

Week 5

1/29/13

James: We want to thank you for the opportunity of sharing this time with you. I'm James Robison. We do welcome you to *LIFE Today*.

My wife Betty and I are thrilled to share the guests that have such incredible stories that oftentimes inspire a book. This one is called *Spirit Hunger*. Gari Meacham wrote it. And her husband, Bobby is a baseball player and baseball coach and has been in professional baseball and sports for a long time. They've had quite a journey.

As a matter of fact, you're going to be shocked at what they've been through and the *Spirit Hunger* is really the result: Filling our deep longing to connect with God. I'm anxious for Gari to tell us how she really came to write the book and what was going on in her life. Because you talk about facing difficult circumstances that could destroy even the desire to live, which actually happened to her, because of what she faced. And I know a lot of times you may have faced things that caused you to despair and you lose hope and sometimes wonder why live?

Believe it or not, I actually reached that point because I was experiencing so much torment as a Christian, and I didn't understand it. I didn't know how to deal with things in the spiritual realm.

You prayed for me and got miraculous help. But I can identify with the despair that some people have.

I want you to welcome Gari and Bobby Meacham, would you, to *LIFE Today*?

I'm glad to see you two.

Gari: Thank you.

James: You teach at Second Baptist Houston. We have a friend, Beth Moore that

taught at First Baptist for a long time. I don't think there was any competition there. You're both blondes, and First Baptist and Second Baptist but --

Gari: Yes! I love Beth Moore! Love her! Fantastic. Yes!

James: Well, and we hear that you impact people in similar ways. I want you to know to let our viewers know why the book and what you mean by *Spirit Hunger*, what was happening in your life to lead you to a place that this hunger was the only thing that could enable you to even handle what you were facing and what had been literally dumped on you.

Gari: I wrote *Spirit Hunger* this past year and a half because I was reading through Psalms and I saw this one particular verse in Psalm 63 where David was saying, "I long for you, God. I thirst for you. I hunger for you in a dry and weary land." It made me just realize, I don't want to just be a committed Christian, I want to be a desperate Christian.

So much of my life, it seemed played out of certain points of desperation. I came to know the Lord in a crazy way. It was really unconventional. I had grown up in a home where my father was paralyzed in a car accident when I was nine. He and my mom's marriage wasn't good at that point. There was a lot of trouble in the marriage. That night of his accident, she had told him that their marriage was over. So no one really knows if he had been drinking so much that night or if he was basically trying to take his own life but his car rolled off the hills in Colorado and a milkman found him five in the morning strewn over the front and back seat of his car paralyzed from the neck down.

From that time on, my mom began drinking violently. She was never a drinker prior to that, and she just drank and drank and drank. I realized at age nine that my six-year-old sister and three-year-old little brother needed to be raised. So I did that.

So I just couldn't wait to get out of my home. I went to San Diego State to college from Colorado and just kind of said good-bye to that. And once I got to San Diego State, I noticed some things about myself that were troubling. I would start to eat and not be

able to stop. I would just binge and binge and binge. I had gained quite a bit of weight from what I had looked like in high school and I hated that. I hated that feeling, but didn't know how to stop eating. After living that way for a couple of years I started to diet and then I began just starving myself, and that carried on years.

But I was dating this great man, a baseball star, and he was a star player at San Diego State and I felt like I couldn't tell anyone what I was struggling with. Back then, people didn't really talk about eating issues like they do today. So I really saw no way out. I saw no way out of the torment in my head and in my body.

And so one day, I was planning how to take my life and I went into one of my roommate's rooms and she had this picture of Jesus on the wall. I kind of affectionately call it the southern California picture of Jesus. His hair is kind of blown back and he looks so warm and inviting in that picture. I said, "Whoever you are Jesus, if you're real, show yourself to me because you're the last thing I know to try."

What I love about that, James and Betty, I had never heard the word salvation ever. I had never been in a church or heard anybody explain Jesus to me in that way. I never knew a thing about that. I just went into that room and prayed that prayer. That's how I know how real God is. That's why I know how alive he is. He met me without any formal knowledge and absolutely changed my life, and that just took me on a trajectory.

I went and dug out a Bible and just started studying and absorbing the Word of God. So much of what I've learned in the years through baseball and us traveling around the country and the game and teaching women, has ended up in my book, *Spirit Hunger*, which is really about prayer and belief and understanding that he is a real God that we long to connect to.

James: Now, was he watching while you were going through this and did he see the conversion and so forth? Did you see that Bobby? You watched the whole thing?

Bobby: Absolutely, James. I'd come to live with this woman who was just amazing

and see how her life was being transformed. And basically, all the times she said, "God showed me this" or "God showed me that." "God spoke to me about this."

