

3/25/25

Week 13: Rescue Life

James And Betty Robison

Mark Rutland

Studio discussion:

JAMES: We welcome you. Betty I'm already laughing. Excuse me, James Robinson, Betty, welcome you to *Life Today*. Mark Rutland's with us. I remember the first time I heard him 35 years ago. I didn't know that much about him at all really. I hadn't not even heard of him. I did hear that he had been part of the Church of God, part of a Methodist Church, that he was pastoring a big church in Florida and then ends up at Oral Roberts University as the president. We were friends here, but I had no idea where this guy was going. Now, here he is, Betty and I are 81, he's in his late 70s; he may want to be specific about it. But he's just written another book, which he's written a bunch of great books. It says *Keep On Keeping On*. Then you've got to read the sweatshirts, "How to Die Young" and "As Old as Possible."

BETTY: I love that!

JAMES: Okay! Mark, welcome to *Life Today*.

MARK: It's great to be back with you guys.

JAMES: You've been here a lot. And you've been in a lot of our conferences. You've been with us in a lot of different types of meetings.

MARK: And all over the world.

BETTY: That's right!

MARK: Asia and China.

JAMES: You exposed us to something we had been exposed to, but taking care of girls that have been trafficked. And literally, going into the areas where they were kidnapped, so to speak, or bought for a television or \$100, and promised to take them to get a good job; where they ended up, you showed me. But you headed them off. You rented property in Thailand and other places. I took you to China and you saw them dedicate a great place of outreach to orphans that we built, and they treated me like I was in great favor with them, didn't they?

MARK: They sure did. It was exciting.

JAMES: Only God could do it.

MARK: Only God could do it.

JAMES: Both of us were doing it. It ended up that you blessed us and inspired us, and then we ended up building the great Destiny House there, the beautiful home. Now then we're about to try to get what amounts to a hotel because you can't get rental property to take care of all these trafficked kids.

Anyway, we started doing things together. You hosted *Life Today* some with us together and even considered you maybe doing that before you ended up at Oral Roberts University. So I'd say we're close. I believe the two of us, and our wives, and everybody around us, we believe we were left here for a purpose not to get us out of here. He's coming to get us, all right, but he left us here on a divine assignment. Do you agree with that?

MARK: Yeah. Jesus said, "Occupy until I come." We're not supposed to just sit around. We have heaven for later. We'll enjoy heaven. It'll be eternal. It'll be blessed. It'll be wonderful. There'll be no preaching in heaven; that'll be a relief to a lot of the people that listen to you and me. Thank God! There'll be no sermons. There'll be none of that. That's now. That's here. So I'm going to work until I can't work, and when I can't work, I'm going to pray till I can't pray, and then I'm going to be in heaven.

JAMES: You would agree with me that since we were left here to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom, his kingdom here on his earth, you would agree that we can be overcomers in this kingdom. We don't have to be overcome. We can be more than conquerors. We should live that way.

MARK: That's declared. We are more than conquerors. So, therefore, we simply have to live as that which God has already told us we are. We are more than conquerors. Do you remember the "Thrilla in Manila?" You're old enough to remember the fight when Ali and who was it, Frazier? They got finished, and they took them out to the center and those men looked like they had been in a war! They lifted Muhammad Ali's hand up, you know, and he's like this. I said, that's a winner? That's a winner? We are more than conquerors. We're more than conquerors! This is not to beat us up. We're more than conquerors.

JAMES: Okay. What in the world led you down this path? Because you've gone on a lot of unusual, and important, and great paths. But this is just interesting.

MARK: Well, this is my 20th book, and the 19 previous ones have all been very serious and good books, great books, won New York Times' bestseller. It's all been great. But now, here I am in my late 70s, as you said, and I just made my mind up. I don't want to be that old guy that spends my senior years chasing kids out of my yard, "Get away from my apple trees!" I just don't want to be that guy. Then it dawned on me, I don't want any Christian to be that guy, that person. So, Travis said, "Dad, I've never known..." Our son said, "I've never known anybody with as many funny church stories as you have." I took those stories and weaved them together into a book about aging with joy. The Lord is clear. The joy of the Lord is our strength. So, anything that sucks down on my joy takes away from my strength in God. So, if I allow aging and the aches and pains -- look, things change. I'm not making light of that. A bunch of stuff hurts that didn't used to hurt. Things don't work that used to work. So, that's all part of it. But if it makes you angry, then it wins.

