

3/22/23

Week 13: Rescue LIFE

James and Betty Robison

Tony Suarez

In the studio

JAMES: I want to welcome you to *Life Today*. I'm James Robison; Betty and I, and we've been telling you this is 60 years married. I know, tough woman, strong woman. Yes, she is, and beautiful! Gosh, that smile still kills me. It is just awesome.

Listen. Here's a title of a book. You know I talk about the need for a supernatural awakening like there had been the Great Awakenings. We used to, always as Baptists, we'd go, we've got to have a revival, a revival, a revival. I got to noticing that they lasted about a week after the week. And it used to be Sunday to Sunday, then it got down to it was Wednesday to Sunday, and then it got to Friday to Sunday. You know, shorter and shorter. And the aftermath was short.

But here's the fact, Tony Suarez has a ministry called Revival Makers. This book, *Revival Makers*. Okay, Tony, I have known you—and we welcome you to *Life Today*. I have known you, Tony Suarez. He is good friends with Sammy Rodriguez. As a matter of fact, they're just linked up. But the National Hispanic—

TONY: The National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference. He tells people he's Batman and I'm Robin. But I won't wear the costumes.

[Laughter]

JAMES: Well, he tells me he's kind of adopted me as a father. So we're close and have had him here. He is just a ball of fire. Well, so is Tony. As a matter of fact, if Sammy

can't go, he sends Tony. And sometimes, we just don't even let Sammy know we're having something, we just call Tony.

[Laughter]

Okay, so you've got *Revival Makers* and we're going to talk about it. Now you had an experience.

One of the things that I know you know, is Betty and I care about you, and our staff cares, and our prayer team, because when you get a broken heart, we weep with those who weep. Well, Betty and I lost our daughter, our miracle baby when she was 40. We lost her to cancer, a seven-year battle. I want you to listen to the battle that Tony and his wife had. Tell us the story because people need to understand.

TONY: And it was about the time that I met you, God had blessed our family, my wife and I had three beautiful miracle babies that we weren't supposed to have. Things were going great. She had just recorded an album. I was in California preaching and I get a call from my ten-year-old son, "Dad, mommy can't walk. Something is wrong." I'm walking him through calling an ambulance to the house so I can get on a plane. I fly home, from a revival, and I come home to the news that she had an aggressive form of leukemia called AML. And they gave her two weeks to live.

My life changed completely overnight. I was being strong for her, being strong for my three children, trying to figure out ministry. And God did extend her life, and we thank the Lord for the six more months we had with her. And it was a roller coaster; there were days when we thought we had a miracle. And then there was difficult days. In October 2016, she ultimately passed away.

We could focus on the difficult days, but God took this tragedy and turned it into a testimony for his glory that left an imprint on my children's hearts that I believe is going to take them to heaven. It was those last days with Jessica, people came into the hospital

with guitars, they were singing. That's how believers celebrate life, even in the pain. She had gotten to the point where she could no longer speak but she could give us hand signals. People are singing in the room, and I said, "Jessica, do you want them to keep singing?" She put her finger up. Asked her three times. The second time and the third time she shook it and I jokingly say I think that was our last argument. Like, "I'm kind of going through something here. I've said yes three times."

But my kids saw that and that's the key. My kids saw that her final act on this earth was to give God praise. It did something to my kids. They were angry. They were confused. But something stirred up in them and they came to her deathbed, and they said, "Mom, I'm going to make you proud. I'm going to live for God. I'm going to obey my dad." And if it wouldn't have been such an emotional moment I would have stopped and gotten a video because now they're all teenagers and I wish that they would remember that they told their mother that they were going to obey their father. But they did it, I was there.

It was my oldest Cole; he said, "Mommy, I know you always wanted to see me get baptized. And if daddy gives me permission, I'm going to be baptized at your funeral." And he got his younger brother and sister, and he said, "I'm getting baptized, and you need to get baptized, and you need to get baptized." And that's exactly what we did. At her funeral we baptized those three children for the remission of their sins, the Holy Spirit descended on our children.

And our worst day, I say turned into our best day because salvation came to our home. I buried her in the ground, I buried them in water. One is death, one is life, one is sickness, one is healing, one is depression, one is joy. And that day I was able to say like the New Testament declares, "Death, where is thy sting? Grave, where is thy victory?" It provoked something in my children. What should have quenched their faith provoked their faith. Those children travel with me now. They go to crusades and revival meetings and tent revivals with me.

JAMES: How old are they now?

TONY: Well, now, I've remarried since then and the lady that I married lost her first husband to cancer as well. So we have five teenagers. They're 18, 17, 16, 15, and 13. And there is a reason I'm here alone today for the glory of God.

