

# Unfavorable Odds

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## Episode 21: Wounded Warrior and Enduring Love

Guest: Carlos and Rosemarie Evans

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**Rosemarie:** It was a Saturday night and he called me that night and I was very happy because he can't call me all the time when he's in Afghanistan. So when I got that call, I was ready to speak to him. But when I told him "Hey Carlos, how are you?" he was like "I'm fine," but he was different—a little bit different.

So, I start asking him like "Are you sure you're alright? Everything is good?" And he says, "This is different—different than Iraq" and he starts telling me "You know that you're the most important thing for me and you and my daughters are everything for me. You know that. I love you so much," and then the phone went dead.

I start crying because I thought that something happened—that he was in danger. I don't know, I started thinking bad stuff about over there. That was Sunday. Sunday passed and then on Monday I receive a call from the Marines, and they told me that they need to see me because they have to tell me something that happened to Carlos.

**Rosemarie:** —notify me.

**Kim:** From the FamilyLife podcast network, this is *Unfavorable Odds*. I'm Kim Anthony.

*Unfavorable Odds* is all about finding hope and help in those seasons of life when things get pretty difficult. Jesus has promised us that whenever we walk through those dark tough times, He's always going to be with us. So on each episode of this podcast, we'll be talking with people who have learned how, in those very difficult times, to draw their strength from Jesus.

Carlos Evans was on his fourth deployment proudly serving our country as a Marine. But one day, while leading his team on foot patrol, he stepped on an IED, an explosive, that resulted in a number of significant and life altering injuries.

As he began to recover from his injuries, he and his wife, Rosemarie, found themselves facing difficulties that at first seemed impossible to overcome. Carlos and Rosemarie have written a book called *Standing Together: The Inspirational Story of a Wounded Warrior and Enduring Love*. I spent time with both of them recently. I found them to be a couple full of faith who have been able to turn tragedy into triumph.

So Carlos, when you were making that call, what was going on in your mind? What had happened to even cause you to tell her those things?

**Carlos:** Well, we were in combat in Afghanistan, Helmand Province, and there were a lot of things going on at that time. My main priority in my life was my family. They're my motivation. So before that call we were in a mission and we went through an improvised explosive device with our vehicles. So my vehicle exploded, and everybody was safe, but it was kind of a reality check in my life—this is very dangerous. I just started thinking of all my family and I knew I was different scenario than I was before.

That day I had the opportunity to call my wife and I wanted to make sure—I wanted to let her know that if something happened that she knew that I loved her and I loved my daughters and they were my motivation to keep moving forward.

**Kim:** When you look back at it now, do you sense that God gave you that opportunity?—almost like a warning.

**Carlos:** Yes, yes, I do.

**Rosemarie:** Oh yes, He was preparing us.

**Kim:** That's amazing. As I look at your story, I see that pattern throughout. That He was preparing you for those things that would come next. Now as you waited after you got that call, Rosemarie, you were concerned. You didn't know what had happened, but you were surrounded by a lot of family and friends. That's one of the things I noticed is that from day one you had great—both of you had great support. How helpful was that for you?

**Rosemarie:** Oh, it was great because when I got the news about Carlos / when they come to the house and told—

**Carlos:** The marines came by.

**Rosemarie:** The marines came to the house and told us what happened. Instantly we were in Carlos house / in Carlos' mother's house and every friend came over there and they started praying. Starting by the chaplain because one of the marines was a chaplain.

**Kim:** Okay.

**Rosemarie:** I remember that when one of the officers was giving all the bad news, then the chaplain started praying for us. He started praying for me and telling me that you'd have peace in this moment and you're going to have the strength and that really gave me a lot of strength. Then all the family members and shared community, they came to the house and started doing prayers and start—it was like it was a hard moment but at

the same time you were feeling that God doesn't forget about us. He sent the right people in the right moment and yes, it was great.

**Kim:** So Carlos, Rosemarie was there with the family not knowing exactly what happened, but they knew that something serious was going on. Will you take me through the circumstances leading up to the explosion?

**Carlos:** I was on a mission in Helmand Province. I was leading that mission. I was a sergeant in the Marine Corps, and I was in my fourth combat deployment. It was May 17, 2010 and we were getting ready to go on this mission. When we ended the mission, I was getting ready to go back, I remember hearing an explosion.

The explosion that I heard was I stepped on an IED / an improvised explosive device. Immediately, I lost both of my legs above my knees, part of my left arm. My left hand was amputated as well and there were other extremities that were injured. What I remember the most was that I felt so much pain that I'd never felt in my life before. But at the beginning I didn't know I was injured because my body was in shock and I thought something happened to someone else.

But when I saw my marines, my medic, my corpsman surrounding me, that's when I knew "Oh, something happened." I kind of started seeing my life like a movie and seeing the things that I've done and the things I haven't done. When I saw my marines surrounding me, that's when I knew "I'm dying." Because what they were doing were things that we trained for situations like this that I was facing.

