

3/7/24

Week ten: WFL, last week

Randy Robison and Tammy Trent

Jennie Allen

In the studio

TAMMY: Hello everybody. Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm Tammy Trent and this is Randy Robison. Randy, have you ever gone to a women's conference?

RANDY: Not on purpose. Not on purpose!

TAMMY: So I've been doing a lot of women's conferences as you know for many years. I absolutely love it. Many guys do sneak in, by the way. So you could. You could put a hat on and little sunglasses or something.

RANDY: I'll keep that in mind.

TAMMY: But women's conferences are amazing. They're so, so fun. I did *Women of Faith* for four years right after Trent had passed. It was such a platform of healing for me. It was mainly just sitting under some incredible women, women of the faith, women of the word, just authentic women. I remember as I was coming out of *Women of Faith* there was this awesome girl that was coming in. Her name was Jennie Allen. And I remember going to one event and hearing her speak and I thought, man, I absolutely love this girl! She was so fantastic. I wondered when our paths would ever get the chance to cross.

And guess what? Today they're crossing. Jennie Allen is here because she has a brand-new book out, *Untangle Your Emotions*: "Naming what you feel and knowing what to do about it." Jennie, welcome to *LIFE Today*.

JENNIE: So good to meet you. I've always loved hanging out with you.

RANDY: You're always fun. But the If:Gatherings, though, they're still going? They're going strong.

JENNIE: Yes! Yes!

RANDY: You know, I always hear great things about that.

JENNIE: It's really pretty amazing because it live streams out all over the world. We've reached 176 countries and all of these groups of people all over the world are coming in live so it's really special.

RANDY: With so many women in one place I can only imagine. I can only imagine that it is a tangle of emotions.

JENNIE: There are some emotions. Yes! There are some emotions.

TAMMY: And speaking of emotions, you talk about the fact in your book that many people struggle with their emotions and being sort of in a pit. Like getting into this pit of emotions and not knowing how to get out. So I'm going to start right up at the top by asking you if you have personally ever found yourself in a pit.

JENNIE: Never! Never!

TAMMY: Come on! Come on!

JENNIE: No! Of course. Almost everything I've ever built or produced has come out of pits; it's come out of places that I've been. There is a little stick figure in the beginning of the book and I drew it. It was all these pictures—they kept trying to draw it and I was like, "No. Messier!" It was this little tangle over the stick figure and it was how I felt. It was like I feel that tangle.

TAMMY: Girl, I can relate. That's me.

JENNIE: And so I get that where I feel like I—so what I would do is I would cope with my emotion or conceal it or control it because that was easier than actually facing it. I just genuinely didn't have the tools or know what I was supposed to do. I also really believed, what's the point? What is the point in really being sad or really being afraid? Why does it matter? What's going to change in my life if I look back or process something? It just felt like a waste of time. I was like a dude in that way. I didn't feel as emotional as you'd think because I was just convinced that those negative feelings were—I just didn't want to feel them and so I'd push them away.

But what happens over time is you become apathetic. And so I feel like that's where I got stuck. I was just really numb coming out of COVID and I felt disconnected from my own heart and people. I wanted to heal and I wanted to figure out why I was so checked out.

So that began a journey for me; over the last few years I've changed my whole view on emotions. I've realized how wrong we get emotions; that we do think that they're negative when God is emotional and God built us to be emotional. It is you are emotional and you are emotional. We all are, every human. Even if you think I'm the least emotional person, I don't feel emotion, you do because you were built by God. And he built you to be emotional. So you may express it differently or not at all but we all contain these feelings that sometimes we wish we didn't have.

RANDY: So you bring up an interesting point because we all, whether we're aware of it or not, have a theology of emotions. I think a lot of that is taught. If you were raised in the church, you were taught certain things whether explicitly or simply implied. What is a good theology of emotions?

