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Week 46

Randy Robison & Blynda Lane

Chad Williams

“Ultimate Sacrifice”

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

CHAD WILLIAMS: But here's what none of us really knew about that night, was that we were actually being set up the entire time, to get thrown into what I could say was by far the absolute worst circumstances we'd been in on this entire deployment, as we're being set up on an ambush, and suddenly now we're engaging in this gun battle for our lives. We have a saying in our SEAL team though, and it's in our SEAL creed, that we're forged by adversity. And so adversity will either operate as that thing in your life that you allow to cause you to utterly fail, or you will be forged by it.

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RANDY ROBISON: Welcome to "Life Today", I'm Randy Robison. Blynda Lane joins me, and Blynda, I'm excited because today we are honoring our military veterans.

BLYNDA LANE: It is a wonderful day, because my dad was a military veteran, he was in the army, and it's a day where I'm so thankful for his service and for all of those who have served and given their life.

RANDY: Yes, and our guest is a former Navy SEAL, so we're excited about that. Chad Williams has a book called "SEAL of God" where he tells his story, but we invited him here today to tell a story to us.

CHAD: Thank you guys so much for having me on, and it's an honor, and I share the gratitude for all the other veterans out there that have served as well.

RANDY: Explain the title, if you would, of this, because I get the Navy SEAL connection, and the God, there's a story there.

CHAD: That's right, so it's funny because Ray Comfort is actually the one that really spurred me on to write a book, and he told me, "You're gonna write a book and you're gonna call it 'SEAL of God'." And so it's kind of a God thing, yeah, in that sense, and SEAL is

actually an acronym, most people don't know. It stands for the areas that we operate in, sea, air, and land.

To kind of give you guys a feel of what my team was doing on the last deployment I was involved in on land, we were out in Iraq, and we were given the task of hunting down men that make suicide vests and those roadside bombs, IEDs. And while we're out there we're working with a group called the ISOF, which is the Iraqi Special Operations Forces, and one of our goals with those guys is just to teach them how to fight their own fights. So the best way to do that is to train them on base, but then beyond that, actually go outside that wire and fight side by side with them.

And if you can imagine a whole deployment going by, I'd say pretty good because, you know, we've bagged and gagged some pretty bad dudes, we're making this world a better place, but we're coming up on what looked like just enough time on the calendar to squeeze in maybe one more operation, and we weren't really sure if the ISOF was ready for us to be passing that baton of responsibility off to them. So we decided, hey, for this final operation, why don't we try and make it a sort of graduation operation, we'll let them plan the whole thing from the ground up, and we'll be there with them just in case things go bad. And so they're starting from scratch, hitting the streets, and they find this intel on this guy that's an Iraqi policeman, he wears that uniform by day, but at night, back home, as it turns out, he's one of these bomb makers that we're looking for.

And so they present this whole plan to us, how they want to approach the house, get into the house, grab the guy, extract. It all checks out, looks great. They had a very odd request though.

They said, "Hey, we, the ISOF, we feel we're getting shot at more than you SEALs do, and we think we've figured out why." So we're like, "Okay, why?" And they say, "It's the color of your uniforms."

We're like, "Really, the mere color of our uniforms? Not the way we shoot, move, communicate, nothing to do with our tactics, you think it's the mere color of a uniform," and I mean, you could see it on these guys' faces, they were convinced. And so the request was, "Would you be willing, for this final op, to take off your American colored uniforms, and we have a pile of ISOF uniforms for you that you could put on."

So we wind up putting on their uniforms. Their hope is that we would blend in with them so we'd get shot at more with them. We're like, "We'll prove it to you, it's not about the uniforms," but here we are, we're rolling out, and I mean, I blended in, you know, my dark complexion, start growing out a little facial hair.

I remember as I'm making my way out to the Humvee, I'm gonna be behind the big .50-cal machine gun, my platoon mates are laughing and pointing at me and they're telling me, "Hey, Williams, you're starting to blend in with these guys around here now." And so I'm behind that .50-cal, and for anyone watching right now that maybe doesn't know, let's just

say that's a weapon that could really reach out and touch somebody. I've got these night vision goggles on, I'm looking through my green little world, and I'm just kind of going over the mental check, the inventory in my brain of all the "I know"s going off in my mind.

