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Week 46

Randy Robison & Blynda Lane

Bonnie-Jill Laflin

“Progress, Not Perfection”

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

BLYNDA LANE: You were a Dallas Cowboy cheerleader?

BONNIE-JILL LAFLIN: Yes, ma'am, I wanted to dance for my favorite sports teams, and, you know, just started into the sports world and got into basketball operations.

RANDY ROBISON: Now, were you the first NBA scout?

BONNIE-JILL: Yes, sir, yes, first female NBA scout.

BLYNDA: Because you're also a host and broadcaster, reporter.

RANDY: You have had tremendous success, from the world's standpoint, in your careers, multiple careers. How fulfilling is that?

ANNOUNCER: Next.

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RANDY: Welcome to "Life Today", I'm Randy Robison, great to have you here. It's also great to have my co-host here, Blynda, how are you?

BLYNDA: I'm good, Randy! I am doing really good. I'm really excited about our guest today.

Well, one, I like her name. I've never really heard this name before, Bonnie-Jill.

Laflin, which I like, because it makes me think of laughing. So we're gonna laugh today, Bonnie-Jill, is this okay?

BONNIE-JILL: That's a great intro.

RANDY: Okay, well, okay, I will ask-- Bonnie-Jill, welcome, by the way.

BONNIE-JILL: Thank you so much for y'all having me.

RANDY: I wanna ask a little bit of credentials here--.

RANDY: Not credentials.

BLYNDA: She's very impressive.

RANDY: Yeah, and that's the thing, and I know you're not here to talk about yourself and all the things you've accomplished, but you have accomplished things that no other women have accomplished. Now, were you the first NBA scout?

BONNIE-JILL: Yes, sir, yes, first female NBA scout.

BLYNDA: I mean, that's amazing.

BONNIE-JILL: For the Lakers.

BLYNDA: For the Lakers. You were also, though, before that, you were a Dallas Cowboys cheerleader. And you danced for the Wizards too?

BONNIE-JILL: For the Niners and the Golden State Warriors.

BLYNDA: Warriors, that's it, I mean, this is crazy, like, you're so gifted. So then, from the dance world you went-- is that when you went into the scouting world, because you're also a host and broadcaster, reporter. I mean, is there anything you don't do?

BONNIE-JILL: My cheerleading was almost a way for me to network and to, you know, get into sports, but also being a dancer all my life, I was a professional ballerina, that I wanted to dance for my favorite sports team, so I was able to do that, then got my degree at UT. Hook 'em. Uh-oh!

BLYNDA: You know, we're Aggies in my household.

BONNIE-JILL: I had a feeling, I'm like, she's either an Aggie or a Sooner, but it's okay, we're still friends. Yes, and then got my broadcast journalism degree and, you know, just started into the sports world and got into basketball operations, and you know, kind of, that's always been for me is like kind of being able to be diverse, you know, in your skill set, being

able to obviously be a sideline reporter and do interviews, but also be able to know the basketball operations side and how a team runs and all that stuff.

BLYNDA: So of all of it, what was the most challenging? What really challenged you the most?

BONNIE-JILL: Scouting, just because I was the only female, and so it was very tough because I didn't have another female to say, "Hey, so when this happens, what do I do," you know? And so it was tough, and I was trying to be so much one of the boys, so to speak, that I was almost not being authentic to who I was. I was trying to--I'd wear my hair up in a hat, no makeup, like baggy sweats.

BLYNDA: Did you ever have to say, "Show me the money"?

BONNIE-JILL: No.

RANDY: Wrong sport.

BONNIE-JILL: But I knew what she was talking about, yeah.

RANDY: But who got you into that?

BONNIE-JILL: Oh, so Phil Jackson. Yeah, the late Dr. Jerry Buss.

RANDY: But here's the thing, you have had tremendous success, from the world's standpoint, in your careers, multiple careers. How fulfilling is that?

BONNIE-JILL: It's funny, from the exterior, it seems like everyone goes, "Oh, she's got the perfect life," and I think we're very good, or I'm very good at showing--always putting my best self kind of forward, not letting people know the trials, tribulations, and having those conversations with God, but not letting anyone else really know about that, and that you go through so much. You know, the blood, sweat, and tears is really a real thing, and everyone sees how successful someone is. They don't realize everything it took to get to that point, and the work ethic and sacrifices.