JENNIE: That's such a good question. When I go over to this side of the world and how they view emotions, I see that it is follow your heart, whatever you feel. Like whatever you feel is your god. And so the world is chasing their feelings and chasing what they want. So the church has responded to that and said emotions are dangerous. I understand where that comes from because I certainly felt the same way.

Yet, we have to take this further because they aren't dangerous. They are given by God and God felt all the emotions. You see him being delighted in creation. You see Jesus in all the different ways that he felt emotion. He felt fear in the Garden of Gethsemane. The Greek words translated to fear or anxiety; that's what he was feeling in the garden of Gethsemane. So you see all of these moments where there is God, the Holy Spirit who grieves over our sin.

There is a God who feels all these emotions. So they can't be bad in themselves. They can't be sinful. They can't be wrong. And he built them into us. And so they can't even be neutral. They've got to be good. Because in his image, we are made and we are made fearfully and wonderfully.

So there is a misconception that emotions are bad. What we do with them, like Ephesians says, "In your anger do not sin." So there is a sense that it is possible then, therefore, to in our anger not sin. So we've got to process our behaviors and our thoughts and places we can sin, but the emotion itself is a gift to help us process a very broken world.

RANDY: I've got a timeout on behalf of a large portion of the audience right now that is going but wait a minute, jealousy, anger, you mentioned anger, is hatred an emotion? Everybody watching right now is ticking off the list of "bad" emotions in their mind.

JENNIE: Sure. So let me back it up just a little bit and help. So there's a reason that you explode on your kid on the way out going to church. There is a reason. In fact, the best way to do this is when was a time recently when you felt an emotion, a strong emotion, whether you acted out or not.

RANDY: Oh, I've been angry over the weekend.

JENNIE: Okay, so you're angry. And you remember that feeling. So when is the first time you remember feeling that?

RANDY: I remember a time when I threw a roller skate and unfortunately, it landed on someone else's car. And I got in trouble for that but it was out of frustration that the skate wouldn't work right. And I was very, very young.

JENNIE: How old do you think you were?

RANDY: Six or seven, maybe?

JENNIE: Now I want you to think about that six or seven-year-old and there were probably great reasons—like that six or seven-year-old isn't processing sin and the world and theology yet. That seven-year-old with the roller skate is just mad.

RANDY: Just frustrated.

JENNIE: What would you say to that seven-year-old that feels so mad?

RANDY: Right now?

JENNIE: If you were the adult in the room?

RANDY: Well, I got to do that because my son is just like me. [Laughing] You try to walk them through. You know my daughter is doing this with my grandson who is three. I'm going I wish someone had done that with me, talking through the emotion and directing that in the right way.

JENNIE: So there was probably a good reason you were mad that day that made sense. And if I were to hear that reason I would probably be like, of course, you're mad. And if I heard the reason this weekend, I might say of course you're mad or I might say you overreacted.

Now, we could get into the fine is it a sin that you overreacted to this? Or we could go to the source. And go, where did that originate? And where does that keep coming from? And that's what I'm encouraging people to do. Of course, hatred is not always good but there is probably a

reason.

So what I believe is that we're missing these things God wants to do in us and for us when we ignore them. When we just keep getting mad over and over and over again, we're missing what that anger is trying to point us to—and it is to healing.

When you look at how most people deal with emotions, because we demonize them, because we say these are bad, these are dangerous, we cope with them, we try to control them, which never goes well by the way, we try to conceal them. All of that comes out sideways, and to the people we love. So what I'm encouraging us to do is go, hey let's not do that. What does God say we should do with them? Are they dangerous? Heck yeah! Of course. But it is because of how we're viewing them. So if we view them as gifts and go, okay, what are they trying to tell us? They serve as the greatest point of connection between us and God and us and other people.

RANDY: Okay. The reason I don't want to tell you more details is because—and it is inherent in all of us, there is shame. Because I don't know if that just comes—I can tell you, I've been in enough churches to know that we should feel ashamed when we're naked and we're putting everything out for everybody to see. God doesn't do that.

