

1/28/25

Week five: WFL

Randy Robison and Tammy Trent

Brooke Martin

Studio Discussion:

RANDY: Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm Randy Robison. This is Tammy Trent. How are you doing today?

TAMMY: I'm good!

RANDY: I like that color. It is very nice. It is a little after the season but it is a good color.

TAMMY: Thanks!

RANDY: We're excited that you are here. If you happen to live in the Indianapolis area, you may have seen today's guest for many years on your local news as a news anchor. Brooke Martin is with us. She has a book out called *Controlled Burn*. She has been through a lot. We're here to hear her story today.

We're excited that you're with us. Welcome to the program, Brooke! Good to see you.

BROOKE: Thanks, Randy. Thanks, Tammy. It is such an honor to be with you.

RANDY: It is great to talk to you again. I got to talk to you online. Tammy, you just met her today.

TAMMY: I did. But I did go back and listen to that interview that you guys did together and I was all in. She is amazing, Randy. So I'm so glad that she's here today.

RANDY: So, where do we even start, right? Jump in a little bit of your story because I know it's been a tough time in a lot of ways but a beautiful time.

BROOKE: It all started in the fall of 2018. I was a news anchor in Indianapolis. Had a young family. Our son was two at the time. I had my dream job. We were living in a beautiful city that we loved and life just felt shiny and bright. We found out we were pregnant with our second child and so as local news tends to do, we made a cheesy video announcement that I was pregnant. We were inundated with well wishes. Viewers become like family.

So everything was great until I started to develop a really bad cold. I ran into my OB on my way to work one day and I was alone. The OB prescribed a Z-pak and said, "Before you leave, do you want to sneak in and see the baby?" It was there that they made a terrible discovery that our child had an anencephaly which is a condition where the baby continues to develop perfectly well except its skull does not fully close at the end of development. It means zero percent chance of survival.

Tears were streaming down my face. I was so confused. I didn't know what it meant really. Then I heard a whisper so clearly to my heart of Emmanuel, Emmanuel, Emmanuel. I'll be totally honest with you. I was brought up a Christian but in that moment of confusion, all I could connect it with was Christmas. And I wasn't sure, like why am I hearing this name? What does it mean for me? When I just received devastating news, what does it mean?

That began our journey. We decided to keep -- we found out it was a little girl, and we decided to keep her full term, as long as she would survive. And we started walking a road we never saw coming.

RANDY: Yeah, that's a tough one. I'm curious when you heard Emmanuel, were you praying? Or did that kind of come out of the blue? Kind of where were you spiritually?

BROOKE: Nowhere. I was literally in a cloud of chaos and confusion mentally. So I was not praying. I was in desperation mode. It speaks that God will meet you where you are. He will cut

in through the chaos, through the confusion, and deliver a message. I thought He is delivering a message so clearly, probably to the world who is now watching because our story went viral. People were really confused. Why are you carrying? How are you doing this? You're anchoring the news every night as you're growing.

What I realized was that he was personally delivering a message to my husband and I that the world got to witness and watch but he is a personal God and he was speaking to us. That "God with us" means everything will change when you truly understand the revelation of what that means.

TAMMY: Was that what the message was for you?

BROOKE: Yeah. I think the message unfolded piece by piece. I grew in it. I am not going to pretend that I was like got it! Okay, this is making this easy now. It was a learning. It was a growing, myself. I say I may have delivered Emma Noelle, we named her after her namesake, but Emmanuel delivered me through her because the journey, the process, and the walking through the fire left us completely transformed.

RANDY: Given that outlook, the probability they're saying was zero. What was the doctor's recommendation at that moment?

BROOKE: Well, we were at a Catholic hospital so you would think you would know what the recommendation would be, and it wasn't. We were taken immediately, my husband rushed to the hospital. We were taken to the maternal-fetal department. My first question was, "What happens next?" Because I assumed this meant she would die in utero at any point. I had never walked through that procedure. And the first thing the doctor said was, "We don't do it here but you can go to Planned Parenthood."

I was so confused. I thought, Planned Parenthood for a D&C? Like why? And then my husband's voice shot through the silence and he said, "We're keeping the baby." I looked at him and then it all started clearing. I was like, oh, they're suggesting abortion. It wasn't until we got

home that I realized why over 85% of anencephaly pregnancies are terminated. So I understand but it didn't lessen the pain and it didn't lessen the reality of what others are recommended to do, sometimes that day, right? In the confusion -- and it broke my heart.

TAMMY: How did you prepare, Brooke? When I think about how you stewarded this whole journey knowing that Emma Noelle had a zero percent chance of survival, how did you prepare your heart to say hello but then say goodbye in just 21 minutes?

