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Week 41: Rescue LIFE

Randy Robison and Tammy Trent

Bianca Juarez Olthoff #1

In the studio

TAMMY: Hi, everybody. I'm Tammy Trent and this is Randy Robison. Welcome to *LIFE Today*. Randy, we have a great guest today.

RANDY: We do. She's been on before and people loved her.

TAMMY: I've never met her before but she is a firecracker! I went online because I always do that when I'm prepping for a show and getting to know somebody. And I thought, I cannot wait to talk to this amazing girl that has a brand-new book out, *Grit Don't Quit*. Anybody with the title *Grit Don't Quit*, you ought to lean in for a listen.

We are here with Bianca Juarez Olthoff. You know I did it! Did I do it?

BIANCA: So good! You brought the Hispanic, you brought the German. It's like an homage to my name. I'm so proud of you.

TAMMY: There were so many accents there that I brought. I don't know how I did it. I like you so much! And when I'm done, I'm going to say I love you, I know. So what I'm going to say right now, is I like you so, so much. You have such a passion. Tell me also about this new book. It is not your first, is it?

BIANCA: No, it is not my first. This is my fourth book. This comes out of a lived experience. If I'm honest with you, I thought, wow! The Lord has graced me to live

through a lot. But now I'm in a new season that requires a whole other level of grit and resilience.

So it is birthed out of a place of knowing but it is also birthed out of a burden for people who might feel like they have taken a couple of hits in life, they feel maybe like they're on the mat of life or maybe they want to throw in the towel. Maybe they're committed to the things of God but then they're asking the question of when will the pain stop? I believe God, I believe his promises, but like when is this going to end? It just feels like there is this spirit of resignation. Like people are just wanting to phone it in and call it quits.

My husband and I lead a church in Orange County, California and we saw a lot of people give up. And so this is a burden, this is a blessing, and this is putting words to not just let's define resilience, let's define endurance or perseverance, but really how do we build grit? And it's very practical. And I want people to walk away with the understanding of this is how I get back up when I feel knocked down.

RANDY: I like that you use the word *grit*. We've been talking about this. It is a very colorful and descriptive thing. But is this based strictly on the experiences of people you know or have you been in places where you wanted to quit?

BIANCA: I have been in places that I have wanted to quit multiple times over. And I'm in a season now where I have gone back and done multiple edits to the book and I realize how much this was a blessing for me.

Again, this is not necessarily about my life in its entirety. I wanted to weave in scripture and story and science. And so using the life of Paul, the apostle who I refer to as my Bible boyfriend, everyone can have a Bible boo, and this man, I love him. And my husband is okay with it because I can have a crush on a dead guy. So we're fine. But Paul, the apostle, typified resilience and grit. The man was stoned. He was accused. He was shipwrecked. He swam up on a salty seashore in Malta. The man endured so much and

yet so much of our Christian theology, so much of the how-to of following Jesus was framed by this man's pen, from his life and his words. I really, really wanted to lay the theological foundation for how and why we get back up.

TAMMY: When did you realize you were a girl of grit? I mean tell me like when you talk about the challenges you faced, what was your toughest challenge that made you rise up and say, I am not quitting. I have been made for something more than this right now. I'm going to fight through this. I'm going to equip myself and I'm going to get on the other side of this. And I want to tell other people how they can do it too.

BIANCA: That is an amazing question. I'm going to answer this, I'm also going to include that there might be someone out there that is like, well, I didn't endure some massive hardship, I didn't go through trauma. I don't necessarily feel like I'm down in the dumps. But the truth of the matter is, is that there is capital T, Trauma, and lowercase t, trauma. We all, whether it is the death of a dog or the death of a parent, whether it is an addiction to pornography or a loved one who is facing addiction to drugs, we are all facing this primary, secondary, and tertiary trauma, trial and tribulation. So I don't want anyone to listen and feel like oh, no. That's not for me. It is! Let's be honest about some of the pain we've endured, and how we bounce back after we've been knocked down.

For me personally, I'm a daughter of immigrants. I'm a first-generation American. I was illiterate. I couldn't read, write, or spell until the age of about 12. I was morbidly obese, raised in the concrete jungle of East Los Angeles, California, and I think statisticians easily could have written me off in the category "highest prone to failure." So there's that component.

