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Week 48

James and Betty Robison

Anne Graham Lotz

James: Thank you all very much. Appreciate your warm welcome and we welcome you to *LIFE Today*. I'm James Robison; Betty and I are grateful to share this time with you.

I don't think there has ever been a preacher more famous than Billy Graham. As a matter of fact, I don't think there is a person on the planet that would question that. I count it a privilege to know him and to know his love not only for the Lord and really for people everywhere but his love for us and his encouragement; he's always been an encouragement to me. He'll be doing some things that will surprise you that you'll be seeing from time to time as you see specials even now as he's gotten older.

His daughter Anne Graham Lotz is here, Wounded by God's People. Now think about this. How can anybody wound Billy Graham's daughter or family? Well, they can -- they did. And the tragedy is so many people are -- and this book has just been out now a short time and already the e-mails and the feedback of people that have been devastated by the church -- not just disappointed by the church, devastated by it.

Would you welcome a very honest, very caring, very biblically-grounded, caring woman, mother, wife, and speaker; would you welcome Anne Graham Lotz to *LIFE Today*? Bless you!

Anne: And grandmother too!

James: A grandmother too! That is -- grandmother too! I want you to tell because I've read... it really shocked me to know that you've been hurt. Tell us a little bit about your story and then tell us why you wrote the book and what you want to happen.

Anne: As I look back on my life and I know y'all can do the same thing, that the most devastating wounds I've received have been inflicted by God's people. All of us are hurt; right? A spouse can walk out, you can lose your job, somebody won't invite you to their party; hurt is a part of life. But when you are wounded by people that you've come to love and trust and felt safe with, people that you respected, looked up to

within the family of God, those wounds go real deep. And I'm talking about betrayal, lying, rejection, slander.

One of the stories I relate in the book, my husband and I had been members of a church for 15 years, he was head of the board of deacons, he was head of the men's ministry, I was in leadership positions and they were going for a pastoral change. The pastor had retired; they're looking for another pastor. They felt Danny and I had too much influence over the congregation so they began their meetings behind closed doors, all the little political maneuverings and the next thing you know on a Sunday morning during the worship service, they called a business meeting and they removed my husband from his leadership position. When they announced the vote to the congregation, the congregation applauded. I remember walking out to the parking lot to the car with my husband and your face just burning with humiliation.

I knew two things: I knew, one, God was not like that church. Even though the church had rejected us, my faith was strong enough and my relationship with God was strong enough, I knew I'd not been ejected by him, and I think that's one of the dangers. When the church treats people badly, those people can take it as from God and it messes up their relationship with God. For me it didn't. What I wanted, I wanted to know him as he reveals himself through scripture, as he reveals himself through Jesus, and I wanted to make him known to others as winsomely, accurately, truthfully but graciously, and that I'd draw people to him instead of drive them away. So for a year, my husband and I were out of church. We had a home fellowship.

Then we got into another church. My husband got involved in a church plant and he planted a church and four years into the church plant they called a young pastor, and after a few months one of the elders decided he didn't like the young pastor. My husband was on the board of elders so he knew what was going on, and they just began behind the closed doors, all their little political meetings, the general congregation wasn't so aware but my husband was because he was on the board of elders, and they moved this young pastor out, not for any other reason than one elder didn't like him and began a whisper campaign and moved him out. So when they moved him out, my husband and I left.

I didn't go to church for a year. To tell you the truth, James, I didn't care if I ever went back. I'd been there, done that. Who needs that? I read the scripture, I pray, I love the Lord, I'm strong in my faith but it's sort of like Gandhi, I think he's the one that said he could handle Christ but he just couldn't stand Christians.

[Laughter]

James: That's sad but too often true.

Anne: It's so sad! But God was good.

The day we left the church, I didn't realize it at the time but my husband got a phone call from somebody who just wanted my husband to take his friend around our area because he was going to plant a church and my husband got involved in another church plant. So one year to the day we were out of that church, we're back in another church plant, which is where we are today.

So I don't want to say that to slam the church because I believe we should be in fellowship. But I want to call out what I think is sort of a hidden, dark, underside and people can be wounded and they suffer in silence or they leave.

