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Week 49: Fall Mission Feeding

Emerson Eggerichs

James: I like y'all. And you! I know you're probably saying if it is early in the morning and some of you watch us on A.B.C. Family or even W.G.N., some of the national secular networks; sometimes it's pretty early. If you're on one of the inspirational networks, you may say, "Well, I'm little further in the day but glad you can't see us, James." We're glad we're able to talk to you. Thank you for giving us this time.

Dr. Emerson Eggerichs is with us: Love and Respect in the Family: The Love Children Need. And I really like his... this wouldn't be a subheading here but up above the title of the book, "The respect parents desire." This is phenomenal and at some point I'm going to tell you who it is that endorsed this book. It's very unusual. It might be every parent's dream. Would you welcome Dr. Emerson Eggerichs to *LIFE Today*?

Emerson, good to see you.

Emerson: Thank you!

James: Well, let's cover some ground. Let's cover some ground because you teach marriage seminars everywhere. You've been with some of my best friends in some of these great churches. Sometimes you'll have 5,000 or 10,000 or a few thousand or a few hundred but you've always wanted to help the family, and you've obviously been blessed and gifted to do it. So this particular book, why its importance and what you really want people to get. Get the viewers attention so they get the book; but why the book? What do you want it to do?

Emerson: Well, I could have written this book years ago. Now I've got my Ph.D. in

family studies, I did my dissertation on effective fathering but I wanted to wait until my children were adults before I wrote a book on that. I also had the privilege of studying the Bible 30 hours a week for nearly 20 years. So I saw something in scripture; I saw something in the social sciences. I looked at everything the Bible says to parents about parenting, not just principles that would apply to parenting, but also because of my family of origin issues. My dad attempted to strangle my mother to death when I was two and a half, and that left a wound in me. At 11 I learned that my...

James: My father tried to kill my mother when I was about 14.

Emerson: So you remember it as vividly as I do. Then he said he was going to kill me and I almost killed him.

Emerson: Yeah, and those things wound us deeply. At 11, I learned that my father was committing adultery. I picked up a butcher knife in the kitchen and said to my mom I was going to kill my dad. It was false bravado; I had no intentions of doing it.

My mother was a very successful businesswoman, very dynamic but she freaked out. I really frightened her and she demanded that I put that knife down. Soon after, she decided I needed to go to a military school.

[Laughter]

So from age 13...

James: To learn how to use a knife?

Emerson: There's truth in that. But from age 13 to 18 I went to Missouri Military Academy. And at age 16 someone gave me a ticket to go see a film by Billy Graham, For Pete's Sake, and I received Christ at age 16. Was thinking about West Point; met with my congressman, met with the president of the military school but when I found out Billy knew Christ and he went to Wheaton I went to Wheaton. My freshman year my mom received Christ, my dad received Christ, my sister received Christ and

my brother-in-law who is a professor received Christ; so our whole family changed.

But that woundedness from those early years still remained, and I had to work that through. I didn't hate my dad but I was hurt by my dad. So all of that together, I wanted to know what it meant to parent. I was the recipient of what I felt was some poor parenting. I didn't want to be a poor parent.

I pursued this study academically. I studied it pastorally. But I wanted to wait because many of us write prematurely about parenting and I wanted to wait until my children were old enough that they could speak back into it the good, the bad, and the ugly.

And over the last couple of years I wanted to quit a couple of times because of the things I remembered I did badly, they didn't remember and the things that they remembered that I did badly, I didn't. I felt like a failure. Then they said to me, "Dad, if you can't give yourself grace, how are your readers, who are parents, going to give themselves grace?"

And they, as you referenced are the ones who have endorsed the book. They said, "We want to endorse this book. We want people to know."

But there were many Friday nights when our kids were teenagers that Sarah and I felt like complete failures. And she'd say, "You're the Ph.D. What should we do?"

[Laughter]

"I don't know!"

James: Listen to what Jonathan said, "I wholeheartedly endorse this book based on my parent's efforts and dedication to us as children. As a clinical psychologist I often hear clients express a hope and desire for their families to be different. They need the wisdom and relational tools in this book."

