

5/20/14

Week 21: Spring Mission Feeding
Brenda Spahn and Shay Curry

James: Thank you all! It's such a privilege to share this time with you. We feel really blessed that we're able to introduce you to so many uniquely gifted blessed people who have incredible stories that are so common. And many of you would say, "Oh, my! I didn't know anybody went through some of the things I've been through." Or "Oh, that's interesting!"

I'm James Robison; Betty and I have been ministering for more than 50 years, and I normally ministered in coliseums and stadiums for 25 years. But here we have a very unique story. It is a little bit like the Blind Side; if you ever saw that where a woman in Memphis reached out to a young man that was pretty well overlooked. Well, here is a woman who never thought she would look into a prison and see a call. A book came out of it and soon a movie. It's called *Miss Brenda and the Loveladies*. I want you to hear their story.

Brenda Spahn and Shay Curry are here. Brenda is the one who reached out to the Loveladies. Would you welcome Brenda and Shay to *LIFE Today*?

Brenda: Thank you.

James: And you raise your hand, you're Brenda.

Brenda: I'm Brenda.

James: And this is Shay. Shay has such a smile and beautiful face. I think she's cute. But she says she was mean. She was downright dangerous. And you found her, as a result of God putting on your heart people in prison and seeing something. Go ahead

and tell us how it happened and what's in the book here and how y'all got to know each other because this just simply wasn't supposed to happen.

Brenda: No, it wasn't supposed to happen. I don't think when I was a child I ever thought well, one day I'm going to grow up and have a lot of prisoners in my home. That wasn't on the radar.

[Laughter]

The Lord found me but I was kicking and screaming the whole way. I'm kind of like the Israelites; I wandered around for 40 years and finally said, "Okay, Lord, I'll do it." When only by the grace of God some things happened in my personal life. And so I decided I felt like he was leading me to be a minister in prison. So I went to the prisons to minister and I loved it.

James: And you were living in Birmingham; right?

Brenda: That's right! I went to a work release center in Birmingham and I started ministering. I loved it. It is kind of like having grandchildren. You go in, you love them, and you leave them.

James: And you had grandchildren.

Brenda: Yeah -- 23! So I'm very familiar with how to do grandchildren. So what happened is while I was ministering -- and prison ministries are wonderful -- but what happened is I found that while I was ministering that when the women got released it was like a revolving door and they came right back.

I said, "Well, I can do better than this." So I badgered the state of Alabama, "Give me some women. Give me some women!" And they said, "What do you know?" I said, "Only that God has put it on my heart." Well, I badgered them 'til they decided to send me some. So I got my...

James: You're talking about right to your house?

Brenda: Oh, well yeah! But by this time I had moved out and I had arranged the house in a great way. I had a house mom and a driver and a cook. I was doing it the Brenda way still. I wasn't going to get my hands dirty. I was just going to do it from a distance. And every once in a while I envisioned me going by and teaching them, loving on them, and then I would fly right on out.

So what happened is the state finally sent me my first seven women and I guess they thought, well, we're going to teach her a lesson. So the van pulled up. I'm standing in the window watching for them and my sweet daughter was standing there. I had the house mom and she was upstairs looking out and everything was just beautiful. So all of the sudden when the van comes out I'm like what is that getting off the van? What is that? Is that a man or a woman? Wait stop!

Miss Smile that you like so much was the first one off the van. I know you like it now, James, but listen, what you see is not what you get.

[Laughter]

So she comes off the van and I told my daughter, I said, "My God, Melinda, what has the Lord done?"

And I started saying, "Lord, you've made a mistake. This is not what I signed on for."

She came barreling through the house and I was like, "Oh, no!"

To make a long story short, within an hour, the house mother quit. I said, "The Lord called you to this. I don't understand -- the Lord called you to do this. You told me he did."

She said, "He didn't call me to that!"

[Laughter]

I said, "Oh, my gosh!"

James: Was it just because they met her?

Brenda: Well, all seven of them! But she was the leader of the pack. So she was telling them -- she was scolding them and telling them, "Quit that smiling!"

I was like... I was like, "Lord, what have you done?"

And so all of the sudden I realized I wasn't playing church anymore. This is where the rubber met the road. When I cried out to God in those dark times, Lord, let me find your destiny and I'm thinking, and this is it? You've got to do better than this because I was quite comfortable. This is what the Lord had for me. I'll let Shay say what she was thinking.

James: What were you thinking, Shay?

Shay: Okay. You've got to remember --

James: You were making an impression.

Shay: Yes. You've got to remember this is my fourth time in prison. You know what I'm saying? I just got through doing eight years and I'm coming out. I didn't want to go back to Mobile because I got tired of just going home, getting back on drugs, going back to prison and stuff. Wow!

