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Week 30

James: Thank you so much for joining us. I'm James Robison. Betty and I welcome you to *LIFE Today*.

We've got Dr. Les and Leslie Parrott back. They are counselors, psychologists. They are professors and New York Times best-selling authors. And they have been with us years ago and blessed us and we have kept up with their journey.

You know marriage counselors had really know their stuff or they may not have the best marriage, I found out. Because you know when you hear about all the trouble, sometimes it can load you up.

Interestingly, as they were doing all this marriage counseling in some of the great churches and great settings in the country, whether they were seminars, sometimes community wide or city-wide, they found out there's a major problem -- married people fight. Now why did you just turn and stare at me for? You know that smile gives you an edge when we fight.

Betty: You have to let me win; don't you?

James: Yeah, I have to. We have these intense moments, and I've got to be honest with you, they have made us stronger in our love relationship. They have not driven us apart, they have drawn us together.

Well, this is what the doctors found out that there's a good fight. There is the right fight the right way for all the right reasons that makes you better. Well, they're going to talk about what the big issues are -- the big five -- fighting through the big five. What are the big five? You want to take a guess at some of them? How about money, finances? How about sex? You want to keep going?

Well, why don't we ask Dr. Les and Leslie Parrott what they think? Would you welcome them to *LIFE Today*?

Les: Thank you very much. Thanks, appreciate that!

James: I want to know about this --

Les: I know you're going to get to sex. I already know that.

James: I have admitted this openly that I think sex is great. I think... and also it can be so very, very destructive. In fact, I was very distracted and could have been destroyed by it; I actually could have been. The grace of God and the power of God and the love of God and the love of a great woman and the love of believers who when I cried out said you know what? This thing can be a great distraction, an unholy attraction and dealt with it.

But the fact is, it should be a meaningful part of relationships. So I don't mind bringing it up because it's important to most guys and important, if you do counseling, it is important to a lot of women and they don't seem to be very happy or they're married to somebody who doesn't seem to understand what make somebody happy? Am I right about that?

Les: Absolutely. And it is, it is one of the big five. We know from research what it is that most of us fight most about and that is one of them. I should tell you up front, by the way, when you said, "Oh, these specialists, these psychologists have to have it all together," we really think of ourselves more as pilgrims than proclaimers. We're the first to admit --

James: Sharing on your journey?

Les: We feel like we basically make our living by telling other people about our mistakes and how we try to recover from them.

Leslie: Yeah, and working our way out is really where the passion for this work comes. We have empathy for every married couple.

Les: You've got to be authentic. You can't just write a book on conflict, "Hey, we never have conflict now." Of course, we still have conflict, it is how do we deal with it? In fact, I'm thinking, we had a speaking engagement in Portland, Oregon. It was early in the morning. We were driving from our home in Seattle, Washington --

Leslie: It is a very tender memory.

Les: And one of our topics of tension is maps. We are like directionally challenged.

Leslie: He came into this marriage believing that if I loved him I would be a navigator for us.

Les: Because my mom did that for my dad.

James: When you're driving?

Les: When dad was driving, mom would be over there with a map and make sure he is going to the right place and it never occurred to me that my wife wouldn't do the same thing.

Leslie: Meanwhile, in my experience, my dad was the maps guy. I couldn't tell you right now if I'm facing north, south, east, or west. I have no idea. So I can't imagine that you could ever equate navigational skills with love.

Les: Any way, we're driving and we're having this little tussle in the car that just kind of -- it was one of those conversations -- the wheels fell off. And we're about to get --

Leslie: And we had pressure because we had to get there on time.

Les: Yeah. We're going to give a marriage seminar.

James: Is she not doing good navigation?

Les: No, she is not doing what a loving wife should do.

James: This is before iPhone and iPad and all that stuff?

Les: And we didn't have a G.P.S. in our car or anything. And we pull up toward this church. There's this huge billboard out there with a picture of us on it and it says, "Becoming soul mates: Dr.'s Les and Leslie Parrott." And she said, "Keep driving!"

