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Week 14: WFL

Randy Robison and Tammy Trent

Alli Patterson

In the studio

TAMMY: Hello everybody. I'm Tammy Trent and this is Randy Robison. Welcome to *LIFE Today*. Life can be messy and unpredictable, and our guest knows that so well. She's written a book called *How to Stay Standing*. It's a great book and I want to talk to her today and ask her, Alli Patterson, welcome, first of all, but what inspired you to write this book? Like the title, *How to Stay Standing*. Where did it even come from? What's the source of this book for you?

ALLI: Well, the source of the book is really my own story of building a life a certain way and then watching it collapse. And later, reading the words of Jesus describing exactly what had happened to me. So there is a piece of scripture that is at the heart of the book. But of course, when I was living that out, I had no idea. I just knew this didn't work; the way that I built my life didn't work.

RANDY: So here's my question because we talked about this online. I think the natural thing when someone hears you say that is well, oh yeah, she was doing all the wrong things. She didn't grow up in church. She wasn't a believer. She was, you know—not the case though. Describe what you built your life on or thought you did.

ALLI: I truly did come into a relationship with Christ when I was 16 years old, and it was very real. It was very different than having gone to church, though that was helpful to me, I truly understood the gospel for the first time when I was 16. I did not understand how to let that be the basis for what happened in my life from that point forward. I just knew I believed, and I trusted God enough to believe this is who Jesus is and I think that's for me, and I get it. But I didn't know how to let that become the foundation of my whole

life.

And so what I did from there is I did what you do as a good kid, as someone who wanted to be happy and successful. Those are the words we use when we talk about what we want our life to be like. And so I did the things that I thought would get me that kind of life, a life where I was happy, a life where I was successful. I went to college, I got great grades, I had an awesome job, I met a good guy.

The tricky thing is when I read the parable, which is at the heart of the book, the light bulb went on for me that I was building the house; that's what I was doing. And some of those things, there is nothing wrong with those things. They're good things, right? And they make a lot of sense. It's just without a foundation, I took a version of what life was supposed to be like and it was, I would say, was worldly wisdom. This is what the world says is going to work.

What I did not understand is I was missing pieces inside my own heart that would have led me to understand, wait, who am I? Whom did God make me to be? And what's the expression of following him in this world that I need to be busy doing? Instead, I was busy building my own career and doing the things that I thought were going to be good for me. I didn't have my eye on how to follow him and what that would mean for building a life after him.

RANDY: I think a lot of people can relate to that. Because hey, look, I love Jesus! I love the church. I'm a good person. I'm not breaking the law. I don't have a horrible meth habit. You know all these things. And so life has got to be good. I'm a good citizen. I love Jesus and America and horses too.

What happened to make you go, okay, something is off, and it is very foundational, and it's very like, we've got to deal with this.

ALLI: I think eventually we all get presented with circumstances that test our character.

They're going to test—whatever you're building, the quality of that is eventually going to be tested. So for me, it was a character thing. I was in a corporate career, and I was finding a lot of success there. And I had a lot of freedom and a lot of money and a lot of things that the world would have thought hey, you're doing great. Only I was presented a set of circumstances with really some deep cracks and holes in my own character, and I had an affair with somebody that I worked with. Even the day before I would have told you I'm not the kind of person who would ever do that.

That's what I see in so many people's lives is we have blind spots that until that trouble comes against, we just aren't presented with the circumstances that we will know this is what I value, this is who I am, this is what I'm made of.

And in the wise and the foolish builder parable, in the book, I talk about the fact that both builders, one building a house that would eventually fall and one building a house that was strong enough to stand, trouble came for both of them, the testing came for both of them. The storm came, the winds blew, the water rose, and truly, I mean, if you're over about 15 years old you know that's going to be the case. You are going to have some kind of struggle. And I do believe, oftentimes, God will gladly use that to test what we've been building.

RANDY: What did you do? What was the fallout of that?

