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Week 30

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

James: We're going to teach -- I'm sorry. I cut in on you. So we'd have a little fight about this. Listen. We are going to talk about how to fight the good fight. I don't know if this is the exact reference, what Paul was talking about, the good fight of faith but I can tell you, it really won't be a good fight if there's not some real faith involved, faith that lifts us beyond ourselves.

But this is written by Dr. Les and Leslie Parrott who have taught just so many couples and so many people about marriage and how to get along with many different great books, best-selling books. Now they're talking about *The Good Fight* because everybody fights but most people don't seem to have a good fight. They don't know how to fight. So they've written a book on how to fight and I guess they've written it from personal experience. Well, let's find out.

Would you welcome Les and Leslie Parrott to *LIFE Today*? Glad to have you with us.

Leslie: Thank you!

James: The last fight -- when did you have the last fight? How long ago?

Les: Let's see... our flight in here...

[Laughter]

James: Right before you walked out.

Les: How about you guys? Have you had a fight today?

James: Have we had one today? I'm trying to think, did we have one today?

Les: Actually, I've got to tell you something. Betty called. She requested this interview.

James: Oh, she did? Well, good! Let's get on with it. Was I the main target?

Les: Yes, she wants us to work on you. And you've got a lot of stuff to work through.

James: And I will welcome it. I really will welcome it. Because I could never win a fight with Betty if we had a jury to pick the winner because I could never win with this sweet precious girl.

Betty: It's not because I'd have more words to say.

[Laughter]

James: No, that's really right. But it is because they just think she is so sweet. She is nice -- and that she is. But we do have some pretty, as she calls it, "heated discussions.

Les: That's the word people use when they say, "Well, we never fight. We just have heated discussions." That's what we call "lying" in the church.

[Laughter]

James: I would say they're fights but I would have to say, Les, that I think they're good fights because we always make positive progress. Is that really the intent of what you're writing about?

Les: That's the point. Yes, as you see in the subtitle of that book, it's how conflict can bring you closer. And it really does. If you know how to fight a good fight, you can use conflict to your advantage. In fact, we sometimes say, "Conflict is a price we pay for a deeper level of intimacy." You know how to fight a good fight it really can make your relationship better.

Leslie: That's right! And of course, the fear comes from each of us having an experience of not having what is a good fight and so we're afraid -- we don't want that to destroy our intimacy together.

Les: Because it is easy to have a dumb fight. We talk in the book about the difference between a good fight and a dumb fight, and then even a dumber fight, we talk about.

James: Could you define a little of that please in short order for us? What's the difference in the good fight and the bad fight and then a dumb fight and a dumber fight? Help me with that.

Leslie: Well, I'll tell you, there really are some important things. One thing to really understand is that a good fight is when you're talking about something important to you, it's really significant and you're also ready to have the conversation.

Les: Those are two important ingredients. That you're ready, that means you're not hungry, you're distracted, you're not looking at your phone, you're not... you know. And then this is of value. I need to process this with you.

Leslie: Yes, it is a conversation really worth having because it really is an important issue. A dumb fight is either about something that isn't important so it's not worth the conversation. Or something that is important but you're not in a good place to have that conversation so it doesn't turn out to be of value.

Les: Have you guys ever had a dumb fight?

James: I think we have. I don't know of one that comes to mind right now. But I think we have. You can get bent of shape over real nonsense.

Les: That's the point. We fight about the silliest things. "Where's my pen?" "I didn't touch your pen!" We get defensive about crazy stuff. In fact, we do these events around the country called "Fight Nights" in local churches. A couple of hours, it's fun, it's a date night for couples and it is humorous and we always start by asking couples about their dumb fights. I was thinking about one in Denver we just had. This couple was fighting about their cat.

Leslie: Yeah! The fight erupted over whether their cat was overweight or not; whether the cat was fat, basically. That was the fight. What was so cute was later the couple came up to us and confessed that the reason they had been having that fight was because she felt if he called the cat fat, he was really saying she was also fat. So somehow her heart had gotten in there with that cat.

[Laughter]

Les: That's a dumb fight.

James: What he thinks about the cat is what he really thinks about me. And he's just saying it about the cat because he doesn't want to say it to me.