[Laughter]

So I just want to make it clear. It is not like we've mastered conflict completely, we still grapple with it like every other couple. But I can tell you this, after doing all the research, we know how to fight a good fight now. And the result, it brings us closer together; that's the promise of this.

James: Touch on some more of the big five. You've already hammered out sex, at least making it clear to everybody that that might be an issue for some people.

Les: Money, of course, tops the list.

Leslie: That's right. What surprises us is it doesn't matter how much money you have, whether you have little or a lot, it still is a topic of tension because there is so much attached to money: The values and dreams you bring in, the power, who is making the decisions. So there are a lot of factors that make money a loaded issue for couples.

Les: Yeah, and if you begin to look at how money was handled in the home you were grew up in, it can shed a lot of light on why you might be having some of that tension. Typically one person is a saver and one's a spender and so you have to kind of work that out.

Leslie: Or as you call me, "a money monk." I don't like to admit money even exists in the world.

Les: Yeah, it's like, money, what's that? She just has no idea that you need money in life.

James: But does she spend it though? Does she like --

Les: Oh, she spends it. Yeah! Right! But not like --

Leslie: What he doesn't like is that every time I pull through Starbucks I like to pay for the person behind me in line because that is twice the fun.

James: Yeah, what does your car look like?

[Laughter]

You wouldn't want Beth Moore following you. I don't think Beth ever misses a one of them. She just hits them all.

Les: That's a truth for us. I don't drink coffee but she drinks enough for both of us.

James: And you're in the Starbucks capitol in Seattle.

Leslie: When you're a Seattleite what are you going to do?

Les: In fact, a few years ago we were invited by the governor of Oklahoma to literally move from Seattle to Oklahoma City to work on the first ever statewide marriage initiative. Why Oklahoma? -- Because it has the second highest divorce rate in the country. Isn't that interesting? Right there in the buckle of the Bible belt.

And so we did, we moved to Oklahoma. It was a fun opportunity to work with a big huge campaign. Anyway, maybe after three or four days there, Leslie discovered at that time, this was about ten years ago, they didn't have a Starbucks in Oklahoma City. So she went into the Governor's office and said, "I can explain the divorce rate here. You guys need to get some coffee!"

[Laughter]

But yeah, conflict. So money is a big one, of course. Sex ranks number two in most surveys. And that covers a lot of ground because it is not only like who initiates that or what it is that I want out of this relationship at a sexual level but it is also the fear that you will use sex as a weapon, that you will withhold it or you'll -- and so that becomes a big issue.

Leslie: And it is big because passion is one piece of love and it is attached to intimacy and commitment in different ways depending on your gender sometimes and your personality.

Les: And we've had people show up in our counseling office saying, "Hey! We don't love each other anymore." When what they mean is they have lost that loving feeling, the passionate part of love. But that is not all of love -- there is commitment and there is intimacy like Leslie said. So sex is another one. Housework -- this is an amazingly --

Leslie: Chores!

Les: Yes, this can cause a lot of friction for couples.

Leslie: Here's what we've noticed. There's almost this unspoken rule about there being this gratitude quotient. Where there is an expectation sometimes on one spouse or the other that if I pitch in I'm doing your work for you so I need to get a lot of praise and a lot of attention for what I've contributed. That can sometimes lead to a fight.

Les: Right. Why are you looking at me? Do you have something on your mind?

[Laughter]

Parenting is another --

James: It seems like though they know how to do it better; doesn't it seem like they know how to do these things better?

Les: Who? Women?

James: They know how to do them better.

Les: We should just let them do that? Is that what you're saying?

James: They just do it so well.

Les: You're on your own right there, pal.

Betty: I prefer to do it myself.

[Laughter]

I've seen his housework.

James: She was gone a few days when the kids were growing up and I think, well, I think Rhonda had gotten married. Yeah, Rhonda had been married, our oldest daughter. So Betty had been gone and I said, "Well, I cleaned the whole house. I did the spring cleaning, honey while you were gone."

And she said, "Really? How long did it take?"

I said, "It took me 45 minutes!"

