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Week seven: WFL

Randy Robison and Tammy Trent

Tim Ross #1

In the studio

TAMMY: Hello everybody. Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm Tammy Trent and this is Randy Robison. Randy, I'm excited about today's show!

RANDY: I am too because this is unique but it is encouraging and uplifting.

TAMMY: This is fun. This guy is crazy fun! He says what he wants to say. He says what you are thinking but don't dare say half the time.

RANDY: Well see, I'm glad you added fun. I thought you were just going to say he is *crazy*.

TAMMY: He is a little crazy but I love that about him. His love for scripture is infectious. His love for life is outrageous. But his love for Jesus is solid—that's what I love about him. He is an author. He is a great podcaster. He is a speaker. He is a social media influencer. He's all the things. And he has a brand-new book out I want to tell you about. It is called *Welcome to the Basement*. And I want to figure out what that means. Tim Ross, welcome to *LIFE Today*.

TIM: Thank you so much, Tammy, Randy. I'm grateful to be here with both of you.

RANDY: Did she cover all the bases?

TIM: She did! Absolutely. You did. Absolutely.

TAMMY: All the important things. You're an amazing storyteller. I could listen to you all day long. So I want to start there. Take me back to the 20-year-old Tim Ross that grabbed a microphone, basically threw it down, and said, "I give up."

TIM: So I gave my life to Jesus on January 14th of 1996. I had been clubbing all the night before; and got home around 4:30 in the morning. I still lived with my parents. And so when you're under their roof you go to their church. I just thought I needed to pay homage to my parents. They still let me live here for free, I'm going to church.

So I was sitting in the back row of the church. My parents, Bible-cationally pastored for 15 years. A church that never got over 100 people but they were very faithful to those people. And on the back row of that church was the first time I heard the Holy Spirit say anything to me. He probably said some stuff before I just ignored him. He said, "You're a sinner." It was the most matter-of-fact statement I had ever heard in my life. It was like pointing out you have on a black vest. As soon as he said it was the first time, I realized my disconnection from God; I could feel it and I just burst into tears.

And so, I'm sitting in the back row of the church but the service just started. Sunday School had just ended, and morning worship had just started. And this is a black Pentecostal church so it could go three hours. The singing and then the praying, and the prophesying, and then the testimonies, and then the sermon, and then the offering, it could be three hours before salvation actually occurs. So I'm sitting on the back row of the church, and I'm like I cannot wait three hours to give my life to Jesus. Either I'm going to interrupt this service or I need to wait for something.

And it just so happens my dad decided to have testimony service, and five people stood up in front of me. I stood up in the back and my dad went from front to back, and I'm the last guy. And he goes, "I think Tim has something to say?"

And I said, "I give up." And it is a small church so everybody knows you. Right? Everybody turns around like, give up what? And I said, "I need to give my life to Jesus like right now."

And my momma let out the biggest, blackest, loudest, Tyler Perry end-credit scene of a movie hallelujah you have ever heard in your life, "Hallelujah, Jesus!" My mom, doctor-verified, has two surgically repaired knees as a direct result of praying on them. So she had been praying for us. And for me to give my life to Jesus with no sermon and no altar call was an extravagant answer to her prayers.

TAMMY: What was it, Tim? What was it? You said you felt like you totally heard the Holy Spirit, "You're a sinner." What was it? Like you said, he probably told you that before but you weren't listening. But what was it about that moment that you decided to listen?

TIM: Again, I could feel the disconnection from God. I had never felt that before. I felt like he was distant and I'm like very, very aware of my sins. Like I wasn't convicted of anything before that statement. Everything I was doing I enjoyed. I probably didn't feel good about it but I enjoyed it. Right? And then I didn't. I just didn't. And I was like I need to give my life to Jesus. I walked down to the altar and gave my life to Jesus. And I kind of ruined the service because nobody knew what to do after that. They were just kind of like I guess it is over. Our son got saved. We'll see you next week!

[Laughter]

RANDY: Mission accomplished!

TIM: Mission accomplished! We're going to fold the whole church up. No, they didn't. But I started reading my Bible on January 15th. Started from Genesis 1 and by January the 17th, I was in around Genesis 7-8. I was going slow because I was reading King James, which is like off-roading in a Honda Civic. So I was reading the Bible and it

was—like I wasn't reading it, I was watching it. It was a pop-up book.

