

7/4/24

Week 27: WFL

James and Betty Robison

John Arroyo

In the studio

JAMES: We welcome you to *Life Today*. James and Betty Robison with a hero. I believe the military, all the armed service members, I believe all of our law enforcement officers, I believe they're the true heroes. They offer their life and their limbs for us to have freedom as a future, have an opportunity to live in this great country. And it was paid for by people who offered their lives and their limbs to give us freedom. And now then great people offer the same to protect it.

And we have not honored them as we should. One of the things I think we'll do the rest of our lives is begin finding ways to honor our heroes, the true heroes. More than maybe anything we've ever done because it is that important and we have overlooked it too much.

Well, we have a Fort Hood shooting victim. There were two shootings at Fort Hood. This Green Beret was shot in the second one, and his name is John Arroyo. John, you, a captain. When you were at Fort Hood were you a captain then?

JOHN: I was a second lieutenant at the time, sir.

JAMES: What took you to Fort Hood from North Carolina?

JOHN: Well, I was enlisted first as a young soldier in North Carolina. I started in the

82nd Airborne Division as a young paratrooper in 1998. After a while, if you've been in North Carolina, if you've been off Fort Bragg, North Carolina for a while which is today, Fort Liberty, it is not going to take long before you see all the Green Berets and the Army Rangers and the Delta Force soldiers. And everybody starts looking at those guys and they're like, "They're the best!"

That's what I wanted to be, sir. I wanted to be the best. I wanted to be the one that when the President says we're already in that nation, I had already been there six months behind enemy lines. So I became an army Green Beret, initially just as an enlisted soldier, I became an army Green Beret, and did three combat tours. But then I just knew one day I was going to get out of the military and they weren't going to pay me anymore to chase bad guys up mountains. How was I going to feed my family later?

So a lot of those questions I began to start answering. So I went to college. I went from being an enlisted soldier, the army sent me to college. They have a program called Green to Gold. So they made me from enlisted to officer. And that's what got me there. But I honestly have to tell you something about why I actually joined the military because that's what I think, that's where the story really starts.

JAMES: I want to hear it.

JOHN: I lost my dad when I was about five years old and I never had affirmation from a dad. I never heard my daddy say, "I love you and I'm proud of you."

JAMES: I never heard it either. I didn't have a father.

JOHN: So what I went looking for is, I went looking for a daddy's love. Every little boy and every little girl needs to be affirmed by their daddies. And so I went looking for affirmation. And I didn't allow my mom to give it to me. I had a great home, a great mom, and a great grandmother that came to help Mom. Right? That's what our grandmothers do. And I will honestly say, and your listeners need to hear this, I'm the

evidence of a praying grandmama. That's who I am. I'm the evidence of a praying grandmother.

So my friends when I was a young boy, they saw the gangs. I grew up in Los Angeles. So in the '80s and '90s, gangster rap came on the scene and it got pretty bad. So in seventh grade, I jumped into a gang. By ninth grade, I'm a teenage father. By 12th grade, I did methamphetamine for the first time and it hooked me.

And that's why I joined the military because my praying grandmama and my sister put the feet in the hands of this young boy who needed discipline, and I was looking—I went looking for affirmation. So when my friends said gangs were cool, I needed them to give me their affirmation. So I did the things that they wanted me to do. And my sister said, "If you don't get out of here, you'll be a loser for the rest of your life."

So I know I'm taking your listeners back but that's where the story really started. It started as a broken young little boy who was looking for a daddy. When I joined the military, I ended up in the 82nd Airborne Division is when, finally, they saw what was inside of me prophetically. I often tell people, the army didn't make me a Green Beret. If the army could mass-produce Green Berets, we would all be Green Berets. What they did was they pulled the Green Beret out of me.

So God had put that there and Grandma had prayed it into being. So after a while, being in Fort Bragg North Carolina, when I saw these Green Berets and I saw the elite, really it was my orphan heart that showed up once again. Because my peers thought there were the Delta Force operators, there's the Green Berets. So I said, how do I get them to think that I'm like that? I'm cool? So I started telling everybody I was going to be a Green Beret. James, I didn't even know what Green Berets do. But it didn't matter, I just wanted the fanfare.

Until one day someone said, "Why don't you go be a Green Beret or shut your mouth." So long story short I end up going, trying out to be a Green Beret twice. This

knucklehead has to do things twice. I'm the guy who has to do things twice. And that's actually how I got to Fort Bragg.

And then I knew that one day I was going to have to feed my family after the military. I became an army officer and my first assignment was at Fort Hood, Texas.

JAMES: What happened there?

