

1/31/24

Week five: WFL

Randy Robison and Tammy Trent

Faith Eury Cho

**In the studio**

**TAMMY:** Hello everybody. Welcome to *Life Today*. I'm Tammy Trent and this is Randy Robison. It is great to be back with you again. You know what I love about this show? That I get to meet some incredible people, Randy.

**RANDY:** We do! We do!

**TAMMY:** Yes! Incredible people that I think in my walk with the Lord have helped me so much growing spiritually. Even some topics sometimes that I would pass over, or gloss over. Think like, I'm good in that area of my life. And then we bring out a guest and think, I'm not so good in that area of my life. I need to learn more! And then they teach us so much.

And such is our guest today, Faith Eury Cho is here with us. She has a brand-new book out, I think it is her first, called *Experiencing Friendship with God: "How the wilderness draws us to his presence."* What a great book this is, Faith! And what a great girl you are! I'm so happy to meet you and talk to you. We don't always have a lot of time so let's dive right in. Tell me the reason you felt like it was so important for me to know the presence of God and to recognize the presence of God in my life.

**FAITH:** I think now more than ever we want people, and the church even, just to be revived and at the center of what God has called us to be in. However, especially from 2020 and on, we have noticed almost an exodus of people leaving the church, leaving the faith. And it was all for this reason that revealed that we were living for the promised

land. We were living for our breakthrough. We were living for our healing. We were living for our promotions. And when those things were not around and we did not see proof of our faith, it almost gave us an excuse to leave God. It almost gave us an excuse to resign ourselves and our trust in the Lord, and in a way just play the part.

And basically, the purpose of this book is to say that if the purpose of our lives is to build a friendship with the Lord that is intimate, authentic, and passionate, then not even the wilderness seasons can take us away from Jesus.

**TAMMY:** The wilderness seasons—you went there so I'm going to go there. Why does God allow wilderness seasons? Why do we have to go through them? I think I know in my own life. It's been so much about preparation; like preparing me for something more. So why do you think God allows us beyond that to go through these seasons?

**FAITH:** I believe that as long as we are on this side of heaven there is always going to be a wilderness season. As long as we live in this time in redemptive history where there are consequences for sin, we're going to go through wilderness seasons.

Now, how we experience those wilderness seasons will be up to us. I think people thought, well, God why did you just throw the Israelites into the wilderness after Egypt? Why go from slavery to wilderness? Why can't you cut them a break? But the thing is, the Israelites did not know God as a friend. They did not have a relationship with God as Moses did. So during their time in the wilderness, although the things that they may have wanted were hidden from them, God was actually revealing himself to them.

And if the purpose of our lives, like I said, is for the building of a genuine relationship with God, then that would be enough; that would be such a beautiful thing. It is so interesting because I remember talking to one of my mentors at one point in my life saying I just want out. I just want out of this wilderness and I don't understand why God won't just make it easy. Why does he cause me to go through things? Why can't he just give me a message via email or a text? Like, teach it to me nicely. Why do I have to go

through all these things? He reminded me that all the most beautiful stories that we celebrate in Christian traditions are actually in the wilderness. When you look throughout the Bible, people celebrate the parting of the sea. People marvel at the manna from the sky. Why? Because these are demonstrations, manifestations of the goodness of his presence.

It's so good when we hear about it for other people but for us, we're like no, I'd rather have the promotion, God. I'd rather have this miracle, God. And this is not to say that it's bad to want these things, because when we are in a loving relationship with the Lord, we can expect blessings because he is a good Father. However, the purpose of our lives is not to pursue the blessings of God but it is actually to pursue God himself and then welcome the blessings.

**TAMMY:** Absolutely. You talk about the presence of God. So I think starting—a starting point probably would also be we need to have a clear understanding of what the presence of God is. What does that mean? For someone that says often like the person who might say, I don't feel God. What would you even say to them? What practically would you say? How could we dive into it? I want to know the presence of God but I don't. How do I get there?

**FAITH:** Oh, I love that! Well, first of all, I would like to say that God is everywhere, right? And when people are like how can you go to God when God is everywhere? And what do we mean by the presence of God? And there are a lot of songs that say we're waiting for you, Lord, or show up, God.

