

4/21/15
Week 17 Spring Mission Feeding
April Smith

James: Thank all of you! We welcome you to *LIFE Today*. I'm James Robison; my wife Betty and I are thrilled to have you here.

This is the time of the year when storms come. I think that we all face storms in life. We all face challenges; sometimes devastation that is almost not only indescribable but unbearable.

I happened to be a pilot since 1968; that was how we got around in the crusades. We could only keep our schedule by flying. In the mission fields of Africa, it's the only way you can transverse, the only way you can get around. But I began to study weather, and as a pilot you really do respect the weather phenomenon. You can actually watch these storms developing. Betty, you and I have learned to really pray because we've seen devastation so close even here in the Dallas/Fort Worth area, and south of us, and up in Oklahoma, the devastation.

Well, a year ago north of Little Rock a tornado hit and it was a category four, and the winds in some areas exceeded 200 miles an hour. The homes were stripped where there wouldn't have even been anything in the way of plumbing; like they would not have even been a bathtub left in place -- everything just rooted up.

Well, April Smith, her husband and two boys, sought refuge when the storm was coming. The story is indescribable what happened. You need to hear it because you need to be listening to a miracle that, Betty is in process and progress.

I want you to welcome to *LIFE Today* April Smith.

April, I'm so glad to see you. It's a year ago. Put us in the setting. What happened?

April: It was a Sunday, and the week before was Easter. We get home from church and my son, it's like a normal day, my son looks at me and he says...

James: How old are your children?

April: Seven and nine; I have two boys. My son was getting a snack in the kitchen and he said, "Mom," he said, "If I go to heaven, will you miss me?" I looked at him and I said, "Well, of

course, honey, I'd miss you." He said, "Well, how long would you miss me?" I said, "Well, every day until I see you again."

And he said, "Don't worry, mom, I'll be watching over you." The day goes on; he goes and plays at a friend's house. The storms are coming in and so we call them home.

James: Did he know when he said that there were any storms coming? Had he even heard about it?

April: No.

James: You don't really even have any idea why he happened to say that. Was church about heaven or something?

April: Well, I lead a deaf ministry at church and so they're always involved in ministry. Actually, about two months before the tornado, my stepdad passed away. And I had to help with his funeral and had asked God, I said, "God, do they really look down on us or is that something people say to comfort us?" And I never researched it on the Internet or asked my pastor, it was just something I had asked God. Well, that day, the Lord answered my prayer through my son.

Betty: Is this your older son?

April: My younger son; he was seven.

James: So the storms are coming now. Tell us what took place.

April: So they're coming. Our parents call us and tell us to get our shoes on, it's coming our way and so we do that. We set up the bathroom, get the mattress, flashlights, Bibles, our phones.

James: So you were hearing it was serious.

April: Yes. We knew it was coming. We lived in the valley and there's about seven houses on our street; and we're in a four bedroom brick home. So we get in the middle, in the bathroom and we bring the mattress.

James: Were you already seeing the wind and the storm look or the dark clouds?

April: It was the sky was changing colors.

James: So you've seen enough of tornados in that part of the United States that you knew that it was serious to take cover if you heard there were massive storms coming; correct? So you were trying to do everything appropriately.

April: And we're in Arkansas, we get them all the time. We did what we normally do. Actually, where we lived, where we're too far out where we couldn't even hear -- there was no siren where we actually lived. So I have the boys in the bathroom and I go approach my husband, which he is outside looking at the weather and taking pictures. I go out there, and at that time, we live in the valley and there's a mountain ahead of us and I see the tornado coming. It's as big and black and about a mile wide.

At that moment I was like -- I screamed. My husband and I come into the bathroom; it was heading straight for us. I calm my boys down because I'm mom. So when they saw me panic, I calmed them down and I said, "We're going to pray." So we all four grabbed hands and I got probably two words out and it hit. It was 200 mile per hour winds so the pressure was so fast I couldn't even hang on to anything. I remember everything about that night. I remember being in the tornado and my pants getting sucked off me.