When they told me about a place called Lovelady Whole-way House and I was saying like, "Okay, I'll go there as long as I can get out." I made parole and stuff. So when we was driving up this driveway I'm looking up this hill and there's this big old beautiful mansion, you know what I'm saying and I'm thinking to myself, "Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah! They're not going to take me out of prison for eight years and put me in here. That's not going to happen."

So I'm looking at it and everybody is so excited and I'm getting angrier by the second; you know what I'm saying? But I'm pulling up them old behaviors where I used to protect myself so I wouldn't hurt or be disappointed in case I am going to her house and be a maid because that's what I was really thinking.

[Laughter]

They've gone and put me in a black dress and little white apron. They were going to work me and make me be a maid.

[Laughter]

Then when we pull up and I see -- Miss Brenda and I see Melinda and I see Lahanda and they're peeping out the window and I see her hair, that red hair and say, "Yep, black dress, little white apron. Baby, it's all up in here."

[Laughter]

And everybody was excited and I was just mad. [Grumbling] "Y'all know we're just going to be some maids."

When I went to her door she opened the door. She said, "Welcome to my home." You know what I'm saying? That kind of thrown me back a little bit -- just a little.

Brenda: Not far.

Shay: Not far -- just a little. I say, "What are you going to do for me?"

And she says, "Help you get your driver's license."

Brenda: I didn't know. I was desperate.

Shay: I said, "I don't need no license. I've been driving all my life. What do I need with some license for?" You know what I'm saying?

And Melinda with her -- she had the bluest eyes I have ever seen, Melinda did. She said, "Well, come on in. Let me take you around and show you the house and stuff." And so we go on in and I'm looking and I'm just getting angrier, you know what I'm saying? -- Because I feel like D.O.C. has done tricked me again. I'm not going to last long. I'm going to end back in prison. I'm going to end up on drugs.

And we were going up the stairs. I looked to the right and there was this bedroom and it had on it "The Yellow Room" and everything in there was yellow. And I see this big plush posturepedic mattress; you know what I'm saying? I'm trying to desperately walk to get to the bed so I can sit on it so I can claim it because I've been sleeping on these little thin ones for so long. And I get there and I sit down.

I said, "O God!" You know what I'm saying? Then I can feel hope building up inside of me.

And I'm saying, "I'm scared to feel it. I'm scared to feel it."

This lady didn't know what to do with us, and I didn't know what to think about her.

Brenda: But the Lord did.

Shay: I didn't have to tell her anything. I didn't have to tell her later, "I don't know how to be a woman. Only thing I know how to do is use drugs and hustle -- that's it." I didn't have to tell her that. Tell her I'd never been a mom. I've got children that I never was a mother to; wanted to be just didn't know how. Didn't have to tell her anything. God told her everything for me.

Brenda: And I had seven of them -- the first seven. And the first seven came in. The van driver said, "Is anybody wanting to leave?"

And I hit my knees and said, "Take that one. Take that one."

[Laughter]

But she was on that mattress and she wasn't budging. So that's how the Lovelady Center was born. Pretty soon the seven turned to 40, and we're up in the middle of nine acres but it got -- that was the first time in my life I have really faced a lot of prejudice. Everyone just could not understand why someone would want to do what I was doing. So I was fighting them, I was fighting the women. I felt like, Lord, I'm fighting everybody here to try to do what you want me to do.

I know a lot of ministers feel that way. I was like surely, surely this cannot be this hard. But you know, I've understood that if it's worthwhile and if you're really making a difference, it gets that hard.

Many times I wanted to give up and I knew I was where he wanted me to be. To make a long story short, the Lord turned the 40 and now we are in Birmingham in an old hospital. There are 400 women, thousands of women have been through the program. We take children. We have...

James: Isn't that great? Don't you just want to say thank God!

[Cheers & Applause]

Brenda: Listen, we're going to have to give all this credit to the Lord because in a million years I wouldn't have done it.

James: You were abused as a girl, molested by relatives, hurt, just lived in hell, tried to escape, tried to hustle, just keep getting hurt. Finally love -- she had a head-on collision with love; the love of God in a person in Alabama, a state I love so much. I love all of you! I love people everywhere. I can't find anybody not to love. I find a lot of things not to love but I know that's true of me and God just loves me endlessly. Well, you begin to love and you shared the love of God with them too. She showed you the love of God so that you wanted to hear more about it and you came to know the love of God; didn't you, Shay?

Shay: Yes, sir!

James: Changed your life.

Shay: Changed my life.

James: Now what do you do?

Shay: I work for the Lovelady Center. I am the Director of Intake.

[Cheers & Applause]

I like to say that. I'm director --

James: You know what? You're not a maid. She's a sovereign of the Most High God!