George Barna... the people who went to church, who don't go to church today, 83% of them don't go to church because they've been hurt by somebody in the church. Then I'm reminded of John 1:11 when Jesus came to his own and his own, not only didn't receive him but they crucified him. So Jesus understands. But what I had to learn is that I need to forgive the person who has wounded me, whether it is the church body or the board of deacons or an individual and I do that -- first of all, I tell God how mad I am and I think some of that is righteous wrath.

But you know how you can be angry, bitter, resentful, you have all those imaginary conversations and I have to reach a point that I'm just tired of that, and get on my knees and tell God I'm sorry for my attitude of bitterness, resentment, a vengeful spirit, unforgiveness. So I choose to forgive.

And then, this is a key, I reach out to do something for the person who has wounded me, just an act of kindness, reach out to bless them; could be write a note, it could be take them a gift, it could be... And then they may not respond or they may become even more hostile; the first church became even more hostile when I did that. But it doesn't matter their reaction, somehow it sets my spirit free and I'm released. So it's a journey.

When you've been wounded you can get past it but there's certain things that you need to do to acknowledge the pain, to make the choice to forgive, to reach out to bless, and then just move on. Don't keep living in the past. What I've discovered about

myself is that when I'm wounded, if I'm not careful, I tend to retaliate and wound back.

When I was a little girl I had a little dog that I inherited from my sister and we did everything together. He slept with me, ate with me, and one day I got in the car, somebody else was driving and we were going down the mountain and he was chasing the car, he wanted to be with me. And he didn't understand the car so I told the driver to stop and he didn't. He just sped up and the next thing I know there's a little bump under the car and he had run over my little dog Sedrick. So I jumped out of the car and went to grab Sedrick and he bit me to the bone and just tore up my hand. And so I was crying, he was crying, and I wrapped him in a jacket, took him to the vet.

But that night I said, "Mother, why did Sedrick bite me? He is my best little friend."

She said, "Anne, it doesn't matter if it is a four-legged animal or two-legged animal, when we're in pain we tend to lash out."

And so when you're wounded, you have to be very careful and guard your spirit and guard your reaction because if you've hurt me, I'm going to hurt you. And if you hurt me worse, I'm just going to get you back and then I'm going to tell everybody what you did and what you did is much worse than what I did. So we just get into this cycle that needs to stop. We need to break it.

And it came to my attention, anyway in the last two years, somebody had wounded me deeply and I mean it was like whoa! Then I began to wonder, what did I... did I do something to provoke that? What had I done because it was so cruel and bizarre? I couldn't imagine that she would just do that. And as I prayed, it took about three months of prayer and soul searching and I felt like the Lord showed me an attitude I'd had with her that I think over time had just grated on her nerves until she exploded. What she did was wrong but I'm not responsible for her, I'm responsible for me and my attitude. So I had to go before God and confess what I felt he had revealed to me.

So when we wound somebody else, I think we need to set it right first with God then we have to go to the person. Tell them we're sorry; name it for what it is. In that particular case, she wrote me a perfunctory letter; she accepted the forgiveness but we still don't have a relationship. And that's something else, reconciliation takes two people. I can forgive, reach out, I can say I'm sorry but reconciliation sometimes takes time and I don't know if it ever will be but at least for myself, I'm free in my spirit because I've done all that I can do. All I can do is what I can do and then it's up to the other person.

Betty: Well, and forgiveness is such a big thing because it can destroy you inside, keep you from going on with God. Well, what do you say to that person like you said you did not blame God for the church, the way they treated you but a lot of people do blame God.

Anne: You know they do. I tell a story in this book about a young guy who was actually a religion reporter for a major newspaper and he was investigating some scandals that were going on in the church. And what he saw -- and he said he was a born-again Christian -- but what he saw in the church was so hypocritical. He said they really weren't much different than the people who were on -- a little bit like we just heard described. We go to church, we put on all the smiles but then we act like whatever at home. So he walked away from God.

