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Week 40

Randy Robison & Betty Robison

J.D. Greear

“Witnessing Well”

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

ANNOUNCER: In this culturally divisive time, it can seem harder than ever to love our neighbors. J.D. Greear casts a vision of putting aside our differences and loving each other the way Christ loves us.

J.D. GREEAR: And so maybe there's somebody listening right now who's like, "Well, I can't talk to the person beside me on the plane. That just makes my mind wanna explode." But you know, you can cook a meal for a neighbor who has a need, and you could sit down with them and just invite them into your life.

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RANDY ROBISON: Welcome to "Life Today", I'm Randy Robison. My mother is here with me, how are you doing?

BETTY ROBISON: I'm doing good.

RANDY: This is fun.

BETTY: It's a little different.

RANDY: It's different, but you know what? I'm so glad that you're here, and I know our audience is too. And we've got a wonderful guest today here.

Our guest has been on several times, and I've had the pleasure of talking to him many times over the years. Pastor J.D. Greear from The Summit Church in Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina, and he has a recent book called "Everyday Revolutionary". And this is very interesting because there's a little bit-- I know Dad was always big on impacting the culture.

He would speak to presidents, you know, and then he would talk about speaking to presidents. And I think we should have this kind of impact, but at the same time, it's a little bit of a tightrope, I think sometimes, because if you get too political, you might miss the spiritual.

BETTY: But to be able to relate is God's way, so no matter what kind of crowds you have, what kind of audience, not about the level of the person, it's the president or it's the man on the street, you know? We gotta be able to relate in the way God would want us to.

RANDY: Absolutely, and that has an impact on culture, and we can prove it biblically. And my guest is gonna do it. J.D., welcome to "Life Today".

J.D.: Thank you, Randy, for having me on.

RANDY: So I love where you go, just foundationally here, to look at how do we impact culture God's way, and that's with Daniel.

J.D.: Yeah, yeah, you know, here you got Daniel, who is an exile in Babylon. He was so bold in his proclamations of truth that he gets thrown into the lion's den because of that, and yet, and yet he is so beloved by the king whose decree threw him into the lion's den that that same king stays awake all night long worried sick, and hoping against hope that Daniel will make it through the night. My question in this book is, how do we become like that in our culture?

Because I'm not talking about ever refraining from saying hard, difficult truths, speaking out against wickedness in high places, that's our job. But also, being so-- what's the word?

Ingratiated into our community, so devoted to meeting their needs, that the thought of us being gone-- I don't think the king was weeping because he was just thinking about how he was gonna miss Daniel's prophetic diatribes. I think he was thinking, "Daniel is our friend, I can't imagine Babylon without Daniel." I've often, you know, challenged our church, you know, I would love it that our community would say about us, like, "Look, we may not believe what those crazy people over at Summit Church believe, but thank God they're here, because if not we'd have to raise our taxes, because they're taking care of our foster kids and helping our prisoners recover." And so it's just an exploration of, being the people that God has called us to be in this culture is not less than speaking truth to culture, it's just a lot more.

BETTY: You're talking about adapting to whatever position God puts us in, whatever place he puts us in, to be comfortable because we know he's leading us. My husband was a lot like that, he could adapt. I mean, he could relate to, like we were talking earlier, the president, anybody in authority.

He could find a way to get into their world and communicate with them, but at the same time, present Jesus to them. Or just someone, a neighbor he might know-- not know, he'd stop and introduce himself. That is a gift from God.

J.D.: Yeah, and God, there's a lot of believers that he puts into those places because he wants them to speak to the Nebuchadnezzars of the world. Daniel 12:3 says that, "Those who speak wisdom, those who win souls," how the King James Version says it, "will shine like the stars in the brightness of the heavens," and certainly your husband, James, he was like that. There's an old Scottish proverb that says, "For every one mile of road there's two miles of ditch," right?

And so, if one side of the road, the ditch, would be the ditch of failing to engage with political questions, failing to enter into the public square, there's another ditch, and that is when Christians get so consumed with really thinking that the primary answers to this world are political. I mean, politics are important, they affect our day-to-day lives. Good politics is a way of loving our neighbor.

