

3/09/15
Week 11 WFL: Last Week
Sara Hagerty

James: Thank you so much! It is such a privilege to share this time with you. I'm James Robison; my wife Betty and I welcome you to *LIFE Today*, and that is what it is about. I'm holding a very beautiful book written by Sara Hagerty and it is called *Every Bitter Thing is Sweet: Tasting the goodness of God in all things*. Are there bitter things that actually can be made sweet? Well, we're going to ask Sara about it. Welcome Sara to *LIFE Today*.

Sara, we're glad you're here.

Sara: Thank you for having me.

James: We're glad you're here. Where is your home?

Sara: Kansas City, Missouri.

James: Kansas City. Well, y'all had a baseball team that made it to the World Series! And do you know that the owner of the team, one of the main owners, David Glass and Ruth, wonderful prayer partners and supporters of our ministry for years and years. They've just had a great year but San Francisco was unkind to them -- very unkind. So they had to get *Every Bitter Thing made Sweet* in Kansas City. It was quite an exciting year for you guys.

You really did have a lot of pain. Tell our viewers, because a lot of folks out here, they have a lot of things going on in their life and they really don't know quite how to deal with it and they're not really ready to get this *Every Bitter Thing made Sweet*.

By the way, where did this cover come from? Where did this concept come from?

Sara: Well, Every Bitter Thing is Sweet is from Proverbs. Proverbs 27:7 says: The satiated soul loathes the honeycomb but to a hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet. I read that verse for the first time at my kitchen table; well, I may have read it before but I remember reading it for the first time at my kitchen table when we were in the throes of infertility, marriage struggles, financial struggles. It just felt like one thing after another.

James: By the way, when you say infertility, you almost say that like that was actually a bitter thing, it was painful to you. You must have really had high hopes we're going to have some children.

Sara: I certainly did. I expected like anyone in their 20s and newly married, sure we just have kids. We plan to have kids and we have children. Much like my early 20s I sort of expected isn't life in God a treadmill? We just turn it up and we run harder and our life gets better and it's just kind of this ever onward and upward life.

When we started facing struggles with infertility and in our marriage and financial struggles, I started to just feel that bitterness inside.

James: Is it actually toward God to some degree?

Sara: It was toward God. It was questions turned into bitterness. I had the question in my heart, not is God good? Because I could see in scripture that he was good. But really, is God good to me? What is it that I've done with my life that my upward and onward life in God turned sour? It's questions turning into bitterness in my heart; I'm just feeling hardened. This isn't what I prayed for. This isn't what I thought life in God was about. I'm sitting at my kitchen table just feeling it.

And I read this verse and for the first time I thought, you know what? This pain is an invitation. It is an opportunity. Underneath this bitterness is actually a real hunger for God. And he's giving me an invitation, "Come and meet with me here. You can come

and find me here. You don't have to have your circumstances change to come and get near me."

James: Right in the midst of all the pain.

Sara: In the midst of it.

James: What did you do?

Sara: Well, I started to ask him, "What does it look like to find you here?" The Bible, to me, had been something I used as a ministry tool. It had been something that I sort of read like a history book and I had enough maybe emotional integrity to know, I'm telling people about Jesus all over the place but on the inside I'm not feeling the love of this God.

So I just started to get alone with him and ask him the questions that were kind of buried underneath, "Are you good to me? What does your word say about how you see me in pain? And who are you really?" And then I just started to open myself up, "God, this really hurts; my ache is deep" -- and to feel his spirit come and meet me.

James: Did you not feel that there was almost a graciousness and a gratitude -- not just grace -- but a graciousness and an excitement on the part of God that you were actually coming to him like that; like bringing the real you to him the way you were? It wasn't catching him off guard. It was just like he was excited that you were coming to him who you are, where you are and did you sense that he was glad you came like that?

Sara: That's exactly it. I think I had seen him as a task master, as a hard leader, which we can do when we are running hard in ministry. I think we can start to see our output as... our output pleases God, instead of what we do on the inside when nobody is looking.

James: Religion tells you all that stuff.

Betty: Then you realize that he wasn't really far away from you; he was right there waiting for you to want to receive him.

Sara: Yes! And I started in those times to see, wait a second, he is not a distant leader, he is a daddy. And he is saying, "Come sit on my lap and keep asking me for what you want. You don't need to stop asking. I want to hear you asking me. I love your voice. I want you on my lap."

James: He really does. I wish people realized that. You know what happens though? This is one of the things I try to point out to people, and as we mature in our praying, because all praying is a two-way conversation. Any meaningful conversation is two way. Nobody just likes to listen all the time. You like to be able to be heard but you need to hear.