**TAMMY:** So is he not here then? I'm waiting for him? Or is he here and waiting on me?

**FAITH:** Yeah! And I feel like sometimes because we don't fully understand it, we relegate it to just poetry. We think it is just positive poetry that we think about at church. When actually, when we say "the presence of God," this is such a theologically rich concept that I feel like if we just take time to solidify this in our hearts and our minds that

this could radically change the way we relate with him. Because just as God is everywhere, he has wanted to be relationally accessible.

And we see this from Genesis to Revelation. If God did not want to be relationally accessible to us then the Bible would have ended at Genesis three. And he would have been like all right, start over. But the fact that we just keep messing it up, pushing him away, falling, running away, hiding, choosing shame over intimacy, we do all these things. But the reason why there are so many books in the Bible is because it is a testament to how God is constantly pursuing, speaking, protecting, guiding, and loving on us. And the fact that he came as Jesus. And then Jesus had to die so that the Holy Spirit could be within us. It just shows that it's just been a neverending pursuit of closeness.

So for anybody that's discouraged, as to feel as though they are not spiritual enough, or that there is this huge chasm between us and God, the cross closed that chasm. So now, we don't have to beg for God. We don't have to chase God. We don't have to earn God. But now by the blood of Jesus, we can acknowledge God. He is a breath away. So even now as I'm talking to you, I'm acknowledging the presence of God.

It is like when you grocery shop with a loved one. Like when I'm shopping with my children, although I'm thinking about what I'm doing, I'm also aware of their presence. After many years of marriage, you grow to have an awareness of your spouse just being around. Even just my husband's footsteps. I know where he is, I know what he's feeling. He could just be breathing and I could know how he feels. It is just this growing awareness of his presence that we could practice. When we practice it, we realize that we do not have to go and find the most holy place because the most holy place is wherever we acknowledge the presence of God.

**TAMMY:** It's so good! I think a season of my life where I walked through loss. I remember standing on the edge of the water and instantly talking to Jesus. Instantly asking God to make himself known to me and real. And the very things I prayed for, Faith, was I wanted to know the presence of God. Because I knew everything was

changing around me. Things were shifting and changing. I felt a heaviness. I was broken. I was sad. I didn't understand what was going on; trying to find the hand of God in it. But I remember specifically praying, God, I need to feel you right now; was the one thing that steadied my world.

The question for me is if all you had was the presence of God, is it enough, Tammy? Is it enough? How do we help people get to that place of understanding? Like if the prayer is an answer today, if you're going through a tough time and it is just you've been in that wilderness for so long, maybe find a place where you just feel the presence of God. You've got to get to the place where the presence of God is enough. We bypass the beauty and the importance and the power and the presence of God.

**FAITH:** Now can I be real? So as a preacher—I'm a preacher. I've been preaching since I was 17 years old. And something that I've always preached was that the presence of God is weightier than the pain. Now that's something I've always preached. I remember I went through a very heavy wilderness season in 2020 when my family and I were church planting during the pandemic. That wasn't the plan but it became the plan.

And we lost basically everything within a week. We were even near homelessness, even one week away from being homeless with four children and dogs; it was just like a whole thing. And I remember the amount of pain and fear that I was going through. And I remember my friends telling me, "Oh, I'll pray for you." Or "God is with you." My honest confession in those moments was that it was not enough. That was just my honest confession. And I was almost ashamed to admit that because as a preacher, this was just my moment to shine and I could talk about it later. But in that moment, I remember telling God, I don't need people's prayers, I need a paycheck. You know? I don't have a song to sing. I don't have a prayer to pray. And right now it just does not feel like it's enough.

Now when I look back, my heart is always overwhelmed with gratitude because when I look back, I could feel God being there in that moment. But in that moment, I did not feel

that. The thing that I felt the Lord inviting me to do in those moments was welcoming my honesty because pain reveals our true theology of God's presence. Pain takes away the tradition, takes away everything that we have been trained to do, everything that culture has raised us to do, and it reveals our true faith. The quality of our trust in him is revealed. The wilderness doesn't change us, it reveals us, and in that moment the quality of my faith was being revealed. In that moment, I realized I have this much faith and I'm going through this much pain. What do we do with that chasm? With that disparity? We sit in his presence and we give him our honesty and he gives us himself.

