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Week 39

Randy Robison & Blynda Lane

Susie Larson

"Reliable Hope"

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

ANNOUNCER: Coming up, Susie Larson overcame the worst effects of Lyme disease, only to discover she wasn't out of the woods yet.

SUSIE LARSON: Ten years ago I had a massive relapse. I was getting ready to go to work and to the radio station where I work. Arms went numb, face went numb, the room started to spin. 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: Believing after your miracle crumbles, next on "Life Today."

[music]

RANDY ROBISON: Welcome to "Life Today." I'm Randy Robison. Blynda Lane's here.

BLYNDA LANE: Hello everyone, happy to be here.

RANDY: I'm glad to have you, and you know, we've got a couple programs here with one of my--I say this a lot because you know, we have so many guests that are just really great, but truly--

BLYNDA: No, but this one is special, really, really special.

RANDY: Oh, she's really, really special. Susie Larson is here. Susie, how are you?

SUSIE: I'm well, so honored to be here. Thanks for having me.

RANDY: It's always great to have you. And you know, okay, so let's just hit her book. "More Than You Can Imagine" is her latest book, "What God Does When You Trust Him." And you might hear that and think, oh, great topical study, and, you know, that's scriptural, that sounds great. There's a lot behind this.

BLYNDA: Let me see it really quick, I wanted to show-- this is one thing that stuck out to me even just when I opened it to the table of contents. Everything was God gives, God fills, God cultivates, God strengthens, like, what drew me-- the attention was God does it, God does it. You say, "When you trust him," so we're required to trust, but God does a lot of things in our life, and that just really struck me, like, it's God and then the verb.

RANDY: Because we feel like we need to do it.

BLYNDA: Right, but--

RANDY: Well, okay, Susie.

BLYNDA: Yes, now we're gonna ask you. Tell us about it.

RANDY: How did you learn to let God do what God wants to do? Because I know this could-- there's a lot.

SUSIE: There's so much, you know, and one of my go-to verses, Ephesians 3:20-21, that God is able and willing and wants to do above, exceedingly above and beyond all we could ever dare to ask or imagine. But the clincher is, a lot of times people leave that last part off. It's according to his work within us. He wants to, he will do, he can do, but we will allow him to.

And for many, many years, I've just heard the Lord thunder in my spirit as I read Scripture, even there's times in Scripture where God himself says, "I would have done so much more in you, for you, through you, but you wouldn't let me, you wouldn't believe me, you wouldn't trust me." And so as I started to explore what does that mean, God? First of all, I've got a wild imagination and you can surprise me? I mean, you can do above and beyond all I could ever dare to imagine? What does that look like? So my hubby and I started to have conversations about the difference between faith and trust, because I feel like it's important to make the distinction.

And faith is we both connect--you know, it's vision, it's fuel. Faith is your substance, right? I say faith is the vision and trust is the decision, because faith is this core conviction, God is who he says he is. Trust is God is gonna do what he says he will do, and it's when you finally shift your weight onto his way, not your way, that you begin to see that his way is higher, it's better, it's deeper, and he's meticulous and he's miraculous.

BLYNDA: But on that side of faith, when it's, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," like, that side of it is hard because there's nothing tangible that says that God is going to come through. I mean, we believe it, we trust it.

RANDY: There's evidence.

BLYNDA: I mean, there's evidence, absolutely there's evidence, but how do you keep that faith and that trust in that longsuffering, when from point A to point B feels like there's a lot in between?

SUSIE: That's such an important question that we really do need to wrestle with, because as someone who's battled chronic health issues, Lyme disease for 36 years, I've come a long way. But as a public person, you know, I have received emails from people saying, you know, "You're a leader at this level and you're still not healed? Where's your faith," you know? And I believe in the miracle-working power of God. I believe in the promises. I believe he's the same yesterday, today, and forever.

But I wanna also offer the caveat that he's not a formula, he's not a means to an end. We don't dictate to him, he dictates to us, you know. A plus B doesn't always equal C. You have godly parents who have prodigals. You have people who've been good health stewards who still get sick and die. So I've had to really, really wrestle with if I can't please you without faith, but I can't control the outcome, what does that look like? And I just know for me, as someone who's battled a long journey, I physically feel better when faith is in my heart, and wisdom's path is peace, so I need him every hour, every moment of every day, because--and what I tried to do in that book is to look at different scenarios where you trust.

