

6/09/14
Week 24: SMF
Shannon Ethridge

James: Y'all are great! Thank you. We welcome you. I'm James Robison; my wife Betty and I welcome you to *LIFE Today*. We have a guest that I think is very, in some ways courageous, and yet really is responding to what I believe perhaps are among the most serious challenges and issues we face for a number of reasons. The title of Shannon Ethridge's book is *The Passion Principles*. The subheading: Celebrating sexual freedom in marriage.

Would you welcome Shannon Ethridge back to *LIFE Today*?

Shannon, good to see you.

I want you to tell us why the book. Why did you write this book? Why do you deal with issues that are sensitive, especially to people who are church people?

Shannon: Well, the fact that they're church people doesn't mean a whole lot when it comes to their sexuality because so oftentimes they've used sexuality and spirituality as two opposite ends of a spectrum. They think that I can't possibly be sexual and spiritual at the same time. And there's a lot of guilt that comes with sex with Christian people, especially those who were raised in the church. And so little is said about sex except for "Just don't! Just say no and don't do it." And it's really hard to go from good girls don't or good boys don't to good girls and good boys do, they do it often, they do it well in marriage. So I just want to set them free that it's okay to enjoy this gift that God designed for our pleasure to enjoy in the marriage relationship.

James: Now what kind of response are you getting? What kind of settings do you deliver this message other than in a book where you are fairly detailed and you answered questions specifically, as you might think two people who were talking, as spouses might discuss these things, and approach them very realistically, very

honestly and very openly; you do it. So what kind of settings are you finding yourself in to do this?

Shannon: The purpose of the book was definitely to open lines of communication between husbands and wives. But I'm also trying to open lines of communication between parents and children and between spiritual leaders and the church because we do learn so much about our spirituality within the church. And if we can stop seeing them as opposite ends of the spectrum and seeing sexuality and spirituality as two sides of the same coin, as two things that we can't divorce from one another.

We are both sexual and spiritual beings from the day we are conceived until the day we die. If we can marry those two together and start feeling the freedom to enjoy this gift, I think it will protect marriages from a lot of temptations and guilt and just distance and frustration in the marriage.

Betty: Well, there are a lot of things that could cause that separation: Upbringing, a lot of things that happened in the home, maybe when you're growing up.

Shannon: Sure. And previous sexual abuse is often a factor, a lot of -- like we said -- spiritual taboos. A lot of times the husband will look at pornography and it will make the wife totally shut down. Or there's actually been a lot of my coaching clients who have the opposite issue going on where she is the one more addicted to pornography and he is the one wanting the face-to-face eye-to-eye connection in the bedroom. So the list of possibilities is endless as to what kind of issues can create dysfunction in the marriage.

You have to be really intentional to create intimate passion in the proper context and be emotionally available to one another to really enjoy that sexual relationship the way that we should.

James: I found that God gives us the best and the enemy that counterfeits it or he attacks it in some way or he takes it and makes it the major focus or an idol and then it becomes destructive and that's what we're watching today. No one but God could

have thought of something as potentially wonderfully beautiful and fruitful as marriage sexual relationships (in marriage,) and the fruit of that.

But today it is actually become, to many people, repulsive because of the extent to which some have gone chasing it and pursuing it, and being damaged in their thinking.

There is no question that men have a tendency to be attracted oftentimes in the wrong way. So when the enemy comes in and he feeds that continually, he makes a woman a sex object; that is not actually in any way doing her a service. It's not doing him a service. But it is perhaps doing --

Shannon: Or his wife.

James: Exactly. And it is probably doing the greatest disservice to individuals to have intimacy together and to really come together.

Now what I've seen you trying to do, what I've heard you do when you're teaching or sharing is you're trying to get people to be open and honest and recognize that this is a gift from God. It's not something to be considered as taboo, it's not something to be considered as dirty. God would not give us something like that. But the enemy has in many ways made it dirty or he's made it so inappropriately attractive that it's become totally destructive.