ALLI: Oh my goodness. These circumstances that were taking place in my life were the same ones, all of this struggle, all of this darkness, it was the same set of circumstances that God was pressing in on my life. And I could feel it, I knew it. I knew he was there in a way that in an X-factor way, in a way that you can't quite put your finger on. And I thought, he's here and this is my chance. This is my chance to try to do something right and real. And there's two words that I think started both my own downfall but the beginning of everything real. I told him, "Break me." If you want a dangerous prayer to pray and I couldn't bring myself to say those words for a couple of weeks. It was almost like the Holy Spirit had planted them somewhere in my heart and they were just swirling

around. And I thought, as soon as I for real tell the Lord to do this, he will.

And so one day I was out on a run, I love to run, I'm a runner. I just fell to my knees on the sidewalk in front of somebody's house. And I didn't care—couldn't have cared less. What I knew is I want what's real. I want a real life and I know you're the one that can help me. And I just fell to my knees, and I prayed those two little words. And I thought he's going to do it. He's going to get me out and it's probably not going to be pretty.

TAMMY: Alli, I could picture that. I could actually picture you running because I think so many people have probably been in places like that in our lives or we just—we also feel trapped, we're stuck, we're stuck in something. I'm carrying this load by myself, I don't know how to get out. When you got to a place of saying "break me" and you meant it, it's almost like God is saying, are you sure? Are you ready for this because we're going to have to break it all the way down to the foundation in order to rebuild this back up again? Are you ready for that?

Because we both know that healing takes work. Repair takes work. So if you're ready to heal, if you're ready to repair and you lay it all down, he's going to do it. He'll take you all the way down to the foundation. And it sounds like that's exactly what he did in your life; that confession transforms a life.

ALLI: Yes! This is the essence of the way into this parable that I mentioned, Jesus says three things. He says, "For all who come to me and hear my Word and put it into practice, I will show you what they're like. They're like a builder." And he tells the parable; that's what the wise builder does. And we're talking about coming to him. You could sit in a church for your whole life and hear the Word of God read to you and truly treasure it and respect it and honor it in external ways and never actually come to him.

Those like deeply honest moments where you're like, I'm not playing with you anymore, God. There is something I want. When I even talk to people, I always want to give them a big hug when somebody says this to me. Like, "Well, I really didn't want God before.

Now I'm in trouble and I need him.” And I think, great! This is the set of circumstances that God may have actually allowed to take place in your life to back you into a corner, will you come to me? Or will you try to do this on your own?

And those two little words were really me coming to him; that's how I would put it now. It was me going, okay, I want you to do this, and I want you to do it no matter the cost. And that's what you were mentioning. There is a cost. And it's not—sometimes the cost is your reputation. Sometimes the cost is just deep pain and difficulty in relationships or in the way your life is going. Sometimes you have to give things up to get out of the situations that put you where you are. And all I can say is oh, my goodness! The flip side is so much better.

TAMMY: So much better! Yeah.

ALLI: Yes, because what you discover is there is this amazing, incredible God who is alive, and he wants to be with you and bless you in ways you can't even fathom when you're in the middle of that kind of darkness.

RANDY: Yeah, I want to ask you about that because I'm a little bit of a word geek. And when I looked at brokenness in the Hebrew there are two connotations there. There is the kind that David had that is the contrition like you had that you said okay, God tear it all down. Let's get to the foundation. You break me. I surrender.

And then there is the other type that I think Job may have talked about. It is the brokenness that is a ruin, as I am crushed, I am defeated, I'm no good anymore. And if we try to do it on our own, life will break us. Our own actions may break us. Our own sin may break us; maybe something completely external outside, an abuse, or some other kind of situation. But when we allow—when we lay our lives down, in a sense, and let God break us and tear us down, he has the redemptive quality to rebuild us.

So for someone who is watching who may be where you were, they may be hanging on,

things just aren't working out right. Maybe it's blown up. It's on the tip of their tongue, that break-me prayer. What can you tell them to testify to God's goodness, his no-condemnation, the restoration process that's on his heart?