But we understand that there is a message that supersedes even the important questions about politics. There are things that, as a believer, I will always speak clearly on.

There are other things that I have convictions about that I just don't talk about that strongly, at least from the pulpit, because I know that there's some more important questions that I have to focus on. I'm not gonna pollute the pulpits with things that are not essential to the mission of reaching people for Jesus and making disciples.

RANDY: We tend to be loud in the culture, and sometimes, even as a Christian, I hear some people and I'm like, "Could you just live quietly a little bit," you know? You talk about living quietly. What does that mean to you?

J.D.: So living quietly is actually Paul's phrase, and Peter says the same thing except he uses the word "remarkably," and it means the exact same thing, which is an odd thing, when you think about Paul and Peter telling us to live quietly.

RANDY: Two of the loudest guys in the Bible.

J.D.: Right, I mean, Paul's the one going to the amphitheater and saying, "The gods you're worshiping are not gods at all." But what they meant was you were living in a way, "in Babylon," that's literally what Peter calls the society we live in, "in Babylon," that people, 1 Peter 3:15, feel compelled to ask this reason for the hope that you live with. That's a hope that shows up in how you suffer. It's a hope that shows up in how you love.

It's a hope that shows up in how you do your day-to-day job. There's an old missionary named Lesslie Newbigin. He was British, he left in the 1930s to go-- to live in India and spent 60 years there.

Comes back to Great Britain, and when he gets back, says, "In the time that I've been gone from the Western world, you've gone from pastors needing to be like chaplains to being just like foreign missionaries in how they think." And one of the things he said that when you're in India, in a place like that, the first place of gospel interaction is the workplace, the workplace and the neighborhood. Before you have a chance to speak it from the pulpit, you have to demonstrate its differences in the cubicle, in the, you know, in the places that you work. And so, "Everyday Revolutionary" is about how you live quietly and testify loudly in those kind of arenas, in a way that set up your testimony.

RANDY: Yeah, and that goes back to-- you talk about holiness. And you know, we look at the word, "Holy, holy, holy," the angels declaring, you know, about Jesus or God, that the word there has a connotation of different, of other.

There's something about God, right? And I think as a reflection of that, to what you've kind of been laying out, people need to go, "There's something about them, what is it?" To almost-- I mean, if you live a life of excellence and holiness and redemption that you talk about, I think some people will ask, "What is it?"

J.D.: Well, it says that-- to go back to Daniel, go back to him for a minute, it says that he was excellent in all that he did, that an excellent spirit was in him, and it even-- it doesn't even apply to just his character or his, you know, prayer times. It says that he was-- I mean, literally what it says is "ten times better in all the subjects that he studied". And so I'm looking at that saying, the way Daniel pursued everything had this aura of God's favor on it, and that was his first place of interaction that made them say, "All right, what is this?" Then they watched how he would suffer, the story of him, you know, the three Hebrew friends of his going into the fiery furnace, Daniel going into the lion's den.

And they would say, "Where's this kind of hope that you have that would defy the king?" Then they heard his message. You know, one of the things we often overlook about Daniel that I think is so beautiful is, what, 500 years later, a group of wise men, we call them, show up looking for the cro-- where did they hear about this?

They heard about it from Daniel, because these wise men were from the same place he was. Daniel had lived in such a way and planted seeds there that it produced literally one of the greatest worship moments of Jesus in history.

BETTY: Well, you know, I'm sitting here listening to both of you talk about it, and it's not about our personalities. God gave us our different personalities, but for a purpose. And I look back at James and he had such a vivacious personality, never met a stranger.

And I would watch him share with people and I thought, "How do you do that?" It comes so out of his heart and so natural. And I said, "God, how does he--how come I can't do that?" And God was just waiting for me to realize that he can do all things through me if I just allow him to. My quieter personality, just like you said, God is as bold in my life with that as he was with James and his boldness in life.

You know, how do you tell people to come to that point to where they can say, "God, you gave me my personality, you gave me my gifts. Now take them and use them like you want to"?

