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Week 48
James and Betty Robison
Mark Gungor

Betty: Thank you so much for joining us on *LIFE Today*; I'm Betty and this is James. We've been married for 50 years but we're going to learn how to be married a little bit longer.

James: Maybe a lot longer. This guy, Mark Gungor, he's funny. He's a pastor. Sometimes, the way he communicates I think, he's a pastor? This guy is really fun and funny. And he's written a book, it's kind of cute. It looks like something he wrote for the kids -- *Beattitudes of Marriage: Nine Simple Steps to a Healthier, Happier Marriage*. And he teaches marriage seminars all over the country, and we're going to give you his web site a little later.

Why don't you welcome Mark Gungor back to *LIFE Today*?

Mark, it's good to have you, buddy! Glad to have you. Well, Betty and I have made it -
- we've made it 50 years.

Mark: There's hope!

[Laughter]

James: That's right, buddy! She gave me a one year extension. She said, "One more." Tell us what you really... let me look at these titles and I want you to pick the ones out that you want to talk about.

Mark: Now it is very simple. It is illustrated, which is great for men.

[Laughter]

There's pictures! Boys, you can read it. And it's a real simple read, which really most guys, you come in and say, "Here honey, I want you to read this book on marriage." He's just not going to do it. It's too big. But this one, this one he will because it is real

simple. It's a great gift. It's the kind of book that you can put on your table and start conversations, and people pick it up -- just nine simple truths about marriage.

James: Can I read all nine of them?

Mark: Yeah, sure!

James: Be nice, be content, be connected, be prepared, be proactive, be clear, be doers, be patient, be dead. Oh, my!

My, my! You mean wish they were dead? Is that what you're saying?

Mark: No, not exactly.

James: Well, pick out the ones you want to talk about because this is not Oprah. We don't have ALL day.

[Laughter]

We have a short amount of time. Help us.

Mark: So Jesus gave his beatitudes, the nine things on the Sermon on the Mount, blessed are -- fancy word for blessing or whatever -- so just a play on words, beatitudes. I said well, we're going to have *The Beattitudes of Marriage* -- nine beatitudes -- attitudes that you ought to be. Just simple things that people can do so they can maintain.

James: Now you're talking to both of us. You're looking at me.

[Laughter]

Betty: To whoever needs it most.

Mark: To everybody, and they're just very simple things. The first one, chapter one is: Be nice -- be nice. People say, "What is the key to being married?" Be nice! For heaven's sake, people are so puking mean. A marriage license is not permission to be mean as a rattlesnake. Some of the sweetest people in the world, they go to church, they're singing and clapping and they just love everybody until you get them home. And then... [Waaakh] Then demons come out and they're all screaming and yelling at each other, "You don't know what you're talking about." "Shut up! You don't..." Just going back and forth.

You'd be shocked if you could hear what goes on in people's homes because for some reason they think, "I don't have to be nice -- I'm married! I don't have to be nice." You know what? A lot of it goes back to some terrible advice that popped up in western culture, I don't know, 40 years ago or whatever. I don't know who the guy was who came up with the advice but we ought to take him and beat him.

But anyway, that is this: You have to be honest with how you feel. You have to be honest. One of the most important things in marriage -- you've all heard this; right? You have to be honest with how you FEEL. So you have couples emotionally vomiting all over each other. [blllkeh blllkeh blllkeh]

[Laughter]

Because they have to be honest with each other, but that's insane! It's crazy! My wife and I just celebrated our 40th wedding anniversary and people say, "How have you been married for 40 years?"

I always say, "It is because we're not honest with how we feel."

Good Lord! Who does that? I mean there are days my wife wakes up in the morning and looks at me and feels she's been blessed by God. I'm sure! I'm sure there are mornings she wakes up and looks at me and is convinced she married the spawn of hell. A simple good morning will suffice. I don't need to hear that.

Only in marriage are we so incomprehensibly stupid. Who lives by their feelings? Can you imagine people tomorrow deciding to go to work based on how they feel? "Yeah, boss, listen, I'd really love to come to work, I really would, but I'm not feeling it."

[Laughter]

"And I feel you're an idiot." Well, he's being honest; right? Well, you'd get fired. Nobody does that in any area of life. In fact, the key to success in life is not to listen to how you feel.

Now this is an important thing, particularly for the male culture. Now we've all talked about the feminization of the male culture over the years because so many women have been convinced that if men would just be more emotive, more in touch with their feelings that it would be better for men but it is not -- it is a bad formula for men because men tend to feel very bad things. We do!

Women feel good things. They're very emotive and they feel altruistic things. A bunch of women will walk into a dirty room and they'll all look at each other and go, "Oh, let's clean this place up!"

[Laughter]

Right?

Dude, I have never been with a bunch of guys who ever walked into a room and said, "You know brother, we ought to get a broom and straighten this place up."