ALLI: As soon as I invited him into that space in my life, right smack into the pain and the darkness and the I don't know what to do anymore, when I invited God into that space for real, I began to experience him in ways that I can't even—I can't forget them many years later. And I was confused by that because what was happening on the outside is I felt terrible. I felt like the worst person I knew. I was trying to hide it from people. I was very ashamed. I was still lying about trying not to lose my job and lose friendships and all that kind of stuff. And we scramble because we want to keep our whole life together.

And what I discovered is when I gave up, when I handed it over, what was mine was kept. What the Lord had for me, it stayed. The things that were good and real that he could build with and work with in my life, they stayed. And there were things that I lost. And in hindsight, I just go good riddance to you. Because we don't like the idea that there's loss but when he takes things it is as good as him leaving things.

I remember a particular instance when I was in my kitchen. I couldn't understand why God wanted anything to do with me. I was just so ashamed of myself. I was so broken. And I remember I was singing some kind of worship song, I can't remember what it was now, I wish I could. And everything around me, I felt his presence suddenly like with me in a palpable way. And it filled me with this incredible joy. I was just like whatever my life is going to turn into from this point forward, it is going to be better than what I left.

And so many times we hold ourselves, we just desperately cling to the things we think we need. It is what keeps us from surrendering to God.

TAMMY: It's comfortable.

ALLI: We're terrified to lose those couple of things. Well, it doesn't take you very long

into the words of Jesus to realize that when we hand over and we're willing to lose, he is willing to give back all the things that are the life that he has for us. That's totally my story. I thought every time I surrender, every time I confess, every time I tell the truth, every time I walk his direction and just do what he says to do, I thought it was going to equal only ever pain and loss, and it was actually the road back to life.

So I was reading just this morning Psalm 40, and that, a lot of people are familiar with the very beginning of that psalm. And David says, "I waited patiently for the Lord, and he inclined his ear and heard my cry. And he lifted me out of a muddy, slimy pit and put my feet on the rock." And there is a translation that says, "I completely relied upon the Lord." It translates as "waited patiently" as though I completely relied upon him. But there is this waiting. You do have to move his direction and sometimes, it does cost you things and the obedience isn't fun. But you have to read the rest of that Psalm. I mean David is a man who ends up completely trusting the Lord even now in the middle of new troubles.

RANDY: Here's my question because you've got the three points coming to Jesus. I think we get that. How important is it that we do the words? Not just hear them, like I'm—agree with them, actually, do them?

ALLI: Yes. I've been in many churches and around many, like truly people who want to love God, and we do tend to listen and mentally agree with the words of God and walk away and not practice them fully in our life. Guilty, we've all been there. As we do them that's where the foundation is actually won. You cannot stand on rock. The parts of my faith that I own today that you can't talk me out of, they're not mental assent, I won in the real-life experience of trying to just simply do what it said.

That started with a confession. I just started telling the truth. I wonder what would happen if you just told the truth? I know that sounds so simple but everything from what do you think about something, all the way to a true confession of something that needs to come out and be released. That in and of itself is revolutionary.

I have a practice when I read the Word. When I come across something that I feel like you know just a little nudge, you need to do that. I make it, I'm a list maker. I make it the top priority for my day. It could be as simple as encourage one another, could be something super simple. Do it! Your encouragement doesn't do any good inside your own head. It's not all earth-shattering stuff but as you do it, you get to watch the Lord go to work. So if I come and I encourage you, and you don't—had I kept that to myself, it may be that it really, it deeply matters for something that the Lord wants for you to hear. So you have no idea what the Lord is going to do with your simple acts of obedience.

And to me, that's the fun part of following Jesus is you get to watch him go to work. He offers you a chance to obey him and if you will, you'll get to watch what he will actually do with that. And to me, that's the best part, that's the fun part.

RANDY: It is! We have an opportunity right now for people to do what Jesus said, which is to reach out to those who are hurting, to rescue those who are suffering, to bring good news to people who desperately need it.