I know where my weapon is at space and time, that means it's ready to go. I know where this guy lives, I've got the plan, how to approach, get in, grab, extract, and one unique "I know" is that this is the final operation, which also means I know, just a matter of days from now, I'm gonna be back in my hometown, Huntington Beach, California, surfing in the ocean. But here's what none of us really knew about that night, was that we were actually being set up the entire time, to get thrown into what I could say was by far the absolute worst circumstances we've been in on this entire deployment, as we're being set up on an ambush.

And suddenly now we're engaging in this gun battle for our lives. And it truly was the team's ability to shoot, move, communicate, and do what we do best in the SEAL teams that led to a pretty obvious conclusion, hey, I'm sitting with you guys right here, right now. But I think it's also worth remembering, it doesn't always work out that way.

You know, we need to remember the fact that our freedoms are not free, and when you consider the costs, what are they paid for in? Well, you could say paid for in the currency of our soldiers' blood out there on the battlefield, and that's a spiritual truth when it comes to eternal freedom as well, you know.

Just kind of shifting away from that earthly freedom, when you consider our eternal freedom, that wasn't free, and that was paid for. You know, earthly freedom paid for in the currency of these soldiers, these warriors' blood on the battlefield, but our eternal freedom, you could say, paid for in the currency of our Savior's blood at the cross.

RANDY: Do you know who set you up?

CHAD: Yes, it was unfortunately the source of information. It was a gun battle, getting shot at from three different directions, taking effective fire, and it was time for us to really do what we do best in that moment, and it did not help that we were wearing, you know, their same uniform, blending in, you know, with the ISOF.

BLYNDA: So, did everyone come home?

CHAD: Everyone came home alive out of that situation. The worst we had was one guy that got shot in the butt cheek, but he was laughing about it, he was like, "It's all right, just get me a little morphine for the ride home."

RANDY: I don't know that I would be laughing in that situation.

BLYNDA: That just speaks to the toughness of SEALs right there, they're just tough as nails.

RANDY: How did you get into this?

CHAD: A good starting point would be really where it all started for me, fresh out of high school, attending a local community college, and at that time I didn't have any real big plans. And that saying is very true, if you aim at nothing in life, you will hit it. Unfortunately, that was the aim.

I have all my peers passing me by, I'm not even making it to the local community college, so I'm just brainstorming, because I know this: I don't want to live a wasted life. I want to do something significant, and that's when the idea popped in my head as I'm sitting in my truck in a school parking lot, like, why don't I go for it and try and be a Navy SEAL? And when I decided that's what I wanted to do, I was all in.

So much so I decided, you know, well, if I'm gonna be a frogman, I guess I don't need to go to school anymore, so I started my truck up and took off out of the parking lot, and I had to break the news to my dad. I set it up as a bad news, good news. Bad news is, I'm failing all my classes.

And of course he wants to know, "All right, what's the good news," well, I was waiting for that. "It's all right, Dad, I got a plan.

I'm gonna be a Navy SEAL." And I mean, I could put myself in his shoes now looking back, like, here's your son that hasn't demonstrated the discipline it takes to even make it to the local community college, and now he's informing you, "Don't worry, I'm gonna go be a SEAL."

BLYNDA: And not to mention, you're picking the hardest thing you could pick. I mean, there's a lot of challenging things out there. I think going for SEALs is like, the hardest.

CHAD: So it made no sense to him, but it made perfect sense to me, I knew I really wanted this, and so he's trying to be that voice of reason, telling me, you know, "Joining the military is not like anything you've ever done. This isn't playing ball or skateboarding or going to the local community college, that when you decide you're over it, you can just stop." He says, "If you join and then you find out it's not for you, or suppose you quit and don't make it, you will still be in the military, and you're probably gonna pick up a job like chipping paint off some boat off the coast of Japan."

And so I remember storming out of that conversation. I know actions speak louder than words, and so I'm just taking those days as I'm preparing, doing all the running and swimming and pull-ups and push-ups, the things I need to do to make it through. And I'll never forget, he invites me back into his room days later, and he says, "So you really want to do this?"