J.D.: Yeah, sometimes we think--it's almost that we have personality envy or gift envy, but your personality is not an accident. And whether you're an introvert, extrovert, I mean, if you use the Enneagram or the Myers-Briggs or any of that stuff, those are all beautiful reflections of the person of Jesus. There are some of us that are wired, certainly James was like this, to be an evangelist.

I remember after my rather brief times with him, I would just feel like, "Man, I think I'm really something," but that was more a reflection on him than it was on me. Those things are--we all have in common that ability, but some people just have that gift. There are others--I mean, the number one way, the number one way that people come to faith in the New Testament is through hospitality.

In fact, even one of the things I point out in there is that Jesus basically ate his way through the Gospel of Luke. That's a savior I can follow, by the way, okay? But he goes from one--because that was his arena for where--and so maybe there's somebody listening right now who's like, "Well, I can't preach like James, I can't go do interviews like you're doing.

I can't talk to the person beside me on the plane. That just makes my mind wanna explode." But you know, you can cook a meal for a neighbor who has a need, and you can sit down with them and just invite them into your life.

Hospitality, nowadays we use that word to mean, like, I just have a nice home that looks like it's on, you know, the front of Ballard magazine--you know, Designs. But hospitality is bringing in somebody from the outside to participate in your life, see the love, and begin to feel the first warmth of the beauty of Christ in your family.

RANDY: Yeah, and that's where the testifying comes in that you talk about, whereas most of us think that impacting the culture means shouting really loud, and if someone, you know--.

J.D.: They shout louder.

RANDY: Right, exactly right. But what you talk about doing loudly are not, I think, the things most people think will have the biggest impact, but you say they do, hospitality one of them. What are some of the other ways that we can testify loudly that we might not naturally think of?

J.D.: Well, if a picture is worth a thousand words, maybe a story would be even better than me trying to explain it. I tell the story in there about a business guy up on Madison Avenue in New York City, where all the advertising agencies are. True story about a guy who is a

believer, and he had a younger intern that was working in their department, and she made a mistake that cost the company a lot of money.

And normal protocol in that environment is you just get out, you don't get a second chance there, you're done. But he went into the board of directors and said, "You know what? Let me take the blame for this one.

I didn't train her properly. Give her another chance for my sake. Let me give her a chance to do it again." Well, she hears about this, and she's just, I mean, she's kind of overwhelmed.

She goes into his office, shuts the door, and says, "I've heard about what happens here on Madison Avenue, that never happens. Why would you do-- who puts their career at risk for somebody else's like mine that's just getting started?" And he said, he said, "Well, since you ask, I will tell you that my life was forever altered by someone who took the blame for me." And he said, "So when I have a chance, if I can do that for somebody, I wanna do it." Now, I can tell you, that young lady was much more willing and interested to hear about his Savior than she was before. He was trying to do it in an appropriate way that didn't pressure her or anything, but it's that kind of-- Christians have an instinct for generosity and an instinct for hospitality, because Jesus was the one who poured out his riches for them.

They were the stranger when he brought them in. And believers, they just--they go throughout the world like Daniel 12:3, like these lights in the sky doing these things that cause people to ask a reason for the hope that's in them.

BETTY: So demonstrating through just actions, letting God speak through you, being available for God to use you in a way that you might not think is possible.

J.D.: I mean, it happens here at "Life Today", right? I mean, why does such a successful media company spend so much money and efforts meeting the needs of people around the world, right?

I mean, I'm sure you've been asked that question a bazillion times, like, where's that in the market plan? You know, the NBC is not doing that, CBS is not doing that, but you guys are doing that because you have an instinct that's been created by gospel transformation, and that's that light in the darkness that, in a very difficult, negative world that we live in, that creates the first appetite for that as well.

BETTY: I think people need to realize that God's not limited, he's unlimited. And just take our ministry for instance. God, for whatever reason, my husband's gone on to be with him, and I'm here, my son's here.

And I'm not like James. I love James with all my heart, he did the works of God, God was well pleased with him, but I'm different.

But God has gifts he's put in me too, and he wants to use those gifts through the television, through the giving of helping others, and I'm just asking people not to give up on Life

Outreach, "Life Today", because the leader's gone. God's the leader, he is the author of everything in our lives, and so he just put someone else in place, for me, for the time, to lead that way, and I pray that you'll trust God in leading me.

