into 45, into an hour, and he never returned. And I remember standing on the edge of the water just thinking, "Life has changed, life has shifted.

I know that it has, and I can't change this. God, what do I do? What do I pray?

What do I say? What do I do in this moment?" And I called in a dive team that began to search for him, and during that time I just went in this back room and I just began to ask God a lot of questions. And the search began, and they found him the next morning, which was the morning of September 11, 2001.

So when all of the world was changing in America, my world was changing in a foreign country. And I will never forget two days later, being in a hotel room where Trent and I were originally planning on going to begin this missions trip. I remember being in the bathroom just weeping, just crying out to God, just, "Do you see me?"

Do you see this girl? God, what do I do with this? What do I do with this change?

What do I do with this shift? Do you see this girl? Where are you now, God, where are you in this?" And Randy, I think that for me, that question started there, the depth of my wound, of my heartache, and God has brought great healing in my life.

Here I am 25 years later, and I can say that even in the tears, God has brought great healing. But as I've traveled the world in ministry, especially with women in ministry, I continue to hear that question from many women, so I carry it for them as well. When I thought about writing this book, I thought, "I want to write a book that will help somebody else that has stood there crying going, 'God, do you see me?"

Do you hear me? Are you there?" And I wanted to give them some tools, some practical biblical tools that would help them find the goodness of God, find his presence in the worst moments of your life, because I think that would be the greatest gift that you will have coming back to life again, is anchoring your faith and your trust in a good God who is there even in the heartache.

BETTY: Well, of course you and I can relate. I lost the love of my life, too, and I know what you're going-- what you went through, and probably to this day you still have a challenge with it. But I also know that I've asked those questions.

"God, where are you? What are you up to, God? Because I wasn't expecting this." And I think your book is so helpful.

I've been reading it, and it has helped me already to know that I have purpose. God's not done with me, and he's given me hope, and I have felt his arms around me continually when I felt so alone. So thank you for writing the book.

And I know it's been 25 years, but it's still fresh on your heart, and it can help so many people to come out of that hole they may be in, because some people may not have the family or the friends around them to encourage them. I think this will be a big encouragement.

TAMMY: Yes, everything I just heard you say, Betty, is the heartbeat of the book. How do we find the presence of God in the middle of the "what if, what now"? "What do I do with this?" And sometimes I think it's-- it's sometimes easier to just say, "I'm gonna stop praying.

I'm exhausted. I don't feel like I'm hearing from God." Or, "The pain is too great and I didn't see this coming. The promise didn't work for me.

The promise worked for them, but it didn't work for me. So where are you, God, in this?" And then we give up, we just give up because it's just too hard. Faith can be so challenging when life is shaken, but my hope is just like that, is to help some-- "Don't give up.

Stay, stay another day, stay another prayer. The presence of God will carry you through when you cannot carry yourself. But not just my words.

Let's take it into a step deeper. Let's go into the Word of God. Let me bring to life a story for you." In every chapter, Randy, that's what I hit.

Let me bring to life a story. Let me cinematically take you into the heartbeat. On the road to Emmaus, what did that look like when these disciples were traveling this road and they were disappointed about what just happened?

Jesus died on the cross, but he was supposed to be the One! He was supposed to be the One, and he wasn't. Like, "We're just so disappointed.

Life changed and we didn't see it coming." Then this guy catches up to them, he's just talking with them and they're like, "Hey," and he's like, "What's going on?" And they're all kind of just sharing and he's listening, and as they go along on the road, they lead up-- this is my version-- they lead up to the house and they're like, "Well, come on in, we're enjoying this conversation." The guy comes in and they're talking with him some more and he starts to break bread, and they're like, "There's something different about this guy." Like, what is-- like, "This looks familiar." He's breaking the bread, and all of a sudden what happens is that Jesus reveals himself to them by just that familiarity of breaking the bread, and they realize, "It is he, he's the One." He's like, "I am." And so they're having this moment of unbelievable, and just like that, Jesus is gone and they're like, "What?" So they push back the table, they're like, "We gotta head back to Jerusalem and tell everybody this encounter we had with God," but what was it? It was that they never walked that road alone. So even when we feel silent, we feel the silence, even when life feels like it's taken a turn and we can't find God, he is never far away, and that is the greatest gift we've been given, is the very presence of God.

