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Week 5: WFL

James and Betty Robison

Debra Fileta

JAMES: Well, it is a joy to welcome you to *LIFE Today*. James Robison and Betty, with a guest that has a book titled, *Are You Really Okay?* Isn't that what people say at church? How are you doing? Okay. I'm all right. And usually, you can almost tell they're not telling you how they really feel.

So Debra is a counselor. The forward is written by Levi Lusko, who has been here a couple of times. He's amazing. It's amazing how when he heard about her and saw what she was doing, he wanted to get to know her. And then writes the forward to the book because she's got great insight to help people understand what it means to be okay, and how you can actually not just say, "I'm okay," but may be getting okay?

So it's a joy to have you here, Debra.

DEBRA: Thank you for having me. I appreciate it.

JAMES: How long have you been counseling people, and let's say, having that title, so to speak?

DEBRA: Yeah, going on 15 years now that I've been a counselor in this space of mental and emotional health.

I think one thing I'm passionate about, people need to understand that just because you're a Christian doesn't mean you're healthy. I think we make that assumption sometimes.

JAMES: And you're talking about spiritual health too.

DEBRA: I'm talking about spiritual health, emotional health, mental health. When it comes to our physical health, if I told you when you come to Jesus all of a sudden, your cellulite is going to be gone, your cholesterol levels are going to be just right, you'd probably chuckle at me like you are now.

JAMES: Probably sign up!

DEBRA: Exactly. But we make that assumption with our emotional and mental health. We assume that when we come to Jesus, somehow, all of these things will magically disappear without us having to work it out. And so this is why I'm passionate about this message because we need to put in the work to become Christians who are healthy emotionally, mentally, spiritually.

BETTY: A lot of times, because we ourselves know we're not healthy, we put on a pretense because we're Christians. We're supposed to be okay.

DEBRA: You're absolutely right. And for me as a counselor, counselors are not immune to these struggles, just like doctors aren't immune to getting sick. I went through my own season. The reason I wrote this book is for two reasons. I would say number one is because I saw the need with my clients that I've been working with on a regular basis. The need is so great. But then I experienced it in my own life.

A few years ago, I went through a miscarriage, a very traumatic miscarriage where I almost lost my life. And when you go through a trauma like that, it leaves its mark on your life. It doesn't just disappear because you're a Christian. And so for me, what happened is after that situation, I go home, I have my kids, I'm working, I'm counseling, I'm writing, and you just move on. But healing happens in layers. And there was the next layer of healing that I needed to deal with that trauma.

What ended up happening was a few years later, I started feeling the effects of that trauma in the form of panic attacks. You know, when a soldier goes off to war, they're in the middle of the battle, they're in survival mode. They're not trying to process the trauma of war at that moment. They're just trying to survive. And when they get home, and life is safe and secure, sometimes that's when the trauma begins to come up. And that's what happened to me.

A few years later, when life was safe and secure, I was doing okay, or so I thought, the trauma began to resurface in the form of these unexpected panic attacks. And through that dark season, the Lord etched on my heart the need to help people get from point A to point B. To help people realize that time does not heal wounds, Jesus does. And we have to partner with him in the process of getting healthy from the inside out.

JAMES: What did you do for your own situation? How did you address it when you discovered, in fact, this goes back to something deeper than I even imagined? So what did you do? Who helped you?

DEBRA: Well, first and foremost, I signed up for therapy myself. Because I don't just preach it because I'm a counselor, sign up for therapy. I knew I needed it. Because what trauma does is imagine your story is like a book. Every chapter is a different part of your life. Well, trauma is like this big marker that comes to write over your story with lies and fear and doubts and disappointments. It makes you doubt God. It makes you doubt yourself. It makes you doubt others.

So I had to go through a season of understanding what was the voice of trauma and what was the voice of truth and differentiating those things with a licensed counselor. Not only that but understanding how the brain works. When you've gone through trauma, there is a part of your brain called the amygdala; it remembers hard emotions. And after you've gone through a trauma, many times, that amygdala will false alarm and make you think that you're not safe, make you think that you're in harm's way when you're really not. So that's the voice of your trauma. And I had to go through that process myself.

For me, it involved therapy; it involved medication. It also involved digging into God's word, understanding that Jesus went through some of these same things. Jesus went through trauma of his own in the Garden of Gethsemane. One of my favorite parts, writing this book is the section on emotional health. I talked about the different emotions that Jesus experienced.

