

1/21/25

Week four: WFL

Randy Robison and Tammy Trent

Ann Voskamp #1

**Studio Discussion:**

**RANDY:** Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm Randy Robison. Tammy is with me. We're excited because Ann Voskamp is back with us. We're talking a little bit about her new journal. It is called *Gifts and Gratitudes*. It is somewhat based on her year of *One Thousand Gifts*, which I know so many of you love. So you're going to want to pick up this. But I'm thrilled to have Ann back. She is so much fun to talk to.

**TAMMY:** I love her and I've gotten to do one women's event, which I can't believe it's only been one. But I just fell crazy, crazy for you; for the way that you teach the word, for your love for Jesus. It was infectious.

So, I'm going to start up at the top for those who might not know you like I know you. Can you paint a canvas for us of all the different life-altering events that have shaped you and made you who you are today?

**ANN:** Well, first of all, you feel like a long-lost soul sister to me from the moment, I mean we just really deeply connected. Maybe when you've gone through valleys you connect with people who have gone through their valleys of suffering.

For me, as I opened up *One Thousand Gifts*, my first memory is I was four years old standing at the kitchen sink on a chair washing dishes beside my mama. Out our kitchen window, in a farmyard, a service truck came into the yard, and didn't see my 18-month-old baby sister toddling after a stray cat. Amy was struck and killed in front of Mama and I.

When you're four years old and you see something so horrific, it is deeply formational. So by the

time I was seven, I was diagnosed with ulcers. And by the time I was in my teens, I was cutting trying to release the pain. By the time I was in university, I was diagnosed with agoraphobia and full-blown panic attacks.

So, fear had formed me in so many ways. And then I -- I was saved as a teen but sometimes you understand the love of God only at a cerebral level, and it hasn't migrated down into the marrow of your bones so that you trust him; that he is a God of love and he is for you and he is good and he is holding you.

And then someone dared me to pick up a pen. She actually told me to write down 100 things I loved. I'm the kind of girl that is going to -- I just write out the things I thought I loved. What I was doing was I was counting all the ways that God loves me.

**TAMMY:** Did that happen right away?

**ANN:** No I was it was in the process of writing it down. I'm like, wait a second. I wrote down the things I love but actually, these are not things that I have conjured up on my own, these are gifts that I'm actually counting. I'm counting all the ways that God loves me.

Like scripture tells us, perfect love casts out all fear. Perfect love kicks fear to the curb. As I started to write down the things I was grateful for, counting all the ways God loves me, these one thousand gifts, I started to see that I was stepping over fear and starting to relax into the expansiveness of God's love that was all around me everywhere.

**TAMMY:** So you felt the shift even as you were writing?

**ANN:** Not only did I feel the shift dramatically, but my husband felt the shift in me. Because I moved from living very anxiously -- actually, I moved from living -- agoraphobia is being afraid of being in public spaces that you can't escape from. I didn't leave the house very much at all. When I started to write down all the things, it was very much like what we see the Israelites do in the Old Testament when they start to remember all the ways this God's loved them in the past, all

the ways God's been Jehovah-Jireh and provided for them. That actually grows and builds trust in this God who is going to give provisions and grace and gifts in the future.

So I actually started to pen down the things that I was grateful for, was growing my trust in God. I didn't have to be afraid. Fear is this sense that I'm going to end up somewhere beyond the love of God. When you start to count all the ways God loves you, you realize, God's love is infinite. I may not end up where I expected to be. The story might not look the way I want it to be, but Jehovah-Jireh, his presence is going to be with me regardless. His grace is going to carry me through. I can relax into his love. And really, the answer to so much of our anxiousness is the adoration of Christ.

**RANDY:** It's interesting that you said you were formed in fear out of the grief, the trauma. And yet, here you are, writing books and journals on gratitude.

**ANN:** Not my default, Randy.

**RANDY:** That's my question. Because so many people get stuck in that grief and disappointment a lot of times. They can't get to the gratitude. They will give it lip service but not live there. What do you say to someone who is still sort of stuck in that mode?

