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Week 31: SWFL

James & Betty Robison

Terry Crist

>> I traveled the world. I preached in 60 nations. I climb mountains. I jump out of airplanes. I'm not an anxious person. But sure enough, it was an anxiety attack. And it was through that period of time I begin to discover that we are really living in the anxious generation.

Learn how to stop running and find the rest your soul desperately needs in the boundless love of God. Next on Life Today!

Studio discussion:

JAMES: Boy, am I glad to see you! And Betty at my side, and talk to you about -- Well, really, we're going to talk a whole lot about grace because we've got Terry Crist here who is a pastor of a Grace Church, basically is called City of Grace in Phoenix, downtown Phoenix, and out in the outskirts. But he's just written the book, *Now You Can Stop Running*. I'm very familiar with the great impact this man's making. And, you're going to be blessed. As a matter of fact, we're going to find out what he's talking about, stop running.

Terry, good to have you on *Life Today*.

TERRY: Thank you. Thank you, Betty.

JAMES: I know you've been here with Randy and Tammy. I know that somehow, Maybe, you can tell our audience how you first connected with me?

TERRY: Well, let me say, before we get in too deep, I owe a great debt of gratitude to the both of you for your lives, for your ministry. I was raised in a pastor's home, a good, godly pastor's

home. But quite honestly, it was a very legalistic environment. We lived according to performance-based Christianity. Do good, get good. And so that was my spiritual formation. I don't recall ever hearing a message preached about grace. I was in my late teens, probably 19, when someone invited me to the Tarrant County Convention Center where you were preaching. It was a conference, and you were preaching on grace. I heard you, heard Dudley Hall, Rick Godwin, Jack Taylor, Peter Lord. And although I was a youngster up in the high section it changed my life and really shaped my outcome, my outlook. It gave me a revelation of God as a good God, a loving Father, one who extends grace and compassion and kindness. So I want to thank you for that.

It was also, a few years later, would have been in my early 20s, pastoring a church in Kansas City, and you came through with John Wimber and put the chair on the stage and invited us to sit in it, inviting us into freedom -- and I needed freedom. I'd had the revelation of grace, but still had some deep areas of bondage in my life that I needed to encounter freedom in. So I owe you both for the revelation of grace, and also, the invitation into living a free life.

So it's such an honor to be here. Thank you for that.

JAMES: Well, it's an honor to have you because God is using you. I'm really curious what the title implies: *Now You Can Stop Running*. So let's talk about whatever it was that you were obviously running from. I don't think you'd tell someone to stop running toward God so you can stop running. What do you imply here? What do you want us to get? And what are we going to learn in the book?

TERRY: Well, I think in one sense I was born running. Our old vintage family reel, struggle to keep me in focus as I'm running here and there and everywhere. But in a deeper way, early on in my life, I went through a traumatic experience that formed me in a way that was unhealthy and unhelpful. It really triggered in me a sense of running. I've since come to the conclusion that most people are either running from something or to something. We're running from unhealed wounds, we're running from unmet needs, or we're running in pursuit of a better life. And so looking back, I now see, the patterns in my life that I couldn't see at the time,

patterns of being driven based on trauma, based on loss, based upon unmet expectations, even the impact of religious performance in my life and the drivenness to try and please.

Running takes a lot of different forms in our lives. For some people, it's rooted in loss. For other people, it's abuse. For other people, it's disappointment. For other people, it's simply religious performance. I want to invite people into the reality that you don't have to run. Jesus said, "Come to me, you who are weary and heavy burdened, and I will give you rest." There is a sense of arrival in our relationship with Jesus, and a peace that we can find in him that is exactly what our soul longs for.

So running is a metaphor for how we seek to escape the pain of life, or we seek to find the pleasure that we think will satisfy us.

BETTY: Don't you think we all experience that in our journey sometimes, always running from something?

TERRY: We are.

BETTY: We do. I'm like you. I ran from "the goodness of church." You know, I thought if I was good enough, God would love me and take care of me and accept me. But I never could arrive. And that was frustrating to me.

TERRY: Well, that's the real problem because there is no sense of arrival. We encounter these false refuges that promise more than they can deliver. So, the businessman who's trying to find his identity in accomplishments, the businesswoman who's trying to find a sense of worth and value, and so they're driven. They are constantly on the move. They've come to believe that this refuge is going to provide what is missing in their life.

