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Week 34: WFL

Randy Robison and Tammy Trent

O.S. Hawkins

In the studio

RANDY: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm Randy Robison; that's Tammy Trent. Tammy, I'm so excited. One of my favorite—I have a lot of favorite people so don't feel left out. But O.S. Hawkins is always such a joy to talk to, and he always brings wonderful encouragement. I'm excited because he's got a new book called *The Connection Code*.

Tammy, this goes right to the core of a very relevant issue, which is this feeling of isolation and not—we live in the age of technology and communication but we feel less connected. That's what he's talking about. I'm excited about that.

TAMMY: Me too. He's one of my new favorites now too.

RANDY: Welcome to *LIFE Today*. Good to see you.

O.S.: Thank you so much.

RANDY: Is this a response to kind of a lot of COVID issues? Where did this come from?

O.S.: We've raised a generation now that doesn't know how to communicate with each other unless they're doing it with their thumbs—and COVID. But really, this is the 14th or 15th in a whole series of Code devotions; starting with *The Joshua Code*, 52 verses every believer should know. There are 52 verses in the Bible that every believer ought to

know and that's *The Joshua Code*. *The Jesus Code*, 52 scripture questions everybody should answer. *The Promise Code*, *Prayer Code*, *Bible Code*, finding Jesus; so this is just the last in that code series of devotionals. But it is really about relationships because when you think about it, everything in life is about relationships.

RANDY: Why Philemon? Because that's one of those tiny books.

O.S.: Only 25 verses and yet it is packed. It is a case study in the art of building positive and productive interpersonal relationships. Whether they're at home, whether they're at the office, or the social arena, or wherever, we're made to connect with each other. We all have something in common. We only have three relationships in life. There is an outward expression, that is the relationship we have with each other. We connect with each other outwardly.

At the end of every great creative act, God stopped and spoke. He made the sea and land and he said, "That's good." He divided the sea and land and said, "That's good." He put the stars in space, he said, "That's good." The moon, he said, "That's good." The vegetation, he said, "That's good." And then he made man and said something else, "Not good!" That's what he said. "It is not good for man to be alone." So we're made to connect with each other. We have an outward expression.

And then we have an inward expression. That's a relationship we have with ourselves. I don't care what you call it. Some call it self-worth, and self-respect, but we have a relationship with ourselves. We get up in the morning, put our makeup on, or get up and shave. I guess in our culture some people do both. [Laughing] But we look at ourselves in the mirror and we have a relationship with ourselves. What goes wrong in our outward relationships is usually a projection of what is happening with me. I get mad at the office about something. If I'm not careful, I'll come home at night and push it off on my wife.

But there is one other relationship we have and that is we have a relationship not just outwardly and inwardly, we have the capacity to have a relationship upwardly with Jesus

Christ and know him in the intimacy of Father and child.

So the bottom line is this, we're never going to be properly related to each other outwardly until we're properly related to ourselves and that never happens until we come into a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, know him in the intimacy of Father and child and find our self-worth in Christ, and then translate that into a lost world around us.

Someone came up to Jesus and said, "What's the greatest of all the commandments?"

RANDY: That's what I was just going to say.

O.S.: What did he say? He said, "Love the Lord God with all your heart and love your neighbor as yourself." He put all three of those relationships in the great commandment: Love yourself, love your neighbor, love the Lord your God with all your heart. When we come into a proper relationship with Christ that's when we begin to be able to share that love of Christ and productive relationships with others. That's the real thesis of what Paul is writing to Philemon and he goes through several characteristics of what makes great relationships.

TAMMY: I love it because can you tell me, I loved reading this, and I loved reading that short little chapter on Philemon's life. I don't know, there might be some people watching today who don't know that story which I think is the foundation of this book. Can you share that back story with us today?

O.S.: On one of Paul's missionary journeys, he stops in the city of Colossae. There is a wealthy entrepreneur there by the name of Philemon and he comes to faith in Christ. Paul continues on his journey. He leaves. And Philemon starts a church in his home there in Colossae. Paul goes on his missionary journey and ends up being incarcerated in Rome for the gospel. He is in his first imprisonment in Rome.

Meanwhile, back in Colossae, Philemon has a contractual worker there in his home by

the name of Onesimus—who rips him off and runs off and goes to the bright lights of the big city of Rome. We don't know what happened but he got thrown in jail. And of all the coincidences you can find, he gets in the same cell with Paul. Paul leads Onesimus to Christ and Onesimus' first response in coming to Christ is I've got to go back and make restitution, make it right with Philemon. So he's going to go back to Colossae.