Biblical scholars have recognized over 39 emotions that Jesus felt and expressed. One of the main ones was agony in the Garden of Gethsemane when he was sweating blood. Doctors have looked at that, and they've only found two other people in history that have gone through that experience. They call it hematidrosis. It basically means you're under such distress; your body is under fight or flight that you start bleeding because your blood vessels break open.

They say it is a stress response. And the stress response was telling him to run, get out of here; you are not safe. But he knew that though he couldn't trust his emotions in that moment, he could trust his God. And he stayed for me and for you. So when I read that in scripture and realized that Jesus had been through his own version of this, it gave me hope and perspective that though my emotions couldn't be trusted, my God could be trusted.

JAMES: And you know he was actually taking not only the weight of what he felt on our behalf in what he knew he faced, but he was taking the weight of all of our failures and our sins. That agony ultimately led to a broken heart. He died of a broken heart. There is no question about that; His heart exploded. And the spirit decides, was kind of a form of autopsy where the blood and the water were mixed, and he had died of a broken heart--very powerful.

There is a footnote here in the corner about getting real about who you are, about how you're doing, and why it matters. That's an important enough statement that you put right here. Let's get real. And you said you had to. You needed some help. How are you doing,

and why it matters. How would you want viewers to answer that? How would they get open and honest to take that step you're wanting them to take even as they realize I take the step, I'm telling the truth, I'm acknowledging it, but I need help. I want to get it. How would you want them to respond to the question, how are you doing?

DEBRA: We live in a culture that makes it hard to answer that question honestly. It is a social media culture. We're wired to put our best face forward. We're wired to post things on Instagram, the highlight of our lives. I think sometimes we live so much in that superficial that we forget that there is more to us. Like an iceberg, we need to go a little bit deeper. So I think that's a really important thing to remember, not to live superficially.

When Jesus calls us to love him, he says the greatest command is love the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. I believe that represents four things: Emotional health, spiritual health, mental health, and physical health. If we're to love God with our heart, soul, mind, and strength, we shouldn't be surprised that the enemy is going to try and attack us in our heart, soul, mind, and strength. Instead of Christians being surprised by this struggle, we need to be prepared for the struggle and be open about the struggle. Dig deep and not just assume we're okay. Oh, I'm fine. I'm good. But to take the time. We go to the doctor for physical checkups, but how often do we stop and check up on how we are doing emotionally or mentally, or spiritually?

So I'm hoping that this book is a challenge but also a practical way with reflection questions, with activities to do along the way to help you stop and do a checkup to ask those hard questions and be honest with your answer.

BETTY: That's hard for people to do sometimes, especially Christians because we do feel like we're supposed to put this front on; everything is okay! When everything isn't. You're tormented inside. You've had a tragedy. We had a loss; we lost a daughter. And that's when I really began to realize God was right there. He said, you're not going to miss going through the pain; you're going to have the pain. You're going to have tears. You're going to have the sorrow, but the thing is, I'm right there with you. And so, like you said,

when you can admit that I'm hurting, I don't know what to do, but I do know my God, and I know that he is sufficient for all my needs.

So when someone has had a loss like that, it's just like we go to try to be a comfort to them. There are no words to adequately say, really. But just being there and loving them and praying with them and holding them is enough, I think sometimes.

DEBRA: It is. I think people have to really understand healing is not a once-and-done experience. I don't just give it up to the Lord, and it's gone forever. Sometimes healing happens in layers. There is the next layer and then the next layer. We can be tempted to feel like we've gone backward when we're struggling with something again. When I'm struggling with anxiety or depression or insecurities or doubts or fears. Instead of seeing it as a struggle, what if we were to see it as the next layer of healing? The invitation for God to come and remove one more layer. And with each layer, he is making us more like Jesus.

BETTY: I believe that.

JAMES: So am I right to imply and even state that sometimes the grip of the enemy is broken instantly, and it is an amazing thing. You'll never crave sweets again. That's kind of a big deliverance right there. Isn't it? God gave us the appetite. The God-given appetites are stronger than what we refer to as unnatural. Anybody that thinks you have an unnatural attraction and that's just bigger, and people understand. The natural attractions are as big as any can get. Just believe that.

