

THE OPRAH WINFREY SHOW

Oprah interviews Ashley Smith and Rick Warren

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OPRAH WINFREY: For 24 agonizing hours the world was on pins and needles as live coverage of an accused spree killer on the loose poured out of Atlanta. At the center of that storm was the young woman he held hostage who somehow talked her way to freedom. Today, in her first in-depth television interview, you're gonna hear exactly what happened with Brian Nichols in that Atlanta apartment from the only woman who knows. But first, here is how that fateful morning in Georgia began.

VIDEOTAPE:

WINFREY: It's Friday, March 11th. Prisoner Brian Nichols is in handcuffs and on his way to an Atlanta courthouse. He's accused of brutally raping his girlfriend. Sheriff's Deputy Cynthia Hall, is his sole escort. Suddenly, according to police, Nichols attacks her, hits her in the face and grabs her gun. She slumps to the floor, critically injured.

Across town, 26-year-old Ashley Smith is struggling to pick up the pieces of her shattered life. A young widow, Ashley watched four years before as her husband was murdered and died in her arms. Since that tragic night, she has battled a crippling addiction to crystal meth. She's also lived with the guilt of giving up custody of her five-year-old daughter, Paige. Now, after her third stint in drug rehab, Ashley is starting over. She's got a new job as a waitress and has just moved into a new apartment. Now, armed and dangerous, Brian Nichols allegedly enters the courthouse and takes three hostages. He makes his way to the courtroom of Judge Rowland Barnes, who is presiding over his rape trial. According to reports, he shoots Judge Barnes in the back of the head and then he shoots the court reporter. Both victims are dead at the scene.

Chaos erupts as Nichols escapes. Police claim that he next shoots and kills a sheriff's deputy and heads for a nearby parking garage where he is caught on security camera. There, he allegedly pistol whips a reporter and steals his Honda accord. Atlanta is put on high alert. A massive manhunt is launched for the capture of Brian Nichols. Unidentified Man: Mr. Nichols is considered armed and extremely dangerous and should not be approached.

WINFREY: Meanwhile, Ashley Smith was busy unpacking boxes as she half listens to breaking news about the murderous rampage and the killer on the run. Just hours later, Nichols is reported to have killed again, this time an off-duty US Customs agent. He steals his badge, his gun and pickup truck, according to authorities. It's now 2:00 in the morning. Ashley goes out to buy a pack of cigarettes. Ashley agreed to take us back to the scene of that horrific night.

Ms. SMITH: I'd been up for a while unpacking and so I was a little bit stressed out and I really needed a cigarette.

WINFREY: When she returns, she sees a man sitting in a pickup truck.

Ms. SMITH: I began to worry, so I got my keys out and I got out of my car and closed the door.

WINFREY: She makes a dash for her apartment. The man follows her.

Ms. SMITH: I was hurrying to get my key in the door and I stuck my key in the door and unlocked the door and turned around and there he was. And I started screaming at the top of my lungs.

WINFREY: According to Ashley, he puts a gun to her face and forces her inside. She has no idea who he is. He lifts his cap.

Ms. SMITH: Then he said, 'Now do you know who I am?' And I was like, 'Please, don't hurt me. Just please don't hurt me.' END OF VIDEO EXCERPT

WINFREY: Ashley Smith was face-to-face with Brian Nichols, the accused spree killer on the run. So what did he tell you to do?

Ms. SMITH: He told me to be quiet and not to scream and he wouldn't hurt me.

WINFREY: Were you screaming?

Ms. SMITH: I was. I screamed at the door and I immediately said, 'Please, don't hurt me. I have a five-year-old daughter that does not have a father. He died, you know, a few years ago.' And...

WINFREY: So you said that immediately?

Ms. SMITH: Yes. Immediately.

WINFREY: OK. Then he forces you into the house?