So at that moment I started to pray, and I started to question God too. How is it possible that I am a Christian, I am a believer, and I'm going through this difficult time in my life? How is it possible that I'm going to die here in this desert? Because before I used to tell my marines: I'm not going to die here because God's purpose in my life is bigger than this desert. But here I am facing all of this and my marines saved my life.

Nineteen-year-old kids / twenty-year-old they put nine tourniquets in my body. When I wanted to give up because of the pain that I was feeling, one of my marines just—he shook my head and looked straight into my eyes and I believe that he was prophesizing to my life because he kept telling me "You're not going to die here today." He kept asking me "What is your wife's name?" I kept telling him "Rosemarie." "What are your daughters' names?" "Nairobi and Genesis." He kept repeating "you're going to go home to them."

In the middle of the crisis everything that he said he was speaking life into my heart. Seven days passed by. I was in an induced coma from Afghanistan to Germany and I opened my eyes in Walter Reed Bethesda and Rosemarie was right there beside me.

**Kim:** As you were lying there in the combat zone believing that you were about to die, you write in your book that you also remembered something your great grandmother used to say to you. What was that?

**Carlos:** My great grandmother—I get very emotional—my great grandmother used to tell me when I was a kid that God had a purpose in my life and that I was going to preach the gospel all over the world. In the middle of all of that I was thinking: how am I going to be able to see that if I'm dying here today? So I started questioning God's purpose in my life.

**Kim:** Tell me what you're feeling right now. I see a lot of emotion.

**Carlos:** I feel my emotions. I'm trying to describe it, but I feel good. I feel happy because sometimes you go through struggles in life and you go through situations and you ask yourself the why and the where: where are you God? And why? God's word is bigger than anything / than any obstacle that you're facing and that's just what I'm thinking. I'm thinking that God is in control of my life. My dog is next to me right now because he knows what I'm feeling. So he's here to comfort me.

**Kim:** Yes, those who can't see you right now, Carlos and Rosemarie are sitting in a chair and as Carlos began to express emotion, his dog came up to comfort him. So beautiful. So beautiful.

Rosemarie, before you were able to see Carlos you had a chance to speak to someone about his injuries and because you have a background as a nurse, you wanted to know everything. You didn't want them to hold back. What did they tell you?

**Rosemarie:** When I called Germany, I had an opportunity to talk with the nurse, I asked how he was doing: he was connected to a ventilator. So I knew he was going to be connected to a ventilator. But then she told me they had to amputate his left arm and I didn't know that—left hand. That was something that really break my heart. Like feeling that the person you love is going through so much.

I get desperate but at the same time I was hopeful that okay, he's going to make it. He's going to come back home and that's the important thing. I always pray to God: "bring him back alive. I don't care right now in this moment he lost his legs, but I need him back. I need to tell him that I love him."

Because when they told me that he was so injured, one of the first things I really started regretting is the times that sometimes you are with your family member and the person you love and you don't enjoy that moment. You don't take the time to tell them "I love you" because you're so busy doing so much stuff in the house. When I see maybe that I'm going to lose my husband, then I start like "God, give me the chance to tell him that I love him. I don't want to lose him. I just want him back." So he came back, yes.

**Kim:** Yes, he came back. He came back. I go back to that preparation that God had you go through beforehand. Rosemarie, you had taken a course in nursing school that would prepare you to care for Carlos.

**Rosemarie:** Yes, it's amazing when you look back and can say "Wow, God, you really were preparing us to—everything / every detail / every small detail, you really were there." One of the courses that I was taking is a prehospital trauma life support. So it's accidents that happen outside the hospital setting.

One of the themes that we have is amputations that happen because of blasts. So we were learning about that. When they told me about Carlos accident, I could look for my book I start checking everything that was going on and what was going to happen how everything looks like. So every detail. God really prepared us for that.

**Kim:** Another thing he did, Carlos, is before this all happened, you took a picture of your left hand. Tell me why did you do that? What was it about? What were you thinking?

**Carlos:** I was taking a shower and after I left, I'm in my room and I had my copy machine in my room. I look at my hand where I usually wear my wedding ring and I'm thinking about what can I give Rosemarie just to remind her that when I'm not here she could look at and be reminded of how much I love her and that wedding day our vows and you know all that.

I took a picture of my left hand. I took a picture with the copy machine and I gave it to her, and I said "Baby, this is for you." She was asking why? I'm like this is so when I'm far away, you can look at my hand, so you know I'm never far away from you. Every time I used to write a letter—

**Rosemarie:** He drew a hand.

**Carlos:** I drew my hand. So that was our thing. She still has it.

**Rosemarie:** Yes, I have it. [Laughter]

**Kim:** That's incredible—incredible how God went before you.

**Carlos:** And when I was at the hospital, I remember you have to go home.

**Rosemarie:** And when the letter came from Afghanistan—one of the letters that he wrote me from Afghanistan, I receive it in my house when he was injured. When I opened the letter, he was like telling me how much I love you and he draw the hand and he draw my family inside the hand—everything.

