

3/5/24

Week ten: WFL, last week

Randy Robison and Tammy Trent

Sara Hagerty

**In the studio**

**RANDY:** Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm Randy Robison. Tammy is with me. Do you have any limitations?

**TAMMY:** Definitely! Did you need to ask me that?

**RANDY:** Well, we all do. And today's guest has been with us before, Sara Hagerty is back with us. Thrilled to have her. She has a new book called *The Gift of Limitations*. That's not what I think of when I think of limitations.

**TAMMY:** I know! When I think of my limitations now, I'm like are they really a gift? Or how can I see them as a gift?

**RANDY:** Oh! Now that's it! So we're going to talk about that. Sara, welcome back to *Life Today*. So good to see you again.

**SARA:** It's good to be here. Thank you for having me.

**RANDY:** Life is good?

**SARA:** It is! Very full and limited. [Laughing]

**RANDY:** So in addition to being an author, you homeschool which to me—how many

children do you have?

**SARA:** I have seven.

**RANDY:** Seven children. So you're not just a homeschool mother, you're a teacher. This is like a full-time job! How do you deal with limitations and how do you define them? Because to me, that right there would be somewhat of a limitation.

**SARA:** That's a great question. I think of limitations like a fenceline around our lives. We have this, whether it is a postage stamp or a piece of property that we live on, and we clearly have our boundaries that we live in and we have the places that aren't ours, that we don't own but for most of us that we want. We spend a lot of time looking over the fenceline, a lot of time wishing, dreaming, and envisioning parts of our lives to be different, to be something that we don't have. So our limitations in some ways are what keep us confined and for many of us, I think we live resenting them.

**RANDY:** Okay. Is that a good thing or a bad thing?

**SARA:** I think the gift of limitations is a process to get there. Our limitations are things that we live resenting but oftentimes we don't name. We react to them. We spend a lifetime kind of working around them. We're trying to hurdle the fence. But there is something to be had in naming those limitations, naming that we resent them, and sitting in the process of grieving them and bringing them to God.

**TAMMY:** It is an interesting place and an interesting topic for me when I think of limitations because I always thought like if I was limited to something do I try to fight through this to get on the other side of it? Because am I not, as a believer of Christ, am I supposed to be unlimitless?

**SARA:** Overcoming. Yes!

**TAMMY:** So how do you kind of balance the two of those kinds of the gift of limitless and yet struggling with like I shouldn't have any limits, I'm bound by limits. How do you balance those two things or explain that a little deeper?

**SARA:** Psalm 16:6 says the boundary lines for me have fallen in pleasant places. I think we as believers, a lot of times, skip steps and coach ourselves into that end game. I just need to see that these boundaries are pleasant. I think the way that we actually can start to see our limits is the things that are not moving, they're not bending, we can't shift them, we can't work around them. I think a significant step is naming our limitations, recognizing how much we often resent them, wanting to work around them, and grieving them with God so that we can then join him in his story for our lives.

**RANDY:** That's a Psalm I've never seen stitched on a pillow.

**SARA:** Never!

**RANDY:** So here's the thing. I'm hearing this almost two different ways. Because you talk about grieving limitations, which sounds like a negative thing. But then you also talk about sort of borders or knowing our area. So it sounds like a good thing. Is there an example from your life that we can understand how you're phrasing this?

**SARA:** Sure! I think of early on, shortly after we were married, several years, we just thought our life would be like everybody else's life. You get married, you have kids, you grow your family. And we watched friend after friend conceive and we shortly realized that we were—that wasn't going to happen for us. And so for other people their rite of passage, which was having children, was a do-not-enter sign for us.

I think as a believer, we can oftentimes coach ourselves into skipping steps and saying, well, I should just accept my lot. This is what God has for me. I need to be joyful. But there is a beauty to saying this is super hard for me. I don't want to be in this place right now. I'm resenting where I am. There is a place I want to be and it is on the other side of

the fenceline.

And so for me, it was walking through the process of naming, these years aren't actually happy years, they're really hard years. And the Bible tells us that God is near to the brokenhearted; so naming my pain, the pain of my limitations so that I could sit with God in that grief. What eventually happened is I began to grow to accept the story that God had given me as different than the one that I wanted.

But you can't will yourself there. We try to. We try to coach ourselves into better behavior and happy living but there is a process that God has us on and I think grief is a key part of that process, because when we grieve, we get to see the nearness of God to our brokenheartedness.

**RANDY:** How did you get seven children if that's the case?

**SARA:** Well, we adopted our first four and thought that that was probably how our family would be. And after that, many years later, we had several surprise pregnancies.

