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Week 27: SWFL

Tammy Trent & Blynda Lane

Niki Hardy

Studio discussion:

TAMMY: Hello, everybody. Welcome to *Life Today*. I'm Tammy Trent. I am so glad you're here. I don't know how busy life has been for you lately, but the fact that you stopped right now and said, I'm going to spend 30 minutes with *Life Today* because I just kind of wonder, what is God up to? Does he have a word for me today? And I believe that he does.

I'm so glad you're here! Definitely stick around to the very end. You won't want to miss any of it. And I have a special guest with me today. A guest co-host, Blynda Lane, who you've probably seen on TV, like I have many times. I'm so glad you're here.

BLYNDA: It is so fun to be here with you, Tammy. Thank you. I'm just so honored to be here. I just love this show. I love James and Betty! Of course, I've followed Life Outreach for decades, and known them for about 20 years. It's really almost surreal that I've known them, but now I get to be a part of this. I'm very, very excited!

TAMMY: Yeah! It's special to have you here.

BLYNDA: And you're pretty special! So it's pretty fun to be next to you.

TAMMY: Oh, my goodness. I'm loving it so much. We've got a great guest on the show today, too. I just want to start out at the top by saying this. I know that when we struggle in life, doubts about God and even our relationship with him can be some of the first things that just rise to the surface. Right? So, I get it. I've been there so many times in my own life, more times than I can even count. That's why I'm so excited about today's conversation with author, speaker, and cancer survivor, Niki Hardy. She's recently written a new book called *God, Can We Chat?* So, if

you've ever wrestled with doubt or disbelief, I truly believe that this conversation and Niki's book will give you the hope and the help that you've probably been looking for. So,

Niki Hardy, thank you for being here. So good to have you here. And I'm going to jump right in. Can we start with your faith journey? How did you get to this place of even asking God, I've got to slow everything down. I've got to stop. We need to talk.

NIKI: Well, I don't have to say very much before everyone realizes that I'm not from this side of the pond. My faith journey actually began in London, in an old Victorian church with bare brick walls not far from Buckingham Palace, when I finally said "yes" to Jesus. And I say "finally," I was in my early 20s, newly married. I'd always felt spiritual, up mountains, felt connected to God, but didn't call it "Christian," didn't have a relationship with Jesus, but I just knew that I was English and I was a nice person, and I wasn't Hindu or Muslim or anything else. So, therefore, surely, I was a Christian. But I think, actually, I was christian with a lowercase c, not a capital C.

But I came to faith, had a relationship with Jesus, and then everything changed in our lives for the better. We said yes to God, and we left the corporate life, and we went to the mission field. And then we went into ministry and seminary. We actually came to America to plant a church, which I was just saying, that really seems a rather ridiculous idea, not to be rude to God. But there's a pub on every corner in London and a church on every corner in Charlotte, North Carolina, where we are.

But we planted a church that's still there nearly 20 years later, and it's still going strong. We don't lead it anymore, but it is doing well. But as you said, I'm a cancer survivor, but I had lost my mum to cancer and my sister to cancer, and then I was diagnosed. For me, that brought up a lot of questions about God, but more about where is the abundant life that you promised me, Lord?

I guess I'm in the storms, will I ever get that abundant life? That's what my first book, *Breathe Again*, was about. But then you fast-forward another ten years, and we had been through a whole other set of difficult circumstances, everything from my husband's burnout to difficult

family situations. You know, parenting teens, where you realize that the research that says the frontal lobe is made of Jello is so true! There were just difficult things going on. And then, of course, the world shut down in the pandemic, which brought a whole different set of questions and different levels of unprecedented suffering in the world. I had readers telling me the things they were going through. And then the church, you know, the wider church, as well, was just kind of imploding a little bit and turning in on itself. You know what it was like. I don't need to elaborate on that.

But then what was happening was that everything God, faith, church, as I kind of lump it all together, I remember this moment, and I was out walking the dog very early one morning. Charlie, a rather lovely but ridiculous goldendoodle, and I were out on a path, and I just remember feeling so lost and disillusioned, and disappointed. And these doubts were rising to the surface, all these questions, and feeling like my faith was dying from a thousand papercuts.

I get home, and my husband Al is sitting on the sofa, and he's got "Amazing Grace" playing. I kind of roll my eyes with the maturity of a tween. Because there he's being spiritual when the world is falling apart. As I went upstairs to shower, those words that so many of us know and hold true followed me up the stairs. "I once was lost, but now I'm found. Was blind but now I see." I thought, no, the opposite is now true. The reversal is now true. I once was found, but now I'm lost.

I just didn't know what to do. I tried everything that I knew, and I just thought, God, we need to chat.