**Kim:** Oh, as I was reading your story and I see the two of you now—I wish everyone else could see you— [Laughter] just the love / the genuine love that you have for each

other is such a testimony. Not only to your story but to the picture that you're able to show others of God. It really is incredible.

What was it like when you first saw each other after the accident?

**Rosemarie:** When I entered the room, first, I was outside because they were doing some of the CT scans of the brain because they don't know if he has brain injury—

**Carlos:** Brain injury.

**Rosemarie:** —and I was very afraid because I was worried—

**Carlos:** —how to deal with it.

**Rosemarie:** Yes, with a brain injury that he couldn't recognize me or something. I was a little bit scared to go inside. But when I went inside the room and he was connected to the ventilator and everything, when I call him "Carlos," he opened the eyes and then he started crying. For me that was like "Okay, he recognized me. He knows who I am. He knows who we are." Because my in-laws came inside the room, too, and he started looking at us. He started crying but at the same time it was like "I'm here. Baby, we're going together through this."

**Carlos:** I don't remember. I remember that experience that she had but as she's saying those for her was tears of hope. But for me, when I saw her, the first thing that I thought about was my buddy in the Marines. That he was telling me: "you're not going to die here today. You're going to see your wife, Rosemarie, and your daughters, Nairobi and Genesis." So when I saw her, I was like "wow, I'm alive!" I asked her—

**Rosemarie:** What happened to me?

**Carlos:** —what happened to me? Because I didn't know what happened to me.

**Kim:** Okay.

**Carlos:** She told me I stepped on an IED. I lost both of my legs, my left hand. You're here in the hospital in Washington, D.C. I'm thinking about all this. I was happy to be alive, but one of the first things that came to my mind was "Wow, I'm not going to be able to be the father that I promised my daughters and I'm not going to be able to be the father that I promised my wife." Because she kept telling me that I didn't have my limbs. I was like "No, I have them because I feel them."

**Rosemarie:** He's still feeling.

**Carlos:** Because of phantom pain, I feel them. She told me and I was happy to be alive, but at the same time I was devastated. Because I didn't think I was going to be the man that God wanted me to be or that I wanted to be.

**Kim:** Yes. What were the early stages of recovery like for you?

**Carlos:** Wow!

**Rosemarie:** It was a roller coaster, I think. It was like a roller coaster. It was like Carlos says: at the beginning, we were happy because he was alive. That's what we were praying for: "okay, God, you bring him alive." But during the process, when we started seeing different things and for example, when they told us it was going to be like a two-year recovery time, that was a really shocking moment.

Because two years in the hospital, it was hard and for me, I had my daughters. The older one was four years old and the little one was five months. So they were separated for a time from us. It was like three months that they were apart from us. We were in the hospital. Another thing, Carlos started having like hallucinations. He was like in and out. Sometimes he was saying the right thing but in the other time, he started seeing like blood or he started having a moment that he was in the war. Each moment was very—

**Carlos:** Severe PTSD.

**Rosemarie:** Yes.

**Carlos:** It was the recovery. It was very hard, but we had a lot of support. We had doctors, nurses, volunteers; my family was there all the time. I mean our family's close, but we got even—it was closer. But during the recovery process I just started questioning God. God, why me? God, where are you? Because I thought that to understand that God was present in my life, I had to feel Him. I had to have an experience.

So I didn't understand "where was God?" because like I said before, as Christians, we believe that if you're serving the Lord, you're not going to go through situations like this where people telling me "oh, maybe God is punishing you." I mean it was very hard, especially those first two years.

**Kim:** Wait, did people really say that?

**Carlos:** Oh yes! Yes!

**Kim:** Oh my goodness.

**Carlos:** Yes, it was—I saw a little bit of everything during that process. Because my life changed. So trying to find our new normal / trying to be a father. I used to hide my

wounds from my daughters all the time. Because as a man I didn't want to show myself weak. When you're talking about recovery, there's so many things. But one of the main things was I didn't love my new body. I don't know how to live with this new body I have now. So I didn't love it. I didn't like seeing pictures of myself. I couldn't look at myself in the mirror. I didn't want no one to take pictures of me. So going through an identity crisis as well. I was suicidal.

**Rosemarie:** Narcotics.

**Carlos:** Taking narcotics—I was addicted to narcotics. Through all of this just trying to see: God, what are you doing in my life?

**Kim:** Right. What was the most difficult part of all of that? Is there anything that stands out to you that you thought “You know what? I don't know if I can make it through this part.”