The Bible says that he draws near, near to the brokenhearted. Psalms 34:18, "The Lord is near to the brokenhearted, and he saves those whose spirits are crushed." Matthew 28:20 says, "Surely, surely I will be with you always, to the end of the ages." So either we believe it or we don't, and I'm telling you, believing it could be the very thing to set you free and bring new life into your broken heart.

BETTY: I know I've leaned on him a lot lately, and he's not afraid of it. God's not surprised. He wasn't caught off guard, and he said, "We're going forward, and you're going with me, and we're gonna do better than we've ever thought possible." And you know, I think back when James and I first started on the mission field, I was scared, I mean, no better way to express it, scared spitless, you know.

I thought, "This is his calling, not mine," because I begged God when I was a little girl, "Don't call me to be a missionary over-- I don't want-- I wanna stay right here in my comfort zone," you know, "please, God." And I thought God must have chuckled because he's thinking, "You have no idea what I have in store for you." Well, I feel like that's God's place now in my heart. "You have no idea what I have in store for you," you know, "I've got great things that I wanna do through your life. We're not done." I miss my husband, yes, I always will.

God had him on a great journey. We went on it together a lot of the time, and I'm so thankful for that, for the things that God taught me on that journey. But my journey is still moving on, and he wants to show me so much more, and I hope you feel that way.

Maybe you're down in the dumps. Maybe you think, "God, I don't have a purpose." Oh yes you do. God's got plans for you, so please don't give up.

TAMMY: Yeah, that's such a good word.

RANDY: Tammy, I appreciate you bringing up the Scriptures that talk about God being near the brokenhearted, because I think sometimes we may get it in our heads that we shouldn't ever be brokenhearted, we should never go through the difficulty, that God would save us from that. And there are times that he does. But the promise is his presence, even through the heartbreak.

In your book you talk about sort of the lingering ache. And as someone who, you know, has been trying to comfort my mother this year especially, and you know, comfort myself, I guess, kind of, I think a question that a lot of us ask is how do I move on? Do I move on? You know, and I know you get that too, but it's like, how do you balance the loss and the lingering ache with not getting stuck and finding that purpose and finding that revelation from God for your life, after the grief and the loss?

TAMMY: Yeah, it's a great question, Randy, because I think a lot of us live in those places. So how do we-- how do we balance that? How do you hold the tension of heartache and hope of letting go, surrendering to believe that God's got something better for you, because truthfully I think when we're sitting in an ache, in a doubt, in a disappointment, oh my goodness, it just feels like, "I'm just gonna sit in this because I'm hurting and I'm mad and I'm not ready to move on.

I'm just gonna be in this moment and I want, God, you to especially see this, and you didn't fix it and I need you to." And I think some of us, I know I have stayed in that place sometimes to a point that it can almost become your identity. And the danger is that when it does, then you have not allowed God to do something beautiful, give your pain purpose, to do something with it. So I've had to learn, I can hold the hurt and hold the hopeful expectation of what's to come, and as I've processed through that, it becomes a surrender.

Do I believe that God is capable of bringing my life back together again? Do I believe that he's capable of answering these sacred questions that I have for him? Can I ask him these questions even?

And I've learned that, yes, ask him all the questions. Ask him, equip yourself. One of the greatest investments we'll make in our lives, not our home, not our cars, not our finances, but our relationship with Jesus, building our faith so that when the next storm comes, you will be equipped.

And when you're holding these two tension things, you have to hold hope higher than you do the hurt. That's what I've learned, because that's the thing that's gonna lead me and has, Randy, has taken me from a place of great hurt and disappointment, and life changed and I've hated that, but I've looked to the hopeful expectation of what's to come. And God is--he's a God that will always move us from a place of hurt to hope.

He's a God of increase, so he doesn't take from us, he increases in our lives, so he wants to bring wholeness. He'll never leave you in a place of hurt. So you, one, have to believe this stuff.

How do you find the truth in that? Get into the Word of God, dig in to find the character of God, the heart of God, to know that if he was there for the woman at the well, if he was there for Mary and Martha, if he was there--the guys on the road to Emmaus, then he will be here for you walking this out, and he will take you from a place of hurt to absolute hope and hopeful expectations and abundant life. It is possible, I'm living it, I can already see it in you, Betty, just months after James went to heaven, that there's a hopeful expectation, even though you carry the hurt.

I will always feel a punch from the loss of Trent in my life, but I feel so much hope that also, heaven is my home, heaven is my hope, eternal. So I hang on to that, and that's where I live and choose to live in that space.

