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Week 40

Randy Robison & Betty Robison

Bonnie Floyd

"Promises Kept"

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

BONNIE FLOYD: And it was that night that three men from the island of Barbuda paddled out and they came on board, and they woke them up in the night and they bound and gagged them, ransacked the boat, and before they left, they murdered my mom and dad and Tom and Criddy, the captain and first mate on the boat.

RANDY ROBISON: Oh my goodness, horrible.

ANNOUNCER: How God taught Bonnie Floyd radical forgiveness in the midst of her worst nightmare, next on "Life Today".

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BETTY ROBISON: Welcome to "Life Today", I'm Betty Robison, and this is my son, Randy. Thank you so much for joining us, and you're gonna be mightily blessed today.

We have Bonnie Floyd with us, and what a dramatic story she has to share with you today, so listen closely. Bonnie, thank you so much for joining us.

BONNIE: Thank you so much for having me. I've been looking forward to it.

RANDY: Great to have you here, I do want to mention, your story is told in a book called "Bound to a Promise". It's available wherever you get books. Because there's so much.

BONNIE: There is a lot.

RANDY: Pick us up just with maybe your relationship with your parents, because it is very much about that, and by the way, I just wanna mention for anybody watching, if you have a loved one that you are concerned about, that you are witnessing to, you're gonna get a little encouragement today. A little foreshadowing here, but take us back to your relationship with your parents.

BONNIE: So I had a great relationship with my parents, but I was not raised in a Christian home, and so they set sail around the world when I was probably a little bit too young, and I went on to make very little of myself. But in my early twenties, I came to know the Lord, and then I met and married my Donnie, who I met at church. And so when my parents returned from sailing around the world for--they'd been gone for seven years--.

RANDY: Oh my word.

BONNIE: I couldn't wait for them to meet my Donnie, and Jesus. And so, meeting Donnie went really well. The Jesus part, not so much.

But we spent a lot of time just sharing the Lord with them through our own life. The last thing I needed to do was cram Jesus down my dad's throat. That would have never went well.

And so I just--we just shared from our own life, and they became, over years, less and less the devil's advocate and more and more interested in our relationship. And there are many facets to our story, but if we wanna fast forward to six months before the tragedy, we were with my parents, and my dad was telling a story of a near-death experience. And I was just consumed by thinking of what would happen if they were to die and they had yet call on the name of Jesus, and so I looked at Dad and I said, "Dad, would you promise me one thing?

If you ever get into a position where you and Mom fear for your life, would you call on the name of Jesus?" And my nickname is Bean, and he says, "Bean, I promise you that if I ever get into a position that I fear for my life, I'll call on the name of Jesus," he said, "but I have never been, nor will I ever be, in a position that I am not in total control."

And six months later, the Lord showed my father that no man is in total control of their life. And they were bound and gagged with black tape.

RANDY: Okay, we're gonna get to that, because it's horrifying, and yeah, anyway. But I wanna ask you about that, because surely over those years, leading up to that one conversation, you'd probably struggled a little bit, you know, with, "What do I say, how do I approach this?"

But yet you preserved the relationship, which I think is key, but sometimes it could be a little difficult, because you care so much, right? How did you navigate just that, preserving the relationship, not cramming it down his throat, but being a constant witness?

BONNIE: I think the greatest witness that we can be is just what Jesus has done in our own life, and so everything I shared, I shared in story form in my life, and the difference that the Lord had made in my life. And my dad did say he wasn't sure what he was coming home to. He didn't know if his feisty little girl was going to be changed and not the same.

But he found me to be very much the same in personality, I just had become a Christian. And we had many, many conversations, we had conversations about tithing. Dad was like, "I see what church you go to.

It's the biggest church in the Central Valley. That church doesn't need your money.

There's other places your money should go." So then I would talk about the principle of tithing, and--.

RANDY: So it's planting seeds over time, and I think that--each case is individual, but I think hearing God's-- the Spirit's leading in those relationships, is how you navigate it.

BONNIE: And you never give up. I think if there's ever a message, it's with my dad, you just-- I never gave up, ever. I never gave up, and I would always-- I would always take every opportunity.

I believe that God creates all kinds of opportunity. We have to be ready, we've got to be watching and discerning and to seize those moments. "Oh, here's a story, here's an opportunity."

BETTY: And he had to see that you were planting those seeds in love every time you even asked him about coming to Jesus.

BONNIE: Yes, indeed.

BETTY: He saw the love.

BONNIE: He did, and Mom too, and Mom too.

RANDY: And then?

BONNIE: And so, after they were done sailing around the world, they went to work as island administrators on a private island, the island of Jethou between France and England. And there was a man who-- they captured his attention and he offered them position of island administrator on the island. And so they went there and they were the island administrators.