What made him mad was that if there is a God, why would God let his people behave the way they do? And that's something maybe one day we can ask God about except that you and I know, we have free choice, we're all sinners -- we're ALL sinners. And even when we come to Christ and we confess our sin, ask him to forgive us and we come to the cross, we're born again into God's family, we still sin and that's something that we need to keep coming back to the cross.

Peter said we just come back and back and back and live at the foot of the cross to make sure that we confess our sin not only to God so that we're cleansed but to the other person to set it right. And for myself, I just want to be so careful that I don't intentionally wound somebody.

But it is interesting... the story, by the way, the book is based not only on my stories but the story of Hagar in scripture. When I was writing *The Magnificent Obsession*, which was the story of Abraham, I came across her story. When I finished *The Magnificent Obsession* I went back and did a Bible study on Hagar. It's a very messy story. It's very interesting.

She was a little slave in Pharaoh's household so you know she was wounded because she didn't have a life of her own. Then Pharaoh gave her to Abraham and Sarah. And when they list the gifts that Pharaoh gave to Abraham she is listed lower than the camels. So she was just a nothing, given to Abraham and Sarah, in their home for ten years and so you know she had come to love them and trust them and feel safe there and saw Abraham build his altars and call on the name of his God and God answered.

And then one day Sarah comes and says, "I want you to sleep with my husband and have his baby." She had no choice about it. So Hagar did and got pregnant. So she had been wounded. She in turn despised Sarah, wounded Sarah. Sarah in turn abused her and so Hagar runs away.

And God finds her on that desert road. The first time the angel of the Lord who is the pre-incarnate son of God, the first time Jesus shows up in scripture, he appears to a woman not to a man, and to an Egyptian not a descendant of Abraham, to a slave not a free person, to a somebody poor running away. And he shows up and talks her through her decision and then says, "Now Hagar, you've got to go back." And she had to go repent. "You have to turn around."

She named the place, "I've seen the one who sees me." So she had a personal relationship with God at that point. Went back, had her baby, 14 years later, her baby has her arrogance and persecutes Sarah's miracle son Isaac.

And so this time Sarah has a meltdown and she tells Abraham and God tells Abraham to throw Hagar and Ishmael out. So this time Hagar is wounded and is wounded in obedience to God's command. That's something that we don't like to think about but sometimes we make decisions, it can be with your staff or your family or tough love, you've got to do something and it's in obedience to God.

But so when Hagar was thrown out, the thing I appreciate not only the fact that God found her and Ishmael and it's a sweet scene because it says that God heard the cry of the lad. So it wasn't Hagar praying, I think by that time she didn't want God. She felt he had rejected her so she wasn't turning to God. But Ishmael had heard his daddy pray, call on the name of his God, he's crying and God hears Ishmael and goes to Hagar and shows her where the water is.

Then he says, "Hagar, you get up, I'm going to make you the mother of nations. And Ishmael is going to be the father of nations." And Hagar gets up and she goes and finds a wife for Ishmael because she is wanting those grandbabies and she's wanting the descendants and she is wanting the nations.

And Hagar teaches us a lesson that sometimes we just have to let go of the past and embrace what God has for us even if it is very different than what we thought.

I look back on my life and the wounds that God has allowed me to receive, so many of them have redirected me, they have moved me out of this church into another one, that has moved me into this phase of ministry to another one, and they can direct you.

If you live in the past and you keep wishing if only, if I could have, should have, would have, and you're clinging to the past, you can't go forward looking in the review mirror. You have to embrace what God has for you. And what God had for Hagar and Ishmael was very different than what he had for Isaac and Abraham and Sarah but it was blessed. God loved Hagar and Ishmael as much as he loved Abraham and Sarah and Isaac.

James: One of the things that as I listen to you and I know my own journey, when God stretched this wine skin to receive a greater fullness and to realize that I had burned out and been defeated, and he really showed me the whole church and your daddy is as responsible as anybody for teaching me to spend time with people I'd been taught to avoid, and I began to love the people who didn't like where I was going and they were unkind to us.

