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Week 41

Randy Robison & Betty Robison

Andrew Arndt

"The Story Of Jesus"

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

ANNOUNCER: Coming up, are you struggling to find peace?

ANDREW ARNDT: And so in that area where I don't believe, what needs to happen is I need to receive Jesus in some way as he's revealed in Scripture, and so maybe I need to receive him as the powerful healer. Maybe I need to receive him as the one that drives out demons, casts out darkness.

Maybe I need to receive him today as the one who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were. How do I need to receive him today?

ANNOUNCER: Surrendering our seasons of life to Jesus, next.



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

BETTY ROBISON: I'm doing good.

RANDY: We've got a friend, I say a friend, and yes, our guest today is a friend, but we've kind of run along these sort of parallel tracks all of our lives, and they've been a little bumpy at times. But our guest, his name is Andrew Arndt, he's lead pastor of New Life East in Colorado Springs, Colorado, which I love as well. But here's what I'll say about Andrew, before we get into his book.

All the things that he's been through that I know some about, he is the guy that has stayed true to his calling, faithful to the Lord, whatever comes his way, has stayed the course, and

so I see the fruit in his life, I see what the title of his book refers to as "a strange and gracious light". I think you see it in this guy right here, so welcome to the show.

ANDREW: I'm so happy to be here, guys, yeah. Thank you for having me, it's an honor.

RANDY: So I referenced the book. It is a recent book by you, I know you've got more coming out, but I want people to understand the title, because there's a depth and a beauty here that I really like. What is that strange and gracious light?

ANDREW: Yeah, well, the book came out of the-- the line "strange light" is from a poem that's one of my favorite poems, and it's by this old Welsh priest poet named R.S. Thomas, and in this poem he's describing this church that's like falling into decay. So picture an old Welsh countryside, a chapel by the side of the road, and it's just--it's been there for decades and decades and it's fallen to pieces. And then he has this line where he says, "But here once on an evening like this, while the preacher had his hearers about him, he caught fire and he burned steadily with a strange light, so that they saw the splendor of the barren mountains and they sang their amens fiercely, narrow but saved in a way that men are not now."

And I remember--I'm born and raised in church, and I've been in thousands of church services, and I have been part of moments like that where it kind of seems like nothing is happening, and then all of a sudden something is happening. The light of eternity breaks out upon us, Jesus walks amid the lampstands. And I've been pastoring now, this Labor Day weekend, this past Labor Day weekend is 20 years of ministry for me, and in 20 years of ministry, that's the thing that I'm chasing.

What I'm looking for in the church is I'm looking for an eruption of this strange light, and it's strange because it comes from somewhere else. It's God's light that invades our world, and it's gracious because it heals us and it makes us whole.

So I'm chasing that as, a pastor. And of course the strange light, the gracious light, it just is Christ in the midst.

BETTY: Well, you know, that kind of happened to me as a young girl when James and I were dating and God had called him into the ministry, and we were shortly thereafter to get married. But he was just so in love with the Lord, it was like a glowing light around him all the time. Everything that God did was new to him and fresh.

And one day he was taking me home after we'd gone to a tent revival, and he just, this young man was giving his testimony, it really touched my heart. And here's this girl that

grew up in the church, knew all the right things to do, kind of the church you were talking about at the beginning, you know? And everything was just old hat, so to speak.

And he, before I got out of the car, he said, "You know, Jesus is as real to me as you are sitting right here next to me." It blew my mind. I thought, I've never known anybody that way, especially Jesus, God, you know.

I just tried to stay out of trouble, you know, so he wouldn't get me. And so I just, I went and I fell on my knees by my bed after he left me, and I said, "God, I want what he's got. I want it with my whole heart."

ANDREW: Betty, that summarizes it for me. So, having been born and raised in the movement, the charismatic movement I was born and raised in, I can't ever think of a time in my life when Jesus was not as real to me as you sitting in front of me. And I can remember when I was a kid, you know, we'd have our church services, our little children's church or whatever, and every once in a while they'd lead an altar call and they'd have us say the sinner's prayer.