James: Carried in the air.

April: Yes. It threw us about 300 yards or better. I had landed and I remember I picked my head up off the dirt and it was night, it was dark, and I remember looking in front of me and I see destruction. I look to the right and the left and everything is gone.

In that moment it was bigger than me. I prayed again. So before the tornado's coming, the only thing I know to do is pray. And then after I look around after this destruction, it was bigger than me. So I went to God and I prayed. I prayed before I even yelled for help. So I cried out to God in my darkest hour and that's all I had left. I couldn't see, I didn't hear my husband running for me. I didn't know where my kids were and everything was gone. I was in the middle of the field and I cried out to God.

James: You then found out... your boys.

April: Not right then. The reason, when I was a child, when I was 12, I was prophesied over. I used to go to camp meetings in Oklahoma at Rhema, with the Hagees and Copelands. This guy from Africa told me, he said, "You're going to be a mighty woman of God." He said, "The Lord is going to use you to save hundreds and thousands of people."

He looked at my Mamaw, and he said, "You're going to live to see it."

So when I had picked my head up off the dirt I had thought I was being mighty already, I was a mother of two, had a business, I was a wife, I started a deaf ministry and it grew and had great favor. I thought I was already living the prophecy.

But when I picked my head up off the dirt I knew had underestimated the definition of mighty when God said "mighty" and I knew this was it. I had no idea how mighty God had called me to be. That's why in that moment, God had prepared me my whole life for that moment, for me to turn to him. So I cried out to him. It was like he met me on the dirt.

I get in the ambulance. They have to move us by doors. A truck that was considered totaled out is how we got to the ambulance to begin with. It was thrown about 100 yards.

Betty: Did you know anything about the rest of your family at this time?

April: No. When I got in the ambulance I still didn't know. At the exact same time, my husband and I both said, "Can we get some heat?"

And that's when I was like, "Babe, is that you?"

He said, "Is that you?"

And then we were silent the rest of the way. We get to the hospital and I remember this, I was laying on the stretcher once again crying out to God and my pastor had just come to my hospital room door. He was like, "That's not her" because I wasn't even recognizable, not even by my own brother-in-law.

James: Because you were so beat up.

April: I was so beat up.

James: Then the scar here on your cheek, that's part of it?

April: Yes.

James: You said something about your ear was torn?

April: Yeah, my mom didn't even think I had any teeth. My ear was -- my whole face was distorted. I was laying there and I cried out to God. I was like, "God, take this pain. Please take this pain."

My pastor, he said that he heard my voice and it was like God pulled him by a rope. First thing I said was, "How is Daniel?"

So he goes to check on my husband. He said it's like a movie, there's trauma everywhere. He said the doctor stopped and looked at him and said he was coded, dead on arrival when he got here. He's on life support. He may make it.

James: This is your husband?

April: Yes, my husband. He said he may make it the next four hours. If he makes it through the night he'll be brain dead.

So my pastor comes back and says they're working on him. And my husband and I were separated for five days; two different hospitals for five days. I didn't find out until after I was home what was going on with my husband. He had a wound on the back of his neck where you could see his spine. There wasn't an inch on his body that had not been battered from the storm.

When he made it through the night the doctor said, "Oh, he'll have blood on his brain. There's blood in his brain."

Not one drop. So we both made full recoveries.

While we were in the hospital my girlfriend, who actually moved into her house in the same city the same day of the tornado, and we were good friends. Her husband was on scene, right after the storm had hit and had found my boys; and we were good friends, our kids were friends.

So they come to the hospital and it was about three days after the tornado. I remember telling everyone to leave the room and they sat on my bed and we talked. She, at the end, when she was leaving she said, "Can I take a picture of you? I want to write a little something for later."

I looked at her and said, "Write it. Take a picture and use it now. Use it now."

So she goes home and writes this article, "The Cheerleader" and posts it. And in 48 hours 2.5 million people read my story of how I gave it to God. She pretty much wrote verbatim what we had talked about in the hospital room.