BROOKE: It was a six-month period of grieving, honestly. But also getting to know her, understanding that she could hear me. It was a scheduled C-section and so we walked in on the prayers of thousands. The surgery room was filled with peace. She was born alive, which is not always the case. So the nurse handed her to my husband and I watched him with furrowed brows look at his daughter. The nurse remarked that when I answered the anesthesiologist she turned her head to me recognizing her mama's voice.

This is life. This is relationship. And he handed her to me. I got to say those things that I'd been waiting so long to tell her. That I was so proud of her. And I asked her if she knew how much of an impact she was making. And then I told her she could go. And I handed her back to my husband and that's where she passed 21 minutes later.

It was sacred. It was so special. And then thanks to a device called a "cuddle cot," which is like a cooling bassinet, she was able to be with me in the hospital room for the two days of recovery afterward. So it was a time of bonding and closure.

But really, the day that I had dreaded the most was the day of discharge. It wasn't even her death. It was the day that I couldn't understand how does a mother physically walk out of a hospital room and leave her child behind?

And that morning, I woke up with tears already streaming down my face and I cried out to God and I said, "I can't! I can't do this part." And I meant it with everything in me. I cannot do this. It was in that instantaneous moment that I felt a physical surge of strength that started in my feet

and it rushed through my body. I felt this weight. I was lying on a hospital bed and it fell on top of me; like weighty peace from heaven. And in that moment, Emmanuel became real. I realized this isn't just another name for God. This isn't just some platitude that we use as Christians. God is in fact with us, and the fact of that should change everything.

So we were able to rock her that morning and hand her to a nurse who continued to rock her as we left. And we got in the car and we looked at each other and we smiled. It wasn't because the grief was gone, nothing like that, it was because we just realized everything we said we believed our lives as Christians was true. Nothing can defeat us because of Jesus Christ. Death couldn't hold him down and it can't hold us down either. It made us insatiable for the things of God. That power that I experienced in the hospital room, all I wanted was more of it. I realized I had been taking a penny of what he was offering me my whole life when the riches of heaven were at my disposal. And Emmanuel made me realize that we're transformed forever.

RANDY: You used the word *sacred*. It is hard -- really hard for us to understand, sometimes, the brevity of life. Scriptures say it is a vapor and 21 minutes feels like a vapor. How has your view of life and death and eternity expanded?

BROOKE: It has expanded by understanding how much we don't know. It has expanded in understanding that his ways truly are greater than ours. His thoughts are so above what we can imagine.

So I have grown to understand that life is more important than we can possibly fathom and that death, too, is ultimately his. Jesus says, "I have authority." When he is talking to Martha after Lazarus dies, he looks at her and she is so concerned about him getting raised. He looks at her and says, "I have authority over death." This means stop thinking that outcomes are what is important. It is me. I am what is important and you need to know me in this. Yes, her brother was raised from the dead but Emma did not. But the message is the same, I am what's important here in this equation. Because ultimately, we will be reunited with our loved ones who are in heaven but for now, this is our chance this side of heaven to know Jesus in his suffering. And to know him, which he says, this is eternal life. It is not heaven, he says this is eternal life, that they

know the one and true God. That's what we're here for.

TAMMY: So what do you say to somebody who is struggling in their suffering to find God? To find hope? Many people feel like part of their suffering has been punishment. God doesn't care. He doesn't understand. It's hard for them, we will often choose to stay in it; it can become our identity. What do you say to the person that everything that you said, I know that that's to be true, life, and I can get through this, and I can get closer to Jesus? But many people struggle with suffering and the very thought of what that means and how that can bring us closer to Jesus.

What would you say to somebody who is struggling to understand that and just doesn't want to even let go of it?

BROOKE: First of all, I understand. I think that was part of the reason that I wrote this book is we heard from countless people who were drowning in loss and despair and hopelessness. It burdened my heart because here we had experienced transformation, a forged faith. And yet, I knew many others were wrestling and couldn't get out. So it is the whole message of this book.

But what I would say to them is that we have a choice to go after proof of God's goodness, of his purposes, of who he really is, his character, or we have a choice to go after his presence. But it means what are we going after? Because ultimately, it is our choice. And if we go after his presence, he has a perfect track record of redeeming every ounce of our pain. He will meet us there. But ultimately, it really is our choice.

RANDY: A forged faith, as you said, only comes through fire. That fire, oftentimes, destroys people. The title *Controlled Burn* of the book, suggests a fire but not destruction. Why did you choose that? What are you communicating there?

