

4/28/15
Week 18: Spring Mission Feeding
Greg Laurie

James: We've actually got folks all the way from California! Came over here to be with a pastor from California; Greg Laurie is with us. I'm James Robison; my wife Betty and I welcome you to *LIFE Today*.

Riverside, California, Harvest Church, and I've watched Greg do the incredible conferences and crusades in the stadiums and it just thrills me to see how people respond, not only to the joy of worshipping the Lord and expressing their relationship with God the way they sing and praise God for the reality of that relationship, so much more than religion, and then Greg comes and communicates in such an incredible way that people want to know the life that they're seeing in those on the platform who are worshipping God, those around them, and what they hear from Greg. He is our guest. Would you welcome Greg Laurie to *LIFE Today*?

Greg, good to see you again. You are coming to the little stadium that the Cowboys -- the Cowboys attempt to play football there. They've done a little better; we want to see it keep going. You will actually be in the stadium during the football season. So we want you to understand, you're coming from California.

But you bring great concern for the Cowboys when you come over here to preach. We don't want any of this getting people from California getting through better than we get through here. Do you understand that? If you come in to do a crusade in our stadium, you're going to help the Cowboys a little bit?

Greg: Yes, we're going to do what we can.

[Laughter]

AT&T Stadium is -- I was just there today. I've never seen a stadium like it before; it's state of the art. I think they spent a billion dollars on it or something like that. The biggest video screen I've ever seen in my life. It's just fantastic. When you drive up to it, it looks like some kind of spaceship or something.

So when you get inside and I was there with about 450 pastors from the Dallas/Fort Worth area and I just thought, I can see this -- I can see this place filled. Best of all, seeing it filled with

people hearing the gospel and making a commitment to Christ. Though it is for the Dallas/Fort Worth area and really for Texas in general, this is an event we do called Harvest America that's really for the whole country because it's simulcast, not just on television and radio, but we have this H.D. video signal we send out, sort of a dedicated high quality signal that's taken down in churches, people will take it and show it in theaters, they will show it in auditoriums, even a front room. And while we're doing the event live in the stadium, people are watching it in these places.

And as I call people to Christ, as you have over the years, James, in your outreaches, as I call them to Christ in the stadium, we're calling them to Christ wherever they are, right there in the moment saying, this is your moment to believe in Jesus. I think that that's really what is so needed right now is just direct evangelism. Sometimes people will have sort of the false dichotomy and say, "Well, I'm into personal evangelism, not into mass evangelism." Well, God is into both.

The fact is, all those people that will be in that stadium were largely brought because of a personal relationship that someone had with them. And they said, "Please come with me to this event." They do the heavy lifting and then I'm just a messenger boy, I'm a paperboy; I just deliver the good news and leave the results in the hands of God.

But I feel that people are hungry spiritually, maybe more today than ever and they respond because the gospel is truth.

James: Well, I want everyone to start praying for the crusade in November. Start praying now, and start planning to bring someone. If you've never seen it, it is worth the trip to go and see it. It is a spectacular place. But to be there where people are praying and caring about others and sharing, you can see the miracle of totally transformed lives.

I want to actually touch on your own story a little bit. Let me show you this. This is Lost Boy; this is the biography of Greg Laurie. This is a book that I'm actually... I want to offer it to you today. It is called Hope for Hurting Hearts.

Greg, we're going to touch on this in a few minutes. I actually want you to speak to me and Betty. Betty and I lost a daughter, as you know, two years ago; he lost a son over seven years ago. So we've been on this journey that this is the loss you just don't expect. It's totally not the norm at all. So I want you to talk to us about that. But your life story, see I'm a fatherless kid. I'm a product of what you call an illegitimate birth, my mother was raped. You actually say in your story, you were what is called an illegitimate birth. So we started out. Tell us a little bit about your story.

Greg: Well, my mom, if you let me see that book for a second, James. This is my mother on the cover of this book. My mom was sort of a dead ringer for Marilyn Monroe. She's beautiful. She's been married and divorced seven times; she had a lot of husbands, a lot of boyfriends in-between. She was a raging alcoholic. So I went along for the ride.

In some ways, I was almost like the parent in the relationship more than the child because she would get drunk every night and pass out. So I had to care for her and take care of her. So in this tumultuous lifestyle it got me searching for meaning in my life very early on. At 15 years old I'm just like what is the meaning of life? Why am I here? Because the adult world I was exposed to was so messed up. I just thought, there has to be more than the life they're living.