But the fact is, there is no simple solution in the universe outside of a relationship with Jesus, who promises not only what he can deliver but promises more than we could ever possibly imagine. It's in him that we find rest for our souls. In him, we find a place where we're free

from striving. And in him, we're free to be. We don't have to earn his love and his grace and his approval. Jesus earned that just by simply being his beloved Son. And now, in Christ, we have all that we need, all that our hearts long for.

JAMES: Why do people have such a hard time hearing that?

TERRY: Well, I think we've been conditioned to run. We've been conditioned by life. We've been conditioned by loss. I think a lot about the impact of trauma on people's lives. I came of age in a time in life when we didn't have a language for what we experience today and what we experienced then. I think it is that sense of being driven out of pain, out of loss, out of perhaps betrayal or disappointment, never quite measuring up to the expectations of other people that becomes fuel in our lives. Again, informing us that if we just do this, that, or the other we'll find the healing that we're looking for. We're all looking for that sense of arrival. And that sense of arrival is found in Jesus, who is, in fact, all that the heart longs for. He is the one that provides for us what we desperately need.

JAMES: You talked about in the book, having anxiety attacks. What do you mean by that? How would you expect people to interpret what you're saying?

TERRY: Well, for me personally, I had an anxiety attack, in my middle 40s, so I was 45. At that point of time, I had no sense of feeling anxiety. I'm certainly not prone to that by my natural disposition. And yet I've been through a lot in life. Didn't realize that so often in life, running doesn't resolve what we fail to address within ourselves.

I think when I was younger, I thought, you know, I'll just outgrow some things, I'll outlive some things. But I've discovered over time that running doesn't resolve the pain in our souls. We have to intentionally address those things, bringing them into the light of Christ, bringing them, to the feet of the Father, bringing them to the cross and all that Jesus provided for us.

So, in my own life, I woke up one day and it actually came about through a series of events, I was 45 and our church was being blessed and was growing. I received an invitation to become

the pastor of another church in Phoenix. So, through a long, drawn-out process, this large, flourishing church that had been through a period of decline, merged with our church and became our third location. Overnight, I went from pastoring a church of about 1400 people to pastoring a church of 4500 people. I went from preaching twice on the weekend to preaching five times on the weekend. From leading a staff of 18 to a staff of 110. There was a lot of criticism leveled at my leadership, because I was stepping in to follow a founder who was deeply beloved. So there was just a lot going on at that point in life. That year, I also had led a recovery team to Haiti following the earthquake there. And 300,000 people had lost their lives during the earthquake. It was a very traumatic experience.

So late in the year, I received an invitation from one of the NFL players in our church to go with he and his wife to Los Angeles where he was performing on Dancing With the Stars. And I thought that isn't my wheelhouse. I'm a Bass Pro kind of guy. I'm not a spandex and sequins kind of guy. I don't know where to look, I don't know what to do, I don't know that landscape. But my wife said, "We've got to go."

So the night before we were to fly out, about 2:00 in the morning, I woke up thinking I was having a heart attack. She got me in the car, got me to the E.R., and I discovered that I was having an anxiety attack. And my first response was, what? I don't have anxiety. I travel the world. I've preached in 60 nations. I climb mountains. I chase dangerous animals with a bow and arrow. I jump out of airplanes. I'm not an anxious person! But sure enough, it was an anxiety attack. And one was followed by another, which was followed by another, and another. And over the course of about seven years, I had more anxiety attacks than I can even count. And if you've ever had one, you know you never want to have another because you feel as if you're having an actual heart attack. You feel this disembodied, dissociative state where the world around you seems foggy and you're on the precipice of impending doom.

And so, it was through that process while leading the church, never sharing this story with anyone apart from my wife, that I really learned a couple of critical things. Number one, I learned the importance of finding rest. Rest isn't the reward for hard work. Rest is the provision of God for all of us, and through finding the importance of Sabbath rest, and routines.

JAMES: That rest would be coupled with supernatural peace.