**RANDY:** Really?

**TAMMY:** Surprise!

**SARA:** A very big surprise. My last one, I was at 42. [Laughing] It was a very big surprise.

**RANDY:** So suddenly, that limitation that you felt, that you grieved, that you dealt with and said, God, now what, led to you adopting four children.

**SARA:** It was a different story. I think that's the key process. Instead of reacting to our limitations—all of us, if we're honest, spend countless amounts of energy thinking about life on the other side of the fence. We dream—we daydream. We spend our days

daydreaming about when I get past this season. When the child is finally sleeping through the night. When I'm no longer taking care of this sick parent or this sick child or this illness in my body. When we actually begin to name, this is hard and this isn't the story that I wanted, and we begin to grieve that with God, there is a slow beauty to accepting the story that he's given us.

So when God then surprised us with these pregnancies, we had been on a decade-plus journey of going, your story—maybe your story is better. Maybe your story, God is better.

**TAMMY:** There are definitely limits, I think. Because I think of even my mom, who's probably watching today, that's 75. She's had two knee replacements. She wants to be more active and she can't. She's limited physically. And so, she's every day I think goes through that ooh, if I could get 20 pounds off. If I could get out there and walk. But some people truly are limited even physically.

Then you're also taught on the other side of that like we were talking about moments ago, about like the burden of it and the chains that you feel when you're limited, things like that. But I think the reality is that there are people who are just going to be limited. Do you see it that way as well? That's part of why I have to accept that I will never be an opera singer. That's not going to happen. I'll never sing like Natalie Grant—that's not going to happen. So I'm limited to some degree.

But I look at the gifts that I do have. What else do I have in my life? What can I do with what God's given me? How can I look at the fences around my life and see it as something beautiful?

**SARA:** And see it as something that's keeping—what's on the inside of those fences is a wonderful beauty to be tended. A lot of times, we can't see that because we're looking at what's on the other side of the fence. I personally have been diagnosed with Lyme disease. So I live in the reality that my body cannot do what it once did. Now, one day

maybe it will be. But currently, my body cannot—I can't run at the pace, I can't accomplish the things, I can't care for friends or even my kids or my husband many days to the degree that I would want to care for them.

But the process of grieving, of actually giving it more than a minute to go, this is really hard and this isn't what I chose for my life. Because I think there are probably viewers who are facing physical illness or limitations that if you look ten years out, you're thinking, this may not change. And there is a process that God invites us into of grieving that into a deeper acceptance of what he's allowed. Not saying that we wouldn't have hope, but in fact, I think hope gets birthed in the place of laying down some of these dreams for the other side of the fence and beginning to say this is a story you've given me. This is a plot line you've given me.

So for me, with my Lyme disease, I move slowly. I move slower than I did ten years ago, slower than I did five years ago. And it's hard. It's not me saying, oh, this is wonderful! It's hard! But in those days, I feel this whisper of God. On days when I'm fatigued and need to be in bed, I feel the whisper of God going, slower still. What do you think I see when I look at you when you're less productive? What do you think I see when I look at you and you're not accomplishing all that you want to accomplish? We see a different side of God looking at us when we can't knock it out of the park.

**RANDY:** So here's the hard question, I think. You start to divide along some of the theological nuances. Because there is one side that I think sometimes is a little too fatalistic and it is just like well, life is hard. It's never going to get any better. I just can't wait to get out of here. And the other side almost lives in a fantasy world that says, oh, I'm not sick! I don't have Lyme disease. I'm like yeah, you do.

And so where do we land in the middle of having faith? We know God can heal. We know he can knock down our goal. He can expand our borders; we sold millions of books on that. Versus the be faithful in a little, cultivate the plot that God's put you on, and accept what you can't change. How do we know the correct road, and not fall in one of

those ditches?

**SARA:** I think that's such a great question. I think the middle line is acknowledging what's right in front of us. I do have Lyme. I'm going to wake up sometime this week fatigued—so acknowledging it. But then, instead of trying to physically overcome it myself, which I think sometimes is that fantasy land, let me just pretend and push myself. Let me push the limit. I'm actually staying in a place, I know this is hard.

But as the Bible tells us, tribulation leads to perseverance, perseverance leads to character, and character leads to hope. If we're staying in that middle place, actually the end of sitting in your pain with God is a supernatural hope, where you go, inside this fenceline you have a life for me. And there is a limitlessness that comes when I lean into the story you've given me.

**TAMMY:** Totally! I feel like that's where I've been the last 22 years of my journey of loss—back to life again. It's taken me years to get to a place where I had to see something as the end of something in my life as the beginning of something in my life. And that's a hard place to be, when something has ended and been taken from you. So it felt like to then look at that plot of land inside the fence and say, now what, God?