But I would say it to them even now, I was able to look beyond that and actually question, maybe I'm presenting what God is doing in a way that they don't grasp or maybe I'm not even doing it right. And I said I'm just going to keep loving. And it's been now probably a 25-30 year journey since that stretching, and God sending me to the whole church, not just part of the church.

And what I'm actually seeing right now, Anne, and I believe it is the will of God, I believe it is the will of God for where you are and why you're trying to show people how we need to stop wounding people. I was listening to you talk about the churches a while ago and how they behave and I thought, well, it looks like we trained congress well. It looks like congress learned from church folks. That's how they're acting, they're acting like a lot of church folks. I really think in some ways church is responsible for that by not behaving in a Christ-like way.

But what I've seen happen is I've watched God, I've watched love never fail and I'm seeing the people that didn't understand the journey now come to have a great respect for the journey, a greater respect for me and for Betty and what we do, even an appreciation for it, and a willingness to listen and reconsider some things and look out at people and see them in a different light. My prayer is that even as I'm listening to you that churches would see we have done that. We need to cease to do it and we need to be totally changed.

There is Anne's web site and what she is doing right now. I really pray you'll get the book, already people are responding saying, "I've been hurt" and now they're going through a healing process by what she shares, just like she is talking about. Imagine somebody hurting the family of one of the most visible preachers of all time. Why

would you do it? Well, we do those things but it needs to cease, and it will cease if we are forgiving and loving.

I pray you'll get the book. I pray you'll go and look at her web site and let her minister to you. A lot of people, you quit going to church. You may watch Betty and me and say, "I think I like y'all. I hope if I got to know you I wouldn't change my mind." But I don't think you would because I would love you no matter how much you downloaded of junk, I would love you! I'd want to help you put your life back together the way I'd want you to help me put my life back together. So there's positive things happening and I believe Anne can help you with that.

And Anne, I want to thank you not only for writing the book, I want to thank you for the compassion, the love, the courage to tell your story. Would you like to say thanks to Anne for telling what she's been through that a lot of people have been through? And I really pray that we're all moving into the greatest impact point of our lives for the glory of God to where... I like to call it the spiritual gravity, the weight of God's character and his presence on planet earth manifest through his people who are praying your will be done on earth, through us, now for your glory forever and ever and ever. That's what we really want. I know that's what she wants.

You know how much we love putting God's arms around broken people. I want you to join with us, and all of our viewers, and all of you here, I want you to look straight into the eyes of very, very precious-to-God children.

On the mission field

Announcer: Kids will be kids; right? Wherever you go in the world, there is certainly some truth to that. But it doesn't take long to discover something different about these kids. Oh, yes, they are a little wide-eyed, a bit bewildered by our arrival... a rare occasion in an area so remote. But then you lock on to their eyes and you realize it's much more.

If you don't look away, you get a glimpse into their experiences, the proverbial window to the soul. They will let you look. It's a stare down you'll likely lose because they're almost beckoning you to see them like Akun, Michael, and Rosa. Eyes which have witnessed things no child ever should. They fled the cruelty of rebels attacking in the night -- their villages ablaze. They've suffered the death of their parents and siblings.

But one thing remains, starvation -- not an aching stomach, a crippling predator attacking them every day. Their gaze isn't easy to hold because in it is a desperate cry for help. We pray it's one you won't ignore.

End of clip

In the studio

James: Boy, just somehow fix your eyes on that little child reaching out. I would love to hold that little hand and I'd like to put something in it. I'd like to give that little child something to eat. And those eyes, I'd like to put my hands on their face and tell them that we love them. And then I'd like to show them we love them by giving them food and giving them a lap to sit in.

I was told I was possibly the first white person in Rwanda where the little children who had climbed out from under the bodies of their parents who were murdered with machetes, climbed up in my lap. You walk in our building here and you'll see a picture here that was done by a wonderful artist in New York of those little orphans in my arms, and they wanted to touch my arms and my face. I told Betty, it's the most beautiful picture -- ever seen a picture of Jesus with the children, I felt like he was there with me.