JOHN: My wife and I, my wife's name is Angel, we get there about November of 2013. What we're talking about is what happened on April 2nd, so five months later. So now here I am, I show up. I'm a second lieutenant. I'm a hard charger, a former Green Beret. I'm trying to get my soldiers shipshape. Right? Four o'clock in the afternoon on a Wednesday, April 2nd, I have to go to my unit headquarters. So I shut the door to my car after I parked it and I step away from my car and I hear shots fired.

Now I've been to Iraq and Afghanistan. I know what shots fired sound like. But I'm on base. I'm behind security. I'm safe. But something wouldn't let me move. So I was looking at my one o'clock when I heard the shots fired and a car came from the road where I was actually looking. It comes and pulls up right in front of me, but sir, I'm in a parking lot. Who thinks that they're in danger on base in a parking lot? Not this guy.

So I turn my head back again. I took my eyes off of the vehicle and the individual, and I turned my head away from him looking back towards my one o'clock and the next shot I heard ripped through my throat. On April 2nd, 2014, another soldier who was broken was on a shooting spree. What I actually heard was him shooting at everybody he saw, and I was victim number 16. So when I turned my head away, I took a 45 that severed my jugular vein, went through my voice box, and traveled into my right shoulder.

He drives away, and I move away from him just trying instinctively to get away. I go back towards my car and I fall flat on my face. And my life is pouring out. So you're a Texan, how long, it shouldn't have taken long for all the blood to pour out of my neck

from a 45. Yeah.

So I'm on the ground and I'm freaking out and I'm praying. I'm asking God, God, what happens to my family? I'm not even praying for me. What I'm asking for is what happens to my family. And in that instance, I hear this audible voice, "John, get up or your wife is going to die." I don't understand what is happening. But I hear it again but this time more sternly, "John, get up or your wife is going to die."

Here's what was happening. Six months before I was shot, when we left North Carolina to move to Texas, my mother-in-law and my father-in-law both died nine days apart. Two years before that, my wife lost her brother in a hunting accident where his dad loaded his gun and set it down. It goes off on its own and kills my brother-in-law. He dies in my father-in-law's arms. So my wife had lost her mother, her father, and her brother. Her parents just six months before me. Essentially, what Jesus was telling me was John, if you don't get up off the ground your wife will take her life.

Here's the other thing. When I was a young soldier coming back from deployment the other thing I did was I brought war home. And then I also did what Daddy did because my dad died of cirrhosis of the liver. A lot of times our kids—we think that our kids are not going to do what we do. Well, what I did is I brought alcohol into my home and I brought brokenness into my home and I brought that war. During that time, when I was coming back from deployment, my wife was a two-time suicide survivor because I was a mean angry drunk, and my wife and my children had to toe the line. And my wife felt like she was torn between the children.

But I'm telling you right now that I'm here because of a praying grandma. Grandma prayed for us through those. When we hit rock bottom, we ended up in a church.

So when I'm on the ground, my life is pouring out and God gives me an opportunity. This is what your listeners need to hear. Jesus didn't shoot me. He didn't shoot me to give me a testimony so I could go tell the world about him. In the midst of my brokenness, this

young gang member, thief, cheat, liar, what he does, he steps into the middle of my brokenness. Like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from Daniel chapter three, what he did is he stepped into my fire. In that moment he said, "John, get up."

See, because years before that, sir, I went and I tried to make a name for myself. I tried to create my own identity because that's what orphans do. We try to create our identity. So the world had told me, John, if you have this much money, you have life. If you have these degrees, if you have these letters after your name, John, you have life. You've made it. So what did I do? I told my family, just wait! Just wait! Just wait! Let me go do this. Let me go earn that. Let me give you a bigger home. Let me give you a bigger car. My family never asked me for those things. All they ever asked me for was me but I couldn't give it to them because I was an orphan in my heart.

So in that moment was a decision. As Moses said, "I put before you life and death."

So I get up, I grab onto my throat and I start walking. I see a soldier walking towards me and I'm trying to get to him because I know if I get to this soldier I'm going to live. And he gets ten feet in front of me and he stops. I'm looking at him, we're looking at each other but there is something not right about him, and he's real hypervigilant. I'm standing in front of the soldier who had just shot me. And Jesus blinds him. He looks right at me, looks through me, looks to the left and right, turns, walks into a building, shoots three more people, walks out the back, and kills himself. That day he shot 19 of us.

JAMES: Well, here you sit. How? How can you be here?

JOHN: This isn't a story written 2,000 years ago. This is the Jesus that's showing up today. I didn't feel that I deserved it. I later asked, because there was a lot of introspection later after recovery. I said, Jesus, how could you have saved me? You remember me! God said, "Because I didn't give you what you deserve, I gave you what my son paid for. Now go tell the world about me."