So I remember going to my mom on that Wednesday like, "Mom! Like I'm not a preacher or nothing but I think I know why the ravens didn't come back."

She's like, "What are you talking about?"

I was like, "Yeah. In the ark. And then Noah lets the ravens out and they never come back. And then the dove keeps coming back until it has like a little olive branch in its beak."

She's like, "What?"

I said, "I think I know what that's about."

She goes, "Okay. Tell me."

I said, "Well, the raven left and didn't come back because there have got to be bloated bodies everywhere. Like the waters are receding, there have got to be bloated bodies of dead people and animals because of the flood. And a raven is a carnivorous animal and it's probably feasting. But the dove doesn't feed off dead stuff, it feeds off living stuff and that's why it kept coming back until it saw a branch with life and trees."

And I was like, "I think the raven represents our carnal nature and the dove represents the spirit."

She goes, "Uh-huh." She goes, "Uh, you're going to preach the last Sunday in February."

I was like, "Why?" I was like, "I'm not a preacher."

She's like, "You can repeat exactly what you just said, or if God shows you anything

else."

And I just thought it was so weird. But I preached my first sermon five weeks after I gave my life to Jesus.

TAMMY: The revelation that you have, that's what blows my mind. Like the Holy Spirit gives you revelation of the word. And I've never thought of things that way. That's why I love to lean in and listen to you. Where do you think that comes from? Even for me, like I want more revelation. How do we get that?

TIM: Ooooh! I'm glad you asked that question. I just believe in sitting with the book. Like the book, the Bible is the only Bible that's alive; it's the only book that's actually breathing. I go to black barber shops or used to before I got married to Juliet. You go to a black barber shop and you sit down and you wait for people to cut your hair. And there are like Ebony magazines and Jet magazines from like 1988. Right? And so you pick it up and you see Whitney Houston and Bobby Brown on the cover and they're happy. And Whitney's dead. So you can pick up the article and you can read it, there is no new information coming from that magazine. It's old news the moment it was printed.

The Bible is the only book that you could literally go to Psalm 23 right now and think, I already know this. And you read it again and something that you've never even thought of matches where you are living right now. That book is breathing. And the more you open it, it opens you. The more you read it, it reads you.

TAMMY: "The more you read it, it reads you." That's so good!

RANDY: Here's the thing, Tim. With this level of sort of insight and application, you should rise to the top. You can be a superstar in the economy of preachers in America today. God didn't take you there. In fact, he showed you some other things. What does it mean to be in the basement?

TIM: So I had a vision, an open vision when I was 30 years old.

RANDY: What's an open vision?

TIM: So a vision is when you see a picture or a scene while you're awake. A dream is when you see the same thing while you're asleep. Right? So I had this vision I was awake but I had a very vivid imagination. I see everything in pictures. That's why when I read a story in the Bible I—people think I have a photographic memory but I didn't just read the passage, I watched it. So that's all it is. So God is playing on my imagination.

I'm walking down a street and there's this 100-story building, an all-white building, scrapes the sky. And even though I'm outside the building, as I'm walking up to it, I can hear music and laughter coming from the 100th floor. This could only happen in a vision, right?

So I'm intrigued by that so I walk into the building. The building is all white on the inside as well and it is sterile. There is no art, there is no colors, there is no way finding. But there is an elevator. And so I step into the elevator and there is an L-button for lobby, which I obviously entered on, and right above the L is 100. There is not 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. It goes from lobby to 100. So I press 100. And I start going up 100 stories.

As you can imagine your ears are popping, and you're like okay, this is a long trip. And the higher I get the more self-conscious I become. I start literally checking my pants for wrinkles and my shirt for stains and I'm like, I just feel self-conscious. So I'm like, okay, I hope I can make it up here. I don't even know what is happening. As I get to the top, I become intrinsically aware, not through recognition but an intrinsic awareness that everybody on this top floor is an influential person in the body of Christ. So I'm like, well, I need to be on my best behavior if I'm going up here with the elite.

The elevators open. The elevator doors open and there is a very long hallway that has three steps that go down and it lays out and opens up to the most fantastic New York City

penthouse vibe you've ever seen. There are people mingling and talking and off of that living room there is a balcony. There are people outside talking. I step off the elevator and what I cannot see before I step out of the elevator is that to my left there is a line of women, beautiful women in bikinis holding silver chargers with every sin, weight, and vice you could possibly imagine on them. To the right, there was a line of men with two percent body fat wearing Speedos, holding silver chargers, sin, weight, and vice that you could imagine, and I'm like, this must be the test. You can't be down there with the elite if you succumb to the temptations on either side. Whatever your vice may be.

