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Week 31 WFL
Michael Jr.

James: Hey hey! Thank all of you! Welcome to *LIFE Today*. You're going to have a smile on your face and you're going to have joy in your heart. We need that. Laughter is good medicine. I'm James Robison; my wife Betty and I are thrilled to have you on *LIFE Today* with us.

We have got Michael Jr. here. This guy is gifted! I mean he is gifted to make us smile but he is also on a mission. I want you to enjoy him. He has got a CD, a DVD, *Laughing on Purpose*, that is great. It was actually done at our church Gateway. I mean he is phenomenal. So many people came to know Christ, to know God as father as a result of what he shared.

But here is Michael Jr. Would you give him a good *LIFE Today* welcome? Michael!

Michael: Thank you so much. It's awesome. I'm glad I'm here. Thanks, James for putting an Afro on the microphone for me. I appreciate that, man!

[Laughter]

It's a little Afro.

So I'm going to tell you about me and my church experience since this is a Christian organization, as far as I know. I was hanging out with James in the back so...

[Laughter]

That's comedy! I was just playing. When I was a kid, my grandma used to force me to go to church and that stuff was miserable. Because I would go to church and first of all, it would last eight hours. And my shoes didn't fit and there was this little -- like it was just miserable the whole time. Nobody was teaching, nobody was explaining what was going on so I would go to church and this dude was up on stage and apparently, he was mad at everybody.

[Laughter]

Because he had some phlegm caught in his throat. At the end of every sentence he would try to get it out. He would be like, "The Lord said [hecck]. Act like you're [hecck]."

I was like, "Grandma, he needs to gargle!" The stuff was miserable.

Then one time we'd go to church and there's a dead body in the front. Nobody explained to a seven year old Michael Jr. it's a funeral, it's not church. I'm like, "Yo! That's how they roll!"

[Laughter]

Like every three weeks or so they would bring a dead body in as an illustration or something.

[Laughter]

Dude on stage would yell at us like we did it.

I remember asking my grandma, "Grandma, what happened to the man in the box? What happened to the man in the box?"

Her whole explanation was, "He in a better place."

[Laughter]

I'm like, "What kind of box did he live in before?"

[Laughter]

So I love doing comedy all over. The Bible says laughter is good like medicine; that's Proverbs 17:22. So God said to me, "Go take it to the sick." So we go to prisons, and we do comedy in homeless shelters and abused children.

But I'm at this one prison and I walk in and I'm scared for real. I've got to be real with you, I'm scared. I walk in and the prison warden stops me and they took my belt from me. He's like, "You can't have a belt. Someone might try to hang you."

I'm like...

[Laughter]

"Can't they just boo me or something? Why do they have to hang me?"

[Laughter]

I'm in prison and my pants are loose. This is weird. I don't know... not a good idea.

[Laughter]

So I'm walking in the prison and I'm scared. When you walk in a prison the bars open in front you, and then they close behind you. Then there's some more bars. And some of y'all viewers, you know what I'm talking about. Welcome home!

[Laughter]

Anyway, so I'm walking in the prison and I'm scared and I need a joke immediately. Right? I have one joke that I thought I was going to start with but I was like I ain't going to start with this joke! I was going to be like, "You know what? You guys are a captive audience. I just want to say that."

[Laughter]

But I didn't feel a peace in my spirit about that. So I'm scared. I'm walking in the prison and I've got nothing. I don't know what I'm going to start with. And I walk in and there's no stage. Like there's no glass. We're not doing comedy on the phone.

[Laughter]

These cats are right here expecting funny and I've got nothing. I've probably got two steps left before I realize I've got to bring the funny or they'll know my timing isn't right and I've got nothing. So I walk in and all of them have got on pink jumpsuits. So what? I ain't saying nothing about them jumpsuits!

[Laughter]

So I'm scared for real. They gave me a little black box with a pin in it because there was

no guards in there. They said, "If anyone tries to attack you, you just pull the pin out and the guards will come in and help you."

I'm like, "Yo! Don't they know about the pin?"

[Laughter]

It's probably one dude in their group and his job is to hold the pin. So this is not a good idea. So I'm walking in. I got no joke. I got two steps left. I lift this foot up, nothing, nothing, nothing. I set this foot down, I still got nothing. And these dudes are expecting the funny. They're all in a circle, no guards, just me and them.

I lift this next foot up, nothing, nothing, nothing. I settle this foot and for real, sitting right up front is a white dude with a white beard named Moses. I was like, "Moses, this is what I want you to do. When you see the prison warden, I want you to look in his eye, look him right in his eye and I want you to say, 'Let my people go!'"

