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Week 35: *Christmas Shoes and Smiles*

James and Betty Robison

Anne Graham Lotz and Rachel-Ruth Lotz Wright

Studio discussion:

JAMES: Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm James Robison. Betty and I have part of our family here. You may not know this, but Billy Graham, a pretty famous preacher, adopted me when I was 19, enveloped me into the family. Now the family is here. So I've got this daughter, Anne Graham Lotz, who has been here many, many times. And we have one of Billy Graham's granddaughters, we've got Rachel-Ruth. And your last name now?

RACHEL: Wright. It is such a tongue twister, Rachel-Ruth Wright.

JAMES: There you go. Well, these two ladies had, in many ways, experienced hell against their bodies. Really, Anne had cancer, and it's a miracle. Her daughter had—tell us what—because you didn't have just one thing coming at you. You had a heart attack.

RACHEL: I had two and it's called SCADS, spontaneous coronary artery dissection, and it's very rare. It can happen to women basically in their 30s or 40s under a high-stress event or like a heart exercise. I went in for a routine stress test and it was terrible. And I walked out with chest pain. I thought it was acid reflux. And four days later, I ended up going to the hospital and having my first heart attack. The next day I had the second one. The artery on the inside just shreds.

JAMES: Now you all have written a book together, *Preparing to Meet Jesus*. Tell me how this all came today because this is a call of God on y'all's life.

ANNE: Yes, it is. I feel like, James, this is the message of the hour. I believe that I'm

living in the last generation. I believe Jesus is soon to return. And I believed that since I was a girl. He's given me scriptures that I believe confirm it. And I won't go into all the details of all that but I base my conviction on what he's told me in His Word.

But we're all going to meet Jesus at some point. He'll either be our bridegroom and our savior or he's going to be our judge. You can't avoid that. So when I look at the church, generally speaking, I see a lot of people asleep. They're not ready to meet Jesus. And they're going to have many, many regrets at that moment. I'm talking about people who have put their faith in Him and they go to church but they're just not ready to meet Him.

And so we wrote this book together and he will—you brought out this Fall will be my fifth checkup for breast cancer, so I faced death when I had that diagnosis. Rachel-Ruth had her two heart attacks a year and a half ago. We almost lost her. I watched her and I knew she was dying. And God pulled her back from that brink.

You never know when you're going to step into eternity, and we need to be ready for that moment. I live my life so that five minutes before I see Jesus I have as few regrets as possible. And if he doesn't come for me in the rapture, I know one day because of my age one day soon, I'm going to step into eternity, I'm going to see him and I don't want to have regrets. And the interesting thing is in the olden days of Jewish culture, in Hebrew culture, the bridegroom would go and make an arrangement with the bride's family and betroth her to him. And they would be married but not living together. And he would go back to his job during that year's interim to prepare a place for her to live in. Her job during that year's interim was to get ready to go and live with him.

So I feel like we're in that interim. Jesus said he's gone to prepare a place for us. He will come again to receive us to himself that where he is we may be also. He's getting the house ready. We need to get ourselves ready. Whether it's through old age, whether it's through a horrible accident, whether it's through disease, whether it's through the rapture, we need to be ready. So Rachel-Ruth teaches an incredible online Bible study. You can find it at AnneGrahamLotz.org.

JAMES: What's it called?

ANNE: It is just Rachel-Ruth—

RACHEL: It's just Rachel-Ruth Bible study. So it is Rachel-Ruth Genesis Bible study. Now I'm going to be teaching Exodus. But you can find it on AnneGrahamLotz.org.

ANNE: And she has 13,000 people from around the world from Russia, from Lebanon, from Africa, and from Australia. And she was teaching through Genesis and teaching this particular passage because the book is based on, you'll have to tell them but Genesis 24, the story of Abraham when he sent his servant, Eliezer to look for a bride for his son, Isaac.