So I'm like let me look at my shoes and walk straight. I have no issue with the guys and their Speedos—not my vibe. Over here could get me, let's walk straight. So I walk straight down. I get down to the end of the hallway, go down the steps, and I'm looking around and no one looks at me. No one even pays attention or notices that I've entered the room. If somebody walked in here right now, we would at least glance—do you know what I mean? Nobody looks up. And so I'm just kind of standing there for a while and I'm like okay. And about maybe eight minutes in, which is a long time to be standing there like a stranger, I see these two guys about maybe 5-7 feet away from me, and I kind of squint my eyes. They're both holding something from the charger. When I noticed it, one of them broke eye contact with who he was talking to and looked at me. He literally scanned me up and down, and when he noticed I wasn't holding anything he went right back to his conversation.

So I'm there for like two or three more minutes and then I realize everybody up here is holding something from one of these chargers. So I was like, I guess I'm not supposed to be up here. So I turn around, go back up the steps, and now put my head back down because the bikini-clad women are now to my right and Speedos are to my left, and I beelined back to this elevator.

Get in the elevator, and I'm getting ready to press L to go back down to the lobby and I noticed a button underneath the L going down that I didn't see going up. And it was a very faint B. Let me pause and say that the people that were on this top floor, it was just

the personalities. There are no wives and husbands and kids, it is just the figures, whoever these people are, nameless and faceless. So I press B. I was like I don't know what that button is but I'll press it. And I'm pretty risk-averse. So this vision is against my normal reactions. I would rather just go back to the lobby and leave.

But I press B. I go down 101 stories. Ears popping all the way down. As the elevator rests on this bottom floor that I now know as the basement, before the doors even open, I hear laughter, I hear vibrant chatter, lively conversation. The doors open and all of these people swing—all of their attention just swings towards the elevator. They're like yeah! They start cheering at the top of their lungs. A couple of people yank me off of the elevator. They are shaking me. They're patting me on the back. They're hugging me. And then one guy grabs me by both shoulders and he is shaking me, like with enthusiasm. And he goes, "Oh, my goodness! I'm so grateful you made it down here. Not too many people that go up there ever make it back down here." Scene.

RANDY: What is that place?

TIM: I now know it to be a basement. Here's what the Holy Spirit told me. Because I was like, what was that? You know? And the Holy Spirit said, "Tim, everybody thinks that the goal is to go up, and the goal is not to go up. It is not to climb up. There are no ladders in the kingdom. There is a hand. Promotion doesn't come from the east or the west, it comes from the Lord." He said, "I haven't called people to come up, I've called them to come down."

And then he said this statement, which was profound to me. He said, "Tim, if Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone, what floor would you want to live on?"

And I was like, "I want to be close to where he is." Like if I can't lay down next to the cornerstone then I want just whatever is right—I just want to be with him.

And so, then he says, "Get as many people to the basement as you can."

I was 30. I was a young adult pastor at the time. So I'm thinking, okay. And my mentorship and my disciple of people, I'll share this vision with them. And I'll calibrate them to what I believe a lifestyle of vulnerability and basement living looks like according to scripture.

And I had no clue, y'all. I've been telling people about the basement since I was 30 years old. I had no clue he wanted this many people to know about the basement. Like I had no clue it would become a podcast. I had no clue we'd have over 300,000 subscribers on YouTube. I had no clue that I would reach more people with a podcast than I've done with almost 30 years of preaching. I didn't see that coming.

RANDY: I want to know more about what that looks like on a very practical level. But we're out of time. Can you come back for another program and we'll talk about what basement living, if you will, looks like? Again I'm looking forward to that.

I want to show you what I think a little bit of it looks like and I think it means humbling yourself, it means giving of yourself, it means reaching beyond your means. We actually have an opportunity to do that right now. Watch this and I think you'll understand.

On the mission field

ANNOUNCER: Clean water is essential for life, but if you don't have access to clean water, you are left with water that has potential of stealing your life. Mothers worldwide continue to struggle with the fact that they have no choice but to drink contaminated water.