Les: We call that projection. But I think of another one. We had a couple in counseling

a while back -- quite a while now but it really stands out. They were fighting... they were actually in the church parking lot. They drove to church, ready to go to church, but they ended up having a fight in the parking lot because they were arguing over the probability of a coin toss. Do you remember that?

Leslie: If you tossed a coin, what is the probability it would land heads or tails? They literally got so wrapped up in that argument they missed the sermon that Sunday.

James: They couldn't go 50/50?

Les: No, they couldn't settle on 50/50. That's what the fight was about.

[Laughter]

Now that's a dumb fight; right? We fight about stupid stuff -- how you drive -- how you park.

Leslie: And we've had our fair share. We had one of the most amazing anniversaries recently. It was our 28th anniversary. We were speaking in London and so we got to --

James: On marriage probably.

[Laughter]

Leslie: Exactly! Exactly!

James: Happy marriage!

Leslie: Yeah, exactly! So here we are in this beautiful city having a magnificent time, high tea, and exploring and I wanted to take a souvenir home to our two boys who weren't on the trip with us.

Les: She wanted red sweatshirts for our boys, these little hoodie sweatshirts and I just thought we don't have room in our suitcase to pack those and they're kind of expensive and do the boys even need them? As I was processing that out loud she just walked out of the store. I said, "Where are you going?" She didn't say anything. So I marched after her and got out of the store and I said, "Why are you walking so fast?" Do you remember what you said?

Leslie: I said, "Angry energy" because I was feeling a bit neglected. I'd been so excited to take something home to these boys.

Les: And it just kind of struck me funny, "angry energy."

[Laughter]

And I realized that wasn't a good response. But uh, um --

Leslie: Humor can be good but not always.

Les: But it was just a dumb fight because I wasn't even engaged. "Okay. Well, let's buy these sweatshirts. It doesn't matter." We fight about anything and everything. As we say, it takes very little for the fur to fly in most marriages.

Betty: Well, a lot of times what we call dumb fights are they just the surface of something else that's really bothering us?

Leslie: See, and I love that question because there's actually been some pretty amazing research done recently at Baylor. They did this --

Les: By one of our former students.

Leslie: Exactly, Dr. Keith Sanford. He's an amazing contributor in this field. But they took thousands of couples, 4,000 couples, married from one year to 50 and they got in there and analyzed their conflicts. What they discovered was, at the heart of every conflict we have is a couple really, we're not fighting about the issue we're talking about, it is an emotional experience we're having. And it is one of two things, we're either feeling threatened or we're feeling neglected.

Les: And it is our perception of that.

Leslie: Right! It doesn't mean our spouse meant to do that but that's what we're experiencing.

Les: I have a friend in my small group and he told me the other day that his wife, they were trying to hang a picture in their bedroom above the bed. And it was heavy and they were both kind of jockeying this thing around. And she said, "I can't hold it anymore."

He said, "Why don't you step on the bedside table there?"

She said, "I can't! All your books are over here."

He said, "Well, just move them out of the way."

She said, "I hate your books!"

And she just kicked them off the night stand.

[Laughter]

And it struck him funny too. It was like, "You hate my books? There are just three books there."

But she was so frustrated and she perceived that he was trying to control her and manipulate her into hanging the picture.

Leslie: The controlling thing is that threatened feeling. When you feel like your spouse is trying to take control and manipulate you into something then you react and that's at the heart of a lot of fights.

Les: Perceived threat or perceived neglect, that's at the heart of nearly every fight a couple has. If you can trace it back to that, we had a school of thought that says, "Awareness is curative," once you become aware of that, then you kind of go, "Okay, this is how I really feel." When you open up your heart a little bit, it is amazing how your partner can kind of step in and go, "Okay. I didn't mean to do that."

James: And it is really important for people to open up their heart too because you find out oftentimes you have actually been stepping on their heart. And you may not have known you were but you've got to be able to be honest about that. If you find out that you were, rather than getting offended at the fact they were honest enough about it to tell you their heart's hurting, then you need to get honest enough, would you agree, to say, "Yes, I see that I am doing that." Would you call that a good fight and a good conclusion? Would you call that conflict resolution coming to a solution that is meaningful and positive?

Les: Yeah, for sure. That's what we want, whenever you kind of approach this as a win/win. See a bad fight is when there has to be a loser and that's when pride enters into this whole thing. One of the cool things we did with this book and I know -- do

you even have a cell phone? -- Because we were talking about technology over dinner.