So Rachel-Ruth has gone through and taken principles or characteristics, one at a time, there are 21 of them and found them in Rebecca and the story, and then she's applied them. Each chapter in this book is based on one of those principles or one of those characteristics. And at the end of the chapter, we have a challenge, which is just an application for us, ourselves. And then, when I finished working on that chapter and Rachel-Ruth wrote the chapters, I worked on them, worked on the little challenge, and the prayer that came to my heart and my mind is what I wrote down at the end of that. So I have personal prayers at the end of each one.

But Rachel, tell them about Isaac and Rebekah, and maybe some of the chapters.

JAMES: Let me ask you something, Anne. Were you surprised at what you saw coming on her after she went through this and then started writing and teaching in this way?

ANNE: It did before that. I remember the first time I heard her teaching it was at the Cove for a woman's Christmas thing. It was packed with 450 women, packed in there for their Christmas luncheon. And I went to support her and I got blown away. And when she

gave the—

BETTY: Isn't that awesome?

ANNE: Yeah. When she gave the invitation, there were dozens of people, women who stood to receive Christ and she prayed them through. Somehow, I had missed that. I had raised her and somehow, I missed it.

RACHEL: How did that happen?

ANNE: How did that happen? Because she is the one with ADD, she's the one who has a crazy sense of humor, and to see her stand up and preach with power. She was not a teacher, she was a preacher. So our book, our last book had just come out, *Jesus Followers*, which is when her heart attacks happened. And then we wrote this book together.

It's been a journey, James. I'm amazed at what God has allowed her to do and her sensitivity to his spirit, her incredible insights into His Word. You read through it, you won't find anything like this because the insights are so fresh and so spirit-inspired that you'll laugh, you'll cry, and you'll be blessed. It's a fabulous story.

JAMES: It looks to me like, by the 21 chapters, it's a three-week, 21-day journey into the fullness of the presence of God. Are you surprised at what he's doing? You didn't know you were going to have a P.R. person that would be this excited about it, did you?

RACHEL: Oh no. It's so sweet. I feel like I am evidence of what the Lord can do with a very weak vessel. Because there is no reason why I should be able to get up and give a message or write a book. I was the student every teacher just dreaded having because I couldn't comprehend, I was raising my hand all the time, I don't understand! And so I feel like God took the least of these and is using me, and I'm baffled by it. Every time I get up to speak or I write a book like I've reread it and I had to do it on the audiobook, and I'm

just like how did God do that?

JAMES: You are a miracle! Tell me what you want the book to do, and how you believe God is going to use it.

RACHEL: Well, just looking around at what's happening in our world, it is unreal how everything is melting down, and all these horrible things are happening. And they're going after our children, they're going after truth. Like truth is—they don't want it anywhere. And Christians are getting persecuted and you cannot believe the things that are happening.

And so, we know Jesus is getting ready to come back. And I feel like a lot of believers probably want to tuck away and just wait but we have to prepare ourselves.

JAMES: Be a light set up on the—we've got to be visible. And he's visible in us.

RACHEL: Yes! And so this book hopefully addresses those things where we can search our hearts if there is kindness, if there is humility, if we're even part of God's family. Have we ever given—we may go to church and go to Bible study but do we ever remember a time when we've prayed and asked Jesus to come and live inside?

ANNE: Stop on that one because that was the first characteristic that Abraham gave the servant.

RACHEL: Yeah! Well, it is so sweet. In the story of Abraham, when he asked his servant, "I need you to go find a bride for Isaac. Don't look amongst the Canaanites. I want you to go to my family and find a bride for Isaac." And so the servant does that because that was important. He didn't want a Canaanite who doesn't care about God or anything like that but go back to his family.

And that is such a picture that in order to be a bride, you have to be part of God's family.

That's the first characteristic, is to make sure you're part of the family. So we've got to make sure that we have a time in our lives where we've asked Jesus, humbled ourselves, and said, I know I'm a sinner and I want you to come into my life and take away these sins and cover them with your blood and have a right relationship with you.

And then the journey begins, and then you can do the rest of the book because then we can just gently go through piece by piece, do I see this in my life? How can I fix this? And just like when you're getting ready for a wedding. And you're getting ready to get married, you want to look your best and have the dress and hair, all that stuff. That's just for a wedding here on Earth. But to think of getting ready to see Jesus face to face, what can we do to get ready for that moment? I mean it's awesome! I cannot wait! I'm so ready for Heaven. But we can do things to get ready.

