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Week 47

Randy Robison & Blynda Lane

Melissa Miller

“Daily Dependence”

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

ANNOUNCER: Have you ever had your prayers answered, only to find out everything is harder than expected?

MELISSA MILLER: I don't have what it takes to help my new kids heal, and I don't have what it takes to adapt to my new job. I just remember all the different changes, like, this mindset of, "I'm drowning and I don't know if I have what it takes to get my head above water." Now, I prayed for this, this is everything I prayed for, and yet I'm struggling to, you know, get out of bed and take care of my kids.

ANNOUNCER: Next on "Life Today".

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

BLYNDA LANE: Randy, I'm gonna have a question for you. I'm gonna start, have you ever prayed for something?

RANDY: Yes.

BLYNDA: Have you ever gotten the answer to something and found when you got it, it wasn't exactly like you thought it was gonna be?

RANDY: I'm living that right now.

BLYNDA: In a lot of ways, that's so true.

RANDY: Yeah, and that's an interesting thing. And why do you think that is?

BLYNDA: You know, I do wonder if in some ways we long for an easy life, so what we're praying for is really, "God, answer these prayers so my life becomes easier." It's not always God's heart though.

RANDY: Or sometimes I think what we think we want sounds easier than it actually is, and then when you have to go back in prayer and go, "Okay, God, now what," right?

BLYNDA: It's true, we have--.

RANDY: Someone to answer those?

BLYNDA: Yes, we have someone who can answer a lot of these questions for us. We are so happy to have Melissa Miller. Thank you for joining us.

MELISSA: I'm so happy to be here.

BLYNDA: You wrote a book called "But I Prayed for This!"

RANDY: I like the way you read it.

BLYNDA: Maybe that wasn't the tone that you intended.

MELISSA: No, you nailed it.

BLYNDA: But that's how I--. "But I Prayed for This!"

And the subtitle is "What to Do When Living in God's Yes Is Harder Than You Expected". Tell us about that.

MELISSA: Yeah, well, I got everything that I prayed for. I got an amazing job opportunity across the country, and I completed my family through adoption and ended up being a sibling set from foster care, so it was two rather than one kid, and I already had three kids, so we went from three to five kids overnight, and I did not grow up with an easy life. Like, I've had a lot of really hard things that have been in my life, so you know, this isn't coming from someone who was handed a silver spoon or anything, but I was so disoriented when I realized that I had stepped into everything I had prayed for, and yet it was one of the hardest times in my life, because it was so much change all at once, right?

It was the job, the new move, you know, the new energy in my family, the new kids, and adjusting to all of that change all at once. You know, we pray for big things and we pray for God to use us, and what we don't realize is that with big answers to prayer come big changes, big milestones, right, that also come with big adjustment periods. And so those adjustment periods are really what I talk about in the book, because it doesn't mean you're broken, it doesn't mean that you prayed wrong, if you're struggling, it doesn't mean that you're on the wrong path.

It doesn't mean that, you know, that there's something wrong with you, and I remember having all of these thoughts, like, "God, did I pray the right prayer? Am I on the right path? Is there something wrong with me," you know. And then you feel guilty, because this is what you prayed for, so you feel a little isolating, like a little lonely, a little like, can I really open up about how much I'm struggling and drowning right now and, you know, experiencing panic attacks and all those things. So I think that guilt can keep us in isolation when we are struggling with an answer to prayer that ends up being harder than we expected.

BLYNDA: So you say the word "more than we expected". How much do expectations play into this, because I feel like that's a big thing is that our expectations are misplaced in some way?

MELISSA: Yes, I think unknowingly, a lot of times, we store up these expectations in our head of what an answer to prayer is gonna feel like, what it's gonna be like, or how confident and capable we're gonna be, right? When we step into it, like, I had this expectation like I was gonna be this adoptive mom that was waking up with homemade zucchini bread every morning for my children and having organic smoothies and reading them wholesome literature every morning, and then the first week of placement we all got hit with COVID, all seven of us, and my husband couldn't get out of bed because he had pneumonia, and so I'm trying to show up as my best and I feel like my worst, right? So these experiences of the road being a little bumpier than we expected can be a little disorienting, right?

Instead of feeling confident and capable, I felt like, "God, did you really pick the right person, because I'm way in over my head." Some of the expectations that we have in our head are that, maybe we don't say it out loud, but maybe we won't need God as much if we get what we wanted in prayer, that we'll feel like life is easy, life is smooth, I got this.

