

Deb Thibodeau – Off The Shelf # 88

Rod: So talking about your dad in your book you referenced your dad's dying words, which were “Brother Branham, lied to me. I have been betrayed.” What was your dad speaking those words in reference to? Because you don't really say that in your book. How had William Branham... brother Branham betrayed him?

Deb: So I intend to keep writing. And, um, one of the things I would really like to write about is the death of my mother and the death of my father.

Rod: Yeah.

Deb: My mother's death was a beautiful experience.

Um, a precious, precious thing that she did for her children in a way a father maybe never could. I don't know, but her children were all around her.

There was a hundred people or more in her little trailer when she died, she had a word for everyone and she said, this is a beautiful place. Children. The colors are beautiful. There's enough room for all of us. We can all be there. And dad would say to her, did you see brother Branham? Did you see brother Brandon?

And she would just say she would just go back to say.

This is a beautiful thing. Children don't miss this. It's wonderful. And she died very gently

and revered with all of her children around

[01:49:22] **Rod:** Yeah.

[01:49:23] **Deb:** When my dad died, he died over a period of about four days, very slowly and just, just Haggan icing. He did not want to die.

He did not believe he was supposed to die. He, he had told us his entire life about the Thus Saith. The Lord promise that that William Branham gave him that he would be taken up in the rapture. You would be, he would go up alive in the rapture. And so

[01:50:00] **Rod:** So William Branham had told him Thus Saith, The Lord, you will go in the Rapture.

[01:50:05] **Deb:** this is what we heard our whole life.

[01:50:07] **Rod:** So this is what your dad told you. William Branham had told him.

[01:50:11] **Deb:** That he had a promise to go up in the rapture. He would go up alive in the rapture. and so he, you know, and here he was on his death bed, unable to function in a human capacity any longer, but he, he agonized over the fact that he was not going to go up alive in the rapture.

And for a long time after mom died, he got it in his head that. Would not be chosen or bride of Christ because she went by way of the grave. So we all got through that with him. And then when he died in those last few days saying he lied to me, he lied to me, brother Branham lied to me. I've been betrayed, you know what, an awful thing on your death.

So

[01:51:04] **Rod:** you put your hope in something all your life and you realize that it was for not.

[01:51:09] **Deb:** it didn't happen. So one of the things that made it all okay to me in the end was, you know, in some of the conflict between my father and my brothers was fairly obvious. His daughters were with him when he died. When my mother died, we were all there. All the children, all the grandchildren, when my dad died, his daughters were there.

And he said in all of those words that he asked mom in everything that he wanted her to tell him that she was seeing and experiencing his last words were mama, is that you? So to me, that gave me some comfort

[01:51:55] **Rod:** Yeah.

[01:51:56] **Deb:** Like at least he had that in his last few moods. So their deaths mama gave us a beautiful experience to remove the fear of death for a lot of her children.

Granted. And dad gave us a completely different one

[01:52:11] **Rod:** yeah,

[01:52:12] **Deb:** but these are things that impact you

[01:52:14] **Rod:** absolutely. they do. Yeah.

[01:52:17] **Deb:** they need to be shared the same way. Somebody wants to share a tale about shooting a bear,

[01:52:24] **Rod:** Yeah,

[01:52:25] **Deb:** speaking squirrels into existence. You should speak about your parents.

[01:52:29] **Rod:** my dad actually two weeks before he died. He had a visit from an angel who said, get ready to go home. And he was so excited. My dad was honestly, was probably the best Christian I've ever met. And he was excited about going and he said, Rod, two weeks from now, I will be gone.

And I'm going like, dad I don't get this... we knew he was sick. He had cancer.

He walked outside, he would never, we, our car would never leave without him staying there until he couldn't see our car anymore. They, he just, He loved his kids and I didn't know, someone could go downhill as fast as he went. And so I've never grieved for my dad cause it's like... I'm leaving on a trip.

I'm going in two weeks and I'll see you one day. And then we saw him go away. And when he died, everybody's around.

And my mom when she had a heart attack and we were at the hospital and my mom's last words to me were rod, I'll see you after the operation. And if I don't see you and she smiled, she said, I did see that none of those were the last words.

[01:53:41] **Deb:** And that's, as it should be, you know, death should not be a scary event for us unless we've been conditioned to make it that way. And I, my mother, uh, of course I miss her, I miss her and I have tried so hard to describe what happened to her in there as well and how she did what she could for me. Um, and you know, ultimately how they broke my dad, they broke my dad in there too.