Then David says, "My father wrote this book because he's interested in saving relationships between parents and their children. He's painstakingly attempted to

expose all of his and my mother's struggles, mistakes and imperfections as parents." Boy, that's huge! And in my opinion, that gains respect and I believe you gained a lot of respect in ways that you only hoped you would. Now that was David.

"While everyone is searching for a formula for the perfect family there is no perfect family. Yet this book will give you some much needed tools for your tool box. Not only will you get tons of wisdom and tips, but you will also hear stories of my parents own mistakes. Twitch! Twitch! Really, I'm fine! Joy Eggerichs."

[Laughter]

Emerson: She is our humorist.

[Laughter]

"Twitch! Twitch! I'm fine, dad! I'm fine!"

James: You think that you have seen in churches a lot of people mercilessly beating themselves up because of what?

Emerson: One of the things that I'm trying to unfold is that God has called us to parent a certain way, and they're commands to us as parents; I'm to do certain things. I put in an acronym called GUIDES: We're to be Giving, we're to be Understanding, we're to Instruct, we're to Discipline, we're to Encourage, we're to Supplicate. It's a game plan; it's a process. And the point we're making is that God calls me to parent this way so that when I die and stand before him he can say, "Well done, good and faithful parent!" But there is no absolute guarantee that our children are going to turn out well.

And this is the message that we're trying to get through. The story of the prodigal: The father had this indulgent second born who was sensual and thoughtless and splurged his portion of the inheritance. When he returns and repents, the father sees him from a distance with compassion and meets him and greets him. But goes back to

the first born, that we don't pay attention to who wanted nothing to do with what his dad had to say. He was a self-righteous angry judgmental firstborn.

Now my question to the church that we go around, would we have this father come to us and lecture us on how to be a good parent? You have an indulgent sensual second born, self-righteous angry first born, yet Jesus holds his father up as a replica of Abba Father. I'm asking parents, James, about this. Is our heavenly Father, Abba, a bad father because we disobey him?

The challenge here is that God calls me to be a certain way as a parent and I'm to stay on this game plan. Here's the deal. It increases the probability, the odds by creating the most loving environment that my children will then choose my faith and my values. There is no absolute guarantee but this is what motivates them more than anything.

If I'm deriving my identity from my children rather than bringing my identity in Christ to my children, I'm putting a pressure on them to perform so that I will be happy. And they'll read that very quickly. And then I'll resent them if they don't perform or if they do perform then I'm in some ways maybe falsely feeling good about myself but also Jesus talked about the two sons.

One son said, "I want you to do this," and he said "no," and then did it. The other son said "yes" and didn't. Which son did the father's will? And of course the crowd said the one who did it after, say "no." Many of us have compliant children and rebellious children. And sometimes -- who appear rebellious -- the children who are in our face arguing with us, "No! No!" It's because they walk in integrity and they won't do anything behind our back. And they're fighting with us because they want us to approve their idea rather than having to go along with our own. But then later they end up obeying us.

Whereas the compliant, "Sure dad! High five it!" And then they always have an excuse later on for not doing it and they laugh themselves through it; right? Now which child do we get irritated with? Which child do we not like? In some ways it is the child who is the most obedient.

And one of the things I'm challenging parents with is not look too closely at this. Just stay the course. Don't make some assumptions that because your child is obeying you that you're a great parent. Maybe not. The issue is am I obeying Jesus Christ? Am I doing what God calls me to do as a parent so that I will hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" Does that make sense?

James: It does. As I'm looking back over my life and I feel like... our kids turned out wonderful. They tell me it was just because they were so spectacularly special. And really and truly in spite of us they made it -- especially me! And that may really be what happened. But I look back and I think, "God, they really did turn out remarkable. What did we do right?" And I have to think, maybe not much. God did a lot right.

But if I look at something I did right, I think it was right, I really wanted to be right with God. And when I knew it wasn't right, I really wanted it fixed. And there was plenty that I could point out and that they could see, that wasn't best and I had to own up to it. And I think the fact that I was willing to say something to them. The fact that maybe they were learning from my missteps, my inappropriate choice or oversight. I think Betty would say, "But I think you did a lot of things right."