BLYNDA: And not only that, but they don't realize that there's a real life going on behind that screen as well, and that can also be really hard because you're living up to an image, but yet your internal world could be falling apart. Tell us a little bit about--I feel like your story has some of that to it. Tell us when, for you, you realized, "I'm not gonna be able to sustain my life with just what it looks like on the outside, I have to take care of what's happening on the inside."

BONNIE-JILL: Blynda, it's so funny you say that, because we have this ideology in the industry, in sports entertainment, of perfection. And since a little girl, I've been told by my mother, you know, "Perfection and being perfect, that's not attainable," and it's not--it just-- it wears on you to try to, every day, how do I be perfect, because you can't! So there's a lot of pressure, and so I finally started to think, "You know what? I don't have to be perfect, and it's okay."

And to be able to even acknowledge that or even understand that, because I think for the longest time, Blynda and Randy, I think I was like, "No, I can do that, I can be perfect, I can control this narrative," you know, and now my whole thing is, you know, let be, let God. And so, give it to him, and whatever's supposed to happen is supposed to happen, where I'm always trying to control everything, and perfection was one of those.

BLYNDA: So how does somebody who has that control side of them, you're a producer, you like to activate, you like to do things, and that's good, that's a God-given gift, and it's okay. But how do you always keep that surrendered to, "I'm gonna always make sure I'm surrendered to God, I'm doing it God's way, I'm not gonna get in his way," what's that balance?

BONNIE-JILL: It's really hard because every day I have to fight the, "Okay, I'm used to controlling things when it comes to my career and making sure things are done right, but then I don't want to carry that into my personal life." So finally I said, it can make you go crazy, when you're trying to like control everything and then wondering why it doesn't happen the way you want. And finally this past year I've been so good about surrendering, like, you know, you mentioned that word, and I say it all the time.

Surrendering is so important, and that's like surrendering everything, when things--like, right now I'm going through this season where it just seems everything's going wrong, and I'm like, "Okay, there is a reason for this." And you have to, kind of like what I say, play the tape and figure out, "Okay, there is a reason why this is happening and I may not know it yet, but God wants what's best for me. I just have to have that faith in him." And when you're lamenting and all the different things you need to do with God that I work on, and my Bible study and getting, you know, just my Scripture, all of that, it just--I don't want it to be just something I do when I'm just home.

I want God to be with me personally, professionally, all the time. And I think before it was more like, "Dear God, I need this, please help me." And it's like now I'm like, no, how about "thank you for my blessings," right?

Because I don't think we thank him enough for the good things. And so that's something I'm just constantly, like, working through, and just, you know, just trying to stay in that.

BLYNDA: So are you saying when you become a Christian, not all of your problems just magically stop? We still have problems after we--?

BONNIE-JILL: And I feel like even when you get closer to God, your relationship with God, like, for me sometimes the devil starts to work, you know? So that's almost, I don't wanna call it maybe necessarily a test, but it's more of that going through everything and being still in that and being okay with not being okay, if that makes any sense.

RANDY: Yes, it does, yeah. Sheila Walsh has a book by that very title, "It's Okay Not to Be Okay", but you mentioned perfection, and there's a Scripture that says, you know, Jesus says, "Be perfect as as I am perfect," or "as my Heavenly Father is perfect," rather. And I read that and went, "Well, that's absurd, I can never be."

And when you dig into it, you do see the concept of wholeness in that, to be whole. But at the end of the day, I think he's setting the bar really impossibly high because we cannot do it on our own. And so you can achieve a level of perfection in your career, you know, maybe in your home.

There's certain areas where we have control, but perfecting ourselves spiritually is completely impossible. And you go, "Well, that can be discouraging," until you read the rest of the Scripture where God says he's faithful to finish the work he began in us. He will perfect--he will make us whole.

How do we get there? Not by our own striving, but exactly what you say, Bonnie-Jill.

BLYNDA: It's actually freeing, that's so freeing to hear that.

BONNIE-JILL: And staying in that, even when things get tough, I think that's the biggest, you know, people-- you can surrender when things are going good, but when you get through those bad times, to not-- obviously we have emotions, we get upset, but not to be so, you know--.

RANDY: Ruled by them.

BONNIE-JILL: Thank you. Controlled by it, speaking of control, and not to-- and just to pray. I mean, for me it's like, like I said, it's like talking to God all day, all night, not just every now and then.

