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Week 40

Randy Robison & Betty Robison

Jeff Wickwire

"Navigating Grief"

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

ANNOUNCER: Coming up, Jeff Wickwire encourages those who are mourning to not rush the grieving process.

JEFF WICKWIRE: Don't force yourself to get over it until you're over it. And so, take your time, have mercy on you. Have mercy on you.

If you need to cry, you cry. If you need to yell and shout, you yell and shout. And you let it out, because everybody has their recovery speed.

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RANDY ROBISON: Welcome to "Life Today". Hope you're doing well out there regardless of what you're going through, and I understand life can be difficult. I'm Randy Robison, my mother Betty Robison is with me, how are you?

BETTY ROBISON: I'm doing well, thank you for joining us today.

RANDY: You know the Scripture where it says, "Count it all joy when you face these various trials. I have a hard time counting, especially the things we've been through and continue to go through, it doesn't feel like joy.

BETTY: No, but you know, God is so faithful. I have been amazed at how he has walked right into our situation, not a happy one, but he's been right there lifting us up.

I've felt his arms around me so many times. I've felt your prayers, so thank you so much for joining us, and I don't wanna dwell on that, James, I just wanted people to know how much I appreciate your love and your prayers.

RANDY: And--but that's very sweet of you. I bring it up only because the rest of the Scripture talks about what happens, the deep work God does in our lives, and

perseverance is key to that, and you're gonna hear about that today from someone who's been through some tough times and has learned to persevere. So, especially if you're going through that, a loved one, I want you to be invited into this conversation.

Our guest is Jeff Wickwire. How're you doing, Jeff?

JEFF: Good, Randy and Betty.

RANDY: How's Turning Point Church, down in Fort Worth?

JEFF: We're doing well, we're on I-35, south, and just before Burleson, and you know, we're doing good. We're seeing people saved virtually every week, and so, you know, doing what I've done for so long, speaking of perseverance.

RANDY: Yeah, but there was, I think, a time, maybe, where you were not sure if you were gonna be able to fulfill the call.

JEFF: You know, there was, and that's when James stepped into my life. And if I can tell a James story, I'm gonna tell a James story. I was in a marital crisis, I was in a huge crisis in my life.

I was pastoring, and I just thought, you know, I'm probably done. It's probably finished for me.

And out of the blue I get this call, "Is this Jeff Wickwire?" and I said, "Yes. "This is James Robison," and I said, "Oh no, now I'm really in trouble."

RANDY: Me too, I know that feeling.

JEFF: And so I said, "James, to what do I owe this?" and he said, "I hear you're in a little bit of trouble," and I said, "Yeah," and he said, "Come on down to my office. Well, then I really thought I was in trouble. So I put on a suit, I put on a suit and tie.

I'm going in front of the man, so I did, and I walked in and James came out from behind his desk, he shut the doors, sat in a chair right in front of me and said, "Tell me what's going on. So I just poured my heart out to him, and he listened. And I thought, "He's either gonna thrash me, or he's going to help me," because James is bigger than life.

James was a bigger-than-life guy, he was a force. He became one of my heroes. There was Billy Graham, and when I first heard James Robison, I said, "Well, there's Billy Graham's replacement," because as an orator, he was just so powerful.

So when I'm done talking to him, he said, "Jeff, you're gonna get past this. You're gonna go on. You're gonna have a life and a ministry.

He said, "Trust me, because there was a time where I wondered if I was gonna be able to go on, and I did, by the grace of God. And he picked me up, he hugged me, and when I walked out of that office, I walked in feeling yay high, and I walked out feeling at least six foot, right? Because he did what I needed.

He was merciful and kind and compassionate and encouraging. So my thought of him, my picture of him, went from already a, you know, 8 or a 9 to a 12, 15, because he didn't have to call me, you know? He didn't have to call me, and again, Betty, when my late wife was diagnosed with a brain tumor, once again, I'm sitting at home and the phone rings, and it's James and Betty, in a car.

RANDY: He did that a lot.

JEFF: Yeah. And they're driving, and he said, "I hear about Cathy's diagnosis, tell me," and I told him. And James and Betty, always so kind, and prayed with me, encouraged me, knowing that it was a terrible report.

And so, that's how-- you know, it's how somebody treats the people that don't know the whole world like he did. He was a big deal, I was a normal deal, and he took the time.

RANDY: Can I ask, just for people who don't know your wife, what was the diagnosis?

