

9/24/24

Week 39: *Christmas Shoes and Smiles*, last week

James and Betty Robison

Ed Rush #1

In the studio

JAMES: Betty and I are with some of the most important people in our lives, you the viewer. Those of you who love to put God's arms around the overlooked. Thank you for loving us. You know, you probably helped keep us together for 62 years in a meaningful marriage, a joyful marriage. All of you, you haven't been praying for us that long. Most of you are not even close to—anywhere as close as we are, and certainly not that old. The deal is that you've blessed us and you've blessed so many people.

We've got an armed service member here. We've got someone who had two swings in Iraq. He is a marine pilot, F/A-18 fighter pilot, and his name is Ed Rush. I'm telling you what, I look down at the title of his book, "How to have a friendship with God. Even if you've made a million mistakes, he'll talk to you."

Ed, I want to shake your hand. Thank you for serving. I've got to ask you when you went as a marine pilot to the very unstable situation in Iraq, did you feel, I know there was nervousness, I know there was concern, but did you feel that you were going there on a mission to protect freedom, to protect people that were worthy and needed to be protected because an enemy was trying to destroy them? Did you feel that you were doing something like that?

ED: So I was in Iraq in 2004 and 2005, two short trips there, as an F/A-18 pilot. First of all, I felt like we were doing a great thing over there. I was committed to the mission that we had. I'll never forget the first night that I took off on the runway. It was Al Asad Airbase way out west of Fallujah in Iraq. Got on the runway, and put my throttles into

afterburner. You take off in the F/A-18 in combat and you're a fully loaded, 50,000-pound airplane, you take off, and you stay about ten feet off the ground. You keep the throttles in afterburner because you're trying to avoid getting hit by surface-to-air missiles and not climb out so fast. Take the throttles fully into afterburner. Stay about five feet above the runway until we get about 500 miles an hour, and literally, you pull the nose directly up and you fly vertically to about 10,000 feet while looking over your shoulder to see if you're getting shot at.

It was the most terrified I'd ever been in my life. And about a month later, I was on the same runway, taking off again, still pulled the afterburner, still pulled directly into the vertical, and it had been so routine that I thought this was actually when I was more dangerous. I learned a lesson that night about vigilance. It is something we'll talk about during the time that we're here. We're called as believers, today is the day to be vigilant. I know sometimes we feel like we've been at this before, been complacent. As we talk about hearing from God, I want to shake something new and put you back on that runway again for the very first time in that conversation with God.

JAMES: Okay. Now you felt you were serving freedom, serving us. How do you think we should feel toward our armed service members, toward our law enforcement officers? How should we feel about them?

ED: That's a wonderful question. So when I came back from my tour from Iraq, when I landed, I landed at the Los Angeles airport for the very first time and came through customs. The first person met me and said, "Thank you for your service." First person. I said, "Thank you for the gas." Because I was thankful that they paid for their taxes to cover my—

But I will just tell you, that was not the case in the '60s and the '70s for the warfighters that were coming back from Vietnam. I will tell you, I had people who disagreed with what we were doing in Iraq who still said, "Thank you for your service." They honored what we do here in America for our service members. And I'll also say, people's opinions

change over time. I look back at what we did there and I think a little differently now than I did at the time. It is okay as long as we're supporting our warfighters like that.

JAMES: Okay. I want to ask you this question because you had some experiences that led you to the greatest, most important part of your life. You have a successful business but you brought everything that you've learned about God talking. And it is possible to hear God, is that right?

ED: One hundred percent!

JAMES: You can actually hear him. Now then, I want to know what it was that kind of moved you up to realize that this is very important, and I've got to perhaps the main focus of my life on this particular calling of God on my life.

ED: So I'll set the context by telling you that 14 years ago I was what you would call a cessationist. I did not believe—I was a believer. I loved my Bible. I believed in the holy Trinity, the Father, Son, and the Holy Bible. I was very diligent about that but I didn't believe that God spoke. I didn't believe in any of the gifts. All of a sudden—

JAMES: Did you think they'd gone away?