**ANN:** First of all, I'm so grateful that God is Emanuel, that God who is with us, and he is El Roi, the God who sees us. He gives us witness and witness in the midst of our grief. When we look at the book of Psalms, David is pouring his heart out to the Lord and he is honest about his lament. Scripture doesn't go ahead and show us David kind of putting on a mask or a smiley face. He howls to God, very vulnerably. And honestly, he was thinking, oh, can you say those things out loud to God?

So God wants us to come with our honest lament. When we are a people of gratitude, it is not toxic positivity. We come not with complaints. Complaints are here God, I'm so angry and you're not a good God, and all this. Lament comes and says I'm in grief, I'm in pain, yet you are a good God in spite of this. The valley I'm in is the valley of your cupped hands.

When we give thanks we're not saying everything is good in our lives, we are picking up a megaphone and declaring God's goodness in spite of what's happening in our lives. It really is. So someone in the midst of grief, God carries a bottle to catch every tear. Just as we write down our gifts to God, God also is keeping a count and record of all of our tears. So, we can be honest with God with all of our laments and all of our griefs. And grief isn't something we get through and then move to gratitude. We don't compartmentalize the two.

Actually, I have found in 2021, I lost my father in the same farmyard, the same way my sister was killed, crushed, and killed underneath a vehicle. And to say, oh, do I really believe that God is good now when it feels like lightning has struck a family twice, in such a traumatic way? But realizing that grief actually is a fuel for so much gratitude. Grief is a sign that you're missing someone that you love. Grief is a sign that I was so grateful for their presence.

So, grief actually fuels the gratitude. We're not trying to push the grief away but to sit with the grief and comfort by picking up a pen and saying, I'm going to sit with the grief and remember all of the things I was grateful for about this person or this particular situation. So grief doesn't ask us -- gratitude doesn't ask us to whitewash away the grief, but grief and gratitude get to sit together before the face of God and find healing in his presence.

**RANDY:** Was this a conscious recognition? The difference between saying oh, everything is good, versus no, everything is not good but God is good and his presence is there in the tragedy. Because that's a very significant difference.

**ANN:** It is, and I think when we walk alongside David in Psalms, and we live in the Psalms. Scriptures tell us that sometimes we don't even know how to pray, that our spirit just groans. We don't have words and we're howling. There have been not just days, but whole seasons that I have felt a heart howl to the Lord. To sit with the Psalms, and let those Psalms give you words for your prayers and you're pounding on God's chest. You see, David gives us words to go ahead. You can be honest about how long O Lord, how long? Have you abandoned me? Have you forsaken me? David gives us those words and yet Psalm after Psalm after Psalm he concludes

that the steadfast love of the Lord endures forever. And he comes back to the position of I can give thanks to the Lord. God is always good and I'm always loved. And in his presence is fullness of joy. Sometimes we want deliverance out of our circumstances. And what gratitude does is it delivers us into his presence, enter into his presence with thanksgiving. The ultimate deliverance comes from being delivered out of the depths of despair into his very presence, and there is healing.

So no, it is a process for all of us. I always think it is like layers of an onion. Okay, like I've got this. Okay, now we go to another layer. But I think when we live in His Word and steep in His Word, especially the Psalms, gives us language for grief and gratitude before the heart of God.

**RANDY:** Yeah. There is always that pain he expresses, and then the word "but," or "and yet" and then the promise.

**ANN:** I think in the heart of all people who are wholeheartedly living, those two chambers, it is grief and gratitude together. It is joy and pain together. That is the wholeness of life in a broken world. And we trust that because of the cross, Jesus is ushering in the kingdom of God that is making all the sad things come untrue. He is redeeming all things in his time and in his way and I can trust him.