BLYNDA: I love that. It's almost as if you were in a crisis in your faith. I think what's interesting about it is thinking about the doubts that you might have about God. Why would God allow these things to happen? How could I be so faithful to God all these years, and yet, I'm still left right now feeling lost? I think almost in some ways, this resonated with me because as a believer, there's some kind of shame put on this feeling that I'm doubting. I don't want to doubt God. I don't want to doubt that he's good because I know that he's good.

I found your book to be freeing, to put the shame aside and just start having an honest conversation with God. How would you encourage the ones viewing today about what you learned about how you can talk to God about the real questions?

NIKI: Well, we all have these questions. So many of us have grown up spiritually in churches that don't really allow for that. It's not a culture of curiosity. You can't stand up in the middle of a sermon and say, Excuse me! But why did the Lord answer her prayer and not my prayer?

TAMMY: We should be able to. I wish we could!

NIKI: How do we do that? And then we're told, you know, quite rightly, and we read that Jesus says, Don't doubt, have great faith. You know, your faith has healed you. Don't be like someone who doubts and is tossed back and forth in the waves. So, to the person who is feeling like that, who's feeling like, well, I shouldn't question God. Think about the tone of voice when he said that. So often we think he says, "Don't doubt!! Have great faith." But what if he's saying, "Don't doubt. I'm right here." He says, "Come to me, all you who are weary and heavy-laden."

I don't know about you, but when I have all these questions and these concerns and this confusion, it's tiring. I feel weary of them. And some people come to that place of feeling lost in an instant because something catastrophic has happened. And some people, it's a slow burn away. We can choose at that point when we get to the crossroads of faith and doubt, as I say in *God, Can We Chat?* We can either say, well, I don't want to go down the doubt route because my faith and my relationship with God are precious. I don't want to go down what could be a slippery slope away from God. But faith, I don't know if I've got the certainty that I need to go down there. I don't know whether I belong down there. So, my encouragement is to sit and chat with God about it and go this way. I teach people in the book how to get over those lies that tell us we can't go to God.

BLYNDA: I want you to talk more about that. I was going to ask about how to replace those lies with truth, and you gave some tools through the chat. You give them some tools to help. Right? Tell us more about that.

NIKI: Yeah. Because what I want people to do is, first of all, reimagine their doubts as their faith superpower, not its Kryptonite. because we think, oh, my doubts are my faith's greatest weakness. I say, no! They're its greatest strength. That's where we use the Chat Guided Conversation guide, because I wanted to give something practical to lead people through those conversations. Because so often we sit down and we go, God, can we chat about this? And then we're not sure what to say. How to lead it through, and hear his voice, and all those things.

BLYNDA: Okay, Tammy, I'm going to -- On page 128, it says that C.H.A.T. is this:
Consider the facts.

Honor the story you're telling yourself.

Ask God what he has to say.

Team up with God moving forward.

I love that. It's so good!

TAMMY: I do too. I actually wrote it down in my notes.

BLYNDA: Oh, did you?

TAMMY: C-h-a-t. What CHAT means. I love that you did that because it really is a guide. Some people think, Where do I start then?

NIKI: I'm happy to take you through it completely if you want me to.

TAMMY: Yeah! Let's do it. Consider the facts.

NIKI: There's normally something that has brought us to this place of asking the question. This is where we consider what happened. What was the event or the circumstances, the hard thing that happened? Maybe you and a friend had both been trying to get pregnant and have been

praying about it, and she's now expecting, and you're not. Those are the facts. Everyone can agree on that.

But then we want to dig a little deeper and with God, we prayerfully look to uncover and honor the story that we're telling ourselves. Because underneath that circumstance is often a little story that says something like, well, he loves her more than me.

BLYNDA: This is where the lie comes in, right?

NIKI: Yes, and it's the story. Our brains want to make up stories to bring us calm -- and those stories don't even have to be true in order to bring that calm. So, the story could be, well, I'm not spiritual enough. I didn't pray correctly. I haven't volunteered enough in church.

BLYNDA: So, we try to find evidence to back up the story we're telling ourselves.

NIKI: Exactly! Then we have the real nugget where God says, That's what I want to work on. That's the heart piece that I want to build intimacy on. And then, holding that story, however hard it is to hold it, we can say, God, what do you think about this? If we were sitting down for a cup of tea, God, and you pulled up your celestial sofa, what would you want to say to me? And so that's where we ask God what he has to say.

And then, of course, life goes on, so we have to team up with him, as we go back into life. How can we link arms with God and live out the life that we are leading? Maybe not finding certainty, but finding relationship and intimacy?