So Paul writes this letter to Philemon and he drops a bomb on him about halfway through the letter to say I want you to take him back and receive him like you would myself. He begins, interestingly enough, with one of the greatest factors in relationships, and that's affirmation. So Philemon gets this letter from Paul in our New Testament and he's reading it. After the salutation, the first thing he reads is this in verse seven. He says, "Your love, Philemon, has given me great hope and encouragement because you, brother have refreshed the hearts of the saints." He reaches out and gives—but here's somebody that starts off saying, man, something encourages me. Man, I want to read that letter.

Every kid needs to know their parents believe in them. Every athlete needs to know the coach believes in them. Every student needs to know the teacher believes in them. So this word of affirmation is so important. This is what Jesus did. He went around affirming people. Met a woman at a well who hadn't heard a word of affirmation in who knows what and talked to her and gave her living water and patted her on the back. He met a woman taken in adultery. He said listen. He reached out and patted her. He said, "Listen. I don't condemn you. Go and sin no more."

TAMMY: Yes, I love it.

O.S.: He was on a cross and he reached over to a thief and he said, "Today you're going to be with me in paradise."

When he was baptized what happened? The Father spoke from heaven. He reached out and gave him a pat on the back and said, "This is my beloved son." Affirmation has a liberating effect on people.

We're talking to people today. Maybe you're out there right now saying nobody has affirmed me in a long time. I haven't had a pat on the back from anybody in a long time. Let me encourage you to find somebody, maybe a waitress or anybody you find today in the normal traffic pattern of life, reach out and give somebody a pat on the back yourself. Give a word of affirmation. It will lighten somebody's load and brighten their road. You'll find out that the scripture is true when it says you'll reap what you sow. It will come back to you. So affirmation is vitally important.

RANDY: Can I ask the hard question about that?

O.S.: Sure!

RANDY: What's the difference between real affirmation versus flattery or a setup for manipulation?

O.S.: That's good! Thank you for saying that. I always say in affirmation there are some things that have to happen. First of all, it has to be personal. It has to be between you and that person. Of course, it has to be genuine. It has to be truly motivated by something. It has to be personal. In other words, if I said, Tammy, I want you to tell Randy after I leave today how much I appreciate him being—that doesn't mean anything. It's got to be personal.

It's got to be present. It's got to be about something that is happening right now. Hey, Randy, you know 15 years ago I appreciated what you—no! It's got to be present. This is what Paul was doing with Philemon. It's got to be pointed. It's not just Hey man, I appreciate you doing all this. Pat on some—superficial pat. No, it is about something. Randy, I appreciate the way you did this, this, this, this, this, and this. So it's got to be pointed to be truly legitimate and truthful.

But the other thing that he does in here that is so vitally important is he calls on him to

forgive him. So two things always have to happen to have true biblical reconciliation like he is talking about. He had two parties. There is an offending party and there is an offended party. Now in most broken relationships is a little bit of both in all of us. But there is an offended party. In other words, that's the one who is the recipient of the offense. In this case, Philemon. So there has to be a receptive heart on the part of those people.

But on the part of the offending party, there must be a repentant heart. If a person is truly not repentant for what they did, they're not going to have true biblical reconciliation. So they've got to come back with a repentant heart. Now Onesimus is going back to him with a truly repentant heart. He wants to make things right. But it will never happen unless Philemon has a receptive heart and receives him back like his own.

You know as a pastor for decades, I dealt with a lot of people in broken relationships, and most of them that didn't get mended, it wasn't because the offending party wasn't repentant. It was because the offended party just couldn't bring themselves to forgive. Jesus said, "If you don't forgive others their trespasses how are you going to expect me to forgive you yours?"

TAMMY: No, I love that. It was such a takeaway for me in the book as well of just being people filled with grace enough to extend forgiveness. Sometimes we've been so hurt that we think I can't even forgive this person even if I've been the offended one. But I think that changes everything when we extend grace to somebody. And you're right, if we don't, we'll never reconcile.

So what do you say to somebody today who just is in that situation where man they feel awful? They've turned it around. They've truly repented and they want change. They've gone to that person, let's make it right. Let's do it. And that person will not forgive—will not extend the grace, will not forgive. Do they keep pushing? What was your—

O.S.: I would say that in that case, if they've done everything they know to do to make it

right and this person still is not—then I would say first of all, you've got to go on with your life. Secondly, I would say the shortest way to anyone's heart is through the throne of grace. I would just go in and intercede for that person and seek to discern what stronghold is keeping them from that. Maybe it is pride—whatever it might be and just pray and pray to that—and then just trust God to see him work a life in someone from the inside out.