TERRY: Supernatural peace! And so, through that, it was a long season there where I spent many nights in the car just outside of the emergency room, not wanting to go in, but yet wanting to be close enough that should I need to go in, I could do so. And it was through that period of time, I began to discover that we are really living in the anxious generation. We're living in a time where anxiety is epidemic. I haven't had anxiety –

JAMES: Even among children, young people.

TERRY: And especially amongst young people.

JAMES: Especially among teens.

TERRY: I haven't had an anxiety attack in about eight years now, because of what I've learned both naturally and spiritually. But I see the signs in the lives of so many people. This is what Doctor Haidt calls the most anxious generation in the history of the world.

JAMES: Is this reality that inspired this as much as anything?

TERRY: It is. That comes from a place of deep revelation. Because I think for most of us, our deepest revelations come from the place of our greatest brokenness. So, I think of Paul the apostle who said, “Because of the abundance of revelations, I encountered a thorn in the flesh.” So, it's right there at the point of our need that God reveals his grace. And then out of grace, we have a message to share with others.

JAMES: And this great man had three specific tormentors, adding constantly that he couldn't silence. That would be anxiety. That would be all kind of pressure on the greatest Christian that ever lived. So, if he experienced that, we can all understand we can experience it. But God told

him what you discovered, His grace is sufficient. He walks us through it with the tormentor still firing at us. He can stop and quench those arrows. And that's what he does.

TERRY: It's amazing how we have to be reminded of that. Just over the last couple of days, and trying to find language to share with people this sense of invitation into rest, I've had this little metaphor, so to speak. And of course, a metaphor is never perfect. But imagine that you have an image of the most peaceful, tranquil place on the planet. I think for a lot of people, that may be Tahiti. I've never been to Tahiti, but I have an impression of what Tahiti is like: Beautiful, stilted houses and the beautiful resorts that are up over the water. Let's imagine you buy a ticket to Tahiti. You're not there, but you're on the journey. You go to the airport. You're still not there, but you're on the journey. You board the airplane. You're not there, but you're a little closer. You land in the capital city. You're not there, but you're closer. It's only when you're there that you're there.

So, I think for a lot of Christians who have verbally put their faith in Jesus and are growing and being formed in grace, that there's still more to the journey. And this journey is one that he's consistently inviting us into. I love how Eugene Peterson translates Matthew 11:28. He says, "Are you tired? Are you burned out on religion? Come to me, Jesus says, and let me teach you the unforced rhythms of grace."

So, I don't know that we'll ever arrive at complete tranquility. I think in this world we'll have tribulation, we'll have trials. But I think we can grow in peace, we can grow in rest, we can grow in the abiding presence of Jesus. And as we follow him, and we're being formed and reformed and transformed according to his love, our soul comes to a deeper and deeper rest in him.

JAMES: You know, I can tell by listening to you and also reading and knowing the things that you've talked about, do you feel like if people will get the book and get into it, they might find out how, as a fact, they can stop running and rest in the Lord and really find the peace they're looking for?

TERRY: I think they can. I want to invite them into that. Not long ago, I was speaking about the movie, Forrest Gump. Remember the movie? I'd watched it. It didn't really land deeply. And I was in Rome about a year ago, meeting with Pope Francis. And afterwards I was in a conversation with a Bulgarian filmmaker. He asked me, he said, "Do you know the greatest movie of all time?" And I thought, of all time? Of all genres? And so I thought the safe answer was, "I don't know." And he said, "Forrest Gump! It's what every movie wants to be." So, I went back and watched it again. And of course, coming out of trauma, he starts running. And he runs three years, something like, you know, I don't know, six months, 14 days and 12 hours until one day he says, "I'm tired. I think I'll go home now."

And I want to say to a lot of people, I know you're tired. You can come home. You can come home to the one who has been pursuing you, the one who has deep rest for your soul, the one whose grace is sufficient for you.

JAMES: Terry, your journey, I'm glad that I've contributed, Betty and I, and my ministry, in some ways to your life. I really do believe that Terry is used by God to really convince you that you can stop running. You will never escape the battle. And putting on the armor of God, suiting up in Jesus and letting him be the shield and the strength, let him be the helmet of salvation. I think you'll learn as you read what Terry shared, there really is hope and help for you. I promise you that.

And you know, Betty, you and I have found great freedom and we know what it is. We really do. Here we are in our 80s, can you believe it?