By the grace of God, I made a big—the funny thing is you've got to be careful about the promises you make God. I promised God when I was ten years old, I said, if you give me words, because I couldn't read, said if you give me words, I'll give you my voice. Here I am all these years later as a podcaster, a writer, a preacher, a pastor, a Bible teacher, and I'm so grateful that that resilience allowed me to be who I am today and what I'm doing

today.

But even just all through the course of high school, one of the stories I included in the book was I ran track. What possessed a 5' 2" Mexirican to run hurdles? I don't know! But my mom said as Christ followers we can do all things in Christ. I don't think that's what Paul meant, Mom! Jumping over hurdles, I don't think that's what he was referring to. But thanks, Mom for the theology tip. But I fell over every single hurdle—hurdle number four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten.

So to answer your question, how did I realize I was a resilient girl? That was the impetus, I just didn't know it. It wasn't until my coach came up to me afterward and said, "I'm so proud of you. You didn't quit. You ran your race."

I looked at her and said, "I could have quit?"

And so this whole thing is birthed out of if we don't know quitting is an option, we will persevere. So I think that this is just a manual and a how-to of like what do we do when quitting is not an option? You can't quit on your kids, you can't quit your job all the time. So what do we do?

TAMMY: And staying down wasn't an option for you if you fell off of every hurdle. You also got up. Because that wasn't an option either. So something was already birthed in you, some mentality of like I don't quit. I might get knocked down but I don't stay down. I keep moving.

RANDY: You strike me as someone who has a little bit of an inclination to be like, okay, fine. You knock me down? I'm going to get back up just to show you. Right? I know I'm that way a little bit. But some people struggle with wanting to even get back up. Do you have any insight for the person who has been knocked down or who has fallen down on their own and they're like, you know, I know I'm supposed to get back up and maybe you're going to tell me how to get back up, I don't know if I want to get back up. Where

would you get that motivation?

BIANCA: I empathize deeply with that person because, at my core, I am that person. I think I read very resilient but that has been rooted in an understanding of who God is, not a personality trait or even a discipline. So in this season of my life, I have to remind myself that this strength isn't my own. And there are a lot books and psychological research and metrics on what is resilience and what is grit and how did we get back up. But really, the crux of it is Romans 10, what Paul writes, that the spirit that resurrected Jesus from the grave is alive in me and is alive in you and you. And if that is the fire and the ember inside, I can't help but get back up, even in those moments where I just don't want to. So I empathize deeply. It is a decision, a choice.

RANDY: That's important. Because we can make that decision.

BIANCA: Absolutely! Absolutely! That's the language that I want people to hold on to, just one more day. God grace me for one more day. It's one step in front of the other. In my strength, I can't do this God but, in your strength, I can. And I'm depending on your strength, the strength of your spirit, you promised me that you will never leave me, you'll never forsake me. That greater is he that is in me than he that is in the world. I'm a royal diadem. That I am a chosen elect generation, as First Peter tells me. That you have called me and fashioned me for good and not for evil, to give me a future and a hope as Jeremiah 29:11 says.

So sometimes, it's not a characteristic or a personality trait, but it is a decision to say I am going to get back up because like Paul said, I'm more than a conqueror through Christ who's called me. That's what I want people to hold on to. This is not an anthem of something easy for me. This is an anthem which I claim every day myself.

TAMMY: Chapter seven, "Train your brain." Tell me about that. I love that!

BIANCA: Can we geek out over some science? Okay, okay. So I like data, I like geeking

out. And I started studying neuroplasticity and how we can retrain our brain. Negative thoughts and positive thoughts are like Velcro and Teflon. So a negative thought sticks like Velcro. It is easy to believe the negative. But do you know what is hard to believe? The truth and the positive; are like Teflon. So I could say a compliment, Tammy, you look stunning. Your blue eyes are as crystal as the water in the ocean in California because the green makes your skin just pop. And you could hear it but because of the lies that you've believed for so many years, it won't stick, it will slide right off like a fried egg of a Teflon pan.