BETTY: Well, you know, as you were talking, God took me back to the place right around my 18th birthday, and James was already preaching, he was so excited about God. And we'd just come back from a tent revival, and he was taking me home. We weren't married yet, and so he was dropping me off.

And he turned to me and he said, "Betty, Jesus is more real to me than you are sitting right here in this car," and I thought, "How can that be? How can that be?" And then he let me off, I went in and knelt beside my bed, and I said, "God, I want to know Jesus like he knows Jesus." And I went and accepted him the next morning at church, and gave him my heart. And Jesus is-- he's reminding me of that, and he said, "The same Jesus that James felt in his life and knew in his life, it's the same Jesus you came to know when you got on your knees in that church and you asked him to come into your heart. I haven't lessened in my love and my power and my hope, and I am right here, hang on to me." So that Jesus that I saw in him, in James, he's in my heart, and I've got to go forward.

TAMMY: I love that, because what you're saying is that he was fully aware of the presence of God in his life. "Jesus is more real." And if we could live in a place like that where we're in pursuit of the presence of God in our life, that we would know we're never alone, that no matter what happens in our life, and things are gonna happen. Things are shifting and changing every single day in our life.

It's not a question of if it's gonna happen, it's a question of when. But to know that you walk nothing alone, and I think that's one of the things, Randy, that a lot of people struggle with, is feeling alone. Like, "I'm carrying this alone and nobody sees it.

Nobody sees me, nobody sees the hurt, nobody sees the betrayal, the rejection, the disappointment, the sexual abuse I've carried my whole life, that I've kept in here because I don't know how to find a breakthrough in it." We're carrying a lot, but to know that you're not-- you're just not carrying alone. And it's not just my words, it's all over the Word of God, but in case you don't know where it's at, I put it throughout this book, in all the pages. I did the work for you, so it's all in here. So the book is really for people that have those questions, but also if you know people, if you have people in your life that you're like, "Man, I can't seem to get to this person," but maybe, my hope is that this book might be for someone that's even given up on faith, that finds through these pages a relationship with Jesus, finds their identity again.

RANDY: Let me ask you this, because I think one of the dangers when we hit these disappointing moments, these confusing moments, the heartache, the grief, all these-- the difficult times, it can be real easy, even if we don't think of it this way, we start to question the goodness of God. And I think that's one of the dangers, that if we recognize that we can go at it by doing this, by saying, "You know what? I don't understand.

I can't see all that God sees, but I'm going to choose to trust that God is good and that he has something on the other side of this that I just can't see." I know you've done that. You've had to say, "You know what, God? I'm just gonna trust, even when I don't see." In doing that, now looking back, can you see that choosing to trust has built a resiliency in you and built a relationship that it's easier to trust now because you-- he's walked through you with all these things?

TAMMY: Totally, I think that's a really fair assessment, Randy. Like, I think that's part of practicing, right? What is practice?

It's being consistent at something. So showing up, being in the Word of God, practice your trusting in him, tracing back his fingerprints in your life.

RANDY: And getting better at it, too. It's okay not to be very good at it at the beginning, right?

TAMMY: And when it's shaken and fragile doesn't mean that's a sign of failure. So many of us think that, "I'm questioning God right now. I must be an awful Christian.

I probably should go to church Wednesday now too," you know? It's like, it's not a sign of failure. I think it's an invitation.

Jesus is always, always up for the invitation. He's always up for the encounter. And so I think that's what I've learned.

I trust him that I'm gonna have the encounter. I trust him that he's gonna show up. I trust him that his time is better than mine, that his ways are greater than mine and he's always, always working.

BETTY: One practice that I have started doing since James passed away is I read Ephesians 6 every morning when I get up, about putting on the armor of God. I think that is so, so important, that we dress up in God and then let him take us through the rest of the day. And it has made a difference for me.

TAMMY: Yeah, because you're suited up, you're ready to go. "Whatever comes today, God, I'm ready, just bring it on." The enemy hates that, because you are ready to go, girl, and I love that about you.

RANDY: And Tammy's book has encouraged you.

BETTY: Absolutely, absolutely.

RANDY: I love-- thank you for that. I know that Tammy's book will encourage you as well, so we would love to send it to you. We would love to send it to you as a gift when you give a wonderful gift this year, and this is the time of year, we're getting close to Christmas.

We want a special gift for some children that really need it, and Mom, I know this is always one of Dad's favorite outreaches and you've enjoyed it too, so I'm wanting this year to be very special, very special. Watch this and you'll see how.