[Laughter]

Like for real. Here's what's so cool about that story and some people need to recognize this as being bigger. I didn't know what I was going to say or what I was going to do until I got my feet where they needed to be.

Yo, I'm Michael Jr. Cool. I'm going to have a seat. Thanks!

[Applause]

James: Buddy! I tell you what. You go into prisons... you said since that first grade experience...

Michael: That's a bad take right there, man. Somebody might just take that cut right there, "You going to prison?" Somebody will be like, "What happened to Michael Jr.?"

James: You know how people edit in TV. Are you going back and doing other prisons for comedy? For Moses?

Michael: Yes, I'm going back... Well, let me say, yeah, I love going to prisons. I do. Whenever we're doing a comedy event somewhere I always see if there is a homeless shelter or a prison where we can go to and just bring the funny because I just love... It's easy -- I say "easy" to make a crowd laugh, people who are happy, excited, maybe even

in clubs they're a little -- they had a lot of communion.

[Laughter]

But when you go into a prison or a homeless shelter where they've lost everything to make those people laugh is really something special.

James: Are you able to move when you are talking to them over to the fact that you're there because you care about them and make that transition when you're speaking to people who are held captive?

Michael: I actually -- I realized from doing these prisons and these homeless shelters and hearing their stories, everyone even if it's at one of my big ticket events, they have a story too in a big way and they're there because they need to relieve or they need to laugh; and I got to bring the funny the best I possibly can because they have a story. They may be a step away from homeless or there's no telling, or they may have just gotten out of prison, or maybe they're headed to prison. I don't know what their story is so it gave me a better... even going to the prison and homeless shelters gives me a bigger understanding about where people might be at.

James: People have never been that, let's say, downtrodden. They usually have an ache in their heart. So many people feel overlooked; they feel like nobody understands where I am and there is no way that the great God who created everything could connect with me.

And you have that ability to connect with people; you have the ability not only to make them laugh and to take natural things and make them very funny; I believe that's a gift God's given you. But I think you also make the transition to help them know God cares about them and notices them.

Would you tell us your story? How did you come to know Christ?

Michael: I would love to tell you my story. I just don't know what "downtrodden" means.

[Laughter]

Yeah! I'm still kind of stuck on that word right there. I don't know if you know that. Do you know what the phrase "the hook up" means?

James: Not exactly!

Michael: Exactly! So now we're on the same page. I love... I've never set out to be... like I'm not like a pastor. Let me say this...

James: You don't have that phlegm in your throat?

Michael: Yeah! I'm phlegm-less -- I'm phlegm-less! But I do know what God has done for me and I just think back to how many times he's saved me from situations where like it had to be him. He's done so much. I naturally have a desire for people to... Like somebody said, I'm not going to say, I'll just it was me, it wasn't, it was somebody way smarter than me but they said it's kind of like everybody is hungry and I know where some food is.

I'm like, "Yo! I'm going to show you where this food is." And I don't necessarily want to charge them for it, I just found this food for free too and I want to tell them as best as I can.

And I really believe this gift that God's given me is really like everyone has the Bible -- like everyone has the Word of God. I know there are some countries but I've never been there. But anyway, everybody else has the Word of God and I think we should lead with our gift as opposed to trying to lead with the Word of God.

What I mean by that is, people are attracted to your gift. Your gift will make room for you. So if you lead with your gift, people will be interested enough to find out what -- there's something about you and that something, s-o-m-e-t-h-i-n-g is actually Jesus. I can prove it because every time somebody who doesn't know Jesus kind of hears from Jesus they say something like, "Man, something told me I shouldn't do this."

That is clearly Jesus trying to give them the right direction but they can't hear him because he is on the outside as opposed to the in. So I just want to lead with my gift, people see it, they get attracted to it and hopefully, I can catch them with the comedy, keep them with the truth.

James: How did you find Christ or Christ find you?

Michael: Okay, it works the same way for black people.

[Laughter]

I don't know if you know that. Just believe in your heart -- it's just believe in your heart and profess with your mouth.

[Laughter]

So I was doing a show. There's a club in New York; it's one of the hardest clubs to get in at the time. It was called The Comic Strip Live, and I wanted to perform there. This club is so hard to get into. Comedians start lining up at six o'clock in the morning so they can be part of an open mike at seven o'clock at night.

So I finally get a chance to perform there. This comedian George Wallace is there. George Wallace is hilarious. He is great but he walks in right before I'm about to go on stage. So normally, whoever comes in, whoever is next gets bumped; if somebody like George Wallace comes in, you get bumped. I'm next!

James: Why? Because he's good or what?

