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Week six: WFL

Randy Robison and Tammy Trent

Jennifer Rothschild #2

In the studio

RANDY: Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm Randy Robison. Tammy Trent is with me. Tammy, I'm excited because Jennifer Rothschild is back with us again. Jennifer!

JENNIFER: I'm so happy to be back.

RANDY: It's great to have you. By the way, if you didn't see our other program with Jennifer, what a blessing! It is available at LifeToday.org as are all of our programs.

But today, we're going to talk about—it's going to be encouraging. We're going to talk about 66 ways that God loves you. And Jennifer, there are a lot of ways I could go with this, but I think my first reaction was only 66?

JENNIFER: Oh, that's a good point actually!

TAMMY: Not 65, not 67, but 66 ways.

JENNIFER: Well, obviously, 66—I shouldn't say obviously, not everybody knows this but there are 66 books in the Bible. So what I have done because I love the Word, the Word has given me life, I went through the Bible and I tried to pick out how God's love is uniquely communicated in every book of the Bible. So that's why there are 66 ways that God loves you.

TAMMY: It's so good. It's so good. Tell me one of the greatest ways if I were struggling to believe that God loves me. And I was talking to you, and I ran into you and said, "I have a hard

time believing God loves me." What would you say to that?

JENNIFER: Well, to believe God loves you, you do have to have humility and faith, I believe. Because sometimes we don't want to receive God's love because we think we have to earn it which is just inverted pride. But I also believe that God—he gets kind of a bad rap. Most people feel that they're fiercely judged by God—not fiercely audaciously loved by him. That's why I go back to the Word every time because it is the Word that teaches me that God loves me.

I was only about eight years old when I got my first Bible. My grandmother gave it to me. We used to call her Sarah Berg, her name was Sarah Richberg. And Sarah Berg gave me my first, I always called it my red leather Bible. It was red. It took me a decade to realize it wasn't real leather. [Laughing] So I got my first red non-leather Bible. But I remember as a little girl, even then before I went to bed, I would read in the book of Psalms. It was as if like almost if you held it close enough you could feel the heartbeat of God towards how he loves us.

Well, then you fast-forward my life to when I turned 15 and I lost my eyesight I could no longer see the words in that Bible. And that was a connection point for me, a way to experience and feel the love of God; like I was reading his love letter to me. I remember the loss of that, not being able to see those words anymore.

Of course, today, I listen to scripture and I'm so thankful for people who read scripture to me so beautifully. I'm so thankful because faith does come by hearing. I'm so thankful I get to hear the Word read. But I still, even on my darkest days, I realize that I have experienced the love of God through His Word, not through my feelings. Because there are days I don't feel lovable, and there are days I don't feel worthy of love. But the love of God isn't based on anything I do or how I feel. And in fact, if you look at it, the love of God isn't even a choice he makes. Like he doesn't look at Tammy and say, I think I love her. Or Randy is worthy. Yeah, I'll choose to love Randy. God loves because his nature is love. He cannot help but love.

And so, when I know that about God which we learn through His Word then it becomes easier for us to reduce our performance level and just receive that gift because God is love, he does

love, and therefore, I am loved.

RANDY: Okay. Okay. I'm going to challenge. I'm going to give you a hardball question here. I get that in Psalms but come on, like Leviticus?

JENNIFER: Right! Yeah, if you've ever read the book of Leviticus, you're like, God loves me in Leviticus? All right! Here you go. Leviticus is full of a ton of rules, and sometimes we think rules are just given to us to manipulate us or make us behave. I believe that the book of Leviticus reveals God's love because out of the kindness and benevolence of him as our Father, and especially pre-covenant days to the nation of Israel, he says, I want you to connect with me. I'm holy and perfect, you're not. So I've set up some rules so that you will have security and you will know how we can connect well.

That's love. Boundaries—boundaries are love. They are not to manipulate us or to constrain us. In fact, in Psalms, scripture says that the Lord has put boundaries in our life in pleasant places. It is a kind and loving father who communicates, here's the rules that will bring you life. And because I love you, I'm instituting them for you so that you can come to me and we can have an intimate connection.

RANDY: Okay. That's good! Side note, did you notice that some of the health laws totally make sense with today's science? They had no clue back then. It's like God was like let me fast-forward to you. I made all this. Do this, don't do this and you'll live long and healthy.

JENNIFER: It's beautiful!

RANDY: It is!

TAMMY: Jen, what are some common misconceptions about God's love?