TAMMY: I think there are a lot of parents that deal with even broken relationships with their children. I've got some friends in my life who are dealing with that where a daughter just wants nothing to do with their father anymore. There is nothing that he's done and he's just aching inside. He weeps, he is just carrying this heaviness. It is kind of like what do you do? And I think he's in that place too. I think that's good advice for people that are just really—

O.S.: Well, and sometimes in a case like that, you just have to trust God that they'll come back.

TAMMY: But it is the trusting. Everything you said there, there is trust. There is a Word of God that you can put a stamp on to say, okay, if God says it, I've got to believe it and I've got to trust it. So it might be for a while. It might be hard for a while but I've got to believe that God will restore this somehow.

O.S.: There is another—he drops another little bomb at the end of the letter. Because the forgotten word, maybe in relationships, is the word *accountability*. Paul closes the letter. He says, oh by the way, Philemon—now he's asking to forgive Onesimus, to receive him back like he was himself. He says, "If he's owed you anything charge it to my account." He said formerly he's useless to you. Now he is useful to you and me. It is a win/win. He closes by saying, by the way, Philemon, get the guest room ready. I'm coming by to visit. So when Philemon read that he said, uh-oh. He's coming by to check up on me. He's going to hold me accountable.

I've got a car I drove over in today, to the studio. Every six months I take it in for a checkup. Susie and I own our own home. The other day we replaced some eaves. It wasn't leaking but some wood was starting to rot. I've got a body, not much of one but every year I go to Ken Cooper and get a physical because what goes wrong with my car, or my house, or my body, usually it's because of one word: Neglect. So if that's good for those physical things, it's good for interpersonal relationships; that we hold each other accountable.

RANDY: It is interesting when you look at just those 25 verses in Philemon, it gives us a picture of God's idea of relationship. Because here's someone who is affirming, Paul's affirming his friend Onesimus—or Philemon. Then he is saying, here is this one who needs forgiveness and restoration of relationship. There is a little bit of Christ's picture in Paul who is saying to charge it to my account.

O.S.: I was Onesimus. I am Onesimus. We've all sinned and come short of the glory of God.

RANDY: I've committed sin. I need forgiveness. I need restoration and restitution. This seems like the relationship aspect, not just with God but starting there, but even with others is *really* important to God. Why do you think he created us in a way that we have to—I'd rather just go away on my own, man. Not worrying about anything. Say goodbye to the world. I'm just a loner. But God says community is necessary.

O.S.: It is because we need each other. That's what the church is about. We need each other. We need community because we all need to be encouraged. We all need to be held accountable. We all need forgiveness. We all need to know that—

There is this principle we talk about in there, this win/win principle. A lot of people have relationships that are win/lose. I'll have a relationship with you as long as I win every argument and you lose everything. Others have a lose/win relationship. I've got such little self-worth, self-respect that I want to have a relationship with you but I'm going to put

you on a pedestal. Let you win everything. You don't have respect for me after that.

The way to have a relationship is to have a win/win where we both win. I've pastored for years. I know dads that kept their thumb on that kid and they just kept it on there and kept it on there and kept it. Their kid went off to college and never came home like you're talking about a while ago. They both ended up losing because you've got to play—you know when we raised our kids, I always thought it was better to lose a few little battles with them that didn't matter so I could win a bigger war and play win/win with them.

So all of that is wrapped up in this. That's why we call it *The Connection Code* because life is all about these connections that we have with one another based on the connection that we have with the Lord Jesus.

RANDY: That's so good. Right now we have a little bit of a win/win opportunity for you. We're going to show you how to do that. But listen. If you're in a situation where you've got a relationship that's broken and you want someone to talk with you, to pray with you, to encourage you, we have a telephone number. You can call it really for any reason, but we're talking about the topic of relationships. We've got someone that will listen to you and pray with you. And if you don't have that relationship with God the Father, that feels broken, you want someone to pray with you, to lead you through a prayer about forgiveness or restoration, whatever, our goal is to bring you closer to that loving Father, that one who does forgive us, the one who will hold us accountable and who will strengthen us and will affirm you as a son or daughter of the Most High God. So call that number if you want someone to pray with you right now.

Look, here's another win/win. When you support our mission outreach today, we would love to send you *The Connection Code* to encourage you. Just request it. But most importantly, here's an opportunity for you to see a need and fill it. You can see someone who right now could be praying to God going, God, where are you? And you're going to say, we're here. We are his people. We are his hands, his feet, and reach out. Watch this and hopefully, you'll take some action today.

On the mission field

JOHN: So I'm here in Liberia. We're here speaking to these families about the loss that they are suffering because of the lack of clean drinking water. Many families have suffered from cholera and other waterborne illnesses.

I'm in the home of a young woman named Blessing today. Blessing's here with her brand-new baby. So, Blessing, I know that you lost a child. Tell me your baby's name that you lost.