**Rosemarie:** For me it was different than Carlos. I have a moment in the hospital—it was on our anniversary. I was there. I was so happy because it was the anniversary, but he starts having like a little hallucination. That night, I think, I go to the bathroom / in the hospital bathroom, I just lay on the floor and I started crying. I said to Him, “God, you know I love him. I love him so much but he's changing. I don't know how I can deal with this situation or how my daughters are going to handle this situation.”

So I think in that moment, I just surrendered to God over there. It was my moment to surrender to God. It was there in that bathroom floor that I started receiving the comfort straight from God. All the Bible verses that I knew from my childhood, everything come back and really, they bring light. They were real in that moment, especially through songs.

I bring the iPhone I always put to Carlos for music. I take that iPhone and put it in the bathroom with me. I was crying and crying and one of the songs that start playing saying only my grace will sustain you. It was like God was talking to me, especially for me. That was my moment. So I think God was working with me first so I can help Carlos. He was dealing with me first and giving me the strength so I can be there for Carlos going through his situation. But for you it was different.

**Carlos:** I pick the most difficult moment. It wasn't—yes, I was missing my legs and my left hand and that hurt. Basically, that hurt; not being able to do the things that I used to do before. Because I was very independent and strong, and I depend so much on my body.

But I think the most difficult thing for me was fear of not being accepted by the people that I love; fear of how people looked at me; fear of showing my wounds; fear of failing as a father; fear of failing as a husband. When I started feeling—here I am in my house, dragging myself on the floor, looking at my daughters and seeing my wife going through

so much, I kept repeating to myself: I'm not going to be able to be that father and that husband and that's when I wanted to give up. Because I was like "I don't know how to live my life this way."

**Kim:** There's no manual for it, right?

**Carlos:** Exactly, there's no manual for it. So that day I wanted to give up. I just wanted to die, and I wanted to give up on my family because I was giving up on myself. I love my daughters; I love my wife. But at that time, I didn't love myself. So it was very hard to express love because all the fear and pain I was feeling. So when you're not happy with yourself you push away the people that love you. So I was trying to do that.

I remember one day that day I was ready to give up, ready to give up and I'm dragging myself in my apartment room and I'm ready to tell Rosemarie: why don't you continue with your life and I will continue with mine here in Washington, DC. And continue with mine was ending my life.

Rosemarie looked at me like she's looking at me right now. Rosemarie looked at me straight in my eyes. She got on her knees and she looked at me straight in my eyes and she told me—I told her: "Why don't you go home and I'll stay here," and she said—she told me: "What are you saying?" I'm like "You can't love me. Look at all the wounds I have in my body."

She told me: "You know what? When the chaplains and the marines came by the house to tell me what happened to you, I prayed to God and I asked God to bring you home alive and here you are alive right in front of me."

She told me: "I'm not a widow and your daughters are not orphans. You are their father and I love you for the man you are. I love you for the man you were yesterday. I love you for the man you are today, and I love you for the man you're going to be tomorrow."

I kept telling her: "You can't love because look at all my wounds." She told me: "That's the difference between you and me. I don't see your wounds. I only see your scars." I said, "What do you mean by my scars?"

She kept telling me "You know what? When a patient goes inside a hospital room with an open wound, the doctor sees him and he heals that wound and after he heals it, that patient goes back home. The evidence that it has been healed, it becomes a scar. So when I see your wounds, I see your scars. When I see your scars, I see who healed you and that is Jesus and if Jesus is the Savior of our lives, we're going to make it through," and that was a breakthrough in our lives.

**Kim:** That's powerful. What an example of unconditional love and pulling on the strength and the power of Almighty God.

How did you prepare your little girls to see you for the first time?

**Rosemarie:** Well the older one, we were afraid of how she's going to react. But you know kids are very different than adults and they see life very, very different. So I remember when she came to the hospital for the first time. She went to the room and she just sit down on the bed. Carlos was with a blanket up because he don't want nobody to see him. She was playing with the Nintendo or the PlayStation or something. She was playing with the PlayStation and then she look at Papi and she said, "Hey Papi, you don't have legs." But that's it; that's the only thing she said.

**Carlos:** —at that time.

**Rosemarie:** At that time, that's the only thing that she said. It was like okay. But then during the process—

**Carlos:** We had psychologists. We had doctors in the hospital that were preparing her and us how to deal with me—that Papi is different. Papi is wounded. This was a lifechanging experience.

**Rosemarie:** Yes, that was.

**Carlos:** I was in the hospital room with my wound care nurse and my wound care nurse is healing my wounds. I mean I've open wounds in my limbs. My wound care nurse is healing my wounds. I don't know out of nowhere Nairobi comes in the hospital room.

**Kim:** And she's how old?

**Rosemarie:** She was five.

**Carlos:** Five years old at that moment. She sees me for the first time with my wounds / open wounds. When she saw me, I was like she's going to be afraid of me for life. Traumatized. I'm afraid of you as a father because she's not going to accept me. I mean who wants a father in this condition. That's me, right?

