

1/23/24

Week four: WFL

Randy Robison and Tammy Trent

Jay Hewett

**In the studio**

**RANDY:** Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm Randy Robison. Tammy is with me.

**TAMMY:** Hello.

**RANDY:** Tammy, we hit these points, I know you have, especially with the tragedy in your life where you just feel like you have nothing in the tank. You are weak. You are done.

**TAMMY:** Empty.

**RANDY:** Do you ever think at that point I feel strong?

**TAMMY:** No. I don't think I ever in the middle of just facing something that just took the wind out of me did I feel strong. It's taken me seasons and being intentional about trying to come back to life again, and choosing life, and looking at it with a different lens. It is tough. It's really hard. I never felt strong.

**RANDY:** I think a part of that different lens is hearing stories like the one you're going to hear today. Because it can go, hmm! If God can do that for that person, maybe I should look at things a little differently. That's why I'm excited to have Jay Hewett with us who is an author of a book called *I Am Weak, I Am Strong* because Jay has got quite the story.

So Jay man, it's so good to have you.

**JAY:** Thank you. It's wonderful to be here with y'all.

**RANDY:** I don't even want to try to tease this. I want to let you tell it because it is one of those that you just look at and you go, okay, wow! Wow! So take us back to the moment where everything changed.

**JAY:** You know life was going well until it wasn't. So out of nowhere I had a seizure. I didn't even know what hit me. Never had anything like this before. And so I went to my general practitioner who sent me to a neurologist, all over the place. We're trying to figure this out.

And finally, one Sunday, I'd just gotten off the stage from preaching. I went home and I got a call from a neurosurgeon. And he told me, "You have a tumor right in the center of your brain. It is about the size of a ping-pong ball. It is going to take a high-risk surgery to get that tumor out. And then we'll find out—we'll find out if it is cancerous or not."

And after surviving a very high-risk surgery with miraculous results, we got the diagnosis back. It was this, "You have brain cancer and it is terminal. There is no cure." Talk about feeling weak! At that moment my wife and I, we were just devastated; had a young daughter who was four years old. I just couldn't make any sense out of it. Why God? Why would you allow this?

**RANDY:** Where do you even go from there? I mean, right?

**JAY:** I'll tell you where I went. I went to Dunkin' Donuts. I dropped my daughter off at school and then went and got some saturated fat. It was in the parking lot at Dunkin' Donuts where I had this moment of choosing, am I going to walk away from my faith or am I going to turn towards Jesus?

I can't tell you exactly why, but instinctually, I turned towards God in prayer. I think it is because of some wrestling that I've done in my past. And I very honestly, directly, almost sternly asked God, what are you doing? What are you doing? I asked him and then he responded. He responded just like Jesus told us the Holy Spirit would do. He reminded us of the teachings of Jesus. And the Holy Spirit took my soul, my spirit, my mind, my heart, all of me to Second Corinthians 12, verses nine and ten.

I asked God, what are you doing? And he answered me very similarly to the way he answered the Apostle Paul. And he told me, "My grace is sufficient for my power is perfected in weakness." And then I came to the same conclusion that the Apostle Paul came to. Well then, when I'm weak I'm actually strong.

And I took him at His Word. I took him at His Word. I left Dunkin' Donuts that day knowing somehow, some way God is going to demonstrate his power through my weakness.

**RANDY:** Okay, so you're a pastor at that point.

**JAY:** I was, yes.

**RANDY:** So you probably preached a sermon on this a time or two.

**JAY:** Yeah. It comes off a little differently, before you go through something like this—while you're going through.

**RANDY:** But I think there is a preparation involved there too so that God can bring that back to mind for you. So your response to let God be your strength, never in a million years would I respond the way you did. [Laughing]

**JAY:** Yeah. Kind of crazy, right?

**RANDY:** What brought that on?

**JAY:** I learned from Henry Blackaby, from his *Experiencing God* workbook, years and years before when I was in college, to pray two prayers: God where are you working? And how can I join you? And my first prayer at Dunkin' Donuts was basically that. God what are you doing? And he revealed that the work was going to be in me and through me. So God what are you doing? You're going to demonstrate your power through me. So then I prayed the next prayer, how can I join you? God, how can I cooperate?

And at that point, I wouldn't say the Lord spoke to me, but it was kind of a nudge from the Holy Spirit. I got this crazy idea of what if, at my weakest, when I've barely recovered from a second brain surgery, when I've just started radiation and chemotherapy, what if I attempted something that I never thought I could do at my strongest? What if I attempted an Iron Man triathlon?

In an Iron Man triathlon, in case you don't know, because I didn't quite know what I was getting myself into. But it is a triathlon that is 140 miles and you've got to do it in under 17 hours.