Now my question to you, how is what you're sharing being received? When couples or people who have been hurt or damaged because of what they're spouse did, maybe had an affair, there is a lot of pain, a lot of hurt, trying to get them to communicate again, trying to get people to be passionate about their relationship and intimacy not just sexually, but really having an intimate relationship.

What has been the response when you speak in a seminar, when you speak to church groups, what is happening to those viewers? How do they respond? Do they get up in arms at you because you're talking so openly or is there a sense of gratitude?

Shannon: No, I think that so many pastors may be afraid to open this kind of forum in the church but the reality is that every time I speak people will come up, of all ages, and say, "It's about time! It's about time that we started talking about these things and being able to ask these questions and get biblically based answers to our questions." Because typically, pastors don't preach about this from the pulpit on a Sunday morning. So when do they get taught about healthy sexuality? When do they learn how to let go of their sexual and emotional baggage? How to heal and forgive and move on and develop that intimacy together once again? So it needs to be talked about. We need to carve out special time to have these types of workshops or seminars or to encourage a study on the book or even just encouraging couples to read it together at home.

James: Well, you worked with Stephen Arterburn a lot. Steve Arterburn is one who inspired the Women of Faith movement; that many of you have met the speakers here on *LIFE Today*, and you've been to those conferences. He wrote *Every Man's Battle*; now you wrote *Every Woman's Battle*. He would probably describe if you put it in simplistic terms, lust was every man's battle, that distraction.

How did you capsule *Every Woman's Battle*? How did you see that?

Shannon: I felt like what women really struggle with is that it is kind of a pendulum swing; that women are either swinging too far to the left and they're acting out sexually, either prior to marriage or during their marriage, it is not just the man's battle at all. There's usually a woman stumbling and falling with that man; isn't there? Or they're struggling with swinging too far to the right; that they were shutting down sexually, that they were developing little or no interest toward their husbands, and that is as much of a problem on a marriage as acting out is.

So helping women find that healthy balance has been my whole goal for the past 20 years of opening their eyes to the fact that if there are things holding you back in bed then there's some things that need to be healed in your life so that you can function the way God intended you to function as a wife and you can enjoy that pleasure and create that bond that we're supposed to have in our marriage relationships.

Betty: One big thing too is the communication -- really listening to one another's hearts and their needs and their maybe their problems that they have with it and trying to work through those.

Shannon: And so oftentimes even couples can't communicate among themselves because they haven't seen a model of this because their parents didn't talk to them about healthy sexuality. And so it's really hard to talk to our children and it is sometimes is hard to talk to our spouse. But my hope is that because I wrote this book to both men and women, husbands and wives to read together, that this will open up lines of communication and allow them the freedom to ask for what they need and to recognize where they each need to have some healing in their own lives to make them a better sex partner for their spouse.

James: I've read enough of the book, *The Passion Principles*, which you can go online and get it. By the way, if our viewers want to know where you're speaking and where you're in some kind of a seminar function or you're out on an itinerant journey speaking at various locations, how would they find that out? What web site and if they wanted to know what material or video teachings or other material that they have, where would they go?

Shannon: They would go to ShannonEthridge.com and they can click on books and DVD's to learn about these types of resources or if they're interested in experiencing a workshop type thing that I do, I do one called "WOMEN AT THE WELL." There is a link on there, where we spend four days, just eight women, in my living room where we unpack their sexual and emotional baggage. We help them look at their history so that they can understand what's been holding them back historically or what's been pushing them to act out. But then we also are going to be launching *Every Woman's Battle* workshops with new life, with Stephen Arterburn here in the next year.

James: I want to read some of the questions that are here on the back. These are some that people ask and she's answered in the book. And I would say this, and I was referencing having glanced through this.

Shannon is... I guess she is quite uninhibited in the sense that she realizes we need to kind of cut to the chase and we need to just go ahead and talk openly. You might say blushing. But what she'll actually do, is kind of lead the dialogue.

