

1/19/15

Week 4

Jimmy and Nelba Marquez Greene

James: I want to thank all of you here in the audience. You are great encouragers and I know that you care about others. You care about what happens in this nation and how we as a nation can bless the rest of the world. I want to thank you. Thank you for welcoming us. We welcome you to *LIFE Today*. I'm James Robison; Betty and I are really grateful to have the opportunity to share with you.

This is not what I would call an easy program. It's not an easy place to start because Sandy Hook and the terrible shooting in Newtown, Connecticut about two years ago, it not only ripped the hearts out of the parents and the school officials and teachers and that community but it ripped the heart out of America.

I don't know that I'm able to explain, Betty, just how hard that hit us. It's just little kids.

Betty and I lost a daughter. Our daughter was 40 when she died and when we thought about these little children, Betty said, "At least we knew Robin a long time and these folks didn't know their kids very long." We really wept.

Jimmy Greene and his wife Nelba lost a little girl and he is quite a gifted musician, and their little daughter was a song... to the glory of God. He plays the saxophone for Harry Connick in his awesome band. He's got an incredible music piece that he's written the lyrics for and plays for to honor his little girl, but also to try to help all the children not only they love as a couple but God loves.

I want you to welcome this compassion-filled, loving couple who experienced a heartache no one ever wants to imagine. Would you welcome the Greenses to *LIFE Today*?

Nelba and Jimmy, Betty and I have had the privilege of just visiting with you for a while. We know that the comfort that you experience comes from God or you couldn't bear to live. I think that one of the things I sensed when I talked to you was a deep desire to be able to touch other people who may have, for some reason, a heavy heart, a broken heart. Who wants to start and tell us what you believe your mission is as far as the will of God for you in light of what you have faced?

Jimmy: As you said, our daughter, Ana was a song -- is a song. She's a constant song in my mind and my heart.

James: Her name was Ana Grace, and she was a manifestation of the grace of God.

Jimmy: For whatever reason God has chosen us to go through this. We've questioned, we've asked him why, and we're okay with the fact that we might not know that answer here on earth but we know our redeemer lives and we know that Ana is with him and that gives us comfort. In the midst of our pain and our suffering, we know that her story isn't over, that she is in glory right now. And if we live to the gospel that we've tried to teach our children and that was taught to us, then we're going to see her again one day.

I just want to -- I want the listeners to know that there is hope no matter what situation you're put in. We can't choose those situations but we can choose how we respond and I believe we need to respond with love and with compassion. Hatred, rage took our little daughter from us and we wouldn't be honoring our God by returning that so we choose love.

James: When you were going through those days, tell me what you were, let's say maybe in your heart when you are experiencing the grief and you're kind of looking around, what did you feel might have been a comfort to you that might have been offered that sometimes we don't see offered in various situations? What do you want people to understand that would be very important to someone who has been devastated? How do we? Because a lot of times people say, "I don't know what to say. I don't know what to do."

Nelba: There is something to just the ministry of presence when you are walking with wounded people; and for us, it was a shooting and the loss of our daughter's life, but it could be a divorce, it could be a loss of a job. People hurt for many different reasons. And a way that we can really gift them is just by giving them our presence. We don't have to have the perfect words because to be honest with you, when you lose a child in this manner, there aren't any words that man can give. There is just the comfort that God can give. But that ministry of presence is a gift that other Christians can give and that really helped us quite a bit in our loss.

Betty: I think often that is one reason that people hesitate, don't you, to respond? They don't know how to respond to a tragedy like this. But like you said, if it is just knowing that someone is caring or thinking about you during this time or they're just going to check on you, see how you're doing, just know that you're present there and just know that God is going to do the healing, but we can offer that compassion and that love and that caring to them.

Nelba: Even just to say, "I'm praying for you. I have not forgotten you. God knows your pain and we will not forget to pray." That's just some of the most comforting words you can hear someone say. Ana was incredibly easy to love -- incredibly easy! She was well connected. She had many, many friends. She just loved and she worshipped and she danced and she sang.

