

Week 46

11/5/12

Betty: Thank you so very much for joining us on *LIFE Today*. I'm Betty Robison and this is James.

James: We have a pastor that I admire tremendously. His name is Chris Hodges. He's got a book that the forward is written by another one of our guests that I know you've come to appreciate and that's Craig Groeschel. But this book, titled *Fresh Air* that Chris Hodges wrote is indeed a breath of fresh air. I think you're going to want to hear from Chris where in the world this title came from, how he came up with it. I want to give him that opportunity.

I want to mention something because I'm going to put a web site up. He is also one of the leaders of a group of churches called ARC, Association of Related Churches. If you have watched *LIFE Today*, you'll know that on more than one occasion we had a guest Willie George who pastors Church On the Move in Oklahoma, in Tulsa. He accepted Christ more than 40 years ago when I was preaching. He's a great pastor. I saw him at the ARC conference this last year that was hosted at Gateway Church where Betty and I are members.

After the conference, Willie George walked up to me and said of the ARC pastors and churches, he said, "I think these are the most unselfish people I've ever seen." He said, "I think this is the most unusual group of pastors and churches." So that's why the web site is there.

You may want to be a part of this association of churches. I encourage you to really look at what they're doing and consider it because I think they'll be an inspiration to you; you'll be a blessing to them.

Welcome Chris Hodges, if you would, to *LIFE Today*.

Chris, good to see you. Always like to hear you preach at Gateway. I've got to ask you since you come to Gateway quite often and I know you and Robert are pastoring, you're friends. Do you like Gateway?

Chris: I love Gateway -- very good friends.

James: What is it that makes Gateway special?

Chris: I think it is what I wrote in this book. There are just some environments that have a culture where you just want to be there. We've all been in environments in a home, some of them are good, some of them are not so good -- classrooms, some of them good, some of them not so good. They're just life giving cultures where things can work. That's what makes Gateway very, very special.

James: Well, it is like being in, I think, fresh air. I see it on the people. You wrote the book, I'd like you to tell our viewers why you did put that title, *Fresh Air*.

Chris: Well, the seed idea came from an experience that I had at our church. I'm shaking hands at the door and everyone's happy. But I see a few people down the line that's coming toward me, this lady with a scowl on her face like she wanted to say something that she wasn't so happy about. So I'm already thinking, this is really not going to be that good. So as she approaches me she said, "Pastor, I found one thing I don't like about this church." You know being in ministry as long as you have, when you hear that you act like you want to know but you really don't want to know.

So I said, "Well, please tell me what that is." And she was messing with me and I didn't know it.

So she said, "Well, the one thing I don't like about this church is I have to wait six days before I can come back." A little tear came out of her eye and she said, "Look, I've been in church my whole life..." -- she's probably in her 50s or 60s. She says, "I've been in church my whole life and for the first time in my life it's like a breath of fresh air."

I just realized that that's what people are looking for. I honestly believe that people are drowning, they're dying, they feel stagnant, they feel listless. The first chapter of the book I wrote the chapter and I called it "The Doldrums," which actually is a zone around the equator, in the oceans where the northern hemisphere spins one way, the southern hemisphere spins another way and in that zone, the trade winds cancel each other out and there is no wind, there is no breath. And in the age before there were motorized boats and a way to get out of it, if you sailed into the doldrums, you didn't get out. You died there.

I'm convinced people are living in a place -- everything is there but there's no wind in their sails. And this book was really written to talk about those cultures like at

Gateway, like this lady at our church experienced and what it would take for all of us to just get a breath of fresh air from God.

James: The Bible does talk about the wind of the spirit because Jesus referenced that. We have heard references many times and I know I've said it, set your sail to catch the wind of the spirit and let God carry you. I think that oftentimes people are either not setting their sail or they've just folded them or there doesn't seem to be any breeze, any fresh air. Don't you think that's what happens if you settle in for some kind of religious form without a real relationship that brings the energy and vitality?

Chris: In fact, this choice has been available to us since the very beginning of time. In the second chapter of the Bible, God offered a choice for us, a tree of life, full of breath, full of his spirit. It was a way for us to get close to God.

And then there was that tree of the knowledge of good and evil that was really makes it where you're trying to manufacture energy on your own outside of that breath. That's why people die there.

What people don't realize is how to recognize those choices and then not only to receive this fresh air but then to be able to be kind of a fresh air kind of person that's bringing it to others.

In the Bible, Paul gave a shout out to a guy named Onesiphorus. Most people don't know his name but in Second Timothy he said, "May the Lord bless Onesiphorus and his household because he visited me often and he revived me. And his visits were like a breath of fresh air," the LIVING BIBLE says. And that word *revive*, the Greek word literally means he helped me recover breath.