I'm like, "Yeah, Dad, I want to do this." He goes, "Great, I set up a workout for you with a Navy SEAL, check out my computer screen." And I'll never forget looking at the screen, and all it has in this email is a one-liner that says, "Can Chad come out and play tomorrow?"

I'm like, "Play?" Like, "Dad, you met some guy off the internet who says he wants to play with me, and you're arranging this meeting?" And he's like, "Oh, he's a SEAL, son," I'm like, "Okay, if you really want me to."

Well, as it turns out, there was more of a conversation that took place on a phone call prior to that email that I didn't know about at the time, but I'll give you guys the backstory upfront. On the phone, he gets a hold of him and he says, "Hey, my son wants to be a Navy SEAL, but here's the deal, he has no idea what he's signing up for, doesn't know what he's getting involved in, so I'm wondering, would you do me a big favor? Would you be willing to meet up with my son?

And what I'm asking you to do, what I need you to do, is I need you to just crush him, bury him, beat this desire of becoming a SEAL out of him." So he thought about it for a while, and he didn't respond on the phone, but that's what that email was, "Can Chad come out and play tomorrow?" So long story short, I find myself out in a beach parking lot in Oceanside, California, going on a run with this Navy SEAL.

He lets me take off ahead on this trail, says he'll catch up with me, and when he caught up with me, I wasn't ready for what came next. As he just brushes past me and I'm thinking, "He's leaving me in the dust now," that's when he turns around and he puts me into the dust of the earth, I mean, punches me in the stomach. I got the wind knocked out of me, he's jumping on top of me.

I still remember that sound in my head of just the threads of my shirt ripping as he's ragdolling me and screaming in my face, and you gotta put yourself in my shoes for a moment. Remember, the only intel I'm operating on is some guy my dad met off the internet. I'm thinking, like, human predator, like, this guy's got me.

And as he's throwing me around, he's screaming in my face, and I just feel the spit raining down on me. These words came through, and this changed my life. He says, "You want to be a Navy SEAL, you better stay three paces behind me."

And there's just something about that moment where it all clicked, I realized this is it and this is for real, and if I quit right now, I knew I'll forever be a quitter. The way I respond here is going to affect the trajectory of the rest of my life. And so that's where I really affirmed that attitude of, "I'd rather die than quit," and I'll just tell you, what took place over the next handful of miles down that dirt trail, after having gone through SEAL training, which has the reputation for being the most difficult military training in the world, hands down-- I started with a class of 173 guys.

By graduation day, there was only 13 of that original class number still standing around. I could look back on that day with that Navy SEAL Scott Helvenston and say, I never went through a more difficult singular workout. Shouldn't even call it a workout, it was a beatdown session, you know?

But I hung in there with him, and from that point forward, he really took me under his wing. He ended up getting on the phone, we all had lunch together one day, that's where I find out, he's telling my dad, "Look, I know what you want me to do, I gave it a go, but I think your son might have what it takes to make it, I'd like to start working with him." So from that point forward, I got to work with him and I went on in life from just being, I was always "Bubba", you know, to suddenly I became "Junior" as he took me under his wing, and he really became like a second father to me, and Scott's an extraordinary Navy SEAL.

The guy holds all kinds of records. He's the youngest man to ever make it through SEAL training, he completed it at 17 years old. World champion pentathlete, the fastest Navy SEAL in the SEAL training obstacle course.

He was the only man on TV at the time to beat the beast on a TV program called "Man vs. Beast", where he raced a chimpanzee through an obstacle course and pulled ahead of the monkey on the monkey bars. You can't make it up better than that, right?

And so you can imagine what it's like to get trained up by him, so he trained me up, and so I sign up now, I get a date, it's set, I'm gonna be shipping off. Well, he takes an opportunity to put in to go overseas again, so he's hopping on the phone with me, he leaves before I leave, and he says, "All right, Junior, I'm about to go do this thing." He's referring to going off to Iraq.