Open captions

>> His name was Morris.

JOHN: Do you know why he died?

Open captions

>> During the dry season, our water source gets very low. We try to scoop out the water that looks the cleanest. I gave this water to my son to drink. And that's when he started to get sick. The water makes him vomit and have diarrhea.

JOHN: Now that you have this new baby, Cyrus, how do you give him water? What are you doing now?

Open captions

>> Right now, I don't know what to do. This is the only water we have to drink. I can only trust God to provide us clean water someday.

JOHN: We know you need clean water but if you could talk to my friends back home, what would you say to them to help prevent Cyrus from ever having to drink that very

water again?

Open captions

>> I'd ask them to pray for us and tell them we need help right now. We need their help so that Cyrus and the other children in this village won't die.

JOHN: Can we please make her generation the last generation that ever has to suffer from the lack of clean water? We will be able to bring Water for LIFE to Blessing's village and villages just like Blessing's all over the world because you have a dream, you have a prayer. It just simply takes us being like Jesus and being willing to make a sacrifice to be a blessing.

End of video

In the studio

TAMMY: These people are surely doing everything they can to find clean water. The truth is it is simply not around. They'll go and they'll scoop up what they think is the cleanest looking water hoping that there would be hope in it. The truth is that water is not real water, it is a counterfeit. It is just as deadly as anything else that they're drinking.

That's the travesty in all of this. Even if that village, when they think, oh, there is some hope here. But it is fake. There is no hope in that. And I have no doubt that with every sip they take, it is in the back of their mind, could I die from this? Can you imagine living with that kind of option, that question in your heart and your mind every day? Am I going to die from this today or will I live? Will my children die or will they live? Every single day.

This is a generational problem. Do you know it is not going to change? It won't change unless we go in and we help. Unless help arrives in this village today nothing will change. So we get to be the change today. We can change this now and for future generations to come. We can help them live. We can help them thrive. We can help them

flourish. We get to be a part of that as God's people.

I love truly that we've been given opportunities to help people. There are people struggling right now, that are suffering, that have heartache deeper than we will ever know or ever imagine. We're sitting in the comfort of our homes behind a computer right now. We have so much to be grateful for and thankful for. But there are people far, far away right now that are crying out for help, that are asking God to provide, that are trusting God, that are holding out hope. They need real hope and they need real water, Water for LIFE right now.

So you and I can jump in today. Our hope is to drill 350 wells in 20 nations. Do you know what that looks like for you and me today? If you're just kind of wondering, it is this small. \$48 will provide water, clean water for ten. \$144 will provide water for 30. And for \$4800, and you can come together with a few of your friends and raise that money quickly, \$4800 we can go in there and drill a well that will provide water for at least a thousand people for the rest of their lives in that village. But we have to act now. We have to get to them now. We have to help them find the hope that they so desperately are praying for and it comes simply in clean water.

This is the last week of this campaign. We will be doing it throughout the year but this is the last week which means right now it is urgent. It is urgent that you pick up the phone and make that call or go online. Reach out to us so that we can reach out to these people today.

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."

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 on the air with this outreach. We need to hear from you. We need to be able to tell our people in the field, yes, we're going to drill those wells. We're going to give those people clean water. So please, go online, and make the best gift you can. Give us a call. Either way, when you want to request *The Connection Code*, we'll be glad to send it to you to bless you.

I do want to let you know a little something. O.S. Hawkins has another book and it is on

Criswell. Why this book? This is an interesting book. It's very personal.

O.S.: W.A. Criswell was the leading evangelical figure of the 20th century, hands down. Loved your daddy. They were involved in many things, not the least of which was President Reagan's inauguration—I mean, election in 1980. But it is a book of his life and times. I've been writing a few biographies now but it is so packed with life lessons that are so helpful. A lot of things you won't know because it is about his times. He lived in every decade of the 20th century. You'll find what nationally known First Baptist Church member was seen with Lee Harvey Oswald a week before the assassination, and then disappeared for several weeks after the assassination. There are so many untold stories here.

I put Dr. Criswell in a room. We taped for three hours. Nobody has ever seen it. He made me promise I'd wait 20 years after he died to write it. So it's got all these untold stories of mystique. If you're a Christian who remembers Dr. Criswell, 50 years pastor of the First Baptist Church in Dallas, you'll want to read this biography.

RANDY: Well, you're just going to have to go get your own copy because this one's mine. Tammy, it's such a blessing.

TAMMY: And this one is mine. But if you call us today, I'll make sure to give you a copy of this. Gosh, we love you and we love you. You're one of my new favorites. Totally! Thank you so much for watching and we'll see you next time on *Life Today*.