That's when Donnie and I went to the island of Jethou and spent a month with them, and we had the opportunity to, again, share many opportunities about the Lord, and that's when I asked him that question. And it was six months later, as a Christmas bonus, Peter Ogden, their boss, sent them on a Caribbean sail on his yacht. So they flew from Guernsey, the main island, and flew to the island of Antigua, and they boarded yacht Challenger, and they sailed over to the island of Barbuda.

RANDY: And what happened there?

BONNIE: And that night, their very first night, Peter called on the ham radio to see how they were doing, and Captain Criddy said, "Well, I'm not sure who's on vacation. Bill's always at the helm, Cathy's always in the galley, and they're out spearfishing for our dinner tonight." And so we knew they were having a great time, and it was that night that three men from the island of Barbuda paddled out, and they came on board and they woke them up in the night, and they bound and gagged them, ransacked the boat, and before they left, they murdered my mom and dad and Tom and Criddy, the captain and first mate on the boat.

RANDY: Horrible, horrible. Where do you go from there?

BONNIE: Scotland Yard. Scotland Yard was on Antigua, and they came over and they captured the men in just three short weeks.

There were so many things that happened. When they were captured, the Lord said to me, "Purpose in your heart not to hate," and so I went there.

BETTY: That's tough.

BONNIE: I went there in my mind, knowing that any one of them could have--I could spend eternity with, if they came to a place of repentance.

RANDY: That's a different mindset, and that--I don't think we can do that on our own.

BONNIE: No, no, no, we cannot. So Pastor G.L. Johnson of Peoples Church in Fresno, California, was my pastor, and the day I got the phone call, he said this to me: "Bonnie, God could have prevented this, but he did not, and the one thing I know for certain is that God makes no mistakes." And those words were indelibly etched in my mind, and through every step in every course of my story, I have always remembered that.

And so when I hear, "Purpose in your heart not to hate," see, I feel like I have three voices in my head. I have my own that I'm familiar with, and I know my Lord because I love the Word. But the Word also teaches who our adversary is, and so with the three voices.

And so Bonnie doesn't say, "Purpose in your heart not to hate." The enemy is not going to say--it's not hard to figure out the voice of God.

Some people say, "Oh, I don't hear him." I don't hear him audibly either, but I definitely hear--I know his voice.

RANDY: Process of elimination, that's really good, I like that.

BONNIE: And so, and then, when they were in prison, one of the men escaped, and as he was being recaptured, he was shot in the head and the chest and leg. And so, when I heard the news I thought, "Well, one down, two to go." And--but the Lord said, "Bonnie, I could have allowed him to die, but I did not, and I don't make mistakes."

RANDY: So he survived the gunshot?

BONNIE: And so the Lord just spoke to me all leading up to the trial.

RANDY: Okay, so you went to the trial?

BONNIE: I went to the trial. And Donaldson, this one that I've been speaking of, he agreed to testify against the other two. And with that, he would get manslaughter and not the death penalty if convicted.

And so he took the stand right off the bat, and I listened to everything. The planning, the execution, I listened to it all, and I sat there emotionless. My mother-in-law refers to me as "the stone that rarely weeps".

But God has a sense of humor because I married into the crybaby family, but that's another story. But I began to get very emotional for him on the stand, and I did not know what was happening.

I was having an encounter with the Lord, and so I stepped out onto the balcony and I asked the Lord, "What is going on in here?" And the Lord ministered to me that, "What you're experiencing is just this much of my compassion for Donaldson," and my question was, "And what am I supposed to do with this?"

RANDY: Sure, so you're feeling compassionate for the man who is--.

BONNIE: And I didn't want it!

RANDY: --part of the three that executed, brutally, your parents.

BONNIE: And I didn't want it, but I couldn't shake it, and when I asked him, "What am I supposed to do with this?" his answer was, "I want you to go to the prison and tell him about my Son." And so, when the trial was over, the other two were sentenced to death by hanging, and Donaldson got 15 years, and I went into that prison to do one thing and one thing only, and that was to tell him about Jesus and get on a plane and never come back to that place. But what I realized is that I didn't go there to tell him that I forgave him, I went there because my Lord asked me to do something that I didn't think I could do, but I knew if he asked me, then he would empower me.

RANDY: Well, did you forgive him?

BONNIE: So, in my active obedience to go to the prison is where I met the Lord and positioned myself to be empowered to forgive the seemingly impossible. I believe that blessings always follow obedience, always. And so I was obedient to what the Lord had asked me to, and in my act of obedience, I found myself empowered to forgive Donaldson, and he was so sorry for what he did.