JEFF: It was a glioblastoma brain tumor, and just one of the great shocks. And the doctor, when he came out of operating, he said, "I couldn't get it all. You can't get a glioblastoma, it has tentacles.

So he said, "I got all that I could, but I'm saying I think you have nine months. And she made it 11. And we were married 39 years.

And it was so hard because when it says, "The two become one," you don't know how much that's true until all of a sudden, when she was gone, when it finally happened, that's when--it's like they say when you get an arm amputated, you still go to move it but it's not there. And it was that way. Sunday mornings, "What do you think this looks like," and there's nobody there to tell you.

And for the longest time, I couldn't clear out the closet, you know, for the longest time. Because not only are the clothes there, you know, but that person's fragrance, okay?

Her perfume, all of that. So, Betty, we love you, and so many have been praying for you, and Randy, the whole family, James was just a incredible man, and he was always so proud of you, always bragged on you.

BETTY: And you know, what you said about having trouble getting rid of their things and stuff. James had this favorite shirt he loved to wear, and I always told him, I said, "James, that is the ugliest shirt I have ever seen. But he persisted to wear it, and I think sometimes just to get at me, just to tease me, you know?

So when--I have cleaned out a few things, but there's things that I wanna hang on to for a while. I ran across this shirt and I said, "I cannot get rid of that shirt.

It makes me laugh, it makes me smile. It helps me to remember the man I loved so much."

JEFF: And the grief is a difficult thing to deal with because it comes in waves. You'll take one step forward, and then the next day something triggers a memory, something triggers a thought, and you take two steps back. And somebody told me something that really helped carry me, and that was simply this: "Jeff, don't force yourself to get over it until you're over it.

And so, take your time, have mercy on you. Have mercy on you. You have to--"Now, come on, I should be past it," no.

BETTY: Stiff upper lip.

JEFF: No, no, don't do that. If you need to cry, you cry. If you need to yell and shout, you yell and shout.

And you let it out, because everybody has their recovery speed. And so I just had to say, you know, "I'll be through it when I'm through it, and don't tell me when I should be through it," you know, so.

BETTY: That's good, thank you so much.

RANDY: Through all these things, you know, back to the idea of the various trials we face, and some of those trials we bring on ourselves, you know, we'll make mistakes and we'll make a mess. And there's no joy inherently in that, and I don't think we call these things joyful. And then the loss, the horrible--you know, I mean, any time someone's suffering and then you lose them, there's no joy in that, and I'm not gonna pretend, I'm not gonna say you should act like it's joyful, because I think the miracle is when--not when all things--all good things work together for good, but when the really rotten, awful things work together for something good.

And so, through these trials, self-made or out of our control, the idea of perseverance, looking back now that you're looking, you can see a little better where you've been, right? What do you see that's kind of built something in you that you value in the perseverance?

JEFF: Well, Christians have an edge that the world doesn't have, and that is the promise. "I'm gonna work this, I'm gonna work in it, I'm gonna work through it. Whether it's pain, regret, grief, joy, all that life can hand out, we have a promise from the wise Master Builder, and he has promised, "I'm never gonna stop working, no matter what.

So Paul said, "Perseverance is gonna work for your good. When you go through hard trials, it works perseverance into you, and when the perseverance is worked into you, it brings hope. So, what I'm learning still, and I had to learn through all these things, is you can be--

you can feel like you're dying on the inside, you can feel like I'm never gonna laugh again, I'm never gonna have a skip in my step again, I'm always gonna be hurting.

The challenge becomes, how do I keep my walk with God intact through it all? Because a lot of people in this day and age, this culture, when I started preaching, Lord, almost 50 years ago, it's a different America, it's a different church, it's different stresses, it's different trials, it's different pressures. So, the key to continuing on is keeping the flame lit.

You know, behind me is a flame, it's a little make-believe flame. Picture that as our soul. How do you keep the flame lit, where even if you're hurting deeply, how do you stay intact, how do you keep walking, how do you break the tape at the finish line?

How do you stay sound and whole? It's a matter of taking care of the inner man. I mean, I found this, this is so true.

I believe the day is gone, if it was ever here in the first place, that a Christian is ever gonna survive not getting with God, in his Word, in prayer every day. How are you going to survive? You will not survive.

You won't survive with your pastor's message once a week. You won't, it's got to be daily. How do I keep myself intact within?

Because as your soul goes, so go you. As the flame goes, the relationship with him goes. And one of the hardest times was when Cathy left and went to heaven, I didn't feel like praying, I didn't feel like getting in the Word.