Shay: But you know what? I would drop to my knees in a day if I had to do it all over again and know what I know today, I would have been glad to be a maid. I would be glad to have been a good one.

Brenda: When you're ministering to the people I minister to, you have -- because they are looking -- they are looking to see Jesus or they're looking for you to make a mistake. And so I have -- I don't know, it's been quite a road. Many years ago the Lord told me I was going to write a book. It took me six months to write the first word and now then I've got a whole book!

James: You know we literally get five or ten books, sometimes a day, and I'm thankful to say there's nobody that has a story that doesn't want to come and tell it on *LIFE Today* because I knew when God told us to do this because I was kind of the center of attention, and the coliseums filled, and millions of people came to Christ but the Lord really said that the day of the somebodies is coming to a screeching halt. I want it to be my body and I want to be the head and I want people to see me and the people nobody noticed like Shay.

Betty, we've been committed to doing that all over the world. I want to see God's family. I told you folks tonight when we were sitting before we came out here just visiting, I said we've got the greatest father and he seems to have the most dysfunctional family on the planet because we just divide and conquer but the house divided doesn't stand. We've been trying to bring the family together and that's what the family looks like sitting here. This story is phenomenal. Betty, what's going on in your heart?

Betty: I'm sitting here listening to both ladies and I see how God's just really gotten a hold of your heart and turned your life inside out. But at the same time I can just see how God has just blessed you because you obeyed him. You've been... reward after reward, every time you see one of these ladies' lives changed.

Brenda: At some point you have to decide, are you more afraid of disobeying God or what other people think? And I discovered a long time ago, it's not in me to try to disobey him anymore. I did that for too many years. Right now, whatever he says is how I try to go. I do it with everything in me.

This journey has taken me from being a person that I really didn't like that much -- I was the kind of person that saw people and I thought, they did this, they shouldn't have done it. I didn't have the kind of feeling that I should have, and now these women are my very best friends. I don't know what I would do without them.

Shay: That's my girl!

James: That's why that smile was there. That's the joy of the Lord! And it's your strength and it's her strength. Now I want all of you to know that they want to help people. And there are some of you watching that God knows, sometimes my administrative staff says, "What's wrong with you, James? You don't understand how many people we're trying to help and what we're doing. You always tell everybody to help everybody that walks by and you want to help everybody?" I do! And if I feel that way as just a normal person, think how much God feels that way -- how much he wants to help. The thing is we really are -- we are the release of the river. So if people want to help you, Brenda and they want to know what you're doing and how they can

help you or how they can be involved or how they could expand it, how they could see what y'all have learned over here and do it in another state, tell me how they would find you. Do you have a web site?

Brenda: That's right. You know my grandkids are so proud of me now, I'm a pop up. Just go in and type in the Love Lady Center and we pop right up.

[Laughter]

You can type in Miss Brenda and the Love Lady and that pops up. We get no federal funding because we are so Christian based. So it's always been a struggle. But God has opened doors where I saw sheetrock; I didn't see doors, and he has just opened them right up. We always need funding but... and we always want to help. We offer hope -- hope to the hopeless. Matthew 25:40 is what we're all about.

James: I want you to look them up. I hope you'll get the book. As a matter of fact, if you'll do something that you're going to -- I think you're going to want to do it in a minute because I'm going to ask you -- well, I'm actually going to let you see something that you'll want to turn away from but don't because God wouldn't, just like God didn't turn away from Shay. She's walking in wondering, "What am I going to get now? I've been hurt all my life. Is this another one of those deals?" And she found out it wasn't another one of those deals.

You just don't even understand how much God wants you to know, he's got a deal for you. He's got an offer to make beyond anything you can imagine. So in a minute I want you to look and you're going to see some things you say, "I think I'll look away."

But God says, "No, touch them with my hands; touch them with my healing hands." We'll send you the book to say thank you for doing what Jesus does because you're... Just like Brenda is an expression of Jesus, that's what you're going to get to be. Say again thanks to Brenda and Shay for what -- thanks to God for what he's doing! And there again, there's the web site. And so you can look up what they're doing, find out

could it happen in our area? Could we maybe get somebody in there they would help that needs help like Shay?

But now I want you to go a long way; I want you to go to the other side of the world and I want you to see a mother's heart and I want you to see a child God wants to love through you just like he loved Shay through Brenda. Watch.

On the mission field

Announcer: Right now Angola is experiencing one of the worst droughts in years, destroying crops and impacting the lives of nearly two million people. As a result, over 100,000 children under the age of five are suffering with severe malnutrition. One of those children is named Elaina; she is almost two years old but she only weighs 18 pounds. Elaina's mother, Rosalina came to a malnutrition clinic desperate for her daughter to be healed.