As you mature in your praying, I want to ask you how quickly you might have gotten there, the more you pour your heart out to God and then you wait, he will pour his heart out to you; and especially if he finds out you're receptive, you like to hear his voice, you like to know his heart. Did you begin to see this transition?

Sara: I did! I think baby showers were a particularly painful point for me because I would go and watch these women who had what I wanted. They were having a baby. And all those questions would come back. Why is she having baby number three and I can't even conceive baby number one. I'm leaving the baby shower and I'm mad in my heart, this hurts. And the Lord is just whispering, as if he was whispering, "Just come and sit with me. You don't need to be mad, come and cry."

It was in those times that I would drive home and just kind of block out the world around me and sit with his Word open in front of me and say, "Who are you, really, God?" And he would start to meet me.

And I would go, "You know what? This is better than a baby shower. This is better than a baby. This is better than my deepest heart's desire -- that I think is my deepest heart's desire -- it's actually you and you're better!"

James: Are you hearing what she's saying? Whatever your heart's desire is and you feel unfulfilled, the hurt, the bitterness and weight, and suddenly, you get to meet this incredible presence in this person; it's not religion, it's not ritual, it's relationship. And suddenly, that relationship is greater than all the things you ever dreamed about and that really is no exaggeration.

Maybe you have all the things that you think make people happy but nothing equals him -- nothing! Please get that. You found it!

Sara: I did. I remember one particular Sunday I was sitting at church and we had a really prolific church so lots of round bellies and one year olds running around and kids strapped in. And everybody is singing to God and I'm feeling in my heart, yeah, you're singing to him. You got what you wanted. And here I am looking around at everybody who has what I want and I saw -- and I'm just feeling it in my heart and I see this picture in front of me in my mind's eye and it's the cross. And I see the word family nailed to it, and it's as if I was hearing him say, "Will you still love me even if you never had a family?" because at this point it wasn't just infertility but we also had a lot of delays in our adoption.

So I left church that day knowing I couldn't answer. I knew the right answer but God wasn't asking me for the right answer, he was asking me for that internal wrestle with him. And I went home and it took me several days to go, would I really love you if you never gave me what I wanted in my circumstances? And out of just the depth that I had been meeting with him came this cry, yes! You're so good, God. When I get alone with you, and nobody is looking, when I'm in the deepest part of my pain and you meet me, it's so good that yes, I'll love you even if I never get what I want externally.

Betty: Don't you think that's what he wants, the point he wants all of us to get to? Him first -- He is everything.

Sara: He is! And you know what? He's so beautiful! It really is so beautiful to sit before him when your life externally isn't working like you want and just have him

come to you. It's addictive; you want to keep going back.

James: I wish everybody listening would realize this is not just some kind of spooky talk, this is not just some sort of church stuff this is reality. It really is. You can go there.

By the way, what she's written will help you go there. That's not an exaggeration. Okay, you're going through this time now, let's say gaining some intimacy with God, which we need intimacy. I did a lot of the same things; as a preacher, I would go to the Bible to get a sermon for you but I stopped going to the Bible to get life for me, and to be filled with the fullness of who he was and we make that mistake.

So now you're in this situation where you begin to hear him. What happens with the children? Tell us the rest of the story because it gets pretty interesting.

Sara: Yes! In the middle of that we adopt and it is sweet because as I'm starting to recognize, oh, he is a father and he loves me, my heart is opening to the fatherless and going, "He is a father to them and he loves them." And I'm really not all that different than them. I need to sit on his lap, they need to sit on his lap. So in this growing...

James: You started adopting kids from distant places.

Sara: We did! We adopted our first two from Ethiopia when they were one and a half and three and a half and came home and just felt the tug of God on our hearts. They were biological siblings. Yes.

James: Boy and a girl?

Sara: A boy and a girl. We got home and just felt the tug on our hearts again.

James: You got two and you got another tug on your heart?

Sara: And we got two more. We just do it in twos! [Laughing]

James: Where did you get them?

Sara: Then we went to Uganda and adopted our second two who were older. At that point, we really just... We had seen that there are many kids who are in the orphanage who are adopted younger; the ones who are older are a lot less likely to be adopted.

James: How old were the older ones when you get them?

Sara: On paper they were five and seven.

James: You think they were older?

Sara: We're not sure.

[Laughter]

James: How is everything going there? Is that good?

Sara: It's been much like our lives were before we got them. It is beautiful and it's painful. We're walking through each one of them grieving and the loss in their own lives and the loss of their history. Some of them have no memories, no records of their history. So we're walking through with them, finding the same God that we found when life didn't work for us.

James: How long have you had the adopted children now? How many years ago now?

Sara: It's been about five and a half.

James: Then something else happened to you that puzzled us.