And she and my oldest daughter they laughed. They said, "That's the funniest thing we ever heard. We can see dad in there." Did he clean the baseboards? Did he do this? Did he look here? And they said, "We can just see that. That's really funny!" So she thinks she does it better.

Les: So we know what most couples fight about. What about you guys? What is the number one thing that you guys fight about? What is the most predictable topic?

Betty: Well, he says that... he calls me and he'll say, "I'll be home at such and such a time." That if he's a few minutes later than that, that just turns my whole world upside down.

[Laughter]

Leslie: See, you take that as a promise.

Betty: Because I'm a precise person.

James: Women have expectations. They time how long it should take you to do that. Okay, you're going to play nine holes of golf. Well, it should take you this long and... that's the way they're thinking. If you don't live up to their expectations... so I have learned, I have this incredible wisdom, to make her know that it is going to be a lot longer than she expected and I get there early and it just makes her so happy.

Betty: Oh, it does! It does!

Les: Betty, we ought to just stop and pray for you right now.

[Laughter]

James: We're in this counseling session. That's good that you brought that up. Don't you think women have high expectations and if you don't meet their expectations --

[Laughter]

I mean you're a guy. You're a counselor for crying out loud. In here, they have these expectations? Am I telling the truth? Do you not have them?

Leslie: Well, I'll tell you what. I do want most out of my relationship. So I might have some high expectations.

Les: It goes both ways; I'm going to be fair about that. We all bring in expectations.

James: Let's move on to another one of our big fight issues.

Les: Well, I'll tell you this, one of the biggest insights that we got as we looked at all the research out there was really, what makes up a good fight?

Leslie: What's at the heart of a good fight?

Les: We said last time that there's dumb fights and there's good fights, but what is a good fight? And we came to this thing that we now call the core of a good fight. It is four things.

Leslie: Which is easy to remember even in the heat of emotions. You can go, "Okay, where am I at on the core?"

James: Core -- C-O-R-E?

Les: You got it; right. So the first one. Let's talk about each one of these. The first one is cooperation. This is --

James: Both of you want it together -- mutual goal.

Leslie: The win/win.

Les: Yes, a win/win, and in spite of your fight types and in the book we have a chapter and we have a little assessment you can take to figure out which of the four fight types you are.

Leslie: And you can be a cooperator even if you're a competitor in your style of fighting.

James: We're both competitors. She might not admit it. But she's a win/win girl.

Betty: The difference is that we've decided that we're not in competition with one another. We're on the same team.

Les: When only one person wins in the relationship that means there is a loser, and that means you lose -- both of you lose! So cooperation is essential. So we drilled down on that a little bit and talk a little bit about how do you get to that cooperative spirit.

Leslie: The "O" is for ownership. This is huge because some couples say, "Look, we're

talking about an issue and it is not my fault. I'm not going to own this." But what we'll say to the couple is, "Well, here is what you can own even if it clearly seems to be your spouse's fault, you can own your reaction to what happened" because that's a part of the mix of the fight that unfolds.

Les: And we sometimes call it owning your chaos pie. We think of when there is chaos, there is friction between us, there's this pie, how many slices are you willing to own and say, "I contributed to this much chaos in this situation"? And remember that cell phone I told you about yesterday? We have a little app on there that you can literally drag your finger around and take the slices. And if you both do that, it will show you, okay, all right, one of us may not be willing to own this, or maybe one is owning too much, whatever, and that insight can get you to a place where you have that kind of cooperation.

Leslie: When you're taking ownership of it instead of placing blame, that's when you start working toward resolve and that's the point of the whole thing.

Les: So cooperation, ownership. The "R" is for...

Leslie: Respect. And this has all to do with what you convey to the person you're in the fight with. I'm not going to fight in a way that shows my pride and cuts you down. I'm going to fight in a way that shows what a grand person you are.

Les: And too often -- we know this from research too -- too often in a conflict you try to cut the other person down by belittling them and being sarcastic. "Oh, way to go, Einstein. Regular genius; aren't you?"

Leslie: Or using even just the non-verbal.