Sometimes trust, because it's moment by moment, is surrender. Sometimes trust is contending. Sometimes trust is to not self-sabotage. And the thing is, when we get into our flesh, when we get into our own mindset, we try to take matters into our own hands. And there's an example in there. Again, so my first phase of Lyme disease was devastating, and then I went-- that was about 7 years where I was army crawling as a young mom, and I was thinking I was gonna die. I really thought, I'm not gonna live to see my kids grow up.

And then I kind of got to a place for about 20 years where I could function, so on a scale of one to ten, I was probably a five or a six. I went back to teaching fitness classes. I never felt well, but I'm like-- I would come up swinging, you know? "I'm gonna live," right? And about four times a year my face would go numb, my arms would go numb, and here I would get blindsided, couldn't get out of bed, you know, for days on end, would feel really sick for several weeks, and then that would kind of pass and I'd kind of get up again. Never felt great, but I could do life. Twenty years, it was in that cycle.

Ten years ago I had a massive relapse. I was getting ready to go to work, to the radio station where I work. Arms went numb, face went numb, the room started to spin. 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." And it was coming on with such thunder that I thought, "I'm in trouble. This is different than what I've experienced." And long story short, people with chronic Lyme can't also process mold, and I'd been repeatedly exposed to black mold that caused brain damage in seven areas of my brain.

And so I would be on the air and I was having these, like, you know, the neuro symptoms were flaring and I was noticing, but I didn't want to admit that they were coming on stronger, but my tongue would go numb, my chin and my neck would go numb. I'd forget what words-- I'd forget who I was talking to on the air. I forgot how to get home one day, I mean, terrifying. I was writing my umpteenth book and couldn't remember how to spell. And so it was in that place, and I don't know, I'm gonna hand it back to you, but where I wanted to preempt and take matters into my own hands and edit my calling, because I thought, I can't bear to ask accommodations from hosts.

I can't bear to, you know, inconvenience people, so I'm gonna decide ahead of time what this looks like. And I can share that a little bit later if you'd like, but God really--

RANDY: Share it now.

BLYNDA: Okay, so this self-sabotage part is what? You decided on your own how you wanted to handle it.

SUSIE: Yes, and it was truly to save face, because, you know, I'm an accommodator and I don't want people to be inconvenienced, and you couple that with, if I'm completely honest, you know, in I would say the '80s and '90s when, you know, Christian music started to grow, you know, Christian publications were growing, infiltrated into the church was this celebrity culture, which I have a problem with, you know?

And as a person who was army crawling through life and God was starting to grow a ministry, I didn't want anything to do with it. But with this mold issue, I mean, I had to walk through hell to get detoxed and get my brain back, and the doctor said, "You can't be exposed to mold." But when you go to churches and conference centers and camps, you never know, and eight out of ten times, there is mold.

Now if it just made my body ache, I wouldn't care, but instantly I'd have brain inflammation and my tongue would go numb, and I suddenly would lose function, and I could not think sharp. And the MRI of my brain, you know, my doctors are like, "You are putting yourself in danger every time you do this." And then to have it in my contract, "Marriott or better," it was like, oh. I just did not--I'm like, "I promise I'm not asking for green M&Ms, I promise you," you know? I just--I didn't want people to think I was like a diva asking for a nice hotel because I thought I was that important, but I needed to to function.

And so, one day Kevin and I were walking into an event and we got into our room, and I whispered to him, even though it was only he and I, I'm like, "I think I'm gonna be done speaking. After these next few times, I think I'm gonna be done," because as a writer, I can write in solitude.

As radio, I broadcast from home. And he's smart enough to just--he just smiled at me, you know? And I just wanted to put myself out of my misery. I didn't want my host to think I was a diva. I didn't wanna ask for accommodations. And so the next day I speak, and there's a

little break between sessions, and there's this long line of women. And I'm an introvert, so the one-on-one is my thing, you know, I wanna pray for each woman. And out of my peripheral I see this sassy Black woman, like, she had orangeish-red pants on and this silk blouse with purples and golds and oranges and reds, and she had a gold scarf that she kept flipping.

And she's at the end of the thing, and she's like swinging her hips, and she's telling these women as she's butting in line, "I'm not butting, I'm just saying." And then she'd swing her hips, "I'm not butting, I'm just saying." And she's got this sass, and I'm trying to pay attention. I'm like, this woman is bee-lining to me, and she was totally butting and she was totally saying. And she gets to me and she leans across the table and she says, "Susie Larson, you listen to me. God is the one who called you. He's the one who sustained you. Don't you think for a moment about quitting. It is not your call to quit. It is the Lord who will decide when you're done," and she flips her little scarf and she swings her little hips away, and I looked at my husband. He's like, "I didn't say anything."