So

[01:54:14] **Rod:** yeah. It's very sad.

[01:54:16] **Deb:** it is sad, you know, because we could have had a different life, you know, and, and I suppose that anyone could postulate that, that these things were meant to be, so they happened, but you know, people are led down a path and then men are easily led by external influences. And that's what happened to us.

[01:54:41] **Rod:** Some men are easily led.

So how did the Park finally unraveled? Just because it's sort of described in the book, but I think for our listeners it would be interesting to hear from you what caused the Park to basically come apart?

[01:54:59] **Deb:** So the things that I can speak to that I actually, as a non-entity overheard or saw or experienced, um, was his deterioration. Um, I overheard a conversation at some point between a couple of the men who were talking about how he had been, they had been at El Chaparral in Prescott, which was a restaurant on Grove street, I believe.

And he had ordered one of those brothers to go order him another whiskey sour in the name of the Lord. Jesus Christ. Can you believe that? And how this gentleman said, well, of course I didn't, I got him another drink, but I didn't say that, you know, but the adults were beginning to have miscue. Um,

[01:56:01] **Rod:** like he was starting to become more and more unhinged...

[01:56:04] **Deb:** he was starting to unravel and I, I know that he was getting a lot of injections of Demerol and morphine, things like that. Um, so he was an opiate, an opiate addict, and I believe, you know, an alcoholic as well. Um, and these things I believe made themselves clear in the years after the Park, but his sexual proclivities began to creep into the adult population of the Park.

And I feel like I can, again, only speak to things that I heard spoken about. And at the time thinking, oh my God, can this be real? Um, and what I first heard about was something that kind of everybody in the Hart Park heard about, we'd all heard about the special covenant that Leo Mercier made with the men that they would abstained from sexual activity, from their, with their wives for several months.

And then this gave him an opening to exploit that, uh, sexual tension. In the way he wanted to, which was to bring them to, uh, uh, uh, the spiritual prayer meeting or something where, and then the Eliezer covenant, covenant followed that in. And we all know that the Eliezer covenant speaks to placing your hand on the thigh of the master and swearing before the Lord, thy God, that you will honor and obey basically.

So I believe his intent was to bind them in a way that would eclipse anything that might be questioned about the children. That's what I believe.

[01:58:05] **Rod:** Okay.

[01:58:06] **Deb:** Um, and I know that reactions to it were big. Um, I believe some succumbed and I believe some said, no, this is not going to happen. And that was the beginning of the end of the Park.

And I feel like that happened because everything that he had been allowed to perpetrate upon the children now kind of envelopes over onto the adults and it could not be tolerated.

[01:58:43] **Rod:** Okay. That's enough. There's no way.

[01:58:45] **Deb:** So somebody said, this is wrong, this is wrong. Why are we letting this. And from there. Um, and you know, and it was, it, it was a big split initially and the kids were just baffled because there was one group against, and one group four.

And I will never forget in all my life hearing one of the abusers of my childhood, very strongly denouncing him as a drink and drug and bastard, and we're not going to be listening to him anymore. And that was the argument. We should stay. He's our leader. We should leave. We should choose another leader.

But ultimately before it was over and people had enough. time to, and the kids just went wild. We didn't go to school. Um, we robbed the dining hall and the total house of snacks. We hung out in the forest. We kind of, we did whatever we wanted. We roller skated and we rode bikes. It was like, all the rules were gone overnight.

And the adults then were meeting in different homes and kind of hashing this out. And for, for the first several weeks, there was a huge division in between the adults. And then eventually, even that went away and in the end. no one stayed with him in the end, everyone left. And that was the strange thing.

14 years, almost 14 years old and living in a place that I had lived my entire life. I had no memory of a place before this and suddenly, I mean, they're just, and, and these, these gardens and, and, uh, sidewalks and things that all the children had helped maintain for all those years are being knocked over, ripped up trailers are being pulled out.

A whole bunch of the big families, went back to Indiana and Coleman. Um, a bunch went to Tucson under a Peregrine. And then of course, a bunch of us went to Flagstaff under Floyd Patterson. And that I felt in those moments, watching that happen, that I would never forget any of them. I would register every name, every man, every woman, every child, whoever lived in there.

And I do not believe I've forgotten any of them.

[02:01:23] **Deb:** So, so, and this is why this subject is dear to me. I remember the name of every child I grew up with and you know, loosely, loosely, we sort of hear how each, how we've all got.