Let me tell you quickly about this other part. So I moved away from him and I started moving, kept trying to move to where the soldiers were. I figured I'd find help. And some soldiers said this is what alerted them to me. They said, "It looked like you had a red scarf flapping in the wind. It was the blood squirting out of your neck." And one of the soldiers that ran to me, there were about five soldiers that ran to me, but he said, "When we were watching behind the glass, because we knew now something was happening, when we saw you bleeding out, somebody yelled, 'Dang, that dude is bleeding!'"

But the guy that yelled didn't come try to help me. So I think there are a few that Jesus has called and I believe right now with this story, there are so many people, so many of your listeners that are bleeding. There are so many people that have mommy/daddy wounds. There are so many people that are broken and they're saying, no one sees me.

Because here's the thing. In recovery, it was so easy for people to run to me and try to triage me. Because you could see the bullet, you could see the blood, you can see the scars. So the doctors knew where to go. But they couldn't see it for my wife. She was bleeding emotionally from everything she had just gone through. And so when we were recovering, what a lot of people didn't realize was there were actually two patients, not just one.

JAMES: So somebody got the blood stopped. Okay. You've had all the damage, your voice box was hit.

JOHN: Yes. So they ended up taking me to the hospital. When they get me to the hospital, they get me on a gurney, they get me into an elevator to get me into surgery. When they open the elevator, two doctors come running out and they end up being the ear, nose, and throat surgeons. So everything I needed was exactly where it needed to be the moment I obeyed Jesus and got up off the ground.

But in my recovery, they moved me to Brooke Army Medical Center and the first thing God did was he began to work on my family. He said, you're utterly broken so we might

as well fix everything right now.

JAMES: Wow! How long did that process take?

JOHN: About four years. So I was in the hospital, exclusively, for 28 days. Then I left the hospital but my actual physical and everything in recovery was about four years. And then I finished 20 years in the military.

JAMES: Okay, you shouldn't be able to talk.

JOHN: Yes, sir.

JAMES: How's that happen?

JOHN: A complete miracle. Every time my doctors would come and say, "We don't know what's going to happen next. We're going to do a surgery and then we wait." I would just say, "Doc, just do your part because Jesus is going to heal me. I'm not your average patient." And they would just be amazed at the healing. My right arm, they said we don't know what happened with your right arm. I said, "Just do the surgery, doc because Jesus is a healer."

JAMES: Wow! How long have you been able to talk now?

JOHN: It was just like three months after I was shot.

JAMES: That's a miracle! And so now you've been ministering out of this experience.

JOHN: Yes, sir.

JAMES: What did you do in the way of response to the shooter? Because in your book you talk about the importance of forgiveness.

JOHN: I had another big conversation with Jesus. He said, "John, in order for you to move forward, in order for you to find healing, the first thing you have to do is face your fear and your pain. And the second thing you have to do is you have to forgive."

And I said, "God, how could you ask me to forgive? He tried to take my life."

He said, "John, if you don't forgive, this is what unforgiveness looks like: Fear, pain, anxiety, depression, alcoholism."

So I said, "Lord, I forgive Ivan Lopez and I release him of the debt."

He said, "I need you to do one more thing."

I said, "What's that?"

He said, "I need you to forgive yourself for hurting other people."

JAMES: Wow! Father, this is a powerful story. And I did live it because I spoke at Fort Hood. And Lord, I drove by this place so many times, and I was not far from it when the shooting occurred. And I did minister to a lot of those people. So Lord, to see John sitting here so miraculously healed, sharing your power with people everywhere, we're seeing a miracle.

I pray for people right now who, whatever it is you're dealing with them with, whatever you're talking to them about, help them to yield their life to you, literally, like soft yielded clay. And now say, Father, please shape Jesus in me. God help them to say that. Because we can see in John what your miracle power does.

You're watching this program because God loves you. And you do know this. If you watch *Life Today* regularly, we're all about his life today in you. But also, sharing his life

all over the world. Betty, our viewers know that we're going to ask them to put his arms around somebody that's overlooked. Jesus referred to them as "the least of these," the forgotten, the never noticed. But we notice them. And we give food and water and housing, and we set the captive, those who have been sexually preyed upon free. When I say "we," that's all of us.

Right now we're in one of our most important projects and that's to drill water wells where they have no clean water, just a cycle of death. We're drilling 350 right now and we're moving into the latter part of it and we need a miracle response. We really do.

Betty, if we get these 350, which we will, we will have drilled over 8,000 wells. We—us together. I want you to watch. I want you to watch very prayerfully and listen to God as he will tell you what you can do to provide the miracle that the precious people you see so desperately need. Their life depends upon it. Would you give them life? Would you become the miracle they long for? Watch!

On the mission field

ANNOUNCER: Water! Earth's most abundant natural resource: yet out of this abundance only a tiny fraction of it is suitable for drinking. And suitable is a loose definition.