ED: I did! That was my belief system.

JAMES: You were a cessationist. You believed it gone.

ED: And I was sincere about that. I was just sincerely wrong. So one day I started having a conversation with God. I took it to my pastor at the time. We were sitting over a Starbucks cup of coffee like this. He said to me, "You shouldn't do that. It could get hokey." By the way, just so you know, he was right about the second part.

JAMES: He wasn't talking about the coffee. He was talking about what you were talking

about.

ED: So it can get a little hokey. God likes to play around with you sometimes but he was wrong telling me, obviously, not to do that. I started cultivating that as a part of my life. But I wasn't telling anyone. I didn't even tell my family for a long time. I was having these intimate conversations with God where I was asking him questions about my life, about my family. I was asking him about money, I was asking him about my business. He was giving me downloads. Literally, he would show me business deals. I'm a teacher and speaker, I write books for a living and do events. So he was showing me, here's how you structure your business. Here's the kind of deals you should do. Here's the kind of pricing. I was receiving that in downloads from heaven.

JAMES: Did you know it was him?

ED: I did. I was training and I was learning how to discern and hear God's voice from my voice.

JAMES: What made you want to learn that you could do that when you believed that it had all passed away, that kind of hokey stuff as the pastor was trying to tell you it was, that all this was gone? What made you decide to give that consideration?

ED: I'll tell you, the best way I could describe this is when I was in the military, I didn't go on a flight without talking to the intelligence officer. They would give us an intel brief every single time I would fly. They would tell us where the enemy was, where the targets were, where the missions were, any threats that were there, any surface-to-air missiles in the area. In my view, when I was talking to God I was receiving my daily intelligence briefing.

JAMES: That is a great way to look at it militarily. He's giving you the information you need to know. How long did it take you to realize it was God?

ED: I was told—people ask me this all the time. I've taught tens of thousands of people how to hear the voice of God. The number one question I get by the way, how do I know it is him? How do I know it is him? I get that question from brand-new people. I've heard that from atheists who I've taught how to hear from God. I've had that question from some of the most experienced people with God in the world. I think everyone is asking that question.

JAMES: Probably great preachers and pastors.

ED: I think it is a common question because we're human and we are not God. We are spirit, of course, body and soul. But I always tell people, first of all, everything I did in the military, back to the military, came with training. The first time I took off in an airplane I almost threw up. On my first landing, I almost killed myself and my instructor! You may have experienced the same thing. Like when you first learned to do something it is a little clunky but after a while, you're pulling seven G's, you're flying vertically, you're fighting against a MiG-29 like I did. You're winning against a MiG-29. There are a lot of things that happen with training and talking to God is just like that, it is a practice. It is something that you just get better at.

I always tell people, if you're not sure if it is God, well get together with two or three people, share notes, and sometimes you'll find some commonalities. When you kind of fly together in formation, you end up finding better answers as well. So just practice.

JAMES: I try to teach people that they can hear God. I'll give them some suggestions when they'll just ask, in passing. I'm not doing in instruction like you are but I'll say, write things down you believe is God. Just write it down. If you believe it was him saying it, and you may have been asking or it may have just come to me, was it him, and then discuss it with some people? Is that a good idea? Is it good to write it down and then is it good to pass it by somebody and say, does this sound like God?

ED: So to put it into context I never, not never, not once flew into combat alone. Not

once. In fact, as an F/A-18 pilot, you always have a wingman. Always! He's there to make sure you don't kill yourself, that somebody else doesn't try to kill you, that you're flying in the right place. You usually support each other. Unlike Top Gun, you're not right next to each other, you're three miles apart looking to make sure that the enemy is not shooting at you. When you're a believer walking with God that fundamental principle works perfectly. Two or three people getting together, is the reason why we build whole communities around the message of this book so that people can begin sharing the kind of things they're hearing. Because sometimes, God will drop something on you that is too big, even to believe. But when you bring it to your friends they can go, oh, come on. You can do that. You get that mutual encouragement and sometimes a little correction too.