Open captions

MARTHE: I am fearful because we still drink the same water. The remaining children might die if we do not get clean water.

JOHN: There have been many women in this village at the same time that have lost children. And as I am sitting here and I'm listening to Francine tell a story of how, as of right now, she lives with a constant fear; and yet I know she is a Christian and it is not God's will for her to live in fear. That's so evident that it's not God's will. The scriptures tell us he hasn't given us a spirit of fear.

But if you're in a situation like this, where water is so scarce, and whatever water you're getting is—you know it's contaminated, no matter how strong a faith you have, there is something in the background that taunts you that your next child is going to die.

You can make a difference. Your gift will change their children's future. I'm asking you from the bottom of my heart, please join with us, join with Water for LIFE. As the Missions director of Life Outreach International, I commit to you, we will be faithful with whatever gift you give. That is my personal promise. It is the promise of James and Betty. You can count on that. We will be faithful with what you give.

End of video

In the studio

TAMMY: You can definitely count on that. It is a promise. I've been working with this beautiful ministry for over 15 years on the mission field and I can tell you truthfully that it is a promise and it is something that we will see through to the very end. We won't stop. We won't give up until we can reach as many people as possible with this life-giving water.

Fear. It's heavy. It is a really heavy burden to bury and to carry. There are many things in my life that strike me with fear but water have never been one of them. When we go over to these countries, that's the very thing we see on all of these mothers especially. It's heavy. The fear is deep. We try to pray over it and against it and push it away. The reality is it's just there. Because the reality is that everywhere they look is bad, contaminated water.

I'm asking you to come alongside us today. I know you hear us talk about this a lot but we're going to keep talking about it because we know there is a solution. And together, we can help these families. We can help lift that burden of fear off of them to give them something to be happy about, to dance about, to be joyful about. We want to give them life – life-giving water that will change everything for them.

Our goal is 350 wells in 20 nations. Do you know what it takes? \$48 will give water to ten people for the rest of their lives. \$144 will give water to 30. For \$4800, we can go in and drill a complete well that would change the lives of a thousand—at least a thousand people in those villages for the rest of their lives. I don't know about you but if you ask me to be a part of something where I can give this one time and it could change somebody's life forever, then that's something, Randy, that I want to be a part of. And I know many of us have come together to be a part of something like that.

RANDY: Yeah, the whole reason you do what you do with us and the whole reason we've done this at *LIFE Outreach International* for all these years, with this program life and the guests we saw on *Life Today*, we want to bring you the water of life, the message of Jesus Christ. We want you to walk away refreshed and feeling more encouraged and more alive to go out and be who God has created you to be.

At the same time, we want to meet the practical needs of that person that needs physical, literal water. This is the gospel in word, in deed, and that's why we hope that today's program impacts your soul and blesses your life.

And then I pray that as Tammy asked, you'll come alongside us and bless someone else's life. So please, go to the phone, go online. Make the best gift you can. Let's drill another well and another well and another well to reach another soul. Do it today.

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

On the mission field

TAMMY: This is my first time to Burundi, Africa. I've seen some of the worst water source conditions that I've ever seen. Here's another one. It's filled with waterborne illness. It's literally killing people. I got to sit down and talk with a mother yesterday who has lost two children in the same week because of this very water right here. But they don't have any other option. That's what breaks my heart. They have no other option.

Nowhere else to go. They will dig and dig and dig to try and find fresh clean water and they just can't get there. It's underneath their feet but they need help.

And we can help them! We can help them get that water. We can come in here and we can drill a well that would change everything for these children, these mothers for the rest of their lives. Please go to your phones right now. Call that number. Go to the website, do whatever you can do. Pray about it. Ask God to lead you, to guide you and then move. Don't hesitate. Too many times we hesitate and we miss opportunities. God is giving us an opportunity right now to move and to act so let's do it together and let's change this village for them for the rest of their lives.

End of video

In the studio

RANDY: You really can make a difference in someone's life today. I pray you'll go online, go to the phones, and make the best gift you can. And today, if you would like to request Tim's book, *Welcome to the Basement* you can do that. I know it will bless you. Tim, you can come back and we can talk about this a little bit more. Right?

TIM: I would love to. Absolutely.

RANDY: Tammy, I'm looking forward to that.

TAMMY: Me too! I know you are too. If you've missed any of the programs go to LifeToday.org where you can catch up. We'll see you next time on *Life Today!*