TERRY: I can't.

JAMES: We've been married 62 years. She doesn't look that old to me. She's so beautiful. But we really are at rest and at peace. And God has told me that because you lost your life to see my dream fulfilled, you're going to witness the power and fullness of my grace. And you're going to be able to share a truth that flows like a river of life!

Terry, God bless you. I want people to hear what God has put on your heart. And you can read it here.

Let me just tell you right now that we are drilling water wells. And as I've told you, it's a challenge. Would you please make the best gift you can to know that we're actually giving life? I want you to listen to Randy as he's looking at what people face. We are the answer and have the answer to it. Watch closely and prayerfully. But know we need a miracle, and you're the miracle these people need. We need the miracle of your help so we can meet their need. Watch closely.

Transition roll-in: (Praying for Ayak)

ANNOUNCER: *Every day, billions of people drink from a cup of water trusting that its safe. But in many communities around the world, that cup of water carries a hidden danger. Contaminated water is a silent killer for anyone who drinks it. It does not discriminate. It poisons the vulnerable, the young, the poor, and the needy.*

And all too often, mothers bear the heaviest burden of living with contaminated water. Mothers like Ayak. She lives in a remote village in South Sudan. But she represents countless mothers across Africa and beyond. She knows her family needs to drink some water every day. She knows the water is contaminated and it could make her children sick, or even worse.

Open Captions: Our water is not good. It gives my children diarrhea and we all have this skin rash.

RANDY: When you hear Ayak's story, it's humbling. Frankly, it's humbling for me. She just needs a little help.

ANNOUNCER: *The solution for Ayak and all the other mothers around the world is fairly simple: Drilling a new clean water well and installing a handpump near her village would assure Ayak that the next cup of water for her and her family is safe to drink.*

RANDY: Lord, I pray you would bless Ayak, bless her family. Thank you for the privilege of being able to come here and sit with her and share her story, and her heart -- her beautiful heart with others who watch this. Amen. Bless you! Bless you.

Studio appeal:

JAMES: You can't believe how much love God has put in my heart and Betty's for those people, and for the children that they weep over. We really, with no exaggeration, we have the perfect cure. They're not perfect cures for every challenge, but for a lack of clean water, there's a perfect cure. We're asking all of you who are watching right now, and I know there are people who have never given to help us drill a well. I mean, when you stop and think about it, that you make a gift of \$48 and you've literally given ten people water the rest of their life. You could give \$144 and you give water to 30 people. That's what happens when we drill a \$4,800 well. And there are people, thank God, every time we drill wells who will drill a well. There are people who tell us they live every year so that every time we ask for water wells, they can drill one. Betty and I prayed that prayer and God answered our prayer.

So, what we're asking you to do right now is make the best gift you can. You're giving those precious people in those villages, those precious mothers and family, and those children, you're giving them the greatest miracle of their life, you're giving them water for life. And we'll point them to the water of life, because that's what the missionaries are in place to do. We can keep them there. This could go on and on as long as there are people who will say, let's keep drilling those wells. Let's even expand it. We can do that.

Would you right now, please go get your bank card and use it like a check? If you write a check, make it to *LIFE* but call us and tell us you're putting it in the mail. Go online. Make the gift God's leading you to make, knowing you are giving the greatest gift, the gift of life, and ultimately, *the Water* of life. Thank you so much.

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:

JAMES: Well, I just pray you make the best gift you can. We would like to send you if you'll ask for it, *Prayers for My Physical Health*. Betty, I've been reading this. Many of the prayers are from Betty and me, or Randy or Tammy, about your health. But there's so much biblical truth. This is actually one of the most fun books I've ever seen, and it inspires you to get healthy. And the prayers are there.

The tumblers set, the “Armor of God” tumbler set, we will send two for your special gift. And don't forget the “Lion of Judah.” This is the one with the real power in it, the cross. That's for \$1,200. So please, it's really important, but make the very best gift that you can. And then, if you'd like to have this as just a gift, it's coming from Terry, who had a gift from God. A lot of it started here with us, according to him. I promise you, this will bless you. If you'd like to have it, just ask for it. We'll send it to you.

Thank you so much for joining with me and Betty to put God's arms around people that thought no one ever noticed. But we did, didn't we? Thank you so much.