And, Betty, we've never stopped holding them and we've never stopped putting something in that little hand. And we don't just try to feed them and stabilize them, and make them dependent, we get them strong, we try to teach them how they can grow a crop and we don't teach them to hate people that have something. We teach them gratitude and then we start feeding at schools. We inspired the World Food Program to start feeding at schools because they saw it work in transforming power -- and I'm glad of that. So we don't want to create what I'm already watching here in our own country, a dependent people who live with the "you owe me" attitude and never go anywhere.

I'm trying to inspire people to go into Africa and see the great resource of the people, not just what's in the land. And I believe I'll live to see that where we begin to look at the people as the greatest resource and give them opportunity.

So here's what I want you to do. I want you to dial that number, I want you to take your bankcard and use it the best way you'll ever use it, as a check to give life. I want you to make the largest gift you can to help us feed these precious children and give them glory in their eyes and hope.

We have some friends who will match what you give because they believe so much in what we're doing. You give \$100 to help us feed ten children for the next months, miraculously give them hope, and the missionaries love them and point them to God, it will actually be right now 20 children. \$30 to feed three, it is now six. \$50 to feed five, it's now ten because some people said, "We believe in what you're doing. We'll match what you do. We want to encourage you to do it."

So I'm asking you to go online LifeToday.org or dial that telephone number that's always a prayer line for you and say, "Here's what God is leading me to give." You're giving life and hope and love. Would you do it please? Do it joyfully and prayerfully. Make the largest gift you can knowing it's going to be matched, and double the number of children that would normally help. If you could give \$1,000 please do. Whatever God leads you to give, it's important to those precious children and their families. So you make that gift.

Begin video clip

Announcer: In remote and impoverished areas of Africa, families are suffering, facing death by starvation, and those hit the hardest are their children.

Life's Mission Feeding program is there able to feed and care for over 400,000 children in crisis areas of Angola, Mozambique, and Sudan. But our food reserves are gone and we desperately need your support to replenish our supplies at more than 800 feeding centers immediately. As an answer to prayer, a group of LIFE's friends have set a \$550,000 end-of-year matching challenge for Mission Feeding. This means your gift today can have a double impact!

\$30 to help three children will be doubled to impact six children! \$50 to help feed five children will be doubled to help save ten children. And \$100 for 10 children will be doubled to help feed and minister to 20 children.

With your gift of any amount we'll send you Christine Caine's powerful new teaching series *Moving Past Your Past*, on audio CD along with her book, *Can I Have and Do It All Please?*

With your double impact gift of \$100 to help save the lives of 20 children you may request both the audio and video series. And as a bonus, we'll send you Christine's latest book release, *Undaunted*.

Finally, please consider a double impact gift of \$1,000 to help save the lives of 200 children. And you may request our 50th anniversary bronze sculpture, "Brotherly Love." Please call, write, or make your gift online today.

End of clip

On the mission field

>> I've been in the malnutrition clinics and my heart broke as I watched those children struggle for every breath. And I watched the moms; that broke my heart to watch them so patiently waiting there on a concrete floor with just a matt, wanting desperately to get help for their children, having walked miles.

We would like to put the malnutrition clinics out of business because we want to feed these children. We want to give them life. We want to give them a chance by going to the phone right now, dialing the number that's on your screen and making a gift, making a contribution to *LIFE* in Africa.

In the studio

James: I just want to say thank you from the bottom my heart, and I know Betty joins me. Thank you for looking in those eyes and seeing the need and the hope. We're sending you the teaching material that Christine Caine offers and her books. And today, if you'd like to have Anne Graham Lotz book, many of you can identify with, *Wounded by God's People*. I'm so sorry that's happened.

I'm so sorry that I have ever disappointed anybody. I know I have! I would want to go and heal that wound with anybody where I ever acted so unbecoming of Christ or I didn't understand you. God, forgive me! You forgive me. But see, God's people, the church does wound people. We'll be glad to send you this book. Say, "James, I need that right now." Listen, don't stay hurt! Be full of forgiveness.

Would you join us saying thanks to Anne Graham Lotz? Thank you, Anne. I love you! There again on the screen is Anne's web site. Do you see? it? Go there, communicate, find out what she's doing and let her bless you in your journey.