[Laughter]

We don't feel good things. A man gets mad, he feels like punching you in the face. Best we not do that. Right?

A guy sees a pretty girl, we feel like going... [eeeh eeh eeh eeh] Best we not do that!

[Laughter]

Okay? In fact, if you're going to help your boy succeed, you fathers, you've got to teach your boys you don't live by how you feel. A man lives by what is right and what is righteous and we don't listen to our emotions, our feelings -- it can be the undoing of us. So that's just the first one is just --

James: Well, go to another one. This is good!

Mark: Another one: Be connected.

James: What does that mean?

Mark: Get some friends. Some of you people, good Lord! Don't people have friends? They have personal friends, you know. "Well, I got my friends and he's got his friends." Yeah, that's the problem because we all have crazy people that are our friends. That's why they're our friends because they think as dumb as we do; right? Oh, we love our... but they don't have any couples friends.

Of course, you know pastors and stuff, the amount of time that is spent marriage counseling and couples coming in and sticking a straw in the pastor's brain and

sucking the life out of him -- It's like oh, seriously? Just get some friends! You can't get some people to talk about... But you know what? In America we have this thinking, no one should know our business. It's our business, no one should know our business. They try to live on an island. Marriage was never designed to be two people on an island. Y'all live on an island just you and your spouse, you will turn into cannibals and eat each other!

[Laughter]

Get off the island for heaven sakes. Talk stuff through because we all talk about the stupid things on earth; right? We think it is so important to us. I want the thermostat set on 72. She wants it at 70. I want it at 72! She wants it at 70. Your friends will probably say, "Well, have you tried 71?"

[Laughter]

Never thought of that! And it would be so healthy to talk. My wife and I do this all the time. We talk with people and talk our crazy out because then you've got perspective, people that you can trust that are your friends and stuff like that. And seriously, if people would just get friends! I'm talking about other couples. You ought to have barbecues and stuff, invite them over. Talk about stuff, "We've been arguing about this." And number one, you'll find out that they argue about the same stupid things you do. And number three, somebody in the group has figured out an answer. You know what I'm saying? So just get connected.

James: You can at least care about each other when you're connected.

Mark: Absolutely! But we're Christians, you see. We love to be phony. Oh, come on! You know what I'm talking about. "Hi! How are you doing?" "Praise God!" A bunch of liars! On the way to church they're yelling at each other and casting the devil out of their kids, "Shut up back there! Shut up or I'll kill you if you don't stop it!"

Then you walk in church, "How are you doing?" "Oh, praise God. Good! We just thank the Lord for everything he's done in our lives!"

Do you know there will be thousands of people listening to me today, this week they found out that somebody in their church is getting divorced and they had no idea they didn't even like each other. They had no idea they were having troubles. Why? Because they play that stupid game nobody should know our business. Oh, some counselor will know their business but they can't tell anybody anything. But if you

would just talk to friends and get some input, at least people can pray with you if nothing else. But give you some practical advice on how to... so get connected!

James: By the way, we're laughing and we're having fun but he is downloading a whole lot of truth, which is exactly what he does in *The Beattitudes of Marriage*. Mark's helping a lot of people. Sure, we should be able to laugh our way to help and I really think that's one of the things you try to show people can happen, that they can laugh the way, that the laughter, the joy, is medicine...

Mark: To health, you said?

James: To health... not the... you didn't get the T-H?

[Laughter]

Mark: We're laughing our way to hell!

[Laughter]

That's a different book. I didn't write that book!

[Laughter]

I just want to get on the same page. That's all! I don't know what direction you're going there.

[Laughter]

James: Take the next little step; will you? I can hardly wait.

Mark: There are several. I'm trying to think of them.

James: Give them something that's sad; will you?

Mark: Be clear! That's a new one -- be clear. Every marriage has one -- generally, most marriages have one person who is very emotive and the other one is...

James: Define that word. That's new to me.

Mark: Emotive -- they're just very emotional, they feel big, and they communicate

emotions and stuff. Usually it is the woman, but not always. There's a lot of marriage where it is the wife who is sane and it is the man who... [lala-la, lalala] We feel everything. And here's the problem with an emotive person. They are so convinced of their emotions and they're so aware of their emotions they can't imagine the other person doesn't have a clue. So they drop all kinds of little hints that they think is real obvious. "Well, I'm mad at you."

"Really, I didn't know that."

"Well, I told you."

"When did you tell me that?"

"Remember when I said..." [Sighs]

[Laughter]

"Seriously, I thought you had gas. I didn't know what that was. What is that?"

[Laughter]

They drop little -- [sighing] -- and the other person is supposed to know what's going on. Stop that! Quit being crazy! You have to tell people what's bothering you; right?