Why don't you go ahead and ask what the things are let's say exciting or maybe are something some man is desiring or some woman is desiring or something is they're not comfortable with and why. Because a lot of times the why is not healthy in itself. They've been jammed because of some damage done when they were a child or when they were growing up or through some form of abuse. So what Shannon will do is she will try to help you get past that so that you can actually move into the beauty of something God made rather than seeing it as ugly or even despicable or distasteful or something to be avoided.

Please understand God doesn't give us anything that is not intended to bless us. He is a God of great blessing. "What was God thinking when he created sex?" someone asked.

Shannon: I think he was thinking that human beings needed a foretaste of what heaven was really going to be like -- the intimacy, the ecstasy, the euphoria of it all. I think that passion, marital passion is exactly that foretaste. I think that he was thinking I'm going to bless their socks off and a whole lot more.

James: Well, those that have been blessed by it are just calling in now saying they want to trust the LORD. They definitely want to go to heaven. They don't want to miss...

Shannon: I want to make my reservation in heaven!

James: All right. He was wanting to bless and he alone knows how to bless us best. Why do humans think about sex so much?

Shannon: This is how we are wired and sometimes people get so...

James: Now you said "we" like that includes men and women.

[Laughter]

There are a lot of women who would say, "Don't ever tell me I'm wired like him. I am not wired..." But you said "we."

Shannon: Well, we're wired to think about it in different ways. But yes, men and women are both created as sexual beings, like I said, from cradle to grave. And some people have a higher level of testosterone, which means they think about it a lot more often, some people have a lower level of testosterone, which means they don't think about it as often but by and large, human beings think about sex. This is just how we were wired by God and we don't have to feel guilty about that, and it really is okay to ask questions. It really is okay to seek biblically-based answers about what's okay in bed.

James: I think it is good that you're saying human beings and you said men and women because I think most women say, "Okay, we understand. We have some issues there." And most boys will tell you it's there. The sad thing is that if you let a boy grow up thinking there's something wrong with him like he's really got something terribly amiss in his psyche because he notices or he is attracted to beauty or he is excited thinking about sex.

That is not -- you're not supposed to make somebody feel abnormal; you're supposed to show them how to properly channel that and how not to improperly channel it. And let's be very honest, most of what's going on today... If you just watch, I don't care if it is during spring break and they show the news clips, this is not...

Shannon: It's on the Disney channel!

James: Sex on display or anywhere, it's absolutely... It ought to break our heart. When I see the kids that they show in the news clips and so forth, at the beach during spring break and so forth, I'm thinking, God, what about the parents? What would that do to a parent to see his daughter out there like that? Or the son out there like that? And I'm thinking, do they even have any parents? Some of them are saying they don't even

care. It breaks our heart that we've reached that point but we have and only God can bring us back.

I'll be honest with you, this is what I think -- Shannon, it's what I think you're trying to contribute to to show it is not something to be ashamed of but something to enjoy appropriately with understanding, that God did this but we need to understand doing things within the right boundaries.

Shannon: Absolutely. I want to say a message to the women listening. Growing up I always heard that this is something that men want but that girls don't really think in those terms. Nothing can be further from the truth. I remember wondering, did God get wires crossed in my brain that I actually do think about it sometimes? Women need to know that they're sexual beings too, and that they're going to have to be very intentional about guarding their hearts and minds and eyes just like men are.

James: And I think if we're really healthy then everyone thinks about it in a healthy way. I think boys can be excited to know girls can be excited about it, should be excited about it; both should be equally so, you might say, with understanding -- but also, with the right respect. And we have not learned properly, we have not been taught properly. The world never teaches us properly.

And when the church ignores such incredibly important issues to people, then they have done the people in their church a disservice, we've done our children a disservice. You asked this question or this question was asked you, "How can I get past his or her sexual past?"