A child like that did this in Connecticut, Adam Lanza, his story didn't begin on December 14th; he had a story before then. And for some reason, those needs with that child weren't met. So I think protecting our children really means knowing our children, loving our children, meeting them where they are even the ones that are difficult to love.

James: A lot of parents don't seem to even be available to do that anymore. Doesn't it break your heart to see the breakdown? As a matter of fact, I think -- and I know, this was what both of you want to inspire people to do. If we could just inspire a greater love on the part of fathers for their wife, first of all, for their spouse, and for their children and to just really care about it. The absent father situation today and the

absence of love manifest in the home is one of the greatest tragedies of all, which really sparks a lot of other horrible things. So we do need -- we need a baptism in love.

The viewers of *LIFE Today*, I've got to say this for you, you appear to be some of the most compassion-filled people on the planet because we watch you over and over say, "Let me help that person that I may never see in person but I care." That's the love that needs to spring up right here in our nation. I think you're trying to inspire that.

Jimmy: I think love is -- we have a saying in our family, "Love wins." We try to live that out every day. Some days are more difficult than others but we really believe if we really love our neighbor, as Jesus teaches us, "The greatest commandments are these, love thy God and love thy neighbor." If we love our neighbor, what a different place this would be.

We feel like there are so many areas that we can manifest his love to our neighbor whether it's loving our children and really participating in growing them and teaching them well. Whether it's trying... to common sense measures, to insure their safety, whether it would be in schools, whether it would be with gun safety at home, protecting firearms and not allowing children access to them. I think those are very, very important things, ways to keep our kids safe.

James: You title this "Beautiful Life" and I know you had to be talking about Ana but also the life that God wants us to live because of what Christ does. Do you believe Jesus Christ makes a difference in people's life if they have relationship not just some religious association but really have a relationship with Jesus?

Nelba: It is the only thing that got us to survive December 14th. We were in the fire house for hours and we didn't know where our daughter was. But no one would tell us where the children were and there were so many children missing that we never imagined that they wouldn't be coming back. There were so many -- if Ana was the only child lost that day then we would have said, okay, maybe, we should be worried but there were so many kids that were missing that we just didn't imagine, and we waited for hours and hours.

And at one point I just looked at my husband and I said, "It doesn't matter what they tell us, if she doesn't come back to us, we know that she's with Jesus Christ." Because that's what we taught her, that's what she believed and that's why we will see her again. And that's how we walked out of there because you can't walk out of a situation like that without faith in Jesus. I don't know how you would do it. That's certainly how we did it.

James: She was a little prayer warrior; wasn't she?

Jimmy: She loved to pray.

James: That's because she knew there was someone she was talking to. It's not like I'm talking to some make-believe or some wall or some church chart, I'm talking to God.

Jimmy: That's right. And she showed in her way, she showed God's love in the little things she did every day. She would walk up to her mom or me or her brother and just give us hugs, write us little notes just to say, "I love you, mom and dad." Just on any ordinary day, not on a special occasion. She was encouraging. She would participate in activities that she may be didn't have a big interest in but that her brother did. And she would encourage him and do those things. I feel like that's the love of God manifest in this little girl.

Nelba: And she loved people exactly for who they were. Her dad's African American, I'm from Puerto Rico and we lived for a while in Canada. There weren't many kids who looked like her. And she would say, "Well, I'm Puerto Rican, African American and Canadian, mom!"

[Laughter]

She just loved everyone equally.

James: Oh, boy! -- Just that joy and peace. I want you to tell our viewers about your web site and what you're hoping to do. Then I would love for you to play the saxophone, just a portion. You said you would like to play a portion and maybe tell us

what you're saying in that particular instrumental piece. But what do you have and what would be the web site if people said, "Okay, how could we in some way join with you to help you accomplish something that through this tragedy God has put on your heart to do something very meaningful for others?" What is the web site and what is your goal?