I tend to do what you're saying parents can do, look back at what all we did wrong. I'm just simply saying that I so wanted to do the will of God. I think that it was so apparent. I think Betty would say with all of my stumbling or missing the mark that she knew in my heart of hearts more than anything I wanted to please God. I think there's a lot about that that is important in the sphere of influence. Would you agree?

Emerson: Oh, absolutely! Because here's what we're saying; children need to hear a melody coming from our hearts, that aroma. And there comes a moment when they ask us to tell them the words to that melody. It is a metaphor that we're trying to say that when parents are the real deal, my kids used to say you're the worse dad on the planet. I said, "Yes! I'm finally number one at something!"

[Laughter]

When we kind of humor the situation but we're also self-revealing, we're self-

deprecating, they see the team work between us, they see us humbling ourselves, as they get out there, they begin to say, "My mom and dad are the real deal." And that's the motivation that causes them to choose our faith. They ultimately are moral spiritual beings that have to make that decision themselves. As I said I can tell them to say thank you but I cannot create in them a grateful heart.

So it's this aroma as parents, as moms and dads. How many parents, if we were to ask them, how many of you pray together for your children? How many of you have children who know that you even pray for them? When we step back we realize how few people are doing that. This is a message of inauthenticity. And this is the thing that does not attract them.

So what we have to challenge ourselves with is what is God calling me to do and to be? And part of it is humility. I want to please God, I want to love God, I struggle with temptations. That is the real deal -- that's authentic. And they're going to come to a point where they say, "Do I want to be like my dad? Or do I not want to be? And he has created something that is very inviting to me and I want what he has and I'm going to make a decision to follow that."

But ultimately, you cannot control that. You can only control your actions and reactions. And at the judgment you're not going to be held responsible for the decisions your children made as adults; you're going to be responsible for yours. They're going to have to give an account for themselves.

That's why I'm excited about this message because there are some parents who have children who have gone astray for a period of time and they're beating themselves up but they've done no evil. And what they've done is either become mad at God, because he didn't somehow fulfill what they thought was a promise of absolute obedience in their children. Or they've just decided I'm a misfit and they stop serving Jesus Christ.

And we're campaigning to get parents to get back into ministry and doing what God wants them to do and not necessarily let the child's performance determine their call that God has got on their life; that they need to follow Christ, do what God wants them to do and quit pulling back. Because we had that psychological view: Good parents

have good children, bad parents have bad children. So if your kids are bad, you must be a bad parent.

But biblically, we see good parents having bad kids, the father of the prodigal, and bad parents having good kids, Josiah at age eight took over the kingship of Israel, age 16. It said he started serving the LORD but his dad and grandfather were wicked dudes. So if that's not true, then every child that has bad parents is a hopeless helpless victim. They have no out. But we would never say that. Why? Because they're free -- they're free. They're moral spiritual beings who can make a decision to go Christ's way.

But you can have some godly, wise parents whose children choose to go the evil way. So at the end of the day children are moral spiritual beings and that's why Paul says, "Children obey your parents." He saw them as moral spiritual beings that can make that choice.

Then it asks the question, and it's this: What is my responsibility as a parent? I'm to be this loving parent toward my children following that biblical mandate. And as I do that, ultimately, I'm increasing the odds that my children are going to follow what I believe. Does that make sense?

James: I like that! Do y'all like what you're hearing? I think it is some great wisdom! Great wisdom!

Emerson: Here's another thing. If I'm doing this unto Jesus Christ, beyond my child stands Jesus Christ. So I'm loving them unto Jesus Christ. They choose to go another way; have I touched the heart of Christ in this? Have I actually pleased the LORD? Have I touched the LORD of lords and King of kings that he's pleased with me? And this is a perspective that some parents that I've been coaching with have -- they've never even thought about this.

I said, "Have you done intrinsically evil toward your children? If we had three judges, three pastors, would they pass judgment on you as a horrible parent? Can you think of anything?"

Because they go around -- "I must have done something bad. I must have done something bad."

"Is there anything that comes to mind? Does your conscience convict you?"

"Well, not really. I mean I got angry, I did some things."

"Did you do anything evil?"

"No."

"Okay, then let's trust that you are pleasing to Christ. Has anybody ever said that you parented God's way even though your child didn't turn out?"