[Laughter]

But they all live for God. They're all involved in some kind of singing or traveling with us. But the most important thing is they live for God.

And when I get to heaven, you know we're living to hear that voice say, "Well done!" But there are two other voices. There's my first wife and there is Gina's first husband. And I don't want to get to heaven and have Jessica say, "Where's my babies?" And say, "I'm sorry, I was too busy with ministry. I was too busy with the things of the world."

Or Cory McCool, who I never met, who is going to say, "Hey, thanks for stepping up and helping with my family. By the way, where are Mylin and Maci?" I have a responsibility before anything else to get those children to heaven and that's what I'm living for.

JAMES: All right, *Revival Makers!* That's the title of the book, and title of the ministry.

What do you want people to get, not only through your ministry but through this book? Because this is ministry through the book. That's the reason you wrote it. Now know this, you and I have had supernatural days with spiritual leaders from across major denominational divides, and did we not watch for many years together the love of God pull preachers, leaders of these various faith groups together as a family where they knew they might have difference or disagreement but they came together like a healthy family with the greatest Father, and they looked like the body of Christ and they impacted leaders on every sphere of life, national leaders? Did we not witness that together which was a glimpse of what you're talking about in revival?

TONY: Something that I don't think most people thought we would ever see, but we saw the body come together. And we did something that we need to do again as a nation, if the leaders did it, now all of us need to do it. We laid aside our differences because of what we had in common. We have the same foundation, we respect preferences, but it was still the same biblical foundational truth that we all stood on and we came together, which is something our nation needs to do.

We are so divisive, we're so argumentative, and we're supposed to change the world and not let the world change us. And if the body of Christ would come together in peace and love and biblical truth, never—never abandoning the orthodoxy of doctrine and what we know to be true, but we come together, then the world would see what the church is supposed to be and what we want to reflect to our world.

It was in those days coming out of tragedy that I had to make a decision, do I believe what I preach or is it just a sermon? Or am I going to practice what I preach? And I had to make a decision to keep preaching, to keep praying for the sick, to keep believing that Jesus heals, Jesus saves, Jesus delivers, Jesus loves you. And every day I prayed with my children. That's what got us through the hard days. We would say, God, I don't understand you, but I trust you.

And I came out of that trusting God that we were going to see revival, a renewal. And a term that we hear a lot in the United States is we hear a lot of people longing for the good ol' days. Well, what good ol' days are you talking about? You talking about World War I or World War II? Well, I mean the Golden Era. Well, in the Golden Era, there was racism like we've never seen. There was Jim Crow, there was Korean war, and the Cuban missile crisis and there were great depressions and recessions. Every decade has something. There is so much that we forget that even in the '80s when we say, well, it was a new morning in America. There was an Iran Contra affair and there is a Panamanian invasion and there are issues. There's always been issues.

JAMES: We had an economic collapse.

TONY: We had an economic collapse. Some of our viewers watching, you still got some cans of corn from Y2K sitting in your basement. We've always had something. But it's never stopped the move of God.

And if that is true for our past, that's true for our present. I don't believe revival and renewal are coming, I think it is here. The days that our grandparents said were coming, the days that our fathers and our mothers prayed for, we're in it. The days that the prophet Joel prophesied. He said, "'In the last days,' saith God, 'I'll pour out my spirit upon all flesh.'" These are those days.

I don't think we need to chase revival down. It is not contained to a denomination. It is not contained to a geographic location, it is wherever there are hungry hearts. Right now, this year, in February, a revival began in a university in the middle of Kentucky. These students walked into a chapel service at ten in the morning on a Wednesday and it didn't—it's gone on for hours and for days. They're delivering food, the professors have canceled their classes because they can't stop the move of God.

This is what I heard was coming one day. I remember every great meeting—you said the Baptists would have revivals for a week. Well, as Pentecostals we go on two, three, four weeks. We never knew when to quit.

[Laughter]

We'd have these great moves of God. And right when you'd be ready to say this is that, an elder would always get up. I could still see that finger get up and say, "You haven't seen anything yet! Something greater is coming." It just would never come.

It was almost as if the responsibility for renewal was being punted down the field to another generation. Well, it can't be punted down the field any longer. We must have renewal. We must have an awakening of repentance now and we're seeing it everywhere.

JAMES: I believe we're seeing it. Betty, you hear me say over and over, we don't have to give one square foot of God's planet to the enemy's destructive, deceptive, divisive, damaging control. We don't have to give our marriages, our families, our community, we don't have to give our city, our county, our state, our nation, we don't have to give God's earth to the devil. We can absolutely—and I see you holding on for that.