Sara: Then we sort of had the surprise of our lives and I conceived.

James: Oh, boy!

Sara: And they called it a "geriatric pregnancy."

[Laughter]

The medical community was very gracious.

James: Did it really confuse you that now you did all this and then...

Sara: It didn't because we kept asking. I had that image of a daughter sitting on her daddy's lap going, "Daddy, would you please?" I was not pounding the gates of heaven going, "God, open my womb!" It really had transformed into a "Daddy, would you please?" And so I wasn't in total shock because I had been asking.

So when we found out -- it's actually interesting, the morning we found out we had conceived though, my husband's first response, and it wasn't a theological dissertation, it was just sort of his initial shock. He said, "Do you think the favor of God has lifted from our lives?"

James: Why would he say that?

Sara: Because there had been so much internal fruit in the years when our external circumstances weren't working. There had been such a sweetness with God.

James: In the midst of all the pressure.

Sara: In the midst of all the pressure that we went back and went, "That's favor. He met with us." The story didn't work like we thought but it was his favor.

James: Sure it was!

Sara: So it wasn't... but it was, all around was, and his blessing.

James: So now you've got a family.

Sara: Mm-hmmn! A lot of them!

[Laughter]

James: From all over the world! You wrote this and you have to have a mission purpose. What do you want people right there and people who hear you and who read, what do you want them to get?

Sara: I want them to find the beauty of this Jesus no matter what hand life deals them. I want them to be, if they're in the deepest life ache and see it as an invitation to cry and find a side of God that they've never seen before. I want them to grow in intimacy with this God who is forever saying, "Come and meet with me."

James: I want you to get the book. As a matter of fact, we'll send it to you. We're asking you to help us give literally, not just a cup of water to people but a well of water and we do that by joining together. And we're sending you those things that will bless you. But we would also like to send you this.

Betty, you and I come in here, virtually every day we're in people's homes and we feel, because we see people, meet with people, and we hear from you, and nearly 2,000 people and sometimes as many as 2500 people will call and our prayer team will pray with them every day. We're here because we believe God will meet people where they are, at their point of need and lift them up.

When you hear a story like this and you look at our viewers, what do you want our viewers to hear, that you believe God wants them to hear that's important to them? What's going on in your heart?

Betty: I want them to know that when you sit here and listen to Sara's story and

you've heard our stories through the years, our testimonies, that it's not just words we speak. We have experienced these things. We have experienced the pain. We have experienced the joy. But most of all, we have experienced God in our lives. He really does make the difference.

His way is the better way when it looks like we're not getting like what we perceived our Christian life would be like. We kind of plan ahead and think oh, I want this and I want this. But we need to say, "God, what do you want? What do you want from me? What do you want for my life that will give real purpose to what you want for everyone?"

And so just not to get ahead of God but just to rest in his peace and in his joy. When it doesn't look like anything is making sense, he does, and he wants you to know that he's just waiting for you to pour your heart out to him. Open up that pain and that hurt, and then let him give you the real joy that comes from within.

James: I hope you're hearing what God is saying through what Betty said and what Sara is saying. I think if you'll just get this, please. If you would just literally get in God's lap, I don't care where you are, he wants to hold you in the most loving, caring arms. And every single issue to you is important to him because you're important to him.

So right where you are, would you do this in a child-like faith expression? Just "God" - go ahead and tell him -- "I don't even know if you're there, you're listening" but he is. And say, "God, please help me. You know how bad I hurt. You know what's going on. Do you care? Would you help me? Please help me!" Just ask him. Talk to him like the father he is. And just say to him, "I'm going to lean on you but I want to learn about you."

And now look at me. There is a telephone number there on the screen. You dial that number and just tell someone, "I want you to pray with me please. I just need to turn my life over to him. If God's there and he'll help me like a father, I need it!" And get someone to agree with you. If you've never trusted him as father, they'll pray with

you; ask him to become your father through Jesus Christ. He gave that you might be reconciled to him, connected to him in family.

I wrote a little book called Knowing God as Father, we'll send it to you. And then it has a Bible study in it to get you started.

And if you wanted Sara's book, we'll be glad to send it to you.

Sara, I just love you. I love your spirit. It's a beautiful story! I pray it blesses many and you keep telling it, and take care of those kids. You may have some more. You don't know!

Would you thank Sara for being a blessing to us and for sharing her story and her heart? Let me say, you call that number, it's paid for by love if you want someone to pray with you?

I want to tell you this too. This is the last week that we're asking you for help to drill 500 water wells. We drill them one well at a time in 12 countries. It changes everything. No way to describe it, it is just a miracle.