Ms. SMITH: Right. He told me to get to the bathroom and he told me to get in the bathtub and the thought there was, 'Great, he's gonna put me in the bathtub and just shoot me, close the curtain and that's it, I'm gone. No more Paige and she's gonna have to grow up without both of her parents now.'

WINFREY: So you did go to the bathtub?

Ms. SMITH: I did. I did everything that he said. I figured that the best way for me to survive was going to be to do whatever he told me to do.

WINFREY: Were you stunned, paralyzed, thinking, not thinking?

Ms. SMITH: I was very nervous. I was scared. I thought I was gonna die really. There was no doubt in my mind. After he took his hat off, I realized--he kind of warned me a little bit. He said, 'Have you been watching the news?' I said, 'Yeah, a little bit.' He said, 'The whole Brian Nichols thing?' And I thought, 'Oh, my gosh, this is not happening to me. You got to be kidding me.' So right then I was like, 'I'm definitely dying.' Then he told me to get in the bathtub.

WINFREY: And did he tie you up?

Ms. SMITH: He told me to get in the bathtub because he didn't trust me. He wanted me, I guess, backed up against the wall. He came back--he walked around the house for a few minutes and he came back with some tape, and he said, 'I'm gonna tie you up.' I immediately silently just started praying. I don't care what happens to me as long as I make it out of here alive to see my daughter. I don't care. I can deal with anything else.

WINFREY: Mm-hmm. Because you thought he was going to rape you?

Ms. SMITH: I did.

WINFREY: Yeah. But he did not?

Ms. SMITH: He did not rape me, no.

WINFREY: OK. He did not rape you. OK.

Ms. SMITH: He was looking--I guess he was looking for something to tie me up with. He came in and he said, 'I'm gonna tie you up,' and he told me to turn around and put my hands in a praying position, so I did that. And at that moment I thought, he's gonna put the extension cord that he

brought in with him over my neck and strangle me. He told me to go into the bedroom after that and I was like, great, I'm gonna get raped here. But he immediately told me to stick my legs out, so I thought, wow, what a solid relief. I'm not gonna get raped right now. Immediately from there he told me that he wanted to take a shower, so...

WINFREY: So you're now duct taped and tied with the extension cord. And he said he wanted to take a shower?

Ms. SMITH: He picked me up and he took me into the bathroom because I couldn't walk, of course, and he sat me on the stool. He asked for some towels and I told him where they were. And he said, 'I'm going to put this towel over your head so you don't have to watch me take a shower.' And right then I was like, 'What? Are you respecting me?' I was thinking, 'Are you respecting me?' So here I am thinking, this man is gonna kill me but now he's putting a towel over my head so I don't have to watch him take a shower.

WINFREY: OK. So when he put the towel over your head, is that when you decided that you had to make a plan or that you could make a plan to stay alive?

Ms. SMITH: Yeah. I knew that he was beginning to see me as a real person. I mean, here's somebody that just killed three people. Why is he putting a towel over my head?

WINFREY: And how much time had passed by this time?

Ms. SMITH: Probably maybe 30 minutes or so.

WINFREY: Thirty minutes. OK. So now you start making a plan, and that plan is what?

Ms. SMITH: Just to try to relate to him, try to get some common ground between us and to make it out of there alive. I had to make him feel like I was a person just like him. I began to tell him all of my stories, that I had been to jail before. And I wanted to...

WINFREY: And where are you doing this? You're still on the toilet stool?

Ms. SMITH: Yes. He's in the shower at the time, and I just kept talking, asking him about his family and where his family was, and he told me that he had a son at the time of--that was born a few days earlier.

WINFREY: Were you at that point thinking, 'I might be able to live? I think I can live?'

Ms. SMITH: I was trying to have some hope, yeah.

WINFREY: Trying to have some hope. We'll be right back with Ashley Smith.