TAMMY: Or like I could receive it for a moment, and you're right, I walk out of here and go, oh—

BIANCA: You see yourself in the mirror or you listen to a comment on social media or you see a supermodel in the magazine and you will easily believe Velcro and negative thoughts rather than believing what is right and true.

TAMMY: Constantly! And again, we can choose to live in that or how do we train our brain differently?

BIANCA: Our brain is like the horse and we are the jockey. The horse will go where the jockey tells it to go. Our brain will go where we tell our brain to go. Now there is going to be someone out there that's like, what is this? Is it manifesting? No! It is biblical. It is rooting God's truth in our hearts.

But I'm not going to tell you, Tammy, you're a supermodel! Tammy, you're amazing! Tammy, you're a millionaire. I'm going to tell you what the truth of God's word says. So I'm going to train my brain with the truth of God's Word and that's where transformation comes. People are talking so much about transformation right now. Transforming our waistline, transforming our academia, transforming our finances, but the truth is, the most powerful thing you can do for yourself is train your brain.

RANDY: You have a great story about a woman named Mia that just puts a punctuation mark on that point. Would you tell us that story? I loved it.

BIANCA: So a couple of years ago, I was working for an anti-human trafficking organization, a global organization, and loved it, for a number of years. But I couldn't shake that I was supposed to go to prison. But there was something inside of me, I had this holy hunch, that I had to go into prisons. While there, it was our third conference, and towards the end of the conference I'm done preaching, I even brought in a live worship team, and it was a blast, essentially.

Well, an inmate stands up. She's 6'1", very strongly built, wearing her prison garb. She comes over and says, "Can I have the microphone?"

You know what you do when a 6'1" inmate asks for a microphone? You say, "Absolutely! Go ahead. Yes!"

I didn't know what she was going to say. I didn't know if she could sing, I didn't know anything. Well, she went on to freestyle rap over the room. And it lit up the entire prison pod. I mean the inmates are standing up. We're worshipping Jesus. And then she had this hook. It was like the medium phrase of this song. And she started with this phrase, "It's just me and Jesus, pick it, pick it. It's just me and Jesus." And the whole prison pod erupted with us singing this chorus.

At the end of the day, no matter what people tell us, no matter what people say, no matter what we have or what we don't have, it is just me and Jesus. There is this beautiful raucous roar. We gave each other a hug and I thanked her for her ministry. And I told her she was a worshipper wherever she was.

Well, the thing about prison ministry is that you don't know if you're ever going to encounter that person ever again. Fast-forward three years later, I was speaking at a conference here in Dallas, Texas and there are 8,000 women in the arena. And I had just

finished. There was a line of security and they were trying to usher me out when I heard this, "Bianca!" This scream coming from a person in the distance. I couldn't make out her face. She was wearing a lime green volunteer shirt. I knew she was a volunteer because all the volunteers had on lime green t-shirts. And I waved. I didn't know who she was so I just waved. And I turned and was walking away.

She said, "Bianca!" I turned around and I wave again. And it was the third time where she said, "It's just me and Jesus!"

And I turned around and the security guard says, "Do you know who that is?"

I said, "I absolutely know who that is."

We ran into each other. We embraced, we hugged. And she said, "It's just me and Jesus!" The words that were imparted into our lives for that women's conference have been my anchor. And that day, what started as a freestyle rap released so many of my friends in the prison pod.

"I went to sign up. I've been following you online ever since I've been out. And I went to sign up for this conference but all the tickets were sold out." This conference sold out in an hour. So she said, "I've got to find Pastor Bianca." So the only way she could get in was by volunteering. And she prayed that she would have an opportunity to connect with me. And as God would serendipitously put it, she is in the back and I hear, "It's just me and Jesus!"

What a beautiful depiction of the truth of God's Word literally washing her mind anew, washing her mind clean, and giving her a song in her heart that hasn't left me to this day. So when I write these words it is not just for the privilege or the pretty or the perfect or the polished. It is for those that are in poverty, whether that is emotional poverty, relational poverty, or financial poverty. We just feel like I could have the whole world! But my soul is not at peace because I know that there is something more in me. And I just

want to hover over that person like I hovered over Mia and I say, "*Grit Don't Quit*. It is just you and Jesus. So get back up and don't quit until you find the freedom that you've been searching for." For Mia, it was freedom on the outside but for many of us, it is freedom to be who God, Jesus Christ has called us to be.