Nairobi is staring at me and the nurse, Lauren, ask Nairobi "Nairobi, do you want to heal Papi's wounds?" And Nairobi says "Yes, I want to heal Papi's wounds." So she puts gloves on Nairobi's hands and Nairobi touches my wounds and she starts healing them. I start crying. She's like Papi does it hurt? I'm like no it doesn't hurt. Papi's happy.

So she's showing me that I'm Papi in her life. It doesn't matter what I look like. What matters is my actions and that I am present in their lives. I mean she was embracing me when I wasn't even embracing myself. She was embracing my weakness when I was hiding my weakness. She was embracing my wounds when I didn't want to show my wounds.

So my daughters showed me all I have to do is be present in their lives and they took it—they were very involved in everything in the therapy. It was hard. It was hard for the changes. But we had a lot of support like family, friends, and the hospital. I think it made them more resilient and more sensitive to the needs of others—that not everybody is the same. Everybody's different.

So here we are in a hospital room with a five-year-old and a baby surrounded by people who are missing limbs, hands and different kind of situations and just living life to the fullest. They were very exposed to a lot of different things. That part was great.

**Kim:** And I'm sure the Lord is going to use that experience that they had as young girls and the experience they're having now in their future. Who knows what He may use them to do.

Now you mentioned being surrounded by other wounded warriors. You'd also have some of them visit you. Some who were maybe further along. What did that do for you?

**Carlos:** Wow! For both of us, it showed me: wow, we can make this. We can do this. Because seeing other marines with amputations similar to mine and seeing other family members going through the things that you were going through it gave us hope. It gave us hope in knowing that we were not the only ones facing these challenges. It was a support group at the same time.

**Kim:** That's great. Now there came a time when you would have to leave the hospital. I believe that one of the first things you did was to visit your church back at home. What was that like for you?

**Carlos:** Wow!

**Kim:** For both of you?

**Carlos:** Well, after the experience where Rosemarie—

**Rosemarie:** —when he wanted me to leave and that experience that he told me that, I was like “I need to go to church. This is the moment you go to church. So I don't care if we have to drive seven hours to go to church.”

**Carlos:** —our church.

**Rosemarie:** Our church; it was seven hours from Maryland. I told him “Carlos, we have to go to church, and he was afraid because we have to drive. It was the first time that he was going to be inside the car for so many hours. But it was the best thing we do that morning. Because when we get to the church—even outside the church—when we hear music, we start crying.

**Carlos:** For me it was very hard. Because just getting in a vehicle and driving seven hours and thinking “what are people going to say when they see me?” Because I was afraid of people. I was afraid of leaving my room.

When I get to the church, I remember listening to the music in the parking lot. No, worship and here I am in my wheelchair in a public place—go inside the church for the first time. When I get there, people were just receiving us with so much love and I remember we were worshipping, and they were clapping or something and I wanted to clap but I forgot that I didn’t have my hand to clap.

**Rosemarie:** So we start clapping

**Carlos:** So Rosemarie put her hand and we started clapping like that. [Laughter]

As we entered the church, the church they embraced us. Remember everybody prayed for me. But it came to a point that I started to pray. I took my wheelchair and I go to the altar and I’m just talking to God. “God, I don’t know how to live this way. People keep telling me ‘you can do it. You can do it. You can do it.’ But I don’t know,” and I was feeling so much pain.

Right there the Word—it came life to my heart. I said “You know what? I look at the cross—what Jesus did for me at the cross and I say: wow! He was wounded, too, so I can be healed.” Because I kept saying “God, you don’t know what I’m going through.” But He was wounded so I could be healed.

I kept repeating the Word: “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” So it means I could be a father. I could be a husband. I could be the person that my great grandmother told me when I was a kid. I could live that Word and I embraced that Word and I started living my life.

I realized also—I saw that later in scripture, but people kept telling me: “you’re going to have a glorified body and you’re going to do everything when you go to heaven.” I’m like “Yes, thank you.” That is awesome. That is our hope. But I just found it in scripture that Jesus, in a *glorified body*, had an encounter with His disciples and Thomas. The first thing that Jesus did in a glorified body was show His scars. I said “My Savior has scars just like me. So I don’t have to hide mine anymore.”

**Kim:** Amen.

**Carlos:** From there on the Lord started opening doors to share our story, and that’s when I realized standing doesn’t have anything to do with having legs. Standing has to do much more with faith.

**Kim:** Now, Rosemarie, you were very instrumental in helping Carlos to come out of his shell / to come out of his comfort zone and try new things. You were instrumental in

getting him to go to church and there were some other things you got him to do. Tell me about those.

**Rosemarie:** For example, I remember in the hospital they told us about a ski trip / skiing. So he was so afraid. He didn't want to do nothing. He was afraid of everything. When they told me about that ski trip, I was like "Carlos, we should go," and he was like "no, I don't want to do it because it's going to hurt. It's going to be different." I'm like "oh, yeah, we're going to go. We're going to go there. We're going to go there," and we went to that ski trip.