[Laughter]

James: I have had cell phones and have really wanted to --

Les: They look like this.

James: That's correct. I actually have one like that. I even have mine in a protective case because when I keep losing the signal, I want to throw it at something like the wall...

Les: You need that book.

James: Oh, yes. Does it tell you how to deal with that?

Les: It does. It will help you. But one of the things we did was put a few little aps together for the book and one is to help you measure your pride level. We call it the pride-o-meter. And by answering about three or four questions, it helps you kind of reflect on whether or not pride is standing in the way of you getting to a win/win relationship.

Leslie: Well, and I love your point about when someone opens their heart, when your spouse says, "Okay, I'm going to be vulnerable," to really have humility yourself and see that maybe, yeah, I was stepping on your heart. Didn't mean to but...

Betty: I think too, what we've learned and is big to us is to trust that we're going to listen to one another, listen to the heart because we're two different personalities. I'm not going to express my concerns or my hurts the same way he might express his; so to allow one another to express in a different way, but to really listen.

James: It is very disturbing to us when we find out we did hurt the other -- that really bothers us. I don't want to hurt her heart. I would never intentionally hurt her heart. So if I find out I did, it is disturbing enough to me that I want to get my heart right with God and with her. And I think we trust one another's heart. I think that's the reason we can have a heated discussion or what you may call almost a knock-down-drag-out and yet we come out the winner.

Les: I just want to make the point like you said at the outset, we all fight; right? In

fact, one of favorite verses in all scripture, Romans 12, verse 18, favorite verse on conflict: If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, try to live at peace with everyone.

James: Including your spouse.

Les: Exactly! And one of the reasons I love that verse is it's acknowledging we have conflict. Notice all the qualifiers in it? If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, try, give it a shot, do what you can. But we're going to have conflict; it is just a part of human nature. If you're with someone long enough you're going to have that. The question is, are you going to learn to use that to your advantage and learn about yourself, as well as the relationship to draw you closer?

Leslie: I loved what you said about how different your personalities are because like you said, you may not be as expressive as James. And here's the thing, that's a big piece in conflict. We all have our own style and how expressive we are, for more or less expressive, is one huge factor in that.

Les: Yeah, in fact, we have a whole section devoted to your fight type because we don't fight the same way. I'm a competitive fighter, by nature, I'm competitive. She's not.

James: So you want to win.

Les: I want to win. I don't want to show you what I want.

James: Betty wants to win... but she wants to win too. Don't ever think she doesn't. She is the funniest thing to watch her play air hockey with some of the grandkids or with her own family, and I mean it is blood and guts.

[Laughter]

Betty, really she is quiet and low key but she's learned to fight. This girl can hold her ground. Actually, she fights with me so effectively that I cheer for her. I actually tell her, "Go, girl, go!" Because she's getting me.

Betty: Well, we didn't start out that way. I was more of a pouter and hold it all in, and he was the confronter. And he decided right off in our marriage we will not go to bed without something settled -- which he was right. But he was also the one that had the way with words. I felt like I'll never win a fight!

[Laughing]

Les: Yes. And a competitor needs an opponent. You can't win unless someone loses; right?

James: Well, she can win. And I'll be honest with you...

Betty: He taught me well.

James: I love for her to win. You are doing something and I really want to ask you if we could talk some more tomorrow about some of the big issues, some of the things that necessarily are majors. If we would say tomorrow, let's touch on this, this, and this of interest to our viewers, what would you say we ought to talk next?

Les: Well, I'll tell you, we talk about the big five in the book. There's five things that we know couples fight about most.

James: Money? Would that be one of them?

Les: Money is at the top of the list.

James: Would sex fit in there anywhere?

Les: Sex is one of your favorite subjects, I know, and we will get to that.

James: Why would you have known that? Is it just because I'm just a typical man or have you been watching us on television?

[Laughter]

Les: I can just look at you and see you've got issues.

James: I guarantee you, I like that. I think that's one of the greatest things you ever did, father in heaven. And so it's great but I want to tell you, it can create a tremendous amount of tension. And we live in a sensual, sex-driven society and really, I think frankly, it must be very hard for women to live up to all the things that are thrown at them that may be expected of them that really might not be the comfort zone or even the pleasure zone. So we can talk about that tomorrow.

Les: Okay, we'll talk about sex. That should get some people to come back tomorrow.