So what I'm saying in this book is keep on giving, keep on rejoicing, keep on forgiving, keep on releasing. Just different ways to *Keep On Keeping On*, to have fun. I thought back over my life, and my ministry began with one of the funniest things that's ever happened in anybody's life, I promise you, James, if you live to be a thousand. My very first funeral -- my first funeral, I was 22; a 22-year-old boy should not be given a driver's license, let alone a church. I had this guy in my church who was an alcoholic and he couldn't get over it. When he died, his wife who was in the Primitive Baptist church wanted me to take part in his funeral.

So, I went up there to this little Primitive Baptist church in the middle of the Appalachian Mountains, and the old preacher was so angry I was there. He just treated me so mean. I was 22, it was my first funeral. He basically denounced me from the pulpit. It was humiliating. We went out to the little cemetery right outside. The pallbearers are carrying the casket the old-timey way and set my friend up on the sling there. I asked the old preacher, "Do you want me to have any part in the graveside?" And he said, "No!" He said, "You've done enough!" It was fine. I didn't -- but he was sure I was going to try to insinuate myself and so he was going to block me. He stepped out like that to keep me from getting in there. And he stepped out on the felt and shot down in the end of that grave. The casket was a little bit loose on the sling, and it gave way. He shot down and it pinned him just like a bug on an insect collection, and they couldn't get him out. So they finally had to call the gravediggers out of their truck. They were in their truck having a smoke, and had to crank, and pull him up. He was wet with Georgia clay. His little wife is dabbing at him with his hankie. You know what I mean? Globbs of wet clay dripping off of him. And all the sudden, that graveyard burst out laughing. Everybody was laughing. Listen, you make a Baptist laugh --. They were laughing. He went off to his car and drove off angry.

I heard two things in that cemetery that changed my life. The first one is, when you do a funeral stand back from the grave. The second thing is, if you fall in, laugh first! Everybody's going to laugh, laugh first. And I thought any ministry that begins that way, there's going to be some funny stuff, and I'm going to be laughing right to the end -- right to the end!

JAMES: Tell me how you think you're going to -- that was great! You can tell so many stories, and I know you've got just bunches of them in here. I've heard bunches of them, I'm sure. But what do you want to happen to the people who get the book? I mean, it's not just going to be a book that we got a few laughs. I think you're beyond just the surface reality of it's a joy to laugh. It's a peacemaker. It lightens the load. It is a ministry in itself. It's good medicine. What do you pray?

MARK: One of your major themes is that we're supposed to be about this until the return of the Lord or until we go to heaven. What I say is you, whoever you are, you have people whose lives are impacted by your life right to the end. Grandchildren that you may have to leap over a generation to reach some, young people, people in stores that you can have an impact on their lives in your senior years. This is a strange thing people don't believe, but it's true. You can have impact on some people's lives in your senior years that you cannot when you're young. You have a built-in kind of trust. If you will handle it with grace and with joy, you can touch them. Our son pastors a great church in Georgia. So, when I'm on the road, I'm not there. But when I'm home, which is rare enough, I hang around the lobby of the church and joke around with people and talk, and I love to joke with the teenagers. When the youth pastor moved on, the kids asked Travis to make me the youth pastor at 77! Well, I didn't take the job; one overnight would kill me.

But it was one of the great honors of my life. That's what I'm saying. You can touch people. We don't have to be that mean person in the grocery store. You can touch people whose lives are -- everybody's looking for a dad or a granddad or grandma, and if we can do it with joy and grace and wisdom. You know things. You know things right now that you did not even know ten years ago. Don't you! You can pour that into people's lives if you can get the buy-in to get there. If you go in angry and smug –

Look, one of the problems we face in our senior years is fear. The world around us is changing, and it's changing so fast. Changes like that make one afraid, you know? I'll give you an example, tattoos. I'm not preaching against tattoos, okay? Everything's cool. But when I was a kid, the only people that had tattoos were pirates. You know? Now you go to a wedding and the

bride comes down the aisle and she's got a death's head tattooed between her shoulder blades. You just say, is she a pirate? Now, I realize I can let that all make me afraid or I can laugh.

Do you ever watch TV and they're advertising something and you realize you don't know what it is?

BETTY: A lot!

JAMES: Almost all the ads. I go, why did they do that?

BETTY: What did it have to do with the product?

JAMES: They sell you a car, they teach you how to wreck it, how to kill people in it. How to do everything wrong with your car!

MARK: You check out at the checkout at the grocery store line and all the magazines are there, and you realize you don't know anybody on any of these magazines. You don't know why they're famous or what their tragedy has to do with anything. It suddenly dawns on you, OMG! Clark Gable's dead! Life has moved on. Well, that can make you angry and afraid.