RANDY: Was there something that happened, a moment or a season, that really opened your eyes to this?

BONNIE-JILL: Yes, actually, my boyfriend, he had an addiction problem, an alcohol problem, and he went to rehab, a Christian-based rehab facility in Oklahoma, and he has always been religious and spiritual, I would say, but really, the way he's been able to stay sober is being in this relationship with God. And I saw what it did with him, and I've always thought I had a really good relationship with God, and I'm like, no, I don't have the relationship I need to have. I have it, but not where everything should be surrounded by God, if that makes sense.

BLYNDA: Because you were seeing a real life change in him.

BONNIE-JILL: Oh, like, and I felt like, "Wait a second, I'm the one who's been really spiritual, religious, and now you're ahead of me," and that, you know, and I think that even though it was such a hard, hard time in my life when he was going through that, it got me to this place.

BLYNDA: You know, it makes me just think, somebody's watching right now, and my heart is kind of going out to you because you're sitting there and you're watching and you're thinking, "I feel so out of control in my life. Nothing that I have done has worked out. I find I'm hitting dead ends all the time," and we wanna remind you right now that we care for you, we love you, we wanna pray with you. There's a number on the screen that you can talk to someone, somebody can pray with you.

But I wanna encourage you that if you would, even with hands open right now, surrender the parts of your life to him that you think you cannot let go of, I promise, in his hands, he can do more with your life than we ever can when we hold it to ourselves. I just wanna encourage you, call that number on the screen, get prayer right now.

RANDY: Yeah, and you remember when we had Andrew Arndt on the program, one of the things he talked about is the fact that our lives, we're all on a journey. We're at different places in our journey. And he talked about how he felt like he had surrendered everything to God, and was feeling good, and then it's like God politely says, "Hey, Andrew, there's this one more area that you really haven't surrendered to me."

And he goes, "Oh, God, you know, I surrender, help me surrender," right, because sometimes we can't do it on our own. And that's really the process, is this daily surrendering what God shows to you. But as long as you're moving in the right direction, even when you fall, you're falling in the right direction.

BLYNDA: And to also take the pressure off that there's no expiration date, and we're in a marathon, and so every step that you take in your relationship with the Lord, every time you spend time with him, you get to know his Scripture, you get to know his character, this is all building something for the life, as long as we have breath, that we're going to be loving him and trying to know him. There's not an expiration date, "I have to know him by this date," or I have to--you know.

RANDY: Yeah, and here's what I love about that process, what I've seen in my life and in others, is that God gives you sort of these markers. And so I wanna ask you, have you seen anything, as you've walked through this process of daily surrender, have you noticed some things changing?

BONNIE-JILL: Oh, yeah.

RANDY: What have you seen?

BONNIE-JILL: I mean, if I didn't get a certain job or if I didn't get, you know, something that I wanted, then I would, you know, catastrophe, crying, everything. Now I'm like, "Well, God didn't want that for me."

RANDY: Peace.

BONNIE-JILL: There's peace. God has something else better planned for me, so I don't have to worry about that and be like, to my agent, "Hey, that's okay," where normally I'd be like, "Well, why, was it not good enough or what do they want," you know, you start to think about everything that you could have done differently, and now I'm like, "That's okay."

RANDY: Has anyone asked you, "What in the world is going on with you, Bonnie-Jill?"

BONNIE-JILL: Yes, yes, well, I've also made my circle smaller, if that makes sense. And not to say that I can't be friends with people who aren't on a, you know, Christian faith journey, but I don't really want people in my close circle to not have the same mindset, if I'm making sense, because I'm doing this every day. I don't want to have people around me and then me get complacent and then find now I'm back to where I was before, where I just go to church, but I'm not actually every day living in--.

RANDY: Yeah, well, when you're selective-- when you're selective about those who influence you, you actually become more effective at influencing others in a wider world.

BONNIE-JILL: And we can talk about Scripture and we can talk about, you know, my daily devotional and all those things that I notice. I notice, if I'm rushing one day and I don't do

my devotional, and maybe I don't do my long prayer, my day is different, if I don't sit still with God and have that peaceful moment in the morning and pray, do my devotional, journal, and then, you know, let's do this.

RANDY: Hey, if I don't take a shower every day, I start to stink. But if you're not washed spiritually, you're not renewing your mind, yeah, I mean, it doesn't-- it's not good.

BLYNDA: I mean, that's the whole Romans 12:2, I mean, we have to renew our mind every day.