BLYNDA: I was going to say real quick on that “ask” part, I feel like there actually could even be somebody today who's saying, I pray, and I don't hear God. I don't know how to hear him. How would you tell that person if they get stuck in that “Ask God,” what is he saying about it? They feel so far from him; maybe because they're hurt. That's a really powerful one to bring some clarity to.

NIKI: Well, if I had an answer for how we exactly hear God, we'd be having a very different conversation.

TAMMY: Give it to me now! Give it to me now!

NIKI: Exactly! It's not a science; it is a relationship. I always say we tune in to hearing God's voice. It's a mixture of so many different things. It's an inner knowing. It's reading the Bible. It's, you know, getting wisdom from close friends who are believers. So many things speak into it. I found journaling really helps. For me, walking in nature really helps. I find that the Lord uses creation as a way to speak to me. Often, when people say, Oh, well, I don't know if the Lord is saying this, there's also a kind of gut feeling, a knowing, an inner knowing. I think what so many of us want is revelation, but what we get is realization. It's a multifaceted thing, hearing God's voice, but it isn't a science. But that's why in *God, Can We Chat?* I give all these prompts to people to think it through in real time and get a sense of what they feel God is saying.

TAMMY: What I love about it is that some people don't know how to put into words what they feel. I think what you've done there is you've helped them identify. You've given them 18 opportunities. Read through this. You're going to find yourself in one of these. But you help us navigate through that. Then you're like, I identify with four. All of a sudden, now I've got a way to walk out of this.

But I want to ask you, just as we close here, the great reversal. So, sitting here with you today, you once were lost, but now you've been found. If somebody feels lost today, they just feel lost. First of all, I think your book, your life story, your journey can offer more hope than we could ever imagine. We could try to stir some things up and send it out in hope. But your life speaks for itself, Niki. All that you've surrendered, all that you've done. You're seeking. You're wrestling. And instead of giving up, you said, okay, I have the questions. I'll stick around another day because, God, I believe you're bigger than this. And somehow, you're going to show up because you always do, somehow. And even if I can't feel you now, you going to show up.

So, there's somebody who feels the way you felt. You were lost and wanted to be found. What can we speak into their life today that says, You're not far from being found? Stay! Stay! Stay!

NIKI: If somebody is feeling like that, first of all, I want to say I'm so sorry because I know it's so horrible to feel that lost and forgotten and alone and ignored -- and all those things. It's just awful! But I want to encourage them to not turn away from God, not to kind of slide slowly out the side door of their faith, but to turn towards God. Take that disappointment and that hurt and even that rejection that they might be feeling from God, because I've felt it all, and still do on occasion. Journeying with God through doubt isn't a one-and-done deal, and I'm now I'm like, oh, I went through that season of doubt and now I am all good.

But to take it because our questions hold power. But not to weaken our faith, to strengthen it. Even if you're going to God angry, and saying, How long do you not see me? Your providence, your provision, where is it? I thought you were good. Take it to him. Use it as fuel because he's saying, Come to me. Walk with me. Work with me. Learn to live lightly and freely. Learn those unforced rhythms of grace, as the Message paraphrase says, Matthew 11:28.

So, I want to encourage them to keep turning to God. I doubt you'll find certainty. I haven't found certainty. But God is calling you, and he wants to be close to you.

BLYNDA: And God is big enough to handle every question we have.

NIKI: Yes. And I've asked him some polite questions and some very impolite questions and he's --. I haven't been hit with a smite button yet.

TAMMY: I love it. I mean, that's the word. Just keep walking with Jesus. It might be messy today. Tomorrow might be a great day, but just stay. Stay! Keep walking with him. Keep asking the questions. Keep seeking. He is never going to walk away from you, no matter what question you ask today. That is a good word for me. It's a good word for all of us today.

I want to tell you another good thing that's happening in the world right now. Things that we're able to do, come alongside some incredible people, and really bring them relief and hope in the middle of their doubting, in the middle of all their questions, where are you, God?

I want to show you something that's really beautiful. It can be heartbreaking, but we have a solution to bring hope to these people who are crying out to God right now. Take a minute and watch this. When we come out on the other side, I want to just say this. I want you to get this book! I'm going to offer it to you today. We're going to get it in your hands. I will tell you how we're going to be able to do that together. Watch this.

Transition roll-in: (Find It In Your Heart)

A: When little ones depend on you to provide them with water to sustain their lives, you don't have time to debate or discuss your water source. You can only give them what you have access to, no matter how deadly it may be.

For Gagrielle, when she steps into her water source, it is a step there is no coming back from. The water she gathers for her family may sustain them for a while, but at what cost? For Gagrielle, the cost has already been the lives of two of her small children.