Michael: Because yeah! Because he is like well-known and people who know words like "hook up" they know him.

[Laughter]

Yeah. I'm sure the "downtrodden people" probably don't.

[Laughter]

James: I'm learning! I'm ready to learn!

Michael: So I'm about to get on stage and he comes in. Then the manager is walking over to me and I already know what he's going to say. He's going to say, "Yo! I've got to bump you. You're going to have to wait until he's done."

But instead he says to me, and this is where God shows up for the first time in my life - well, this is where I noticed him. He says to me, "Listen, George Wallace is here. Do you want to go on before him or after him?"

I was like, "Let me go on before him."

So I go on before him and I've got New Yorkers laughing.

Now listen. In New York, if you're not funny, the way they'll let you know is they'll say something like, "You not funny!"

[Laughter]

So not only do I got New Yorkers laughing, but George Wallace is laughing too. Then after the show he walks up to me. He asks me a question. He says, "So why don't you curse?"

At this point I don't know anything about Jesus but I made a pact with my friend when we were 15 years old we wouldn't curse anymore. If he heard me curse he can hit me in the chest as hard as he wanted to. Vice versa, the dude could hit hard; I stopped cursing immediately.

[Laughter]

But I can't tell George Wallace this because at this point I'm a grown man and I shouldn't be afraid of my friend hitting me in the chest.

[Laughter]

So I told him, "What if my grandmother walked in or something?"

He said, "You know what? That's funny. That's honorable. I'd love for you to do a show with me and my best friend in a couple nights."

I get to the show. It's me, George Wallace, and Jerry Seinfeld.

[Audience gasps]

I do two shows, I get two standing ovations. I rip. After the show, different club, the manager walked up to me and he says, "Hey, Michael, you want to go to church with me?"

I was like, "Church? I just got two standing ovations. Why are you messing this up?"

[Laughter]

"I don't want to go to no church. Back up!"

Then like 20 minutes later his fiancé asked me if I wanted to go. She was fine! I'm talking about beautiful! She had some kind of accent too. She was like, "Michael Jr., would ju like to goh to church with us?"

I was like, "I was just looking for a church!"

[Laughter]

So I go to this church. I go to this church for the wrong reason, Christian Culture Center, Brooklyn, New York, A.R. Bernard. This dude is on stage talking about Jesus. That's it, he's just talking. He ain't screaming. He ain't yelling. He don't have no perm.

[Laughter]

And he did an altar call and I wanted to go down but I was like, "No, I've got to read the pamphlet first."

So I told myself, because I didn't want to be one of them -- I've got some friends who were Christians that was creepy. There's some creepy Christians out there!

[Laughter]

James: I agree!

Michael: If you don't know any creepy Christians, it's you! I just want to point that out.

[Laughter]

You know who you are! So I told myself I would read the whole Bible. And I had a problem reading when I was a child. I struggled with reading for a long time. Besides, I didn't know the Bible was that big. So I started reading the Bible. I finished reading the Bible in 38 days because at this point I want to go up and give my life to Jesus, but I told myself I would read the Bible first.

So I'm reading the Bible. I'm like putting in like 14 hours a day; all I'm doing in New York is reading the Bible, going to church, and getting on stage and doing comedy. It's all starting to make sense. And now, I understand, after finish reading the Bible, I ran up to the altar like during announcements at church. I was like, "Yeah. I know you've

got a picnic but listen, is Jesus here right now because I'm ready to do this."

[Laughter]

So now I understand. I used to think I was funny but now I get it, like I'm funny for a reason. Like there's purpose behind this funny which is amazing. Then I read in the Bible that God used a donkey so I'm like okay!

[Laughter]

I get it, man. It's amazing to know how like all this time I can see how he was using me all along, when I look back. Even little stories, little things, celebrities, I get a lot of celebrities asking me questions, to ask me to explain God to them. And my response is, I can't explain God because if I could, he wouldn't be God, I would be and we would all be messed up.

So I can't explain him completely but I do give them some nuggets so they can take home and chew on and a lot of times call me up and be like, "How do I get down with this?" So it's really kind of cool. Get down with this is...

James: Do you love what you're hearing?

[Applause]

I'm just hearing someone that has the gifting of God all over you. Your timing is supernatural, the gift is supernatural. Do you ever find yourself amazed at how things have -- people you know are so funny.

Michael: I was just looking in the mirror the other day like, "Man!" No, I do have an extra understanding about comedy that I cannot explain; like I literally can't explain. In fact, God has given me some insight. We're working on a book right now that's not available, buy my other stuff on the web site.