And instead I felt the opposite, and I can look back now and think, wow, that's beautiful that I would need to depend on God during that season more than ever before, but when you're in it, you're like, "God, help!" And yeah, you're thinking, "Maybe there's something wrong with me."

RANDY: I'm wondering if you've experienced what, frankly, I've experienced, which is, you know, it's a lot easier to, in my sports world, armchair quarterback a situation, or to maybe wish you could have this or have that, or "if I just had that," or "if I was in that position" or whatever. And so you pray for it, and then it happens, and then you realize, as you said, God, actually, I need you now more than ever. Like, I have the responsibility, you're talking about this responsibility of this family.

Do you think, I mean, he knows that, I know he knows that. Do you think that he allows us sometimes to feel overwhelmed with what he gives us so that we'll lean into him even more?

MELISSA: I absolutely do, yeah, I think it's such a humbling experience in the best way to look back and say, we need God just as much in the highs of life that we do in the lows. Like, we never get to this point where we're like, "I'm good, I don't need God anymore," and there's so much beauty in that, but it's something that's really easy to forget.

And sometimes we think that that dependence means that it's bad somehow, that somehow we should feel more confident or capable, and all throughout Scripture, that is not the case. He's calling people to unknown territory and to depend on him every step of the way.

BLYNDA: But you talked about feelings, I know in part of the book that I read, you highlighted that feelings though aren't always final, so if you are feeling overwhelmed, "God, what have I done," all of those emotions that you felt, some of that you had to remind yourself, "I'm not going to actually lean into these feelings, I'm gonna lean into truth."

MELISSA: Yes, I know that that seems like such a simple truth, like, your feelings aren't final. Like, that's so basic, right? But when you're in a fog, when you're in survival mode, when you are struggling to make it through your next day and you're overwhelmed with what I call change fatigue in the book, where you're adapting to big changes all at once, sometimes you need that reminder that these are feelings and my feelings are temporary, right?

This is an adjustment period, and the adjustment period doesn't last forever. I will find my footing again, God is going to be faithful every step of the way, and he is the unchanging God when everything is changing, right? Like, he's the one that I can depend on when everything else feels shaky, including my own feelings, right?

And so that was such a comforting truth to know that my feelings wouldn't last forever. And there's actually a funny story behind how I came to that conclusion, was that my grandma invited me to do a cruise to Alaska, and she ended up inviting me to go on the world's largest, tallest zip line. And I am not a thrill seeker, I am a bookworm, and I thought she was joking, so I played along with the joke.

BLYNDA: You said this is your grandmother?

MELISSA: My grandma, my grandma. I know, I thought she was joking, so I was like, "Yeah, that's funny, let's do it." And then until we're at the ticket counter buying tickets, I realized she's not joking, and I was like, "No, no, no, Grandma, I can't, I can't do this."

So the lady at the counter says, "You're not gonna let your grandma, you know, do this by herself, are you?" And so then I feel guilty, and I think, "I'll just buy the ticket, but then when I get to the top, I'll back out."

RANDY: Oh no!

MELISSA: I know. So, two gondolas to get to the top, it's taller than the Empire State Building. I do not do heights, I do not do thrill seeking.

We get up there and I said, "Hey, I'm not really planning on doing this, how do I go back?" And he said, "Well, actually, you can't go back because it's a half a mile trek back to, you know, the gondolas, and you'll get attacked by bears." So I was like, "I guess I'm doing this."

BLYNDA: If your two options are bears or zip lining, I guess you're choosing zip lining.

MELISSA: But they said, "It's only 90 seconds from the top to the bottom, it's only 90 seconds."

RANDY: That's not necessarily good news.

MELISSA: That's a good point, good thing I didn't think of it at the time. But I'm thinking in my head, "I can survive anything if I know it's not gonna last forever. I can survive it if it's a short time, it's only 90 seconds," and I kept saying, "It's only 90 seconds," and I took that back to my hard season.

"This doesn't last forever, I can make it. I can make it through," you know, "my feelings aren't final." And so that funny story with my grandma ended up becoming a little truth that I could hold on to to say, you know, Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever, but my feelings are not, right?

BLYNDA: That's so good.

