

6/9/15
Week 24
Spring Mission Feeding: Last week
Susie and Will Davis

James: It is a pleasure to be with you. Thank you! -- And to come into your home. I'm James Robison; Betty and I, my wife, we welcome you to *LIFE Today*.

I lived ten years in Austin and they were tough years for me because I didn't have a dad. We didn't have a home that was on a street. It was tough. The memories there were challenging -- but I love Austin. It will always have a place in my heart.

Our guest pastored there in Austin, Texas at the Austin Christian Fellowship. They've got a book that Susie, the wife of Will Davis wrote. They are both a very inspirational couple, *Unafraid*: Trusting God in an unsafe world.

The thing you need to understand is she was very much afraid. She was terrified -- almost indescribably so. And you would say, when you understand why, you would say, "for good reason."

Don't you think, Betty?

I want you to hear her story. I want you to get it. But I want you to meet Will and Susie. I'd like you to give them a real good welcome to *LIFE Today*. Would you do that?

[Applause]

I'm glad to see you. How is my old town Austin doing? Is there some good things going on?

Susie: It's good! Austin is good -- as it always has been.

Will: We love Austin.

James: It's a beautiful city. It's a city of trees. If you don't think Texas has a lot of trees, you've been to Midland or Lubbock and Amarillo and you think we don't have any trees. You go to Austin we have a lot of trees. Tree-lined roads and streets, the Rio Grande, one of them that's just prominently tree-lined. I had a lot of sorrow there. I guess I had a lot of fear. I don't know. I was desperate. But you had a lot of fear.

Susie: I did!

James: What happened?

Susie: Well, when I was 12 I heard the story of Jesus and I was all in with Jesus. I read the Bible and I looked at those promises like, he has good plans for those who love the Lord, who are called according to his purpose. I knew that was me. So I was just deeply in love with God. I was all in with him and then two years later when I was 14 years old I was in my classroom, my English class in May, and sitting there with all the classmates, and my teacher was sitting at the front of class, and one of the students in our class, and a guy who lived just up the street from me, who had grown up with me, walked into our classroom with a rifle and shot and killed our teacher in front of us.

James: Goodness!

Susie: Yeah! That was before there had been any school violence. This was a really long time ago.

James: By the way, did it look like he might threaten others or was it like he zeroed in her for some reason?

Susie: He walked in; it was actually a male teacher. He walked in and shot him, and then he turned around and walked out. We were just stunned. Like I said, there was no school violence, there was nothing like that happening at that time. We all just scattered and ran out of the classroom. And unfortunately, the teacher died. And the young man who killed the teacher, they said that he was diagnosed with schizophrenia.

So for me, I feel like that was the beginning of my breakup with God, is what I say. I loved God, I still loved him, and I was wholehearted about him but I didn't trust him because I felt like he walked out on me. I felt like he turned his back for just a minute and my world crashed to pieces. I think that what happened is kind of what happened with Eve in the garden. I feel like I heard a whisper and I heard fear whisper, "Maybe God isn't as good as you think he is."

I started agreeing with those subtle lies. And over time I felt like fear protected me. I know that might sound weird but I felt like it was my job to take care of myself.

By the time I was 16 years old, I was having panic attacks, hiding under the counter, calling my parents home at dusk because I couldn't stay in my house alone. They weren't called "panic

attacks." I just thought I was afraid. And I actually thought I had a reason to be afraid because I felt like God wasn't big enough to take care of me. So that just got worse and worse.

Will and I started dating in high school and then we eventually got married.

James: Could you tell she had these issues when you were dating her or not? I know she must have been real pretty so you might not have cared about all that.

[Laughter]

Will: She is a distracting person. I would find her -- I'd go over to pick her up for a date and she would be hiding under the counter because she was afraid. I just thought it was normal. I didn't think about it at the time, being 18 or 19 or 20, and I had my own stuff to deal with. But as we matured, we both realized, this is not normal behavior.

James: So you get married and then did you begin to see more of the manifestations or what?

Susie: Well, we got married and got into ministry. Like I said, good Christian girl, loved God. I was all on team Jesus but I still had all these fear issues in my life.

James: Did you serve in the church?

Susie: Yeah! I was a minister's wife.

James: But what did you have like assignments?

Susie: No, my assignment was to be married to him; that was big enough. That was like a big one.

James: Betty can comfort you.