He says, "I want you to know something I've never told anyone I've ever trained before," he says, "I know you're gonna make it." And to hear those words from my mentor, it meant everything to me, I still don't have the words to this day. But just a handful of days later, I would see him on a TV screen, and he was hanging upside down from the Euphrates River bridge as this group of insurgents had ambushed the vehicle that he was in along with three other Americans, and the media is playing these scenes as I'm watching his vehicle engulfed in flames, this angry Iraqi mob just doing everything they can with sticks and rods to mutilate their bodies and then stringing them upside down, setting them on fire and chanting into the camera, "Fallujah is the graveyard of Americans, Fallujah is the graveyard of Americans."

And needless to say, I'll never have the words to describe what that moment and all the surrounding moments were like. It is one of those things that radically changes you as a human being going forward. We have a saying in our SEAL team though, and it's in our SEAL creed, that we're forged by adversity.

And so adversity will either operate as that thing in your life that you allow to cause you to utterly fail, or you will be forged by it. So that forging process really began for me as I began to reflect on his last words to me, you know, "I know you're gonna make it." So I wrote his name on the inside of my hat, and as you go through training, you wear a hat the majority of the time, and when things got difficult, I would look up at that name on the inside of my hat, I'd just drop my eyes up past my eyebrows and I'd think to myself, "You have to take me out of here in a body bag before I ever quit on that name.

It's not gonna happen," and it didn't happen, and like I said, 173 guys, by graduation day, 13 still standing there, which is by far one of the most fulfilling moments, the happiest moments, but I was not ready for what came next after that. I heard these words by a Christian philosopher over the radio where he says, you know, one of the loneliest moments a man will ever experience, when he's achieved that which he thought would deliver the ultimate, in the end, it lets him down. I went from the highest of highs, to the next day the wind slowly came out of that sail, and everything began to circle the drain and go downhill from that point forward.

I couldn't wrap my mind around why at the time, but it's Jesus's words, "What's it profit a man if he gains the whole world, but in the end loses his soul?" I had my version of gaining the whole world, we all kind of have our own version of it, but the reality was, my soul was not oriented correctly with the Creator, I didn't have any peace with my Creator, so I wasn't gonna experience any peace while I was here on earth without him. I didn't know that was the answer at the time, but looking back, that nails it.

That's exactly what was going on. I get put on SEAL Team 1, I got family, I got friends, like, you did it, you gotta be living the dream. I would play the part on the outside, it's a facade, when in reality I felt like I was a dead man walking.

RANDY: Yeah, so did you grow up in any kind of church home, any--?

CHAD: Yeah, my family would go to church and I just kind of felt like it would just bounce off my head, you know? But it was on March 14, 2007, where I heard this story, of all the stories, the Old Testament story, the story of Naaman. Syrian commander, he's a leper.

He can't get the leprosy off himself. Jesus says nobody during the time of Naaman had ever been healed of leprosy. The guy sounds like he could have been a SEAL, had there been such a thing during his time.

He's this mighty man of valor, but a leper. He's this dead man walking. And then he goes and he sees this prophet that serves the God of Israel.

He gets told to go basically dip himself in the Jordan River seven times. When you come up, you'll have brand new skin. And he's furious, his pride gets in the way.

He's thinking all about just the physical aspect of it, not the spiritual aspect. He's saying, "I've got cleaner waters where I'm from." So he turns, he's leaving in a rage, but if he continues in that direction, it's terminal, he dies.

But he was surrounded by some men that cared about him, and God was able to use those men to persuade him to turn around, and I think that's where the light really came on. It's not about the water, Naaman. You do have cleaner water where you're from.

It's about being humble before the God of Israel. This walk you're about to make is the walk we all have to make, a walk to die to self, it's a walk to your own funeral. So he goes and

does it, and humility, dips himself, believing the God of Israel is gonna come through and do the heavy lifting.

Seven times, comes up, brand new skin like that of a baby. Well, this gets related to the gospel, like, who are you on the outside, what kind of armor are you wearing, like Naaman, when in reality, underneath it all, we all have a disease like Naaman. His was leprosy, our disease, you could call it SIN positive, it's sin.