James: And you know now your boys are gone?

April: Yes.

James: When did you find that out?

April: I just knew. The destruction was so bad, I knew it was a miracle that I was even alive. I just knew. But as people came to me, they waited a few days to tell me. They wanted all my family there.

My mom's deaf; my mom said the first thing I did was sign, "Where is T. C.?" Because I couldn't even move; my hands were right here and I would just sign T. C. for Tyler and Cameron.

She couldn't answer. I knew. And I just let them do what was -- I just waited until they wanted to tell me. But the one thing I kept saying, I didn't know how it was going to work out but I knew that God is good. I had to press into what I already believed in that life is a vapor; that I should be blessed because death, Jesus has victory over the grave. Their will was complete and I got to live to see it. They're home. Their next breath was with the father. I had to stand on that and I believed that with my whole heart.

So something else that really gave me a lot of peace is in heaven, 1,000 years is a day. So my kids are hanging out with Jesus for a day and even if they were to ask where is my mom? Jesus is going to say, "You'll see her tomorrow." So they don't miss me. They're not sick.

Betty: They're together.

April: Yes, and they're together and they truly had a beautiful relationship. They had their own rooms but every night they would sleep in the same room -- every night. I mean I have pictures of them just snuggled up together by choice.

James: What were their names again? Cameron and what?

April: And Tyler.

James: I know you're watching; okay? How about you go find our daughter Robin and let her talk to you about how much fun she had watching her kids grow up. And she is watching them now; they're such beautiful examples of Jesus. We just see the fruit of Robin's life. And you boys didn't live very long but you're a blessing and you're witnesses.

We want you to witness, mom, and dad, being witnesses for Jesus. I know you're cheering. Talk to Robin about it; okay? And you tell Robin that you're joining her, pulling for mom and dad trying to point everybody to Jesus and to heaven. You've got an indescribable peace.

We know what it feels like to lose a child; it's the heaviest loss there is. We're still processing. We too knew our daughter won. We knew at the funeral, the children speak about where mom is and mom's a winner. There was peace.

We know Jesus came to bind up broken hearts. There are broken hearts all out in front of us, perhaps in this studio and all over the world who are watching. How do you encourage them in a way that they would want Jesus to bind up their hurt and their wounds? What would you say?

April: I would say he is the only source. I had my husband too, but he was just as broken. I couldn't draw from him; I had to go to God. I literally, that's all I had left. My body was taken. I was in a wheelchair; my job, my children, my ministry, my marriage, everything was gone. I just had this beating heart and I just gave it to God. He gave me peace that surpasses all. Now I still had pain. We still had suffering. I still miss my boys every day.

James: Do you look at a picture of them when you flash?

April: At times. Sometimes I have joyful memories and then there are times that I break because like anybody else --

James: And it is okay to break.

April: Yes! I would rather them here.

Betty: It's part of the healing process.

April: Yes. But there are times when like, the Lord brings the beauty to me. Like my last memory of me and my family is all four of us holding hands praying.

James: And as the storm hit. How is your husband?

April: He's doing really well. We're both -- God has started restoring our marriage because men and women, we grieve so differently. He was angry; and men are the protector, the provider. So he had to deal with a lot of guilt. Not that it was anything he could have controlled.

James: What is his name?

April: Daniel.

James: Let's just tell you what. Would you say thank God for the miracle of just even the peace and grace?

[Applause]

Join me in prayer all over the world.

Father, I pray for Daniel. And Lord, I pray for April. I pray that the healing that she has miraculously experiencing, because it cannot be explained, it is beyond comprehension but it is what you can do. And it is a peace that passes understanding. I pray that that will flood Daniel in every way. I pray their relationship will be stronger than it's ever been for your glory. I pray, Lord, the memory of these boys will cause many people to know, I don't want to miss heaven and the way to heaven, Lord Jesus, is through you. Help them to see that. Lord, thank you for healing.