J.D.: Yeah, well, the evidence of a good leader is that very quickly it becomes less about their personality and more about the mission that they called us all to. Certainly "Life Today", I mean, just you walk around the offices here, you can talk with any of the team, and what you hear is, "Yes, James is missed, but the mission that he called us to, that was much larger."

BETTY: And that's one reason he changed the name from James Robison Evangelistic Association many years ago, because he didn't want it to be just about him. He said, "Let's call it Life Outreach, 'Life Today'," because he wanted to expand it to what God wanted.

RANDY: Yeah, yeah, and generosity, as you mentioned, has been a core principle here, and you know, someone recently said on the program that if you make generosity a habit, God will be your enabler, you know? And I like it, what she says, because he has the resources. But there's another one that you actually talk about that I don't think we always catch on to, and that is how joy testifies loudly to other people.

And I've seen this, and I think you can kind of go look in your life and go, "Oh yeah, you're right, because that person was always a joy to be around, lifted other people up," and man, sometimes, you know, in the church, some churches I've been in, Dad used to say they looked like they swallowed a curtain rod, right? One of his famous lines.

And they do, they look like they don't wanna be there, so why would I wanna be there? How does joy--how have you seen joy testify of God's goodness in our lives?

J.D.: Yeah, I'll be honest, so the place where I pastor is a very skeptical area, more PhDs per capita in Raleigh-Durham than anywhere else in the United States, because of all this, the Duke University and UNC, and a lot of people that come in from around the world to study there. And so we have a very educated, very cynical area. I've seen a lot of skeptics explain away even the miracles.

I do believe in miracles, I've seen people pray, I've seen sicknesses healed. But I've watched skeptics just dismiss that, you know, like, "Well, doctor misdiagnosed it," or "the power of positive thinking." Joy in the midst of deep suffering is the one thing that's even harder than the miracle to just brush aside.

RANDY: That's so true.

J.D.: And I've watched that change. Do you remember the old cardboard testimonies?

Churches don't do it much anymore, but there was a-- it was like five years, it was the rage. Basically you play an emotional song, worship song.

RANDY: And you just flip the cards?

J.D.: And you come up and you'd have a--it was beautiful, it'd have something on the front that was like your life before Christ, and then you'd flip it over, yeah, you know, like, whatever, "Ashamed" and now it's "Forgiven," you know. So, most powerful one I've ever seen is an older man and a woman in her thirties walk up on stage together, and she flips hers over and it just says, "Diagnosed with," some really kind of progressive MS, and life-threatening. He flips his over and it says, "Doctor who diagnosed her." "Unbeliever," right?

Then he flips his over and it basically says something about through her suffering, and watching her joy in suffering, he came to faith in Christ. Then she flips hers over and it says, "Worth it." And I thought, here's joy in the life of a believer that God is using as a vehicle to say, yeah, sometimes God is glorified when sick people get well. Sometimes God is glorified when sick people die well, because they die with joy in their heart that the unbeliever can't understand.

RANDY: Okay, that's how we change our cities, our states, our culture, our country, our world, and I love it, and I would love for you to get "Everyday Revolutionary" when you help us be generous and share joy. And Christmas is the best time to do it, and we're wrapping this up this week. Watch this, and I want you to step in a little generosity so you can experience some joy.

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's 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're wrapping up Christmas Shoes and Smiles, we need to hear from you. It's the last week we'll be on the air talking about it, and you're gonna make it such a special Christmas for so many children, so we're looking forward to that.

And by the way, request "Everyday Revolutionary" if you would like to receive it. I know it'll bless you, and Mom, I love J.D.'s just approach to life and impacting the culture.

BETTY: Thank you so much for being with us, great insight into God's truth.

RANDY: Appreciate you guys being here, see you again next time on "Life Today".

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ANNOUNCER: What happens when the miracle you prayed for doesn't come?

ROBERT JEFFRESS: Every hurt we go through gives us more people to encourage in their faith.

ANNOUNCER: Next week.

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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