"If you want to accept Jesus in your heart, tonight's the night." And I might have done that seven dozen times, because it was always a little bit confusing to me, like, I don't know--so, "I was lost but now I'm found," I could never make that turn because it was like, I just never knew a time when Jesus wasn't real to me. And I tell my congregation all the time, Christianity is not--we're not here gathering in the loving memory of a dead founder, you know what I mean?

Nor are we just like rehearsing our favorite ideas about God, and we're kind of like gathering around going, you know, "Don't you just love this dogma?" I mean, the dogma is important and all that stuff is critical, but what is interesting about the church is that Jesus is there and that he's changing people's lives, and that as we lean into the person of Christ, we become something more than what we are. We're revealed to the world as sons and daughters of the living God.

RANDY: That is basically what we would call the gospel, but I think we don't fully understand that a lot of times, and maybe some of the baggage we carry into that whole idea. What are some of the obstacles you think that we may have that prevent us from stepping into that strange light?

ANDREW: Yeah, I think that sometimes when we say "the gospel", what we only mean is the death and resurrection of Jesus that secures something for us, and that if we believe, then we kind of get that something. And I think that sometimes the way that that kind of

deteriorates is it becomes like Jesus helped win us a ticket to heaven, and if we just say yes to Jesus, we get the ticket to heaven when we die. Well, okay, yes, when we put our faith in Jesus, we do have access to all that God is and has, and that includes heaven when we die, but I think that when we put our confidence in Jesus, the best thing that we get out of that is Jesus.

He's the one who dwells in our midst now, and the power of the Spirit has been poured upon us now, and Matthew 28 is, "Surely I'm with you always, to the very end of the age." And so for me, in 45 years of walking with Jesus, the best part of walking with Jesus hasn't been like, "Oh man, I can't wait to go to heaven when I die," it's that I have a companion.

BETTY: It's walking in that light right now, all the time, and that's what I saw in my husband, that's what he was doing.

ANDREW: He had it, he knew the Lord. You know, and those are the figures also from the Bible that I'm like so moved by. Like, I just was very recently meditating again on Enoch from the Old Testament, and it's just the tiniest bit of commentary on him, but it says that he walked with God.

"And then he was no more and he couldn't be found," Hebrews says, "because God took him away." And I just go, what a life to live, that the best thing that they could say about you is like, "Randy walked with God," "Betty walked with God," "James walked with God," "Andrew, he knew the Lord."

And when he transitioned in the next life, nobody really knew what happened because he was always in the presence of God. That, to me, the best thing in the church that we give people is not a ticket to heaven when they die, we give them God, and that's the thing that changes everything.

RANDY: My dad used to talk about, you know, for a lot of people, I think when they cash that ticket to heaven, it could be a little jarring. He always said, "I don't want it to be that different," right? And that seems, I think, far-fetched, but there's a quote in your book that I wanna read, and I don't--this one just, it stuck me, okay.

So you're talking about the gospel as a story, and really a lot of your book is kind of walking us through this story and what it means, how it relates to us. And you say, "The extent to which we believe this story and live by its light is the measure of our transformation." And that there, man, that one spoke to me because I, you know, a lot of us, the transformation aspect of it, I think is critical, because we're all on a journey.

This is a journey, and I haven't arrived-- if we're still breathing, it means God's not through with our journey to get us there. But how do we--I don't know, sometimes it's almost intangible. Like, how do you go, "Okay, there is this story, or what is this story that I can live by and it will transform everything?"

ANDREW: You know, there's that--that's such a good question, Randy. I always think about that moment in the Gospels where the guy comes to Jesus and his son is demon-possessed, and he really needs Jesus to help him. And he's like, "If you can, if you can. If you can do anything, would you take pity on us and help us?"

And Jesus says, "If you can? Everything is possible to the one who believes." And then the line, it just staggers me, he says, "Oh, I do believe, but help me with my unbelief."

RANDY: The story of my life, honestly.