JAMES: Did you feel like it turned out to be rather deliberate what we could easily make a day process, is that what you've seen happen?

RACHEL: Yes, yes!

ANNE: They are short chapters so we were saying last night, it is so nice, especially if you're busy, just to have a short chapter that touches on one primary characteristic or principle. And I love the fact that the servant chose, according to the guidelines that Abraham gave him, but he chose Rebekah. But then Rebekah had to choose, we were talking about that this morning.

RACHEL: Well, it's so sweet because when Abraham was asking his servant then the servant said, "Well, that's fine but when I go what if she doesn't want to come with me?"

And he said, "Well, then I don't hold you to this. It's okay. Don't force her, in a sense, and don't take Isaac. I want him to stay here."

And so that's a picture that we're all offered this free gift but it's up to us to choose, do we

want to follow? Do we want to—so it is this great beautiful picture of both. We're chosen but are we going to choose?

JAMES: And you know, you are choosing him, you're not choosing a membership. Betty was a church member but she didn't know Jesus.

BETTY: That's true.

JAMES: And she was the sweetest little church member you ever saw.

RACHEL: There are so many like that.

BETTY: But to know now at the age that we are, we're getting, we're considered part of the older generation now. James and I have said over and over again, we want this to be the best season of our life. We want to be closer to him and walk closer in his footsteps than we ever have before. We want to have more zeal and love for what God loves. He loves all of us. And we want to show that love in the greatest way that we've ever been able to express it.

ANNE: You all do that, Betty. Can I just tell you? I want to encourage you, you're so loving and genuine, and authentic. But I think there are a lot of people out there today like you were. So they go to church, they're involved in religion. They don't know a personal relationship.

And the last characteristic that Rachel-Ruth pulled out, which is my favorite, I think, maybe other than the first one about being a member of the Father's family, but the last one is that when the servant took Rebekah and she met Isaac he took her into his mother's tent and he loved her. So it wasn't just an arranged marriage, it wasn't just something that she had to do, it was a love relationship.

And the relationship we have with our heavenly bridegroom is a love relationship. It's

not just master and servant, or boss and employer or employee, it's a love relationship. It is our bridegroom who is in love with the bride. And we need, with hearts overflowing with love for him, we want to be ready for that first look. At least I do.

JAMES: See, I'm going to be 80 years old and I have never felt more loved. I mean I feel like his love is so unconditional. It is boundless, it is endless, it is not measurable. It is continually expressed. And it is like he lets me know he's excited that I'm so excited about experiencing his love and then expressing that love. To me, that's what he's praying for.

As I look at these steps and I just read over them, all the things you're talking about are characteristics of somebody that's finding their way into the center of God's will to be a member that's rightly connected to the other members so that you're blessing one another. And then as a body, you're blessing everybody on this planet because they can see him. They can see his body adorned in his glory. Isn't that basically what you're trying to take everybody?

RACHEL: Yes! It is that natural overflow. When we have that time with the Lord and we're honest before him and we get rid of things that we see in our own lives that we don't need there, then not only are we blessed but others around us are.

ANNE: Well, it is the greatest evangelistic tool is just to be somebody who represents Jesus so well that other people want to know him because of what they see in us.

JAMES: You have to be pleased with her countenance. When you live there because you know when I met her, I had not met her in person, and I saw her, she has a radiance. And the whole church can have that radiance. You've always had that desire for God to flow, you want it. But you've got to admit, you're watching a miracle here. Not only the fact that she's alive but that Jesus is living so visibly in her. Can't you see that? I believe we can see it in his whole church if we would come just like you're trying to help us get there.