You know, so I'm still fairly close to some, I don't have any contact with at all, but I am sorry in so many ways that it has taken me so long to speak, but I needed to be where I am now to do it.

And I kind of wanted to speak to why I've written the book the way I have, because I, and as you know, I've written it sort of in a, an epic poem

[02:02:09] **Rod:** Yeah, it's it really was not what I expected it's not quite poetry, but it's definitely poetic. And you paint with words to describe certainly the physical and emotional trauma that you went through as a child. And I found it quite effective as a method of storytelling. It's very emotional, but it is different.

[02:02:32] **Deb:** Yes. And it may not be what people expect, but I would like to sort of prepare them for that to be ready for it, because that was my intention was not a tell-all was not, uh, let's bash. Everybody was not dirty. Mommy, dirty daddy, dirty Leo. It was about the emotional, experiences of a child. How and why I felt the way I felt in that moment.

And I, I absolutely loved epic poetry from an earliest. Um, you know, I think my first experience with it was the midnight ride of Paul Revere. And I could, I could say that poem start finish when I was a kid. And of course, Invictus, I felt was like a lifesaver for me. The first time I read something that said, you know, I am the master of my fate, I'm the captain of my soul.

And no matter what I've experienced, my head is unbowed. So, and then in, in when I met my second husband and I got married, he has children and his daughters very much loved books written by Ellen Hopkins. And they are all written in verse. Um, they're sort of geared toward teens, young adults, but that was probably the first time I started to recognize, I could tell this story.

I could reach emotional depths. I could translate that emotion into words because I love words and I could put it in verse. I could avoid character development to avoid hurting other people. I could, I could avoid the tell all aspect of it and just say, this is one child and what one child experienced. And I am willing to open my soul and say this is what I felt. So I am asking you if you are still alive and, above ground in 2020, And you were an adult in the Park, go speak to your children, go talk to your children and ask them what they felt and what they experienced because it hasn't been done.

[02:04:44] **Rod:** Yeah. And it's not a short book.

[02:04:46] **Deb:** No.

[02:04:48] **Rod:** It's not a short book.

[02:04:50] **Deb:** Well, and that's just, the first 14 years of my life,

[02:04:52] **Rod:** Yeah, no. I picked up the book and I looked at it and it I read, it on a Kindle. And so I looked at how long it was gonna take. I go this is a long book

[02:05:02] **Deb:** but I don't think it's a hard read.

[02:05:04] **Rod:** No, it's not a hard read.

[02:05:07] **Rod:** I would say it will expand some people's vocabularies are a few words that, I had to look up. And uh, my, my vocabulary is pretty good, but there some medical terms in there that I did not have a clue of what they meant.

[02:05:21] **Deb:** well, I use the word in there, but I, I changed that in my final proof because you know, you don't want to be pedantic. You want to, you don't want to use words. People won't understand at all.

[02:05:32] **Rod:** No, And there. are some words that people just you know

[02:05:34] **Deb:** so and there's times when I

[02:05:36] **Rod:** unless you've really read a lot And I read a lot. I try to read, last year I probably didn't quite read a book a week, but I'm close to a book a week.

[02:05:45] **Deb:** Yeah, well, and I thought in the interest of synonyms and poetry, try to find another word to describe it, rather than just, or you could find yourself using the same words over and over again.

[02:05:56] **Rod:** That's how Shakespeare wrote.

[02:05:58] **Deb:** for me, it was about using a word that somebody may have to go look up to to describe that. experience, but I hope, and maybe you can tell me having read it.

I hope to invoke the emotion.

[02:06:13] **Rod:** Oh yeah. No, the emotion is certainly there. As I said, as I was reading along and you got to the point of herb and grace, and it's just like, oh, you know, we got some color in here now. It was just so dark and black and bleak. And it seemed like there's no hope. and now there's hope. and, that's it was it's more gut emotion as you're reacting to these things.

So yeah it, you did a good job with that.

[02:06:37] **Deb:** Well that's, my desire is to, is to, and, you know, I don't know if people, adults from the Park will pick it up and read it. I hope they will. Um, you know, I hope people in the message will pick it up and read it because the Park is sort of a mystery and it's always been a question and I know adults in my family have been asked about it and it's always been pawned off.

[02:06:57] **Rod:** I hope we will make people curious through this podcast so that people will go and be curious enough to read the book and hopefully some message preacher will preach against it, which will probably sell a bunch of copies.

[02:07:16] **Deb:** That would be great.

[02:07:18] **Rod:** So I want to ask you a couple of last questions. What do you think of William Branham?