What I'm saying is, embrace those changes with joy unspeakable and full of glory. If you can say to that kid, you know, go to a restaurant and the waitress has her tongue pierced, okay, this is bad. The tongue -- no, no, that is disgusting! I can't even talk to her because [Mumbling] "Can I help you?" But she's frightened, too. That's what I learned. She's frightened. And if I can make her feel better about herself and about me, I may be able to let God get a word in edgewise. I'm enjoying these last years of my life talking to waitresses with pierced tongues and brides with tattoos. I'm okay with life right now.

BETTY: Well, I'm excited about this book. I think it's just great because so many people our age, they think, oh, I'm just going to sit down, I'm tired. I'm just going to sit here in my chair until God takes me home. Well, that's no fun!

MARK: It is no fun. There's no use.

BETTY: There's no use. I want to live till Jesus comes; he takes me or he comes back. I want to be full servant to him. That's what James and are trying to inspire people to do. God still has something for us to do.

MARK: Of course! And you're proving it with your own lives and your ministry. It's self-defensive, too. Look, I always tell senior citizens, when that nurse is coming towards you with a hypodermic in her hand, don't be mean to her. That's a moment for *nice*. It's a strange world. And I listened the other day to the flight attendant on the plane. I'm on planes, just like you are, all the time. I listened to her little patter, no social media and all those things, and I realized there was nothing that she said that would have been intelligible to an American 30 years ago. There was not one word that she said. Look, when I was a kid, social media meant talking at a drive-in movie. There was no cell phones. She says, "Put your devices into flight mode." Okay. What does that even mean? But it does mean things to people now. I have to know what it means. I have a podcast. What's a podcast? I thought that meant throwing cotton balls at people. But now I have a podcast. Here we are. We do what we do. I'm with Betty, I'm not going to sit back and sit down and let old age happen to me. I'm going to be going at this.

I hope that God will give me the grace to tell somebody a joke on my deathbed.

BETTY: It's just like with the cell phones and the texting, my kids and grandkids can text almost before I send mine. Answer me. It's like I just texted that and I've already got an answer back. And here I am trying to just -- it may take me ten minutes to get the answer back to them.

MARK: Well, pick up the phone and call.

BETTY: I'd rather them call me. But that's okay. It's okay.

JAMES: I want to tell you something. We come on the air, you know that we're going to do our best to get God's arms around somebody that thought nobody ever even knew they were alive, or care if they were alive or dead. We do help the least of these. We, meaning you and us together. As a matter of fact, Mark went with us to the mission fields. We do so much in harmony with one another because we not only have joy in our heart but we have the compassion of the Lord for people who are the least of these. But, I'm convinced that Mark is going to continue getting people to live on the bright side while looking to the light and letting that light, his light shine wherever they are.

Mark, I want to get everybody here to ask for this book. We're going to ask you to help us do what Mark and I did together in the early years of our relationship, and that was rescue girls from trafficking. Also, rescue children that were about to be trafficked or were about to be sold foolishly to a trafficker. We did this. We did it in Thailand. We did it up in the mountains, all around the area near where we had the war.

MARK: We're still doing it!

JAMES: We're still doing it. We went to China and you saw what we were doing there. We got the adoption business turned over to where it would be legal and not plundering everybody. These were things you and I did together. But one of the things you've always done is you've helped us to have our day brightened by the reality of the presence of God and the joy of the Lord that he puts in us.

Do you believe that if people would read the book they would actually find inspiration in doing what you have implied in this title?

MARK: Yes, one of the whole chapters is, each chapter is "Keep on..." Keep on with something. "Keep on Forgiving." But one is "Keep on Giving." A whole chapter on giving. As we get older, we tend to let everything occlude. Certainly, some revenue streams can go down and I understand all that. But the fear that sets in in our senior years can cause us to quit giving. We quit tithing to our churches. We quit giving to missions. We quit supporting. There are

people right now, seniors in America, that are holding a vast fortune in America. Huge! I say this is the time in our lives when we should be *more generous*. Don't let fear cause you to grip what you have. You spend your whole life giving. In your senior years, give generously, give graciously, and give with faith. God will take care of us. Keep on giving.

JAMES: Mark, I want to ask our viewers to just look in on our mission director who has been a pastor, a wonderful father, wonderful man; been with us for 25 or 30 years. But just listen. He's there in the midst of the suffering of those who are being trafficked. And you, our viewers, have given so many, literally millions now an opportunity to live. I want you to watch and I want you to help put God's arms around the trafficked in the area that he's referring to.

Transition roll-in:

JOHN: You look behind me and it sounds like a big party but all I see is brokenness and pain. It's sorrow, regret, and shame. I can tell you right now there's a thousand girls right behind me who did not wake up at seven years old and think I want to do this for the rest of my life. As a dad, I am just broken.