Susie: Yeah, so we know! By the time we had our first baby, my fears heightened to just an extreme level because suddenly, I realized that it's one thing for something bad to happen to me but it is completely different for something to happen to my child. I felt like it was my job to be the savior of my little world including my sons.

Betty: So you became over protective?

Susie: To say the least.

[Laughter]

Will: That's a good way to put it.

Susie: I remember when our son Will was newborn. If I was coming home to our little apartment, if I felt like... like I said fear whispered to me like the worst things, the worst case scenarios. If fear said, "Maybe there is someone in the house," I would devise a plan to take care of things.

I remember, when he was just an infant, pulling into our garage, waiting for the exhaust fumes to leave, closing the garage, cracking the windows, locking the door, and then I would go into our little house with lightening speed and check all the closets and under the bed like he was jewels in a safety deposit box. But it's because I felt like it was my job to take care of myself. I just really didn't know if God's good plans for my life really equaled good plans for my life.

So things continued to get worse as they do when you're a fearer -- I talk about that a lot in the book, being a fearer, someone who starts strategizing with fear. And in many ways I felt like fear was stronger than God. I felt like if I prepared for the worse, that it could keep bad things from happening to people I loved. And if I was on top of my game... so I was super stressed out all the time.

Betty: Paranoid, would you say?

Susie: Paranoid -- yes!

Will: Hyper vigilant!

Susie: I was.

James: Did it register in a negative way on you to watch all of this?

Will: Eventually, because it is stressful, it is exhausting to try to be proactive all the time.

James: About how many years now are we tracking after marriage into this and it's building?

Will: Ten years?

Susie: It was a decade full of fear.

Will: It is exhausting to try to stay up all the time and ready all the time.

Susie: And I would try to make him stay ready. I wanted him to follow my fear rules.

James: Did you ever start getting fed up with this at all?

Will: Fed up, no -- concerned, yes. I started praying for her. I believe in prayer. And Proverbs 31:25 says, "She is clothed with strength and dignity and she laughs at the days to come." And I wrote her initials next to that verse and prayed that every day for Susie and she has become that.

James: When you would try to take away the fear and assure her it was okay, did it register?

Will: That wasn't very effective.

James: It didn't register. Would you say something to him like disrespectful or you don't understand or you couldn't understand or what?

Susie: I would say, "Will you double check the door; that you locked it?" He would be like, "It's fine." I was like, "Well, okay, then I'll go do it."

James: You wrote in the book that you had him look under the bed.

Susie: Look under the bed. I was a freak.

James: Like something was under there that would --

Will: Someone.

Susie: Something bad. I was waiting for the next bad thing to happen. I was bracing -- I was trying to prepare and brace for the next bad thing. Instead of anticipating God's protection and his care and his joy, I was waiting for -- I was just trying to be ready.

James: You sound like somebody getting ready to die, self-inflicted misery, suicide by your own hand over a slow process of miserable, fearful...

Susie: I was a broken woman.

Will: But the story is she is not that anymore. That's the story.

James: You said that like you really believe that.

Will: I'm married to her. She is here talking to people around the world about her -- she is so out there now. Go ahead. I'm sorry!

Susie: The good news is that my story is a love story about a very big God in a very broken woman. He was not content to watch me self-destruct. So I talk in the book about how looking back now I can see how God was scattering love notes all over my life.

I also talk about how most often they were in trees and through stories of trees. There was one tree that my dad planted when I was five years old that he made me help him water. At the very school where the murder took place. It was many years later when that huge cotton wood was just towering that I looked back and I was like, God planted that tree through my dad.

James: And you watered it.

Susie: And I watered it, like blessings over a little baby tree; God was doing that in my life. Then when I started getting well, Will was praying for me, and he wasn't telling me he was praying for me, he was just praying for me. And I also talk about how I prayed a dangerous prayer.

I was in a Bible study with a seminary wife, when we lived in Fort Worth, and we were going through a book and in the margin of the book I said, "God, if there is anything you need to heal in me, will you heal it?" It was just like a sliver of courage and trust again that maybe God knew better than I did about what I needed.

I tell you what. Within two months I went through posttraumatic stress disorder, which sounds like a bad thing. It was very difficult and I felt like my brain was breaking apart but I was I think posttraumatic stress in my situation was the biggest blessing because God was allowing me to realize I wasn't through grieving yet. And by just not talking about it, which I had tried for so many years, just to not talk about it and push it down, the bad thing, God was allowing those memories to resurface. That was really kind of the catalyst that started my wellness, my journey to wellness. He did that.

