

11/27/14

Week 48

Scott and Georgeanna Johnson

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

James: You know I always listen to see if she is actually going to go ahead and greet everyone. But she's got a bad cough and she's just... I was watching... Are you okay?

Betty: Yeah. If you see my eyes start watering I'm holding a cough back.

James: We could have a cough -- not a coffee break but a cough break. You understand that.

I don't know many people or churches that I have any higher regard for and appreciation of than I do Church on the Move in Tulsa and Pastor Willie George. Now Willie is a friend, he is a brother in Christ, he is a co-laborer. Well, he's also a son in ministry, of our ministry because Willie found Christ when I was preaching when he was kind of a football playing, what he called himself "a bootlegger" for the football team. He really needed the Lord and boy, did he meet God. He has been so grateful that he not only praises God but he expresses thanks for the fact that I showed up at his school and that I preached Jesus with compassion and boldness he calls it.

Well, his church is wonderful. It's where our youngest daughter was a leader and where our grandchildren, Robin's children have been wonderfully blessed and I think a blessing; and where Ken Turner is one of Willie's closest friends and trustee.

Well, we've got a great guest that's actually staff. We've got Scott and Georgeanna Johnson and I'm looking down because Georgeanna's name is quite lengthy. I wondered if there was a George and an Anna?

Georgeanna: Not at all.

James: "Not at all," she says. I want to be sure I got it right. But George and Scott are actually on staff there.

Betty: You said "George."

James:

[Laughter]

There was a George in your family -- this is big! Georgeanna and Scott are actually on staff there but there is an incredible miracle that really occurred for both of them and it had a whole lot to do with what happened when she was actually on *Extreme Weight Loss*. But you were a big loser.

Georgeanna: I was the big loser, yes.

James: Would you welcome George -- Georgeanna and Scott. Would you do that? I met you kind of personally when you picked us up and you --

Georgeanna: We hosted you all week.

James: It's so interesting that after we got out we just prayed and I actually, because you are the sweetest couple and so nice, but we were impressed to pray that we felt like you had a battle with your weight.

Georgeanna: I did! It was obvious.

James: Yeah, but it was like it... like it mattered and we really, really prayed for her. Tell your story. What has happened? Because you are kind of a new person in a lot of ways.

Georgeanna: I am, in a lot of ways -- more than just physically. I got married young. I actually got pregnant in college. Scott and I married and we had our oldest daughter Chelsea back in 1990 and I think life changed very quickly and I think I thought I'd let people down because I had gotten pregnant and left college to raise a child instead.

James: You did get married though; right?

Georgeanna: We got married. We've been married for almost 24 years.

James: Is he the culprit over here?

[Laughter]

The point is that you knew you needed to be together. In other words, was this just the situation, where you said, "Okay, she is pregnant now and I've got a duty." Or did you feel like you really loved one another?

Georgeanna: We did. Sorry! We had a conversation then that we didn't want -- we were only getting married because we knew that we loved each other and wanted to get married anyway. We felt very strongly convicted about being married and raising a child together and being a family. It obviously worked for us. Strong believers, it's how you finish not how you start. So we didn't have the greatest start in our marriage.

James: And you felt bad about it?

Georgeanna: I did. I think I felt bad about it. We were poor, young, coming out of college students and we didn't eat great. I bought cheap groceries and I was staying home with Chelsea and I had moved to his hometown. I just didn't have a lot of getting out and about and gained weight pretty quickly then and continued to gain weight through the years with my kids, as so many moms do.

I think so many women have related because now they put everybody else first. You put your family first, you put your children, what they need, your husband, your

household, your church, your volunteering, whatever it is, you tend to make sure all of that is taken care of, and somehow mom gets on the back burner. That's definitely what happened with me.

I got to the point when I was chosen for the show, I weighed 315 pounds. I know gasps -- that was last May, about a year and a half ago, I weighed 315 and was very down on myself. I'd spent years beating myself up for thinking why can you be successful in marriage? You've raised great kids. You're at this great church, you're on staff, it's such a wonderful place, it's so supportive. Why can't you figure this out? What is wrong with you?

James: Did you feel condemned? Did you feel like... What was feeding this, let's say, this tendency to not control weight or to actually be hurting yourself?

Georgeanna: I didn't feel condemned by others. I think I thought they thought things about me. It was definitely within myself that I had a lot of negative chatter in my mind about you're not good enough. Your husband is a pastor; people go to him or are counseled by him on how to live fulfilling lives and how to correct problems in their lives spiritually and otherwise, and I felt like I was kind of a walking advertisement that something was wrong with me.