**SARA:** And what's in here?

**TAMMY:** What is in here? And how can I find beauty and comfort in something new within something that's always been in front of me?

**SARA:** It is like resurrection weekend. We have a Friday of the cross. I think all of us are invited into this reality. We have a Friday of the cross and we have to admit and acknowledge that some things are dying in our lives. And then there is this Saturday waiting, sitting in the pain with God. Grief is actually good. Grief is a gift from God. We can sit in that unfamiliar wait, that uncomfortable wait knowing that really out of death that's when new things are birthed. But we skip Saturday, right? We just want to go from

Friday to Sunday. We skip the—let me sit in this pain with God knowing that, to answer your question, on the other side of it there is new life, new hope, new birth that comes from the things in our life that we can't have.

**RANDY:** I love that because it's not hopeless. And that's okay. If you're in that painful position right now just know that God is with you, and that is where the hope comes from. It is not hopelessness—this is a place of hope. There is something, Sara, you say in your book that I want people to hear because it will give purpose to those sitting in the pain sometimes. You talk about how slow growth equals maturity. And if we understand the purpose of God is to conform us to the image of Christ then we can sit in that difficult place not being as productive as we think we should be or want to be and let the slow growth conform us.

**SARA:** Absolutely. It is a letting. I mean, there is a process that God does in us, that is if we let him use our circumstances to shape us.

I think to answer your earlier question about overcoming. So many times, we want to shift our circumstances, we want to change what's happening to us, not recognizing that he is a really good dad and the hard that he is letting happen in your life right now maybe isn't to be overcome. But if you can let yourself sit in it and let him work the process and engage with his heart, I think that's the key thing to not being cynical, that I'm going to engage with God's heart for me right now, I'm going to cry it out with God, I'm going to pray the Psalms to God, if I can stay in that place then he is bringing on the other side of it profound hope and life, profound beauty, profound wonder, profound newness.

**TAMMY:** My goodness! So why do you think that even in your book we talk about emotions a lot? In your book, you talk about grief, emotions, and a lot of things. Why do you think we also avoid big emotions in our lives?

**SARA:** I think they're scary and unfamiliar. They feel like they could rob us of what we think we want. Many of us weren't raised really knowing how to process our emotions

and so they just feel off limits. Sometimes, I think we develop whole theologies to help us avoid our emotions. When in reality, as we look at the Psalmist, God gave us lanes for our emotions in the Bible. They were some of the most emotional beings. Psalm 22, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Jesus' words that he uses on the cross. We have lanes in scripture to be emotional. God was emotional.

**TAMMY:** Exactly. That's one thing I've learned, especially being on the show. We had Dr. Anita Phillips that really was life-changing for me when she was talking about emotions. I'm like, so my emotions are okay? It was so freeing for me because I giggle freely and I cry freely. But I love that. And I love learning about that so much.

I think about your story of when you lost your dad and how you've had to process that for a long time.

**SARA:** It's still ongoing.

**TAMMY:** Yes! And we talked about that backstage even how I still, all these years later, I sometimes can still feel punched in the gut.

**SARA:** Grief can take you out in a second. Absolutely.

**TAMMY:** And just dealing with the limitations of even grief, and what does that look like? Chapter six in your book meant so much to me, Sara—so much to me. It talks about good grief. It is their good grief. Is it possible to grieve well? Like you said, you can't skip over it at all.

I just want to read something that just ministered to me and I think it may minister to somebody today. Lean in for a second. "All the while God's invitation remains the same, 'Come to me with your tiredness, your overwhelmed, your sadness, over what you thought the season would be. Come to me. Come to me with lowercase aches, the ones your dad might coach you out of or your sister might say are foolish, the ones that don't

compare with a child starving in Africa. Come to me with those aches. Yes, come to me when your neighbor has lost their spouse or when you think it is foolish to cry over another unpaid bill.'

God doesn't set us up on a scale to see who is crushed enough in spirit to warrant comfort. Many of us have years of splinters we never brought to him and we wonder why our hope is lost."

Hope is never lost. What I love about that chapter, that moment in my life as I sat in my study reading it, hope is never lost. Bring it all to Jesus. Bring it all to him today. Whatever you feel is holding you back from living your best life, change it today. Look within the fence of your life at what God has placed—very beautiful things, very specific intentional things for you to see that you might be overlooking. And today, it is keeping you from living a free fulfilled life that is limitless within the gift of limits. I pray you'll do that today.

As you're thinking on that just take a second right now. I want to show you something really powerful where we get the chance to help some people live outside of those boundaries as well. Watch this.