**TAMMY:** Absolutely!

**RANDY:** That's good! I think it was Mike Tyson that said, "Everybody has got a plan until you get punched in the mouth." I'm maybe butchering it. But the idea of—and it happens. Right?

**TAMMY:** I don't want to get punched in the mouth.

**RANDY:** None of us do, literally or figuratively. And I think that's where a lot of people, especially those of us who have grown up in the church, and we mean it, we believe it. And then you're there. You've got the unanswered prayer, you've got the spiritual longings that just don't seem to ever be satisfied.

That wilderness experience, and you go, and part of me, theologically wants to go, but Jesus you died on the cross so I don't have to suffer now. I think there is some truth in that, but when someone is in that season of God, where are you? I just lost a loved one. You went through an experience with one of your children that was a test. The platitudes like you say, we want that tangible thing, we want to sit in the presence but man, for that person that's there right now, how do we minister to them the most effectively?

**FAITH:** Yes. I think being real about what they're going through and being real about God. I think sometimes in the fear of offending somebody that's hurt, in a way we feel

like there's only room for their pain. But also, we have to be real about God, and we have to be real about both.

So I have four kids and when my second born was born there was just a lot of trauma around his birth experience. We were not expecting him to come out early, we were not expecting him to have issues and go into the I.C.U. And I have all these trained protocols within me. Okay, if something happens like that, you pray! You gather the saints, you fast, you do all these things. And man, people were praying but I felt like the more we prayed the worse it was getting. That's how I felt. I mean people came into the hospital room, surrounded my bed, and surrounded us in prayer, and then the next hour a doctor or nurse would tell us, he's getting worse. He's declining, and we added an antibiotic. We added another breathing machine. We added this and that.

And I remember around the third day thinking I'm not going to pray because you're going to do whatever you want anyways. That was what came out of me. I'm not proud of it. I'm not proud.

**TAMMY:** No, I've been there and I think many people have.

**FAITH:** I just felt what is the point when you're just going to do whatever you want? So I'm just going to sit here and let you do whatever you want. But it is just not fair! And I remember I felt this unction in my heart to give thanks. And oh, my goodness that was the last thing I wanted to do. When you're in a hospital bed and your innocent son is going through something that is beyond your control, and you're just bombarded, just constantly bombarded with bad news, it almost feels offensive that you're called to give thanks. And perhaps, that's why it is a sacrifice of praise. It is a sacrifice.

But I felt it in my spirit, that whisper from the Lord, give thanks, give thanks. So I reluctantly got my journal out and I just started to write a list. Man, my attitude was just not there. I was like thank you for this day, whatever. You know? I was just writing it out. But I remember around the 20-minute mark my heart started to thaw. And around the

40-minute mark my awareness of his nearness, I was just weeping.

And it's interesting because while I was writing the list of thanksgiving, even during that time, a nurse came in and said here are the numbers. It is not looking good. But I remember I just kept on going. Because up until this point, I thought giving thanks was just ignoring the wilderness. I thought we were just being naive and it was just Christians telling us to just be optimistic about life and blindly so. I thought it was just a call for us to ignore everything that's bad.

When actually, the call to give thanks is a call to fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. And it just started to inundate my whole being with his nearness—with an awareness of his nearness. It is all about that awareness. It is so interesting because so much of what happens in scripture starts with what we choose to look at. You know? From Genesis three, it starts with what we choose to look at. And thanksgiving is just choosing to gaze upon Jesus.

And I cannot even say that it was just a physical or a spiritual or just an emotional or mental experience, it was a fully embodying experience of just knowing he is with me. And it was well with my soul. It was well. My cup was overflowing. Perhaps, it is because we weren't created just to get whatever we want here on Earth. We were created to know him. We were created to be in friendship with him. And when that is in place, all is well. And it is not to say all is perfect—but all is well in our soul.

**TAMMY:** It might not be well with my circumstances but somehow it can be well with my soul.

**RANDY:** It's interesting, I think a lot of times we think of thanksgiving as God needing to hear how great he is—which is just wrong. And in that situation, I don't think he was getting—he's like you need to be thankful because I'm just that great. Thanksgiving is almost for us to change our perspective, to help us.



There is so much here. I've got more notes but Tammy, I think people need to just request the book today.