[02:07:24] **Deb:** I think William Branham was an opportunistic and very charismatic man who was actually probably a reader himself and an investigator. I think his persona became the little country boy who was ignorant and only spoke what God showed him to speak. I cannot blame any man for creating a legacy for their family.

In fact, it's what I desire to do for mine. Um, and He has done that in millions, you could say, but I,

I think that that's who he was. He, he, you know, he found a way to tug the hearts of people and he promised them something that they couldn't have any other way. So.

[02:08:21] **Rod:** he made them feel special.

[02:08:23] **Deb:** He became meteoric. You know, he, he found that way to become bigger than life. And unfortunately when, when large numbers of people put their entire life in the hands of one, man, they are making a mistake and they allow themselves to do this by saying, well, he's special. He's the prophet of God

[02:08:43] **Rod:** yeah,

[02:08:44] **Deb:** but he's just a man

[02:08:48] **Rod:** You're right. He was very good at creating a persona. The seven seals... he stole all of it from other people.

[02:09:02] **Deb:** every last bit...

[02:09:03] **Rod:** And he would get up and say, oh, the Lord came to me in the room today. And I got this. I almost made a mistake. I read everybody else and everybody else, nobody else is getting this. And I, the Lord just made me change my mind.

And, but then you go, oh, hold it. You just copied now. And then once you tell everybody you got and nobody else has you just copied it from Charles Taze Russell, Clarence Larkin, he copied...

[02:09:28] **Deb:** Larkin... word for word.

[02:09:30] **Rod:** Larkin. And when you put them side by side. It's obvious he copied it word for word.

[02:09:36] **Deb:** word-for-word and you know, the big one for me was as the Eagle Stirreth Her Nest, Because that was a sermon that every year... everyone raised in the message heard over and over and over again.

[02:09:48] **Rod:** The Eagle And the chicken coop.

[02:09:50] **Deb:** the Eagle in the chicken yard. And that is C.L. Franklin's sermon from 1952, right up to, and including the title as the Eagle Stirreth her nest, which is not a word by the way "stirreth".

But you know, for me, there is no reason in 2022, why people can't find the truth. And once you find one lie by his own word from his own mouth, he is a false prophet. That's what I have been told my entire life. So when I exercise that, right, I do not expect to be reviled for it.

[02:10:32] **Rod:** Yeah.

[02:10:33] **Deb:** Bottom line, stand me before Christ right now. And I would say exactly the same thing

[02:10:39] **Rod:** and that's exactly the truth. Because as a philosopher, once said, I'm not upset that you lied to me, I'm upset that I can never believe anything you say for the rest of your life

[02:10:52] **Deb:** well, it isn't, isn't that the case of any liar?

[02:10:55] **Rod:** well, yeah, that's correct. It was William Branham. Once you catch this thing and you say, okay, if it's just one deal, as my son said once, This is about putting things on the shelf. He said, we would put things on the shelf that dad, I got so much on the stuff on the shelf it's starting to fall off.

[02:11:12] **Deb:** I hear him, I hear him and that, and spit out the pit, the cherry pit, you know, but you know, you stopped being baffled at some point and you say no more, I am letting this go. And I am living my life without this umbrella.

[02:11:30] **Rod:** Yeah.

[02:11:31] **Rod:** I've told people, it's not so much the pits. It's you going to ask the question? What if, what is in the pie is not cherry pits. It's sewage... It's going to kill you, right? This is not good stuff, right? You can't... if you eat some of it, it's going to kill you.

[02:11:51] **Deb:** Yes.

[02:11:52] **Rod:** Debbie, you survived the Park you're a survivor.

You had a career, a successful career as a nurse. What advice would you have for those who have survived, physical, emotional, psychological abuse? Is there a key to being a survivor from your perspective?

[02:12:11] **Deb:** From my perspective? it's about losing your fear and, and I'm sorry that, that, that this religion has created such a culture of fear. Let go of your fear and live burying yourself, stand before God and say, this is who I am. I did not intend to do the things I've done as an adult or a child. I am a good person.

I do care about other people. I do want to be a good person and lose your fear, speak up, say what you believe.

And I understand the fear because I've lived with it for so long. the idea that someone in my family might actually speak out against William Branham is beyond belief. And the fear associated to that is huge.

But as I have said to a couple of family members that have chosen to dress me down about this is why are you worried about me? Because according to your own belief and to the words of the prophet and the promise, you don't need to worry about me. I'm sealed, I'm sanctified. Everything's fine.

