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Week 15: RL, Last week

James & Betty Robison

Todd Mullins

Studio discussion:

JAMES: I am so excited to be talking to you right now. Just a few minutes ago, Betty and I stood with a missionary that we have supported for 31 years. Now, here's the thing I want you to know. We couldn't show you the missionary because it could cost him his life. But in those 31 years, with your help and your support, we have led 100 million people to Christ who made it public, who signed up, who took Bible study. A hundred million! So, you are putting God's arms around a lot of people.

We're going to be talking to a pastor today that is one of the most effective preachers in the country. And his dad, as far as I'm concerned, is one of the greatest pastors and preachers that has ever lived. I'm sure his son would say the same thing. But it was Christ Fellowship in West Palm Beach, Florida that I'm talking about. I think they have 17 campuses just all around the Florida area. It could be outside of that too. But Tom Mullins is just one great man. Tom, Betty, and I love you so much. We have Todd here, his son, who has written a book. He's pastoring the church now, and has been for about 15 years, *Don't Let Doubt Take You Out*.

BETTY: I like that!

JAMES: That's catchy. Todd, we're just glad to see you.

TODD: So honored to be here today. Truly, we love you. Our family loves you. Our church loves you. And as I told you, it's a little surreal for me to be here today because of my respect and admiration of you and your ministry, and watching you all these years, what God's doing through you. Thank you for having me.

JAMES: Well, we love you and your dad. We know your dad very, very well. Now, he does believe you're doing a whole lot better job than he ever did.

TODD: I learned it all from him.

JAMES: It's just amazing. Y'all do love each other so much because you love the Father. What inspired you to write this? Where did this doubt thing jump so big?

TODD: It came out of my own struggle with doubt, my own questions, and my own anxieties about God. Why is this happening in my life? Or can I do what you're asking me to do? As I processed it, I realized that doubt is something everybody has to deal with. Even the most confident people that we know have had to struggle with questions of doubt and uncertainty and even people with great faith that we look up to. The reason they probably have that great faith is because they struggled through their doubts and they asked the right questions.

What I've learned is that if you learn how to deal with your doubt, it won't take you out. It can actually lead to a deeper faith. On my journey, I found that there were three ways that most people dealt with when it comes to doubt, and this has happened in my life. We doubt ourselves. We don't think that we can. We sit here and feel all the insecurities, the voices, things that have been said to us over the years. So we don't step out into the life God has for us, and we hold back. Then we doubt God when he doesn't answer our prayers the way we prayed he would, or think that he should. We question his goodness. Man, are my prayers even working? And then doubt can also seep into our relationships with people because when someone lets us down, we question their motives, question their intentions, and it causes us to pull back. In all of those ways, it's the enemy's ploy to try to take us out so that we don't step out, we don't trust God, we don't have the relationships we're created for.

So, in the book, I really try to share my journey with that, my own struggle with that, the lessons I learned, the mistakes I made, and how it led to deeper faith.

BETTY: Don't you think that doubt can also come from unanswered questions we've had, an unanswered prayer we call it that causes us to doubt God sometimes?

TODD: Absolutely!

BETTY: Because a lot of questions aren't answered now.

TODD: That's right. And I think that's why it's called faith because we're not going to get all the answers to the questions we have. We're not going to fully understand it but we can go to God with those questions. The problem I've seen is when people push away from God in their pain. When they have unanswered questions and things aren't working out the way they think and they push away from God, well, they're never going to find what they need. But when we allow that pain to push us towards God and we reach up for God in those times of questions, he's always faithful to show us himself.

JAMES: And so many times too that we don't see things that we expect the absolute to see, even in answered prayer. We lost a 40-year-old daughter, and she had three children. She believed with all her heart she was going to be healed. She was the strongest Christian that we ever knew, even though it was our daughter. And all the family, her own family said that. Everybody that knew her said that. We just couldn't figure it out. We couldn't get it; couldn't get a proper answer.

Don't you think that those are the kinds of things that a lot of people are literally taken down and out because they don't see it? How do you deal with that to help people with that challenge?

TODD: I think that's one of the number one reasons that people that have faith begin to lose their faith is when doubt seems to take us out, when we can't get the answers, when life doesn't turn out the way we thought it would, or the way we prayed that God would come through for us. In those moments, doubt screams the loudest to take us out and make us push away from God. That is a very normal response of life when that happens to us.

For me, it was our son. Jefferson was diagnosed on the autism spectrum. After seven years of infertility and seven years of trying to have a family, finally had a baby boy, and then this happened. The journey that took us on, where I began to question everything that I believed. I remember when we're sitting there going, God, why are you letting this happen to me? Why is this happening to our son? How are we going to deal with this problem? I remember in the moment my faith would pop up and I'd say, well, that's not going to describe him. It may prescribe a journey we have to go on with him, and therapy will have to do, but it's not going to describe my boy, because only God can do that.