JENNIE: But is that even—what's that based on? Like that's what we've got to do. Romans 8:1, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." So we get to come in and go, I just lost my mind on my kid. We get to go in—it should be the safest place in the world to share this stuff. But because of shame, because of the division that we feel.

But this is the power of God is to remind us of the truth. The enemy wants us to believe the lie of shame. God wants us to believe that we are not condemned and therefore, the point of connection between us and him and each other is our point of struggle. So those knots that I felt, that picture, were supposed to be ropes that were tying me to God but I'd gotten apathetic and numb because I was afraid of sadness, I was afraid of fear, I was afraid of anger, and when I felt it again, it awakened me to joy. It awakened my heart back to run to him with every little feeling. When I do get mad, to confess and make it right.

It's so much more fun to live in that point of connection than to stuff it down. It's scary at first but it absolutely is living. It is living. And so if we could not be so afraid of it, and realize God feels these things too. It says he empathizes with our weakness; that he feels our weakness. That's such a gift! We have a God who feels it. Then we could just not be so afraid of it and begin to process it and begin to heal.

TAMMY: Jennie, thank you for this counseling session.

RANDY: Right? I didn't know I would be—

TAMMY: That's so good! Because honestly, as you're talking to Randy, and Randy is thinking about childhood stuff, we all have stuff from our childhood that we have concealed, that we have kept down, we've pushed away, we've hidden. And then we have years and years and years of it because of even what Randy said too, I don't want to talk about it. I shouldn't be dealing with this. Or I feel shame or I feel guilt or I've been raised in the church so I should handle this better. And so I'm not going to talk about it and pretend it didn't happen. But my best friend saw that it happened. How do I fix this?

But I love—everything you've said is almost like a bit of a revelation. Like oh, my gosh! So it is also fixable!

JENNIE: Yeah! That is one way to say it.

TAMMY: We're not meant to fix things but to feel them but—

JENNIE: But I think there is hope, right? It is like you can—it is not like you have to get stuck there forever. That's not what I'm saying. I think it is not just being afraid of it and trusting God with it, and as you do that, relationships deepen. When you think of somebody that's cried to you about something, they feel ashamed. They're embarrassed. What do we all say when we're the ones crying?

TAMMY: I'm so sorry! I'm sorry!

JENNIE: We put our heads down. But the person—if you're the person on the other side of the table and they're sharing with you, you feel so grateful. It is such a gift. It is such a gift.

TAMMY: It is. Is there a difference between being tangled up in our emotions and suffering from depression or anxiety? I know you talk a lot about that, your personal experience, and what you went through with your husband. It's tough to read.

JENNIE: He's walked through depression twice, and he wanted to share this. It is just the issue of our day, mental health. We see it everywhere. I could never talk about a subject like this without really getting into the depths of our experience with that.

What's so great about my husband is he's grown so much emotionally and that's exciting that you can do that, by the way. You can grow in it, and he's grown in it. And just recently, as I was writing the book, I was a month in and he sat down with me and said, "Jennie, I think I'm back in this season of depression again."

And I remember even then, even as I'm writing a book about not fixing our emotions but feeling them and allowing God to use them for purposes that he intends, I am like, oh, no. How long is this going to last? How long are you going to be sad again? And he said the wisest thing. He was like, "You know, we're just going to be sad for a little bit." Like I'm just going to be here. And he was at ease with it this time. Not that he wanted to stay there but he just realized that there were circumstances that were difficult and causing this moment in his life. It was for several months but he owned it. He sat in it and he was honest about it and he talked about it. It brought such closeness to our family versus him hiding it and lashing out at us. Instead, he was so genuine and honest.

I remember my son wrote a letter to him and it was so tender. And it was just, "Dad, I'm so proud of you. I admire you so much."

It was just such a beautiful point of connection because my husband let us in and said, "This is what I'm going through." My kids' reality, it brought us closer.