BONNIE-JILL: We don't want you coming to set smelling.

RANDY: Spiritually or physically, right?

BLYNDA: And we can't live life alone, I mean, that's why it's so important. I think anybody who's on a journey, a spiritual journey, how important it is that they're in some kind of community. I mean, we tell our kids, "Hey, show me your friends and I'll show you your future," you know?

It's true, you have to surround yourself with people who are going to be speaking life into you and who are gonna be like-minded, and you don't outgrow that. I was telling that to teenage kids, but I would say it to an adult right now. You don't outgrow the need for that kind of spiritual community.

RANDY: So, admittedly, most of our guests that we have on, they're pastors, they're teachers, right? I love the fact that you're sitting here as a successful person in career, in life, and saying, "You know what, I may not have all the answers, but I know who does." And that's a lot of our audience.

A lot of our audience, you know, they may be feeling very successful in their business, in their corporate life and whatever, but still something's missing, something's missing. So if someone is watching right now and they're thinking, "Okay, I can relate to her because everybody else says I'm doing great or whatever, but something's missing," what would you say to encourage that person to really begin to walk this journey of daily relationship with Christ?

BONNIE-JILL: I think we all want to live each day in peace if we can, and the only way it's attainable is through God, you know. So, and when you feel alone and you wanna pick up the phone and talk to your friends, no, talk to God. And that's what I've had to do, and you'd be surprised how much different you feel from the inside out, just living in that every moment.

And you start to realize, yeah, it's great to be successful, but it's better to have some peace in your mind, body, and soul, and spirit, and be able to then live in this journey with God and to enjoy things. Like, I enjoy things about my career that I didn't before because I see all the blessings that God gives, and going outside and seeing my horses and trees and everything that God has given us, and it's like a different lens that you see.

RANDY: Yeah, I love that.

BLYNDA: Yeah, we're just so grateful for, you know, we need people in the culture, visible people, we need people like that, that are willing to stand up for their faith.

BONNIE-JILL: And I mention God a lot when I do interviews, and it's funny how certain people, if they're not on the journey, or maybe they don't have faith in their life at all, they get a little taken aback, and then as you speak they're like, "Well," and if I can help one person to maybe just--I'm not saying, you know, just--at your pace, but if you can eventually really get into that surrendering, it's such a huge, huge difference with your-- not just your life, but everyone around you kind of feels it.

BLYNDA: Peace speaks.

RANDY: Yeah, and you don't have to have your MDiv from--. All you gotta do is tell your story.

BONNIE-JILL: Exactly, and you're gonna have bad days, I don't want to sit here and act like everything's great, but that is what makes it even stronger and even more rewarding, because you're getting through things you normally wouldn't, and you can handle it so much differently because you're surrendering.

BLYNDA: They wanna know, "What's different about you," you know, so we appreciate that you are taking that mantle and saying, "I'm gonna be bold and courageous. It's not popular in my industry, but I'm going to do it anyway."

BONNIE-JILL: And I keep saying progress, not perfection, and I just keep--you know?

RANDY: Progress not perfection, well said. Okay, that's true across the board, and there's an area actually, Blynda, you got to see some of the progress.

There's still a great need because it's not perfect, but we gotta take a little look at where you've been. You wanna tell them where you've been?

BLYNDA: I was able to go to Angola just a few months ago, and changed my life. It was truly incredible to be there, and I saw some really hard things and I saw some really amazing things that "Life Today" has done, and that--.

RANDY: Well, that our viewers have done.

BLYNDA: That's it, our partners, we couldn't do it without you.

RANDY: We wanna take a look at that, and then we wanna invite you into this. Watch this.

BLYNDA: The day before we went to the malnutrition clinic, we held a malnutrition screening in the village. Hundreds of children showed up, and this was my first encounter with severely malnourished children. I had never seen children in such desperate need of nourishment.

When we arrived at the Quibala malnutrition clinic, I thought I was prepared for what I would see. But I don't think anything can quite prepare you to look at a severely malnourished child who has no idea if they will live another day.

ISAK PRETORIUS: The clinics here are where we have children that we can't treat out in the community.

BLYNDA: When we arrived, we first went to an outdoor pavilion. Though there were some faint cries of children, what I will never forget was the silence of most of them. So many were too lethargic and sick to even utter a cry.

