

8/18/14
Week 34: WFL last week
Angela Thomas

Betty: Thank you so much for joining us on *LIFE Today*. I'm Betty and this is James.

James: And Angela Thomas is with us. I want you to look at this. This is just real pretty. It is *Stronger*: Finding hope in fragile places. What in the world would Angela know about fragileness? She seems pretty strong but this is called *Stronger*. Would you welcome Angela Thomas back to *LIFE Today*?

Angela, tell me about this. What inspired this? It looks like you're talking about a need for strength and you talk about struggles here on the back. Everyone has them. Tell me about it.

Angela: When I was praying about the next Bible study that I would write, this was really a powerful thing for me because everywhere I go and the ladies that I meet, I meet some incredible people around the country, around the world and I would meet a woman who is facing a battle as a believer; and I would watch her walk in strength and in power toward that, and in that struggle and in dark places.

Then I would meet another woman who belongs to Christ who is a follower of Christ and there was no presence of strength, no power. I began to ask the Lord, "What is it? What is it? Why is one stronger and one is not?" I want to walk stronger.

James: You were convinced the person that wasn't was still a Christian though.

Angela: You can belong to Jesus and not live in his power. You can know that he has forgiven you of your sin and died so that you could be forgiven and have home with him for all eternity.

Betty: Well, we tend, sometimes, to feel like we hang in there and so therefore we don't know that his power lives within us -- even Christians.

Angela: That's right! Christ died on the cross so that the fullness of who he is can live inside of us. He bought it with his life; the fullness of who he is for us, and yet, a woman can give her life to Christ and then limp to heaven -- make heaven and never live in the power that Christ has provided for us.

So I began to ask the Lord what is it? What's the difference? Why can one walk in your power and one limps and walks in weakness? Because I know in my own nature I'm going to limp and I'm going to stay in my weakness. I want to know what it is like to be stronger. I want to know what it would be like for me to be a woman who lives stronger, who acts stronger.

What I found out though when you open the Word of God is there's not 25 ways to be stronger by Friday. It's not like they promise you at the grocery store, when you're walking by the checkout stand there, the Lord makes himself known in scripture that the only way you and I will ever be made stronger on this earth is that he, through us, is our strength, that he in us; that because there is more and more of him in me and less and less of me, which is always been the problem --

James: It's about recognizing that he is that strength.

Angela: He is! He is able and yet, I wanted to know like today, what does that mean for me? Today... Like you know very well, I sat beside my mom's bed as she went to heaven a year and a half ago. And I asked the Lord, "Where is stronger in this room? Where is your strength?" And what I have studied through scripture is this beautiful truth of Christ proving on the cross that he is stronger than sin, and proves three days later that he's stronger than death. And then so graciously giving to us what he bought for us so that we could live -- that we could face every struggle we go home to this afternoon in his strength and not our own.

You know my story a little bit. I was divorced about 12 or 13 years ago and lived as a single mom to my four kids, seven and a half years. So my story is one of great brokenness and pain. I will never forget the day I asked the Lord, "What do you do with brokenness? What do you do with women like me -- with men and women whose lives have broken into a million pieces for 100 reasons?"

And it turns out according to scripture, God runs toward us and he bought for us all that is required to face the brokenness. He stoops from heaven to wrap up the broken in the robes of his glory. And so I did not want to be the woman who refuses the strength of God in my life. I'm like, "Lord, you've come to rescue me. I know that you are the one who is redeeming my life. So I don't want to just coast into heaven. I want to run toward all of who you are and everything you have for me stronger."

James: How do you -- you said you don't get there like by Friday, or five days or five steps. What do you think the key is? Because I know one of the things you kind of mentioned is in our weakness he is made strong. I am weak -- we are weak but he is strong; it seems like we heard that a long time ago when we were pretty young. I don't know how to explain that that doesn't get here by a certain time. How do you answer that? -- Because we want it now.

Angela: And sometimes God does give us an understanding in a blink and then sometimes it is a journey of maturity. But for me, as I kept trying to examine my life, where am I getting in the way of... if Jesus Christ is all and he has provided all and all of who he is lives inside of me then I am obviously the problem.