BLYNDA: Wow, that's an angel that came to say--

SUSIE: It was an angel. I was looking for her after and everybody's like, "I don't know who you're talking about." I'm like, "How could you miss her?" And it turned out nobody saw her, but Kev saw her, and I about wept after, because the Lord's like, "What are you afraid of?" I'm like, "I don't want to be misunderstood. I don't wanna be misjudged." And he said, "Is it true what she said?"

Did I call you, or did you call yourself?" And after that, a new resolve sprung up, and I wanna tell you, we're seeing more healings in our meetings. And there are times I'm exposed to mold, but my body is bouncing back, I'm getting some strength. I mean, I still get setbacks, but there is a fire in my belly now because I'm like I serve an audience of one.

RANDY: Something was said recently, when we were praying for my dad to be healed before he passed, and Dudley Hall, the minister to our family, and great friend, long-time friend of my dad, he was praying, and we were praying for healing. And literally two days before he passed, because it was so quick. And he said, "Lord, we don't always know what you're doing, but we trust you. We ask for healing, we trust you."

If you heal him, we trust you. If you take him home, we know what's best." So he was voicing our request, but he was saying, and I think it was clear because we were all struggling with this, you can and you must trust God, no matter the outcome, no matter the situation. And that's kind of what I hear you saying, I mean, it's really what I hear you saying because-- how are you doing right now physically? How do you feel today?

SUSIE: Okay, I'm battling some vertigo and severe tinnitus, but physically, other than that, I'm doing pretty well.

RANDY: Okay, you're battling, you're in the middle of the battle, and you're still declaring that you will trust God and you will obey God, and that's what I think we have to hear.

SUSIE: I have to tell you, in Hebrews 11, you know, because again, you, I'm sure, as public people, have heard the formula, and it's like, it always works, you know? It's like I've heard people say, "If they're not healed, it's because you didn't have enough faith." But I know personally godly people who died with faith in their heart. The devil did not win. They graduated, you know what I'm saying?

And faith, I mean, who even knows the welcoming committee, the reward in heaven for them? But in Hebrews 11, it talks about people who died without receiving the promise because they saw the heavenly city in the distance and they welcomed it, and what does it say about them? The world is not worthy of them. And when you tie things in a tidy bow and you make a formula out of faith to the suffering, you're operating in formula and not in faith, and it's a cruel theology.

RANDY: Yes it is.

SUSIE: And I want to tell you, as someone who's walked this road, people who are chronically ill, you can get your identity from your illness, and that's falling short as well, because you're not your sickness, you're not your affliction. You're bought and paid for by Jesus. But what I know, that people who are godly, who are pressing in and believing God, their hope is not in the outcome, their hope is in the living God who daily establishes his purpose.

And the thing is, life on earth is short, eternity is long, and every gesture of faith, of hope, of love, every movement of trust in God reverberates into eternity in a way we cannot know. And I think if you pulled the sky back to see the reverberation in heaven, the change of the kingdom story, you'd be like, "Outcomes on Earth? What?" I mean, this is such a short, short stint that we're here, and I think if anything, Hebrews 11 outlines that for us, that the things that they were receiving, and those who did receive what they want, they received, you know, in part.

Like you and I were talking backstage, even the answers we get in the land of the living are not perfect. They're just tastes and glimpses of glory. You said backstage, "Lazarus still had to die," and he died a second time.

RANDY: He died twice, right?

SUSIE: So like, you might be praying, like, you're single and you're praying for your husband, and you're trusting God's gonna bring you a spouse. Well, when you get him, he still is gonna leave his boxers on the floor, I mean, you know?

You got your spouse, but I'm telling you, the answers that we get in this life come with stewardship, come with battles, and if we can know, "My hope is in the living God and

whatever he allows, he redeems." And our faith is so precious to God that when you make the gesture to trust him, it changes the story not only on earth but in heaven. I think we need to get a bigger picture of how much our trust means to God.

BLYNDA: So you said something a second ago about identity, and I resonate with that. I think there are people, I can think in my own life, where whatever the biggest thing that is said about us is how we think about us, so if it's been an illness, if it's been a cancer diagnosis, if it's been-- that's kind of how we see ourselves.