**TAMMY:** I think one of the gifts that you give to me in this conversation is also realizing the gift of journaling and being able to write down what you're feeling, being honest about it, and bringing it before the Lord. And then also, maybe mirror that with okay, here is my suffering, here is what I'm dealing with today. But then find something to be grateful for even in it. In it, in the moment.

So how do we -- or is that a good way for us to find God in the moments of our stories?

**ANN:** I think it is John Piper, he has this little poem I think of so many times when I pick up a pen after I've read scripture in the morning. He says, "I do not know how the light is shed or to understand this lens, I only know that there are eyes in pencils and pens."

**TAMMY:** Ooh! I love that.

**ANN:** When you pick up a pen and I start to write, you start to see things differently which makes sense. We are made by the word. We're not just made up of atoms. We're made by the word, you are made for words. We're made to steep in His Word and then we pick up a pen and start to write down where our hearts intersect with God's heart.

So, when you pick up a pen and you open up a gratitude journal, and the reason I love this particular gratitude journal is that it is formatted such that --

**TAMMY:** Yeah! Tell us about this.

**ANN:** It is exciting. It is formatted so that this is the sixth of the month. You would write down the three things you're grateful for on January 6th. And then you're going to go through this entire journal and then circle back so that on February the 6th you are on the same page. So each day when you write down you're saying what am I grateful for on this day of the month, from the previous month? It is a built-in way of remembering the goodness of God.

When you pick up a gratitude journal and you're just writing things you're grateful for, it is not a built-in format to review and recount and recollect. I love it when I write down, oh these are things I'm grateful for. Oh! Where was I in September? Where was I back in August? God is writing a good and faithful story in my life. When I recount all of the ways God has been faithful in the past, I'm growing my trust and -- count on in the future. So something really beautiful and sacred and holy to say, oh! I'm grateful for this today.

Actually, I was thinking of [Branson] and I'm realizing, oh I'm grateful being here. [Branson] must, oh my goodness, the Lord has had me in the same place four months ago. Oh look, God is writing a redemptive story because sometimes in our lives I don't see the hand of God.

But that's why when you see all the way through scripture the Israelites, they go ahead and they

recount, they remember. Because in the midst of remembering the goodness of God, on this day of the month and all the previous months, when we are being literally re-membered, put back together in the midst of our brokenness. We see all -- God is picking up all the pieces and writing a redemptive story.

So there is something, very, very powerful to be a people of remembrance. Do we have a rhythm of life and a way of life that allows us to keep remembering the goodness of God, which remembers, and puts back our broken hearts?

**TAMMY:** That's important for me. I don't know, Randy, if you feel the same. But I think what I hear you saying and what resonates with me is if I happen to hit a bump in the road, and today is a hard day, and something has just punched me in the gut, I've lost my breath and I'm on my knees and I'm asking God, where are you today? And I can't find you. I can't find you. I don't know where you are and I can't hear you. I think people get into those places.

So I think what this would mean to my spirit is that I could say even, if I don't feel God right now, I'm numb. Let me go back. Let me go back --

**ANN:** To this day. I have a pen.

**TAMMY:** Yes, and see and read.

**ANN:** On this day the sixth day of December, the sixth day of November, the sixth day of October, look at how God came through.

**TAMMY:** God has come through and God is good. So he will come through today. But just stay and remain faithful, and trust God with the pieces of your heart because he holds them so close. And he's always been good, even if life has not been good.

**ANN:** And what I love too, on each day it has all these scripture verses. When you can't remember anything to thank God for, can I just copy out the verse? Can I copy out the promises

of God? His promises are yes and amen.

Or at the back, we have a little pocket that you can go ahead and stick your pictures in.

**TAMMY:** I did not see that!

**ANN:** Yes, so I carry the pictures around of things that I'm grateful for. So when I can't remember, I have all these pictures or ticket stubs or something. Look, God has been so good, and so faithful. He will continue to write a good story for my healing and his ultimate glory.