### **On the mission field**

**JOHN:** So this is where you get your water? This is unbelievable. We just got through walking down this crazy steep hill where I literally just fell coming down. And this mom is coming down here to collect water, and she is about to carry this. This is five gallons of water, eight pounds per gallon, 40 pounds. She is going to put that on her head, while she has a baby on her back, and she is going to walk back up that hill. And this is what this mother's drinking. This is why two of her children have died.

### **Open captions**

>> I try everything to keep my children healthy. But even when we go to the hospital to

get medicine, my children have to take the medicine with the same dirty water. They still have bloated bellies and diarrhea. No matter what we do, death is always near us.

**JOHN:** Two of her children, both passed away from the water that's here that they had to drink. Esperanza has another baby on her back called Angeline or angel. Earlier, I was saying how beautiful she was, and she said, "How can my baby be beautiful when the water that she drinks makes her so sick?" And I had to tell her that she was beautiful because God made her. And that I see the image of God in her.

Do you know that in the same region right here in this village, over 32 mothers have lost children in the last couple of years? Would you please, please help us bring clean water to this village. We will take what you give and we will make a difference in the lives of villages all over the world through Water for LIFE.

**End of video**

**In the studio**

**TAMMY:** Yes, we will. Yes, we will, John. That is our promise. It has always been our promise. We will do everything we possibly can to get to every child, every village, every family that we can possibly reach. That's our goal.

When I look at that piece and I see her words, "I tried everything," oh man, it almost knocks the wind out of me because I think of things in my life, the hardships I've had, the struggles I've had, the suffering I've had in my life where I feel like I've tried everything to make it better, to fix it. My struggles seem very little in comparison to hers and losing her children and the fear of losing more.

"I tried everything." It makes me pause for a moment and think, have I done everything I can to help those who need my help? This is just one story. This is another day. This is another question I have. We've got to do everything we can to reach these families. I want

to bring them hope. I want to help them, give them another reason, be another reason. I want to try, I want to do what I can.

Our goal this year is to drill 350 wells and I hope we go beyond that, in 20 nations. It will be life-giving water. Randy, there is something so real about this opportunity that we get to be a part of.

**RANDY:** It is an opportunity. It is a tragedy, it is a terrible situation in so many places but that is an opportunity. I think that's how we need to look at it. So when you see the images of a child who is suffering, when you see the images of a mother who is in pain, yes, I want you to see the emotions that they're feeling but I want you to see that it is an opportunity. You've got a little bit of a glimpse. Tammy, I know you've seen this out in the mission field with John Yeatts too, and this goes on with so many of our mission partners, there is a ministry opportunity that takes place right there. We're not just tending to their physical needs, though we are doing that, we are shining a light—and that light is Christ—into the darkest most desperate places.

We can only do what you enable us to do. We can only reach the goals that you enable us to reach. The 350 wells in 20 nations, that is our prayer, that is our hope. I'd love to go right past it. We can only do it with your support. This is the last week we will be on the air asking for your support. So let me quickly tell you how it breaks down. Your gift of \$48 today will help provide Water for LIFE for ten people—clean drinking water. A gift of \$144 will provide life-giving water for 30 people. Some of you can drill an entire well. The average cost of that globally is \$4800.

Whatever though, it is just critical that we act and act today because as we're wrapping up this campaign, we need to get things in motion. Literally, wheels are in motion so that we can get to these villages quickly and time is critical. So please, don't delay. Pick up the phone right now, if that's how you give. It may be easier to go online, click, click, click, and you've just made a difference in someone's life. Whatever you can do, whatever God puts on your heart, I pray you'll do it today and help us give Water for 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.*

*This is the last week! Please call, write, or make your gift online.*

**End of video**

**In the studio**

**RANDY:** This is the last week we'll be in this emphasis on the broadcast show. But your gift will keep on giving so I pray you'll do the best you can. Go online, go to the phone, and know that you will be saving lives.

Listen, if today's program has ministered to you, when you make that gift, just request Sarah's book *The Gift of Limitations*. We would love to put that in your hands. Sara, you end the book with a chapter called "Something Beyond." I love that because it says there is hope.

**SARA:** Absolutely, there is hope. We live untold amounts of time thinking about what we don't have. And there is a fence. Inside the fence, there is a yard and trees and birds and wonder and beauty available to us. And part of the gift of our limitations is the Lord saying I want you to look here in the life that I've given you. And what I have here for you, I want to meet you right here in the life you have. Not in the life you're dreaming of but the life that you're living right now, this moment, this day.

**TAMMY:** And it's possible to have a good life. Absolutely! Gosh, I love you. I think you're amazing. It was so fun meeting you today for the first time. Thank you for being here. We appreciate you so much. What a gift your book is to all of us.

Thanks for watching and we'll see you next time on *Life Today*.