It turns out that what I realized is that Christ in me doesn't necessarily mean that I'm allowing the fullness of who he is to work. See, I keep my eyes on myself and I've realized, that is where the root of my problem is. I just keep looking at myself. I have spent so much time thinking about myself and how I feel and what I'd like to do and how my hair's doing and if I'm cold or where I'd like to go eat dinner. And even in the small ways and in the bigger ways I've consumed myself with myself and Christ is saying, "Do you want my strength? Do you want what I bought for you? Would you keep me at the center of your life? Would you stay gospel-focused? Would you keep my word at the center of your heart? Would you turn to me first? Would you think of

me first instead of yourself?" And so there's been this spiritual journey for me, an intentional journey of learning what it means to push me down.

James: Do you ever find that when that begins to happen and he begins to be stronger, do you notice that others become more important, seemingly almost in conformity with how big he gets?

Angela: When you lift your eyes off yourself -- I mean to keep my eyes on myself, then that's miserable -- I'm going to stay in my misery and I'm going to stay in my pain. And when I have decided I will look at the one who has saved me, then I turn out. It's so interesting what happens. The judgment begins to fall away and the mercy comes and you want to begin to give to people what Christ has given to you.

But it is a decision that I want to know more of him less of me. I already know too much of me! I have plowed the field of who I am. I have just re-plowed it and re-plowed it and thought about it and thought about it.

James: That's really a part of his amazing grace is how much he loves us, and he knows us better than we know ourselves. I want to read some of these titles and then if something just jumps out you want to jump into let me read them off because they're good. God is stronger than everything. That's a fact. God is stronger than my struggles. God is stronger than my bad news. God is stronger than my overwhelming life. God is stronger than my attitude. Do you ever have a problem there?

Angela: No... Yeah! They say you can't write about things you don't know.

James: Did you write that one for me?

[Laughter]

And God is stronger than every broken thing in me. Would that include a broken heart?

Angela: Oh, yeah -- broken heart, broken dreams, broken plans.

James: We've been through the broken heart deal. We've had a broken heart over the years for a lot of people but we'd never had our heart broken as much as when we lost Robin -- and you know which you went through with your mom.

Angela: I don't know anyone who makes this journey to heaven apart from brokenness. We live in a fallen place but we live appointed by a holy God who longs for relationship that carries us through this place. We're not home yet but the assignment here is to live from salvation to eternity in the fullness of Christ, in the fullness of his strength and for his glory.

There is a passage in Colossians where Paul says that he wants us to be strengthened with all the power because it's already been made available to us. And he wants it to be done for the glory of God so that we are made strong for all endurance and all patience. He prays that that will happen for us with joy. And when we get to an instruction in scripture, always there's never this intent in the theology of the Lord that this is not a fake it until you make it. The Lord has never said, "Pretend that I'm strong."

James: That's miserable. I don't know how people stand to live there. I can't fathom it.

Betty: One thing through our journey of losing our daughter, one important thing I have learned and still learning is how patient God is with me while I'm going on this journey because it is a journey. I don't want to miss anything that he wants to show me through the journey we've been on. I don't wish it on anyone, but if you live very long you're going to experience heartache and pain of some kind. But God allows us to go through this journey; he doesn't want us to miss anything that will make our lives better for him.

Angela: To bring glory to him. He is so well acquainted with how he made us and he made us in our humanity and in our frailty. And he knows that we grieve and that the

heart aches and that there are days in the grieving where we sit in the dark and say to the God we have not yet beheld with our eyes, "I trust you even though I can't see you but it sure is dark in here."

James: I think he wants to hear it like that. He wants you to tell him exactly how you feel. He knows our feelings but he needs us to feel like you can tell him. It's really important for Betty and for me to be able to really talk to one another. It's not only important to Betty when she is hurting that she knows I notice and I care, but it is important to me to notice and care -- and God always does. But when you can feel James feels what I feel, and he cares deeply, God wants so much for everybody to hear that. He wants so much for you to hear... when she is writing about *Stronger*, it really is his strength. We don't just suddenly become super Christian; he becomes super and bigger in us. How big is God in us? How big have we allowed him to be in us? That's really, really the issue.

I wish with all my heart wherever you are, whatever is going on, that you would recognize the God that created it all and the enemy threw a horrible hand grenade right in the middle of God's creation and rebelled and has taken as much of humanity as he can into total rebellion. But God set in motion redemption to bring us back into a beautiful relationship with him to have the strength that Angela is talking about. If we will admit we need it, if we're willing to admit we hurt just like you were saying a while ago, open up, tell God what's going on inside.