And I would just nod and say, "Yeah, I understand." Because I was the big baseball star who was a Christian who was supposed to have it all figured out.

And other Christians would say, "Here is a guy we can put on a platform to kind of speak to everybody about Jesus." And "He's our guy." So I couldn't make any mistakes, I couldn't fail anybody. I was a good player and now I've got to be a good Christian and be upheld in front of everybody.

So basically, what I saw in her was this inspirational person who was just real in her relationship with Jesus and I wanted that. She talks about longings in the book, *Spirit Hunger* and I longed for that. Without really knowing, it was just one of those things where I want what she has, that relationship with Jesus but how do I get that?

And so I kept thinking about being a man of God and what did that mean to become a real man of God? I kept thinking of how my life was and it wasn't reflecting that man of God; it was reflecting somebody who was posing to be a man of God. I felt like I was in this hole where I couldn't get out because there were so many secrets in my life; the way I dealt with things in the baseball world, the way you would think a baseball star would act, the fallings of women and stuff like that. The enthrallment with being with other women and stuff got in the way of what -- I guess I wanted to be as a godly man.

So I remember speaking to God and just saying, "God, I really want to be a godly man."

I remember him saying, "Oh, okay." I felt like he was saying, "You really want to be...? Okay, here's what you got to do. You've got to come clean with all your stuff. You've got to be honest with your wife -- no more secrets. This is what a real godly man needs to do to start over with me. I will start over with you."

And I remember thinking, "Boy, I'm going to lose my whole family. I have too many secrets, too many things that I've done that are going to just waste away my whole family."

As we went through it all together, as God brought us through it together, God gave everything back to me. I remember just choosing him for the first time over everything, over baseball, over my family, over --. I said, "Okay, if I can't have you, Jesus, then they're not worth having anyway -- it's just not going to work because I need to be that godly man that I long to be." So he gave it all back. He just gave my family back to me.

I was able to confess all of my sins to my wife and come clean with a lot of secrets. I was able to feel the love that she had for me and feel the compassion and mercy that Jesus shows us every day. I was able to get off the matt and start to become the man of God that he called me to be.

Betty: Gari, did you sense that he was going through these struggles because he opened up to you? Did you have any idea?

Gari: Betty, I wish I could say I did. It sounds so crazy because I always thought that I would know that, I would sense it. But there was a point when I realized we were not getting along as well as we normally had, and I just remember the Lord really pressed on my heart that there was something wrong.

I think I truly can say I think Bobby is the bravest man I know because he -- I think often men choose to keep that secret and confess to God but not to their wives. I think in order to really heal you have to be transparent with one another. He was that with me. As painful as that time was, we have seen such a ministry grow from that area. It is sort of that untouched part of Christianity that people don't want to talk about much. And often, you don't see marriages that make it through that.

But God has been so real to us -- he's so real to us. We have seen him just take our love and make it better. We're so in love with each other, it's really amazing.

James: Don't you think that's probably the reason a lot of people don't get better, much less stay together? They don't get better in any relationship because we don't come clean or get honest. It isn't just the person not sharing, that's problem one, you've got to open up like you did, Bobby. But it is the way people handle what they hear that they don't want to hear or didn't expect.

In other words, we just -- we don't handle things that we see in others that we love if they disappoint us. When they do, rather than helping them deal with it because the very fact they're willing to open up, that's the biggest step towards getting healed and getting right is to open up. That's where repentance starts, that there's a need for a mind change, there's a need for a change of direction and action. If you open up and people don't handle it, I think it tends to cause people to not want to open up. Would you agree?

You're teaching at Second Baptist in Houston, you've got a lot of people you're teaching. You teach women wherever you're invited, you go and help them. Don't you find that the church is stuck and a lot of people are stuck in an unhealthy relationship because they don't open up or if somebody did they didn't handle it right and they didn't help them go through it? You wouldn't have made it if she hadn't responded right; correct?

Bobby: Absolutely. I wouldn't have made it. The big thing too, with that is being able to trust God. It was a conscious step to choose God over everything. Trust that he is going to do whatever. I was like, "Okay, God, my life is yours. Do with it what you will. I know I'm going to lose my family, but that's okay. If I have you, I'll be fine." Just to see the amazing part of doing that was watching God work in the lives of those who knew the story.

Gari, specifically, her people that knew and loved her and were mad at me but I never really felt that. I felt like they just said, "Come on. Let's get up and go." The people at the church we were at that knew what we were going through, they were like loving to me which blew me away. She says the bravest -- I'm the bravest man. That just

defies all logic but only God can make that happen or make her feel that way, and that's the best thing about trusting God.