Beyond all the lights and everything you see, and as Americans, you think people choose this. I know no little girl woke up thinking they wanted to be a go-go dancer or a prostitute, or a massage bar worker. I'm a dad! Don't tell me that. I know better. Nobody chooses this life. It's chosen because there seems to be no other hope.

If I can wrap them all up in my arms, and say there's a better way. There is a hope. This is what I know, Jesus is a better way. It is not this. Here's some amazing mission partners that are giving their lives; sacrificed everything to help young girls, young boys find a better way.

I want to do, and I'm asking you to do everything you can to keep them here so that young people can have a better life. Thank you for helping us. God bless you. We love you. We need you. We need you more now than probably ever before. We need your help.

Studio appeal:

JAMES: In that area of Southeast Asia, we've been normally having to rent property. Now, there's no rent properties. You saw the beautiful Destiny House that we built. A beautiful outreach. You've seen many of the places we've built. We've got basically, a big building like a hotel we can renovate and move 50 girls into it; I have an idea it can go past that. But we're going to have to have over \$1 million. Would you give us a \$1.25 million we need to give precious girls a chance in life? In Jesus name. There's not a better place for somebody to invest money in an outreach that's any more effective and does any more to set people free from literally living in hell than doing the kind of outreaches we're doing.

MARK: Absolutely! There are people that have the resources. They ask themselves all the wrong questions, how will I be able to handle this? How can I hold on to this? How can I keep this? And now is not the time to grip it. Now's the time to invest it in Kingdom work just like this.

JAMES: Absolutely. We want to ask you right now to go get your bank card and use it like a check. Please go get it. I know you want to do this. It takes \$128 average to reach, rescue, and begin to restore someone in this area. But we're going to need \$1.25 million, and we've got a building right now that's going to be perfect. It's a miracle and it's going to be a miracle life-changer for so many.

Would you please get that bank card? Would you dial the number that you see there and make the gift? Use that bank card like a check. If you write a check, make it to LIFE but call us and tell us you're mailing it. Please do it. You can go online and make the gift.

We'll gladly send you Mark Rutland's book. I think everything he's written is a blessing. Dr. David Jeremiah is one of the greatest blessings on the planet. You know he's over here. He is. This is daily devotionals. As a matter of fact, its got a place where you can tap, or I forget what they call that app that you do.

BETTY: One of those things we were talking about.

JAMES: One of those things we were talking about that older people don't understand. But you can actually listen to the message. It's a devotional. You'll love this.

And then we want to give you “The Lion of Judah” with the cross. It is awesome. Please help us give life and freedom to these precious ones that have been trafficked for so long. Thank you so much for doing it. Get that card, make that call, go online and give life. Thank you!

Rescue Life Cause Spot:

ANNOUNCER: *Innocent children longing to be loved and cared for are being abducted and sold into the evil industry of human trafficking. Through Mission: Rescue Life, your gift today of only \$128 will help reach, rescue, or restore a child and change their destiny forever. Gifts of \$64 or \$32 will be combined with support from others to help rescue one more child from the shame and pain of sexual slavery. Currently, one of our Rescue Centers in Southeast Asia is at maximum capacity. With the need never greater, we need to secure and renovate a new Rescue home that will offer refuge and restoration for up to 50 trafficking survivors. Please consider an additional gift as we urgently need \$1.25 million above our normal budget to secure and renovate this place of hope. With a gift of any amount, we'll send you Sleep on This by Dr. David Jeremiah. This nightly devotional will help you let go of your anxieties and rest in peace as you reflect on inspiring promises from God's word.*

With a gift of \$128 or more, you'll receive the elegant mug set, “A Beautiful Morning.” Both generously sized mugs are inscribed with encouraging scriptures to begin your new day. Finally, please consider a gift of \$1280 which will help save 10 children. And you may request our inspiring bronze sculpture, “Lion of Judah.”

Please call, write, or make your gift online.

DR. JEREMIAH: Hello! This is David Jeremiah and I'm excited to share a new resource with you. It's called, *Sleep on This*, and evening devotion I wrote to help you reflect on God's word just before you rest for the night. I hope you'll request a copy of *Sleep on This* today. Be assured that you will be helping advance the kingdom of God. God bless you!

Studio good-bye:

JAMES: I'm hoping you'll listen to Mark again this week, and I hope you'll get the book.

Thank you for helping us give life. Don't stop. Please keep sharing his life. Thank you so very much. Mark, we're going to talk more about keeping on, how to die young as old as possible. But we're also going to be challenging the church in a way, I think, you all will be inspired. So don't miss the next program.

Thank you, Betty, 62 years with her, married! Thank you Jesus. He's a great God, isn't he? We love you.