I remember that at the beginning it was very hard because he fell so many times. He was like—he didn't want to go that next day. He didn't want to do it again. I was like "yes, we have to do it. We have to do it." But it was great because he has a lot of experience when we do this ski trip.

**Carlos:** I mean being able to do something that I'd never done in my life before, during that week in Colorado, it showed me that if I could do this, I could do anything I put my mind to. I mean Rosemarie showed me, and she shows me every day, that when you look at someone through God's love, you don't see that person as a person that's incomplete. When you see someone through God's love—even in his weakest moment—you don't see his present, you see his future.

When someone loves you because God has loved you—Rosemarie shows me every day that love can conquer anything. Through her love, I see how God sees me and that's how I want to see her, as well, and that's how I see her. By she showing me that, I started looking at myself through the mirror of the Word.

When I look at myself through the mirror of the Word, there's no incomplete because Jesus fulfills everything in your life. It all takes someone to see you how God sees you, and when you see someone the way God sees you you'll see the world differently.

**Kim:** I'm sitting here looking at you two. It is like God has designed you for each other.

**Carlos:** We share the same birthday!

**Kim:** Do you really?

**Rosemarie:** Yes! [Laughter]

**Kim:** What are some of the things that you have had an opportunity to do as a result of all that you've experienced? There are a lot of new things.

**Carlos:** First-time things. I mean first time is everything because it's a new normal. But first-time things: skiing, doing marathons—

**Rosemarie:** —parasailing.

**Carlos:** —parasailing—

**Rosemarie:** —skydiving.

**Carlos:** —skydiving.

**Kim:** Oh, goodness.

**Carlos:** All kind of sports and activities that showed me that if you could do this, you can do anything. But one of the most powerful experiences that we've had is that understanding that our tears yesterday is our platform today. So understanding that platform—those doors that the Lord started opening.

I mean we met so many good people. We met people—we were at the White House. We were invited by the first lady, Michelle Obama, at the time, to the State of the Union address with the president at the time, Obama. We were at the Capitol. We were at the White House. We've been traveling all over the world—Europe, Asia, the Caribbean—just sharing with other people: who is Jesus in our lives?

Those new things are because we see life differently now. This has made us more sensitive to the needs of others. We understand that it can be in a room in the Capitol. It could be a room in the White House. It can be a room in someone's house or in a church.

Everybody has scars. Some are visible and some are in the heart and people need to see someone who they can relate to. We talk to people. We are very honest. That's why our book is *Standing Together*. We're very honest in our book. Because we want people to see everybody has scars. Everybody has wounds. But this is our Healer and our mission in life is to show the world who is our Healer / who is behind our smile.

**Kim:** You share the hard stuff and one of the things you touched on a little earlier, Rosemarie, was the fact that you saw some effects taking place in your husband's life that had to do with the medication he was taking. There were some red flags. What were you seeing happening?

**Rosemarie:** For me it was changing of moods / a little changing of moods, hallucinations. Mostly the changing of moods is something that is hard. Because seeing the person that you love going in depression, going very—that break your heart. Seeing the person that you know that he has so much potential but right now you seem like I want to give up and that really breaks your heart. I think that's the moment those things I could see it because of the medication and because of the situation that we were going through.

But that's why I always I let him know that he's still the head of my family. He is my husband and he's the head of the family. You are the one that needs to take care of us. You still have a purpose. You don't lose your purpose because you lose your legs. This is something that you lose but you don't lose your purpose. You still have a purpose and your battling for our family.

So I don't want you to give up. Right now is a time for us to keep on going. We're going to do it together. I always told you. It's something that I told you. Jesus has to be the center of our family and for me surrendering to God is like the key for my family. Praying has been my mighty weapon. I think yes! Pray! Just going to God and tell Him I can do this. Give me the wisdom to start making the right choices. That's what I need God. I think that's what God has been doing.

**Carlos:** Asking for help.

**Rosemarie:** Asking, yes.

**Kim:** And one of those areas you needed to ask for help for, for Carlos, was the addiction that began to develop with the medications.

**Rosemarie:** It was hard because at the beginning, he didn't want to accept he was getting into it. But really you can see it because it was like honestly, he got the medication and he's still sleeping all day and he don't want to do nothing. I started seeing those little things like I know you have PTSD. I try to give him the chance. Okay, you're hurt but there were times that I was like you need to stop.

**Carlos:** Denial

**Rosemarie:** Denial, that's the word. He was in denial in the beginning. It was like he knows something was wrong, but he didn't want to accept it. So I try in the beginning to tell him, but you know what? Something that was very helpful was a friend. Because a friend came to the house and she saw what was going on. When she stayed there, she started seeing some stuff in him and she went inside the room—She's one of Carlos' best friends. So she went inside the room and she with love / she loved you—

**Kim:** Tough love.

**Rosemarie:** She told you the truth. She told you this is what is happening right now. If you keep doing this, you're going to lose your family. So it's time for you to wake up. Stop doing this. I think that was a waking call for him.