But how important is it when we're talking about this resilient trust in God, this faith that passes, you know, the understanding that we have of what God's doing, we have this faith, this peace, how important is that that we have our identity, that we understand our identity is in him? And how does somebody who's only seen themselves identified in one way, how do they change their thinking?

SUSIE: I love that question so much because the journey of trust, if you really are setting your eyes on the Lord, he will pull the layers back. If you get your identity from your achievements or your affliction, God will address that. And any encounter you have with God, he will bring a deeper revelation of who you are. An example would be when he was walking with the disciples, and he says, and it's not because he didn't know who he was, he was like, "Who do they say I am?" "Well, some say you're the prophet, some say John the Baptist," and he stops and says, "Who do you say I am?" And Peter says, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." And he says, "Heaven has revealed that to you," you know, that God has given you that.

You did not come up with that on your own. So because Peter was in a posture to see God as he is, he was in a position to see himself as he is, because then Jesus pivoted and says, "You are Peter," and he called him a rock before he ever acted like one. If we are so attached to our achievements or our afflictions, we're not even open to an upgrade in our identity, we're gonna miss the purpose.

But Jesus gave him this download, "This is what your purpose is going to look like attached to your God-given identity." But when you are walking in perpetual revelation, you will get perpetual upgrades about who you are. I'm telling you what, I am not a sick person trying to get healthy, I'm a healthy person resisting illness. I am deeply loved by God, and that is what's the truest thing about me. And the thing is, when I got ahold of that, I physically actually started to feel better.

BLYNDA: Wow.

RANDY: I know, okay, also, that bit with Peter, right? He was speaking from a supernatural standpoint, and then he's speaking from a very natural standpoint, right? And that's what I see you saying and fighting, because you're saying, "Okay, the natural? Doesn't look good, from day to day." I mean, it can be very difficult, right? I don't even know how you--

honestly, I don't know how you do it. But I know it's God, right, at the same time. But when we set our eyes on more, when we trust God, it is more than we can imagine.

SUSIE: It is. When you posture yourself, when you make him the greatest gift, he's not a means to an end, he's the beginning and the end. I mean, any gift from his hand literally pales compared to the treasure of knowing his heart, and we already have him. And so we deprioritize, you know, our relationship with him to get what we want, already there's been a downgrade.

But if the revelation of God, of knowing him more, is your highest concern, you will get upgraded revelations about who you are and the call of God on your life, when he says, "I would have done so much more." You know, one person he said that to was Saul. Saul could never get out of his own way because he kept making it all about him. He also said that to his people, you know, the Israelites, because they could never get out of their own way. But you find one heart willing to not make it all about them, to say, "I want you to confront my fears, my idols, my self-preservation." When you want him more than anything, your trust level will go through the roof.

BLYNDA: And then when it does, I think what is so precious about what the Lord does is that is so infectious to other people who are walking beside you or walking alongside you. It gives you a taste of heaven, and you go, "I want some of that."

SUSIE: "I'll have what she's having."

BLYNDA: "I'll have what she's having," and you then start searching your own heart, am I doing that? And so it's not only just for your intimacy, but how it affects those around you.

SUSIE: That's so true, and that's the thing, is when you live with eternity in mind, that's the reality, because in heaven, we're gonna be blown away about how our lives have enriched the other, you know? And how our lives have intersected, and how your yes has impacted my yes. I told you backstage I couldn't wait to meet you to honor the gift of God in you, because you have blessed me so much. And as I've seen you on screen I'm like, "Someday I'm gonna tell her how she has impacted me" and so, really truly. But that's the kingdom, and that's the economy of the kingdom.

And Randy, you have all these years, you are carrying such a heavy weight, and you keep stewarding the call of God with so much courage, and that encourages me. And that's what we're supposed to do. But I would tell you, many Christians, as I'm traveling around the country, many Christians are living saved and not loved, you know? They know they're saved, they don't know they're loved. And because they don't know they're loved, they're trusting themselves more than they trust God.

RANDY: Okay, there's more to talk about, and we'll talk about some more things with you. But I wanna show some people what we're doing and, you know, one of the freeing things about understanding who you are and trusting God is that when you read the Scripture that

talks about works, we were created for good works, you realize that that's not something to prove anything to God, that's God's gift to us, that we are freed up to go, "Oh, wow, I don't have to worry about the things of the world, I can just go bless others." That's what we love to do here at Life Outreach, and so many of you have been a part of the various outreaches.