We saw Jefferson, and he started doing well, and things got better. He didn't have any language or words, and he started getting words, and four words became eight words and then 80 words. And then he didn't stop talking in the back seat of the car. One time I got frustrated. I'm thinking, man, he's talking a lot. God whispered to me and said, "Yeah, you prayed for every word. That's it. Every word is an answer to prayer."

We saw him progress, and then all of a sudden when he hit his teenage years, he regressed. He lost his language. He wasn't able to function. He was having neurological episodes. It was at the same time that Julie and I were stepping up to be the senior leaders of the church. I was thinking, God, how can we do this? He's an only child. He doesn't have any close family that's younger. We were talking out all of our fears and all of our worries and concerns about his future and what was going to happen to him. I remember one day, he had been kind of in the house, not being able to get out for weeks and weeks, and we decided we were going to take him to the beach to go walk and pray on the beach. When you live in Florida, at least you get to go pray on the beach and walk on the beach. And so, he and our dog were up ahead of us, and Julie and I were just crying out to God and just asking God for mercy for our boy.

This man came walking towards us wearing this t-shirt. I wouldn't normally encourage anybody to get their theology from a t-shirt on a beach in South Florida. That could be dangerous. But that day, God spoke to us through that t-shirt. His t-shirt said, "Listen to what you know, not to what you fear." When I read it, it was as if the Holy Spirit said, "Todd, you've been not only listening to your fears, you've been speaking your fears. You've been rehearsing your fears and

your concerns.” So, Julie and I, right then at that moment something shifted inside of us. We went home and we said, “We are not speaking our fears or worries anymore. We're not giving that airtime. We're going to only confess the Word of God over our son, over his future.”

So, what do we know? We know that Jefferson's called and chosen. We know that God has a good plan and a future for him. We know that he who began a good work in him is faithful to complete it. Nothing changed instantly for Jefferson, right? But something shifted in us, and that began to shift the atmosphere in our home. We put sticky notes of scriptures all on the mirrors and the refrigerator and hope began to rise in our hearts. And faith began to rise again. We had to fuel our faith instead of feeding our fears.

I learned at that moment that fear and faith have the basic same definition. Both of them are believing that what you can't see is going to happen. And whichever one you align yourself with is going to direct your future. It's either going to take you down the path of more fear or it's going to build your faith. We started to build our faith back up again. But we had to do that. We had to lean in to God and keep hoping and praying and believing. It wasn't a couple more weeks or a couple more months, but about 18 more months, Jefferson started to emerge again and started to go back to church. We got him back to church sooner than that. And he started to play guitar and hang out and volunteer. We didn't know if he'd finish school. He ended up finishing college, top of his class. Leads worship at our church today and got married to a girl that he fell in love with serving at church together. He and Cassie are doing great.

So, we still are on that journey of miracles but we are seeing God do some amazing things in his life. I always encourage people that we like a miracle in a minute. And sometimes, God does a miracle in a minute. We like that because it's fast and it's quick and we get to move on with life but often God takes us on a journey of little miracles. If you don't know which road you're on, which route you're on, you can miss the little miracles because you're looking for the big miracle. But if you notice the little things God is doing along the way, it will build your faith and help you recognize that the hand of God is going to help you through even those darkest moments of your life.

JAMES: You know, when we lost a daughter who believed as we did, she would be miraculously healed from cancer that she fought seven years, and then when it didn't happen, I found myself asking the question that every person who has a tragedy come in their life, why this? Why? It was as though God, as clearly as a person can speak, and certainly he does. He said, "You'll never get the answer to why. You need to ask the question, what do you want to do with it?" Do you think that's an important question to ask when you don't see the why and you do have the doubts coming at you, and they come from every direction? With all that's in your path right now, all that's painful in your life, all that distracts, is that a wise thing to do is just say, God, I don't know that I will ever know why. Maybe not even in heaven, but what do you want to do with it?

Because I feel like God has shown us that he can take our pain, he can take our loss and our sorrow, and if we ask, what do you want to do with this, He just pours out more of his love, and oftentimes, answers that mean a lot to people. When you show the person that doesn't have an answer or we don't have one, ask God, what do you want to do with it? Does that sound like that comes directly from God?

TODD: It's directly from God. Because we won't know the why on this side of eternity. There's no way to get our minds around the fullness of it. We know that this isn't our home. We know this isn't perfect. We know that when God created earth, it was. But man, sin came in, and sorrow and death came in. But there is a place coming where there is no more sin, sorrow, or death. I believe that even the struggles and the pains help us remember that heaven's our home, and that God's got something good waiting for us.