JENNIFER: Well, I kind of alluded to it a minute ago. We think we have to earn it. Or some of us, and I have fallen into this being a firstborn, loving Jesus my whole life, being a pastor's

daughter, some of us fall into a performance mentality. Well, I know God loves me, I get that, but I don't know if he likes me unless I perform well. So I'm going to perform well so that he likes me.

I think it is a misconception that God's love for us has anything to do with our performance, it has everything to do with his provision through Christ. I think one of the misconceptions we have about God's love is we think it has to be one extreme or the other. Like if you love me, then it will always be about grace, grace, grace alone—nothing but grace. And if you're just going to throw truth at me, which I might have misunderstood as judgment, then I'm not going to see that as love. But if you look at the embodiment of love, Jesus Christ the righteous, the Apostle John said that Jesus was full of grace and full of truth. That was not 50% grace, that was not 50% truth. That was 100% grace, 100% truth. That's the love of God.

And so, I think when we take one extreme and isolate it from the other, then we misunderstand the love of God. His love is full of grace, his love is full of truth because he is 100% grace, he is 100% truth.

RANDY: So what do you? I mean you said in the last program, you have a crush on the minor prophets, right?

JENNIFER: Yeah, I have a crush on them.

RANDY: How do you reconcile the feeling that if I mess up, destruction is coming? Because a lot of the Old Testament prophets read very much that way. Because you did this, this is going to happen. And God even said, I'm going to do it. At least, I'm going to allow it. It is hard to get around that sometimes.

JENNIFER: It is hard to get around that. And you know what? Jesus couldn't get around that on our behalf. To me, that is the picture of love. The holiness of God has standards that you and I, just like all those people in the Old Testament, they just couldn't meet, within our abilities and flesh. And because of the love of God, he sent Jesus so that we wouldn't have to fix all our stuff

and please him. Jesus took upon himself all the result of everything we've ever done that has blown it and Jesus took the punishment for us.

And so the holy God who has a standard of perfection that we can't meet, chose that Jesus would take the punishment for us. So all that wrath of God got laid on Jesus so we don't experience it. To me, that is the embodiment of the love of God.

RANDY: Okay. I've always known that, but I may have just connected a couple of dots, that were not connected before. Because you still hear preachers today who will preach the judgment that you're saying Christ took.

JENNIFER: Christ took our judgment. God didn't change his standard.

RANDY: Is that a misapplication of the Old?

JENNIFER: I personally believe that God's standard has never changed, and no human could ever meet it. Only God who created the standard could fulfill the standard—and that's why Jesus died. He received the wrath of God. He met the standard of perfection and then he took our sin upon himself and he received the wrath of God for our sin. That's the love of God!

So to me, what a beautiful picture! And that's why I said earlier when you asked about receiving God's love, we have to have the humility to say I don't deserve it. I'll never deserve it. And it is not even about me. So if I'm going to receive the love of God that is the way I'm going to honor God by saying, "You are worthy."

RANDY: That's so right. I think if we get this right in the sense of understanding it truly and properly, it wouldn't force change on us, it would just create change in us.

JENNIFER: And it invites the response of change.

RANDY: What do you mean by that?

JENNIFER: When I know that my husband loves me, do you know how that changes my behavior? If I feel that my husband is judgmental toward me or waiting for me to act to a certain standard before he will show me affection, I will never cease to try—I'll strive for it or maybe I'll just get tired of it and give up. But when I know that I'm unconditionally loved by him then I'm free to just respond in a way that I know is going to please him because I feel safe to fail, I feel safe to succeed.

And God is that way for us. And also, we can never separate God's response towards us, we cannot take it in isolation out of being covered by the righteousness of Christ. So God's response to us, ultimately, when we are in Christ is based upon his response to his son. And from what I read in Romans, "Neither death nor life, there is nothing that separates us from the love of God" because when we are in Christ and Christ is in us, there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God because the love of God is in us and upon us.

TAMMY: Honestly, I listen to you, and I feel overwhelmed because you're so smart.

[Laughter]

And you're so wise. It's like—has it always been in you to love the Word this much and to be a teacher of the word?

JENNIFER: You know I have always loved the Word. But I'll be honest, it's because I need the Word. I'm not that smart. I also know me well and I know what I can be like outside the protective comfort and guidelines of God's Word. I'm not a legalist. I just know God loves me and he chose what's best for me. When I read His Word I find strength. When I read His Word I find identity. When I read His Word I find purpose. And I also find, honestly, in every book of the Bible how fiercely God loves us.

TAMMY: You choose to stay in it because you know what you are capable of outside of it. So that's what I love. And I think it challenges me to stay in it, to stay wrapped in it every day

because I think our thinking changes, our reactions change, the way we love other people changes when we are in it with Jesus, wrapped around it, thinking his thoughts, having the mind of Christ, the heart of Christ, it changes our atmosphere constantly every day as we go about our day.