And again, it is not always the woman. It usually is, but not always. Because sometimes -- because I'm that way. My wife is like she's normal and I'm just like Mr. Emotive. [Lala la la luh] And here's how emotive people get around other emotive people and they all understand.

[Laughter]

The ladies get together and say, "Oh, I could tell you were feeling that. I could just tell right away." So she can't understand why he is such an idiot; that kind of thing or why the wife can't understand stuff. So just be clear, for heaven's sake.

Betty: A lot of times that's hard because women and men speak different languages.

Mark: Yes, we speak English.

[Laughter]

Betty: No!

Mark: Habla Ingles -- speak English.

James: Now was the next one you wanted to touch on Be Dead?

Mark: Be Dead -- yes! Be Dead -- that's the last one in there. I love the picture. Can I show the picture? This is very spiritual. Okay, be dead.

James: They're in the casket.

Mark: They're looking at themselves in the casket. Now what's that about? You can't possibly read the New Testament, the gospels, without getting the sense that God wants to kill you.

[Laughter]

Now I'm not talking about the physical you but how many times did you... so we don't hear this. Because so much of the gospel God just wants everybody to be happy. Well, that's not necessarily true. A lot of times what we have to do makes us unhappy. Do you ever fast?

[Laughter]

There's a party! Not everything spiritual is happy. But Jesus said, "You lay down your life, you need to pick up your cross."

Paul said, "I'm crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live."

All that stuff! So God wants to kill the selfish part of you. And there's no more perfect institution designed to kill you than marriage because you can't do it and stay selfish. And all marriages end for only one reason and one reason only, somebody gets selfish; it all boils down to that. So what we have to learn is to die to ourselves.

Everybody is calling, "Pastor, how do I get my husband to do this?" "How do I get my wife to do that?" First of all, you can't get... nobody is a robot. You can't get everything you want in marriage. Anybody notice this?

[Laughter]

And they get mad because they can't have what they want. It is like check your medication. Calm down! Nobody gets everything they want. And at some point you're not even supposed to get everything you want. That's what people don't want to hear. We need to learn to die to our self.

Jesus gave a perfect example. He said, "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it will remain alone." Right? And boy, if that doesn't describe a lot of Christians. They're just dark and it's cold and they're in the dirt and they come to the pastor and they say, "Pastor..." [coughing] "I keep breathing dirt and -- I can't see nothing and it is hard to move. Pastor, what should I do?"

"Die already! For heaven's sake!"

[Laughter]

Because Jesus said, "If you will die, then new life will burst out." If you'll learn to let go and let God, you will climb out of that dirt of your life and break into the glorious sunshine of his grace. But you can't do it if you don't just let go!

James: Is he fun? Do y'all appreciate his humor and the good message he's brought? I like it.

I love you, Mark.

There's Mark's web site. You can go there, get the book, likely get it online. Amazon, I'm sure has it and you can go there and order it immediately. I think you'll find it fun and inspirationally informative. But you'll also find where he's teaching marriage seminars that you're going to enjoy going to but it's going to be transforming because he makes the point, he makes it clear and it's fun and it can impact you in a positive way.

Betty and I have been married ten years longer than you and your wife. You said 40, we've been married 50. I will say this and I think most people who watch us they wonder and they will come and ask our staff when they get them, "Are they really like that? What are they really like? Tell us what they're really like." This is really who we are and we do talk straight to one another and she is tough. But you know what? We find joy in what the other person enjoys. We actually find our focus first on God and

we mean that, that's not religious church talk, we're talking about God relationship, like a father, like a friend, like one who will direct your steps and encourage you and pick you up when your heart's broken as ours has been broken as you know if you've followed the program with the loss of our youngest daughter, and God holds us. Well, we find joy in holding one another and lifting one another up and being one another's encourager while we're being honest.

And we can share -- we don't really -- she doesn't really have to go and find somebody to hold her hurt or care about what she cares about or be excited. I get up looking for what puts joy and a smile on her face and she does that for me, and I don't really think that's all that hard to do. But you really do have to die to yourself in a very true sense of the word to begin to live for God and live for others.

Really, what Mark is saying to us is biblical truth where he expresses it in a fun way. One of the reasons you're laughing is not just because he is animated and funny, but you identify with what he's talking about.

Of course, some of you want to say, "Well, it's my neighbor." But the truth is, it's too close to home. And the fact that we can laugh about it is in itself healing. But then if we will apply truth to the situation and the spirit and life and love of God nothing's impossible. I do hope you'll get the book, I do hope you'll check out the web site and see where he is in seminars.

Join us again saying thanks to Mark Gungor for what he is doing and saying and sharing as a pastor and a leader.

Mark: Thank you, guys!

James: Mark, one of the things that we have told our viewers, that to live life fully express it freely. If you've ever wanted a shoulder to lean on when you hurt, ask God to make you a shoulder for someone else to lean on. Be the hands that reach out to pick someone in need up like you would wish somebody would of you if you're in a tough spot. I want you to look, watch, and respond as God prompts to what you see.