RANDY: Love it!

TAMMY: It is just me and Jesus! Wokka wokka wokka wokka.

BIANCA: Yes! Yeah!

TAMMY: Was there ever a time when it's appropriate to quit? Or okay to quit?

RANDY: That's a loaded question.

BIANCA: It is! It's layered.

TAMMY: I think she's got good answers.

RANDY: You know what?

TAMMY: Should we talk about it later?

RANDY: We're almost out of time.

TAMMY: That's true. So maybe on another show?

BIANCA: Let's hook them! Let's do another show because this is a good one.

TAMMY: It is a good one. You're right.

RANDY: It is a good one. But just to put sort of a cap on the conversation today, and we'll save that for another program. It will be good. You'll want to see how much of not quitting in the grit is perspective.

BIANCA: Resilience is a choice. Grit is a decision and whether people get the book or not, at my core, my publisher is going to hate me saying this, but I'm going to say at my core, if you hold to these three things, these are three hallmarks of people who are resilient. And we talk about resilient people think like well does resilience equal success? Maybe not as the world defines it because I don't think people would look at Paul living his last dying breath in a prison and find that successful in our modern day. But his success was honoring the God call upon his life, and the success that we get to walk in the wake of. The path that he has paved with his resilience, that is success.

So here's three hallmarks of very gritty resilient people. Perspective: Perspective is an honest evaluation of reality that is rooted in hope. So we could say this situation stinks. This looks hopeless. But my hope isn't in the situation, my hope is in God.

In addition to having good perspective, gritty resilient people, we have the ability to pivot on a dime. When all the walls of Jericho look like they're being erected in front of you, you find a way to go around the walls until they fall down.

And then after that, it's finally identifying the purpose in the midst of the pain. A lot of this work comes out of an amazing therapist that was in the Holocaust. He realized that those who survived the holocaust and went on to live lives that were thriving had an understanding of purpose. And so when we give people purpose and we walk in our purpose, it helps us understand the pain. It doesn't diminish the pain, it doesn't erase the pain, but it allows us to deal with the pain so that the pain fosters something beautiful inside of us. And that pain could be the fodder to fire the purpose that God is calling us to.

RANDY: So good! Okay. Your publisher will appreciate this. We would like to send this

book to you if you request it when you participate in something that is really, really important, Tammy. Something very close to our heart.

TAMMY: Very important. When I think about Bianca talking about the pain there are a lot of people walking in pain right now. We have been with many of them. We have seen many of them and we want to be a hope. We want to be a light to them right now. Why don't you take a minute and watch this where you could also be light and hope to these.

On the mission field

ANNOUNCER: The threat most often materializes out of the blue targeting those who are innocent and unaware.

Open Captions

>> One morning, my mom wasn't home. A man came to the house. He offered to take me on a trip.

ANNOUNCER: It appears friendly at first, but inevitably its true colors are revealed.

Open Captions

>> He told me he would take good care of me. But then he threatened to kill me if I didn't come.

ANNOUNCER: With one final maneuver, the trap is sprung and human traffickers have snared yet another victim.

Open Captions

>> He gave me a piece of candy. Then he made me walk out of my house and down the road. I don't remember much, other than seeing cars and buses, and then I passed out.

ANNOUNCER: Pujo was only 12 years old when this nightmare became her reality,

linking her to countless others like her who are approached, drugged, threatened, and abducted before anyone even notices. Fortunately, for Pujo Rescue Life was ready. Our ministry partners at the border intercepted her captors and pulled her from their grasp before she was sold into slavery.

Open Captions

>> The next thing I remember is waking up in the hospital. They said, "You are safe... everything is going to be okay." What if they weren't there to rescue me? What would my life have been like?

End of video

In the studio

TAMMY: "You are safe. Everything is going to be okay. You're safe." Those are some pretty powerful words for those children, probably right now at this exact moment someplace in the world. I'm so grateful for this ministry, the team that's on the ground right now at those borders. They are reaching, they're rescuing, and we're restoring.

That little girl asked, "Where would my life be?" Where would their lives be?