ANNOUNCER: From your family to our family, your generosity has empowered Life's mission efforts around the world. And the look on these children's faces make the impact obvious. It's in the smile of Matteo as he receives a bowl of food made possible by your giving, or of Gabriella as she quenches her thirst from a clean water well that you helped drill.

You could even say you make it your business to give children smiles. Well, this Christmas, we'd like to give a smile to someone who might not easily be able to smile otherwise. You see, all over the world, there are children who have trouble smiling because they were born with a cleft lip or palate.

But a simple surgery by loving doctors can radically transform the appearance of children like these, and greatly improve their quality of life. But they won't be the only ones smiling this Christmas, because with your help, we also want to give a brand new pair of shoes to children who have never had them.

TAMMY: You can see all of the little ones. Honestly, the smiles on their faces, it's so exciting to be a part of it. You can look around at all of the children in this village, and most of them are without shoes. They could lose their very lives because of an infection that they could get on their feet.

ANNOUNCER: Help make this Christmas special for a child like this. Help us provide Christmas Shoes and Smiles.

RANDY: It makes a difference, doesn't it, Tammy?

TAMMY: Oh my gosh, you guys, that took me right back to India. I remember that trip, it was so precious. It's probably one of my favorite things that we have ever done here, honestly.

It's such a fun time of the year, but just pouring into the lives of these children, giving them shoes. And you think, "I'd rather give them water, I'd rather give them food," but there's something so significant also about the need for these shoes that protect their very lives.

BETTY: It sure is. And of course, as a grandmother, a great-grandmother now, I love that. I can--it brings me to the point, I see our little granddaughters, they get a new pair of shoes.

Ooh, they're prissing around, you know, they like those new shoes. And then I think about these children, they've never had a pair of shoes. To protect their feet is what they need them for.

It's so much more serious circumstance than just a brand-new pair of shoes. This is the first-time pair of shoes for a lot of them.

RANDY: Oh yeah, and we've been there, we've given them out, and you see the smiles on their faces, but you know what? We can literally put smiles on children's faces with these corrective surgeries. And I know you guys have seen the before and the after pictures. Sometimes you'll see that child and they can't smile, or oftentimes they can't eat, you know, or breathe properly, and it creates all sorts of problems.

BETTY: I remember the first time that James and I were over there and we saw a little boy. He'd never seen himself in a camera and everything, and he had the cleft palate. And when he saw, he drew back that way.

It frightened him. And I thought, how sad for these children, you know? It's pretty simple surgery most of the time.

RANDY: Well, it's not real simple, but it can be done.

BETTY: It can be done, it's doable. And it would make such a difference, and I love to see the smiles. There's nothing like it.

RANDY: Yes, after they've had the surgery, the smile. They're able to smile, and they're no longer afraid to see themselves. And you know what?

That only happens because of viewers like you. You have done this over the years, and we again are coming to you and saying, let's make this Christmas very, very special. I think we can reach our goal.

I'd love to exceed the goal of 150,000 children who get a new pair of shoes. I think we can do that. The surgeries as well, here's how we do it.

Let me tell you real quickly, here's how we do it. A typical pair of shoes, getting them manufactured, made, distributed across various countries where we're working, costs about \$3.60 per pair of shoes. That means \$36 right now will help provide shoes for 10 children.

A gift of \$72 would provide shoes for 20 children. Many of you could maybe give 50 children, think about that, 50 children. I think about the \$180 that provides shoes for 50 children, and I think, I don't know if that'll buy a pair of shoes for my kids or my grandkids right here, right?

So what an amazing thing. Of course, some of you, let's go big. Let's give 275 children a pair of shoes for \$1000, which would also provide two corrective surgeries.

Whatever you can do, we would encourage you, just in the spirit of Christmas, in the spirit of Christ, be generous. You will make a huge difference. Your love can go so far.

Please join us right now. Pick up the phone, go online, make the best gift you can. Let's give them shoes and smiles.

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.

RANDY: Do make the best gift you can and request Tammy's book "Where Are You Now, God?" Tammy, I know it'll bless people, thank you.

TAMMY: Thank you so much. I loved being with you guys today. Thank you so much for this time.

BETTY: God bless you.

RANDY: Appreciate you guys being here.

BETTY: Thank you so much.

RANDY: We'll see you next time here on "Life Today".

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SUSIE LARSON: I was in a neurological hailstorm, and I'm begging God, "Not now, not now, please no, not at this stage, not at this age, oh God, not again."

ANNOUNCER: Tomorrow.

MALE 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.

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