So you challenge me all the time to stay in it. I notice I'm a different person when I'm out of it. But Jen, I love you for teaching me how to stay in it and to understand the love of God in my own life!

RANDY: I do have a question, maybe a tough question.

JENNIFER: I like Tammy's questions better, by the way. You keep throwing the hard ones at me.

[Laughter]

RANDY: This one, I say difficult not because it is theologically challenging, it is just something a lot of us face. I know people see you and you look great, you speak very well, and you have a lot of knowledge. But life hasn't always been easy. And they don't—you wouldn't just pick up in this interview that you have experienced some difficult suffering. And yet, you say in First Peter God shows his love to us through victory and suffering. Now I like the victory part, I don't like the suffering part. How does that work?

JENNIFER: Well, sometimes we think faith in Christ will prevent suffering in our life, and it doesn't. Sometimes it can even invite it, let's be honest. But I do believe that God gives us something within the suffering he allows and that is victory. I mean he invites us, like in First Peter, this is how we know he loves us in First Peter, he invites us to cast our cares upon him. And that doesn't mean we drop them off. It means we throw them! We cast them. Why is that? Because he cares for us.

But then he also tells us like a loving father in First Peter 4:12, "Don't be surprised about these

fiery trials that are going to try you as if some strange thing has happened. But instead, rejoice because as you partake in the sufferings of Christ, you will also experience the overwhelming joy when his glory is revealed.

You know sometimes, y'all, we think, when his glory is revealed in the sweet by-and-by, when we say goodbye to planet earth and blindness and cancer and suffering and loss—No. I believe the way God gives us victory over suffering right now in the midst of it is that he reveals his glory in the midst of it. And we get to be grounded by a far greater weight of glory.

I mean—the suffering is heavy? Absolutely, it is. Blindness is the hardest thing I deal with even on my best days. But I'm telling you this, it will never be as heavy as that far greater weight of glory that anchors me, that sustains me. That's the victory. Victory is not deliverance from suffering, victory is deliverance with joy through the suffering every single hard day.

RANDY: Wow! Somebody needed to hear that.

TAMMY: I needed to hear that. I needed—it was probably me. Thanks! A lot—a lot of people.

RANDY: I love the *66 Ways God Loves You*. Just the structure of it. Do you have a favorite one?

JENNIFER: Well, I do have a crush on the minor prophets, so I got to say one more, Hosea. I just don't think there is a better picture of the love of God than in the book of Hosea in the Old Testament. So Hosea was a prophet, and God told him to marry a woman whom some call a prostitute, but she definitely was not every mama's dream for her little boy. And Hosea married her, and she was unfaithful and it broke his heart.

When he could have just said, hey, I have legit reasons to say see ya! You blew it. You're not worthy of my love! God said, "You go bring her back." And Hosea brought her back, her name was Gomer, and he said, "I will remain faithful to you, and you will remain faithful to me." That is the love of God.

When we wander away, when we are wayward, when we choose other gods, he still pursues us! And he is never unfaithful because we are unfaithful. He is always faithful. And no matter how we have walked away, he always brings us back home and restores us to his heart. That's the love of God right there in the book of Hosea.

RANDY: I'm going to have to go read that again. I knew that, but you're right, it is a beautiful picture. You know God's love does change us when we get it because not only does it benefit us but then we want to share it with others. We have an opportunity right now to share God's love with others. And Tammy, you were there.

TAMMY: I was there, and you know it's funny, every time I go on a trip, you always think, you step into it thinking, you know, it's going to change the lives of someone else but it always changes my life too. Every single time, the impact is enormous for me, and it changes my life. And the fact that we get to partner together to help change somebody else's life is incredibly important. If you'll just take a moment, I want to share this piece with you.

On the mission field

TAMMY: When you lose someone you love unexpectedly, it can feel like your whole world is falling apart. It's almost too much to bear. If you know my story, you know I lost my husband in 2001 in a tragic scuba diving accident. I'd give just about anything to go back in time and stop that from happening. While I know God has never abandoned me, I've learned some memories stay with you for the rest of your life.

Recently in East Africa, I got to visit people with some very fresh memories, people who lost loved ones of their own. And in a way, I feel connected to them. My husband died in the water, and her husband died because of water and the lack of good clean water. Because the water they need to drink every day in order to live, well, it's killing them. Water that looks like this--and this. Water that looks like this.