RANDY: You know, my brain would go, "It's not the 90 seconds you gotta worry about, it's the hitting the ground at the end that you gotta worry about," and I think a lot of us do fall into this living in a worry imagination. And really when you when you go, "Okay, I'm gonna trust God in this situation, I'm gonna take my feelings, my concerns. I'm not gonna be anxious, I'm gonna focus on what he tells me to focus on instead." That's, I think, how we get through a lot of these difficult times.

Did any of that come into play for you as you were working through your family situation, the illnesses, the COVID, all that kind of stuff? Did worry worry you?

MELISSA: Definitely, I remember feeling very stuck at one point thinking, "I don't have what it takes to help my new kids heal, and I don't have what it takes to adapt to my new job. I don't know how to adapt to life in Florida. This is a different planet from where I grew up in the Pacific Northwest." Like, you know, I just remember all the different changes, like, this mindset of "I'm drowning and I don't know if I have what it takes to get my head above water." And I'm not usually that person, I'm usually such a resilient person.

So I remember my mom, you know, being with me, my adoptive mom, and she was in the car with me when I had just tears rolling down my face saying that out loud for the first time, "I don't think I can do this," you know, and just worrying about the future, like you

said. And she said, "You can and you will," and she is the one who took me in when I was 14, and so she knows this road of staying with someone for the marathon journey of healing and watching them, one day at a time, become the person that God created them to be.

BLYNDA: For those that are watching, tell us a little bit about your childhood, because you did come from some pain, and you've overcome a lot to be where you are today, and now it will even sound sweeter, I think, to those watching when they know that you ended up adopting after being adopted yourself.

MELISSA: Yeah, I was 14 when it was no longer safe for me to be in my home, and my best friend's family became a refuge for me, and we weren't sure how long that would last, and I remember they had talked about adoption at the time, but I was like, "Oh, I don't--." I feel like in that moment, I was afraid that if they stuck with me through the long haul, they would learn that I'm really not perfect, and then they would regret their decision. And I can relate to maybe my kids now feeling that way, right?

Like, you're just afraid of rejection, right? You're afraid of that, and so I was like, "No, no, no, we don't need to make it official," but here we are decades later, and she's still my mom, and my sister, who was my best friend at the time, is still my sister, and you know, family sometimes comes in the most unexpected ways, that God provides that place of belonging. And so to be able to do that for kids that needed belonging and kids that were coming from a hard place, you know, and around the time that we were fostering and adopting, learning that there were kids sleeping in social workers' offices because they didn't have enough foster homes, learning that over 50% of the homeless population have a history in foster care, and to think that I could have been maybe one of those statistics, but because a neighbor, a friend, you know, from school and their family cared about me enough to take me in, I didn't have to become one of those statistics.

And so that's, you know, what I'm able to offer these kids, even though I am the imperfect mom, making my way through, crying on the bathroom floor, you know, asking God for help daily, they are loved. Like, they are loved, and they never asked for perfection.

RANDY: Yeah, one of my dad's quotes, one that I carry with me today, is "God uses imperfect people to accomplish his perfect will." And I love that. He adopted me at birth, so yeah, adoption, and it's a beautiful thing when we step out into obedience, not perfection.

God will do the perfecting. He's faithful to finish what he started in our lives, but we step out in obedience. I do want to hit one thing real quickly in your book.

You talk about four seasons of blessing, and I think people can connect with these, whether they're in them now or they've been through them, or they're going into them in some kind of phase. But quickly hit these four seasons that you define.

MELISSA: Yeah, I'm so glad you mentioned that because that has provided language for so many people who have read the book that said, "Thank you for giving me language to describe my experience, because when I was going through it, I knew I wasn't hopeless, I knew I wasn't depressed, and I knew I wasn't facing a crisis or a tragedy, so what is this, right? What is this crazy season that I'm going through right now?" And you know, the four seasons really came from a lot of research in Scripture, a lot of research in science, a lot of interviewing other people and just having them describe their experience of what they were walking through. And so, the first season is a season of blooming, and I think that's what we all expect an answer to prayer to feel like or be like, right?

The prayer of Jabez, it says, "God granted his request," period, and sometimes it is like that. Sometimes it's those sweet seasons of life that we wish we could push pause on and wish we could last forever, and our feelings are flourishing and it's all good.

BLYNDA: We can't just stay there?