But how do I recover the flame and continue in my own life, and stay whole and stay healthy here? Because if you're not healthy here, everything goes sour out here. So, quickly, the Old Testament ideal is the manna in the wilderness.

The wilderness represents the world, the Promised Land represents heaven. For 40 years they were sustained by supernatural food, the manna. It was put there every day by God.

They had to gather it every day, if they didn't get it that day, it rotted. They had to gather it every day. And that's how they stayed alive, that's what kept them, and only when they entered the Promised Land did they no longer need it.

The manna is a picture of the Word of God for us. The Bible is manna, it's our manna, it's our sustenance, it keeps us alive. It keeps the fire burning, it's fresh wood for the fire, every day.

And I learned, if I'm gonna survive this and other things that I've gone through, if I'm gonna survive, because you've got to. You know, they're gone to their reward. Now I have to carry the flame.

I'm carrying the burden. I'm carrying on with what they left. So you have to understand, and every believer listening, you can't make it without the Word of God in your life.

You've got to get into the Word every day, it's that supernatural food. The Psalmists called it angels' food. So to persevere, I found that I had to feed the inner man, and I know this is not revelation.

However, as a pastor of 43 years, I can tell you, most Christians are not doing it. And so they're anemic, they're not running the race well, they're being defeated. And strength begins here, it says, "Jesus grew mighty in his Spirit, John the Baptist grew mighty in his Spirit," Luke 1:80, Luke 2:40.

Those two verses tell us about how they both grew up, mighty in their inner man. So we have to feed our soul, our inner man, with that manna, or we will never persevere.

BETTY: Wow, and that's exactly the way I feel like God has revealed it to me. I get up every morning and fill my heart with his Word, with his truth, and I put on his armor. I dress myself fully with his armor, and then I turn to him and I say, "How wide, how deep, how long, how high is your love for me?"

It's unlimited, and I cling on to that every morning as I walk through the day. I weep, I may sometimes, but sometimes I'm laughing because I remember the joy that James and I had together serving God, and that's going to continue. No, he's not here in person, but he's here in God's Spirit, and he will walk with me through this, and God is there before me every day, and I cling to him.

JEFF: That's right, and James was who he was because of the power of that Word that was so deeply planted in him. When he preached, out came that Word, just like an encyclopedia, and he was full of that Word.

RANDY: Yeah, and you know, one of his favorite sayings that I really like is, "God uses imperfect people to accomplish his perfect will. And so, as we kind of have this conversation, I don't want anyone out there thinking, "Okay, well, that's a guy on TV, of course, and well, he's a pastor, you know. This is what God wants for all of us, to have that kind of relationship, to persevere through the trials, to repent when we need to repent, to pray when we need to pray, to be part of a community, why?"

For his glory, and he invites all of us into it, no matter what--you know, redemption is his story. So whatever we've done, his redemption is greater.

JEFF: Yeah, that's right, yeah. And just that time with God is so key. I'm seeing people sensing a whole new level of spiritual warfare in our country.

You can feel it, the temperature has gone up. It's way more intense, and I think a lot of people are realizing, "I have to get with God, because I'm walking through the front door, or out the front door every morning, straight and facing the world of flesh and the devil, and it

seems to be a meaner devil lately. It seems to be a more intense battle, so we've got to get into it.

If they had not gathered that manna every morning, they would have died. They were kept alive by it for 40 years, fried manna, cooked manna, boiled manna.

RANDY: A little quail here and there.

JEFF: A little quail.

RANDY: You have some protein. That's good, but you know what? I have the solution, I believe, for all of these things that you're talking about that we face, and it is wrapped up in one word that is a name, and that name is Emmanuel, which means "God with us".

And if God is for us, who can be against us? We can persevere, and you might need a little community. God created us for community, so I would encourage you to get into that.

I think a great part of overcoming is stepping into joy. And when you talk about Emmanuel, it's the Christmas message, God with us.

This is the time of year we celebrate it. And Mom, we have celebrated Christmas in a special way for so many years, and it still brings us joy, still brings you joy.

BETTY: It does, I love Christmastime. I love the heart of Christmas. I love to plan for Christmas, and I love the family at Christmastime.

RANDY: And this year, we want you to enjoy Christmas as much as we do as we celebrate Christmas Shoes and Smiles.

JAMES ROBISON: They're gonna be devoted to Jesus.

