

8/29/24

**Week 35: *Christmas Shoes and Smiles***

**Randy Robison and Tammy Trent**

**Addison Bevere from 8/31/23 wk 36**

**In the studio**

**RANDY:** Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm Randy Robison. Tammy Trent is with me. There is a gentleman that we've talked to multiple times. I've talked to him online, and we've talked to him here in the studio. You're going to see him today because Addison Bevere made such an impact. We talk to a lot of great people but this is what I told Addison later. I was like, man, I've been thinking about what you said in our conversation and like over and over. And then you dive into the book *Words With God* and you see this depth and it is life-changing. I know it impacted you as well.

**TAMMY:** It did. Randy, I remember falling apart. I remember just crying and I couldn't pull myself back together because I definitely had those questions about how I pray to God, and when I felt like my prayers have fallen short. This book is so powerful. It was also teaching me how to have the right words with Jesus.

**RANDY:** All right! We want you to see this. Whether you've seen it or not, and if you're watching online, share it with someone else. This will bless you. Here's Addison Bevere.

**Pretaped from 8/30/23:**

**ADDISON:** There is a moment in the garden that I love that I think brings the tension of prayer, brings it front and center. We see Jesus in his moment of greatest need, the Garden of Gethsemane where he is crying out. And he says, "Father, if there is any way

this cup could pass, please let it pass." He is specific. So God wants us to be specific in our prayers. There is a lot in scripture about asking. The Greek word *aiteo*, which means to ask, means to put a demand on God. It means to ask with a sense of you expect a response. It might not necessarily be what you're asking for but you know you have a right to make a request. You know you belong in the presence of the one you're bringing that request to.

So first of all, he was specific. Second, he was steadfast. He prayed again and again and again. And for so many of us, the process of praying prepares us to better understand and receive what we're asking for. It is going to God and contending that prepares us to receive what he has for us. So he's steadfast.

And there's a third component, he was surrendered. He said, "Not my will but yours be done." We want to swing the pendulum. We want it to be really easy. We want it to either be God, I give you my list and you answer everything on my list the way I expect you to answer it, and prayer works, or I'm just going to pray a vague prayer, not my will but yours be done.

**TAMMY:** So you've listed the three. Have you, yourself, ever struggled with the three? Have you ever been in a season in your life? Because I want to know I'm not alone, Addison.

[Laughter]

Have you ever struggled yourself and just thought, what am I doing wrong with my prayer life right now? Have you been in a dry season?

**ADDISON:** Absolutely. I was going to say not a season, multiple seasons of my life. But there was one season in particular where I navigated insomnia for five years. I lived in a perpetual fog. I felt like God had abandoned me. I would reach out to God in prayer and I didn't sense God's presence.

I remember toward the end of this season, my wife had invited a few couples over for a time of prayer. I was like come on! Really? Are we doing this? Because I knew that moment would happen where everyone is sitting and they're talking about how God is touching them and ministering to them. And all I wanted to do is pour out my complaints to God. Like that's where I'm at, just being real. Like that's where my prayer life is.

And we're sitting there and we're talking and my wife shares and she looks at me like hey, it is your turn to share. I'm like I'm not sharing. I'm not saying anything. Everyone else is crying and talking about how God has touched them. And I'm just sitting there and I'm quiet. And finally, I shared with them and said, "Hey, to be honest with you, I haven't sensed God's presence in years. And I feel like I'm being faithful, I feel like I'm checking the boxes, I'm doing the right things but God has checked out of my life. And honestly, I don't know what to do."

And I discovered in that season because I had an idea of myself and I had an idea of God that I struggled to let go of during that season. And I realized that God has a way of not delivering us from a thing. For me, it was insomnia. For so many of us, when it comes to prayer, we want the answers. We do because we want to get life right. But I learned that peace isn't found in having all the answers, it is found in being in tune with the one who is the answer. I discovered that God has a way of not delivering us from a thing if he knows that that thing will ultimately deliver us to him.