ANDREW: Well, right, so the way that we believe this, we accept Jesus and what is said about him and we receive him into our hearts, and yet as we journey, what we keep finding is that there's all of these places where we go, "Oh, shoot, I don't trust you there. I trust you here, maybe I trust you with my money, or maybe I trust you with my relationships, but I don't yet trust you with my sexuality, or I don't yet trust you with my hope for the future, or I don't trust you with my kids. I'm still trying to control my kids because I don't actually believe that you love them more than I do, help!" And so the Christian life to me is a process of like-- this at least is how I've experienced it-- is that there will be an area that I'll surrender to the Lord, and it will feel so good and I'll feel like I've arrived, and then I'll live five more minutes and I'll realize, "Oh, shoot, there's this whole other area that I just haven't given Jesus. I haven't confessed him as Lord yet. I haven't known what he can be for me." So that's part of what I'm trying to say in the book is that it's not just the death and resurrection of Jesus, but one of my favorite theologians says that the gospel is the story of Jesus told as a promise, which means that the whole story of Jesus is gospel for us and so in that area where I don't believe, what needs to happen is I need to receive Jesus in some way as he's revealed in Scripture, and so maybe I need to receive him as the powerful healer.

Maybe I need to receive him as the one that drives out demons, casts out darkness. Maybe I need to receive him today as the one who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were. How do I need to receive him today?

How do I need to surrender today? I think that's the whole process of our sanctification.

BETTY: Well, what I think I hear you saying is, when we accept Jesus Christ in our life, and like I told you what I did-- about the experience I had, that was a transition, a big transition. We should be open to other transitions that God wants to bring us through. In other words, like you said, I haven't arrived, and had God shown me everything that he had planned for me, I'd have run the other way immediately, you know?

So God knows when we're ready to transition to another step of the journey, and he's bringing me through a big transition right now with James being gone, but I'm ready. I want him to do all he wants to do in this part of my journey till I meet my husband again.

ANDREW: And he's going to, he's bringing you from glory to glory. I think that's--to me, that's the beauty of this life that we share with the Lord, is that he conspires to use all of the circumstances of our lives to give us the thing that we long for the most, which is union with him. We want to be one with him, to a point where we wouldn't need anything else, and then all of a sudden we realize that we have everything else too.

He's giving us himself, and we have the kingdom. We'll have each other and we'll have the kingdom, and everything is ours.

I think it was Martin Luther, the great reformer, who said, "The honor for us is so great, what greater honor could we have than to be called children of the highest and to have all that he is and has?" It's all that he is is ours, and also we're heirs and co-heirs with Jesus Christ, so who's got it better than us?

RANDY: I know, and you know, we just don't realize it. And I think there's an interesting tension too in this transformative process, and both of you have said it a little bit, because there is a part we have to do.

God doesn't, you know, he respects what he gave us. He made the choice to give us somewhat of a free will, agency, depending on your theological background, but--.

ANDREW: Yeah, no, we've got to surrender.

RANDY: That's it, that's where I was going. How much of the transformation is that yielding, that surrender?

ANDREW: I would be curious what you guys have experienced about this, because you both have walked with Jesus longer than me. I almost think that surrender is just the whole thing. I think early in my faith, and Paul says, "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling," so I get that.

And early on in my faith, for sure, it was a lot of, "Uh, do it," you know what I mean, like white knuckle and we're gonna bear down on this thing. And what I'm experiencing of the Lord is it's like, would you just let him? Just let him do his work, and at our church recently we preached through the parables of Jesus, and there's a few different parables where Jesus talks about seed and soil and what happens.

And the soil in these parables, the soil doesn't really have to do anything other than to let the imperishable seed of the Word of God get at it, and so I honestly think that most of our Christian faith is just staying in a position where God can get at us. Like, I just think that that's what prayer is. Prayer is like, "Hi, it's me again, I'm kind of in trouble and I'm kind of confused and my heart's broken, have your way."

And he does, and Mary says it, you know, when the angel says, "You're gonna bear the Christ child, you're going to conceive God in the womb." She says, "I'm the handmaiden of the Lord. Let it be to me as you have said." I think that's Christianity, is whatever you have said, God, I just want that, have your way.

RANDY: Yeah, not my will but yours, and we see it reflected all throughout. You know, a lot of times I've said, you know, "God, what do I need to do?" and it's like he's like, "Get out of the way," right, "and let me, let me." So there is an invitation, and I get that.