MELISSA: I know, right? Can't we just push pause? And then sometimes I think this is where maybe the disorientation or disillusionment can come in, we can find ourselves in one of the other seasons.

The season of building, which if you read the book of Nehemiah, that is a season of building, right? God answered his prayer, he stepped into God's yes, and it was a lot of building, a lot of rubble, a lot of opposition, a lot of work, and the workers were growing weary. And I think that there's so many seasons of life that people can relate to that, where it's like they step into their dream job or their dream career or even motherhood, and it's like, "Wow, this is a lot of work."

So the book of Nehemiah is a season of building, and a lot of people can relate to that. And then there's the season of balancing, which is everything's right on the outside, and everything feels off on the inside. And you know, think about, like I mention Moses, you know, he didn't feel maybe like a leader should feel when he was chosen, right?

He felt insecure, inadequate, and you know, the Israelites got what they wanted in prayer, and yet they find themselves missing their old life. And so these kinds of, you know, experiences, you know, I think about a lot of postpartum moms, I had a friend who was researching post-wedding depression because she's like, "I don't understand why I feel this way," and I unpack all of that in the book. And so those experiences can be confusing because you're thinking, like, "What's wrong with me, why am I broken," and you feel guilty.

And then there's the bittersweet seasons, which is when you got what you wanted in prayer, but something really hard comes right along with it, you know, and something really unexpected. My friend Hannah, you know, she gave birth to a baby boy, which was the cry of her heart, but then she also almost died in surgery having an emergency hysterectomy. So she wakes up and she has the gratitude for her baby boy in one hand, and then the grief

of "I'll never be able to give birth to another child," and to have those simultaneously, you know, is a confusing experience, to have grief and gratitude.

And I talk about the Scriptures around that in the book, and, you know, I think if we can identify what season we're in, sometimes that just helps us feel less alone. "Oh, wow, there's a word for it. Someone else has been through this, I'm not alone." So I feel like it just helps provide a little bit of language and context so that you can find your way forward.

BLYNDA: And then the idea there, like I even am thinking about there was a season where my husband was transitioning out of a job, and that transition happened three months before my daughter got married. So I actually really know what you mean about that bittersweet season where all of a sudden you're feeling some of the high highs in life and the low lows, and what that makes me think is a lot of times we talk about seasons, and it's like, "Oh, if I could just get out of this season into a new season, that might feel easier," or whatever, but what I've realized in life, actually, is in a season, I have a lot of good and a lot of hard that parallels together.

I don't really always-- I don't get to a season where it's all good and a season where it's all bad, I feel like they coexist a lot. So how do you encourage, you know, somebody who's living and walking in a season that's hard and good?

MELISSA: Yeah, that's such a great question, and it's so true, right, it's like life is never linear, and usually we are holding those two truths at once. And I think that I went to London once and I was around a bunch of different cultures for a work event, and I never experienced that before, and one of them stood up and he said something I'll never forget. He said, "I know we have a lot of happy-clappy Americans in the room, but we need to be honest," and that theme carried through the whole week where I realized to other cultures we only like the happy--they said we sound like motivational speakers, which I thought was so funny.

BLYNDA: I don't see anything wrong with this, I like happy-clappy.

MELISSA: I like happy-clappy too, but I think giving yourself permission to admit that you are in that season of holding two truths, and one doesn't have to cancel out the other. Doesn't mean that you're not grateful, it doesn't mean that you're not enjoying your new blessing, it doesn't mean that you're, you know, just trying to, you know, dismiss one or ignore the pain of something, you know. It means that there are two truths that can exist at the same time, and we see a lot of scriptural reasons for that.

RANDY: Yeah, the thing that keeps me grounded when I remember it is that whatever season I'm going through, God promises to be with me, you know. The beauty of just the name, when Christ was announced, of Emmanuel, God with us. And so whether I'm getting the answer to a prayer and I'm on a high, or I'm not getting an answer or I'm just, life.

Life just can be messy. God's with us, and that promise, it transcends every season, right? It's good, okay.

Some people may be connecting. If you're connecting with what Melissa is saying, you might wanna pick up her book. In fact, we'd like to send you her book when you will do something that we think is really expressing the love of God and that is reaching people that are in a bad season, I would call it, you know.

They're in a tough time, and they need help, and you know what? We can be the answer to their prayer, as my dad would often say.