BETTY: I know for myself, losing our daughter, of course, it's painful! You always hurt because they're not here. And you're right. You go through some anger, too. But if you will allow God to heal your heart, he turns that anger and that pain into his joy and his peace. He said, "I'm not done with you yet. Your daughter's rejoicing in heaven and waiting for you someday." We get the joy of her children and her grandchildren, she's got six grandchildren. So, we're watching them grow up. And so, God says, "I will make joy out of this."

It takes time. I mean, I don't ever, as you can tell, I still shed the tears, but they turn to an appreciation for what God has done through that loss in my heart. I have a closer walk with him. I understand better. I understand his ways better. So, there are some wonderful things God will do for us through the pain.

TODD: Yes. And because you asked what instead of why, he'll show you what. He'll give you that answer. And it may be people who are also walking through the pain that don't have the hope of Christ. You have that hope and you've sensed his comfort and now that comfort is going to comfort others that you come in contact with.

JAMES: You know, Robin would be so excited when she started having grandchildren because she was a church party mom for all the kids. They all wanted to come to Robin's house and be with her three children. But, she just kept doing beautiful things for people. And as I think about it, I know Betty and I both heard that we are enjoying your grandchildren, Robin, and we know what all you would have been doing with them. But the Lord has assured me you are enjoying your grandchildren. You don't lose any of that joy. You gain more joy and more understanding. And your love and prayers, even for us from the next kingdom mean so much.

Todd, I've just got to ask you, when you focused on a challenge, do you believe God put this into your heart for a specific reason that you write this book right now?

TODD: Yes, I believe so. Because I think people think they are the only ones battling some of these questions, fears, and doubts. We live in a world where most people are going to be confident, they're going to act like they've got it together. And even in faith, I'm going to speak words of faith, and we often don't say, yeah, but with that comes questions and doubting God. I wanted to let our church, Christ Fellowship, and I wanted people who read this to go, "Hey, there's a pastor that's talking about doubts and questioning God in the midst of having to preach on Sunday, he's doubting on Monday." And how I walk through that so that it normalized it. Because sometimes, they think that doubt is the opposite of faith. If I'm doubting God, then I am a bad Christian and I don't have faith. No, no, no, I don't think you could have a growing faith without some doubt. You talk about stepping out in faith? Well, I think most of the time

when you step out in faith, you step out with a little bit of doubt because faith is not knowing everything. You're stepping out and trusting God without all the answers.

And so, allowing yourself to sit in that, allowing yourself to ask God the hard questions. I had yelling matches with God in my prayer times and just getting real with God. Where are you? Why does it seem like my prayers are hitting the ceilings and bouncing down, and I'm not seeing anything change month after month? But as long as I kept going to prayer, as long as I kept getting on my knees, as long as I kept calling out to God, I felt his presence. I didn't always get the answer, but I felt his presence and his comfort. That's what built my strength and built my faith back. Plus, being around some other brothers in the Lord who wanted to pray when I couldn't pray anymore. I always tell people, if you're dealing with doubt, don't hang out with doubters. Get around some people of faith, some people who have seen some things you haven't seen, that have walked with God further than you've walked with God, and ride the coattails of their faith.

Paul says in Romans chapter one. He says, "I want us to help each other out with the faith that we have. My faith will help you and your faith will help me." And so, if people can just know it's okay to deal with your doubt, just deal with it, work with it, lean into it, and if you do, I believe actually, you'll come out with a stronger faith and a greater understanding of the faithfulness of God.

JAMES: I know this book has only been out a short time but are you already seeing people get answers to their doubts?

TODD: Yes, I am! They've come to me just in the few short weeks and said, "I didn't know that you thought exactly what I was thinking. Now I know how to pray about that or what to do. Praise God!

JAMES: Well, let me just say to all of you, it's in the bookstores. You can go get it or you can get it online. But if you would just help us put God's arms around some of the most abused, hurt people on the planet, children that are being sexually trafficked, being molested and used and

sold, we are giving them by the thousands and thousands a brand-new life. We want you to help us do that in a very special way right now over in Asia. If you will help us do that, to put God's arms around trafficked children, and girls primarily, and you'd like to have this book, we'll be so glad to send this to you if you would just reach out and offer hope to some of the most hopeless people on the planet. Watch closely.

Transition roll-in:

TAMMY: In all my years of traveling with Life Outreach International doing mission work, this was my first in-depth human trafficking mission trip. Some of it felt like maybe scenes from a movie, and I found myself asking, is this really real? Well, let me tell you, it was real -- real life, real people, and real stories from the red-light district to the beautiful safe houses where those who've been rescued are being restored at this very moment.