So mental health, the way I describe it in the book is you can imagine that emotions are an ocean and sometimes you're standing on the shore and they're hitting your ankles and you're like I see that. Okay. I'm okay. I'm sad but I see it. I recognize it. Sometimes you're hip deep, sometimes you're swimming but you're still in control and you feel okay. But you know that you're sad and maybe it is a season of sadness or grief.

But then sometimes, you get out too deep and you feel like I'm going to drown. And that's where you just need help. And you have to look at—how long have I been here. And Praise God for wise counselors, for wise doctors, for people who know how to help today. That was not the case in prior generations. But today there are so many people who are trained to help you when you feel like you're drowning. And sometimes, I think at different points in all of our lives with the world we live in, we might need that.

RANDY: Sure. I was near the ocean not too long ago and some girls were taking pictures in the ankle-deep waves and a big one just came out of nowhere and smacked them.

JENNIE: Hey, that will preach.

RANDY: Right? It's like that sometimes. You're not looking and man, all of a sudden you just get walloped. I want to run through this very fast because we're out of time. If you want to dive into this, get the book. And we will send it to you when you support the mission outreach today.

But I've got to ask you about this last point because you walked through, noticed your emotions, named your emotions, felt your emotions, shared your emotions, and you covered these in detail again in the book. I know I'm short-changing everybody out there watching. But you end with "Choose Your Emotions." Is that a real thing?

JENNIE: It's to choose what you're going to do with your emotion. So I don't think we always get to choose our emotions. A lot of times, sadness finds us and you can really, really work hard to not feel it but at the end of the day, you need to feel it. But what are you going to do with it?

I've seen, we have a choice. We can let it consume us, that it becomes our god, or we can submit it to God and it will connect us deeper to him. That is what I've experienced and I don't want anyone to miss it.

RANDY: You said trust God with your emotions earlier and I think that is the crux of it. And then even, trust others with your emotions. That's hard for people but you're saying there is hope in that.

JENNIE: Yeah, that's what he wants. That's what he built them for. He built them for us to heal together. I was just talking to a Navy SEAL yesterday and he was talking about being in combat. He said you had to turn off your emotions to go do your job because it was so impossible to think about what you were doing, potentially killing humans. I mean this was just so hard. But then you'd come back to the barracks and you would be together and you'd weep together. He said, "I've never experienced anything like that, weeping together." He said, "I don't think I ever will again."

I stopped him and said, "Oh, no! No, don't ever say that. Because that's how it is supposed to be." Because we're all at war. We're all facing things that feel impossible, and we're supposed to be going back to the barracks and crying together and weeping together. Because there is nothing more bonding and powerful than sharing our emotions together. It is how God meant us to do life together.

RANDY: Oh, wow! That is powerful, Jennie. You know what? You're about to see an example of that. You're about to see an example of some people feeling some deep emotion that I was able to sit with and that others in our ministry team have been able to sit with. I want you to sit with them in their painful emotions because there's hope on the other side of it. Watch and you'll see how.

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

TAMMY: So I hope you're going online and giving the best gift you possibly can give. You must know that it will make an enormous difference. This is the last week so jump on in. Let's do something to change the lives of so many people.

And listen, for any amount that you're able to give today, request this book *Untangle Your Emotions*. We want to make sure to get that to you. Jennie, it has been so great having you here today. Do you have any last, final, really great words for us?

JENNIE: Well, this is what I will say. If any of you feel overwhelmed by your emotions, I just want to say, of course, you feel this way. Of course! The world is broken and of course, our hearts are broken too. So you are not alone. And gosh, I just pray grace over your life that you would experience God's delight over you even in your fear, even in your sadness, even in your anger.

TAMMY: That's such a good word. God bless you, girl! I need a Jennie in my life every day. You probably do too. And I'm so glad you were here today to have Jennie in your life. Thanks for being here. We're going to see you next time I hope on *Life Today*. Bye-bye!