He was so sorry, and he was no longer the man that bound and gagged my parents with black tape, but he was a man who was so incredibly sorry for what he did. And so I met with him and I told him my salvation story, I shared with him the story about my mom and dad, and if I can just let you know that during the trial, one of the other two, not Donaldson, was on the stand, and he said, "The Americans, they must have been Christian because they were praying."

RANDY: Your parents?

BONNIE: My parents. Because the other two were British. And I found out in the courtroom that they had kept their promise.

RANDY: They called on God.

BONNIE: Yes, they did. That's why my book's named "Bound to a Promise". But my book is "Bound to a Promise", not just the promise that my dad and mom made me to call on the name of Jesus, that they were bound to.

But really, if God doesn't keep his promise to save anyone who calls on his name, then their promise means nothing. And I had an encounter with the Lord about whether he keeps his promises, and he does.

BETTY: You had to go away feeling, "Wow, what a great God," all these things.

BONNIE: I did, and then when he left, he turned and he looked at me and he said, "You write me?" And I said, "Donaldson, if you write me, I will write you," and he did.

BETTY: Because your purpose was just to go there and witness.

BONNIE: Oh, I was out of there. I was never going back.

And now we have a full-blown ministry right on the island of Barbuda, so God's got a much greater plan. But yeah, for ten years--.

BETTY: God turned it for good, he really did.

BONNIE: He did, and then the Lord catapulted me into this ministry that I have, and then writing the book, and and then in 2016, he called Donnie and I to return to Barbuda and to start an on-island ministry. And little did we know, a year later, here would come Hurricane Irma and completely decimate Barbuda.

RANDY: That's a lot of need.

BONNIE: I mean, there's so many things because it's like, why would the Lord call us back to Barbuda, and then a year later, when he knew it was gonna be decimated? And then here comes Samaritan's Purse, in all their glory. The DART team came in and we thought,

"Well, we're just-- we're just this little-- we're gonna leave," and when we prayed-- you always have to pray, and the Lord's so faithful, and this is what he said: "I brought them there to help you, not just Barbuda."

And we did, we flew on their planes, they would give us material, and then when we'd go to give them the material back for the project we were working on, they wouldn't take it. And I don't know where Barbuda would be right now without Samaritan's Purse, but it also gave us our foundation, and we're still there.

BETTY: That is awesome.

RANDY: Where would you be if you hadn't done the hard things out of obedience, do you think?

BONNIE: Not here. I want you to know that the most powerful things that have happened in my life has been being obedient to the hard things. I said it already and I will say it again, blessings always follow obedience, and obedience sometimes is really hard, but the reward is so great.

RANDY: It is, and you know, the other thing I hear from your story is that there's circumstances that we just can't, you know, act like Jesus and get through on our own. You can't forgive someone who's done something so horrible to a loved one, on your own. You can try, but I think the obedience and the blessing that follows, many of the blessings are the grace that allow you to forgive.

What happened when you got to the point where you actually found that you could forgive? Something you couldn't do on your own, God enabled you to do. Did that give you some sort of peace, freedom, joy, or anything--what happened in your life when--?

BONNIE: I would have to say in the two years leading up to the trial, when God was speaking to me, if you would have asked me before I went to go see Donaldson if I had forgiven them for what they did, I would have said, "Oh yes," because you--right?

RANDY: Because you have to, right? It's the right answer.

BONNIE: I mean, you have to. But it wasn't until I truly forgave that I realized, oh yeah, I had not been--I wasn't there.

RANDY: Yeah, which again came out of the obedience to do what God asked you to do, and the blessing of forgiveness.

BONNIE: The only way to be empowered to be able to do the hard, obedient part of our walk, is you have to be in the Word of God, you have to pray. You have to, in my opinion, you have to, you know, you have to gather with the fellowship of other believers. When my parents died, if it wasn't for my church family, I don't know how we would have made it.

And so, it is your walk with the Lord. People ask me all the time when I'm speaking, I mean, or just in an airplane and they know my story, and they ask me, "How did you do it?"

And the answer is your walk with the Lord. You have to walk closely with the Lord.

BETTY: You have to have that foundation, God's foundation, for God to build on in your life. And what great riches God brought out of your tragic story, and it just is beautiful. God wants to do that for all of us, I hope you see that today.

Maybe you're having some really tough times in your life right now and you say, "There's no way out." Obey God, trust him, find that foundation that God wants you to walk on, and stay on it and let him show the riches that he has for your life.

RANDY: Yeah, and both of y'all use a word, I noticed, a phrase. "You say, You have to do this, you have to do this," and I think sometimes that sounds like, "Oh well, now I gotta do something I don't wanna do," but it's kind of like saying, "You have to breathe," you know? Like, if you wanna live, you have to eat, you have to get-- these are tools that-- these are blessings that God has given to us freely so that we can survive these situations.