Les: Yeah, do you know what one of the most toxic things we do to our partner in a conflict? It is not even with uttering a word, it is just rolling the eyes. When we roll our eyes at our partner and we've been in the laboratory, scientific laboratory when a person's hooked up to bio feedback equipment, their heart rate is being measured and their skin temperature and so forth. And especially, this is true -- you'll like this -- especially when a woman does that to a man, the man looks like a feather fell on the head. He didn't even notice it. Inside he's going bananas.

Leslie: Yeah, because he wasn't respected.

James: I think men when we feel dissed -- and I've told Betty, I feel dissed, you're

disrespecting me and that really boils -- it makes me mad. That's the only thing I'll say, "Betty, this really makes me angry. I'm getting angry and I don't like it." And I go ahead and express it. It makes me -- right? And we don't like to be dissed. Men want to be respected. There's something about that honor. Is there an appropriate thing that a man feels, like he should be respected? I know we need to earn it, we need to deserve it, we need to be worthy of it, but there's something inside us that we want that. We feel like we really need to be respected.

Les: And you can't have a good fight without it. And it goes both ways, she needs to be respected as well. But that is essential. That is one of the four ingredients that you've got to have to fight a good fight.

James: I'm point-blank determined to respect her. I really am and I want it back and that's why if she -- I don't think she would ever mean it but if it comes across like it I just say, "I feel like you're dissing me." Right? I'll say that.

And she'll reflect on it. She might diss me one more time or two to make a point but the point is that that's big to us. What's the last one? What's the E?

Les: By the way, one of the best ways to do that is simply to listen to each other. It's not like wow, what do I do to respect you? It is very easy to respect a person, it is to hear them.

James: And we do that.

Les: Then here's the last one and I've got to tell you, this is my favorite one and I'll tell you why. But it is empathy: C-O-R-E, "E" is empathy, that capacity to put yourself in your partner's shoes and see the world from their perspective -- to accurately see it. Why is this important? We know from research, nine times out of ten, this is 90% of the time, if you did nothing else to resolve conflict we know that your conflict would dissipate solely because your partner feels that level of deep understanding.

Leslie: That you identified with them. This doesn't mean you set aside your perspective. It is a temporary choice. I know what I think happened. I'm going to set this aside and enter your side.

Les: And empathy changes you. That's the other thing. It's not just about what it conveys to that person, you begin to see the world differently. It changes you and that's why it is so risky.

James: I'm convinced that if we really mean it and we say we want to put our life in the potter's hand, that the pressure that comes -- pressure is intended by God to shape us, however the pressure comes, whether it is filtered through God's fingers or comes from his fingers. If we feel pressure, any pressure that we feel, God intends in his eternal purpose and kingdom purpose to shape Christ-likeness in us and that's what we need to learn.

Would you say thanks to Les and Leslie for sharing their insights and really your journey as pilgrims, you're sharing? Let me just say this, there's so much contained here in the book and they're great writers and great communicators. They're gifted to do this. They're not only trained to do it, they have a gift from God to do it and a desire to do it.

Now there's the web site again. I just want to put it up there. If you want to learn to be a mentor because you've been blessed in your marriage and you'd like to help someone else in theirs, for every marriage that's strengthened and the marriages are strengthened one percent, a million children -- a million children's lives are positively affected. So there's how you can learn. There's the web site.

Now we will send you the book, *The Good Fight* today as a gift -- you can get it in the bookstores, and go online and get it, it would be wonderful for you to do that. But we'll send it to you as a gift if you'll do this -- and I know the Parrotts like this -- we're going to give, with your help, fresh clean water to people that have never had it and it is killing their children and it is destroying their health and their future. I want you to watch very closely something that is going to be so clear to you when you see the compassion of God through a caring person. Watch very closely.

On the mission field

Tammy: This heat -- this oppressive heat! It drains you of energy just like it robs this ground of water. What's left is often a death sentence.

These women, girls, so young... I watch them again and again drawing from their only source within miles. Twelve year old Tulsi, what a precious girl born into such adversity, into impossible circumstances beyond her control.