**Carlos:** At the same time, it helped a lot her being a nurse.

**Rosemarie:** Yes!

**Carlos:** She was able to see something's not right / something more and she endured withdrawals. So her telling—I didn't want—like I said I was in denial because I had never been through a situation like this. It was like about three years, or more, four years.

**Kim:** How did you overcome addiction?

**Carlos:** I first went to my pain management doctor and I told him I don't want to depend on these medications. So I went to a treatment. So I was in a treatment for about two years and when I'm going through that treatment I got addicted to the treatment and I was starting to—

**Rosemarie:** —depend—

**Carlos:** No, I was trying to get out of the treatment, but I couldn't. I was having too many withdrawals. It was just very, very, very hard and I just kind of did it little by little. But I just couldn't do it on my own.

So I remember one day at the church and my pastor, he's preaching at the church, and he says someone here is going through this situation and I feel it's in my heart and I want to pray for this. I couldn't believe what I was hearing. I was in shock. I wanted to run away. Because this was something nobody knew about—just us.

That night I gave up and I started to pray. I said "God, I surrender this to You because I don't want to depend on this." I remember I was home for about 14 days, no medication, nothing narcotics. But day 15, I started having strong withdrawals. I started looking for the pills. I started looking for them. "Give them to me! Give them to me!" Like a baby looking for food. I was crying, yelling, looking for it. I couldn't go to the hospital at the time to get any because I just couldn't at that time. I couldn't find anything.

I remember Rosemarie lays on bed with me; puts hot towels on my body, worship music, a praying environment and I go to sleep that way. Wake up the next day, no withdrawals. Thirty days pass by, no withdrawals. Two months, nothing. Then I got worried because I kept asking her where are those pills?

**Rosemarie:** Where are those pills? He couldn't find them.

**Carlos:** I couldn't find it. What happened if my daughters found them or something like that? I was worried and Rosemarie tells me: why are you asking me this? I'm like because I'm worried about someone finding them or whatever. She's like I found them about a month ago. [Laughter] I'm like really? Can you get them for me? She went and got them. I took them with me, and I flushed them down the toilet. Never again.

**Kim:** Never again.

**Carlos:** So that is our experience. Everybody goes through different experiences. But what I tell everybody is get that help. There's help out there. For that family member that's dealing with something, sometimes tough love is needed. You've got to show people the effect. This is what's going to happen. This is what's happened with the people that love you. So it was very hard but thank God we're here today. Thank God for the support of my family and my faith family as well.

**Kim:** Carlos, are you still in pain?

**Carlos:** Yes, yes. I'm in pain all the time because I have phantom pain. I don't have my limbs, so I have a lot of nerve pain. Because it's something that I deal with every day. Sometimes it's less than before and I've learned to deal with it / to live with it.

**Kim:** One of the difficulties that you and other amputees face is living more of an independent life. Sometimes you can live more independently but there has to be some accommodations in place. What has God done to help you in that area?

**Carlos:** Well, when I was in the hospital, we got so much support from so many people. I mean I love this country. Because when I first had my injury, I didn't think there were so many people out there. I just started meeting so many good people that care / that love the sacrificing of what we were doing for our country.

So I remember one day I was in Puerto Rico at that time and this Dave who has a nonprofit organization operation, Coming Home. They called me and told me "Hey, are you Sergeant Evans?" I'm like "Yes, this is Sergeant Evans," and he's like "We want to build you and your wife and your family an accessible home for you and your family."

**Kim:** Oh my goodness.

**Carlos:** I thought it was a joke. [Laughter] He calls me again. We want to meet you. We heard about your story. But I couldn't believe it because I was like "why would someone do something for me." I mean, what's the catch? I remember them telling me: "The reason we want to do this is because we want to honor your life for what you've done for this country. But we understand that God has a purpose in your life, and this is our way of being part of that purpose."

**Kim:** Wow!

**Carlos:** So yes, the Lord blessed us with an accessible home where I could be independent. Where I could do things on my own. I remember one of the first days we're home, I could go inside and outside the house by myself. That's the first time I didn't have to ask anyone to open the door or help me.

**Kim:** That had to be a great feeling.

**Carlos:** Yes! Things that we take for granted sometimes.

**Kim:** Yes.

**Carlos:** I remember I went outside with my dog!

**Rosemarie:** He didn't tell me nothing and I was looking for him all over. "Carlos, where are you?" He was with the dog. [Laughter]

**Carlos:** I came back, and she was: where were you? I'm like "I just went out with the dog." There are things we take for granted / things like that. We've met so many nonprofit organizations out there that are doing great for our veterans.