Angela: He is not afraid of our weakness and he's not afraid of our broken place. He's not... The Lord does not hold it against us that by our nature we are weak and unable because he wants to show us he is strong and more than able. And he longs for us to call out for his comfort for what this world can't give to us.

I tell people all the time that God did not send his only son for the ones he likes a little. He is so wildly and eternally in love with you and longs for you to know his son Jesus Christ as your savior. He is not mad at you about your brokenness or that you've cried a little too long or that your wound is deep.

James: Or you messed up.

Angela: Before we got here, God knew we were going to need a savior. Because this world and this journey, I don't know, you just want to go, raise your hand if you have already proven you can't save yourself. I can't -- I can't! God knew before he gave us life that we could not. And we've sent so much time trying to figure out a way... this world has tried to figure out a way to do it apart from God and globally, in my neighborhood, in my soul, we've proven that we can't.

James: And religion won't do it either. Betty and I, you know we do -- you come from a very strong... Dallas Theological Seminary is one of the great schools on the planet. And because they hold high the Word of God that we have a reliable steadfast, unshakable standard. But you also know that a lot of times you can be standing on truth and not walking in the power and the fullness of that truth, and even the fruitfulness of the truth that God is talking about.

When people get stretched, God will get you to do some things outside your comfort zone. Betty and I have been reaching out to people outside our little Protestant world of Evangelical Christians. I want everybody to be saved. I want everybody to be stronger in the Lord. You have been through some challenging times; what you said about the marriage and having the kids there and just you; you had to have a strength. Do you realize that's the story of most of the people watching? They too have had something happen in their marriage and you don't want people looking down on you, you want people lifting you up.

Well, that is precisely what this book does. It lifts you up into the presence of the one who is stronger. This is a Bible study. It is not a fiction book. It is not just a nice little read. It is an intense study in the Word of God and the Word of God gives liberty and life, and that's what you're trying to get people into.

Angela: When you have been broken, when you have been weak, and God manifests himself in your life with a strength you know you couldn't manufacture, I couldn't come up with on my own, the scripture says what results in your life is a joy that marks the Christian who has been made strong in the darkest places. And that joy is manifested in our lives because according to the book of Colossians we have in us

Jesus Christ the hope of glory, which is what every man and woman and child, the people we will encounter this afternoon or tomorrow morning, that is the most important thing we can tell them and show them. And if we are marked by that joy, if we are the ones who are marked, there is something about the joy of the Lord -- it is so contagious. It is contagious to the point of being evangelistic. People come to Christ because they've encountered in you what makes no sense.

Aren't you the ones who have known great brokenness? And aren't you the weak ones? And aren't you the ones -- aren't you the divorced woman that was a single mom? And yet, what is this countenance of joy on you? If I could buy it in the store I would but I couldn't. It is only Jesus Christ in me. And I want you to know about the hope of glory in me so that you too can live in the strength that only God provides.

James: He paid for it and provides it. Thank you. You want to say thanks to Angela for just being willing to share out of her own journey and her own struggles? This is a Bible study. Web site? How do they find you? Know where you're going to teach and what's available?

Angela: AngelaThomas.com.

James: There it is. We've got it up on the screen so if they didn't know how to spell all that we've got it for you. And really, check it out, and get this because it's a wonderful study. I think the way God has blessed you and Beth Moore and others who are teaching, just a tremendous gift from God to all of us as believers. I thank God for you. Angela, one of the greatest joys in our life is sharing the love and life of God with people who thought no one noticed.

I want you to look at a woman here. This isn't like some drama. This is a woman that we found through our mission workers and through those outreaches. Listen to what she shares. And know this, you're the answer to her future hope. You're the answer to her prayers.

On the mission field

Open captions:

Every day over 4,000 children die from a water-related disease.

>> My name is Bun Toeun. I know mostly I don't have clean water. I use water that everybody uses, even the cattle. I have four children, but two of my boys died. I worked hard to get the money for the hospital, but it didn't matter how hard I tried. My two babies died. My dream is for clean water. If I would have had clean water to drink, then my two children wouldn't be dead today.

>> In the 60 seconds it took Bun Toeun to share her story, three more children died from contaminated water.

End of clip

In the studio

James: In the 60 seconds for her to tell that story, three more... Betty, she said, "my dream, my hope, my dream -- clean water."