Next, for the first time, Ashley Smith reveals the shocking offer she made to accused killer Brian Nichols. (Commercials)

WINFREY: When Ashley Smith made headlines as the daring woman who was held captive by Brian Nichols, the nation seemed to adopt her as a clean-living, God-fearing hero, and for the first time Ashley reveals in her book called "Unlikely Angel" that she is a recovering addict, struggling to pull her own life together, and was so at the time that Brian Nichols broke into her home. What was the first real conversation that you all had? Didn't he start talking about his girlfriend?

Ms. SMITH: Yes, he did. He asked me if I knew what he was in jail for and I said, no, 'cause really I didn't. And he told me that his--he was on trial for rape, a rape that he didn't commit, and I was like, 'That's terrible. You know? I know what it feels like to be accused of something that you haven't done. That's not right, you know.' So I tried to relate to him a little bit.

WINFREY: And your strategy was you were gonna agree with whatever you needed to agree with, right?

Ms. SMITH: Yes.

WINFREY: Mm-hmm. People may be very shocked by the confession in your book that you--the fact that you called it "Unlikely Angel"--I think most people really are unlikely angels--but what are you addicted to or were addicted to?

Ms. SMITH: I was addicted to ice, which is methamphetamine.

WINFREY: Methamphetamine.

Ms. SMITH: Yes. I did ice every day, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

WINFREY: How could you if you were also working?

Ms. SMITH: At the time I was--I would get a job and not be able to keep it. I gave custody of my daughter away.

WINFREY: Because of the addiction?

Ms. SMITH: Because it was more important.

WINFREY: So had you been taking crystal meth at the time that he, you know, broke into your home?

Ms. SMITH: I had did it the day before to help me move. There was always an excuse why you do it, you know. I tried so hard to get off of it and I would stay off of it and then it would be like, 'Oh, it's OK, you can do a little bit.' But--so I would just do a little bit. And I had done it the day before, but I had slept, and...

WINFREY: Because usually--isn't that--that is a drug that allows you to stay up.

Ms. SMITH: It does.

WINFREY: And it also makes you crazy, does it not?

Ms. SMITH: Right. It makes me very--it made me very crazy. My family put me in a mental hospital...

WINFREY: Because of it.

Ms. SMITH: ...because of it. And I got into...

WINFREY: Because it's methamphetamine ...which is like speed.

Ms. SMITH: Yes. I would hear things. And ultimately I gave up the thing that mattered most to me, was my daughter.

WINFREY: Because you couldn't take care of her.

Ms. SMITH: Because I couldn't take care of her and I knew that she deserved a better life. I wasn't giving it to her and I loved her enough to say, 'Mommy is not gonna stop right now, so I'm gonna let you go stay with somebody that's gonna love you the way you deserve to be loved.'

WINFREY: So you would see her regularly?

Ms. SMITH: I saw her as much as possible, being in school and working two jobs.

WINFREY: After he tied you up, you say he told you he wanted to smoke pot?

Ms. SMITH: He did. I told him that I didn't have any pot. And it just came out of my mouth, 'I don't have any pot, but I have some ice.' And immediately I thought, 'What have you just done? You have just offered the thing that has ruined your life and made you crazy to a killer. You're dead now.'

WINFREY: Mm-hmm. Yeah, when I read that, I thought, 'Well, Jesus loves you, girl. Jesus be looking at you,' because to offer crystal meth to a killer, that's pretty...

Ms. SMITH: It just came out.

WINFREY: Yeah.

Ms. SMITH: And when it came out I was like, 'It's not'...

WINFREY: So he said OK?

Ms. SMITH: He said, 'OK, I think that's just what I need.' And I'm like--and I said, you know, 'It's not what you need.' I said, 'I hope that you don't do it--this stuff makes me crazy.'

WINFREY: You said that to him?