James: That's a good one. There's a lot of people need it; and a lot of people don't want to talk about it and that is an issue. You don't want to talk about it; that's part of the problem. So let's do talk about it. What else? What's big?

Les: I can tell you when we come back; we can help people predict whether a marriage will make it or not based not on how they fight... I'm sorry, not whether they fight but how they fight. This is on a mountain of research. In fact, probably the most -- the only work that's been done in the last 20 years in this whole field of relationships is on this subject matter. So we can talk a little bit about that. It will really open your eyes.

James: If someone wanted to say walk us through some things. You have online, if we wanted to go and we wanted to see what you have, but also I know for a fact that you're trying to teach couples who have a good solid marriage, they've learned something about fighting in an effective healthy way, meaningful, they mentor other couples, which you say that's critically important. And you actually have a training session online.

Now, if our viewers say, "Where would we go, Les, where would we go, Leslie to find out what we can learn to do to maybe help somebody else effectively?"

Les: I really appreciate you bringing that up. We are passionate about this. It is called Marriage Mentoring; it is a great way to navigate conflict but it is more than just that. It is just taking a seasoned experienced couple and we have viewers out there that God's tapping them on the shoulder right now saying, "This might be something for you to look into." A seasoned experience couple, doesn't mean they're perfect but they're relatively happy together, if they come alongside a less experienced couple, almost like a travel guide, kind of point out some things along the road that are up ahead for this couple.

It does a -- we just know, it is a game changer for these couples. We all know the divorce rate in the church is just as high as it is any place else and that's a shame. So we believe this is a sleeping giant in the church. People can be tapped on the shoulder out there and wake up this sleeping giant and really reverse the divorce rate. Let me mention this, James, that for every single percentage point that the divorce rate is dropped, I'm talking about just one single percentage point; the lives of more than a million children are positively impacted.

James: Where's the web site? How do they access this?

Les: If they go to MarriageMentoring.com --

James: There it is on the screen. You can see it right there, go there.

Les: And they can watch a little two-minute video that will cast the whole vision. Here's our big -- do you know what a BHAG is? -- A Big Hairy Audacious Goal. And this is our big hairy audacious goal: To recruit and train a million marriage mentors in local churches and reduce the divorce rate into double digits.

James: We've got viewers today that can be that. I've said to you many times, if you really want to live life fully, express life freely. Mentoring is one way you can do it. Will you say thanks to Les and Leslie for sharing? We want to have the right fight. And really, the good fight is the good fight of faith, and we always fight in faith and win that way.

Les and Leslie, this is one the most exciting things we do and that is to give people, not only spiritual water and insight and inspiration but physical water. To give them Water for Life, they get a demonstration of the water of life by the love that gives it, and then we tell them about the water of life. I want you to look in on this scene. I think you'll be moved by it.

On the mission field

Tammy: It's been another stunning journey for me today coming into this village that really is sort of out in the middle of nowhere and just wondering what their water supply might be here. To be honest with you, I didn't see water anywhere. I did see, as we were driving in, some women carrying buckets sort of up and down the terrain of the land. I thought, where are they getting this from? And I started to walk around the village until we came down a hill, very rocky terrain, down this hill, and I came upon this pool of water.

As I began to ask some questions, discovering that this is their only source of water right here. This is his only source of water. This is where they have to come every day, all the way down here to get their water.

You can look around and you can see that it is very dirty. I asked them, when they get this water, how do they filter this from here to drink this? -- And was told that they don't. They don't filter it. This is it. This is their only source, this is what they have, and

this is what they drink every day. You can see the contamination in it, you can see that there has got to be much disease and illness with each sip that they take.

And it really breaks my heart to be sitting here with this little guy thinking that there is something that I can maybe do, something different that I could do, even if it's a little bit to change the steps of his life -- the rest of his life by giving him a cup of pure, clean water. I know there is much work to be done. This is just the beginning of a beautiful story.

End of clip

In the studio

James: Tammy is asking, "What can I do?" Betty, what can she do? What's the answer to that question when she sees the filthy water, contaminated water, and knows that that child is likely to get sick and even die like others have in that village, what's the answer to that?

Betty: There is something we can do. They need the water wells drilled very much so; water that we can give them would be pure clean water. And as I watched that child scooping up that water, because why? He's thirsty. And why? -- Because that's the only water source that they have.