I'd like you to step into that for just a moment, and then see if God would lead you to reach out and join what we are calling the Christmas Meals Blessing. Watch this.

[children crying]

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ANNOUNCER: There is an alarming food crisis affecting almost 13 million children in southern and eastern Africa, according to UNICEF. Because of the prolonged drought, these regions have experienced massive crop failures, which in turn means hunger that turns into malnutrition, and malnutrition, if not treated, means certain death, particularly among young children.

ISAK PRETORIUS: I mean, this little life is fighting a battle of life and death, and we're doing everything we can to try and save this child's life, but this child is not one, this child is many. This child actually represents so many that are not in the clinic, many that die in villages without us ever even hearing or knowing about it, they just become another statistic, another child that died of malnutrition. We've got to be out in the villages, we've got to be where malnutrition starts.

This is where malnutrition ends. It either ends with us saving their life, or it ends with a child losing its life.

ANNOUNCER: The tragedy of children losing their lives because of the lack of food is what drives our commitment to our Mission Feeding program. A simple bowl of vitamin-enriched soup made available to children on a daily basis will save lives.

BLYNDA: This brings me so much joy, Isak, that I get to sit here today and be a part of feeding this village. But we need to continue to feed more villages. There's more children that go to bed hungry every night in these villages, and we've talked a lot about the need for it to be constant and consistent, and we won't stop until every child has a warm meal.

Please, will you continue to give? We need your help, God bless.

RANDY: Well, you know, I know that's hard to watch, and Blynda, it's hard to be there. But yet, you know that we can do something about it, we have the solution.

BLYNDA: We have the solution, I mean, when you-- I got to actually hold the bowl and give it to a child, and there's nothing like seeing the look on their face when they get this warm bowl of soup. And we cannot save everyone, I've heard you say that before, we can't.

But we can save the one, and we can do, if we all work together, we can make such a difference. And we might not be able to ease all the suffering in the world, but we sure can ease the suffering of some.

RANDY: We can, and you know, I think that's all God asks of us, is to do what you can. And the beauty is that we know we can do so much. And the statistics, you know, Isak talked about a child becoming a statistic, and that's a terrible way to have to look at it, but the numbers are great when you talk about malnutrition, and then somewhat starvation.

The numbers are great when we talk about our goal, 20 million meals, but what that represents is that one child in need, that one child who, without intervention, will not eat anything today, or will possibly eat something that has no nutritional value to it, and so the cycle just continues. But Blynda, you've also seen the positive side of that, because we know when we go in, with the support of our viewers, and we provide those meals, it turns things around rapidly.

BLYNDA: Because you say yes, because you partner with us, because you become a friend of Life Outreach, it changes lives, I have seen it. I have seen a village that had none of our help, none, and it is destructive and devastating and so sad.

And I got to see villages that had our Mission Feeding program. It's transformed, I'm telling you, Randy, it's the most transforming thing to see.

RANDY: It really is, and you know what, people are there right now. They're in the field, ready to serve food to children in need. We just need you to provide some of those meals.

400 meals could be provided with a gift of $44. If you're able to give $77 today, that would help provide 700 meals, and the hope that that represents. $110 right now will provide 1000 meals.

A gift of $1100 would help provide 10,000 meals. That's the power of us just saying, "Yes, Lord, we'll follow your example. Yes, I'll give what I have." It may not seem like much, but man, when we give in obedience, God can multiply it.

Will you go online or go to the phone, make the best gift that you can? I can promise you, it will be life-changing, it will be life-saving, so please do it, and do it right now.

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: I do hope you'll go online, go to the phone, make the best gift you can, you can be such a blessing in someone's life today. And you know who's been a blessing in our life today?

BLYNDA: Melissa Miller has, but I feel like everybody needs this book, but if you get it, you have to say it like this: "But I Prayed for This!", that's how I feel. Thank you for--where can they find you if they want to know more about what you're doing?

They can go on melissamillerwriter.com and you can find all the places. I love hanging out on my Substack, and the link is right there on my website as well, so, love to connect.

RANDY: Thank you for hanging out with us today.

MELISSA: Thank you for having me.

RANDY: And we appreciate you hanging out with us today. Please come back, we'll see you again next time on "Life Today".

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JAMES ROBISON: If what people think of you keeps you from going on with God, lay it down!

ANNOUNCER: A classic sermon from James Robison, tomorrow.

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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