I went upstairs to hang out with the older girls for a little while. I remember sitting with them. I could feel the heavy weight of their pain and the shame and the trauma. I remember picking up a Bible that was just sitting there, and I asked them how important the Word of God was to them. I remember one of the girls had such a touch of God in her life I could feel it in that moment. She couldn't stop talking about what God had done for her, and how he was bringing her freedom. Freedom from the lies and freedom from the torment, freedom from the trauma, freedom from the abuse. It was powerful!

I sat in that room feeling so inspired by their determination, and the maturity to trust God on the hard days and to put their hope in him for their futures. Because in that space of healing for them, new life had just begun. They are on a path to healing and strength because they are being equipped right now with the truth of who they are in Christ, and who the truth of God's Word is over their life.

This is why it's critical that we come alongside mission partners to continue the incredible work happening here every single day. But they have some serious needs that must be met today.

Let's send whatever we can to help our mission partners so these homes can thrive and continue to reach, rescue, and restore lives.

Studio appeal:

JAMES: Wow! Do you know what restores those lives? The love of God flowing through people just like you. Betty, as we watched those children rushing toward that beautiful building, which is perhaps the largest facility, maybe in the world, where you're rescuing the sexually trafficked and you built it. It started with just small rental houses where a couple left Hollywood, where they were very successful. Sold a seven-carat ring just to get the resources to go over there, get a place to stay, and start renting houses to take the trafficked. They have never come back.

We have been working in this outreach for 20 years or more, and it is beautiful. But right now, Betty, we've got another place that's basically already built but it needs to be changed. It needs to be renovated in certain places where we can take care of 50 girls in parts of Asia. It's going to take \$1.25 million to bring it where it needs to go but it will be an instant home.

Now, think what I'm saying. It'll be an instant home for 50 girls who will just move into a miracle of life and love. It's just an amazing thing that God's going to do. And I believe with all my heart that we've got viewers who are going to respond, Betty, because aren't you amazed at how our viewers have saved so many lives, millions of lives, how they've given a future to those who have been trafficked. It's a beautiful thing to watch.

BETTY: Without you we couldn't do it. As I saw those children running toward that beautiful place that probably you've helped provide for them, I saw love. They're running toward love, freedom, and safety because you gave them a place to go and feel love and to be able to play like little children should play.

Now, we have another opportunity to fix up a place for children to go, to stay, and to feel that same way. Please join us.

JAMES: Father, you're the only one that can show them the power of your love demonstrated the way we're talking about. Please give us an outpouring of love right now, in Jesus' name.

Would you go and get your bank card? Use it like a check. Would you get a check? Make it to LIFE. It takes \$128 to rescue a person from sexual trafficking. That's the average cost. For \$1,280 we can rescue ten. We're asking you to do that but some of you watching will not only do that, perhaps, but would you help us with a large gift toward that \$1,250,000 needed to work a miracle that's already there? We can be in it in a matter of months. They've already started working on it in faith. God bless them!

So I'm praying, Lord, please! Whatever you can do. Go get your bank card. Please do it now. Call the number or go online and make the gift God put on your heart because you're going to be giving life and freedom and a future, all because of God's love, which you are freely expressing.

Now, remember this, please. This is the last week of this particular emphasis and outreach. Thank you so much for doing this. Please don't wait. Do it now.

Rescue Life – Last week 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."

This is the last week. 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*. An evening devotion I wrote to help you reflect on God's word just before you rest for the night. Each brief reading will help you deepen your relationship with God and prepare your heart and mind for peaceful sleep. 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: Well, you know, I want you to give the largest gift you possibly can. If you can give \$1280 and get that beautiful "Lion of Judah" bronze with the cross, which is the power even for the Lion of Judah. Please make the \$1,280 gift to help us with ten if you can. Whatever you can do, we will send you Dr. Jeremiah's book that is nightly devotionals that are fabulous.

Todd Mullins is here. I understand why his dad was so pleased with what he watched. Just like Todd's been pleased with watching his dad, Tom. This is fabulous. If you help us put God's arms around the trafficked, we'll be so glad to send this to you. You be praying for us, Todd.

TODD: Yes, sir. I will.

JAMES: We're going to be praying for you and the church. You let everybody in the church know how much we love you, your dad, but all of them, because they have made an impact on the whole world because of what they've heard and lived. So tell them we love them.

We love you. Thank you, Todd!

TODD: God bless you. Thank you.

JAMES: Thank you for helping us share Jesus. Thank you for helping us share *Life Today* every day all over the world.