And you know when we think of scooping or drinking water, we think that's going to quench our thirst, it's going to be good for our bodies. Well, it may quench the thirst of the child for the moment but it's bringing death to their bodies.

And we can make that difference. We can give what God leads us to give and you join with us because we can't do it by ourselves. We need your help to drill these water wells. Please help us.

James: I think just as you saw the love that was being expressed in Tammy through the things she said, and just the concern that she was sharing with all of us, it was that love and that concern that brought us to that area. It's the only reason Tammy and our mission team went there, along with our video cameras, was to show you a real need that a missionary found. A missionary went there with God's love in their heart to share God's love with the people. And if you really love people and you see a need, you want to meet it, just like a mother wants to meet the need of her child. The parents of those children, they want those children to have a chance. They're never going to have the luxuries and nice things that a lot of us have in the advanced world.

And we have been blessed. When we have been blessed we are blessed to bless. We enjoy the blessings that we have but we also should get the greater joy of sharing those blessings. So what we do in answer to the question, what can I do? We can drill a well there. The missionaries pointed us to that site. We know there's water there. That's a bore hole where they dug. There's water there but it's contaminated and filthy.

We can drill a fresh water well, the average cost \$4800, case it, give them a manual pump that doesn't depend upon unreliable electricity and electrical energy sources. It is one a child can turn. They can get fresh water every day; take it back to their family. Would you help us do that?

Now think about it. She said, "What can I do? What is something I can do as an individual?" \$48 -- \$4800 is the cost of a well. Some people can drill a well. "But what can I do?" she asked. \$48 -- \$48 will give ten people water the rest of their lives. \$144 -- multiply that by three, \$144 -- 30 people! Could you give 30 people water the rest of their life?

You say, "I wish I could get water like that." Well, we have it in abundance. We have it everywhere -- in a tap. They don't. Would you make it possible? The missionaries will tell them about the love that prompted it and made it possible. Could you give a well, \$4800? If you can, I believe you will. And I want to thank you for it. Could you give \$2400 and pray someone matches it? Or \$1200 and pray three join you. There is a level at which you can find the answer to the question Tammy asked, "What can I do?" What can you do? What will you do? That's the real question.

I know you care, but do you care enough to share? Would you dial the number or go online LifeToday.org and make the gift right there? Write a check and make it to *LIFE*. Use your bankcard like a check but call us today, tell us what God has put on your heart to give. Please do it. Go to the phone right now or go online, and from the bottom of my heart, thank you. We have some special gifts for you to bless you as you are blessing others with a love gift of life, fresh clean water.

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 *Majesty*, an inspirational new, fully illustrated book that will help you discover the promises behind the many names of God.

With your gift of \$100 or more, be sure to also request "The Names of God" pen set custom crafted with the various names of God and the gifts of the spirit.

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*."

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

End of clip

In the studio

James: Well, you know, here's a little girl getting a drink. Betty just said, "I can't help her -- I can't help her do it." The reason Betty says that is she knows, she's seen the river where it comes from, we've seen the animals and the animal waste and we know it is contaminated. How are you going to tell a thirsty child they can't have water? Her mother brought them the water. Mom brought them this water. Mom had no idea she might be bringing this child disease and sickness.

Betty: This is the kind of water they're drinking, the only water that they have to fill their thirst. But as they're filling their thirst they're putting disease into their little bodies. We don't need that to happen. We can make a difference in that if you'll just join with us and let's give these children some clean safe water. Will you please go to the phone right now? We need to begin drilling these water wells to help these children. We must not delay. We need your help now. Please go to the phone!

James: Betty and I want to remind you even as we say thanks that we have taken the greatest challenge ever to drill 500 wells. Can you drill one of them... or part of one? Or can you give ten people water?

We want to send you the book, *Majesty: The names of God*. Boy, this is a treasure! You're going to love it! The witness pens, the anniversary commemorative bronze, "Living Water," we want to bless you and give you opportunities to share.

Also, tomorrow we're going to be talking about *The Good Fight* with Dr. Les and Leslie Parrott. You don't want to miss that.

Would you all join us in saying thanks to Les and Leslie for joining us today?

Looking forward to talking about all those big fights -- the major issues tomorrow. Thank you so much for spending this time with us. I hope you were inspired. Thanks for sharing life.