Ms. SMITH: Yes. He said, 'Are you gonna do it with me?' And, you know, anytime where it would have been easy for me just to say, 'Yeah, I'll do it with you, why not? I might die anyway.' That moment I heard God say to me, 'Ashley, you have got to do something good for your life right now. I'm gonna give you one chance. You can do this with him, and I'm bringing you home. Because you're not gonna stop. Or you can say no and I'll let you live to help people in the world.'

WINFREY: So this was a feeling that came over you...

Ms. SMITH: Yes. And I thought...

WINFREY: ...that's so strong that you feel like you heard it?

Ms. SMITH: I thought I would rather die in this apartment tonight not doing those drugs than doing them.

WINFREY: Really?

Ms. SMITH: Because there was a point in my life where I said, 'I would rather do these drugs than stop. I'd rather die doing these drugs than stop.' And that night it was completely opposite.

WINFREY: Were you surprised at--were you as surprised at yourself for saying no as you were as surprised at the fact that you told him you had the drugs?

Ms. SMITH: It was a total sigh of relief for me. It was kind of like, 'Oh, wow, I can breathe now. I said no to something that has ran my life.' It's run my life for years. That was a huge miracle for me to not do it and...

WINFREY: Had he done it before? Did he even know what...

Ms. SMITH: He said that he had never done it but he said he had heard about it before.

WINFREY: OK. So--and after he did crystal meth, Brian Nichols, the accused killer, you were surprised that instead of getting more agitated or crazier, it actually calmed him down?

Ms. SMITH: It did calm him down.

WINFREY: And he then started confiding in you?

Ms. SMITH: He did. He told me that he had had a son born two days before. He told me that his parents were in Africa and knew that they were probably disappointed in him and he was very concerned about that.

WINFREY: Didn't he--at some point, did you all turn on the TV?

Ms. SMITH: We did.

WINFREY: And was there non-stop coverage?

Ms. SMITH: Yes, there was.

WINFREY: Yes.

Ms. SMITH: He sat on the couch and in awe. His jaw dropped and...

WINFREY: When he saw himself on TV?

Ms. SMITH: When he saw himself on TV.

WINFREY: And what he had been accused of doing?

Ms. SMITH: Right. And he said, 'I cannot believe that is me on TV.' It came up on the TV that the lady that he hit over the head, I think it was Cynthia Hall, that she was in the hospital and they had said that he shot her on the news, and he jumped up out of the--off the couch, 'I didn't shoot her!' and I'm like, 'Yeah, but you hurt her, you know? Just watch it.' And he said, 'I hope she lives,' you know. And I could see something unfolding of--he was just like, 'Wow, I've done'--he was in shock. He was angry but he was in shock. Going, 'Wow, I did something,' and I said, 'You did it, and now you need to pay for what you did.'

WINFREY: Mm-hmm. And how did he--how--by this time you've established a rapport where you obviously feel comfortable enough to say that. I heard--did he also try--is this true, that he tried to get you to rob a bank?

Ms. SMITH: He did. He said, 'I have a plan, and I'm gonna rob a bank on Monday and I'll have lots of money and I need you to help me.' And I was like immediately just kind of--the same thing with the drugs, I'm like, 'Forget it. Are you crazy?' I could see the end results of that and maybe I've watched too many movies or something, but I know how that ends, and somebody dies, and I wasn't gonna be robbing a bank with a total stranger that's killed three people and die, because, 'Oh, well, ro--forget it!'

WINFREY: No. So you said to him that in that tone, 'Forget it.'

Ms. SMITH: Yes. I think he knew how serious I was because it was immediately, you know, the thought left his mind.

WINFREY: So, you were supposed to see your daughter next day?

Ms. SMITH: Yes. I was supposed to see her at 10:00 the next morning, and I told him, 'I'm supposed to see my daughter in the morning. Can I go see her?' And he said, 'No, maybe I'll let you call her.' And my response to that was, 'OK, I have to work two jobs tomorrow. And I have to see my child, which I haven't seen in two weeks. How do you think that's gonna make her feel for her mommy not to show up?' I said, 'You know, my family's not just gonna take a phone call. And the two jobs I have to be at, they're gonna wonder, 'Something is up. She didn't show up to see her daughter, which is one of the most important things for her to do, first of all, and then she's missed two jobs all day long. Somebody's gonna wonder what's going on, if he's on the loose.'