Gari: One of the things that strikes me, and it's partly what I wrote about in the book is, I think there's that -- I call it a holy tension between what we pray for and what we then believe. I think so often you pray for a healthy marriage or you pray to be restored when things go wrong or you pray for things in your life or your family, just how we pray period. But then there's this disconnect after we've prayed to actually believe that God will come through or can come through in the ways that you hope he does.

I think about the man in Mark who had the seizing son. He said to Jesus in the same breath, "I do believe, help my unbelief." How in the same breath is he saying, "I do believe, I don't. I do, I don't. I do, I don't." I could have lived there in this instance with Bobby and in a few things that we went through with one of your children where here I am on stage, on platforms preaching, teaching, speaking, leading, but there were moments when I thought, do I really believe that God can heal this marriage or can walk with my prodigal child or can really change habits or behaviors within me? And I feel for that man, "I do believe, I don't believe."

I think there's a few reasons why we experience that holy tension. Sometimes it is flat out doubt, fear, embarrassment, and sometimes I think we have that spiritual scar tissue that just sits in us and only God can heal that scar tissue. And though you may be left with a scar, any time I see... we're still in pro ball, we love it! But any time I see a player messing around and I know his wife at home is waiting for him, missing him with the babies, my heart goes back to that pain and I just pray and pray for that person. There's that scar tissue there but I believe that's why God brings us through scars so that we can offer that hope to other people. And if we have the guts to get through that holy tension of believing for what we've prayed, we will see him change us -- we will see him change the world.

James: What do you think, Bobby, is one the most important things you wish viewers who are in some kind of battle or they've failed miserably or they just are miserable --

what do you want to say to them? What would you like for them to hear? I don't care if they're athletes or just trying to be just a good homemaker and maintain a job and have a family. What do they need to hear about how we really go on in life and it has meaning and fullness? What do you want them to hear?

Bobby: The biggest thing for me is to get up. Don't stay down. You're going to get knocked down. The people of this world, the things of this world, are going to knock us down but don't stay down. God wants to walk with you through everything. So he's right there when you're down and he's going to help you up. Just put your hand out there and let him help you up and get going again. To stay down earlier like I did in our marriage was the biggest mistake I could ever make.

The best decision I ever made was to basically say, "Okay, Jesus, I'm all in with you. Just help me get back up again. When I get knocked back down, I'm going to get back up again after that."

James: That's the way we have got to be in life. And God is never down on us. He's never waiting to jump on us. He's waiting to lift us up. He wants to tell us, "I love you." And even when you made a mess, when you were willing to admit it, "Okay, I bombed. I did -- I bombed." God showed you his love through Gari, through your wife, and like you said, through those loving church people who can sometimes be so unloving, but they behaved like who? -- Like Jesus. And as a result of it that came through; right?

That's what she is talking about when she writes *Spirit Hunger*. It's in the bookstores. I really encourage you to get it.

Do you have a web site if people want to know where you may be going out to speak?

Gari: I do. It's just GariMeacham.com.

James: You want to say thanks to Gari and to Bobby for sharing with us? I want you to know that we love to share with you.

You're going to see in a few moments some very needy people. You're going to see some children that are desperate.

I want you to try to understand that when I see someone in need, I notice it. It captures my heart, not just my attention. When I see a need that we can help meet or that I can meet, I'm going to meet it.

I'll be honest with you. I've watched people in grocery store lines that got up and they're trying to pay for their food and they came up short. They didn't have enough. They'd have to start taking stuff back. I step up; I'm going to pay for it.

A lot of you will be out shopping and say, "I'm going to be looking for James. I want James to be around." But here's the deal -- but I would. If I could meet the need, and it's a legitimate need, I'm going to meet it. When we see a need, I want to meet it.

Here's what I see. When I see these little children and see people hungry, what you don't understand is, when I'm looking out at you, and I look out at people in public places, I see people who are starving spiritually. I see people that are naked spiritually. I see people that are broken and hungry.

That's why we have Beth Moore, *Wednesdays with Beth*. We want to feed women that are so hungry. Beth is so anointed to do it. We want to bless you. Where there's hunger, there's thirst, there's hurt, there's pain -- we want to help. That's what *LIFE Today* does. That's what *LIFE Outreach* does. But here is one of the most effective outreaches you will ever be a part of. When you see you're going to want to meet the need.

On the mission field:

[Sound of water]

>> Water; water everywhere... but not a drop to drink. That well-known line from the poem is about a mariner at sea. But it could have been written for this village. It's not the availability of water, it is the condition.

Jeanne: If your child scooped this up and went to take a drink, how fast would you knock it from their hands?

>> It literally is poison. But it's a poison they are forced to drink every day. And each time they do, their lives are shortened.