**TAMMY:** You look like, it seems like, you found the way to live life fully. Do you feel like you're there?

**ANN:** Oh, I think we're all on a journey all of the time. But I think -- the people of God are Jewish, that come from Judah. Judah is related to the Hebrew word for thanksgiving today, today and Judah come from the same root. The people of God, the Jewish people are meant to be a people of thanksgiving. When we know we are on the way, do we have a practice and a way of life that keeps us giving thanks? Because we ultimately don't give thanks for the things we've been given, we give thanks because we get to be in the presence of God. Enter into his courts with thanksgiving. And the message says, the password, enter with the password: Thanksgiving. Thanks.

So when we go ahead, a lot of things can be messy in our lives but there is always, always, always something to be grateful for, ultimately, the cross. If we can't think of anything in our lives circumstantially, turn our eyes back to Jesus and write down all of the riches we have in Christ. And when we live in a posture of thanksgiving, we get more of Jesus himself.

**RANDY:** What's interesting is the Israelites were commanded to build those Ebenezer stones. Right? That was a visual, physical reminder because we do forget. And God was like --

**ANN:** We are a people who are constantly forgetting.



**RANDY:** Take the time, build something so you'll remember. There is nothing sacred about the stones, it is about the remembering of who is behind them. To me it says that gratefulness doesn't necessarily just arrive, it has to be cultivated.

**ANN:** Yes! With an intentionality, with a rhythm. Because what we ultimately need is a gratitude muscle so that when the crises hit, we remember, oh! I know what to do in a stressful situation. I pick up a pen and start seeing, looking, and turning my eyes, it's eye practice again. Training what I'm going to look for. Looking for the gifts and the graces of God so that I know what to do in the midst of the crisis. I will continue to give thanks to the Lord and look for his goodness. Because ultimately, when we lead with gratitude, we have this attitude that everything comes after the goodness of God first.

**RANDY:** So good! So good. You may not be there right now. If you want to pick up the phone and call somebody who will pray with you and encourage you, do that right now. We have a telephone number. We have Christians, people who love God, that will pray with you, that will help you turn your eyes, help you start to cultivate gratitude.

Look, it is a journey. You're not just going to -- you don't just go, okay, I'm there. And you know what? We're here for each other. That's why we have this. We can also pick up the book, *Gifts and Gratuities*. And Tammy, we can get that in people's hands today.

**TAMMY:** Oh! I would love to be able to do that. I think, Randy, just as growing our faith, I think it is the practice of even journaling. My father has been a journaler since I was a little kid; thousands and thousands and thousands of books. He will tell you how many squirrels he hunted today. How many fish he caught, very specific. But I love that. It's been a great example to me. There's so much life that comes from writing down what's going on in your life, and you will find the absolute lover of your soul. I think you'll be able to work through that.

I would love, we would all love to get you this book. So if you're able to come alongside us and help us with this fantastic mission that we're doing, we're going to get it out to you right away.

But first, take a minute and watch this. We'll come out on the other side and I'll tell you how you can pick up that book.

**Transition Roll-in:**

>> When I experienced what we have seen this week, my heart was broken.

Open Captions: Nearly 90% of Liberia's population has limited access to safe drinking water.

>> The major cause of death is -- been the issue of water.

Open Captions: One Liberian mother, Hawa, discusses the effects the water crisis has on her health.

>> What is happening to me right now is I have pain in my stomach just from drinking this water. I have diarrhea and not able to move.

**JOHN:** Hawa, do you know personally of someone who has lost their life to this water?

>> Just recently, two children who were just here with us, died from diarrhea. Just because they drank from this water.

**JOHN:** I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry for the loss of your children because I know that in most cases it's like we're all losing our children here. The village children are all of our children.

So, you've been watching us as we're sitting here next to this water source that you can obviously see as just absolutely tainted and deadly. It is a tragic problem. But we know the solution.

With your help, we can make a difference. With your help with Water for LIFE, we can assure this village will not have to worry about waterborne illness. They can have fresh clean water, the

Water for LIFE.