And during that time I have what I call a yet or holy moment. I was lying on the floor in our little house in Fort Worth, crying my eyes out, seeing those scenes again from the murder, hitting the floor, wishing they would go away. And I remembered a sermon that he preached,

that Will preached, and it's out of Psalm 22:3. And it's when David was saying, "God, I cry out to you by night and by day, and yet you don't hear me."

Then he says this in verse three. He says, "Yet you are holy." Me on the floor, posttraumatic stress, was "God, I don't understand why I had to see it. I don't understand why I'm a wracked a woman. I don't understand why I feel like my brain is breaking apart, yet you are holy." And it is with that confession that I really believe that God started to heal my mind without even medication. I think he started to heal my mind because I agreed with a truth that was bigger than myself.

I said through my tears and through my pain, I said, "Yet you are holy -- yet you are holy -- yet you are holy."

And he dropped more love notes in my life over and over again as he does with all of us. And about five years later, I guess, something really amazing happened. Because you kind of think gosh, when you get healed, on the backside of wellness you go, "I was such a mess and God was so big. How could he have done any more?" And then he keeps doing it over and over, the love story part.

But I was hiking in Colorado and I was following a trail master and we were in a big group. He was talking about the dense forest and it was beautiful and green and lush. We went around the corner and my eyes were locked on the trail. And he said, "Now you're going to see a burn."

I looked up and literally, as far as I could see, there was no more forest. It was just trees standing burned as if someone had just torched it -- and it was thousands of acres. I just started bawling, crying, and I heard God say, "This is your soul. You've had a burn." And it was the biggest love note of my life aside from receiving Christ for the first time. It was God just saying, "This is how much I love you. I love you enough to let this happen for you to see." I could look and see on the ground there were little flowers coming up, little trees, little baby saplings everywhere. I hiked up, I hiked down, I cried the whole time. I'm sure people thought I was a freak but that was nothing new; right?

[Laughter]

Will: It was just altitude.

[Laughter]

Susie: And I was so curious about the fire that when I got back to our cabin I called to find out about it. I called the ranger station. I said, "Tell me about this forest fire." They told me how it

started. It was a lightning strike and they allowed it to burn and then it got out of control. It was the biggest fire on record at the park.

I said, "When did it happen? Because like when I was there I could touch it and there was still ash on my hands." When the ranger told me the year that it had happened, I just crushed the floor in tears. That burn took place the very same year that my teacher died.

Will: It started three months after the shooting, August of '78.

James: So you are seeing the forest come back, you see new life.

Will: You walk through it now you can't tell it's there. You can't tell the fire was there now.

James: That's new life.

Susie: And only God can do that.

James: Have you seen like the fire burn now is not evidence in her; it's just a totally different person?

Will: She is a complete different person. She's wild and out of control.

[Laughter]

Look at her!

James: Father, thank you. And for every person watching who says, "I've experienced something that's held me." Lord, break that grip, that yoke, that pain; heal that hurt.

And really, just ask him to. Like she said he's holy. That holiness is not smugness or meanness or unkindness; it is love, immeasurable, unfathomable, unimaginable, but experience-able love -- you can experience it. Just ask him. Say, "Lord, just heal my broken heart. You are holy. You are perfect. You are love. You're compassion and forgiveness and you're my strength. Be my strength." Just ask him. Just talk to him -- talk to him like the best friend you'll ever have.

You want someone to pray with you? See the phone number there on the screen? Somebody there will pray with you because we love you, we care about you. I'd be happy to send you *Unafraid* if you'd like to have it. We're asking you to help us save the lives of precious children and their families in our last week of mission feeding. You say, "You know what? I think I'd

like to read Susie's book because I want to experience some of that." We'd be really happy to send it to you. I really appreciate you sharing. I appreciate what God is doing.

We're going to let our viewers, and I know you'll want to see this, look at a mother and listen to what she says and listen to her heart cry to God. Now remember this, we are Christ's body which means that we can hear and respond to what we hear the way Christ would respond. We do it individually, we do it collectively. We can't do everything by ourselves. Betty and I are so tremendously limited. If this part of the body is not connected to this part, so this part functions when all parts are submitted to the head, to Christ.

So I want you to listen to him. You're going to hear a heart cry and you in fact, as Christ's body, you are the answer. Watch. Listen to God.