Those affected most are the children. Their immune systems are weakened, fighting a battle they should not have to fight.

But we're encouraged because we know what's possible with your help. Yes, we too see water, water everywhere but what our eyes see is water that will save their lives. And this water usually opens the door for the water which will leave them thirsting no more.

End of clip

In the studio:

James: Boy, I want you to just look at that little child. Betty, all of those images really captured me but I wanted them to back up and let us see that little child. That's a precious... a precious... I think little boy. He's desperate. He's desperate for water. To put it in the most absolute terms, he is desperate for life, another day, another chance. And that little fella with all that diligence is drinking slow death -- ultimately painful death that he doesn't have to drink. I noticed that child but not before God noticed the child.

And then the missionaries... precious missionaries, they noticed the child, and then they called our attention to the child. I'm calling your attention to the child. And I promise you, I know what God is saying, "Did you see what I see? Do you feel what I feel? Will you be the expression of my love? Would you put my hands out? Would you give that child a cup of clean water?"

And Jesus said, "I promise you, if you will, you won't lose your reward." Let him define what that is. Don't start speculating about what you might get if you give a child a chance. Just know that Jesus said, "You give a cup of water in my name."

How about a well of water? How about hope and an opportunity? That's what we do together. We give wells. We are committed with your help, God's grace displayed and expressed through you, we're committed to drill 500 wells in 12 countries.

Would you drill one of them if you can? Could you give \$4800 or part of it -- \$1200 or \$2400 and pray for others to match yours? Would you help us give water to 30 people? -- That's \$144.

\$48 will give ten people -- literally, ten people water the rest of their life. Would you do it?

All of our viewers, joined in, Betty, can solve that crisis. Water everywhere but it is contaminated. We can give them clean water. We're going to work to do whatever it takes and we're going to do it together.

Would you dial the number and take your bankcard and use it like a check? If you write a check, make it to *LIFE* but call us and tell us you're mailing it. Please!

Father, I pray everybody watching will notice those little children the way you do and that we will be the answer to their prayers and their cry; in Jesus' name.

Please go to the phone. Go get your card. Go to LifeToday.org. Go online and make the gift God put on your heart. Thank you for helping us with those children. Thank you for helping us touch those families with water. Water for Life -- and we're going to tell them about the water of life.

Begin video clip:

Announcer: Every day millions of children are forced to make a dreadful choice, drink filthy polluted water filled with deadly disease or die from thirst. No child should ever be faced with this decision.

The good news is there is a solution! Mission: Water for Life is one of the most exciting and viable demonstrations of God's love in the world today. Suffering can end because clean water changes everything!

With your gift today, we can establish and drill 500 new water wells for remote villages in over 12 different nations. Your gift of \$24 will help provide clean water for five people. A gift of \$48 will help provide for ten people. \$72 will impact 15 people. And \$144 will help provide fresh clean disease-free water for 30 people for a lifetime!

With your gift be sure to request Beth Moore's "*Blessed Mornings & Restful Nights*," a beautiful new daily devotional to begin and end your day in God's presence.

With your gift of \$100 or more, you may request *Morning and Evening: I will Praise You*, a two CD collection of 20 instrumental hymns and the companion book that shares the stories behind each hymn.

Also, please prayerfully consider a gift of \$1200 to help provide water for 250 people or a gift of \$4800 to help sponsor a complete well! And be sure to request the limited edition 50th anniversary bronze sculpture, *Living Water* by artist Robert Summers.

Please call, write, or make your secure gift online today!

On the mission field:

Janice: I wish I could just sit down in your living room with you or a coffee shop and just share my heart and what it really is like in a place like this -- and what the people are like. Obviously, the need is great. People, and children especially, are dying because of contaminated water.

You can be a part of the answer. You can save lives. You can join with James and Betty and *LIFE Outreach* and drill a well that will give Water for Life to a village like the one I'm in right now.

I hope you'll reach deep into your heart and join with me and let's save lives together.

End of clip

In the studio:

James: We're going to send you *Blessed Mornings & Restful Nights*, the devotions by Beth Moore. What a way to start the day and end the day. I promise you, it will be a real blessing to you.

Also, if you'd like to have Gari Meacham's book, *Spirit Hunger*, filling the deep longing to connect with God. I think it will be an inspiration to you. If you'd like to have it, and you help us give water, we want to send it to you to say thanks.

Would you join Betty and me in saying thanks to Gari and to Bobby for being a blessing to us?

Thank both of you. God bless you and your family and all you do. Bless you in baseball! That's a challenge! That will challenge you in your Christian life!

Thank all of you for watching. Tell your friends to join us on *LIFE Today* and help us share *LIFE Today*. What a joy it is!