The one thing that's along those lines that struck me years ago, and I've said this several times but I think it's critical, because in churches, as you know, growing up in a church, a lot of times the-- if it's not overt message, sort of the vibe is, "Hey, here's the fruit of the Spirit. Now if you supposedly have the Spirit, you'd better be more patient, you gotta be more loving. Could you be a little gentler and kinder and all this? Because there's this list of check marks, you'd better check to prove that you've got the Spirit." And it was like, one day it's like, wait a minute, why am I focused on the fruit when Jesus specifically said, "I'm the vine, you're the branches." Focus on Jesus, and I don't need to-- you can't stop the fruit.

ANDREW: No, you can't, it's impossible. I remember, you know, a moment for me that changed my life was when I was in-- I remember being in 11th grade and having a lot of questions about signs and wonders and miracles and the fruit of the Spirit and how do we get it. And I was pretty stressed out about it, and I remember I was reading 1 Corinthians 13 by my bedside one morning, and, "Love is patient, love is kind," we know it, "doesn't envy, doesn't boast, not proud, not rude, not self-seeking, not easily angered, keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. Always protects, always hopes, always trusts, always perseveres, love never fails."

And that hit me with peculiar force that day, and I realized, you know, Paul can say that about love, so love is patient, because Paul knows God and God is love, and so God is those things. So those things were true about God first, and we meet God in the person of Jesus. I just saw it in a flash and I went, "Oh, Jesus is patient. Jesus is kind, Jesus doesn't envy, doesn't boast, not proud, not rude, not self-seeking, it's Jesus."

Like that, in 1 Corinthians 13, that's a description of the contours of the face of the Lord. And Paul says in 2 Corinthians chapter 3, he says that we all with unveiled faces reflect the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into his likeness. Are being transformed, not that we are transforming ourselves, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory which comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

And I've noticed this in couples, you know, you and James, the older you get, you know, something about your faces start to-- you like mirror each other because you've been looking in each other's faces for so long, so even though you've come from completely different genetic worlds, you look the same. That's what happens when we look in the face of the Lord, is that we take on his characteristic, and it's like, so you don't even try. All of a sudden we're patient and we're kind, because that's who our God is for us, and Jesus.

RANDY: I love it, man. I want people to get that strange and gracious light, and I don't just mean the book, although we'd love to send the book to you today.

We have a chance to go into darkness, to be that light, to reflect the love and light of Christ, and we've been doing it for many years, but we're talking about it now on television because we want you to come and be a part, because this work only happens when you partner with us. Take a look at something we call Rescue Life, and as you watch it, just yield, surrender to the Spirit, and see what God would have you do, watch this.

JAMES ROBISON: Wait a minute, wait a minute! Wait a minute, wait a minute!

JAMES: It's a shame that people, you know, live around this, and yet you can see children out here trying to have fun.

ANNOUNCER: For decades, Life Outreach has been locating children at risk of starving to death because of food insecurity or dying from drinking diseased water. In our reaching out to the overlooked, we made a discovery: children at risk not from starvation or waterborne diseases, but of something straight from the pit of hell. Children at risk of falling prey to sex traffickers.

JAMES: But they are so abused by these horrific people who lie to them, they actually take them in and put them in a setting where they're totally in prison and they abuse them terribly, they hurt them terribly. They don't care what they have to tell them to use them, and their lives are destroyed, they're totally wasted.

ANNOUNCER: Once we had seen the tragic toll it had taken on its young victims, there was no turning back on our entering the war against human trafficking. Life Outreach now has mission partners on six continents who are actively engaged in one or more programs of rescuing and restoring survivors who fell prey to sex traffickers. Another of our programs is using preventative programs in schools and rural villages to reach out and educate the most vulnerable who are at risk of being trafficked.

Once the children are rescued, our mission partners lovingly care for them through Christ-centered restoration programs. This is a war fighting the evils of sex trafficking, and it is far from over, with many battles ahead. Our continued fight depends on the support of those who will stand with our partners and us, so those at risk will never have to endure the horrors of becoming a victim of sex trafficking.

RANDY: I know that's hard to watch. It is dark, but that's why we must be the light into that situation. That's why we're asking you today to come alongside of us as we rescue lives, we reach, we rescue, we restore those who are in that hell on earth.

Let's bring them heaven. Will you go online, go to the phone, make the best gift you can, and just to give you an idea, when you do, the average cost for the programs around the world to reach, rescue, or restore one child comes out to about \$128. That means a gift today of \$1280 would actually help us reach, rescue, or restore 10 children.