I wanna show you one that is--wow, it's literally life-changing for the children who receive this gift this Christmas, and I wanna invite you in and just saying, be free to bless someone else in Jesus's name. Watch this and pray about how you can give a gift, a special smile this year.

ANNOUNCER: Every child deserves the chance to smile, to laugh, to be accepted, and to simply live life as a child. But for children born with a cleft lip and cleft palate, even the most basic things, eating, speaking, and being embraced by their community, can become daily struggles.

DR. ANDREW HODGES: Cleft lip and palate is a congenital condition that children are born with. The cleft lip affects the lip with a split through the lip, and then the cleft palate, that split continues inside the mouth. If you have a cleft lip, it is a significant facial disfigurement, so that will really have an effect on your social growth. Often children can be rejected, and they'll really suffer a lot of psychological trauma if it's not treated.

For the cleft palate, it's much more of a serious condition in terms of feeding. So initially children will not be able to breastfeed, so they may have nutritional problems, and then as they grow and start to try to speak, they will not be able to speak clearly, so that will really also affect their acceptance in the community. But effectively they will be essentially normal after doing those surgeries. The quality of life should be normal, they should be as any other child. They will just grow up normally.

ANNOUNCER: Through the compassion of friends like you, Life Outreach International is helping provide life-changing medical care to children and families who otherwise would have nowhere to turn.

RANDY: I love seeing those smiles, and Blynda, when you see the before and after--

BLYNDA: The pictures are-- one, the surgery is really effective. That's what I, when I saw the pictures, I was like, "Wow, it's really effective." But what a new life they get from that.

RANDY: Absolutely, and in some cases, it can save their lives, and that's the beauty of it. And you know, we have doctors there, like you see, that are ready. They will provide as many surgeries as we allow them to. We just need your support.

An average cost of the surgery, because these are serious surgeries, it's about \$500 each. So if you could provide a surgery, you would be providing years of smiles for a child, so. And the other part of this, though, Blynda, are the shoes, the Christmas Shoes and Smiles, and the shoes, everybody can be a part of that.

BLYNDA: Everybody can be a part of it, and it is something that might be small, if you think, "Oh, I'm just giving shoes." No, you're giving a new lease on life, because these children, I mean, it hinders them from being able to run and play, because they get damaged feet, there's obstacles, there's pain, there's-- so it really does help them, it's amazing.

RANDY: Well, and actually, they can get infections and they can get hookworm, and I've seen, unfortunately, I know this is hard to discuss, but I have seen feet that were malformed because of something they got because of something that came in through the feet. A simple shoe solves that problem, and that simple shoe can be provided by you this year. And that's why we think this Christmas Shoes and Smiles campaign is so brilliant and it's such a blessing, and frankly, it's just kind of fun. I have been honored to be able to go put shoes on children's feet that you, the viewers, the donors, provided. And so I wanna say thank you for all those who have been a part of this in the past, but man, 150,000 children we wanna give shoes to this year, plus the surgeries that you've seen.

We can only do it with your support, so please, go online, go to the phone, and just to give you an idea, a gift of \$36 will provide shoes for 10 children, a gift of \$72 will provide shoes for 20 children, \$180 for 50 children. Some of you could give 275 pairs of shoes for children with a gift of \$1,000. That same gift would provide two corrective surgeries, whatever you can do. Let's make Christmas special, and let's impact a child's health, possibly even their life, for the good.

And as always, we do it in the name of Jesus Christ. What better way to demonstrate Christmas to someone? Please go online, go to the phone, make the best gift you can, and if you want Susie Larson's book, "More Than You Can Imagine," just request it. We'd love to send you that gift. Do it now.

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 duo-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 \$1,000 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: You really can put a smile on someone's face this year, a child who so desperately needs it, and the shoes. Just please, we invite you into this, go online, go to the phone, make the best gift you can, the one God leads you to. And by the way, if you would like Susie Larson's latest book, I would love to send it to people. If they just ask for it, we'll send it.

BLYNDA: Yes, you will want this, "More Than You Can Imagine: What God Does When You Trust Him." Susie, thank you. Will you join us for another show? We'd love to talk more about this.

SUSIE: Let's do it, I'd be honored.

BLYNDA: Okay, well, we are so grateful you joined us today. Stay tuned to the next episode with Susie Larson, and we'll see you back here soon.

[music]

BONNIE FLOYD: And it was that night that three men from the island of Barbuda ransacked the boat and murdered my mom and dad.

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.