And we can't get the sin off of ourselves like Naaman couldn't get the leprosy off himself. But Jesus, what he did is he came down into this world, so as Naaman dipped himself, what God did is he dipped his Son down into the world, lives a holy, perfect, sinless life, so not for one split second was he ever a sinner, and the picture that stuck with me was at the cross, Jesus, at the cross, traded skin with you and I. He took our leprosy, as it were, our sin upon himself, so that we could be lavished with God's grace and mercy, paying the penalty of our sin in full at the cross, rising again from the grave, conquering sin, conquering death, and he declares to you and I, "Because I live, you also shall live."

Every other pursuit in life will leave you hungry and thirsty for more. That's why being a SEAL was satisfying for a moment, but then thirsty again. What does Jesus say: "You drink of my living water, you'll never thirst again."

And it was from that point forward the light came on, I became a child of God, and I realized I'm not a SEAL for me. That's like decaf, it just does not deliver. Instead, it's a SEAL for thee, a SEAL of God.

RANDY: You've got a shirt that illustrates that.

CHAD: That's right, and so in the SEAL teams, as I mentioned, you know, if I'm going to be a frogman, we're called frogmen in the SEAL teams, and so in the SEAL teams we wear, there's many variations of it, what we call a bone frog. And so this is a variation of it here on the shirt, and this is to honor SEALs that have shed their blood for our earthly freedom. And on the back of the shirt, it has those familiar words, "Greater love has no one than this, than one that lays down his life for his friends."

Jesus, who said those words, it's John 15:13, but intentionally no Scripture reference, why? Because if you had a Scripture reference there, anyone on the street wouldn't ask, but because it's not there, they ask.

RANDY: They ask about this a lot?

CHAD: Oh yeah, and so they'll tap you on the shoulder, they want to know, what does that frog represent? And I say, "This is SEALs that shed their blood for your earthly freedom," and they go, "I love those words on the back of the shirt too. That sounds familiar, who was that, like, Socrates?"

You go, "No, not Socrates, that's the Savior. And so just as these guys shed their blood for your earthly freedom, the Savior who spoke those words shed his blood for your eternal freedom." And the response is almost the exact same every time: "I never thought of it that way before."

And so it is a real eye-opener to the gospel message, and that's ultimately why we are still here. We're here to know God, and once you know him, to make him known.

I could be a SEAL for Christ, people watching right now could be a stay-at-home mom for Christ, corporate world, construction world. We are still here because he has a purpose for us to go fulfill the Great Commission.

BLYNDA: Amen. I mean, it's so inspiring. I mean, thank you for your service to our country, and thank you for taking the message of truth and grace to all of those who need it, because you're exactly right, there is--.

RANDY: Yeah, and you know, we've just barely touched on this, Blynda, there's so much more in the book, "Seal of God", so if you're interested in that or you know someone who would be interested in that, you can pick that up wherever you get books. But you know, the idea of making God known, that is core here for us, and I believe for many of you as well.

One way we do it is to reach out to those who are in desperate need, and we fulfill that need, and then we tell them why we do what we do. Watch this, and then consider how you can make God known today.

ISAK PRETORIUS: All there is is the dry, burnt-out remnants of the last crops that were here. The dry soil, that is testament to the fact that nothing can grow here. Veronica has brought her child here to the screening clinic here in the Quibala area of Angola today, and you can see, I don't have to describe the condition of this child.

You can see that this child is suffering. But you know, the reality is it's not just a lack of crops. It's not just dry, parched soil.

It's lives. Lives that are being stolen by the lack of food. Not a war, not some human-made crisis.

Simply the fact that there isn't enough rainfall to grow crops to feed their children, and that is what's stealing their lives. This child is suffering from severe malnutrition, why? Because there is no food at home.

Literal starvation, children in these areas that have been starving to death, children dying of malnutrition, many parents telling us, "We don't know what to do, we don't know where to turn, we have done everything we can do. But we can't feed our children." For five years there has been a drought in this country that has meant that mothers like Veronica are not able to grow food for their children, are not able to provide what their children need, and

you can see that this child Samuel is just a representation of more than 250 children that are here today, 250 mothers that have brought their child, saying, "Please, help me.

Help me save my child's life." The solution is food.

The solution is expressing God's heart and extending his hands, and I'm asking you to do that today, please. Give that gift, give the gift of food, give the gift of life.