WINFREY: Did you tell him that?

Ms. SMITH: Yes. And he said, 'All right, maybe. We'll see how things go after that.'

WINFREY: OK. So by this time, as dawn starts to break, Brian Nichols knows his time is running out. How did Ashley manage to stay alive? She's gonna tell us that when we come back.

(Commercials)

WINFREY: By this time it's been hours since accused Atlanta spree killer Brian Nichols took single mother Ashley Smith hostage at gunpoint in her apartment. She was struggling to form a bond with him that she was hoping would spare her life. And as the sun comes up, Brian Nichols knows that he needs to make a move.

So what happened next, Ashley?

Ms. SMITH: I asked him where he had gotten the truck that he arrived in from, and he said, 'I didn't--you know, I didn't want to kill him, but I had to. I just wanted his truck.' And I said, 'Who?' So then I learned that he had killed a fourth person, which was the special agent. And I said, 'You know, do you realize that you'...

WINFREY: This is what he told you?

Ms. SMITH: Yes. And I said, 'Do you realize that you have killed someone's husband possibly? Someone's father?' I tried to make him feel that right now but--or right then, but he told me, 'I got to get rid of this truck or they're gonna find me.' So, you know, what other choice do I have but to say, 'OK, fine, I'll help you.' So I did. And he asked me if I knew where a place was to get rid of the truck.

WINFREY: Now this is the part where I read that I absolutely positively never could figure out. You were in a car and he's in the truck. You have your cell phone in the car. Ahh...

Ms. SMITH: OK. All right. I did dial 911. I never pressed the send button. I have him behind me at one point and then I have him in front of me at one point leading the way at the end, and I thought of every scenario possible. If I were to call the police, he could drive off. And a lot more people would have died then because obviously he wasn't going to stop. I knew pretty much by the way he was treating me that he was going to let me go, or in my head I was getting out of that house no matter what. So I knew that once the truck was gone, if I could just get him back to my apartment, he would be left in the apartment alone.

WINFREY: No, but I--Ashley, this is the thing--I'm so glad I get to talk to you in person because amongst my friends we are like, 'She's in the truck. Why not drive somewhere, anywhere, screaming, yelling and flashing lights or'...

Ms. SMITH: Well...

WINFREY: Did you think he was gonna shoot you because did he have--he even left the guns, didn't he?

Ms. SMITH: No, I didn't--I don't know. I think he left the guns, but while we were in separate cars, I thought, 'OK, well, by the time I call the police, he'll be in the car with me, and what if they surround both of us? Well, I'm for sure dead. They're gonna definitely shoot out if that happens.'

WINFREY: Yeah.

Ms. SMITH: He gets in the car after we dropped it off. I said, 'Are you ready?' And he goes, 'For what?' I said, 'To turn yourself in.' And he said, 'I just need a few more days. Can I please just stay at your house a few days and then I will go turn myself in? And, you know, I'll let you take me.'

WINFREY: So you drove back to your apartment?

Ms. SMITH: We drive back to the house and go back in, and I just immediately started making pancakes.

WINFREY: How is it that you end up eating pancakes?

Ms. SMITH: I was hungry... and I thought maybe he was hungry, too. And I knew that I was gonna leave. I just really felt like I was going to.

WINFREY: So you sat down and ate pancakes together?

Ms. SMITH: We did.

WINFREY: Now we've all heard that he either saw "The Purpose-Driven Life," that book, or you started reading to him. How did that come about?