There are things in your life if you're dealing with drugs or alcohol or pornography or whatever it is, people don't see that on you. You can walk around and keep that hidden but your weight, 315 pounds doesn't hide.

Obviously, you were aware, just meeting me, that I was dealing with my weight.

James: I was concerned just for your health. I was concerned because I could tell you were a precious couple and I didn't want -- I did not want you to hurt your future. Obviously, you love your kids. Pastor Scott, where were you watching all of this?

Scott: I think it was -- we had had very few conversations specifically about her weight just because as a husband it's a difficult conversation to have.

James: And you don't want to put a heavier weight on her by letting her know.

Scott: As a matter of fact, the producers of the show asked her this question about me being a pastor and how I help so many people, why I hadn't jumped in and helped her? Did I even love her? Which quite frankly angered me a little bit but it really made me take stock of what is my role in this?

I'm not her pastor, I'm her husband. I think the main thing for me was I had to make her feel -- I had to make her feel that she could trust that whatever she decided to do about it, I was going to be fully on board with helping her. I think that was the key, as a husband, that was my role, to love my wife as the Bible tells me to do, to give myself up for her as Christ gave himself up for the church.

I think that's really what this step was that I was to take. Unfortunately... not unfortunately but fortunately for me, I needed it -- I didn't realize I needed it. I went in to help her but really helped myself in the process.

Georgeanna: He lost 55 pounds this year too just in support of me. When I left for boot camp, I was gone for the first three months of the journey, the year and he would call me and say, "What are you eating? How are you guys eating there? What do I need to be buying here? How much are you working out? What are you doing?"

So he started applying those things at home, which was a huge support for me. God doesn't intend for us to walk alone through this life. We need support; we need people around us.

James: Did you lose weight because you were really trying to step in with her or she just wasn't there fixing all the stuff for you?

[Laughter]

Scott: That's a good question quite honestly.

[Laughter]

James: I don't know about this victory, pastor.

Scott: Quite honestly, if this hadn't gone down, I would imagine I would have eaten out every single meal while she was gone, so I probably could have gained about 50 more while she was gone.

Georgeanna: Thankfully, our daughters were big helps. They all kind of rallied around the situation with me being gone. He hates to grocery shop so Francie did a lot of the grocery shopping and they got in there and she...

James: Don't we wish everybody would take every challenge like this -- as everybody is in it together? Not to tell you how awful you are and you ought to fix this but when you're trying to address something that's just a concern; it may not even concern the rest of the family. But if it concerns you then it should concern the rest of the family and they get involved.

This is really what the church must do. We don't put condemnation on people in a battle. We want to really lighten their load. After all, Jesus said, "If you let me get in the yoke with you, whatever that is, that load, I will actually not only lighten it, it will become so light. My burden is easy. I got it!"

Really, this is the way he was helping you. What were you about to say?

Betty: So you knew he was also trying to eat right while you were gone?

Georgeanna: We weren't allowed -- I was not allowed to Skype or FaceTime or show photos so he didn't see me for three months, the first three months I was gone. But he was sending -- he could send me pictures here and there so I knew -- but I had like kind of a big 90 day reveal when I got home and I felt like it was as much me being surprised at how he looks as it was just for me on showing up and him seeing me again.

James: Let me tell you what I would like for us to do right here. I want to say to you, really proud of you. My son-in-law called me, I don't know, months and months ago and told me what a remarkable change in both of you, even in the impact of your witness in your life; and probably the whole journey together was as big as the weight loss. It was how you related to it, and show it the audience.

This is the thing I wish I could say, a lot of times if you're battling something, the last thing you want somebody to do is look in your eyes or look into your heart -- intimacy, into me see. Well, intimacy, real love does see and discern but what kind of love is seeing? Is it this cruel judgmental, typical religious condemning spirit? Oh, my no! Let God deliver us from it.

Here's the thing I want you to hear. I don't know where you are. I don't know what you struggle with. God's bigger. We care. Others care. You may have found just the opposite. You may have even found just the opposite in church.

But I want to say to you, every one of you watching, whatever load you carry, he wants to lighten it and he really wants to get in the yoke with you and he wants that to become light. And he wants it to become so light that you're able to help others with whatever load they're carrying to let them know that you will walk it out with them. See, the whole world is looking for that. It's really what we should find in marriage with our spouses. But it is not what we find very often so we need to begin to set a whole new example.