I'm just convinced, I've faced it myself, I don't really sometimes like to admit it but I had a time in my life where I was so depressed, so down, so caught in the doldrums -- and when you're there -- and you've probably have seen this in people and you know this firsthand probably, that when you're there you can't let it -- you don't think you can let anybody know so you fake it. You put on anyway and that actually makes it even a bit worse. Then you start putting it off thinking well, time will heal when time really doesn't heal anything. That's an old adage that is actually isn't true. Only the Holy Spirit can heal you.

So then you get a little bit deeper in it. And then literally, we all get to this place of death. It may not be a physical death but it can be a moral death. I've watched people just say, whatever. Where there is no vision for my life, you cast off restraint. So

whatever. I guess it just doesn't matter anymore. And they die a moral death or they'll die a mental death or die a spiritual death and give up on God but you end up in this very dangerous place.

Betty: Well, this fresh breath that you talk about, it is the Spirit of God. But it is not something that has to be passing. It is something that we can actually live in, in his presence knowing he is ever present with us and through his Word we get the encouragement and the inspiration that God wants to give.

Chris: I think that's what I'm passionate about most about the book is leading people to two things and that is a vibrant, intimate relationship with Jesus because I think there is always two ways to follow the commands of God, you can do it out of duty or you can do it out of delight. It can be out of that tree of the knowledge of good and evil or it can be out of the tree of life. You can do it because he commanded you to do it or you can do it because you're in love with him.

I think there is two ways for me to stay faithful to my wife. I can do it because I said I would and the Lord would be upset with me if I committed adultery or I can be just in love with her and being unfaithful is just not an option. There are always these two choices. So I'm very passionate about that.

And then, leading people to a vibrant understanding of the person of the Holy Spirit. The benediction of Second Corinthians is know the grace of Jesus, the love of the father but have the intimate friendship with the Holy Spirit.

So I end the book, I call it the big reveal part of the book, that the breath of God, the Spirit of God, the words literally translated *ruah* in the Hebrew, *pneuma* in the Greek is breath. It's just a breath of God.

James: The fact is with me as a preacher, and as a preacher that had big crowds, I found myself in the doldrums because I found myself going through the form and a found myself, Chris, I was operating in the gift of the spirit but not walking with the fullness and the fruit of the spirit. I was so defeated and in my mind so tormented that I was miserable.

I actually had something happen that I feel like is really what Chris is, I think, illuminating in our thinking to show us that this is where I happen to be at that time is not where we're supposed to be but here's where we're supposed to be. I had a guest speaker at our Bible conference that was showing us Sampson and he was referencing how he had lost his vision, he had lost his strength. He had moved out of the will of

God and he was grinding at the mill. And here was this powerful man who could just destroy hundreds of people with his own power, could kill a lion. He was stronger than a wild animal and yet he is grinding at the mill and he could barely move. And this preacher literally got into some kind of contortion form of showing how Sampson was trying so hard and working.

I just began to weep and tremble because I said to God as I was watching this guest at my own Bible conference and I think there were 13,000 people around me, and I said, "That's me. I'm grinding at the mill." I'm working so hard in ministry but the joy and the peace and that fresh breath of God, Chris, it was gone. I really believe that hearing that preacher showed me where I was reminded me of where I had been and where he invited me to live in the fullness of the spirit and that actually was an initiation of my journey back into fresh air and into the fullness of the spirit and you observed that walk in my life of what God did when he literally lifted me up out of that pit of defeat.

I've got to be honest with you, there are so many people watching us right now and I wouldn't scold. As a matter of fact, I point a finger sometimes and then I think, oh, my, I wouldn't want you to think I'm trying to scold you because I know I can be pretty emphatic. But I want you to understand that it's an invitation to receive the fullness of the spirit, to receive the fresh air. God wants to lift us up out the doldrums. He is the one that can move us out of them and he is the one that can give us the refreshing power of his manifest presence. That's what I hear you say with all of the various chapters and stories as you're trying to show people, this is really supposed to be the normal way of life.

Chris: Absolutely. And I think if there is one keyword that they need and that is relationship. I just believe when you're close to the person of the Holy Spirit, when you understand him not as a ghost but as a friend, when you really have him as someone that you're intimate with. "An intimate friendship with the spirit be with you all," Paul said; same thing with Jesus if you're operating out of this love relationship.

One of the stories I love to tell -- I love musicals. So I love Fiddler on the Roof. A lot of people have probably seen this great play or this musical. But of course, the clash is between this Jewish dad and his five daughters. They're falling in love but he has a tradition where he arranges their spouses with a matchmaker. Well, in the course of this clash and it's a great story, he wonders if his wife loves him. So he goes into the house when the daughters aren't there, of course, and he sings a song to her because it is a musical and he sings to her, "Do you love me?"