See, I had a transactional—going back to the transactional view of prayer. But God is like actually, no. This is about intimacy. This is about you letting go of old constructs, old ideas of what it means to be a son, what it is to be someone who is in connection with me. I'm encouraging you, I'm creating an environment for you to let that go so you could be grasped by me in a fresh sense.

**RANDY:** I think it is funny, we oftentimes pray for God to show us our purpose or to help us fulfill our purpose. But we're not there yet, and the process of refinement, of

conforming us to the image of Christ, which is his ultimate goal of sanctification, we don't—we want to skip a lot of that.

What I hear you suggesting, both from experience and from study, is that sometimes a lot of the frustrations we may be experiencing, a lot of the dry seasons is a part of that transformation that will ultimately get us to what we're praying for.

**ADDISON:** Absolutely. It prepares us. Like those specific requests, they're good for us because they create tension in our lives. We pray vague prayers. We don't know if God is responding to our prayers. When we pray specific prayers, we have to wrestle with God's answer to our prayers or what seems like a lack of an answer to our prayers.

Prayer is the gateway into the heart of God. It is the gateway to understanding how God created us to flourish in human relationships. It is the gateway to understanding ourselves. We're so obsessed with the therapeutic in our world right now, I think so much of that is we've let go of the robustness of prayer.

**TAMMY:** What is prayer?

[Laughter]

Someone is watching today, going: what is prayer? What's the simple—simplest prayer I could start with right now?

**ADDISON:** Okay, I'll share a prayer, a very simple prayer. Three words: I am here. I'm going to explain what these words do for me. I take a deep breath and I pray, I am here. Number one, the great I Am is here. God is with me in this moment. Whatever I face in this moment, God is with me.

Number two, because I'm here I can't be somewhere else. We're really bad, really bad at living in the non-present. God is saying, actually, meaning, purpose, and connection

happens in this present moment. So for me, "I am here" is a surrender to this place. I can't be in two places at once. I'm not God so I'm going to be here.

And the third dimension of this prayer for me is, I am here in this place and time. I'm not where I once was. I'm not where I'm going to be. I'm here in this journey. That's okay. It's been a good growth, it's been a good work.

And what I have found is that the enemy of our soul wants us to live in the past, and when that happens, we're filled with hopelessness and regret. Or he wants us to live in the future. When we live in the future, we're filled with anxiety. We weren't designed to engage with the past, present, and future. We were designed to engage with this moment.

So to answer your question about what prayer is about, I believe prayer is the way that we connect to the heart of God. If what Paul writes in places like First Thessalonians 5:17 or Romans 12:12, this idea of praying without ceasing is real, then that means our entire lives are supposed to be an integrated prayer. That does not work with the religious box that prayer has been forced into. So obviously, prayer has to be something more than what we've known it to be while still including these fundamental parts of prayers like asking God, going to God, and bringing our requests to him.

**RANDY:** So since we talked last, because we talked on the *Life Today Live* stream before today, I started thinking about that and I realized that I will pray and repent of my sins, which I should, which is the past. And then I will pray and ask for maybe direction, blessing, wisdom, which is the future. And that was it. There was no present prayer on any regular basis that I can even—I wasn't always thinking of it in those terms. But when I became conscious from talking to you of this idea of present prayer, you realize wherever I'm at I'm able to ask for wisdom or discernment or sometimes God is like be quiet. I've got to listen to that too. That is a whole different dynamic because then you can pray without ceasing in a sense, which sounds like some weird kind of nice idea from church.

You're saying that—to me, that was the missing piece. I got the future prayer down, I got the past prayer down, it's this present thing and that's transformational.

**ADDISON:** It is. Our lives flourish when we're present to the presence. Present to the presence of God but also present to the people in our world. Because if you want to enjoy a good life, be present to the people in your world, to whoever is around you. That will transform their life and it will transform your life. You will see things, you will garner insight that will lead to foresight. And that is so powerful.

And prayer is how we center and how we're present to the day, and how we know when to speak and we know when to be silent. So many of us, are terrified of the silence of prayer because, in that place of silence, we hear the voice of accusation. We hear you're not enough, you'll never be enough. And that's not what this is all about.