I wrote an article that was picked up by FOX News. Unbelievable! They picked up two of my articles -- went around the world. One of them was, "Why biblical parenting has nothing to do with the kids."

James: Wow!

Emerson: And they published this and I'm making this point.

James: Did you write about that in here?

Emerson: Yes. That's the idea. And the irony is, once I let go of that, then I please Christ and I'm probably going to give my children a great incentive to choose what I believe.

James: Sure! He's just been downloading and he's a great communicator. That's why the seminars -- if you want to know where he's going to be -- web site to go to find out where you're going to track?

Emerson: LoveAndRespect.com.

[Laughter]

James: Do you have to put the WWW in front of it?

[Laughter]

Emerson: Exactly!

James: Go there; there it is on the screen. He'll tell you where he'll be. Also, other materials, I think they have DVD teachings from some of the seminars that could be extremely helpful. This is just an amazing book. He's an amazing person. The approach is amazing.

I do think that all of us as parents and maybe it is a weakness on our part but I think most parents would like to believe that their children respect them and appreciate some deposits they made.

Do you think that's natural for parents to want that? Or is that a weakness on the part of a parent?

Emerson: This is what I'm pointing out and this is a huge teaching that we bring. Moses said in one of the Ten Commandments: Honor father and mother. Jesus picked it up in Matthew 15. He said, "God said..." He didn't say Moses said, "Honor father and mother." Paul picks it up in Ephesians six: "Honor father and mother."

One of the points we're making is we have a need -- not just a desire -- a need as parents to be honored and respected. This is not narcissistic. This is not egotistical. This is not something that is wrong. What we're helping parents understand is that our children will disregard us and we can feel offended and disrespected. We have a need to be honored in the same way they have a need to be loved.

But then it begs the question, parenting is for adults only. I say it, I would have been a great parent had it not been for my kids.

[Laughter]

But here's the deal. When I feel disrespected and dishonored, the real question is what will I do? Because I'm going to feel dishonored. I have a need that they're not meeting. Now am I going to react in an unloving way? Or am I going to blame them; am I going to be unloving? This is why we put it on family craze act: When a child feels unloved that child reacts in a way that feels disrespectful to us. When we then feel disrespected, we have a tendency to react in a way that feels unloving to them. This then puts us in that family crazy cycle. So what we're challenging parents with first and foremost is you have a need to be honored but how will you deal with it when you feel disrespected? And that's what this book is about.

James: It's fabulous! I'm sitting here looking at incredible family pictures in here. It's really, really neat. I got to looking at one where the son that looks like -- I think he might be the younger son but he is really not happy about this picture being taken right here. He looks like he's dressed for church. I'm not sure he's really very excited about going to church.

[Laughter]

But then there's one. Here's this girl down here; it's your daughter. She's just happy. You can tell it's there. This is a treasure. I'll tell you what we'll do. We're going to send it to you. You can get it online or you can go to the bookstores but if you'll do this -- by the way, would you like to say thanks to Emerson for being such a wonderful gift?

[Applause]

I really hope you'll get the book. But what we'll tell you is this. If you'll help us literally take care of 400,000 children who just need food, and it will always be given in love, and they're going to see Jesus through the missionaries and through your gift. And most of them are going to come to know Christ and love him. We're going to save

their lives. And if you'd like, we'll send you the book. You help us save a child's life and we'll gladly send you this to help build your life because we want to -- that's what we do. I want you to watch closely.

On the mission field

Announcer: This is an experience we pray you never encounter. A child fighting for his life; a young boy named Leo. The clinic staff has done everything within their ability to keep him alive. Now his mother, Ilda watches helplessly. She too has done all she can.

Open captions:

>> I cannot lose my boy. He is my youngest of two boys. I can't lose him.

Announcer: It's a case of malnutrition. We'd like to tell you it doesn't happen often -- that it's a rare occurrence but Leo's suffering and Ilda's heartbreak cries out from all over Africa where almost half of child deaths under five are caused by malnutrition. Like so many mothers here, Ilda holds the hand of her suffering child, willing him to live but fearing he's slipping away.

Leo was 3 years old. He died from complications of malnutrition.