As we greeted the moms, I tried to look at each one in the eye, or at least give them a touch that let them know we loved them and we cared. I remember one mom specifically, when I touched her, she was hot with fever.

BLYNDA: She's very, very warm, very warm. So what we're finding out is not only does this precious mama have her son here for malnutrition, she herself is very sick, and so she has to choose between taking care of herself or taking care of her little boy. And you can just see the emotion in her eyes, that her little baby boy is hurting.

And it's just so hard as a mom to watch a baby suffer, and she's doing everything she can for him. He's so precious.

BLYNDA: Once we left the pavilion, I had the chance to visit the rooms where the children sleep and stay. I felt a range of emotions as I walked through the room.

I wanted to cry upon entering, as internally I'm processing the dire level of suffering these children were enduring, but also I wanted to be strong for the moms, believing they would sense the hope I felt for them and their children. My prayer was that they could sense from our hugs and prayers that they were loved and seen, not just by our team, but ultimately by God.

BLYNDA: You know, I watch that back, and it was just a few months ago that I was there, and the emotion is still there because the pain in the eyes of the children, the pain in the eyes of the mother, was so real. And that one mom that I referenced, she ended up having malaria, we found out, and so the desire that she had to put her needs aside to help her child, this is how they live every single day. And we talked about, in that story, that being able to hug them and pray for them was important, but today what we're asking is could we do more than just pray for them?

Could we actually put action to our hope and our love for them? Every single child could be saved if we all together, and you do, you're so good at this, you're so good at hearing the need and reaching the need, but would you, in your generosity, would you do what you can to help us with these meals? These children, they don't just need a meal for a day, they need meals for a lifetime.

Randy, it's sobering to see it in a story form. I mean, I lived it, but to watch it like that, and to remember the pain of those mothers.

RANDY: I'm really glad you got to go. It's one thing to see it on television, and that does convey the seriousness of the situation, but when you're there and you're-- the smells, the touches, you realize that this is real, this is a serious situation, this is an urgent situation.

BLYNDA: Urgent, that is such a good word, Randy. It's urgent, it feels that way.

RANDY: But we can do something about it. We can do something about it, that's what I want you to hear today. We can do something, and by we, I mean you. 20 million meals, that's the goal.

Listen, your gift right now of $44 will provide 400 meals. Your gift of $77 will provide 700 meals. A gift of $110 would help provide 1000 meals.

Every meal means another chance at life. Some of you could give 10,000 meals. That's 10,000 times a child would be able to eat.

That is life, that's what you give today. So please, go online, go to the phone, 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.

RANDY: These children are here because they're hungry. Now, thanks to your support in the Mission Feeding program, they're getting a meal today, they're getting that vitamin-enriched soup mix, and we will continue as long as you'll enable us to, because what we're seeing is where Mission Feeding is, hope lives. There are many areas right now where Mission Feeding does not exist.

We need to take it to them. We need to turn the malnutrition around for them so that they will look like these children: healthy, vibrant, alive. Look at these beautiful faces, another face of success of Mission Feeding, thanks to you.

Let's keep going, let's reach another and another and another. Go online, go to the phone, make the best gift you can. The lines are long, but we can meet the need.

RANDY: We do need to hear from you today. Please go online, go to the phone, make the best gift you can, you will make such a difference, and we say thank you. We also say thank you, Blynda, to our guest, Bonnie-Jill.

BLYNDA: It's been so amazing having you.

BONNIE-JILL: I could talk to y'all forever.

BLYNDA: Well, we're just grateful that you came out. Okay, if somebody wanted to find you, tell us a little bit more about your-- you have a charity that you--.

BONNIE-JILL: Yes, my nonprofit since 2011, it's called Hounds and Heroes and Horses, and we rescue dogs that would otherwise be euthanized and we pair them up with disabled veterans as service dogs, and then we do equine therapy retreats for children of fallen soldiers and disabled veterans as well.

BLYNDA: So where can they find you for that?

BONNIE-JILL: Oh, at houndsandheroes.org.

RANDY: houndsandheroes.org.

BONNIE-JILL: Sorry.

RANDY: No, that's great, we appreciate you being here so much and telling your story. Come back, we wanna see you again next time here on "Life Today".

♪♪♪

APRIL OSTEEN SIMONS: When you run to God and not away from him when life is crumbling, you're teaching your children to run to God.

ANNOUNCER: April Osteen Simons, next week.

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