These precious people don't have a choice in the water they drink. Right now, it is this, or it's

nothing. But you and I have a choice, a life and death choice. Not life and death for us but for them. So will you please choose to partner with *LIFE Outreach* today? Will you help give Water for LIFE so that we can give them water like this.

[Talking and Laughter]

End of video

In the studio

TAMMY: It's so special. It's so special every time I get the opportunity to take a trip. It is something that I look forward to. It is so special. I think the feeling, Randy that I have every time I land someplace is how can I serve these people? How can I love them with everything that is in me?

You know I didn't get to have children. That was something that Trent and I didn't get to experience together so I think I find it to be such a gift each time I go into these villages. I think you'll see moments of me playing with the children. You know we play, we giggle, we laugh. And then my heart also feels so moved in those moments thinking that the hardship they're facing, many of these children don't even fully understand what's going on around them. When I walk around their villages and they lead me to their water sources, I watch them drink even at that moment, some of it, the most vile water I've ever seen. And there's feces in it, there's animals drinking from it, and this is their only water source? Sometimes I can't even wrap my head around it thinking, there's got to be something else. There has got to be another way.

How can God use me in this moment to help this village, to help these children, especially who are so vulnerable—especially under five, they're so vulnerable? And so many die from just simply drinking the only water that they have access to. It is always my privilege to tell their stories and to come back here and to put that piece together so you can see what I have seen and what I have experienced over there. That this is a real problem but there is a real need.

So yes, pain is real but so is hope. So what do we do about that? We join together, I tell you the

need, I tell you what it's going to take, and then we step in and we change everything for that entire village for the rest of their lives. Why? By just drilling a well and giving them clean water for the rest of their lives? That's how simple the solution is to that problem.

RANDY: And the difference between clean water and contaminated water is life and death. But you know the difference between the option of having to drink that water or not having to drink that water? The difference is you. We can't do this without our viewers' support. And that's why over two decades now we've drilled over—well over 7,000 wells in numerous nations in the most needy areas. And our goal this year is to drill another 350 water wells in 20 nations. Those places where, like the children you saw Tammy with, they very likely will become ill, and in many cases, they will die without clean drinking water.

But we can step in and stop that cycle of death. The average cost for a well is \$4800; that's when it's averaged across all the different places we work, and the different machinery required to drill to different levels. There are a lot of variables. When we average it out, \$4800, which is why we say your gift today of \$4800 will provide one well for life because on average they last about 70 years.

Now, not all of us could do that but there is something you can do. We're asking you to do it today. A gift of \$48 will provide clean drinking Water for LIFE for ten people. A gift of \$144 will provide water for 30 people. Will you do something today? Will you say, "I will be the difference between death and life for somebody?" Go to the phone or go online. Join with us. Give the best gift you can. Let's give life today.

Begin video clip

ANNOUNCER: *Every day thousands of lives are lost to waterborne diseases, and nearly half of those are children under the age of five. Through Mission: Water for LIFE, you can give mothers hope and children a future as we provide clean life-giving water for thousands of children and their families before it's too late.*

With your gift today, you can help drill and establish 350 water wells this year! Your gift of \$24 will help provide clean water for five children. A gift of \$48 will help provide for ten. \$72 will provide for 15. And \$144 will help provide life-giving water for 30 people for a lifetime.

*With a gift of any amount, we'll send you *The Birthright*. This book is a liberating and life-changing celebration of your birthright as a child of the King. Discover the joy of coming home to your Father's warm embrace.*

With your gift of \$100 or more, we'll also send you the "Moments With Him" mug set. These two beautifully crafted coffee mugs feature scripture on the side, the perfect way to start your day and reflect on the goodness of God.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1200 to help provide water for 250 people or a gift of \$4800 to help sponsor a complete well, and request our new, inspiring bronze sculpture, "Consider the Birds" inspired by Jesus' words in Matthew 6:26.

Please call, write, or make your gift online today.

End of video

In the studio

RANDY: I hope you are going online or going to the phone. Make the best gift you can. You will save lives.

Jennifer, this is not just a great book, content-wise, it is a beautiful book. I would love to send this book to anyone that requests it today that helps with our outreach. Would that be good?

JENNIFER: I think that's a beautiful idea. You're giving the love and spreading the love.

RANDY: Love it!

TAMMY: Yes, we love you, Jennifer. I love you personally. I love being involved in all that God is doing in your life, even just a little bit on a small scale. And I love this book. Thank you so much for being here. What a privilege it is to talk to you. And I love that you love the Word so much.

Thank you so much for watching and we'll see you next time on *Life Today*.

RANDY: Bye-bye!