ANNE: I think that's right. And I think the things that Rachel-Ruth has been through, the pressures, the problems, stress, pain, God has used that to develop what you've just seen, what you see. And I think the church right now is getting ready to go through a time of persecution—it is going through a time of persecution. The things that they are doing are just almost you can't believe. But I think God is going to use that, just like he did in Acts to purify the church so that it becomes what you've said so that we're attractive to the world. Right now, I think the world, so many paint us with the same brush and they despise us because they think we're self-righteous, judgmental, whatever. But you strip all of that away, and you see somebody who is suffering and still with joy on their face and love in their hearts and caring about their neighbor, that is something that—

JAMES: That was the New Testament church in the book of Acts, and it brought down the greatest power that had ever been established on this earth. It came down so that ultimately the power of Jesus could go to everyone, and great births and miracles of things that changed lives and reached millions could happen. I believe right now today, the church dressed up in Jesus, prepared to meet Jesus, adorned in his glory, I honestly believe it's possible that billions of people would come to that Jesus. If they can see that Jesus because the one they think they see or they've never seen, they're not attracted to.

But I believe, I see him in you. Let me just pray for you. Lord, I love this girl. I've got her on my heart because mom put her on our hearts. And she is a miracle to be alive. And she's got your glory and she's trying to get your church adorned in that glory that she's walking in. Mom's excited about it and should be excited about it. But Lord, we want it to happen to everybody that's listening right now and watching, to really be prepared to meet you and to show people around them how beautiful you are, how magnificent you are. Please, God, let us be an answer to Jesus' prayer in John 17. Let us see that prayer answered, in Jesus' name, we pray.

I want to say to you, every one of you who watches this show knows we're going to ask you to help someone. You cannot watch *Life Today* and not know we're going to ask you

to give life today to somebody, and we point out the overlooked. And for some reason, you see the importance of touching the least of these with the love of God.

We'll send you the book if you'll do something. Would you give a pair of shoes? These are just like the very expensive shoes but they're \$3.60. \$36 gives ten people shoes, children. And we want to give them for Christmas. And then we want to give surgeries for cleft palates. So we call it *Christmas Shoes and Smiles*. Would you help us do that?

I'm going to let you look and see some little faces that can be changed. I want everybody to have the glorious smile you've got. Do you realize that children who have cleft palate, they don't ever like to see themselves? And their parents are broken. And then when you give them a smile, it is like what you're trying to do is give people the glory and grace and beauty and mercy of God. That's really what this book is doing. Because when you prepare to meet Jesus, you're going to encourage others to get ready to meet Jesus. They're going to want to meet him.

I want you to watch closely and just ask this question, do I want to be that person's miracle? Do I want to be the answer to their prayers? You can be. Watch.

Transition roll-in: [Know My Name]

James: I love you!

Announcer: For a child living in poverty in a developing country their smile may be the most valuable thing they own. But imagine if that child was born without a big beautiful smile.

People told me not to dream
To live in their reality
But I am walking through those doors
Because I am sure

There's something more
Than what I've been told
Oh, I know I found my way
Oh, tomorrow is a brand-new day
And the whole world is going know my name

Announcer: More than a decade ago, *LIFE Outreach* started an annual mission campaign called, "Christmas Shoes and Smiles." In addition to providing over two million children with a new pair of shoes, *LIFE* and its mission partners have also changed the lives of over 2,000 children born with a cleft lip or cleft palate by providing the surgery needed to give them their very own brand-new smile.

Tony: A big thank you to the *LIFE Outreach* family. It's a privilege to serve with you as we share the gospel of Christ and as we provide life-changing surgeries in our part of the world. Our partnership has resulted in children's lives being transformed; from disfigured faces to faces beaming with smiles all because of your generosity in providing these surgeries.

Our world is going to know my name.

Studio appeal:

JAMES: I don't know if you noticed the little girl that was sitting in my lap when we first saw that. Betty, I prayed that little girl into my lap. I just saw her walking very timidly, walking down the road and turning. And I sat down and I said, "Betty, did you see that little girl a while ago?" Said, "I'm praying she'll come get in my lap." And she turned around and came and sat down in my lap. But with that little girl, we went and we saw children whose feet were all torn up and diseased. We saw where a child had died of the disease that had started in his feet, and then hookworms got into his brain and killed him. And the doctor there told us what happened. And we realized what shoes could do.