Then ironically, though I saw the emptiness of their life in drinking and all that, I got into the drug culture in the late '60s and I got into drinking myself. That was sort of a short-lived little time and I just thought this can't be it. So for me, it was like a process of elimination. It is not here, it is not here, where is it?

Thankfully, on my high school campus in 1970 in Newport Beach, California, the Jesus movement was in full swing and the kids would meet on the front lawn and have Bible studies. So one day I walked by and I just checked it out. Actually, to be honest, there was a cute girl I'd seen and she was talking to a friend of mine and I wanted to go and meet her.

I noticed that she had one of those mysterious books with the black leather cover and the ribbons and the gold pages. And I went, "Oh, no! She is a Jesus freak. What a waste of a really cute girl." That's what I thought. I thought, why would she be into something like that? It's so stupid. It's so ridiculous. I was so dismissive of it but I knew nothing about it.

So one day I was walking across my campus and I saw these Christians singing their songs about God and so I decided to sort of eavesdrop on their conversation, far enough away where people wouldn't think I was in the group participating, that's like social suicide, to be with these people, but close enough where I could hear it. I was kind of looking at her and then I started looking around at the rest of them.

And then I just tried a thought on for size I'd never considered, what if they're right? And what if God is real? And what if Jesus Christ could change my life? I thought that would never happen. I'm not the religious type. You know the things I've seen; I saw things no little boy should ever be exposed to with my mom. I thought, no. I was too cynical because of my upbringing. I thought what if it's true? So I was sort of considering this.

And a guy got up to speak and I don't remember most of what he said but he made one statement that just -- boom! Like a lightning bolt from heaven in my heart. He said, "Jesus said, 'You're either for me or against me.'"

I looked around at these kids and I thought, well, they're for him. I'm not one of them; does that mean I'm against Jesus? I always believed Jesus was there, out there somewhere. I'd seen all of his movies.

[Laughter]

I loved Ben Hur. I respected Jesus but I knew nothing of Jesus. For the first time it occurred to me, he could be known in a personal way. So I responded to the little invitation this preacher gave and I walked forward and I prayed. I thought to myself even as I was praying, this is not going to work for me. It will not work. But it did work because it wasn't an *it*, it was a him -- it was God. And God will reveal himself to any person that reaches out to him. And I did, and he started changing me.

So kind of fast forward a few years and then to what I'm doing now; the reason I do what I do is because of what happened to me. And I want to reach other people that maybe have that same cynicism. For me, in my day growing up, I was the exception. Most people came from intact families I came from a divorced home. I was the exception. Today, that's the norm. That's the norm -- that's the culture we're in.

James: Sad but it's true. You deliver the message effectively. I want to touch on something and we're moving into an area that's tough. You've written a book called Hope for Hurting Hearts. You understand a hurting heart. You understand a hurting heart the way no one wants to know a hurting heart. Two years ago we lost our youngest child, our daughter and she was the mother of three teenagers, and the greatest witness throughout our life that we'd ever known. We're still going through it, Greg, more than two years later. Over seven years ago you lost a son. How old was he?

Greg: Thirty-three years old. We're coming on the seventh year of it. He would be 40.

James: We lost our daughter when she was 40, and it's been over two years ago. You're farther down the road. We have gone through... and we don't feel condemned, we have wept, we have screamed. I walk by her picture sometime now and say, "No!" Like it's not right! She should still be smiling. She should be watching her children get married. She should be seeing their children. Did you experience that?

Greg: Oh, yes. And I think, James and Betty, it is important to be honest to God.

As you look at the Psalmist of the Psalms and the honesty of the Psalmist and his struggles, and I think, we need to be honest with the Lord. I don't think there's anything wrong with asking God why. Don't necessarily expect an answer because I think even if God were to reveal to the three of us, "Okay, I'm going to tell you why this happened," we wouldn't agree with it, we wouldn't like it. So God isn't going to tell us why.

But then it comes to another question, what? Like what am I going to do now? I'm never going to understand it. I'll never wrap my mind around it. I would have gladly, as I know you guys would have, given my life in exchange for him.

My son died in an automobile accident. It was sudden. One day he was with us, the next day he wasn't. He was working at our church as a graphic designer. When I heard the news that my son had died, if words could kill you, I felt like I could literally die on the spot. It was like the air was sucked out of the room, time stood still. I went into a state of shock; I collapsed on the ground.

But I found myself like minutes after -- our house immediately filled with people. I don't even know where these people came from; everybody with words of comfort. And honestly, some of these words were not comforting at all. I finally got away from everybody...

James: We don't need sermons at that time. We just don't.