Shannon: We so have to realize that just because you weren't their first doesn't mean that you won't be their last. I think there is a lot more victory in being their last than in being their first. Our spouses, and 90 percent come into marriage having had sexual partners prior to that wedding day. So we have to realize that these were decisions that this person made before you came into the picture; that there can be forgiveness, there can be healing. And I'm a big believer in understanding the root cause of why you acted out in those ways in the first place because you have to look at the roots, not just the fruit of what they did because if they don't understand why they had those

sexual encounters in the first place, then there's a chance that they could continue in that pattern.

So you need to have the confidence of knowing that there has been a deep healing in that person's life and there's a deep self-awareness of why they went looking for love in all the wrong places in the way that they did prior to marriage.

James: I think when we -- you were with us before, and I had talked about having battles years ago, even in ministry because I saw something that I found and I always understood sex was an obvious attraction, women were beautiful, they were attractive, God did good. He knew what he was doing. Good work, God!

Shannon: The pinnacle of God's creation!

James: The point is, that I found something happening to me as a leader and a strong person who loved God and who really cared about people, I could feel myself being desired by women as I traveled.

Shannon: That is a magnetic quality to women.

James: It was unbelievable that I was feeling that and what they were seeing is they were seeing perhaps a representation of a strong father, of a leader --

Shannon: Yes, that they didn't have most likely.

James: And a person who was sensitive to their feelings. A man who seemed to care and who was willing to share his concern and who really seemed to want to bear your load and burden, which was the compassion, and there was this incredible drawing. I believe I told you the last time you were here that that feeling of being desired was more frightening than sexual attraction was. I think that probably is something that is very important from both people in a relationship that they feel their spouse desires them, wants them -- that needs to be mutual. The woman feels like I'm the queen in his life. I'm the -- he wants me! But the man needs to feel the same way. Am I right about that?

Shannon: Absolutely you're right.

And we have to understand that just because we feel some sort of attraction to someone for a wide variety of reasons, whether it is because they were like a father figure or they remind you of your brother that you lost long ago, whatever the reason is that you feel that attraction, that does not mean that you're destined to have sex with them. That's where I think that so many Christians are going wrong is if they feel an attraction they go, "Well, I must be about to fall into an affair!" So they just kind of fall head long into it.

No, there is going to be attractions between you and a wide variety of people in your lifetime. You have to be a person of integrity and know that just because that thought may randomly enter my mind doesn't mean that it needs to take root there and blossom and grow into something inappropriate.

James: Having the wrong thoughts or being tempted is not sin. Jesus was tempted in all points like we were yet without sin. So temptation itself or thinking thoughts is not sin. When we dwell on them, we want to fulfill them, then there's the problem. The point I really would like for you to hear is that there is something very important to people and very strong about a feeling of being wanted.

Shannon: Yes.

James: I think that that really needs to come across.

Shannon: Especially if their parents didn't make them feel wanted -- that was a root need in their life.

James: Therein was probably why I felt it more because I'd been given away, sort of been quote "rejected," been left and had foster parents.

Shannon: That was a pain that you could have medicated through a wide variety of inappropriate activities -- a lot of people do.

James: Absolutely! So here, if you want the book, you can get it online, get it in the bookstores. Go to Shannon's web site. There it is. And you can find out where she is going to be speaking. You may say, "Hey, we've got some serious issues here. It sounds like she would be willing to come in and speak openly." And she would. Would you express thanks to a very courageous, I think a very helpful person, who is trying to touch an area of great need. I appreciate that.

Shannon, one of the great joys we have and I know you watch and you appreciate what we do because you basically have been in outreach to young people and you've been in missions all your life. We reach out to assist those who are suffering in an effective way. One of the reasons those of you who watch are willing to look at a need that can be met is because you know it will be met. And you get to have a part in that.