These nonprofit organizations helped us to be more independent and my daughters able to see me strong and independent. I show them look at Papi doing things on his own and it's encouraging me. We celebrate our experiences and we want to be able to do this with other people as well. So after we built our home, I worked—we built, I think, 14 more homes after that.

**Kim:** Oh my.

**Carlos:** And they're still building homes for wounded vets / Gold Star families. Being a veteran advocate and speaking / representing wounded vets, that's something that's deep in our hearts—bringing awareness to wherever we go.

**Kim:** Now are you able to drive?

**Rosemarie:** Yes!

**Carlos:** Yes, yes, yes!

**Kim:** Tell me how that works.

**Carlos:** Well, at Walter Reed we have this awesome therapist friend, Tammy Phipps. I remember that I didn't think I was going to be able to drive but Tammy, the therapist, told me this is possible. Throughout therapy, she taught me how to drive and the vehicle has hand controls. So through hand controls I learned how to drive with Tammy Phipps.

It was like six months after that there was an organization, Helping a Hero—Helping our Military Heroes from Connecticut that we met in the hospital. They wanted to meet us. I didn't even know why. So we're talking / sharing our story, everybody's crying, and right there they told us: we have this organization and we'd like to honor your lives with a van / accessible van. We were the first recipients of that van and today they've done more than a hundred vans for wounded vets and their families.

**Kim:** Really.

**Carlos:** Rosemarie doesn't have to lift the wheelchair anymore and put it in the car. Now we have a van. It has a ramp—go inside the wheelchair and it has hand controls and that's the way I drive.

**Kim:** I love that. I love that. And then your girls you get to drive your girls around if you need to.

**Rosemarie:** Yes!

**Carlos:** Of course; yes.

**Kim:** In your book you said that you were being interviewed on a television program and the reporter asked if you could go back to the Carlos who was at Walter Reed in that hospital bed, what would you tell him? What was your answer?

**Carlos:** My answer was—I was shocked by the question but my answer made me go back to eight years at that time—my answer was if I could go back and see that Sergeant Carlos Evans in that hospital bed, I will tell him these words: be patient—very, very patient. Because from now on you are going to live the best days of your life and my family is a witness. My wife is a witness. What happened to me on May 17, 2010, I thought it was going to be the worst thing of my life.

But in Christ, it has become the best thing that has happened in our lives. Because we have grown and I'm seeing God in a way that I didn't see Him before. I didn't know Him before. Today with one hand, I'm touching more people than when I had two. Today without legs, leaving more footprints than when I had legs. I look at this experience—everybody goes through situations in life—afflictions, troubles, loss. But we're seeing through all this, in Christ, we are conquerors. We're not victims.

So I look at the explosion not as an obstacle today but as a step stone to a better father / a better husband / to a better Carlos Evans. I'm not saying that everybody has to go through a situation like that.

But in my life, I thank God that He trusted me with this experience. So His name could be glorified. I remember the day I was in the State of the Union address and everybody is applauding / everybody is applauding to me. I'm like "What am I doing here?" And right there, I mean, the Spirit of God in my heart: "You are here so the world can see who was your Healer," and that's what it's all about.

**Kim:** I wish you could have seen Carlos and Rosemarie Evans as I interviewed them. I could see the joy of the Lord on their faces and the deep love they have for each other. Proverbs 16:9 it says, "The mind of a man plans his ways, But the Lord directs his steps." Carlos knew that God had a plan for him to share the gospel with others. But

when things didn't happen the way he thought they would, he began to doubt it would happen at all.

Have you ever felt that way? I know I have. It's easy for us to believe that if we do what we're supposed to do then everything should work out just fine. But this is not always the way God chooses to do things. He tells us in Isaiah 55:8 that his thoughts are not our thoughts, and neither are his ways our ways. God has a plan for each one of us. Yes, some of us see those plans fall into place like pieces of a puzzle. But others, others of us have our lives interrupted by some extremely difficult circumstances. It is in those dark times that God shapes us and prepares us for the work He has called us to do.

I think of Joseph in slavery and then in prison; Moses on the back side of the desert; David on the run from King Saul. My prayer for you as you've listened to Carlos and Rosemarie's story is that it sparks in you a new hope that no matter how your circumstances currently appear, God is able to do, as He says in Ephesians 3:20, immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine according to *His* power that is at work within us.

Thanks for listening. If you want to find out more about Carlos and Rosemarie Evans, check out the show notes on the *Unfavorable Odds* page at [FamilyLife.com/podcasts](http://FamilyLife.com/podcasts).

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Next time on *Unfavorable Odds*.

**Todd:** Being there after he left, with her bleeding and curled up in a corner, crying, pleading with me that you'd never treat a woman like that. Those moments still live in my heart.

**Kim:** Dr. S. Todd Townsend, next time.

I'm Kim Anthony. Thanks for listening to this episode of *Unfavorable Odds*.

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