What does that mean? To reach is to actually prevent it from ever happening. It's awareness, it's telling young children the dangers.

The rescue is when someone is already being trafficked and we get them out by whatever means necessary. But the restore is very much the gospel. It's giving a hope, it's giving support for the trauma.

Sometimes it's giving a life skill to a young girl so she can support herself. It's a comprehensive program, but it relies on your support. So that's what we're asking, Mom, is people to come alongside us and do what we've been doing, but to reach those who are in desperate need right now.

BETTY: Absolutely, and I know you want to be a blessing like this, to rescue these precious little ones. I'm about to have my 24th great-grandchild. I can't even imagine someone taking one of those precious children and taking them away from the love and the home that they have and being treated like these children are treated.

They're locked up, they're mistreated, they're beaten if they don't obey. Please, help us do this, help us rescue these little ones, and as you do, we want to bless you. We have a book, your dad's last book that he wrote is called "A Life Proclaiming Freedom".

It's basically his life story, walking the journey that James and I walked, and it was quite a journey, never a dull moment, but so full and rich of God's love. Let us bless you this way. We want to send this to you.

RANDY: Yes, "A Life Proclaiming Freedom", and that's what we do when you join with us. We proclaim that freedom, we put it into action, but we can only do it with your help. We'd love to hear from you today.

FEMALE ANNOUNCER: Every day, innocent children are being trapped in the wicked web of human trafficking. Instead of dreaming about a future, they are sold into a nightmare of sexual slavery. But you can join the fight against this evil through Mission Rescue Life.

You can reach at-risk children before traffickers do, rescue those already enslaved, and restore young lives with hope for the future. A gift today of \$128 will reach, rescue, or restore a precious child and change their life forever. Gifts of \$64 or \$32 will be combined with support from others to help deliver one more child from the shame and pain of sex trafficking.

With a gift of any amount, we will send you James Robison's final book, "A Life Proclaiming Freedom", as a thank-you for your support. Discover James's personal journey from bondage to freedom, share in his calling to bind up the brokenhearted, and learn how to experience your personal freedom so that you can bring healing to the hurting world around you. With your gift of \$128 or more, you will receive the "Life Proclaiming Freedom" bundle, which includes James's book, a special edition collection of the Gospels, and the beautiful Life planner.

Finally, your gift of \$1280 can help save 10 children from the horrors of human trafficking. With this special gift, you may request the inspiring bronze sculpture, "The Good Shepherd". Please call, write, or make your gift online today.

ANDREA CROSS: As we partner with Life Outreach International, we are making a difference in the lives of children. It's people like you who, with unwavering support, dedication and generosity, have been the driving force behind every rescue, every smile restored, and every life transformed. We know there is still so much work to be done, but your contribution has made it possible for us to stand up against child trafficking and for these children to be pulled from the darkness into the light.

Every smile, every step forward, every dream reignited, these are all a testament to the incredible impact that your support has on these young lives. I personally want to extend my deepest gratitude for everyone who has made a difference in a child's life already. With your continued support, we will help to create a world where no-one is subjected to the horrors of child trafficking, a world where love, compassion, and justice prevail.

By working together, we can reach every person and rescue every child. Thank you so much.

RANDY: I'd love to hear from you, and I'd love to hear from you today. We can reach, rescue, restore, and we need your help to do it, so please do go online, go to the phone, make the best gift you can, and if you would like it, I would love for you to have "A Strange and Gracious Light" by Andrew Arndt.

I think it'll challenge you, and it'll deepen your walk with Christ. I've loved this conversation, Mom, have you enjoyed?

BETTY: Yeah, wonderful, thank you so much, Andrew, for sharing with us today. It's been kind of almost like--I haven't met you before, but with Randy here, kind of like a reunion.

ANDREW: I feel like we're family. I could have talked with y'all for hours.

RANDY: Well, we'll talk some more with the rest of you if you'll come back next time. We'll see you again here on "Life Today".

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NONA JONES: I believe that when we release the truth about how we feel and the fact that this thing hurt me, there is a level of freedom because we're inviting the Holy Spirit into the pain.

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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