End of clip

In the studio

James: And Betty and I understand. We know what that feels like to lose a child. I don't want anybody to feel that if there's a way to prevent it -- and there is, a perfect way for these children.

Betty, if we could have gotten the food to that precious little child before they brought them in desperation to the malnutrition clinic, which we support to keep it there as a last resort, if we can give them the food in these little orange bowls that I'll never hold up without knowing that love from people like you provided the bowls. These are heat-resistant bowls. They have little handles on it for little fingers. And these children treasure them. In some places the missionaries give them to the children and let them take them with them; they don't ever lose them. They don't come back clean and shiny.

In most instances the missionaries will keep them or the schools, where once we get kids stabilized we'll keep feeding at their schools so they'll go to school and they'll have a mind that has the nutrition so they can think and learn. It's a whole cycle of love. It's love that was birthed first in the hearts of the missionaries, and you and I saw it and we witnessed it and we experienced it. It's the love of God, and it caught us and we were caught up in it and we brought it to you.

And every time you saw a need, you wanted to meet it and you even wanted to say hey, get rid of those old tin cans like this and plastic bags like that, that the food burns right through and give them bowls. And you did it!

To feed these 400,000 children that we have now, (there have been times when it's been more than that,) but these 400,000, we're asking you to make a gift that will feed them for the next months; \$30, \$50, or \$100 feeds three, five, or ten. It's pretty simple. Where could you better put \$100? Or \$30? Or \$50? We've got a real crisis in Angola due to a drought right now. That's part of what you saw there with that little boy dying; that's the result of it.

And so what I'm asking you to do now is I'm asking you to respond to the love of God but I'm asking you to take advantage of the love of God expressed through some of our friends who know the need is so great in drought-stricken Angola and other places, and the children are dying because they didn't have a food line and the missionaries have found a place to feed them to stop this process but we need the food.

And some of our wonderful friends said, "Well, we'll give a matching gift of one and a half million dollars! That's how desperate it is and we'll do it. But we want to ask everyone who is watching to give the largest gift they can. We'll match it."

So would you please, right now, whatever you're doing, just get up and go to the phone, take your bankcard, make the largest gift you can, please. We have some gifts to send you to say thank you and to help you. You can go online, LifeToday.org. Make the gift. If you write a check, make it to *LIFE* but call us and tell us you're sending it, we need to know.

We're going to notify the missionaries, we'll place the order for the food to be provided for all the necessary ingredients to be there, for the delivery systems to remain in place. Thank you for going to the phone. Thank you for doing it. Thank you for being the hands of Jesus, literally.

Begin video clip

Announcer: In remote and impoverished areas of Africa, families are suffering, facing death by starvation, and those hit the children 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 all of our previous reserves gone, and Angola facing its worst drought and food shortage in 20 years, we need to immediately replenish our funding and supplies for our feeding programs.

As an answer to prayer, a group of *LIFE*'s friends have set a \$1.5 million matching gift challenge for Mission Feeding. This means your gift today can have a double impact! \$30 to help feed three children will be doubled to impact six children. \$50 to help feed five children will be doubled to help save 10 children. \$100 for 10 children will be doubled to help feed 20 children. And \$300 for 30 children will be doubled to help feed and minister to 60 children!

With your gift of any amount we'll send you *All Things New*, a daily devotional with an inspirational music CD. With your double impact gift of \$100 or more, please request the N.I.V. larger print reference Bible.

Finally, please consider a double impact gift of \$1,000 and request our commemorative glass sculpture, "The Blessing."

Please call, write, or go online today and make your gift of life to help feed and care for hungry children.

End of clip

In the studio

James: If you'd like to have it, our wonderful guest and what a beautiful gift he is to all of us, Emerson's book, *Love and Respect in the Family* -- all sides, all points, all people, pointing together to one another with love and respect. Great book! Great writer! Great gift to us.

If you want the book, of course, you can get it in the bookstores. Go race, go online, get it! But if you've helped us help a child and you ask for it today, we'll mail it to you as a gift to say thank you.

Join Betty and me in saying thanks to Emerson.

We appreciate you very much! Bless you in all you do.

There is his web site. You can go to LifeToday.org. We'll tell you other ways you can find him if you want to. There's his web site. Thanks again so much for your help.