On the mission field

Announcer: Throughout God's Word, we're challenged to reach out to the least of these, to the widow, the orphan. There are few places in the world which present more opportunity to embrace that call than Africa. The one we present to you today is Monica, a broken widow whose family is losing the fight for their lives.

>> My boy was only three years old. He died from hunger.

End of clip

In the studio

James: Monica, I wish that you could -- I wish you could understand my language and I could understand yours. I hear your heart. I would like to help heal your broken heart. We cannot give back the children. I believe you'll see them some day. I know you're a woman of faith. And I know your heart's broken. And what we want to do is help you keep your children that you have now and not lose them.

I know you're concerned about everybody else's children too. So Monica, we can be an expression of love and healing for you.

And all of you who are watching, I'm asking you to be just that because if I'd been right there with her I would have let her weep on my shoulder, I would have held her and her children. I would have sat down there by the little kids like I've done so many times and hold little children

in my lap. We've held some when they breathed their last breath and we just love to save them. And love saves lives and it gives life.

So during this last week of mission feeding, for this particular emphasis, I need to hear from all of you and say, "I'll help heal your heart, Monica, and your neighbor's and keep those kids for you. I'm going to give the missionaries the ability to do it."

That's what you're saying when you say okay, I'm going to go to LifeToday.org or I'm going to go online and I'm going to dial that phone number, whatever you're going to do, and I'm going to take my bankcard and use it like a check. And I'm going to give life knowing that because some friends have such a burden for people like that, they said, "We will match what you give this week, up to \$400,000."

We have 400,000 in feeding areas now the missionaries have found and they've organized them, and those groups grow because people hear there's food there and we know there are 400,000 and we know there are 25,000 there where Monica was in that area of Sudan that's just been ravaged by horrible warring factions and by famine.

So please, the missionaries are there. They're so precious, they're so beautiful; let's keep them there doing the work of God. They face persecution and danger and death. But let's don't leave them empty-handed; let's let them know we're with them. We're with the family of faith and we're with these precious people and their children.

So would you dial the number or would you go online? Take that bankcard, go to LifeToday.org and say, "Here's my gift" knowing it will be doubled. Could you give \$100? That normally will feed 10 children; for the next months now it will be 20. If you can give \$1,000, instead of feeding 100, it will be 200! Your gift of \$30 or \$50 will be doubled from three to six, from five to ten here right now. Basically, a few hours left, you might say. We need to raise all the necessary funds.

Father, I pray every person watching will give what you put on their heart and they'll do it joyfully. They will be cheerful givers; in Jesus' name.

Please go online. Will you? Will you get up and move? Reach out and embrace these precious people with love and encourage the missionaries, "We're with you." Please do it! Or dial the number. If you get a busy, be persistent and get through because you're going to be a lifeline. You're going to be an expression of God's love. Thanks for doing it. Thanks for being an answer to Monica's prayer.

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.

As an answer to prayer, a group of *LIFE*'s friends have set a \$400,000 matching gift challenge for Mission Feeding. This means your gift today can have a double impact! \$30 to help feed three children will be doubled to impact six children. \$50 to help feed five children will be doubled to help save 10 children. \$100 for ten children will be doubled to help feed 20 children. And \$300 for 30 children will be doubled to help feed and minister to 60 children.

With your gift, we'll send you *Heirs to the Kingdom*, four powerful messages on audio CD or USB flash drive. You'll also receive the award-winning book, *Fearfully and Wonderfully Made*.

With your double-impact gift of \$100 or more to help feed twenty children please request *The Story*, a running narrative Bible to help you engage with God's word more easily.

And finally, please consider a double-impact gift of \$1,000 and request this beautifully framed canvas print of the "Forest Chapel" by the Painter of Light™, Thomas Kinkade.

This is the last week! Please call, write, or make your gift online.

End of clip

In the studio

James: There really isn't an adequate way to express the thanks. We mean it. But for Monica, from those precious people and the missionaries, thank you! Thank you for giving life -- saving life.

If you'd like to have *Unafraid* by Susie, we'll be so glad to send it to you. Susie Davis wrote this, she and her husband Will are a tremendous blessing and have been.

I want to remind you this is the last week now of this mission feeding emphasis. And twice a year we ask you to help us. We have over 400,000 -- now 425,000 that are going to depend upon us for a while. Thanks for your help.

Would you say with me and Betty, thanks to Will and Susie?

Thank you! Bless Austin! Bless the city of age 5-15 for me. I love you. I had some great crusades there.

Thank y'all for watching. Thanks for sharing life. We really appreciate it.