Let me just look at you in the eyes, those of you who are watching me right now. We process grief and pain in so many different ways but wherever you are, whatever has happened, he wants to lift you up.

Now she talked about prayer and praying but she also had people praying for her. She talked about that and the miracle of it. Do you see the phone number there on the screen? We have prayer partners here. Many of them have been through brokenhearted occasions and tragedies but they're finding the same healing. If you want somebody to pray with you, there it is. Don't you hesitate to call.

See, my heart breaks. You may just be lonely; you may just need a friend. We're here for you. You realize that?

Do you realize that this program is paid for and put on the air by people who love you? And that phone center is there because people love you and want to help you?

April, thank you for blessing us. People are calling right now for prayer to get help. If you don't know Christ, give your life to the Christ that lifts us beyond death. These boys are alive, April's -- our daughter Robin is alive and we're seeing the life of God that she sowed in her three children and her husband, Ken; they're all full of Jesus. It is beautiful to watch.

I want you to look at something right now, every bit as devastating and more horrific in its reach than even the kind of storm she described. But here's the thing I want you to understand, we hold the solution in our hand and in our heart. Really! We hold the miracle and we can release it and there's no question that it takes its affect, life. I want you to watch but I want you to be ready to be the miracle that somebody's waiting for.

On the mission field

Announcer: When you look at the hardship facing many in Africa, their struggle to survive, it is easy to think it's all they've ever known. We might even been inclined to think they are accustomed to pain. But to believe that, removes us from the reality of their plight. For Aluel suffering and tragedy are things she has come to know only recently.

Open captions:

We used to have farming before the attack on our homes.

Announcer: There was no warning. Aluel lost almost everything in one dark night. Bullets flying and fire raging, defenseless and helpless she witnessed the unthinkable.

Open captions:

They killed my husband and two children...

Announcer: It's not something from which you recover quickly, especially when it was just the beginning. Though she lost two children that night, five of Aluel's children escaped the attack. But what they couldn't escape is the malnutrition attacking in the aftermath of lost crops, livestock, shelter.

Open captions:

Three of my children died because we have no food...

Announcer: As Aluel watches children play nearby, her mind drifts to sweet memories of those little ones she lost.

While she'll never forget, she can't dwell there long. The desperation of her two remaining children calls to her and it calls to us. We can't change everything Aluel and countless families like hers have experienced, but we can help them on their road to recovery by insuring no more of their children die of starvation.

End of clip

In the studio

James: And yes, we really can.

Father, I pray that we will.

Because of the horrors of what's occurring there and it can occur here, in any free country where you live like the United States, Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom, wherever you are, horrific things happen. But there in Africa where so much crisis, and then the plunder, and then the absolute devastation of crops and food, we've got 400,000 precious children and their family members throughout Africa that have been hit hard. They hurt, and only love can heal the hurt. But they're hungry.

And now then for nearly 25 years we've been feeding the hungry. What you need to understand is that we're watching impoverished nations turned upside down, right side up miraculously.

One of them is Mozambique. The miracles we have seen there are indescribable. What we're watching happen in Angola, what just has happened in Botswana where freedom has been born in a way that is reminiscent of the birth of our nation; various things are happening throughout the country.

What's taken place in Rwanda is nothing short of a miracle; the healing of the racism that has been there for hundreds of years. Miracles! It's the gospel. But it's demonstrated love. We're saving lives.

When you meet people at the point of their need, Betty where they hurt and you show them love, they're more anxious to listen to people talk about love and we've seen it.

Betty: They are, James. We've watched what war can do. It killed her husband and two children. But they're fighting another battle, a battle against starvation, hunger, that can also take the lives of her other two children that she loves so desperately and wants to spare from death that surely is headed their way if something doesn't take place. That's what we can do. We can make that difference. We can offer hope to them through giving and love and supplying the food that they need, James.