Open Captions:

I'm very much worried because now two of my children have died. I'm even more worried about my children, who are still alive because, by continuing to consume this water, I believe that they may pass on as well.

A: When not caring for her children, Gagrielle visits the graves of her babies that she has lost and weeps and prays. She mourns not only for her children, but for the over 20 children in her village that have died due to consuming contaminated water.

Open Captions:

There's nothing better than clean, safe drinking water. If we get a water well with clean water, this is the beginning of life. It would guarantee life for my children.

JOHN: I'm here today in Mapair, South Sudan, where I've been listening to the story of a beautiful village that has been ravaged with waterborne illness. It's this one village. It breaks my heart and makes me say, Lord, when am I going to be able to tell Gaglielle that a well is coming? That we're going to put a well in her village? And we're going to put a well in the village next to her and next to them, so that we know that this whole area here will stop losing children?

Open Captions:

We beg you in the name of God to help us. Find it in your heart to make it better.

Studio appeal:

TAMMY: Loss is a heavy thing. I know a little bit about that, losing my husband in a scuba diving accident. His death was because of water. Their death is because of the lack of clean water. Loss, suffering, it's heavy. These people are carrying it every single day. When I see those precious little babies walking, I just want to scoop them up and say, it's going to be okay. It's going to get better. But it's not going to get better unless we do something about it. And by "we," I mean God's people. He presents the need. It's in front of us. And then he presents a solution and says, I need you to come alongside me. Together, we can make a difference in the lives of so many people because we come in the name of Jesus. We give them water for life -- the water of life!

I am so privileged. Truly! You must know that. It's such a privilege for me, all of these years, 16 years to be traveling with Life Outreach, going all over the world, sharing God's great, great good news and sharing the water of life. Just like that village, John said, it would be incredible to show up tomorrow and tell them we're on our way. We're on our way, and we've all made it happen.

Blynda, I know that you haven't been out in the field yet with me. I hope one day you'll get to do that and experience it. I know you're a mom. I know that it would be hard for you, probably, to imagine losing a child because of the water they're drinking.

BLYNDA: Watching the video, it's just sobering to think that this is a life and death decision they're making every day for their children. That they know they obviously can't go without water. But knowing they're giving water is giving them the risk of death. I can't imagine being faced with that every single day. And yet that is their reality. It is a reality to them.

What I absolutely love is that I know the Life Outreach givers are so generous! They're so generous! They've caught the vision and understand that when they give, they save lives. That's what's so important! That when you give, you are literally saving lives. I just want to encourage you, I know that you are a giving people and generosity flows out of you. But if you really understood that when you watch that mom, you understood that when you give today, those children live. It's just amazing.

TAMMY: It's incredible! Let me tell you what the breakdown is. It's super easy and anybody can do it. So let me tell you what that looks like. For \$48, you can provide water for ten people. For \$144, you can provide water for 30 people. And if you can, \$4800 will go in there and drill a complete well. Now, this is water that will be provided for about a thousand people for up to about 70 years these wells will last. So basically, for the rest of their lives, Blynda! We can go in there. It's an incredible opportunity that God has given us today. Won't you jump in? Won't you come alongside us and do something? Go online. Make a call. Let's do it together and let's do it now.

SWFL Cause 2025:

A: 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 Prayers for My Physical Health, a Bible-based collection of 52 prayers designed to bring strength, healing, and renewal to every area of your body. Covering a wide range of physical needs, this beautifully crafted book encourages intimate conversations with God.

With a gift of \$100 or more, you may request the "Armor of God" tumbler set. These two 20-ounce stainless steel tumblers, each inscribed with Ephesians 6:11, are a practical and meaningful way to carry a reminder of God's strength and protection throughout your day.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1,200 to help provide water for 250 people, or a gift of \$4800 to help sponsor a complete well and request our inspiring bronze sculpture, "Lion of Judah."

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

Studio good-bye:

TAMMY: I hope you're going online and giving the best gift that you can give today. Truly, it is making a massive impact in the lives of so many people -- more than you even imagine. With any gift that you can give today, we are going to send you Niki's book, *God, Can We Chat?* You are going to love it, I promise you that. So, when you call in, just request it and we'll get it out to you right away.

Thank you so much, Niki, for being here. Blynda, thank you for being here.

BLYNDA: Thank you for having me. It's been so fun. And yes, Niki, thank you. I was thinking about this book and how this is like a tool in the toolbox or in the tool belt. This is a tool to help

you. So, get the book because it's so encouraging! Thank you so much for what you've done to contribute to helping people come to a better understanding of how God is for them.

TAMMY: You're amazing! We love you. And we love you! Thank you for watching. We'll see you next time right here on *Life Today*.