JAMES: I tell people that I think it is important to know the nature of God by knowing the Word of God. If you're a stranger to His Word, you will be a stranger to his nature. I think you would certainly agree with that. Do you think it is really important for people to be sure that they know the word and know his nature because that makes it so much clearer to know it's him?

ED: One hundred percent central. So in the book, for example, the first few chapters, are much different—there are a lot of books that talk about hearing from God. One of the main differences in *God Talks* is the first few chapters I talk about how the brain works and the neurology with recoating and retraining your mind. This is why this is so important. God describes his voice as a still small voice. God, if you will, has a frequency, a carrier frequency that he communicates on. If you're staring at your social media platforms for four hours, if you're reading Twitter for four hours, you're not in the zone that you can typically hear God.

By the way, he's speaking all the time. So your job is to tune into his frequency, not the other way around. I always tell people like, God's carrier frequency, the way he communicates, the love, the kindness, the compassion, are in His Word. So if you want to get better at hearing God, read God's Word because you're tuning yourself, if you will, to God's radio station or his frequency.

BETTY: You know, growing up as a Baptist as I did and going to church, being faithful all the time I didn't have that personal relationship with Jesus, but I was doing all the right things. But I didn't think I was qualified to have that kind of relationship with God. I thought it was for ministers and everybody else. But through meeting him and God meshing our lives together and growing together, I found out that God wants to talk to me if I make myself available to him.

It would be just like my children. I want to talk to my children. I want to communicate with them. Well, God feels that way too. So I think if we tune ourselves to his voice and learn to discern which is God's voice, it makes a big, big difference.

ED: It's amazing how you just described that. So because we've done this with so many people, big groups, small groups, live Zoom training, big events, and small events, I will have people often write down and submit the answers they get. I will just tell you, 60-70 percent of the lies that people believe—when you ask God, the book takes you through these seven exercises, when you ask God for example, what lies do I believe about me? What lies do I believe about you? What lies do I believe about my past? 60 to 70 percent of the answers are the same.

I'll give you an example. In the book, there is an exercise about money. When someone asks what lies do I believe about money? 60 percent of the answers are I'm not worthy. These are good godly people who love God, have been walking with him their whole life, and have an embedded belief system that is trained into their neurology that says I'm not worthy.

JAMES: Not worthy to hear him?

ED: Not worthy to hear him, not worthy to receive God's blessing, not worthy to be a blessing. And what's crazy is so the enemy—they just copy the same strategy over and over and over again. But we're starting to unfold what the enemy has been whispering

into people's lives. That's one of them, you're not worthy. So you're not that famous person on TV, you're just a regular person.

But you would be amazed—last week, we had a 75-year-old Southern Baptist woman who never believed that God spoke to her. Five minutes later, she is weeping as God brought her into an encounter. And after that, she said, "I guess God does speak to Southern Baptists after all." So you never know.

JAMES: You tell, because I heard people talking about it, a story about an atheist that made a very deep impression on you.

ED: So once God got me out of my comfort zone and having me teach this message, I was doing at the time business events. And at the business events I had everybody, all walks of life. I had Christians that came but I had atheists and Hindus and Buddhists and Muslims and skeptics and people pretending to believe something that they didn't. I have everybody because look, I'm happy to have everyone come and we can all have the conversation. They were business events. They were not God events, they were business events.

But I always did these optional sessions where if anyone wanted to come and learn how to ask God questions about their business they could come to the optional session. So I'd have 250 people at an event and 249 people would come to the optional session the next morning. One of the women was an atheist and she walked in the room late. As she walked in the room, I said, "The first question I want you to ask God is what lies do you believe about you?"

At that moment, she was standing at the door, she told me later, she was ready to just walk out the door but she didn't. She decided she was going to sit down. I don't mention this in the book but she said, "I thought I would just ask my subconscious a question instead of asking God a question." What little did she know that her encounter with God was just moments away. She sat down and she asked God the first question. She said,

"What lies do I believe about me?"