RANDY: When Isak talks about extending God's hands, we know from Scripture that we are his hands. That's you, that's me, that's us together. The only way we will reach 20 million meals this year, for a beautiful Christmas blessing, is with your help, and we need to hear from you today.

Just to give you an idea, it's around 11 cents to deliver a meal to a child. That means your gift of $44 today will help give 400 meals. A gift of $77 will give 700 meals.

Some of you can give 1000 meals, think about that, 1000 meals to someone in need, with a gift of $110. And I know some of you, you wanna do more than that, you could give 10,000 meals for a gift of $1100, even more. Help us reach that 20 million meal goal this year.

You're going to bless somebody by picking up the phone or going online and making whatever gift God puts on your heart today. And I know as you see the numbers it can be daunting, there's such a great need.

But I want you to see the opportunity here, the opportunity we have. And you know, Blynda, that's what blesses me, is I go, you know, wow, we get to be God's hands and feet.

BLYNDA: It's so true, I hear that video and those cries of those children, they're so piercing in my ear. And I was there, I really got to experience the cries of that child, and you could leave there, you can leave watching that and go, "The need is so great, what could I do?"

Or you could listen to that cry and say, "What I do here, my generosity here, could actually bring life to that child." It is an opportunity, Randy.

RANDY: Yeah, and so don't ask, "What can I do?" Imagine what I can do, because you can do so much.

Join us, and join us right now. Again, go to the phone, go online, make the best gift you can.

ANNOUNCER: This holiday season, many families will gather around tables filled with food, but for mothers in impoverished communities, simply finding enough food to feed their children can be a daily struggle. Through Life's Christmas Meals Blessing, your generosity can help provide 20 million nutritious meals for hungry children. One meal, one child, and one precious life at a time.

Eleven cents, that's all it takes to provide a life-saving, nourishing meal. Your gift of $44 today can help provide 400 meals. $77 will provide 700 meals.

And $110 will help provide 1000 meals for children in desperate need. And with any gift, you may request James Robison's final book, "A Life Proclaiming Freedom", as a thank-you for your support. Discover the freedom James found in Jesus and how you can experience it too.

With your gift of $110 or more, request the "Fruitful and Flourishing" bundle, a beautiful collection of daily encouragement to remind you of God's faithful care and his promise of guidance from Isaiah chapter 58, verse 11. Finally, with your gift of $1100 or more, you will help provide 10,000 meals for children in need, and can request Life's beautiful bronze sculpture, "The Good Shepherd". So please call, write, or make your gift online today.

ISAK: I want you to experience what we are experiencing today. I want you to feel my joy, to understand the gratitude I have in my heart for the fact that we can hand out these bowls of food, because they are not bowls of food, they're bowls of life. We're here and we are able to fill these bowls on a daily basis as long as you continue to partner with us.

As long as you do your part, we'll do ours, and we'll make sure that these bowls get filled, that they get handed out, and that these tummies get filled and these lives get saved. So please continue to partner with us, continue to bring joy, happiness, and life to child after child.

RANDY: We do hope to hear from you today. We really can make this Christmas special for so many, and Blynda, wow, what a blessing, I mean, it's just an extraordinary story of God's work.

BLYNDA: Extraordinary, that's the word that comes to mind. He's just an extraordinary person, and we're just grateful that you're here to tell about it.

RANDY: How can people get in touch with you if they want to follow up with you?

CHAD: So if they would like to get the book, I sign all the copies that go out from sealofchrist.com, so I'll mail it right there to their porch, and the same, they could get the shirt there at sealofchrist.com. I'm also on social media, I'm pretty easy to find. Like, on Instagram, my handle is the same as the book title, sealofgod.

RANDY: Seal of God, Seal of God, wonderful. We appreciate you being here so much and sharing your story, and we appreciate all of you being with us. We'll see you again next time here on "Life Today".

♪♪♪

♪Oh, you can't hear me cry ♪

♪See my dreams all die ♪

♪From where you're standing ♪

♪On your own ♪

♪It's so quiet here ♪

♪And I feel so cold ♪

♪This house no longer ♪

♪Feels like home ♪

ANNOUNCER: Bonnie-Jill Laflin describes how her faith gave her the strength to be a trailblazer for women in professional basketball scouting, tomorrow.

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