**RANDY:** 140 miles of what?

**JAY:** Well, first you swim two and a half miles.

**RANDY:** Most people can't do that.

**JAY:** I couldn't. No way could I do that at that point. Then you cycle 112 miles. Another thing that I was not able to do at that point, and then after you've done both those things then you just finish it off with a marathon.

**RANDY:** A marathon? 26.2 miles.

**JAY:** Why not?

**RANDY:** You know there is a thing called a Sprint Triathlon, right?

**JAY:** Yes! [Laughing] But you did the big granddaddy of them all! Why?

**JAY:** Well, a couple of reasons. One, I was taking God at His Word and what better way to demonstrate that, at my weakest, it's God's power working through me than to go on the grand level. Another reason is because I wanted to give my daughter a grand gesture of love, a little four-year-old. I wanted to dedicate my race to her as a grand gesture of love and to teach her that all things are possible with God. I wanted her to see what resilient faith looked like.

**TAMMY:** Can I ask you a really honest question? Um, thinking about your daughter, thinking about "terminal," the word. Has it been somewhat easier for you to think about, I don't know how much life I have left. Do you struggle even with the thought of death? Do I have a year left? Do I have six months? Do I have two years? What does that look like?

**JAY:** Yeah. Yeah. So as a follower of Jesus myself, it was pretty easy to come to peace with yeah, I'm going to pass away at some point, and it is all game. It is all game on the other side. However, what weighs heavier on me is my family, my wife and my daughter. And just like I went to Jesus in prayer and said, what are you doing? I've also gone to prayer and said, will you take care of my family? And so I had this very honest, very well real moment of prayer where again God was so gracious and he enlightened my heart and soul to say yes, I've got them. Yes, I've got them.

And then you ask about the day-to-day moments. My wife is so wise. In the middle of the year worth of training for this triathlon, she said to me, she said, "Jay, you're teaching your daughter from a distance. But what about up close?" Training for an Iron Man takes a lot of time. But I was on medical leave so I could take my daughter to school, drop her

off. My wife would go to work, and I'd train during that time. But then this little thing called COVID-19 hit, and now my wife who's a professor is giving lectures from home. My daughter is no longer at school and she's bothering my wife and I'm out on a bike ride. And so it became just so stressful on my family. I thought, Lord, was that nudge just ridiculousness from me? And I had to really wrestle with that. But in the midst of that wrestling, Natalie said to me, "What about up close?"

And so I gave Hero a journal when I crossed the finish line, and it is a resilience journal. We worked on it all the time together. And after a year and a half of that shoulder to shoulder, we finished the journal. And she loves it! And now, we do daddy-daughter adventures. So you've probably heard of daddy-daughter dates and we do stuff like that but I also want to make sure we're doing adventures where we're really working on that resilience piece. Because we all need it—we all need it and I want to gift that to her.

**RANDY:** What was the prognosis at the time even after the surgeries?

**JAY:** So yes, after the surgeries two highly successful surgeries, the prognosis was just a couple of years.

**RANDY:** Still?

**JAY:** Yes. Yeah. They told me, they said, "There is no cure for this. We're going to do radiation and chemo, it will slow it down a little bit, but it doesn't do what this can do for other cancers."

**RANDY:** But you doubled that. So where do you sit today as far as physically, but also, I don't know spiritually, relationally, emotionally? Where are you?

**JAY:** Oooouh, those are big questions! That's something you can write a book on, right? [Laughing] Yeah, I have—With my type of cancer there is no remission. It is called a chronic cancer. So even though I feel pretty good right now the medical community says

yes, but there are still cancer cells scattered throughout your brain and at some point, those are going to turn on and they are going to overtake your brain and your body and your life.

And every time I go in for a scan, because it's been so long, it's like the medical community is thinking, okay, it's possible that we're not going to see any new tumor but it's not probable. But I feel like I've received enough from the Lord to when I walk in, I have this peace of it's possible that they'll see a new tumor but it is not probable. I've flipped it on its head—and I live that way. I live that way.

**TAMMY:** Yes. And how did you get to the place of understanding the concept of allowing something like this to really transform your life for the good?

**JAY:** You know, I think it happened early on when I decided to take on this Iron Man and I started training. I would wake up so fatigued, headache, nausea. And I would start my training every day the same way, Lord, give me strength. And then I'd put my feet on the ground and I would trust in his power and I would get up. So as I was going through this year of training, I was also understanding that I was going through a year of transformation. That's not going to stop when I cross the finish line—if I could cross the finish line.

**RANDY:** Here's what I'm curious about though because you mentioned COVID while you were training, and that threw everything off. There were no Iron Mans during COVID that I know of? Right? At least not for a while. But yet, that had a weird way of creating another moment that was special to you.