And do you not see, you and I have been in ministry, we've been married 60 years but in ministry over 60 years, do we not see glimpses of his glory right now on many members in his body?

BETTY: Absolutely! I so resonate with what you talked about. You lost your wife, your children lost their mother, where do I go now? Well, boy, God is there. If we allow God to be there, be the center of the rest of our lives, we know that in the loss of our daughter, we could have shut down everything but the expectations of God for what he wants to do through all of us is so indescribable. And just to know that we can get up in the mornings and say, God, what do you want me to do? To be fluid enough in our hearts and our lives to say, God, where are you moving next?

TONY: Absolutely! And I think again when people hear our story, they'll—they have pain. Everyone is going through something. And they'll say, I haven't gone through what you've gone through. But that's relative, pain is pain, hurt is hurt. There are a lot of hurting people that are even tuning in today.

For me, getting lost in the why is difficult. I had to make a decision to give that to the Lord. And we used to sing an old song that said, "By and by, when the morning comes and all the saints of God gather home, we'll tell the story of how we've overcome." And that last line says, "And we'll understand it better, by and by."

There are some questions that you have to say by-and-by to. And when you get to heaven and they have the assimilation meeting and they say, are there any questions? You then

raise your hands and say, yes, I'd like you to explain 2020 to me, and also, 2015, and 2010. But until then, I take this and say, Lord, I don't understand it but I know you're good. So I trust you with what I don't understand, and I give it to you, and I say I trust you. I trusted you yesterday and you got me through it, therefore, I trust you with my today and I definitely trust you with my tomorrow.

JAMES: When we have what you called revival, what I'm referencing as the next great world spiritual awakening, we're going to see unconditional, redemptive love and see truth uncompromised, unwavering, unshakeable, undeniable truth carried on the shoulders of unconditional redemptive love. Agreed? That's what we saw with those preachers. That's the miracle. That's what you're writing about. That's what's in this book. You can get it online, you can get it in the bookstores.

You know, we're going to ask all of our viewers to reach out and put God's loving arms around those Jesus called the least of these. It's very interesting to see this in Matthew. It is very interesting to see it throughout all the teachings of Jesus in the gospels. The only place you can see absolutely unshakeable, the ones that really are the sheep are the ones he said, "Do this to the least of these. They are the sheep." And we're having this discussion about sheep and goats, and who is and who isn't. Let's settle it.

And by the way, the reason Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed was not because of the sexual extremities of immorality and gross unnatural affection. It was because they didn't notice the poor and the needy and the overlooked. And you know what? America, I think we have survived, we still notice the people that have been hit by a tornado, hit by a hurricane, hit by an earthquake. There is something in this nation that still wants to touch those who have been damaged. I think that's one of the reasons we're still here.

But the real reason that we're here at this moment is to allow the unconditional love of God to carry truth on those shoulders in a body that's connected to one another, submitted to the one head Christ, to see people that claim to know God behave like the perfect Father. Do you agree that's revival?

TONY: One hundred percent.

JAMES: That's awakening. We're seeing glimpses of that glory and that grace. That's what we're praying for.

Do you know what our viewers love to do? Not only present you, present preachers from all different types and backgrounds that actually are family, and they watch us as leaders of this ministry, and in Christian ministry, encourage you and encourage our viewers to pray for you, support you, *Revival Makers*. There is a website there.

Do you know what else we do? We reach out to those who are defeated and downtrodden, the unnoticed, the least of these. Those that are hungry, thirsty, in prison. That's what you do. Right now, we're seeking to rescue those who have been taken captive in sex trade.

Betty, I don't know of anything any uglier than hurting a child. Imagine using a child to feed twisted appetites that could never be satisfied, and to use those little children and beat them and torment them to make them serve the horrors of those appetites.

Well, God's unconditional love sets them free. You make that possible. You become the miracle some child is longing for, some mother is longing for. I want you to watch, I want you to hear this testimony. I want you to hear this story, and then know that you are God's solution, his unconditional love extended to that challenge, that pain, that problem. Watch closely.

On the mission field

Open Captions

>> I was really scared and afraid.

I was so young, and I did not know anything. The men forced me to do bad things and I could not find any help.

>> Girls? How old do you want?

>> Young.

>> How old?

>> What's the youngest?

>> Huh?

>> The youngest.

ANNOUNCER: Sex trafficking of young women and children is one of the darkest and most depraved activities of humankind on the planet today. There are nearly five million victims who have been forced into prostitution, and the majority of those are women and children.

DAVID: These are kids that have been forced to have sex with people; and they're being abused, and they're being photographed, and they're doing things that no child should ever have to do.

Open Captions

>> They blindfolded me and put me into a van. When we arrived, I was put in a room with two sets of locks.