And she says, "What do you mean, do I love you? I wash your clothes, I cook your meals, I milk the cow" and she goes through a list.

And basically, he comes back and he says, "I know what you do for me, but do you love me?"

And I think the Spirit of God says to us, "James, do you love me?"

And we respond back, "Well, I went to church. I give. I serve. I read my Bible. I prayed."

"I know what you do for me, but do you love me?"

And I'm convinced if people can come back to a vibrant love relationship with the Lord the wind comes back in the sails. They'll find themselves propelled right out of that dead place.

James: Boy, you really -- that really touched my heart. I don't know if it's because I'm approaching 70. When you get older, maybe you get where you reminisce or you think back but I've got precious memories. I flash back while you were talking and I'll just kind of tell you how I felt that grinding at the mill sense. And I know how I came back to fresh air but here's what moved me while you were talking.

Betty, you remember so well because you watched it happen. Really, you have prayed me into so many serious places and beautiful places.

I came back to God, Chris, not because people thought I wasn't really right with God or I'd messed up. I came back to God because I missed him. I missed him.

I said, "Jesus, I loved you so much." He was first love. And I said, "I've gotten to where I love ministry and things but I miss you." And that brought me back. That's where I live now. I've been living in that love relationship with Betty for nearly 50 years and I have a relationship with the Lord that is so precious.

The thing I want to say in line with everything you've said, Chris, and all of our viewers, is that he is worthy of your love and he loves you. He loves you beyond any articulate communicator's ability to convince you. He loves you so much that he gave his son to die that you could have life. He loves you! And to experience that love but also to express it back like Chris was saying, to express it, that's where he is inviting you right now.

So right where you are, why don't you say, "Lord, I want that." Just talk to him like a friend. "Lord --." Go ahead and call him "Lord," that's who he is. "Maybe I don't know you like I should. Maybe I don't even know you. I want to know you." Go ahead and tell him. "And I want to love you because I believe you surely must love me, you gave your son for me. I want to receive that." Just go ahead and tell him.

Jesus said no one can come to the father unless they come like a child. Just ask him to come into your heart right where you are. The telephone number is there on the screen if you want to call and say, "Pray with me. I just prayed and asked Jesus into my heart."

We'll send you a book that is *Knowing God as Father*. It is a little Bible study. It kind of tells how I came to know God as father because I didn't have a dad. I got that father. But it will tell you how to know God the father. I'd like to send it to you.

The book, *Fresh Air*, it's in the bookstores. It's a blessing -- absolute tremendous blessing. If you'll help us feed children, we'll be happy to send you Chris' book.

I want you to know I appreciate you writing this book and coming and sharing.

Would you just tell Chris Hodges how much we appreciate him being here?

[Applause]

Thank you very much! I want you to listen to something that I think will bless you. Betty and I have been ministering together, a lot of her ministry was along with our kids giving dad and her husband to the world, so to speak, to minister. But about 25-30 years ago she and I, our children had grown up and having their own families, we went all over the world to touch the people that no one had ever noticed. And you helped us love them. I want you to listen to what a doctor said about that that watched Beth Moore. Just listen.

Begin video clip

>> I had found out about *LIFE Outreach* because I watched "Wednesdays with Beth." So that was something really important to me. I've actually heard Beth Moore talk about her experience of going to Angola. So I had been so impacted by those stories of the children feeding and all those things. I just started to feel like the Lord was leading me

to join with them to support *LIFE Outreach* in all the different ministries. The feeding and the water ministry were just extremely important.

I think maybe because as a doctor I constantly talk to people about what they're eating and drinking enough water. It started to just weigh on my heart that there's people that don't have anything. In America we have so much to choose from and there are so many toxic things that people can choose.

Over there, there were just images of children that didn't have anything. It really pulls at my heart because I can see things now that I'm a Mom with completely different eyes than I saw before. I know what it's like to have a baby depending on you to eat. And I thought so many times since I had my child a couple months ago that I can't imagine watching him suffer or watching him hungry. So that has spurred me on to just continue what I feel the Lord calling me to do in a much more emotional way because I feel connected to those moms who aren't able to do for their children what I can do for mine.

It just broke my heart where I just felt like I've got to do something even if I'll never meet them, I don't know, but it doesn't matter. We're called to do that. I just feel like the Lord has blessed me in different ways and it is not for me -- that we're blessed, we're blessed to be a blessing and that's what made so much sense to me. Is even if I can't go all the time overseas, then I can partner with people who are already there and already doing amazing programs that are in place. That made a lot of sense to me. That's certainly what I felt the Lord moving me to do.