BONNIE: But serving God is so exciting. I know that you know that, I know that you know that, but I think that, you know, I've been through some really hard things, not--more than just my mom and dad. I mean, I've been through some really hard things, but I just have to tell you that serving the Lord is so exciting and he is so faithful, but you have--you know, you never arrive, you never arrive in the Lord, and I know I'm not telling you anything you don't know, but maybe I'm speaking to someone out there, that we never arrive, and that's why you can read the Word of God and it is living and active, and every year there's a new revelation, and that's where our strength and that's where we are empowered to do the seemingly impossible.

And so, if there was one thing that I could say is just check your walk. If you're--check your walk. I've had to check my walk.

RANDY: And keep moving.

BONNIE: Keep moving forward, check your walk. He's a good Father, and serving him is fun.

RANDY: I would like to give our audience an opportunity to try that little thing about obedience and blessings. God loves a cheerful giver, and as we roll into the Christmas season, we are giving you an opportunity to give. And if you feel like God is telling you to do it, I would just say be obedient, and blessings will follow.

And it's not always what you expect, I think usually it's better. The joy, the ability to forgive, just the fruit of God's Spirit in our lives. So take a look at this, there's a real need out there, but there's also a wonderful opportunity to give someone Christmas Shoes and Smiles.

ISAK PRETORIUS: I always love sitting here and dishing up food, handing out the bowls, it's like--.

FEMALE: My favourite part.

ISAK: It's the happy part of what we get to do.

ANNOUNCER: In African villages where Life Outreach ministers, this is a very common scene: children lined up receiving a nutritious bowl of soup that viewers like you help provide. But this line was an extra blessing for the children of this village when they received a new pair of shoes. Meet Pedro as he receives his Christmas gift.

These shoes will protect his feet from injury and disease, as well as being a gift he will treasure. And because of the outpouring of love from our friends of Life, we've been able to provide more than 3 million pairs of shoes for children around the world through our shoes emphasis that started over a decade ago.

MALE: *[speaking foreign language]*

ANNOUNCER: But there's something more we do that literally has put a smile on children's faces. Life Outreach has provided thousands of corrective surgeries that totally changed the lives of children impacted with cleft palate and cleft lip conditions. Meet just some of those children who have experienced this transformation.

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What wonderful gifts you gave to children and their families around the world who will be forever blessed. We want to do it again this season. Please join us in helping make this Christmas a joyous time for children who otherwise might be overlooked this year, as they receive the gifts of shoes and smiles.

RANDY: You know, I want you to look again at one child, the before and the after. The difference is you. You are that bridge from the before to the after.

Some of you could give a surgery right now. They're, on average, \$500 each. Some of you could give two, three, four, five.

I would just say there's plenty of children that need the smile, and if you could do that, give as many as you can. And yes, the shoes, we want to give shoes.

Mom, I love--it's fun just putting the children-- we had a great time, last time I was out and we were doing this, trying to find the right size for the child. And they come out, and we had all the different sizes, and I was like, you know, this is the best thing ever.

BETTY: Well, and if they outgrow their shoes, they'll pass it on to someone, and then someone will give them a pair.

RANDY: Because they last that long.

BETTY: They do, and it's so wonderful if you can help us get shoes to put on their feet. They help them so much healthwise, there's so many things that they prevent by being able to have shoes on. But the smiles, can you imagine the first time a little child can smile after the surgery?

If you could do that, please join with us on that too, it would be so wonderful. What a wonderful Christmas they would have.

RANDY: Absolutely, and by the way, I just want to give you an idea. The average shoe cost is \$3.60 per pair. That means you could give 10 children a pair of shoes with a gift of \$36.

A gift of \$180 would provide shoes for 50 children this Christmas. Whatever you can do, let's come together, let's share the generous heart of our Savior this year as we go out in his name and we spread joy through Christmas Shoes and Smiles. Do what you can, please do it now.

It's the last week we'll be on the air with this. Thank you so much.

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.

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 considered and loved and cared for. And we have an opportunity to do that right now, among these children and those around the world, 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: Go online, go to the phone, make the best gift you can. Again, "Bound to a Promise", available wherever people pick up books, at your website too?

BONNIE: Website's probably the best and least expensive way to go.

RANDY: Okay, and your website is--?

BONNIE: bonniefloyd.com.

RANDY: We appreciate you, it's such a blessing. We appreciate you guys.

BONNIE: Thank you for having me.

RANDY: We'll see you again next time.

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ANNOUNCER: In this culturally divisive time, J.D. Greear encourages us to love our neighbors in spite of our differences, tomorrow.

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