TAMMY: This is their only source of water right here. This is his only source of water. And this is where they have to come every day, all the way down here, to get their water. I mean, you can look around and you can see that it is very dirty and muddy, and there are frogs all over that I actually see at the moment. And you can see the contamination in it. You can see that there has got to be much disease and illness with each sip that they take.

Announcer: While the problem here is serious, the solution is surprisingly simple, and it's already been implemented in this Central American village.

Betty: This is a time when I don't mind watching them stand here and pour water over their head because I know it is good water.

James: That's right! This is a place for which we give great praise to God in gratitude. But we need to drill hundreds of wells like this all over the world. And you can see, if you can't look at these children, look at their faces, look how happy they are, and understand the importance of clean water, it becomes the center of life, schools spring up. We want children to get an education and we want them to come and get healthy, clean drinking water.

[Cheering]

End of video

In the studio

JAMES: You see they don't have a choice. But we have a choice. And we can give them a choice. We can give them clean water. We can give them the miracle they need.

Betty, when we complete the 350 wells that we have designated areas where drilling has already started in more than half of them and we need to complete that right now. There are a lot of wonderful things going on to help us get this point to where we're going to drill the 350 that will give us over 8,000 wells that the viewers have given. And you're giving millions drinks of water. Billions since we started. And we're asking you please today, would you give a cup of water, in Jesus' name?

When you think about it, Betty, it is an amazing thing to realize that you can literally give ten people water for the rest of their life for \$48. \$144, you give 30 people. And for \$1200 you're giving one-fourth of a well. \$4800 will give a thousand people water every single day. We're just asking you to do what you can do.

We have gifts to send you that will be a blessing. Betty, you have a tumbler like this. I think you have one just a tiny bit taller than this. But these are absolutely beautiful. And the devotional, God's Word for my day. Such a blessing! And the cup of water bronze, many of our viewers have told us that they actually had to buy shelves to put the bronzes on because the bronzes told a story of love, God's love, and the fact that they were able to share that love.

So would you right now, would you make the best gift you can to give the greatest gift? Betty, it is hard for people to imagine but clean water is the greatest gift many of the people in this world will ever get.

BETTY: It really is. I know you would love to be there in person to see those children, the smiles on their faces. They just glow when they see that fresh clean water come out. We can't all go, we can't be there but, in a way, you can be through your gifts and your love and your prayers for these precious little ones. To see the smiles on their faces when they know that water coming out is fresh and it won't hurt them, harm them, make them diseased and sick. God bless you for caring. God bless you for sharing God's love.

JAMES: I'm praying for a miracle right now. You get your bank card and you make the best gift you can. Betty, we've taken it where they were burying thousands of children every month and we've gone back in those areas where love through people like you totally turned it around and we've drilled wells. We had these children by the hundreds singing praises to Jesus. In a matter of years, singing those praises in English because we teach them English in the schools. And we give them food in the schools. That's what love does. But it all started with a fresh water well.

Would you please get your bank card? Use it like a check. Call that number or go online. We have gifts to send you that will bless you. But you really are, you're giving the greatest gift, the gift of life. And they're going to learn that it is because of his life given for us that they received that gift, and then they will hear about the greatest gift. Thank you so much. Thank you for sharing his love.

Video begins

ANNOUNCER: Every day thousands of lives are lost to a waterborne disease, and nearly half of those are children under the age of five. Through Mission: Water for LIFE, now in its 25th year, you could give mothers hope and children a future as we provide clean life-giving water for thousands of children and their families before it is 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 help provide for ten. And \$144 will help provide life-giving water for 30 people for a lifetime.

With a gift of any amount, we'll send you the "God's Word for My Day" devotional set. These four seasonal devotionals each contain a daily reading, an encouraging verse, and a thought to ponder for each day of the year.

With your gift of \$100 or more, you may request the "His Word is Life" tumbler set. These two 20-ounce stainless steel tumblers each inscribed with a scripture will inspire you throughout the day and help keep your drinks well-insulated while at home or on the go.

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 beautiful bronze sculpture, "A Cup of Water."

Please call, write, or make your gift online.

End of video**In the studio**

JAMES: *Attacked at Home*—boy, it's so sad! But the miracle is worth it. It's his story. John, we're just really praying that everybody will have the forgiving power that God gave you and be healed.

I just want to say to all of you, pray for our military. Pray for those that offer their lives and their limbs for our future and our freedom. And thank you so much for blessing us today. I just pray you keep on blessing others.

JOHN: It is an absolute honor to be with you. I'm like a kid in a candy store.

JAMES: He said he helped drill wells—and I really appreciate that!

Thank you so much. Tell others to watch *Life Today*. But above all, share life today every day with someone. And I'm not talking about a TV program, I'm talking about real life, his life!