He said, "You're believing that you're ugly and that I hate you." And in that moment, he transports her mentally back to when she was five years old. From age 5 to age 17 she was sexually abused by her dad. And in that moment, a software program ran in her mind that she was ugly and that God was done with her.

Now just so you know, she is an atheist taking notes from God. I get it. I understand why an atheist who has such a horrible earthly father would not believe in a heavenly one. I get it. Like I have compassion for that. There is no judgment in my heart for that. I understand why she had that belief system. By the way, when she's doing the exercise, she is in her 60s. She hasn't told this story to anyone. Then she asks God what's true. He says, "You're beautiful. I've always loved you and I've always cared for you."

The next thing you know, she just begins weeping. We're passing these tissues around. She comes up to me afterward. She says, "Ed, I'm an atheist." But what happened next is she asked me a question which fundamentally is the evangelist question. She said, "What do I do now? What do I do now?"

I said, "Let God father you. Just let God father you." And for the next few years, she just spent hours a day hearing from the Father. This is a person whose life was transformed. And three months after that event, she is on my stage standing in front of hundreds of people telling a story she hadn't told anyone for 40 years because God healed her heart.

JAMES: Isn't that great? See, you have that happen over and over now. We're going to talk about how important prayer is now and hearing God. You can pray and ask God to do things. You can pray and share your heart. We need to do that. We've got a lot to pray about. We've got a lot of challenges. I think we're in grave danger right now all over the world that we're going to have to pray and see his power make supernatural adjustments and corrections. We're going to have to make corrections and we're going to have to speak truth to people who have not heard truth, they've discarded it. They've actually

changed the truth into a lie. According to Romans 1, when you do that, you're incapable of thinking straight. God called it a reprobate depraved mind. You can see people are living all over America and all over the world where it looks like they have a totally depraved mind. They can't seem to think straight. The fact is they can't. You've got to adjust by acknowledging that what God says is true and we're going to have to pray that in.

So can we talk about how urgent prayer is and how important prayer is? Do you think that that is something people must hear and must heed?

ED: Yes. So 100 percent. So Psalm 24 is the chapter for us as believers to focus on. Psalm 24 says, lift up your eyes, everlasting doors. By the way, that's you, God's people, the way that God moves through the earth. And right now God's people need to look up. We spend a lot of time getting our news. We spend a lot of time looking down at our phones. If we just understood we sit at God's right hand, according to Ephesians. We sit with him in an unbelievable place of authority if we simply look up.

Like I said, the book shows you how to have that simple conversation with the King of kings who happens to have made a universe that is apparently 13 billion light years old, and at the same time, he is happy to have a conversation with you.

JAMES: I'm going to be happy to send you this book if you help us give some shoes to children who don't have shoes. They're the least of these that are really poor, and you would help us finish a neurological surgical center. If you will just make a gift to help us, you ask us and we'll say thank you by sending you this book. Because Ed, we've got to learn to pray and we have got to learn to hear God. He really does. Betty, can you hear God?

BETTY: I can.

JAMES: Can anybody hear God?

BETTY: Anybody can. If I can, anybody can.

JAMES: Do you enjoy hearing his voice?

BETTY: I do. I love it.

JAMES: Does he like to hear yours?

BETTY: Yes, he does.

JAMES: So y'all have a conversation?

BETTY: We do.

JAMES: I'll tell you what. Would you watch this, please? And say, God, I want to put your arms around somebody, give them some shoes, give them some smiles, give them new life. Watch.

On the mission field

ANNOUNCER: As the world celebrates the birth of Jesus this Christmas, *LIFE Outreach International* is also celebrating nearly two decades of spreading this good news in a very special way with shoes! Yes! Shoes! We, along with our mission partners located throughout the world, have provided two and a half million children with a gift of shoes. Children who in many instances have never had a new pair of shoes.

ISAK: We all celebrate different holidays around the world. The holiday that is pretty common to most of us is Christmas. That's what it feels like here today. It feels like Christmas for us because we're getting to do one of the most incredible things and that is to bless these children with a pair of shoes.