They want a better life. If we come together, we can offer them a better life one life at a time. I know it seems enormous when you think of all the millions that are being trafficked right now, that are being abused. Let's think of that one girl right now. To be able to look at her and say, you are safe because—because we are coming for you and we're going to rescue you. We're going to take you out of that place. We're going to show you a better life. You were made for something more than this. And the enemy can't take from you one more thing from your life.

We can come together. We know how. We know how to reach these girls. We know how to rescue them. And we know how to restore them to their original identity and who they

are in Christ. Randy, we've been doing this a long time. They're there right now on the ground. They just need us to come together to make it possible for them.

RANDY: Absolutely. You hit it because there are three aspects of this. One is to reach and that is where we go in and we educate. We would rather prevent any sex trafficking from ever happening. So the reach goes in and speaks to that area and educates people and stops them at the border. It gets them where they're never in a position to be abused.

But unfortunately, as you know, there are many young women who are in an abusive situation and that's where we go in and rescue them. And sometimes, it means kicking down doors, literally. But spiritually, there are many to be kicked in.

And the third aspect is right out of Jeremiah. We want to give them a hope and a future and that's the restore. All of these efforts do cost money. We have people on the ground, we have facilities, we have materials that need to go out. And so we look at it and we say how many are we reaching with the overall budget? And that's how we come up with these numbers where you say, okay, it costs \$128 to reach, rescue, or restore a child.

I mean a child is not a commodity. We know this. This is what we're fighting against. But to put it in terms that we can relate to, to say, okay, how far can my dollar go? Well, actually it can be doubled right now because we have a matching gift, a \$320,000 matching gift. Some friends of the ministry have said we'll match every dollar given. Which means a gift of \$64 today will help reach, rescue, and restore one child. The more that we give, the more that we can give. The more you put in our hands, the more we can put into the field to reach, rescue, and restore.

So my prayer, Tammy, is that people would say what can I do? What does God want me to do? Because I know that this is a mission directly from God. This is a mission of heaven against hell here on earth. And we're all a part of fighting it. So would you just take a moment and say God, are you putting something on my heart to do? And it may seem small. It may seem big but all obedience is big to God. Every life changed is big to

heaven.

So take a moment and pray. And then if God leads, go online and make the best gift you can. The one he puts on our heart, that's the best gift you can.

Begin video clip

ANNOUNCER: *Innocent children and young people longing to be loved and cared for are being abducted and sold at the hands of violent predators, forced into the evil industry of human trafficking.*

Through Mission: Rescue Life you can reach out to warn children who are at risk for sex trafficking, rescue those already enslaved, and restore young lives and give them a future. With a generous \$320,000 matching gift, now your gift of \$128 to help reach, rescue, or restore one child can be doubled to help two children. Your \$64 gift will be matched to help save one child from the horrors of human trafficking. And a \$32 mission rescue gift will be doubled to \$64.

With your gift today, we'll send you "Declare." This beautifully designed 31-day devotional reveals 31 names of God from scripture and gives insight into the character, grace, and the depth of God's love for you.

With your gift of \$128 or more, you'll receive The Gospels book set. This special edition collection of the four gospels in the classic King James version includes journaling space opposite each page of scripture so you can reflect as you read. The perfect companion for your daily time with God.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1280 which will now help save 20 children. And you may request our inspiring bronze sculpture, "Consider the Birds."

Please call, write, or make your gift online.

End of video

In the studio

TAMMY: I have no doubt that God is up to something really special today. Listen, we want to send you this book, *Grit Don't Quit*. I promise you, it will be a blessing in your life. So make that call, go online, and when you donate to the ministry today, we want to get this to you. Just make sure to request that and we'll get that right out to you. Bianca—

BIANCA: Juarez Olthoff.

TAMMY: Oh! I'll try to get it again. Oh, I appreciate you so much. I love you.

BIANCA: Thank you! What a gift to be here with you and everyone that's watching online. We're just so grateful and honored to be here.

RANDY: Thank you. And my last question for the next program is, is there ever a time to quit?

BIANCA: That's a great question. I can't wait to unpack it! We're going to unpack it together.

RANDY: We'll do it and if you miss any of the programs, you can always go to LifeToday.org. We'll see you again next time.