So whatever battle we're in, if something is controlling us, oftentimes it is broken. But you seem to be implying that it can be progressive too. That's the slower process, probably not as fun process, but it is an essential process. Am I right to assume that and even say that? That some of our overcoming eating habits, losing our temper, being able to forgive, overcoming addictions, that sometimes it is progressive. Am I right in that?

DEBRA: You're absolutely right. And not only that, but for those of us who have experienced that instantaneous miracle, the question is, what's next, Lord? Because we're never fully healed from everything emotionally and mentally and spiritually and physically. I almost get worried when people feel like they're healed once-and-for-all forevermore because the reality of the Christian walk is that we're constantly growing and constantly healing and constantly moving toward Jesus. I think when we think we have arrived, we are the most vulnerable to the enemy's attack. That's where I see pastors and leaders falling from the height of ministry because they've stopped working on themselves emotionally and mentally, and they feel like they've arrived.

So for those of us who have seen the Lord free us and break those chains, the next question is, okay, Lord, what's next? What's next? I'm ready for the next layer of healing with you. And we keep working; we keep getting real; we keep being honest. We keep uncovering more and more and becoming more like Jesus along the way.

JAMES: One of the things that I've tried to say when I have, let's say, extended periods of time with people, or even when I'm preaching, and I talk about being a father and a grandfather of 11 grandchildren and 14 by the end of the year great-grandchildren--that's 25 grandkids, folks. Great-grandparents thank God for grandparents because I guarantee you we can't handle them like we could when they were just our grandkids.

But I keep telling people that no matter how many times you strike out, keep going up and keep swinging. I think people tend to give up. I think "give up" is as near-fatal as giving in to the enemy and accepting misery as a way of life. Am I right to say that we press on toward the mark for the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus? We forget those things from behind. We look ahead.

I'm standing against these tormentors, these messengers of the devil, Paul said, that are tormenting me. And God said, my grace is sufficient. They did not stop tormenting; they didn't stop hitting him. He didn't stop fighting. He is the one who told us to put on the armor of God, to be good soldiers of the Lord Jesus. Don't get entangled with the affairs

of the world. You're in a battle.

I think Christians need to realize that in this world, there is an enemy. In this world, we're in a fight. In this world--but we can be as excited by getting ready for the fight and winning as winning the World Series or the Super Bowl. That's the way the Christian lives. Not defeated because we got a little knockdown or we lost, or we're bullied, or we struck out, or we did something stupid, we're going to come back swinging, does that make sense, and swinging the sword of the Lord.

Am I preaching okay and in line with good counseling?

DEBRA: Amen! Amen and amen! It's true. When we give up, that's when we failed. Sometimes when we feel stuck in the present, it is a reminder and an encouragement that maybe there are some things in our past that we haven't fully healed from, some patterns, some family patterns. The Bible calls it a generational curse or a generational blessing. What does that mean? It's not some mystical hocus pocus. It's because there are patterns that have been passed down to us, and sometimes we need to look back to break free from those patterns. Not to shame the people that have gone before us but to provide new hope for the people who will come after us and begin to break those chains.

JAMES: Am I right to say that this is a little bit like having a counseling session with somebody that loves God with all their heart, loves them, the person, that if they would go, they would be getting some of the insight, inspiration, and divine direction that you've gotten that not only helped you but helped them?

DEBRA: That is my hope that the reader would feel like this is a one-on-one session, an interaction, a process of really getting real from the inside out.

JAMES: You know we're in our Water for LIFE emphasis. We always say we come into your home to bring you water of life and spiritual life, and we offer inspiration. You help us give someone a drink of water, you say, you know what? I need some of that

counseling. We're here for you. So all you need to do is ask for it.

Debra, we're going to let our viewers hear one of the most talented musicians, singers, writers, communicators on the planet. Beautiful Tammy Trent lost her husband, who was a swimmer swimming in clear water. No explanation for it. She's been with the Father comforting her. But she's been on the mission field many, many times, and I'm telling you she really relates.

We're going to let you look in now on somebody that knows what it is to suffer loss but knows what it is to be full of the love of God, and show others how we can put God's loving arms around people and become the miracle they long for and hope for. But most thought it would never happen. But you're the miracle maker. You really are. Watch closely.