Now here's what I want you to do. This is the last week that we're asking you to help us in our mission feeding emphasis; to literally feed over 400,000 children and rescue 100,000 that are facing death. I want you to look in and when you see this child and what malnutrition has done, you tell me if you don't want to be the healing hands of Jesus. Watch closely.

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: These bowls are empty, that you see those children holding, until we, through love, put the nutritious soup/porridge mix in it. Betty, when you hear a mother say what you saw there, that "I have nothing to give my child." Her breast milk has no nourishment and she has no food. What does that do to a mother and a grandmother when you hear that?

Betty: I remember when our children were very small babies and I would hear a little whimper of a cry, well, I was just on red alert. I wanted to go immediately and see if that child, that baby needed something or they were hurting. And I wanted to fix whatever was wrong with them.

Well, this mother, she's done all she can do. She has nothing to give her child nutritionally. She feels helpless. Every time she hears that child cry she knows they're hurting; they're in pain -- seriously, something is wrong. And that just breaks my heart, James, because I know that we, and our friends, can make the difference and we can stop some of those cries by caring and loving and getting the nutrition to them that they need. This is something that we can fix.

James: Well, that precious mother and that little girl were at a nutrition clinic, and it's a very small place; maybe they can take 25 to 50 children that are about to die. And only a few -- now think about this -- we've got 400,000 -- I said 400,000 -- 400,000 located who are malnourished, who are headed for a malnutrition clinic if there were

enough of them for it to ultimately get there, they're not. She was obviously close enough that someone got her to it. It is like the last stage.

Yes, we provide the nutrition, the intravenous feeding, the sugar and water that they might need to just take when they can't keep anything in their stomach. We do what we can medically there. That's the last stage; it's like where they go to die or to experience a last moment miracle.

Now, what we're doing, yes, we're going to take care of them there. Yes, we'll see miracles there -- thank God for it! But we're wanting to feed the children out like you saw them lined up where they were all holding their bowls, which love gave them through people like you.

Now we need to put the food in them for the next months -- 400,000 of them! \$30, \$50, or \$100 will feed three, five, or ten children. So I'm asking you, Betty and I are asking you together, please dial the number, take your bankcard, use it like a check and make the largest gift you can. This is our last week so we really need your help.

Then we've got a real crisis in Angola because of a very serious drought; 100,000 children are facing death or they need to be in a place like that to head it off. So we need -- we need a million dollar surge. I've asked a thousand of our viewers to give \$1,000. That will enable us to feed 100,000 of those malnourished children that are facing death but we've got to do it immediately.

This is the last week now; we need all that to come in. Thank God many of you have been helping! At whatever level you can help, please do so.

I repeat now, \$100 will feed ten children for the next months. \$50 will feed five. \$30 will feed three. Please help at the level you can.

We have some gifts for you but you're giving the gift of life. Thank you for doing it. If you want to go online, LifeToday.org you can do it or dial the number, use your bankcard. If you write a check, call us and tell us what you're mailing in because we need to know. And just make the check to *LIFE*; that's what you're giving. Thank you

so much for doing 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."

This is the last week! Please call, write, or make your gift online!

End of clip

In the studio

James: Well, Betty and I thank you so much for... Thank you for your love and your help! I want to send you *A Dad's Blessing*. Big boots, little boots -- you know when you

have three children, 11 grandchildren, you see how our children affected their children, you understand how important a dad is.

And Randy, our son wrote a book, *Rise Above*; how your faith, how the truths and principles of God can lift you higher faster than you ever imagined for the glory of God. Great book!

Thank you for your gifts! I want to say thanks to a real missionary, to people here and around the world who need to understand passion for all the right reasons. Passion for God, for one another, for love and for what God has blessed us with.

Would you say thanks to Shannon Ethridge? Her book is in the bookstores! There again is her web site.

Thank you, Shannon, you're a blessing. We appreciate you so much!

Thank all of you for watching and we really do thank you for helping this last week now -- to help us with the mission feeding outreach. Thank you!