Betty: James, there is a mother that had four children, two of them she's lost; one of them because of the contaminated water. She knows exactly what killed them. And yet she has to continue to give water to her other two children because there's no other source. She would do anything to have saved her babies. She tried but she had nothing to turn to, no one to turn to but now she does if we will just step in and drill those wells and bring them some clean water so at least those children will have a chance in life. They will have a choice to drink the clean water or the contaminated. Which one do you think they will pick? I know! Please join with us and let's help drill these wells.

James: I don't think we have to show you all the sad stories of what happened to get your attention. We show them because that is the reality. And what we wanted you to hear was her request, her hope. No, we can't save the children that are gone but we can give life to the ones that are there. She is actually making an appeal for children and

for mothers all over the world. In the areas where by the grace the God, we're drilling another 500 wells, we've got 68 targeted to drill in Angola.

Betty, I'm looking here at the exact amount of money that some friends gave to be a challenge: \$326,400 that if you would help us with those 68 wells, which means if you would give \$4800 to say, "I'll provide one of those," we'd have two -- and we really need it. This is our last week to really secure the rest of the funds. And all we need to happen is for each person watching to simply do what God has put on your heart -- that's all!

Would you be an answer to the heart cry, the request that she made? Would you say, "I want to keep other children from drinking that kind of water in different places and give them a future"? It is a simple dream and we can fulfill that dream, that heart cry. If you'll dial the number, take your bankcard, use it like a check. Make the largest gift you can.

Please remember, if you make a gift of only \$48 that's huge because it will give 10 people water for the rest of their life. A gift of \$144 gives 30 people water for the rest of their life.

And remember, for Angola, it will be matched immediately. Would you please go online? If you don't go to the phone, go to LifeToday.org and make the gift. We have some special gifts to send you to say thank you, to bless you and to bless children that you love, and your own family and friends. We want to be a blessing to you and we thank you for blessing others with a gift of life and clean water. We will share the love of God. You will have demonstrated it. Thank you for your gift.

Begin video clip

Announcer: Every day children of all ages are forced to make a dreadful choice: Drink filthy polluted water filled with deadly disease or die from thirst. No child should ever be faced with this decision!

The good news is there is a solution. *Mission: Water for Life* is one of the most effective life-saving demonstrations of God's love you could ever be a part of. Suffering can end because clean water changes everything.

With your gift today, you can help establish and drill 500 new water wells for remote villages impacting over 20 nations. Your gift of \$24 will help provide clean water for five people. A gift of \$48 will help provide for 10 people. \$72 will impact 15 people! And \$144 will help provide fresh clean disease-free water for 30 people for a lifetime!

With your gift, be sure to request the new *Children at the Well* interactive book to help your little ones understand the blessing of clean water, as well as the *Women at the Well* daily devotional with 32 refreshing devotionals for your quiet time. With your gift of \$100 or more you may request this beautiful leather journal to help capture your personal times with God.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1200 to help provide water for 250 people or a gift of \$4800 to help sponsor a complete well and you may request our commemorative sculpture glass statue "The Blessing."

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

End of clip

On the mission field

>> This is what completely breaks my heart. We were in Domingas' house just now. You see, they've had drought here for nearly four years. There is no clean water and even this water you're seeing here, people have to walk one and a half kilometers, or come with a donkey just to fetch it. And it's horrible! It's green! Nobody should even be drinking this water. Three children have died in this village of diarrhea in just the last two months.

And this woman, Dominga's child, has had severe diarrhea and was throwing up just a day ago. The reason is this terrible water.

And you know what? We can do something. Together we can say, "We're going to change it." We put in a deep water well. We'll change their lives. We'll make it

healthy, clean water. And if you will work with us, and if you will do something we, together, can solve this problem. Let's do it for her sake and her children's sake!

End of clip

In the studio

James: Betty and I want to remind you that this is the last week. If you're going to help us in this emphasis, we do need to hear from you today. I want to remind you about Angela's Bible study, *Stronger*. There is her web site because she speaks different places, and you might find that she is close by or you may say, "Hey, we would like to get her to come to our area and download the word on us and help us be stronger."

Join Betty and me in saying thanks to Angela.

You're a blessing, Angela. We love you and appreciate you. Thank you for being here. I'm glad you're stronger.

You can be stronger. That's what God wants for us. He wants it for all of us. Thanks so much for sharing this time.