James: It really is simple because the missionaries are there and they're sent by God but they're supported by us, people like us. When we talk about feeding and we talk about the costs, we're also talking about keeping the missionaries and relief workers in place. We're talking about you

have invested in trucks, hundreds of them, and aircraft to move things around. You who have watched *LIFE Today* have been miracle workers now for decades.

Right now we're talking about the hundreds of thousands that we have located that have a need that the missionaries are ready to meet. All we do is keep them there and we feed the children and their families and we give them the food and the wherewithal. It takes an average -- think about this -- of \$30 to feed three children for the next months, \$50 to feed five, \$100 to feed ten. You can feed 100 children for a \$1,000 gift. I pray many of you will just say, "I'm going to the phone, I'm going online, I'm giving \$1,000. I want to help 100 children like that. I'm going to do it."

I don't think there is a person watching that couldn't help three, five, or ten. I don't think there is a person that couldn't. The issue is will you?

A lot of times we say, "Oh, I care!" But how much do we care? Do you care enough to share? I believe you do. Would you go to LifeToday.org and make the gift God put on your heart? Or dial that number, use your bankcard like a check. If you want to write a check, make it to *LIFE* but call us and tell us you're mailing it.

We have some beautiful gifts to send you. The book, *Fearfully and Wonderfully Made* is probably the most high-impact book I have read in many years, and I told Philip Yancey that. He said, "James, thank you."

This message from this incredible doctor on the body, *Fearfully and Wonderfully Made*, to show the body of Christ what we're to look like, it is absolutely indescribable. We want to send it to you to bless you.

Dudley Hall teaching on *Heirs to the Kingdom*, right here right now for the glory of God. We want to bless you. We have gifts to bless you but you're giving the gift of life. Would you please right now, LifeToday.org or dial that number and make the gift of life? Whatever gift you can make you're going to be saving lives. Thank you for doing it!

Begin video clip

Announcer: Disease, malnutrition, starvation -- all terrible human atrocities being faced every day by people living in remote and impoverished areas of Africa. Those at greatest risk are the children.

This month, 400,000 children are depending on us for survival. And now in South Sudan the suffering has intensified and our feeding efforts are desperately needed by an additional 25,000

children. Our mission teams are in place but your support is critically needed to replenish and distribute food supplies immediately. When you call or go online today and make a life-saving gift of \$30, \$50, or \$100, you will provide urgently needed food to three, five, or ten children for the next three months.

As our way of saying thank you, we'll send you *Heirs to the Kingdom*, four powerful messages on audio CD or U.S.B. flash drive. You'll also receive the award-winning book, *Fearfully and Wonderfully Made*. With your gift of \$100 or more to help feed ten children please request *The Story*, a running narrative Bible to help you engage with God's Word more easily.

And finally, with your gift of \$1,000 or more to help feed 100 children you may 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: I so much want you to get this book. I want you to see how God designed our body to function like his body. The Bible says 30 times, not you're like the body of Christ, you are the body of Christ. How does all these diverse members so uniquely designed fit together and submit to the head and have health? The same way we've got to do it as a church -- tremendous! It will bless you.

I want you to go to stream.org every day. Get the news, but then let's get the insight and wisdom on what we do about it. By the end of this year, our whole thought processes can be totally reprogrammed by wisdom and understanding that comes from God, stream.org. Go there every day. Find something, Facebook it, tweet it to your friends and tell them to go there and let's let God change our hearts and our minds for his glory.

We have heard a testimony today as great as we may ever hear. Would you join Betty and me in saying thanks to April? And may God comfort her and Daniel, and use you as a witness for Christ.

Thank you, April. Thank all of you for being here and thanks for watching *LIFE Today*. Thanks for sharing life today and hopefully every day.

Announcer: Introducing stream.org, a rich and lively source for breaking news, analysis, and entertainment. Stream.org is a new information stream where those concerned about our nation's course can now gather for news, wisdom, and inspiration. Working together we will see the promise declared in Psalm 46:4, "There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God." Be sure to visit stream.org, a new site to unite us!