Do you remember the little boy that had never seen his face in Angola? We took a video, turned it around, and let him look at the monitor. And when he saw his face, see he had never even seen a mirror, he went, "Aah!" And he screamed and ran away. It so broke our hearts that he was scared when he saw himself. We came back and talked to you. And Betty and I got the money together. We found we would have to take him, because it is a serious surgery, to Johannesburg, quite a trip. And we asked you to pay for it, and you did. And we gave that little boy the most beautiful smile.

When I say we, that encompasses all of you. I've said many times, and I don't think it is an exaggeration even in the slightest, the most love-filled, unselfish people I think on the planet are people who watch what you God have called us to do for the least of these and the unnoticed, and you know love never fails. We could weep over the hurting, the suffering and the unsaved, and the thirsty and the hungry but we could not feed them, give them water, give them a surgery, give them shoes. You do it. It is the body of Christ. It's the family of God doing God's will on his earth for his glory.

Could you give \$500 for a surgery? \$1,000 for two as Christmas gifts? Could you give \$36 to give ten children a pair of shoes? For Christmas, we have to raise the money now, Betty. We're several months ahead in order to get the shoes, to get the doctors lined up, and get them to the places of need and deliver the gifts and the surgeries.

Would you right now go online or dial that number and take your bank card and use it like a check? Have you ever made a \$1,000 gift or several thousand to work miracles? Could you give over \$100 to give shoes? We have gifts to send you to say thank you. And I pray you'll give the greatest gift because of the great gift God gave us through his Son Jesus.

Would you go get that card right now? Use it like a check, please. Give a smile if you can. Give as many shoes as you can. Let's do this for Christmas. We have to raise the money now. Thank you for your response.

CS&S Cause 2025:

ANNOUNCER: Poverty is a killer, and because of it, children needlessly suffer not only from lack of food and clean water, but also from a lack of things we take for granted, such as a healthy smile or a protective pair of shoes.

Far too many children living in extreme poverty have never owned a pair of shoes. And while that may seem minor, walking with bare feet puts them at risk of painful infections, injury, and life-threatening diseases.

But this Christmas, you can bring hope and healing. Your gift today will help provide new shoes for 150,000 children in time for the holidays. And for some children, a beautiful new smile. Your gift of \$36 will help provide shoes for ten children, \$72 will help provide for 20, \$180 will help provide shoes for 50, and a gift of \$500 will help provide a cleft surgery, restoring a child's smile forever.

As a thank you for your gift of support, be sure to request the beautifully crafted yellow crystal shoe ornament, a treasure to display each Christmas. With your gift of \$100 or more, you may request this keepsake set featuring four of LIFE's colorful crystal shoe ornaments. Finally, please consider a gift of \$1,000 or more to help provide over 275 pairs of shoes or two children with corrective smile surgeries, and you may request the beautiful bronze sculpture, "Lion of Judah."

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

Studio good-bye:

JAMES: I want to thank all of you that have responded. And I know you're going to be blessed if you get the book. You've done a Bible study. Your mom is excited about it. She knows it's God. She knows you and she knows God is bigger than you, but he's real big in you and she's excited. Tell them how they can find you if they go and see the Bible study.

RACHEL: Absolutely. So you can go to our website, AnneGrahamLotz.org, and on there it will just say Rachel Ruth's Bible study. We just finished Genesis, so we'll study Exodus. So Rachel Ruth's Exodus Bible study. All you have to do to sign up is put in your email, and then every week you'll get an email with the link. We have a live Zoom on Tuesdays where I teach live, and we have interaction at the beginning where we discuss the passage. And then I give it a lesson, I mean a message for about 45 minutes, after that on that passage.

ANNE: They can get it on demand after that.

RACHEL: Yes. So if they can't get it, a lot of people are in different time zones, if they can't get on the live one, then they can get it any time. It will just be in their email.

JAMES: Well, I think you'll be mightily blessed to do it. Thank you for helping us bless so many people, including this beautiful couple you've just seen. You've been helping Anne for a long time. And thank you for all you do. I hope you do get the book. We'll send it to you if you give some shoes or a smile. We want to say thank you. God bless you! Thank you for blessing others.