On the mission field

TAMMY: I have the privilege on occasion of being a part of the *LIFE Outreach* mission team. It is always a reminder of the awesome responsibility that we have of learning about and documenting the lives of precious people who have really great needs. And without fail, we discover struggling families, particularly mothers, and their children, as they unfold their stories about the lack of basic necessities, waterborne illnesses, hopelessness, and oftentimes, even death.

Open Captions

>> My baby twins died. They had diarrhea and swollen bellies from the water they drank. It is not safe.

>> My son Mothsaman had diarrhea and died. I am worried my daughter will also die.

TAMMY: These stories capture not only the heart of thousands of the friends of *LIFE*

but each one of our hearts as we go about our work.

We've sat with mothers who have lost their children. We've sat next to gravesites and wept with these families that feel so incredibly hopeless. The suffering is so great, and it is so deep. I've seen their very source of water that is actually the source that is killing them, their children, and their families.

During these fact-finding missions, our teams are able to offer comfort to the mothers and their children through prayer and expressions of love. But the only way hope can be renewed in these mother's hearts, and the lives of their precious children is if we have the resources to put our words of love into action by providing them with clean, fresh drinking water that they so desperately need.

End of video

In the studio

JAMES: Well, God bless you, Tammy. We want to thank you for the love of God that flows so freely through you. Betty, it is beautiful to see that we're helping children and families in 20 different countries. You see so much of the need in Africa that you may think, well, that's the only area you're touching. No, that's not so. Wherever there is hurt, we try to touch with healing, loving hands, hunger with food. Where there is a need for water, everybody needs the water of life; some people need water for life. And that's what we heard. I know as you were watching and just looking at those scenes, I know as a mom and a grandmother, there is a lot going on in your heart.

BETTY: James, of course, you know we've been over to the mission field many, many times through the years, and we've seen these mothers weep over their babies that they could not save their lives. They loved them dearly. They would do anything for them. But they did not have the source to save their life, and that is clean water.

Well, I would try to understand. My heart would go out to them. And not that I wanted to

understand exactly what they were going through because I didn't want to lose a child, but we did. And I know the hurt that's in their hearts. I've experienced it personally, but I want them to know there is hope. Not only in those that reach out to them and give them water, but there is hope in Jesus, too.

So I hope you will join with us and let's, again and again, drill the water wells and give them a cup of fresh water for their precious children.

JAMES: This year, when the missionaries made us aware, they said, "This could be the most difficult year ever." And I thought, God, how are we going to make it? And we found 350 areas where we knew there was a water need, but we also knew that there was water subsurface that could be reached and could solve the problem.

So we said, God, please, please, raise up people who, in the face of the challenges will give. We wondered if we could make it. And you know what I find myself believing? God is going to raise up people to the point that we know we'll even go past it. You have no idea because we got to do this recently; we got to call the missionaries and say, "Guess what! You can do more." It was like heaven opened. Really, what a miracle!

Would you right now help us drill those wells? Each well averages \$4800. People tell us, "James, it is the joy of our life to do it." Some say, "We try to do one a year!" Well, I don't know if you can do one but do it if you can.

\$4800 is a well. \$2400, one person joins you; we've got a well. \$1200, three people join you, we've got a well. Keep this in mind, \$48, basically when you break it out, will give ten people in that area where we drill, water the rest of their life. \$144 gives 30 people water for the rest of their life.

Would you right now go get your bank card and use it like a check? Please? Go get it. Do it now. I know you're thinking about, praying about it, but go get the card. You can pray with the card in your hand. And go online or dial that number; it's always there as a

prayer call.

Today, hundreds of people are calling to be helped in prayer. Hundreds! Scores! We pray. It would be wonderful if there were hundred or more who would call and say, here's my gift. Would you do it, please? Just make the gift God puts on your heart. We have some gifts to send you to bless you in your life. Thank you so much. Thanks for giving 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

JAMES: Well, we're sending you water of life in the sense that we're sending you spiritual water. And if you say, James, I want to be okay. I'm getting honest. I need some comfort and some counseling. Would you send me that? You better believe it.

And we just want to say to you, Debra, we praise God for you. You're a beautiful person. God healed you, and now he's enabled you to heal a lot of others. We thank you.

Thank you so much for watching *LIFE Today*. But more than anything, thanks for sharing life. We love you.