**Studio Appeal:**

**TAMMY:** Just as John said, I feel the same every time I go into a village that is suffering, that is struggling, where there has been death because of their water source. I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

And then I realize before I leave that I have to be more than sorry, I have to do something, especially if it's been presented to me and now I know the problem. As a child of God, I feel like he shows me, he gives me pictures, and he gives me glimpses of needs all around me. This is one today. That is the first time I've seen that along with you. So I've seen it and I have to be more than sorry. I have to do something.

Here's the beauty of the hope that I feel. I've also been there when we have been able to do something. Just as you saw with me right there, we can do something today right now for more than one village. We can do many villages. Do you know there are more than 800 million people without access to clean drinking water? That seems like a humanitarian crisis.

**RANDY:** It is. It doesn't matter where we've gone over decades now, we've been out there in different countries, and we hear these stories, the same thing over and over. And the solution is so simple!

So many of you have joined us over the years in providing that well where we go in. We drill deep down to the clean water, the water that will give them life instead of taking their lives. We put in a well that is going to last typically, a lifetime, about seven years on average. And we've seen it. We've been there with the children when they dance, when they celebrate, and what a beautiful celebration it is!

You make that possible. But as you've just seen, and as Tammy has seen, as all of us have seen, there is still a crisis. There is still a need. But guess what? You are still the answer. It's very simple. Let me break it down for you. A gift of \$48 right now will provide ten people with clean

drinking water for a lifetime. That's based on the average cost of a complete well being about \$4800. When we look around the various nations, 350 wells are the goal for this year. By the way, I'd love to exceed that. But we're looking at 350 wells, an average \$4800 cost. Some of you can drill a whole well, by the way, if you can do that, I would highly encourage it. You will change a whole village for a lifetime. You won't be hearing the stories like you heard today out of those places. But maybe with a gift of \$144, you'll provide water for 30 people.

Whatever you can do, join us in giving life to others through Water for LIFE. Your gift today right now will make a difference. It will go a long way to saving lives. So please pick up the phone, go online, and make the best gift you can.

**2025 WFL Cause spot:**

*Announcer: Every day, thousands of lives are lost to waterborne disease, and nearly half of those are children under the age of five. Through Mission: Water for LIFE you can give mothers hope and children a future as we provide clean, life-giving water for thousands of children and their families before it's too late.*

*With your gift today, you can help drill and establish 350 water wells this year. Your gift of \$24 will help provide clean water for five children. A gift of \$48 will 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 Dr. Don Colbert's new book Spiritual Health Zone. Discover the key to living in divine health as you find a roadmap to adding joy, peace, and years to your life.*

*With your gift of \$100 or more, you may request the "He Restores My Soul" candle set. This decorative candle and match set will inspire you to remember the restoring presence of Jesus, the true light of the world.*

*Finally, please consider a gift of \$1200 to help provide water for 250 people for a gift of \$4800*

*to help sponsor a complete well, and request our new bronze sculpture, "Lion of Judah" inspired by Revelation 5:5.*

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

**Studio goodbye:**

**RANDY:** I hope you are able to go online or go to the phone. Make the best gift you can. You can make such a difference. Let me tell you, those people who receive the blessings, the gifts that you give, they are grateful. We could cultivate gratitude in so many people. You can cultivate it in your heart today when you request Ann Voskamp's book with your gift. What a blessing!

**TAMMY:** I love it. *Gifts and Gratitudes*: "A year of a thousand gifts." I can't imagine getting a thousand gifts. That seems fun!

You seem fun! I love you, sister. Thank you so much for being here. Will you come back?

**ANN:** Oh, my goodness! Yes! Yes! Yes!

**TAMMY:** Count me as a gift on your list?

**ANN:** Yes! A thousand times over.

**TAMMY:** Sounds good! Come back. We'll do another show with you. We'll see you next time on *Life Today*!