**RANDY:** Did you struggle with that one?

**ADDISON:** Absolutely! I've struggled with that one.

**RANDY:** I didn't know. But a lot of that comes from our upbringing, religious upbringing. I did have a level of that, God's probably not happy with me because I'm not perfect. And so, when you dare to go to him in prayer, it better be with full repentance and then more repentance. And then maybe you'll be okay. But I think that's a wrong view of God if you look at the prodigal who was living in the pigpen. The Father was not like what we think God's like.

**ADDISON:** Like he ran to him. He received him. He spoke dignity, and honor to him with a ring. I look at Hebrews four and this statement that the writer of Hebrews makes, like God, the word knows. It searches, it divides soul, spirit, bone, marrow. There is nothing unseen, nothing unknown. And that sounds scary. I think that's where we stop. But then the writer of Hebrews goes on to say, "Since then we have a High Priest who can sympathize with us in our weaknesses, that knows the struggle, that knows the pain."

And I believe the great pain is the belief that we're separated from God. I believe Jesus fully encountered the human experience on the cross when he cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" I think that our greatest temptation is to believe that we are forsaken by God.

**TAMMY:** What do we do with unanswered prayer?

**ADDISON:** So I feel like with unanswered prayer, I feel this need to fix it, to balance the equation, if you will. And the reality is when there is a prayer that isn't answered, there is a tearing in us. And as long as we view this transactionally, going back to the old and trying to return to what was old and trying to recover what was old, we'll actually miss out on the faithfulness and goodness of God, and how God moves through unanswered prayers. I kind of want to put that in air quotes because I believe that there is no prayer—no prayer when it leaves our lips that does not find its rest in the Father's heart until its time has come.

God's not afraid of our doubts. He wants us to bring our doubts to him because doubts lead us to faith. You can't experience faith unless you first doubt. Otherwise, it is just a continuation of what you already know, what you could already see, and what you could already perceive. And God is saying, no, I'm calling you to fresh ways of understanding yourself, understanding pain, understanding promise, understanding purpose, and that is going to come with a profound type of disorientation that often comes in and through moving past and beyond but being honest about unanswered prayers.

**RANDY:** Read that part that you wanted to read.

**TAMMY:** If I can get through it. Like I'm just so [ Emotional pause ] I feel the weight of unanswered prayers. I feel the weight of something not going your way. And I think so many people walk away from their faith because their prayers aren't answered. They give up and they don't think God is listening in the silence. The voice of the accuser is so strong and so heavy. There's so much of the lie but a little of the truth to pull us in enough

to keep us from a connection with God, and to keep us close to the heart of God and chasing after that. So we walk away.

Your words, the *Words with God* have meant so much to me and taught me so much about prayer. And I feel like every believer, it is like when we come to faith we should be taught immediately about prayer. Sometimes we skip over that, Addison.

I think chapter nine is my favorite chapter of your book. I'm going to read it many times. You probably never want to tell someone to start in the middle but chapter nine ministered to me so much. This passage just says, "Prayer is so powerful that God must retain the right to grant certain requests within our desired timeline. But the moment a prayer leaves our lips it begins its work."

That is powerful, Addison, right there. "The moment it leaves our lips it begins its work. There is no prayer that goes unheard but for our sake, there are prayers that must go unanswered. But no prayer, even the bad ones are without purpose. Even a wrong step is better than no step. And the truth is, every finite step in the light of God's infinite wisdom is less than a perfect step. So run to the Father or away from him if you must, but for Heaven's sake don't stand still. God has a way of guiding people who move their feet."

That meant so much to me and it might mean so much to you today, too. I hope it does in the sense that God is saying, keep moving. Some way, keep moving, keep trusting, and keep praying even in silence. There is never a time when Jesus is not speaking or listening or present in your life. You cannot take that as abandonment. God is so walking this out with you. He wants you to understand prayer. And Addison, that's what you're teaching me. Thank you so much for that gift to me.