ANNOUNCER: It is because of friends like you that we have been able to reach remote areas every year providing the gift of shoes and sharing the good news of Jesus.

This year we want to once again see children's faces light up with smiles as they receive a new pair of shoes. Unfortunately, there are children who can't smile because they suffer from a condition known as cleft lip or cleft palate. The good news is our annual Christmas Smiles outreach allows us the opportunity to minister to some of the world's poorest children who have no hope of correcting their condition with surgery.

>> But thanks to James and Betty, and the friends of *LIFE Outreach International*, we're able to make lasting changes in children's lives through corrective surgery.

ANNOUNCER: And this year, LIFE Outreach is expanding our corrective surgeries to include children of neurological disabilities such as spina bifida and hydrocephalus, commonly known as "water on the brain." To meet these children's needs, we need your help to build a new surgical center. This new neurological surgical center will allow our mission partner to expand their capabilities and to perform even more lifesaving surgeries for children and their families who are waiting and so desperately need our help.

So this Christmas season, as you gather with your loved ones and friends to celebrate the birth of Jesus, know that as you give to our Shoes and Smiles emphasis, you will be providing hope, dignity, and the opportunity for a brighter future to thousands of precious children!

End of video

In the studio

JAMES: Boy, I remember taking businessmen to a retreat and one of them came up to

me and held up a little shoe like this. He said his life had been changed going to the various ministry events that we had. He said, "James, I can get little shoes like this for almost nothing; just like this and they'll last so long. Could we give shoes to little children who have never had any shoes?" I thought, man, I don't know. I've never thought about it.

Boy, have we ever given it to millions and millions of children. We're doing that. I remember when my staff came to me and said, "We're going to give people a little Christmas shoe gift." I told that to Betty, do you think that would be really neat? She said—by the way, we have a tree—we've got a whole tree that's got nothing, this is the decoration. And then we have these on the bigger tree, the family tree. By the way, you get this whole box of four of them if you give a gift of \$100 plus the other, get all of that. We're good givers. And by the way, if you give a gift of over \$1,000, we send you the beautiful "Cup of Water" bronze with Jesus offering a cup of water. And you know how much water we've given by drilling wells.

Well, we want to ask you right now, you make as great a gift as you can make because we're going to build a neurological center where we're going to give smiles. More than that, we're going to give brain surgery. We've got to have \$1.2 million to finish it, and one of our donors gave \$700,000. We need \$500,000 to complete that. So you talk about giving shoes and giving smiles and giving life, we can do it.

Father, would you please give people joy at the thought that I can do that! I can give *Shoes and Smiles*. I can give children life. I can give them a future. And we can share you; in Jesus' name.

Would you please go get your checkbook, go get your credit card, and use it like a check? Would you go online or would you call that number and make the best gift you can? Would you do that right now, please? It is easy to put it off. This is the last week. Don't put it off! If we're going to get it done, if we're going to meet the goal it needs to be now. Please, go get that bank card. If you write a check, call us and tell us what you're mailing;

put it in the mail. Thank you so much for doing it. And we will send you *God Talks* because he wants to talk to you. Please do it. Thank you so much.

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."

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

End of video

In the studio

JAMES: Betty, we're going to give little shoes like this. We gave them to lots of kids ourselves. It's a little bit hard for us to travel to those—I don't know how many of you know but she hurt her back to the point that she could have been paralyzed, and God has miraculously healed her. Well, it's hard for us to go into those areas like we did for 25 years or more. And boy, we marched into hell to give *Shoes and Smiles*.

By the way, God wants to talk to you. You never needed to hear him more clearly than right now. He wants to hear your heart. Will you let him share his and his wisdom and his direction? He will share it, won't he?

BETTY: He will.

JAMES: I love you.

BETTY: Willing and able.

JAMES: You don't know how pretty you are. Thank you, God.

Ed, we're going to talk more. We're going to spend a lot of time together being friends and talking to God and seeing God work miracles. So we're glad to send this to folks. Thank you so much for watching. Thanks for sharing life. His love.