Open captions:

>> I used to give Elaina my milk. She started getting sick when I ran out. Elaina cries when she's hungry but I have nothing to give her. I am very worried that she is still losing weight.

Announcer: Elaina's skin disease can be a fatal symptom of malnutrition, when a child is not getting enough food the lack of protein results in large painful lesions all over the body. If treated early enough the skin lesions can be healed but the long term effects of malnutrition will be with a child for the rest of their lives. The cure for malnutrition is simply food. A daily bowl of food will keep children out of the malnutrition clinics and give them the life they deserve. That's the miracle of mission fielding.

End of clip

In the studio

James: When I look at those... what I saw for so many years, skin ulcers, and realize that all we had to do to correct it was to give them something to eat. You're thinking about give these kids a chance; they don't define chance as an entertainment center or

park. These kids have more fun with a rock than our kids can have with a game box or some video game.

One of our best friends just came back from Africa and he went to where we've been feeding and where we've been saving kids for 25 years, and some of the older people are now grown tell us about how a lot of them went through college now and they're teachers themselves. But they had a bunch of these kids, Betty and they were kicking around a plastic bag they aired up, they didn't have anything to play with, and they had brought a soccer ball and they threw it out. He said, "I saw several hundred kids go crazy that they could kick a ball." He said, "I've never seen -- I've never seen kids so happy!"

So when we show you these desperate kids, and these mothers, and these kids are fighting just for a breath and we talk about hope, we're not talking about giving them an iPhone, we're talking about giving them life and showing them love. And yes, it is in my heart to see the whole continent of Africa changed and the resources there developed for the world but the great resources are the people. So I'm asking you, please, save those kids' lives: Give them food, be an answer to the mother's prayer, be the healing hands of Jesus and give them something to eat. And give them what to them is the greatest joy of all -- that they might have a family and a baby to love, because that's their biggest joy.

So I want you to dial the number, take your bankcard and use it like a check and make the biggest gift you can. We've got 100,000 kids right now that are facing death in Angola, the very place where you saw those malnutrition clinics. But I'm talking about out in the bush where the crops have failed.

We need a miracle. I'm praying God will raise up 1,000 people to give \$1,000 because with a \$1,000 we can feed a hundred kids, save their lives and we've got 100,000 that are desperate right now because of a drought. We've got 400,000 that we've located that we're feeding and we need to continue that to turn it around. So if you can give \$30 or \$50 or \$100 we'll feed three, five, or ten children. Think about it, \$30 feeds three, \$50 feeds five, \$100 feeds 10, and \$1,000 will feed 100.

Father, I pray everybody watching will reach out and be the hands of Jesus today. I'm asking you to touch their hearts God so they express your heart; in Jesus' name.

Dial that number. If you get a busy, you be determined, I'm getting through because I'm going to do what God told me to do; I'm going to see those children have hope, and you make the gift.

Or you can go to LifeToday.org and make the gift God put on your heart. We've got some gifts to bless you because we love to bless you, spiritually to feed you, and so we'll say thank you. But boy you're going to be the miracle some mother's praying for, some child, some young person, some family needs. Thanks for making the call. Thanks for right now doing it and going online. Bless you for it!

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.

With previous food reserves gone and Angola facing its worst drought and food shortage in 20 years, we desperately need to replenish our supplies for our feeding programs immediately!

Your life-saving gift of \$30, \$50, or \$100 will help feed and care for three, five, or ten children for the next three months.

With your gift of any amount we will send you this inspirational two book gift set, *A Dad's Blessing* by James Robison is packed with valuable fatherly wisdom and insight for dads of all ages.

Rise Above, by James and Betty's son, Randy Robison will show you how to soar far above the circumstances of life and go higher in your walk with God.

With your gift of \$100 or more to help feed ten children you'll receive our blessing bowls, a great way to teach your family about giving and a daily reminder of God's provision for hungry and hurting children.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1,000 or more to help feed 100 children and you may request our 2014 commemorative glass sculpture, "The Blessing."

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: Boy, I tell you my heart has been touched by the love of God. And I want to thank you. I'm praying there is not a person watching who could help a child that won't respond and make a gift. Like I said, if you get a busy, be determined. Be as determined as you would be if you just desperately need somebody to pray for you because there are people calling like that right now. We'll send you the book, *Miss Brenda and the Loveladies*. It is awesome! We want to send it to you to say thanks just for you reaching out and touching somebody.

Would you tell Shay, this formerly mean lady here that is so sweet and this beautiful smile, and would you tell Brenda, would you tell both of them you love them and thank you?

[Applause]

Thank you both. Do y'all feel loved here?

Shay: Yes, sir!

James: Well, y'all go share the love. Listen, you share the love -- all of you share it.

And all of you watching, you share the love. We want to bless you. Thanks! Thank you for helping us bless others. What a joy!