Greg: It's true. Look at the story of Job. The best thing that Job's comforters did was when they just came to him and wept with him. The Bible says, weep with those that weep. My friend, Steven Curtis Chapman...

James: He's been here right after his terrible loss, he and his wife.

Greg: They lost their daughter. He said that one of the things that really spoke to him was when someone just came to him and said, "There are no words."

I think as Christians we always want to try to explain everything, but we can't. I think the question is what? And what I realized was what am I going to do now? Well, I don't want to waste my pain.

Paul says we comfort with a comfort we've been comforted with. One thing that actually helps me, believe it or not, is helping other people. Like even to talk to you, if I can bring just a moment of comfort, just a little measure of something that lifts you a bit, to me it is not oh, I would go through it again. If I could rewrite history, this would never have happened to me.

But it did happen to me so I want to try to say to others, you're going to get through this. It is going to be hard. It is going to take longer than you thought it would take. You're going to think you're progressing and then you'll take two steps forward and four steps back. And grief is -- to me, grief is like going over the falls of a wave and you're in the white water. You don't know which way is up. If you have a surfboard or a boogie board, you have a little leash attached to your ankle and what you need to do, I read this in a surfing magazine, is if you go over the falls and you're disoriented in the wave, grab the leash and pull up toward your buoyant device; it will always take you to the surface because sometimes people have gone down when they should go up.

To me, the leash is the Word of God, and the surface, I get a glimpse of Jesus again. There are times when I will be driving along and it will hit me, I'm never going to see my son again. I'm never going to hear his voice again. His daughters are growing up and he's not seen that. I'll go into this pit. And I will actually start preaching to myself. I'll say Greg, you listen to me. You are going to see him again. He is in heaven and he is more a part of your future than he is a part of your past.

Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. He that believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." And those words lift me because of the Word of God and they're true.

So it doesn't make my pain go away but it gives me that eternal perspective. And that's how you get your head above water; it is eternal perspective that you're going to be reunited with Robin again, I'll be reunited with Christopher but it is still painful every single day.

Betty: I agree with you, it is an eternal perspective about it because I think more about what it's going to be like some day to be with her forever, and all of our family, all of our loved ones.

Greg: I became a student of heaven after this. I'm not an expert on heaven, but I am a student. And I studied heaven like I'd never studied it before.

Betty: Naturally, you want to know more about it.

Greg: He is there. I feel like part of me is in heaven.

James: One of Robin's sons, her oldest child, is Christopher, and Betty and I thought about that when we looked at your story, *Hope for Hurting Hearts*.

Here's the thing. Today, before we came up here, Betty is reading to me out of her journal, Greg, where she had written the Word of God from the Psalms to her own heart when it was hurting as she thought about Robin. As she read those words, I immediately began to forward

them to somebody I know whose heart is hurting. I did that right then. So it's comforting with the comfort wherewith we're comforted. I know as you're talking you're saying, "Please, Lord, let me say something that will help Betty and James." But we're all here together saying we want to help everybody out here.

Listen to me. If I could take your broken heart and I could heal it, I would. And I'm a mere man. Yes, I'm a dad, I'm a grandfather, and I feel pain and I can identify with it. I do weep with those who weep.

But here's the thing. I can't fix your heart but God can. He's more anxious to hold your hurt and to heal your hurt and to bind up the broken heart than I could ever adequately describe or explain to you. But you can experience it right where you are.

Father, please heal my hurt, heal my heart. Tell him! He is so anxious to do it.

God, I just pray you'll download healing miraculously, supernaturally on every person who hurts right now; in Jesus' name.

Listen. If you'd like to have Greg's book, *Hope for Hurting Hearts*, we'll be glad to send it to you.

Greg, we always tell our viewers, we don't sell things on *LIFE Today*. We don't! We give things away. But what we do ask people to do is experience the joy of giving life and sharing love. Our viewers love it. We don't ever have a viewer -- they don't look at me as James the beggar -- here's the beggar! They look at James who points to pain and lets us be a healing factor and their hearts leap with it.

Would you say thanks to Greg for his testimony and his life, and what he's doing? And to all of you who are watching, the crusade is in the AT&T Stadium, the Cowboy's stadium, and start not only praying but thinking who can I take?

How many nights is it, Greg?

Greg: It is one night; it's in the month of November. You can learn more about it by going to HarvestAmerica.com. We'll have all the latest info on it. But it's such a big old place that our goal is to just...

James: Just fill it up!

Greg: We want to fill it up.