We all have a role to play and I feel especially burdened by mine because as I look around at these scenes before me I'm so conflicted with how to adequately bring their stories to life, their struggle for the most basic of necessities. For if I can't help you see

it, feel it, how can your heart know how to respond? A death sentence, that's what I'm holding in my hand.

Dear God, you came to make all things new. Beauty for ashes; a new heart from death to life. Father, please, I know you see her. Bring Tulsi life giving water. Take away this death sentence.

End of clip

In the studio

James: Tammy was there because of the prayers and concern of missionaries who planted their lives in the midst of pain. Here is that bottle. It was Tammy's water bottle. Here is that beautiful little girl's picture. Here is the water that Tammy got. It is filthy. I wouldn't give it to a pet -- to an animal. We don't have to in advanced countries; we can get clean water. You can even go buy bottled water in any store in the country if you're not satisfied with the tap water, which is so far beyond anything people know.

She was crying out in behalf of a little girl that represented thousands of children in the villages, and their family, of 500 areas that we've targeted in 12 countries where missionaries, with a heart like Tammy expressed, have directed our steps to say, "Would you please give these precious people Jesus died for, and we want to tell them about the love of God but we'd rather demonstrate it too; would you do it?" And we come to the viewers of *LIFE Today*, the missionaries know that, they come to us because they believe that together we have the heart of God to help the hurting and the suffering.

Betty, they're convinced the viewers of *LIFE Today* will help. And I believe they will.

Betty: I do too, James. I look at this and I see not only her picture but I see the pictures of child after child because there are so many of them that have this same need as she does. And James, yes, God does care about every one of them. He loves the little children but he wants to use us, his children to reach out to these children that are in need, and we can do that. That's our responsibility as his children to love and to reach out and to respond when there's a need.

James: I think it is a joyful responsibility to respond. Do you know what our staff and workers told us when they gave us this bottle? They said, "Be very careful not to get it

on your hands. That is the water; it will make you sick." Isn't that something? "It will make you sick."

Well, I'm grateful that our own staff would care enough to say, "Be careful with that. It is contaminated!" What about those precious children? See, we really do care about them. I believe you care about them.

Here's what I want to ask you to do. Help us drill those wells -- 500 wells, that's the most we've ever taken on in faith and it is because of the prayers of the missionaries who direct our vision, our sight. Here's the place; would you drill a well? Would you drill part of a well? Would you give toward a well? \$48 will give ten people water the rest of their life. A gift that just keeps on giving. Would you take your bankcard or write a check, make it to *LIFE* and call us and tell us you're mailing it? Or go online, LifeToday.org and make that gift? \$144, 30 people have water.

Many of our viewers, including children -- it's amazing what they do when they set their sights on it, give entire wells. There are couples that do it, individuals, small businesses that do it and church groups and prayer groups but also children. If you could possibly drill a well, please do it. We're going to need some people to drill a well, \$4800 or give \$2400 and pray, "God, help someone match this." If you can give \$1200, pray for three people to join you and we've got another well. It's going to take all of us together doing what we can, doing our part expressing God's heart, extending his hands of love.

Would you do it? Would you give a cup of water in Jesus' name? -- Or a well of water? Please dial that number or go online. We have some gifts to send you to say thank you and to bless you as you bless others. Thank you for making that call. Please don't be distracted. If you get a busy, be determined and call until you get through. Thank you for doing it.

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: I do want to remind you, this is our commemorative bronze, "Living Water." And it just has the beautiful gold inlay on it that is just beautiful. And we're sending it if you'll help give a well, a portion of it. And we're sending Majesty for any gift, the witness pens, and also, today, if you'd like to have it, you make a gift to help us, whatever level God tells you to give and you'd like to have *The Good Fight*, I want to not fight to win myself, but for us to win and to grow stronger. I think this will help you do it.

Join Betty and me again in saying thanks to Les and Leslie Parrott.

Doctors, thank you both! Thanks for being a blessing to us.

And there again is their web site. Go on there and find out all you want to know about helping someone else in their marriage. You'll want to do it. Thank you so much.