End of clip

In the studio

James: Wow! I can't tell you how much that blesses me. It doesn't surprise me because that wonderful, wonderful doctor who got spiritual food -- you know we tell you when we come and share our guests or Betty and I share from our hearts or we have Beth Moore and she talked about who touched her, we're trying to give you spiritual food and water. We're here to bless you, to give you *Life Today* and to encourage you to share and express life today every day.

But when you hear a testimony like that, Betty, and you comment so many times how as a mother you would never want to see our children or grandchildren suffer yet that's where these people live. We can alleviate their suffering and give them hope by simply giving them food.

Betty: Absolutely, James. One thing I appreciate in her sharing about her desire to be a

help to those babies that are in such need as she compares them to her baby and how beautiful her baby must be. But I think of it too, the mothers are the ones that touch my heart too because there is not a mother holding one of those babies that they wouldn't do everything they could to save their baby and they do but they don't have any options left. But we can help. We can make that difference. You have so many, many times because in your love have reached out with *LIFE Outreach* to make the difference. We're asking you to do that again.

James: Boy, I've got a pretty tender heart. Sometimes I find myself apologizing for it; I wish I wouldn't because I can't help it. Okay? I can't help it. But when you were talking about those mothers and those babies and I saw them being fed and I saw the one holding them I felt like while you were talking, I guess I felt like I heard a lot of mothers say, "Would you help my baby?" Many of them have no milk because they're malnourished and they can't even breast-feed. And those mothers are saying, "Will you help my baby?"

And I guess I hear Jesus say, "Would you give a cup of water? Would you give food? Would you do it to the least of these?" I hear Jesus saying that to you right now. Would you? Okay, would you? Would you help? Would you help her baby?

You can. We'll always pray with you. Love pays for the phone call when you call. Say, "I've got a broken heart." Okay, we want to pray with you. We care -- we really care! We want to share your burden. But would you dial the number today and say, "Yes, I'll help your baby"?

A gift of \$30 -- think about this, this is incredible but it's true. A gift of \$30 feeds three children for the next several months. \$30, three children for months. \$50 will feed five. \$100 will feed ten. We're going to send the book that I've written to bless you. Nearly everyone that knows me, and our son joined me in editing and helping with the book. He said, "Dad, this will be the best seller you've ever written." Because he said, "Everybody understands how precious their pets are but oftentimes they don't see the lessons God wants them to learn. And Dad, you've put it out." We'll send this to say thank you for any gift. I hope you'll help all you can.

Then we're sending Sarah Young's devotional Bible. This is absolutely beautiful! She is a missionary. Beautiful devotional and this is a fabulous, beautifully bound, leather bound Bible; make the gift of \$125, help us feed ten children.

"The Lion and the Lamb" bronze for those of you who can make a \$1,000 gift or more. And you know something? Some of you can do that. You can say a big yes to a lot of mothers for their children.

Go to the phone. Use your bankcard like a check. Or go to LifeToday.org. You can do that and make a gift online but make the gift God put on your heart. Would you do it?

Pre-taped video:

Announcer: At this very moment a child is drawing his last breath struggling to stay alive due to a lack of food. Sadly, this impoverished child is not alone and without our help many like him face death as well. Today you can make a difference. You can help save a life.

Life's mission feeding teams are in place right now ready to answer the hunger cries of 400,000 suffering children in remote areas of Africa. With previous food reserves gone and parts of Africa facing its worse food shortage in more than two decades, we desperately need to replenish our supplies immediately. Your life-saving gift of \$30, \$50, or \$100 will help feed and care for three, five, or ten children for three full months.

With your gift, we would like to send you James Robison newest book, *The God of All Creation*. Through his personal observations of animals and wildlife, James shares heartwarming stories and spiritual lessons of God's love and grace.

With your gift of \$125 to help feed ten children, you may request the new *Jesus Calling Devotional Bible* featuring 260 scripture insights from the author of the *Jesus Calling* devotional, Sarah Young.

Finally, please prayerfully consider a gift of \$1,000 to help save the lives of 100 children, and you may also request "The Lion and the Lamb" bronze sculpture. Call,

write, or make your gift online today.

End of clip

In the studio

James: Betty, I feel like a lot of people are going to say a big yes to a lot of mothers for their baby. Mothers that aren't able to even feed their baby but you can help them do it.

We're sending the book, *The God of All Creation*. I promise you will love this.

Also today, if you'd like to have Chris Hodges book, *Fresh Air*, we'll be so happy to send it to you. Something may have just sparked inside of you. You say, "I know I can go to the bookstore and get it, but James, I'm going to help you feed those kids and send me that book too." We'll be glad to do it.

Join Betty and me again saying thanks to Chris Hodges.

Love you, buddy! Appreciate you!

ARC churches, Association of Related Churches -- go on our web site at LifeToday.org and find out how you can check that out. You'll like it.