**ADDISON:** Thank you. And that was my experience.

**TAMMY:** Was it really?



**ADDISON:** That was my wrestling with God. I felt abandoned by God and I realized, the silence was not a rejection, the silence was an invitation, an invitation to know him in ways that I didn't think were possible. And that for me, has changed everything. And so that's one of my favorites—like that's one of my favorite paragraphs in the book. So, Tammy, I love that it spoke to you the way it did.

**TAMMY:** Deeply, yeah.

**ADDISON:** Because God can handle it. He can handle—like be honest with God, whether that's running to him, or being honest about why you feel like you must run away from God. God will respond to us in those moments. It is the apathy, it is the indifference, it's the I've got to be in control of all the answers and so I'm going to deny what's going on here, that's what's dangerous.

**End of video**

**In the studio**

**TAMMY:** I'm right back there again. Oh, my goodness!

**RANDY:** It changes the way you view everything. Does it not?

**TAMMY:** It does. He just does such an incredible job explaining it all, especially to me in a way that I just got it, Randy. I just understood it. His book does the same thing.

**RANDY:** It does. Listen, if you're watching and maybe you're struggling in your prayer life or with a particular issue and you're like, okay, I hear him. I believe that. I know God really cares. He wants me to bring my struggles to him. Listen, sometimes we need someone to talk to. We have a telephone line. It is available to you at any time. You can call this number, someone will be there to pray with you, just to kind of walk with you to God and just lift up whatever it is you're dealing with, whether it is personal, whether it is someone in your family. We want you to know God the way that Addison was talking

about. So if you want someone to share that with, please don't hesitate. Call that right now.

If you support the outreach that we're going to tell you about in just a second, we will send you *Words With God* by Addison Bevere. Tammy, I know when people get this, it will at least force them to confront some of their misconceptions or maybe just open up that invitation to know God in a deeper way.

**TAMMY:** Totally! That real connection with God is matchless. Nothing compares. I think when we are in a season in our lives where maybe our prayers feel empty, how do we swap that out for a real connection with Jesus? And I think that's what Addison does in this book.

**RANDY:** Prayer is a gift. It is not a burden. It is not a task. It is a gift. It is an invitation.

Look, we're coming up, we're thinking about Christmas already, actually. We want to give you the opportunity to give a gift to someone else. We do this every year. It is a fun thing. Tammy, I know you've been there. You've gotten to participate.

But the *Christmas Shoes and Smiles* outreach this year is a little different but it is very special. Watch this and just say a little prayer. And say, Lord, what's my part in this? I hope you will be a part. Watch this.

### **On the mission field**

**TAMMY:** We're so excited to help you.

**ANNOUNCER:** For nearly two decades friends of *LIFE Outreach International* have made it possible for us to bless thousands of children during the Christmas season through our *Christmas Shoes and Smiles* campaign. Because of their generosity, we have been able to provide shoes for children of impoverished families throughout the world.

And for children impacted with cleft lip and palate disorders, we have blessed them with corrective surgeries.

This year we want to do even more. We want to provide surgeries for children who are suffering with various neurological disabilities including spina bifida and hydrocephalus, also known as water on the brain.

### **Open captions**

>> For almost all children who do not have treatment for their hydrocephalus, many will die.

**ANNOUNCER:** This Christmas season and all year round, the quality of children's lives and in many cases their very lives depend on them receiving corrective neurological surgeries. We need your support to help build a state-of-the-art surgical center so that we can say yes to children and their families who are waiting for lifesaving care.

### **End of video**

### **In the studio**

**RANDY:** What an opportunity! Tammy, I love the *Christmas Shoes and Smiles* every year. Obviously, the shoes are a lot of fun. That shot that you just saw where all the kids are running, they look like they're all on the same soccer team or something, right? But just to be able to give them something simple.

What you don't realize is that it does save lives. Literally, the shoe can save lives because there are a lot of things in the soil, hookworms, and things like that that cause all sorts of problems. I don't know. It seems so simple that it is like, why not? We can do this.

**TAMMY:** It is a simple act of love. It is a great way to give love and hope and fun to these children. Some of them, Randy, have never even had shoes.