[02:13:33] **Rod:** You're going to make it

[02:13:35] **Deb:** So stop worrying about me.

I'm going to be fine. And some of you could be too.

[02:13:41] **Rod:** well, we've just proved if William Branham was a prophet, we proved that saying he's a false prophet is not blaspheming the Holy ghost, because you're going to make it according to William Branham.

[02:13:51] **Deb:** well, and you know, um, I haven't been struck down. And these are the things I learned to fear. Believe me, my father was a fearmonger and I think he believed, you know, when I married outside the church, I walked down to the aisle to marry my husband, absolutely believing that God might strike me dead before I got there. But what the person that I've always been is to say, this is what's. This is what's being said, but this is the reality. And the reality of what I see isn't matching what's being said from the pulpits preachers were excused for the things they do. I've, I've watched preachers all over the country, completely bastardized what they preach over the pulpit hammer into children and keep preaching.

Even though according to everything that we've been taught, they shouldn't be any

[02:14:48] **Deb:** So this is what I'm saying reality versus what's being said, and reality is that everybody's got an underbelly and you can't hide it behind a pulpit.

[02:15:03] **Rod:** Yeah. So how soon before you're going to publish your second book.

[02:15:09] **Deb:** Well, I'm, I'm hoping, you know, I'm writing right now. And, and I'm hoping based on the success of this one, that the next one will happen.

Um, and I'm just waiting for the ne the first one to come out in print. And then I, I want to, I want to put a dent in a lot of old and long-held beliefs that are not relevant to anyone anymore. William Branham is not relevant on any level, any longer. He had his day back in the sixties and whatever people gained from that they gained, but it's gone now. And in 2022, anybody on the planet can research and just find one lie.

That's all you gotta do. Find one lie. And then for yourself,

[02:16:01] **Rod:** Yeah. Oh in fact he really is time wasn't in the sixties. It was in the

[02:16:06] **Deb:** it's actually the thirties, forties,

[02:16:07] **Rod:** that it was in the fifties, When he was in his heyday. Yeah. The end of that. So the latter part of the forties, the early part of the fifties, because I remember the first time I went, when I went to bat, Branham tabernacle, you go and this is it.

Message people say, nobody would stand up to William Branham. They all left. There was only a few people are around them. This is, either a couple of hundred people. And he didn't have big crowds. He didn't have, because of what he did in the forties and fifties, he had a bit of a following, Among the Pentecostal folks.

If they had a meeting, you could get some people out, but it was basically over.

[02:16:46] **Deb:** His big meetings were over in 65, which might be why he actually agreed to come to the Park and preach a sermon. Cause we were definitely small potatoes. so you know, and his death was an interesting thing because I watched the, you know, watching the aftermath of his death in the Park and what happened there, it was just one of those things that, you, the people were devastated. they were devastated. And it was like, well, what do you do now? And when nothing, when he didn't rise from the dead, when he was buried in the, ground, then it was suddenly necessary. Oh my goodness, here we are. We're in Arizona. We have this trailer Park full of people. We've got growing kids, we've got to feed them.

We they've got to be educated. and and so they had to move on, you know, life

[02:17:42] **Rod:** 77 was coming, so they knew the end was near.

[02:17:46] **Deb:** until 1977 and then they could, they could get ready for that. So, and then, and then of course that didn't happen. So there again, a lie, a lie. It didn't happen. So that's one lie and there are several others. So just find one and then let go of your.

[02:18:03] **Rod:** Yeah, and we've got, we've got it all documented in our YouTube channel on the BelieveTheSign website, we've got the pod, this podcast that people can hear stories of other people who've gone through different struggles, but all have ended up coming out, whether they be ministers or people who were in the pews who have realized something's wrong with

[02:18:26] **Deb:** I agree.

[02:18:28] **Rod:** but I know that your story, which is a story of someone overcoming a huge amount of adversity is going to be a huge encouragement and and help to those who have been subject to abuse themselves.

Both in the message And where abuse may have occurred in other circumstances. Thank you very much for for spending this time with us. I hope

your book sells well and we'll do whatever we can to ensure that everybody knows about or as many people as possible. Thank you very much. And we'll look forward to having you back when your next book is published

[02:19:05] **Deb:** Thank you. I appreciate the opportunity and I just, I just want to spread the word. I want people to feel something different.

[02:19:13] **Rod:** as do we so again, thanks very much.

[02:19:15] **Deb:** Thank you. You have an excellent day and we'll see you again.