Would you -- would you help us drill a well? Would you give a part of a well? I want you to listen. I want you to listen to some mother's hearts. I think you'll hear the father's heart, and then you'll be his hands. I really believe that. Watch!

On the mission field

Announcer: Is there anything more miraculous, more precious than God's gift of children? -- Remarkable and sometimes confusing little versions of ourselves. Yet so incredibly unique. We plan, sacrifice, stress, and pray over our decisions -- over their decisions, all that we want for them and the legacy we hope to leave. There is a breath of immortality in those generations that follow us. But that all assumes those generations don't end with us.

In Cambodia, what we encountered floored us. Mother after mother, who because of something as basic as water, had lost child after child. Contaminated water filled with disease, their only source.

Open captions:

>> I lost two children.

Announcer: In the villages we visited, it became harder to find mothers who had not lost a child to contaminated water than it was to find one who had.

Open captions:

>> I lost four children.

>> I lost five children.

Announcer: Our children are supposed to outlive us. These mothers have lost more children than the average American has even brought into this world.

Open captions:

>> I lost one child.

>> I lost three children.

>> I lost one child.

>> I lost five children.

>> I lost five children.

Announcer: Of all the things we, as parents, might struggle to provide for our children, it's unlikely that clean water is ever one of them. Why should it be any different for these mothers?

End of clip

In the studio

James: We're the answer to that need. I've said to those of you who watch us on a regular basis that if you want your prayers answered, I think it wise to seek, to be an answer to someone's prayer.

In Isaiah 58, the prophet made it very clear that if you address the needs of others, if you see someone that is hurting or hungry or in need of food or care and you give it to them, that you will find your prayers answered quickly, and that God moves into the situation and we become a well-watered garden, fruitful in every way; that we become like a stream of water, an ever flowing stream he says.

Would you, right now this last week, just with the prompting of the Holy Spirit, when you see what's happening, you say for another mother, "I will save her children. For the sake of those who've lost, I will show them the hope they've longed for" because a mother who has lost a child is longing for something much better for other mothers. Would you be the answer to that heart cry? Would you answer the mission and commission of Jesus to literally take his love and the good news of who he is to the ends of the earth in action, not in words only but in deeds? Would you right now go to *LIFE Today* online or go to the phone and dial that number? And take your bankcard and say, "James, I'm going to help answer the cry and the prayer of those ladies who lost their children."

We're going to save that village; we're going to save that area by giving them fresh clean water, *Water for Life*, and the missionaries we know will tell them about the water of life, but we will have demonstrated his love.

Please right now get your bankcard and make the largest, most loving gift of mercy possible to assist the suffering and to give them an answer. If you would make a gift, the wells are \$4800. You may be able to give a well. Invariably someone does; even couples and children and churches will say, "We want to give a well." Businesses do it -- individuals! Could you give a well?

Father, I pray if they're able, who are watching, they will joyfully do it; in Jesus' name.

Most of the support comes from people who make gifts of \$48 or \$72 or \$144 because when you break that down, you are giving water the rest of a person's life for ten people, or 30 -- \$144, 30 people Water for Life. If you can give a gift of \$1200 or \$2400, somebody matches that or three others join you, we've got another well. There's some level at which you can participate.

So would you right now go online and make that gift? Or would you dial that phone number and take that bankcard and use it like a check?

By the way, if you want to write a check make it to *LIFE*, but please call us and tell us what you're mailing because this is the last week. We have some beautiful gifts to say thank you and to bless you in your spiritual walk, to encourage you. No one ever gives because they want to get a gift. We're giving because we love to give a gift, the gift of life and love. Thank you so much for doing it. Please, if you get a busy because others are calling to know Christ, to give their life to him, you be persistent. You call or press on or go online until you get through. Thank you so much for doing it!

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.

This is the last week! Call, write, or make your gift online today!

End of clip

In the studio

James: We will be sending you Betty's book and the devotional, the 40-day devotional guide. I think the beautiful "Forest Chapel" from Thomas Kinkade is just magnificent. We'll be sending you that as you make that special gift.

But if you'd like to have Sara's book, *Every Bitter Thing is Sweet*, it's made sweet by the intimacy and the presence of God. It really is that loving father.

Sara, we want to thank you. It is in the bookstores but if you'd like to have one and you just help us share life, we'll be happy to send you one.

Would you join Betty and me saying thanks to Sara for being a blessing to us?

You did a great job! Thank you so much. Bless you and your husband, and all those kids and more to come! Where do they come from?

[Laughter]

Thank you so much for being a friend for life and for watching the program. Encourage your friends to watch. Go to stream.org -- stream.org. You're going to receive the news -- and the good news! God bless you.

Announcer: Be sure to visit stream.org, a rich and lively source for breaking news, analysis, and entertainment! Stream.org