Jimmy: Well, through my wife's work at the Klingberg Family Centers in Connecticut, the Ana Grace project was birthed. I'll let my wife talk more about that.

James: Is the web site Ana Grace project?

Nelba: It's www.AnaGraceProject.org. And it is a program that promotes love, community, and connection for every child and family as a way to prevent violence and it is really about getting parents, getting mental health people, getting teachers, getting the faith community to learn strategies, to love children in order for us to grow them and teach them and hopefully make a better, safer world.

James: Do you feel like you're offering them on the web site even some counsel and advice and instruction on how they can inspire this?

Nelba: We're adopting classrooms. We are offering professional developments. Our last conference had over 500 people in attendance, which I know for a big state like Texas isn't a lot but for a little state like Connecticut it's a lot.

[Laughter]

James: Now isn't Harry Connick, Jr. actually encouraging you and didn't he show up as one of your great comforters during this time?

Jimmy: Absolutely. Harry has been a great friend throughout this whole process, and he was a great friend even before. His friendship has lasted since I met him, goodness about 15-16 years ago. He's been a great source of comfort and support. The album that you're holding is the product of many, many people's sacrifice and effort and blessing. It's to benefit the Ana Grace Project.

James: Can they get this on your web site? If they went there you tell them how to get it and then that would be benefiting what you're trying to do?

Jimmy: Absolutely!

James: And help you inspire and give people even insight and instruction; correct?

Jimmy: Absolutely. It can be ordered through iTunes and Amazon.com, wherever you purchase CD's or digital music.

James: Well, you're going to play something. Give us a little understanding of what the message is.

Jimmy: Well, there is a song that I composed that is on the CD called "Ana's Way," just giving a little glimpse as to who my little girl was. And of course, the lyrics go: Giving lots of hugs each day she loved to pray and thank God for his blessings. Thoughtful notes for mom and dad, her love never lacked expressing. We'll miss her smile; though way too short her life teaches us a lesson. Ana had a way about her. So this is...

James: Would you like to hear him play this?

[Applause]

[Playing saxophone]

James: I know, Ana Grace, you heard Dad. I know you're in the arms of the Father. Sweetheart, you left a bright light as with our own daughter, you left a legacy of life. Father, I pray for everyone with a broken heart -- whatever the cause. You will send arms of comfort but above all, they might feel your arms and your love, wherever they are, whatever situation. And then God teach us how to love others effectively -- far more effectively; in Jesus' name. Jimmy, Nelba, we love y'all. Would you just say thanks again for coming to share this? -- Your journey.

[Applause]

I want to show our viewers and show you love in action. I want you to watch this. And coming from my point of view, everything we see is a result of love, God's love through somebody like you. It really is! I want you to look closely, the setting but look at the faces, and just let God talk to you.

In the studio

James: Oh, boy! When I watch that, there is just so many memories and images that just fly up in my mind. I've seen so many areas where they were so weak that when we got the water to them we didn't know if we would even be able to save them.

Here's where we've been feeding but they needed water. We've been giving them some clothes and we're feeding them at school but they need fresh clean water.

And what I saw, Betty, as the little boys were getting their dirty water and then here comes this truck.

See what you don't see that I see is that people like you paid for the truck. And you made it possible for those relief workers to be on the truck who knew what they were doing. Then you drive and begin to give people something they've never had, clean water, it's better than Christmas. It's better than an entertainment park. It is a chance at life.

Betty: It really is, James. I think don't I've ever seen anyone more excited about a fresh drink of water. Those kids were splashing it in their face, and they were just having the best time. And we've been there, James, where they just dance around -- such celebration over clean water. Can you imagine?