James: We could win tens of thousands of people to Christ that night -- literally! You could have half -- What is the largest number of people who have been saved in one night? Why couldn't we just pray? What if we have so many lost people there we can go outside and stand around the stadium and let them stay inside with you. Literally, you say, James, that's crazy praying! No, that's not crazy praying -- that's hopeful praying! Because we love people so much we would give up anything to see you get what he paid for you to have. Don't miss it!

Greg, I want to show our viewers what we're doing right now that literally saves people's lives, and we show them the love of God. I want you to watch this very closely. I think you're going to be moved by God to express the heart of God. I think you're going to be excited to do it. Watch.

On the mission field

>> Once the fighting broke out in my village, we ran from our house without carrying any food. Sometimes we spent two days without eating ...and sometimes we have three or five days without eating. Sometimes we are able to eat water lilies from the river. My child died on the way here because we had nothing to eat. If the water lilies dry up, we will be planning for death.

Announcer: ...Planning for death. After months of escaping to safety on foot across the harsh terrain, imagine if your only option for living was to plan for dying? To face such adversity only to succumb to a lack of food is a loss that is difficult to accept.

But while we cannot change the past, God has given us the power to affect the future for so many children like these. With your help, mission feeding can be a miracle of life for this mother, and these children who are desperate to survive.

For I was hungry but you gave me something so eat. Matthew 25:35.

End of clip

In the studio

James: I don't want any mother to have to continue that. They were eating lilies and plants. We actually have seen many times a child not only pick up the soup that might have burned through a plastic bag that they brought to get the porridge. And when it hit the ground they would scoop it up and eat the porridge and the dirt. But we've actually seen children who were so hungry they were eating dirt -- to put something in their little stomachs.

Now, we can go on and on about how awful it is but let me tell you something. We have saved - we know for a fact -- we have saved over 10 million children's lives; that's by count of the people overseeing in the different nations that know what happened. That when I say "we," that's us together.

So here's what I need you to see. Where you were looking, there's 25,000 people right there in southern Sudan right now where all hell has kind of broken out for about the third time in the last several years. We can save those 25,000. We've located them but we need to give the missionaries and the relief workers the food. And then we've got 400,000 organized in areas of tremendous need, and we want you to help us feed them.

So what I'm asking you to do, please, right now, is to go to LifeToday.org, go online, or go and dial the number there and take your bankcard and use it like a check. Here's what you need to understand. This may be hard to find them but it is simply the truth and it really does work. For \$30, \$50, \$100 we can feed for the next several months three, five, or ten children. I will always ask you to reach for the highest level. If you can help us save the lives of ten children do it. Make that \$100 gift -- please do it! But whatever you give, think what it means to those three children, if it's \$30.

Whatever it is, make the best gift that you can make. Would you do that? Go right now online, dial the number, or go LifeToday.org and make the gift. We have gifts to send you to bless you. This book will transform your thinking. It can change the church.

And then, *Heirs of the Kingdom*; what an incredible teaching series. Please, right now, give us a chance to bless you by saving the lives of these precious children. Would you do it?

Thank you for making that call, for making that gift.

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

On the mission field

>> We're here in South Sudan. And I really can't believe what I'm seeing today. I've been doing missions work personally for over 25 years and this is one of the worst situations I've ever seen; where these people had literally everything destroyed. And they're trying to live out here under a tree. They don't have food.

But here's the good news. We have people who care, who can transport. We have a way to bring food and what these children need immediately.

So please go to your phones right now. Go online, whatever is easiest, and make that gift today because you will be bringing a blessing, providing food to those who desperately need it.

End of clip

In the studio

James: From the depth of my heart, Betty and I both say thank you.

To Greg Laurie, we say thank you. And we want to thank him for sharing the healing of his own hurting heart to help Betty and me, and all of you. We'll gladly send you the book if you'd like to have it. Thank you for helping us give food to these precious children and their families.

Greg, I'm praying for the crusade in November; that in that one night -- wouldn't it be wonderful if as many people were saved in that moment as ever been saved in a single event? Wouldn't that be glorious? Why would that not happen where in Texas things are bigger, and we don't have to arrogant about it. We can be brokenhearted --

Greg: But they are!

James: We can be arrogant! That's right. Maybe that's why --

Greg: Well, no, I mean things are bigger here and why not? It's been said, "Attempt great things for God, expect great things from God." With all of these technologies we have today, why not leverage them all for God's glory and for the extension of his kingdom and the proclamation of the gospel.

James: Let's get the eyes of the whole nation on the service from the AT&T Stadium. Let's just see millions of people getting saved. Would you say thanks to Greg and praise God for what he's doing? Thank all of you for watching. Thanks for your help! Thanks for helping us feed those kids and their families.

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!