Ms. SMITH: After he did the drugs, I thought, 'You know, well, I didn't choose to do the drugs, so I might as well do something good for myself right now.' So I asked him if I could read, and he said, 'Sure, what do you want to read?' I went to my room and grabbed my book.

WINFREY: "The Purpose-Driven Life."

Ms. SMITH: Yes

WINFREY: Where were you in it? Which day?

Ms. SMITH: Chapter 32, and I just began to read the whole front page to him.

WINFREY: Read to us...

Ms. SMITH: OK. (Reading) 'Using what God gave you. Since we find ourselves fashioned into all these excellently formed and marvelously functional parts in Christ's body, let's just go ahead and be what we were made to be. What you are is God's gift to you. What you do with yourself is your gift to God. God deserves your best. He shaped you for a purpose and expects you to make the most of what you've been given.'

WINFREY: OK. After you read this passage, he asked you to re-read it?

Ms. SMITH: He immediately stopped me right there and said, 'Read it again.'

WINFREY: Read it again.

Ms. SMITH: And I read it again.

WINFREY: And then he asked you what you thought your purpose is?

Ms. SMITH: Yes.

WINFREY: What did you say?

Ms. SMITH: I said, 'My purpose is to serve others, you know, and to try to help other people.' Then I asked him what he thought my purpose was. And he said, 'To tell other people about you, about what's happened to you.' Then he asked me what I thought his purpose was. And I told him he needed to go to jail and pay for what he did, but maybe it was to help other people in jail and to minister to them.

WINFREY: And what was his reaction to that?

Ms. SMITH: He just stopped and thought about it and just put his head down and that's all he did.

WINFREY: I heard that he asked if you would visit him in jail...

Ms. SMITH: He did.

WINFREY: ...when he turned himself in?

Ms. SMITH: Right. He did. And I told him, yeah. I mean, of course I'm gonna tell him yeah. I'm about to walk out the door of my house. I'm not going to say no, because then I wouldn't have got out.

WINFREY: Yeah. And then he just let you go?

Ms. SMITH: He said, 'Is there anything I can do for you while you're gone?'

WINFREY: Had you told him, 'I'm going to leave?'

Ms. SMITH: Yeah. He said, 'What time do you need to leave?' I said, 'I need to leave about 9:15 or 9:30.' So that time was coming up. 9:00 rolled around and I said, 'All right, I'm about to leave.' And he says, 'Is there anything I can do while you're gone?' And I'm like, 'You can hang the curtains. You can hang the mirror if you'd like. You know, whatever.' He did say...

WINFREY: And you did say, 'Could you hang the curtains?'

Ms. SMITH: Yes. He did, and he said, 'You know, if--I wished that I would have met you at a different time under different circumstances, because I think we could have been friends.' And at that point I was like, 'He really does trust me and he's beginning to feel like I am his friend. I've actually--I've obviously said something that hit home, and he took it to heart.' And I knew that when I left, the choice was his. He said, 'Will you tell Paige hello for me?' I'm thinking, 'Yeah, right. I'm gonna walk up to my daughter and say, "Hey, Paige, Brian Nichols said to tell you hello."' But I think he really just--he--I think he wanted me to come back but I think he knew I was not coming back.

WINFREY: And so you left and called the police?

Ms. SMITH: Yes. I did. My knees were shaking the whole way out the door. Even at that point I was thinking, 'This is it. You know, he's gonna come out the door behind me and shoot me and

all of this for nothing.' But I got in the car, started it and put it in reverse and went to the first stop sign, dialing 911, and it was busy. And I'm like, 'You have got to be kidding me. It's busy? So I called back again, it's busy again. So the third time I'm like, 'Oh, it's ringing. Hello, this is Ashley Smith and Brian Nichols has been in my apartment.' And she's like, 'What? Slow down. And where are you?' And I'm like, 'I'm on my way to see my daughter. That's the whole purpose of everything I was doing that night to get out.' And she's like, 'No, ma'am, you need to turn around and go back to the apartment.' And I'm like, 'Why? I made it out.'