**JAY:** Yes, absolutely! By this point, Iron Man had heard about my story and so they brought me on as an Iron Man athlete because I embodied their "Anything is possible" motto. I got a call from them and they told me, "We're shutting down every Iron Man in the world. So we're going to adjust. We're going to show some resilience and we're going to do our first ever full distance virtual race."

I said, "What's that?"

They said, "Well, you'll wear your Garmin sports watch and you'll connect it to an app and we'll measure time and distance and all that through that."

I said, "Yeah, but how does it really work?"

They said, "You'll plan your 140-mile route, and then you'll set up your own aid stations. You'll staff it with volunteers. And it is all on you."

I told them, it's kind of married man speak for no. I said, "Let me check with my wife."

[Laughter]

"I'll get back to you."

So I asked Natalie, and like I said before, she is so wise. Her response is, "I think you should do it. If you have to plan it and you plan it here, your family will be there, your congregation members will be there, your friends. You'll have support here." I didn't realize that, and I thought, that's right! That's right! And then this was the kicker though. She said, "And if you can set the course, you can put the finish line right in front of our house."

And when I realized that this was becoming a metaphor for me, that just as I was battling cancer, I was fighting for my life to make it home to my family every day. Now, for 140 miles, now I get to race with everything that I have to make it home to the finish line to be with my family. And that changed it all for me.

I called Iron Man back, and I said, "We're in. We'll figure this out." And sure enough, my church family, rallied around me, my biological family, everybody pitched in. Everybody



was in and I had more than enough support to pull this off.

**RANDY:** When your daughter's grown and looks back on this, whether you're here or whether you're not here, what do you want her to take away?

**JAY:** There is a moment in the race where it didn't look like I was going to make it. Just something happened with my body and I won't go into detail but it was not good. I realized, I've got to make peace with the fact that all this training has gone into this, I'm not going to see her at the finish line. And I changed my mantra. And I said in this prayer, God, I've got nothing to prove, just an example to set. All these people waiting for me at the finish line. I've got nothing to prove, I just have an example to set. And that is I want to look my daughter in the eyes and let her know, honey, you're so loved. And I will give it my all. I will give it my all to make it home to you.

And then, God is good. The people that he called to support me, they were good, and they were able to change things for me. My body changed miraculously. I was able to keep going and I made it to the finish line. And what I told her at the finish line is what I hope will just reverberate in her heart and soul and that she'll understand it to a deeper level.

This is what I told her. I crossed the finish line and I said, "Honey, if I can do it, you can do it because we serve the same God. The God who delights in demonstrating his power through our weakness. Honey, God is going to put dreams in your heart. Go after those dreams but do not be surprised when your enemy knocks you down. But hold on to the hope of Jesus. Do not let go. Hold on to the hope of Jesus. And with his power, get up, stay strong, press on, and see for yourself that all things are possible through Jesus."

**TAMMY:** You know, Pastor Hewlett, if you don't have a father in your life that could say that stuff to you at the finish line today. When you were saying all that, I just envisioned Father God saying that to so many people that don't have a father in their life or have never been told those things—that you were made for more. That God will get you to your final destination, that you can conquer anything. It is within you because of

who Christ is within you. You are loved, you remember highly valued. So many people have never been told that. I'm so grateful that your daughter has a father like you.

Jay, what a gift you are. What a gift we all have in a relationship with Jesus that our Father speaks that over us every single day. Thank you so much. I'm sorry I got emotional there but I know the gift of a father and I know the gift of my father.

**RANDY:** I understand the struggle of wanting to be there for your kids and not fearing for your own life but almost fearing for them. When I hit that moment, because I have hit that moment, not with a diagnosis like yours, God kind of gently, lovingly reminded me, I actually love your kids more than you are able to. And that doesn't get us off the hook from doing anything that we should do in obedience. Absolutely not. But God, his ability, his capacity for love is so much beyond ours. And that kind of switches it. The motivation becomes I'm going to obey because of the love that I've experienced.

And that's why I appreciate what so many of our viewers have done over the years through our mission outreaches to say, look, God loves these children who are in need. And they're not even my own children, but because of God's love for me, I'm going to reach out and do something for them. Because you know what? Some of them, they don't know God. They don't know Jesus. They don't know the gospel. And we will walk in with a clean cup of water which for them looks like a water well. We say hey, look, here's life. Both in this cup but also let me tell you about eternal life. You know, we can't do it on our own but we don't have to. We're weak, but God is strong.

And so I want to just take a moment to invite you into something where God's power changes everything. Watch this and you'll understand.