**TAMMY:** Seriously! It is so good, Randy. Honestly, and look, we want to send you this book. If you're able to come alongside us today in this great mission that we have, we want to get this book in your hands. But first, I want you to take a minute and watch this mission that we're so, so passionate about.

### **On the mission field**

**RANDY:** How many children do you have?

### **Open Captions**

>> I have five children but one of them is dead so I am left with four.

**RANDY:** I'm so sorry!

### **Open Captions**

>> There is so much death in this area. You can't count how many women who have lost children due to this dirty water.

**RANDY:** I don't understand all the things that happen physiologically, but the mother recognizes the same signs in her nine-month-old that she saw in her year-and-a-half-old son before he died. This is the urgency that we're facing right now. This is the reality in places just like this. They need clean water and they need it now!

If someone was able to bring clean water to your village, what would you say to that person?

### **Open Captions**

>> I would clap my hands as a sign of joy.

**RANDY:** If this little one has any hope for a future, we have to provide an alternative because drinking this water is death. We want to give mothers like this hope for their children. I'm asking you to reach out and give the best gift you can. Support Mission: Water for LIFE and know that when you do, you will be helping little ones just like this.

**End of video**

**In the studio**

**RANDY:** We have a choice today. Those hands that hold those small children can be used to bury that child, and unfortunately, that is the case. But those hands can also clap with joy. And they will do it when you and I come together and we go into those places of desperation and we drill that water well and we bring clean life-giving water out of the God's ground and it turns those situations around.

We've done this in so many places with your support. You've made it possible. But there are still places where children are dying. And that's why the need is urgent. We need to go in there right now as soon as possible and give them water.

Tammy, we have seen this so we know it works. But also, you have seen the need. We know it is desperate.

**TAMMY:** Yeah, it is heavy, Randy. You know when I see a piece like that too and you sitting right next to her, it makes my heart happy the moment to know that you had a moment to minister to her, and just love on her and her family. I think that's one thing I love so much about our ministry too is the ministry that happens, the love that we get to share with these incredible families that are hurting so desperately. They need hope and I don't want to give them false hope by going into those villages and just hugging them for a moment and leaving. I want to bring them real hope, something tangible. We leave there and we tell them we're going to go back and tell everybody about you. We're going to raise awareness of this need right here that you have. We want you to be filled with

joy. We want to be a part of that.

And we want you to be a part of that with us today. Would you go online? Would you make a call? Would you give the best gift you possibly can, today? Even if you have given before, today is a brand-new day, and with it comes a brand-new need and another life to save. Would you go online and make that call and join with us today?

**RANDY:** Yeah! And we can do it. I love Tammy that you point out that when we go into these places, we're not under any illusion that we're going to solve the entire issue in the whole world. What we do know is we're going to go in and we're going to represent Christ to somebody and we're going to show them the love of Christ, and we're also going to meet their basic needs. This is more than just a humanitarian outreach, it is a ministry.

**TAMMY:** And I love it so much!

**RANDY:** It has more than just a short-term benefit, though it does, it has eternal benefits.

So will you help us go in spiritually and physically? Let's meet the spiritual needs, let's meet the practical needs. Your gift right now of \$48 will help provide clean drinking water for ten people. The average cost of a well you see is \$4800. So if you want to provide a whole well, come on, let's do it! Let's do it for a village of about a thousand people for about 70 years; that's why we call it Water for LIFE. However, you can come in. A gift of \$144 will provide clean drinking water for on average about 30 people.

Whatever you can do, it's about going in with the love of Christ, meeting that practical need, giving them water for their bodies so that they can live, and sharing the water of life with them. So please, join us in this beautiful mission of Christ, Water for LIFE. Go online, go to the phone, and make the best gift you can.

## **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**

**TAMMY:** We hope you're going online and giving the best gift you possibly can. It is something we believe so much in and we would love you to come alongside us. When you do, make sure you request, Faith Eury Cho's new book, *Experiencing Friendship*

*With God.* And when you request that, we'll get it right out to you.

**RANDY:** And you keep using this word, can we really be friends with God?

**FAITH:** Absolutely! Yeah!

**RANDY:** That's such good news! Such good news!

**FAITH:** By the blood of Jesus. Yeah, the blood of Jesus is strong. It is effective.

**RANDY:** It is. Well, you just need to pick up the book to get more encouragement on that when you help us help others. And we will see you again next time on *Life Today*.