Here's what I want to know. What do you say to people to help them maybe take the step you took? Because see, you were feeling bad about having gotten pregnant. You just found all kind of reasons for having whatever it is you had. You were loading yourself up, more than even others were. What do you want to say to people that would say, "I might help you get started."

Georgeanna: I would say start somewhere. God wants you to live the life he intended for you to live. I wasn't. I didn't feel like me. I spent years feeling like I was in a stranger's body. And I'm sure there are people out there now that feel I'm not living

the life that I thought I was supposed to or that I know God intended for me to live. I would just tell them to take steps towards it. You can't sit there for another year. Time is going to go by whether you change or not. God has a plan for you. You have to make it happen. You can't just sit back and pray and think, poor me, why is it not working? Take a step and God's going to meet you there. Take a step and he's going to give you the power to keep moving.

I beat myself up for years and during boot camp I had a moment where I was praying and I thought, Lord, the Bible says you speak to us in a still small voice and all of this time I've been letting this resounding voice of "you can't do it, you're going to fail" be the voice that I listen to.

So I would tell them too, don't listen to those voices that tell you you can't. Don't listen to the voice in your head that says you're not good enough to change, that you're not worthy of changing, that you don't deserve to have better.

Listen to God's Word that says you're an overcomer; that I want you to have above and beyond the things that you can think or ask, to live the life that God intended for you to live victorious and not beat down and carried and burdened by the problems that you have.

James: And if you don't have a Scott to support you, I really wish you could hear this. He's a father to the fatherless; he is a husband to those who have lost their spouse. He is bride to those who feel like I've lost mine as a man. He really is so big. Isn't it nice when he comes in the form of a person?

Scott, your countenance is an encourager. The way that you -- your very countenance when she is sharing says volumes. It says I love her, I'm with her, I'm for her, I won't ever stop lifting her up and that speaks volumes.

But what would you say to our viewers?

Honey, you were about to say something, I don't want you to forget that either.

Betty: It's okay.

James: We need marriage counseling. Scott, tell us what was it that you might want to add to what she was saying there to our viewers?

Scott: I would just say that her issue was outward. So many of us have things that are hidden inward, things that we're hiding from whomever, from everyone, even from ourselves in some ways but one of the big moments for her and one of the big moments for us really, was the night that she weighed in and in front of all of our friends and family and I had no idea what she weighed. It was a hidden number. I'd never asked, she had never shown me. She went to great -- great efforts to keep me from seeing that number.

James: She probably did not know herself.

Georgeanna: I didn't for a lot of years, you're right.

Scott: But there was a time where she had to do that. On the show, you see it where she's -- that's a real moment where she's standing in front of friends and family and having to show everybody that number. I would say honesty is first. And even if you don't have someone, the Bible says, if you confess your sins, he is faithful and just to cleanse us, to forgive us of our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. He's always there. He's the one that is -- he's already paid the price.

And the confession is not for him, the confession is for us. We need to let that go. He said cast your cares on him for he cares for us. We have to let that go so that we can begin this work that she had to do in taking those steps to rid ourselves of those weights -- literally weights, spiritual weights, physical weights.

James: I want to pray for you.

Would you like to say thanks though to Scott and to Georgeanna? And to Church on the Move? And Pastor Willie George -- just thanks to all of you for being such a wonderful shepherd and great flock. I want to pray for you.

Father, I know there are many right now who may even feel like I'm the only one with this particular challenge but they're not -- nor are they alone. I want you, Father, to let them sense your spirit like a hand on their shoulder, an arm around them, a shoulder to lean on. And let them know that you will walk through this battle with them, and that you will actually, in answer to our prayers, supernaturally give them someone else to help them walk it out.

It may be someone else with the same challenge will actually join with them and the two walk together, both of them to become victorious. Lord, I ask you to please set people free from the weight and the weights of any bondage; in Jesus' name.

If you want someone to pray with you, you call the number. Say, "Just agree with me about something" -- a particular heartache or need. Don't hesitate to do it. Please! I wonder if maybe you and I praying for them the night they picked us up and took us to our destination and our heart just went out. I've many times prayed for people just walking by and God would just like whisper, "I heard that. I heard that!" He does -- and he notices when we notice.

Reach out if you want someone to pray with you. Please do! I want to give you an opportunity to be an answer to someone's prayer. Many, many times people ask me, "How do you get your prayers answered?" And I've answered one of the best answers you'll ever hear, "Seek to be an answer to prayer; watch how quickly your prayers get answered."