On the mission field

>> This is Akun. She is four years old and her frail body tells you something is terribly wrong. Her parents have died and her surviving uncle is the only one left to care for her.

Subtitle:

>> She used to be healthy. Her stomach became bloated. She began coughing and has difficulty breathing.

Announcer: But why? Why is this weakened little girl struggling to survive?

Subtitle:

>> So when the child was brought it was having severe malnutrition. In fact, for Akun, it was a lack of food. It was the lack of food.

Announcer: An immune system broken down by malnutrition, broken down by starvation. In a matter of days Akun's body could reach a point of no return. In a downward spiral that could ultimately take her life all from a lack of food -- just food!

Subtitle:

>> I am trying my very best but it's all I can afford. I have no other choice but to survive in the way that we have.

Announcer: Her uncle's best effort may not be enough for Akun but yours would be for both Akun and so many like her.

End of clip

In the studio

James: I see you, honey! I want to put the arms of a loving father around that little girl the uncle is caring for. And we can because there are missionaries in place with a broken heart, a heavy heart and they really want to give that little girl who represents, and sometimes the number causes you to lose sight of the preciousness of one individual life, but there are 420,000 right now that are already in settings where we found them, and we're trying to do what we want to do for her and that's establish a feeding center, and restore their health, give them the nutrition, which is mixed in a nutritious porridge-based mix and take care of them and literally give them a bowl to replace cans or plastic bags that they bring to get something to eat. We want to give them a heat-resistant bowl that you the viewer said, "Give them a bowl so they don't burn their little hands." So you've done that.

And now then we are giving what this bronze illustrates. Here is an older brother feeding a malnourished brother. We call it "Brotherly Love" but he's feeding out of a

bowl that somebody like you gave with food in it that someone like you gave and he's taking care of his little brother.

And amazingly, Betty, the older, stronger children feed the little ones, and they're weak -- and we feed all of them. And when I say "we" do you understand that "we" encompasses a whole host of people around the world? You and I do our part gladly and we've been doing it now for nearly 25 years faithfully, from the moment we found not only the hungry and the thirsty but we found the mission workers who had given their lives to give them life. And the missionary said, "Go back and tell so we can stay here and help and point them to God." So they show them love, they share love, they give them life and they tell them about the love of God.

In our mission feeding programs a couple times a year we ask you to help us. A gift \$30 or \$50 or \$100 we can feed three, five, or ten children for the next several months. But now, Betty, we've got a miracle. Some of our friends who love what we're doing, they're excited about it, they said, "We'll match what you give right now." So if you want help save the lives of ten kids with a \$100 gift, you're actually going to save the lives of 20 kids. Think about that! What you do right now... and no gift is too small. You say, well, give \$30 for three kids, that's big to those three kids and their family -- but now it's going to become six kids. \$50 is not five kids right now because of the friends who match your gift it's ten kids. You give \$1,000 it's not 100 children we're able to feed but 200.

We have some spiritual gifts for you to feed you spiritual nourishment by Christine Caine and the books she's written to bless you. So would you go to the phone, take your bankcard, use it like a check, or go online LifeToday.org and make the gift God put on your heart? I pray you'll do it right now. I'm asking you now. Don't just sit there and say, "Oh, I hope somebody does it." You be the answer to that hope. You be the answer to the heart cry, you be the answer to the prayer, you be the answer to the need. You can be the answer for someone... or many. Help as many as you can right now. Make that call. 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

James: Here are two children at school. This little guy has got the United States flag on. I want our country to always be known as a country that gives life to children like these, not only saving their life from starvation but from malnutrition that keeps them from learning as they should. Everyone in the United States watching me right now, you have a chance to make a gift. And all our Canadian/Australian friends, United Kingdom, European friends, let's all help!

Would you right now go to the phone or go online and respond and make the best gift you can possibly make? Please do it! Don't turn away. Do what you can to help.

In the studio

James: We're going to be sending you Christine Caine's teaching material, *Moving Past Your Past*.

If you'd like to have Mark Gungor's book, *The Beattitudes of Marriage* just say you, "You know what? I like what he had to say. I want to read this. Sit down with my spouse and we'll read it prayerfully together and we'll begin to apply it."

We in the blessed world have so much to be grateful for, and around the Thanksgiving season as we look forward to the greatest season of giving when God gave the greatest gift, you be grateful -- you be grateful for what you have enough to share with others and bless them. Thank you for doing that.

Would you say thanks to Mark Gungor again?

Mark, we appreciate you. Thanks for making us smile. Thanks for brightening our day, and thanks for helping us.

Thank all of you. We are grateful, we are thankful for you and people all over the world are thankful for your love and your help. God bless you!