BROOKE: I didn't choose it, in all honesty. I feel like it was given to me as I was driving down the road one day. I felt like I was being called out of the news which was very scary because I built my life building a career in TV news. I asked God what was next. I saw a picture of a burned-out forest in the back of my mind, and with it came the words *controlled burn*. I got

really quiet because I knew he was speaking but I had no idea what that meant.

Piece by piece he started downloading this illustration of life's fires taking one of two divergent paths. Our pain, as you said, Randy, can grow out of control. It can turn into wildfires that can destroy for generations. Think about the trauma that turns into an addiction that turns into the death of a loved one or the affair that turns into the divorce that turns into a fractured family. These are life's wildfires. We've all experienced them or at least witnessed them.

But there is a better way and there are controlled burns. If you're familiar with that, the actual purpose of controlled burns is to rid a landscape of multiple things and -- species but to renew the ecosystems there. I felt like God said, if your life's fires are bordered intentionally with my promises and my provision and my power, suffering can burn away what is holding us back from his presence, things that have grown, maybe even unknowingly in our life's forests. It can burn it away and leave behind nutrient-rich soil that can grow things in us that could have never grown without the fire.

I went home to my husband and I said, "Okay, sit down. I had this vision and I feel like I'm supposed to leave my job." He looked at me and said, "Do it! Immediately." Because it was like we had been through the fire. We had been forged. Things were growing in us now, trust; like supernatural things that made us make really crazy decisions.

So I did and I just realized I want to get this illustration into people's hands to help them walk through life's fires because what is on the other side is so remarkable. But so often, we are trying to jump out of the fire with our decisions, which we're trying to throw our own buckets of water on it. We're not being forged by taking Jesus' hand in it. If we do, oh my goodness, the beauty, the redemption, the hope that is ours for the taking is there for all of us.

RANDY: It's beautiful. Listen. I don't know where you're at today but if you feel like you've had that raging wildfire and you want someone to help you take Jesus' hand right now, pick up the phone, and call that number. There is someone at the other end of that line who will just pray with you.

Let it be Christ's presence in your situation so that you can forge a deeper faith and he can grow things that you never imagined. I know you can't see it right now if you're in the middle of it, I understand, and that's okay. He will be with you. His presence, Emmanuel, what a beautiful promise.

So if you want to pray with somebody, again, just pick up the phone right now and make that call. Tammy, ah, I know the book will encourage people because her testimony is encouraging people because of what God has done in her life.

TAMMY: It's really -- we didn't have a lot of time to dive into so much of it but she wasn't always like on fire for Jesus. She's had to go through that burn, that process, the crossroads in her life to finally surrender and say, we're here. We're coming along with you, Jesus. Cole, and I, the whole family, we are here, we're showing up. We're all in.

Randy, she's got some chapters in this book on sin and repentance that hits hard but so, so good. There is so much. So listen. If you want a copy of Brooke Martin's new book *Controlled Burn*, just request that and we will get that out to you today.

Just as Randy said, if you find yourself at a crossroads, at one today, you're suffering and you're asking where are you, God, in my suffering? You don't have to face it alone, you don't have to do it alone, just as Randy said, call that number, let us pray with you. Let us stand with you. Let us kneel with you even if we're without words. We know the one who will carry us both in these times.

He is doing it for so many around the world right now, so many in need that need to be carried, that need hope, that are suffering. Take a minute and watch this. When we come out on the other side I want to tell you how you can be a part of helping to bring hope to these precious people.

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. 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's 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 and 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 for typically, a lifetime, about 70 years on average.

We've seen it. We've been there with the children when they danced, when they celebrated, 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 is 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 of about \$4800. When we look around the various nations, the 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 could drill a whole well, by the way. If you can do that, I would highly encourage that. 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: You can be such a blessing today. I hope you're picking up the phone or going online

and making that call. Give the best gift you can. When you request *Controlled Burn* by Brooke Martin, we would love to send it to you because you will get hope.

What would you say to someone who maybe is in the middle of that fire and they're not sure where it's going to go?

BROOKE: I want to say that God is with you. There is a species of flower called a fire follower, and its seeds are locked in impenetrable shells. They don't open from normal sunlight or rainfall. The only thing that cracks open these shells is the searing heat shock of fire. I want to tell you that inside each of you are seeds of revelation and truth and it takes sometimes the searing heat shock of suffering to crack open these seeds of revelation, of truth, of God's power. You have more capacity for the things of God than you even know. God wants to grow you in and through your suffering. He will not waste a hurt.

TAMMY: Amen! Brooke, mighty woman of God, unshakeable faith, thank you for being here. Thank you for sharing your life's journey with us. It inspires me and I hope that it inspired you today too as you lean into the one who knows you more than anybody and who will carry you through it all. Thanks for watching and we'll see you next time on *Life Today!*