Well, it's because many of you have shared and you've cared and you've loved and so now it makes it possible for us to drill those wells so that people that are just thirsty for clean water can have a drink. And those mothers that weep over their babies because

they die, they don't have enough water and the water, the bad water, James, puts disease in their little bodies. This is hope for them -- real hope! So thank you if you've been participating in that.

James: Everybody wants a cure for Ebola and diseases. And my goodness, wouldn't we have wanted cancer to be cured when our daughter was fighting it? We've got a perfect cure for what ails so many of them and that is just clean water.

You, the viewers have expressed what Betty and I express. We started praying and a lot of you started praying that and a lot of you have seen your prayers answered. We said, "God, every time we call for water wells, we want to drill one." When we started it was a stretch but we just said, "God, please let us do that." And it's been amazing how God has enabled us to do that though there were some times when we've been able to do more than one well.

You've already commented, "I want that picture." We're giving away these bronzes. We've got that beautiful Kinkade canvas that is just fabulous. And Betty said, "I want one!" Well, we're going to give a well.

Here's what we're doing. Look, this is a devotional book that Betty has written, *Free to Be Me*. This is her journey and a lot of it is the two of us together. We're sending this to those of you who will make any gift and we're sending to those of you who will make a gift of \$100 or more the beautiful "His Word is Life" coffee cups. These are the greatest coffee cups you will ever drink coffee out of.

[Laughter]

I'm telling you, if Starbucks would get a hold of these they might sell some coffee.

[Laughter]

I'm going to tell you something, we've got them everywhere we ever go; we want to be sure we've got them. Our viewers said, "Can you give us some more?" Yes, we can. Here's what we're asking you to do. Make the largest gift you can to help us drill these

wells. A gift of \$48, ten people water the rest of their life. \$144, 30 people water the rest of their life. Could you drill a well? \$4800 -- that's the average cost. Our target is 500 more wells this year. Could you drill one of them? Could you drill several? I don't know what you can do. Hey, a lot of people say, "I can give a part." \$1200, pray three people join you or \$2400, pray one person joins you, we've got a well.

Father, I just pray you'll lead everyone to share their part in your heart; in Jesus' name.

Would you dial the number? Take your bankcard, use it like a check. Go online, LifeToday.org and make the gift. We're going to send gifts to bless you but you're going to in essence be giving the greatest gift of all, life itself and you're going to be giving it because of the love of God expressed through you.

Thank you for making that call. Thank you for making that gift. We look forward to blessing you with the gifts that will inspire you.

Begin video clip

Announcer: Every day millions of children 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 exciting and viable demonstrations of God's love in the world today. Suffering can end because clean water changes everything.

With your gift today we can establish and drill 500 water wells for remote villages in over 12 different nations. Your gift of \$24 will help provide clean water for 5 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 you'll receive the brand-new *Free to Be Me* 40-day devotional where Betty shares the challenges, victories, and insights God gave her while struggling through fear and insecurity. You'll also receive Betty's book, *Free to Be Me*. With your gift of \$100 or more you may request *LIFE's* inspirational coffee mug set featuring encouraging quotes and scripture to brighten your mornings for years to come!

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1,200 to help provide water for 250 people or a gift of \$4,800 to help sponsor a complete well. And request this beautifully framed canvas print of "The Forest Chapel" by the Painter of Light TM, Thomas Kinkade.

Please call, write, or make your gift online today!

End of clip

In the studio

James: Well, Betty and I just say from the depth of our heart, thank you so much for reaching out and touching someone with the love of God.

I want to thank Jimmy and Nelba again for the incredible blessing they are -- beautiful life. There is the web site again. It's an incredible project, Ana Grace lives forever but the power of her little life impacts so many. You can be a part of that and in some way protect others or comfort them.

Would you thank Jimmy and Nelba Greene for being with us? What a blessing!

Nelba, thank you! What a beautiful couple! Love you. Bless you!

Thank all of you so much. You are awesome. Thank all of you here. Encourage your friends to watch *LIFE Today*.