Check that out in Isaiah 58. I want you to watch, I want you to listen to a heart cry. I want you to listen to a need. I promise you, this is a need you can meet, this is the load you can lift. You really can! Watch!

On the mission field

Tammy: As a widow, suffering isn't something I've escaped in life. Oh, there was a day I might have gone to some lengths to avoid it but I now know that part of my purpose is to do what I can to breathe hope into those who are suffering.

But here, walking through this clinic it is everywhere I turn in the horrific form of starvation. Part of me wants to run from this scene but the other to run for help. Hope deferred makes the heart sick.

This mother, Sakura, her heart is sick because she is losing hope for her little princess, Luisa, a precious 16-month-old girl so severely malnourished she weighs a mere seven pounds.

My life verse is Jeremiah 29:11, its breathed life into me countless times: "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord. "Plans to prosper you and not to harm you; plans to give you a hope and a future."

I think sometimes -- sometimes we forget it applies to these precious children too. It's so critical for us to respond, to not hesitate, to not think that somebody else is going to take care of this need. You can be the difference today in the life of this family, in the life of hundreds of thousands of families.

End of clip

In the studio

James: I'm just going to tell you how it is. A picture speaks more than a thousand words but I really need you to hear what I'm trying to say in light of what you've seen. Only a miracle, I'm talking about a supernatural miracle is going to let those babies Tammy is talking about live and the ones she referenced in particular.

They're at a point, Betty they won't make it 24 hours -- and it is their little princesses. And the one talking to Tammy, she lost her husband; and she actually had a little tattoo.

I've often wondered about tattoos. I don't have one, won't have one, but she actually put the verse of scripture you heard her quote, to God has a hope and a future for a woman that lost her very young, very athletic swimmer husband, he drowned, of all things.

And yet Tammy is there, she's gone all over the world for Jesus and for *LIFE Outreach* because she knows that what we do works. She sees the hope that God has for mothers and children to never end up where those little babies are and we're still prayerfully and desperately trying to save them -- and miracles happen. Boy, they do!

Beth Moore saw it. Baby Matthew -- boy, did she ever see it! Went back and saw the baby couldn't live through the night and went back and played soccer with him because he lived.

So we're praying for the miracles. But here's the thing. We've got the feeding station set up where we can feed 400,000 children, thousands of them we've just found, that are headed on the way to clinics like that where they've got a matter of hours or days at most to live.

Now here's the deal. We've got to have a tremendous surge of support but let me tell you what God has done.

Betty, this is huge! This is the biggest gift we've ever had for any program.

We've been given a one and a half million dollar challenge. Think about what I'm saying to you. Just kind of zero in on what I just said -- one and a half million dollars -- that's the largest challenge.

You say, "Who did that?"

A group of friends -- not one or two -- a group who said, "We know the crisis situation is there. We have heard what the missionaries say and we want to challenge everyone to make the largest gift they can and it will be matched."

Which means if you gave \$30 or \$50 or \$100 to feed three, five, or ten children for the next months it would be doubled to 6 to 10 to 20. If you could give \$1,000 instead of feeding only 100, it would be 200.

Father, I pray everyone watching would reach out right now and say, "I'm going to be an answer to the heart cry and the prayer." And you direct them in their giving; in Jesus' name.

Give to bless knowing it will be doubled whatever you can do. Would you dial that number? Take your bankcard -- please do it right now; be an answer to that mother's heart cry, to the children's need, to the missionary's requests. Go online LifeToday.org and make the gift God puts on your heart. We have some beautiful gifts to send you that will bless you and encourage you and inspire you. It's our way of just saying thank you for blessing others. We love to bless you. Thank you for making that call!

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: I thank you for what God's led you to do. I thank our friends who gave the challenge gift. God bless you! What an answer to prayer; not just our prayers, missionaries' prayers, but mothers' prayers.

We want to send you the beautiful Bible that is large print, the All Things New devotional, the beautiful sculpture, "The Blessing" and I want to say thanks to Georgeanna and to Scott for being such a blessing to us and sharing their story. Would you join Betty and me in saying thanks?

Greetings to the Church on the Move in Tulsa. If you're in Tulsa and you're looking for a family that loves you and cares, visit them! Church on the Move in Tulsa; tell our pastor friend, Willie George, "James and Betty sent us!" Bless y'all! Thank y'all!