ANNOUNCER: Mission: Rescue Life was born over a decade ago to do our part in helping shine the light of God's love into these dark and depraved areas. We are partnering with missionaries around the world who are rescuing those bound in slavery.

Even former trafficking victims like Bella are helping those in need.

Open Captions

>> You know, sometimes I tell them about my story. I said, "Before, I used to do that too. And I know how it feels." I think if I'm without God, I'm nothing. So every day, I always thank God for this life.

DAVID: So when we look at these big numbers of statistics that are just demotivating, what we choose to do is we just choose to focus on the one. We work alongside law enforcement and so we rescue one today, we rescue one tomorrow, we rescue one next week because every single child matters to God. And so then they have to matter to us.

In the studio

JAMES: We have been doing this now for, we're moving toward 20 years of outreach, even in this area. It's just amazing, Betty, that we actually find missionaries and people with a broken heart who take us to these settings. I remember when we went to the sex capital of the world, which we built one of the largest rescue centers on the planet there.

By the way, when we built that Destiny House and that center, and when we, I'm talking about you, we used to be able to go in and show you all the children singing and all of them praising Jesus. We'd show their little faces and show how they're speaking English and they're learning a trade and they grow up. We can't show their faces anymore because of the internet. The sex traffickers, which you saw some of our group breaking in, working with the police to rescue them, we reach, we rescue, and we restore. And you support that.

Well, Betty, we are still setting them free whether we get to show their faces or not. But see, if they recognize them, then they would try to retake them if they were out in public or hurt them even later in their life. But you can't stop the love of God from setting them

free. But who is it that makes that possible for us to have those mission partners, for us to have those centers, those places of hope and help and head those children off before someone sees them and takes them away?

Our friends have put up a \$320,000 matching gift for this, they believe in it so much. That means it takes an average of \$128 to get one. Now if you give \$128, we rescue two. You know how I always ask people to give the \$1280 and rescue ten? Now, they'll rescue 20.

Betty, what do you want our viewers to hear about the importance of how they respond to children like that when we just saw to rescue them? What do you want them to hear and feel in their heart?

BETTY: Well, I hope your heart is as touched and broken as mine was as I was watching those precious innocent little ones. They're being trapped, they're being traded, they're being beaten, they're being under control, James, to where they have no choices. They lock them up in a room, and then they send these men in there to abuse them in so, so many ways. We wouldn't even want to put it on the air.

But thank you, thank you if you've contributed to helping these children come from darkness into light, to know that they have a future. So many of them think they will die in these places if someone doesn't come and reach out to them. Let's continue to do that. There are so many—so many that God loves so much. But he wants to use us to make the difference in their lives. So please join with us.

JAMES: And he is, in fact, using us and it is the big us. Betty and I remain among the most faithful givers to LIFE, and we have been ever since the ministry started 60 years ago. Why do we do that? Because that's unconditional love. It's redemptive love.

Think about this. What you give today will be doubled. The average to rescue one, \$128, you give that we rescue two. \$1280 will rescue ten. Thank God, many of you do that.

Now it will rescue 20. We have some gifts to send you to bless you. And we always to want to bless you because we love you as much as those we're trying to help. We want to build you up in the faith so that you express that faith and that unconditional love.

Would you go get your bank card? Would you use it like a check please, right now? Dial that number or go online and make the gift of life. Make the gift God puts on your heart, please. Please do it now.

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 "Believe This, Not That!" featuring the promise from heaven for every need on earth. This book is a resource every believer should have when facing discouragement, pain, fear, or the vast array of negative thoughts that attack all believers.

With your gift of \$128 or more, you'll receive "Experiencing Israel," by Tony Evans. Discover the holy land like never before and view stunning scenes in spectacular full color photography. Also, find practical applications that bring the world of the Bible into your life today!

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

Please call, write, or make your gift online.

End of video

In the studio

JAMES: Well, Lord Jesus, I want to thank you for the response today. Putting your arms around the broken, the overlooked. Setting them free, in Jesus' name.

Thank you. If you'd like to have Tony's book, *Revival Makers*, or you want to know about his ministry, go online. I want you to pray for him. Pray for Sammy Rodriguez, they work so beautifully together all over the world.

Tony, thank you. Thank you for the way you shared your testimony. I pray God will bless those children and bless everything you're doing, and I know he will. Thank you for being such a partner with us in trying to wake the church up to look like Jesus.

TONY: Thank you for all you do. Thank you so much.

JAMES: Well, those viewers right there, all we do, you are literally the support. You are the wind beneath our wings, so to speak. We couldn't do what we do without you. Thank you so much for sharing his love. God bless you.