### **On the mission field**

**ISAK:** I've just been talking to Monica and she's been explaining her story to me. The story of her life, the story of how water has impacted that life. She's got five children. But

then she explained that she's lost two of those children. She lost them because of exactly where we're sitting today, where we found her, and what she's doing. She actually said this water, maybe it looks like it's clean to you, I've got to tell you it doesn't look clean to me at all. But she said, "Maybe it looks clean to you," she said, "but you don't know what's in there." And she explained how she lost two children because of waterborne disease.

The pain was so evident when she spoke about the fact that she had lost these children. That's why she cried out to God as she said angrily, "Why didn't I die first?" I can understand. I think you can understand. If we lost our children, I think we'd feel exactly the same way. Why could I not have died first?

But you know what else she said? She said that she dreams of having a water well here. Right now, what her immediate need is, is water. Monica's story broke my heart. I'm sure it's broken yours but don't leave it at that. You can't leave it there. Because then all we're left with is three broken hearts, yours, mine, and Monica's. And what Monica is left with is no future for the three children that remain. But if you'll act today, we'll make Monica's dreams could true. If you'll give that gift to Water for LIFE, you'll be giving life for Monica, life for her children, and life for the people of this area.

**End of video**

**In the studio**

**TAMMY:** Isak, I do understand. I'm with you on this my brother. Absolutely! I would do anything to help her dreams come true because she is not asking me to build her a million-dollar house. She is not asking me to buy her a brand-new car, or even pay her debt. She is just saying, could you bring me some clean water? Could you drill a well and help save children in this village and families in this village? That could change everything for them. Could you just do that? So for me to think about just helping to make her dream come true, it really doesn't take very much to help her do that! It's unbelievable how simple it is.

We're in 20 nations. We're wanting to build 350 wells this year, hopefully even more. We've got big dreams. We've got big hopes for these people. It only takes \$48 and it will provide water for ten people. \$144 will provide water for 30 people. And for \$4,800, to me that's it! \$4800, we could go in there and put an entire well in that village for Monica, her family, her friends that will last for their lifetime, that will be life-giving to them instead of the fear and the worry of death and losing someone they love.

Those are the kind of dreams I want to be part of. And we want you to come alongside us in that dream, in that vision to help make that possible for so many people around the world. Would you go online? Would you make a call to us today? If you've given before, thank you so much! It means the world to us. Maybe today you're in a position where you could give again or a little bit more. I'll challenge you, come alongside us. Let's do it. Let's make some dreams come true right now for these people, Randy.

**RANDY:** We can! And you know I think it is important to say, because there are a lot of organizations that do good work, and we applaud good works, but when we go in, it is a demonstration of the gospel. We share God's love in word and deed. So yes, we're asking you to meet a practical need today because we can. And God, I think has entrusted us with it. But we're also asking you to do a supernatural thing, to come in and give them drinking water for their bodies, but to give them that eternal living water for their souls.

So I just want to reiterate what Tammy said, will you go online, will you go to the phone, make the best gift you can? Let's give them water. Let's give them life.

### **Begin Video**

***ANNOUNCER:** Every day, thousands of lives are lost to waterborne disease, 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 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 Daughter, written by James and Betty's granddaughter, Laney Rene. This insightful book invites all girls and women to walk in the freedom of their God-given identity and embrace who they really are.*

*With your gift of \$100 or more, you may request the "Great is the Lord" decorative blanket featuring the words of Psalm 145:3. This beautiful blanket is perfect for comfort and cold weather and a reminder of your help with Water for LIFE.*

*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 bronze sculpture, "A Cup of Water," inspired by Jesus' words in Mark 9:41.*

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

**End of video**

**In the studio**

**RANDY:** You really can make a difference today. You can save a life. You can share the love of Jesus. I hope you will go to the phone or go online and make the best gift you can.

And Tammy, for those interested, which should be everybody, request this book. We would love to send it to you.

**TAMMY:** Yes! *I Am Weak, I Am Strong*: Building a resilient faith for a resilient life. It is pure inspiration! You need to have it in your life. Honestly, it is so, so good.

Jay, goodness, we love you. Praying for a long life, my brother in Christ. God bless you so much.

**RANDY:** How can our viewers pray for you?

**JAY:** First, every prayer matters, and here's why. I don't believe that you need a certain amount of prayers before God hears you and acts. But this is what I believe. The more people praying, the more glory God gets when he does act. So I want to invite everybody to pray for my total healing, to pray for my family, and that just the same strength that he's given to me that he gives to us as a family.

And I also want your prayers for the medical community as they research for a cure for this. Not only do I want to be healed, I want many people to be healed through it.

**RANDY:** So good!

**TAMMY:** Absolutely! I will be praying for you, brother. God's will will be done in the name of Jesus. And we're praying for you as well. We love you. We appreciate you. We're grateful you were here today. We'll see you next time here on *Life Today*.