WINFREY: Did you turn around and go back and meet the police?

Ms. SMITH: I did turn around and go back. Yes.

WINFREY: Brian Nichols surrendered to police that morning. He left Ashley's apartment unarmed, waving a white T-shirt in the air. He is now awaiting trial and is charged with murder, kidnapping and escape, and is facing the death penalty. But he pled not guilty. Do you think he surrendered because of you?

Ms. SMITH: I think--I told him it would take more of a man for him to surrender and pay for what he did than to take his own life or to die--just go out dying. And he may have taken that to heart. He--I think he--I really drove home the point that he needed to pay for what he did and...

WINFREY: Would you ever go see him in prison?

Ms. SMITH: I don't think so. I don't feel led to do that right now. I think that my purpose and my time with Brian Nichols was that seven hours, but...

WINFREY: We'll be right back. (Off camera) Coming up, a surprise for Ashley from Rick Warren, the author of "Purpose-Driven Life."
(Commercials)

WINFREY: In an attempt to save her own life, hostage Ashley Smith read passages from the best-selling book "The Purpose-Driven Life" to accused Atlanta spree killer Brian Nichols, and ultimately he ended up surrendering peacefully to police. Two weeks later, Ashley got a call from the author of the book, Rick Warren. What did he say to you?

Ms. SMITH: He told me he was proud of me and he asked me if I needed anything, and he prayed with me.

WINFREY: He prayed with you? Ms. SMITH: He did.

WINFREY: Well, he's here and he wants to meet you in person!

Ms. SMITH: No way. No way.

WINFREY: Please welcome the author of "The Purpose-Driven Life," Rick Warren.

RICK WARREN: I'm proud of you Ashley.

WINFREY: Well, I know, having read "The Purpose-Driven Life," it's one of those books, it's still on the best-seller's list after how many years?

Mr. WARREN: Three years.

WINFREY: Three years on the best-seller's list. You teach that there is a purpose for every life, and that there would be a reason even for Ashley to be involved in this story. It's so captivating.

Mr. WARREN: You know, Oprah, there are a couple great lessons from Ashley's life. One of them is you don't have to be perfect to be used by God.

WINFREY: Yeah.

Mr. WARREN: If God only used perfect people, nothing would get done because none of us are perfect.

WINFREY: Right. Ms. SMITH: Amen.

Mr. WARREN: So God uses us, in spite of our faults, our mistakes, and our weaknesses. I love this story because she was just going out to get some cigarettes!

Ms. SMITH: I don't smoke anymore!

Mr. WARREN: The bottom line is that God will use anybody if you're available. That's the key. Ashley happened to be available, and she responded in love instead of fear, as we just heard in her story. I think the other lesson is that no matter how bad your problems are, God's purpose is bigger than your problem. We see this in Ashley's life. God had a purpose that she didn't know that was so much bigger than the problems she was going through, and even the problems that Brian was going through.

WINFREY: And also, when Brian asked her to re-read the passage... obviously, he wanted it re-read because something clicked there. You think he has a purpose, too?

Mr. WARREN: You know, I don't think it was that particular passage that got Brian's attention. I think it was Ashley's attitude from the whole book that made the difference. Everybody is looking for hope.

WINFREY: Yeah.

Mr. WARREN: The Purpose Driven Life is just a book about hope. And when people are going through a crisis, they're looking for hope.

WINFREY: Wow. Thank you very much.

Mr. WARREN: Thank you.

WINFREY: Thank you so much, Rick Warren. author of "Purpose-Driven Life." And Ashley's book is called "Unlikely Angel," because aren't we all--aren't we all unlikely angels?

Mr. WARREN: We're all unlikely angels, and if you will give what you've got to God, he'll take it and use it.

WINFREY: Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back.

Mr. WARREN: I'm proud of you Ashley.