**RANDY:** No, they haven't. And the way they're built, by the way, I've got one here, they pass these things down. You know, kids, how they outgrow shoes and they pass them along. You can go to certain places around the world and see these shoes for a long time. And you make that possible. I'm waving a shoe at you.

But listen, the cleft palate surgeries, Tammy, I know you've seen the before and after pictures, what a change! A lifesaving change in these cases.

**TAMMY:** Totally! Totally lifesaving. And will change their lives forever. When I think it would only take \$500 to change a little kid's life for the rest of his life, that is very little in comparison, and it is totally doable. Some exciting things are happening right now.

**RANDY:** There are. The \$500 is the average price for a corrective surgery. Once that's done, the child can eat, can breathe. It really is a lifesaver.

But listen, this year, we have such a huge opportunity to go above and beyond the normal blessing that *Christmas Shoes and Smiles* will bring, and that is with the surgical center. I don't know that I can stress how critical this is. We have a location in Uganda but people come from, not only from all over the region but from all over the world for these various neurological issues.

We have people right now doing these but they are overwhelmed. There is more need than they have the capacity for. And this facility performs more surgeries every year than the average hospital here in the United States or Canada or Australia. They are doing the work. They are beautiful, dedicated doctors and nurses and staff there doing the work to save lives. But we want to do more.

Tammy, you were asking before, someone has graciously granted a huge gift, more than half of the \$1.2 million to make this possible. But we need to finish that out.

**TAMMY:** Incredible! We need \$500,000 immediately to help finish this. The need is

great. We get to be a part of it. Look, this is how it breaks down. For \$36 you will provide shoes for ten children. For \$72 you will provide shoes for 20 children. For \$180 you will provide shoes for 50 children. It is an incredible opportunity.

Here is the other one. For \$500, you can do a complete corrective surgery on a child that needs something today—done today. Let's give them a better future. If you can do an extra \$1,000 or more, we're going to put that right toward this new surgical center. That is going to change the lives of more than we could even imagine, Randy.

**RANDY:** Yeah, well, we talk about Christmas. It is early, I know, but the spirit of Christmas is one of giving and sharing Christ with the world! Emmanuel, God with us. What better way to say God is with you than through the expression of saving a life?

So I hope you will go online. Go to the phone right now. Just listen, look, do what God puts on your heart. Let it be an expression of love. And just know, you will put a smile on a child's face and very possibly save a life.

### **Begin video**

**ANNOUNCER:** For almost two decades *LIFE's Christmas Shoes and Smiles* has continued to provide shoes for impoverished children throughout the world, as well as corrective surgeries for children with cleft palate disorders. By responding today, you can help provide new shoes for 150,000 children in time for the holidays, and for some children a beautiful new smile. Your gift of \$36 will help provide shoes for ten children. \$72 will help provide shoes for 20. \$180 will help provide shoes for 50. And a gift of \$500 will help provide a corrective smile surgery.

This year we have an incredible opportunity to help construct a new surgical center that will provide lifesaving surgeries to children suffering serious neurological conditions. This \$1.2 million project is up and above *LIFE's* normal budget but because of one

generous friend for *LIFE*, only \$500,000 is needed.

As a thank you for your gift of support to this life-saving outreach, be sure to request the blue crystal shoe ornament, a treasure to display each Christmas. With your gift of \$100 or more, you may request this keepsake boxed set featuring four crystal shoe ornaments.

Finally, please consider an extra gift of \$1,000 or more to help construct *LIFE*'s new surgical center. And with this gift, you may request this beautiful bronze sculpture, "A Cup of Water."

Please call, write, or make your gift online today!

**End of video**

**In the studio**

**RANDY:** I hope you are calling right now or going online to make the best gift you can. You can make this Christmas so special. When you do, we have a gift for you. You can request Addison's book. And Tammy, I've got to tell you, I'm so excited about this surgical center.

**TAMMY:** Honestly, I am too. It is happening right now. We've raised what like \$700,000? Or our partner gave us. So we are needing about \$500,000 more. We can do this today. Make a call. Oh my goodness! Go online, whatever we can do to just push this thing forward. It's exciting.

Thanks for watching! We'll see you next time on *Life Today*!