ANNOUNCER: For James Robison, standing before massive crowds, preaching to literally millions of people, never overshadowed his desire to comfort the least of these. While leading global initiatives that altered the lives of millions, James, along with his wife Betty, traveled the mission fields of the world to find those who had been forgotten and overlooked.

JAMES: You know, Betty, all these people have wondered why we're here-- how are you? And we have told them through translators that we're here because we love them, and because we wanna give them a better life, we came in the name of the Lord Jesus, but we didn't just come to talk about God's love. We came to share it and demonstrate it.

ANNOUNCER: James firmly believed that hand-delivering a brand new pair of shoes to a child was just as important as any mission he had ever undertaken.

JAMES: We found out something else. Because of contaminated water, and even contaminations and problems in the soil, children get little cuts in their feet and they pick up hookworms, and as I understand it, that ultimately gets into their intestines. And it is a horrible sickness, but it is a disease that not only brings incredible pain and discomfort, but in so many instances, death.

ANNOUNCER: To he and Betty, that simple gift of a pair of shoes was a powerful message that whispered directly to a child's heart, "You are seen, you are loved, and someone cares for you."

BETTY: You know, I'm standing here with these children and they're just a small example of children all over the world that they deserve to be cared for, and we have an opportunity to do that right now, to put some shoes on their feet, to give them a chance in life, and I ask you to help us do that. It's just a simple request, but a very urgent and important one.

Please join with us, you'll get such great joy out of it, I know you will. God bless you and thank you.

RANDY: The joy continues this year with your support, with your love. Please go online, go to the phone, make the best gift you can. Just to give you an idea, a typical pair of shoes is about \$3.60 by the time we get it to the various destinations around the world where the children need it the most, so \$36 right now would help give 10 pairs of shoes.

Some of you could give 20 pairs, a gift of \$72. Many of you could give 50 children a pair of shoes with a gift of \$180. And don't forget, we also are doing the corrective surgeries.

They're about \$500 each. Look, whatever you can do this year to make Christmas special, to give shoes and to give smiles, let's do it. Let's be generous, in the spirit of Christmas.

Please do it now, it's the last week we'll be on the air with this. I hope you'll do something today, and Mom, I love that this is something you and Dad started, and I love that it continues.

BETTY: I love it. All the mission trips we did back when James and I went on the mission field, feed the children, give them fresh water, that was wonderful, it's so wonderful. But the joy that came to my heart instantly was to sit there on the ground and put shoes on those precious little feet of those children.

They would immediately light up and smile because they had gotten a gift of love given to them that they could see immediately, and they'd just walk up, they jump up and down, Randy, it was great, great joy. If you want to see that again, please join with us, and let's give the gifts for the shoes that the children can have a special gift for Christmastime. I love you, and thank you so much for your generosity.

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 \$1000 or more to help provide over 275 pairs of shoes, or corrective smile surgeries for 2 children, and you may request the beautiful bronze sculpture, "The Good Shepherd".

This is the last week. Please call, write, or make your gift online today.

ISAK PRETORIUS: The thing you need to understand is just how tough life is for the children that live in these villages. They fight malnutrition, they struggle through sickness and diseases, and I mean, even just their little feet. And there, ultimately a hookworm can get in there, it can infect this foot.

Children, in some cases, in the worst cases, end up dying from that, but even if they don't die, it really just makes them sick, it impacts their lives, and it's not right. It's not fair that children should be struggling like that, and you know, fortunately, we're here today. This is such a happy moment, because we actually get to-- and I'm gonna show you right now, you're gonna join me as we're gonna put a pair of shoes on this little guy, and we're gonna change his life right now by doing something as simple as putting a pair of shoes on his feet.

And so, please, I'm asking you, celebrate with us today, but do something. Dial that number on your screen or get online and give this joyful gift, give the gift of shoes.

RANDY: We'd love to hear from you today. This is the last week we'll be on the air.

We have to get ready, we have to get all those shoes over there so those children can get them, and it's because of you, so thank you. Go online, go to the phone, make the best gift you can, and Mom, I appreciate-- honestly, I appreciate Jeff ministering to you.

BETTY: I do too, thank you so much, Jeff.

JEFF: I'm so thrilled to be here.

BETTY: And thank you for listening to our hearts. If you're sitting out there and you're hurting, please call that line that's on the bottom of the screen.

Somebody wants to pray with you. We love you dearly.

RANDY: We do, and we appreciate you so much. We'll see you again next time here on "Life Today".

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

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