We want to give you that chance to actually do it. So take a look at this and see how you can do the words of Jesus.

On the mission field

[Children playing]

ANNOUNCER: It began with a dream. For a mother like this, it was the dream of a prosperous future for her daughter. And hope for that dream came as a promise from a stranger—an honorable start to a new life, an opportunity for a child to escape a world of poverty and to pursue her destiny.

But in reality, this dream come true was a mother's worst nightmare. Promise became betrayal. This daughter was kidnapped and sold into the sex slave trade.

Once a picture of innocence, her body was violated as she was then submitted to the unbridled lust of countless men. With her humanity stripped from her and her spirit broken, it seemed all hope was lost.

It's not too late for daughters like this to be rescued. But time is running out.

In the studio

TAMMY: This is not a life that any one of these families or children ever wanted or ever dreamed of. They've been lied to, they've been promised the world, and then they step into a nightmare. Everything is stripped from them, it is taken from them, their dignity, their identity, in many cases, their very lives.

I can't imagine a mother having to carry this burden around thinking that she was about to change the life of her little girl, had no idea just what kind of change that would bring.

We have an opportunity today. Time is of the essence; time is running out for many of these little ones. We have an opportunity today to come together and to make a difference, to save the very lives of hundreds of children that have been sold into human trafficking, that desperately want out, that feel trapped, that feel like nobody hears them, nobody is on the way, nobody is coming to rescue them.

I want to be that voice for them today to let them know that we're on the way. We're coming. We are going to reach you, we're going to rescue you, and we're going to restore your little life. We're going to rebuild that. We're going to tell you and show you exactly who you are in Christ so that this would never happen to you again, and you would recognize the signs to be able to help the next child.

I want to be a part of that and I'm praying that you would consider being a part of that

with us today. Randy, there is so much that we can do.

RANDY: It is interesting because we've talked to many girls who have come out of this that said that they prayed. They don't even necessarily know who they are praying to—if anyone is listening. But do you know what, Tammy? We come in with Rescue LIFE and we're an answer to that prayer. And we tell them who it is that can restore them and give them hope and a future and heal the lies that cause so much damage can only be healed by the truth of Jesus Christ. That's what we believe, and we know you believe it too.

That's why we ask you to join us in this ministry that is openly a ministry of Jesus Christ to reach, to rescue, and to restore. I'm asking you to give the best gift you can. I can give you the numbers. You'll see them and how it breaks down on average per child. And we've got a wonderful matching gift. But it's not just about—it's not about dollars. It's really not. I mean the money enables us to put people into the field, to get the programs in place, to buy the things we need. It is a necessity. But it is about giving life and hope of Jesus Christ to people who desperately need it. Who some of them are praying right now to get out of their hell. We need to bring them the good news of heaven.

So I'm asking you to give the best gift you can. It doesn't matter what that is. You know what it is. Just pause for a moment. Say, Lord, what would you have me do to reach someone who is in a desperate situation, to rescue them from the hell that they're in, to help restore them and give them a hope and a future? What can my part be? And then give with gladness in your heart knowing that it is going to make a difference.

With the gift of \$64 today we'll reach that child, \$128 will reach two, \$1280 will reach 20. Reach, rescue, or restore, whatever it is, again, Tammy and I just come to you and say, hey, let's come out as a big strong team, the body of Christ, to storm the gates of hell and to give them heaven. Go online or to the phone right now and give 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 "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**

RANDY: I hope you are going online, going to the phone right now. Together, we can make a huge impact, but it takes all of us. Alli, I appreciate you being here. What's your website for people that want to get the book or find out more about your ministry?

ALLI: Yes, it is AlliPatterson.com. And I would love to connect. You can find out about the book there and all the other work that I do.

TAMMY: Man, it is so good to talk to you, Alli. I learned so much even from just our conversation today. Thank you for taking a stand and writing this book. I believe it's going to impact the lives of so many. Go out and grab this book today.

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