[Laughter]

Working on a book right now, it's called *Funny How Life Works*. Basically, the way comedy works is first there is a set up and then there's a punch line. A setup is when a comedian uses his talents and resources to insure that his audience is moving in one direction. But the punch line occurs when he alters that direction in such a way that

they weren't anticipating. When they catch on to the change they receive the punch line and the results are revelation, fulfillment, and joy.

Well, life works the same way. We all have a setup and our job is to discover what our punch line is. Your setup is about what you receive. Your punch line is about what you will deliver.

The greatest setup-punch line story ever is about this guy... what was his name? He is in the Bible... Jesus!

[Laughter]

Jesus was a king and when you're a king everyone is supposed to serve you. He was the king of kings! So that's the direction the entire audience should have been moving because he is the king.

So he said, "You guys should serve me." But no, he altered the direction in such a way that no one was anticipating, not even the people around him. He said, "Instead of you serving me I'm going to serve you. I'm going to climb up on this cross and I'm going to die for you." The greatest setup-punch line story ever!

And he's also the author and knows what our punch line is. He knows what our setup is. In the back you were telling me how you didn't have a father. That was your setup. Your punch line is you are a father to multitudes right now just through watching you on screen -- that's your punch line.

Betty: When you're performing sometime and say, a prison where you just are people that you can tell are hurting, they're just really going through a lot of stuff and everything, can you just see sometimes as you're performing their countenance change like they're letting go of some of that hurt? Because laughter is good for us; it is healing for us.

Michael: I can see it. It's a little overwhelming because I'll do -- because I do Sunday services all over and a lot of times people -- it's funny because I love doing weekend services because you can always see up front where the Sadducees will be sitting up there like, "This ain't right! This doesn't make no sense."

So I always do a joke that's a little more -- some people might say edgy; it's really not edgy but I do one so they can confirm what they thought. Like, "We shouldn't be laughing in church."

Then later on I will show them the video of me at a facility with abused children doing comedy. There is one little boy that's so afraid, his grandmother explained to me, everywhere he goes he wears a Spider-Man mask. He won't go anywhere. His mom had been pulling out his toenails. So you hear this story, you see this little boy, and he's sitting in my audience and he has this mask on and he's so afraid.

And then probably 25 minutes into my performance, we showed a clip, this little boy pulls his mask off and introduces himself to me. He says, "My name is Ronin." And by the end of the show me and him are on the floor dancing together. So God is amazing. He used a donkey!

[Laughter]

So...

James: Thank you, Jesus! Would you say thank you to Jesus but also thank you, Michael Jr.

[Applause]

What's the web site? I want people to get everything you've got to help you do everything you want to do that God put in your heart.

Michael: Everything I've got! You heard what he said!

[Laughter]

So its MichaelJR.com is the web site.

James: There it is on the screen. Go there, they can see what you're doing but also what you have that will be available. And here is *Laughing on Purpose*. If you'd like to have this, a DVD, we will send it to you. What we are asking you to do and you know this, we're asking you to give a fresh cup of water to those who need it; who don't have it like we do, and it is killing them because of the contamination. I want you to look if you would, with the very heart, I believe, and the focus of Jesus. Watch closely.

On the mission field

Tammy: Where do you even begin to tell their story? Her sister was killed tragically by drinking contaminated water in this village.

Open captions: My sister died. She got pains in her stomach from the water then she died. This is the only water that we have.

Tammy: I know she fights every single day but the fear for her own life, for the life of her children, the life of her family and probably her friends in this same village. The thing is I looked at that water source and it is the worst water I could ever imagine drinking let alone give to my children.

Open captions: I am afraid of this water because it has a lot of parasites. I feel sad because I have to give this water to my children. Their aunt died from it and they could die too.

Tammy: There's a huge need here. When I sit here and I listen to a story like that I think what can I do to help her? -- Because I feel so connected to her, of course. My heart feels connected.

Sometimes it seems so overwhelming and I know that it takes more than just me to make a difference and that's why I'm here to ask you to help me, to partner with me in making a difference into this little girl's life, and to her life, and to every other person that I've seen here today.

We know how to do it. We have the vision. We have all the passion in the world to change this community and to bring them water -- life-giving water! Let's do something today. Let's change the circumstances. Won't you join me today in making a difference?

End of clip

In the studio

James: And yes, I believe we will, Tammy.

I thank Tammy Trent for being such an incredible mission outreach partner with us. I want to ask all of you to simply take action right now. I believe you care. I believe you're grateful for the water and the opportunity you have to have health. And even in our advanced countries, like here in the United States or Canada, and many places all over Europe, people even go and drink bottled water because they want to be sure they get the freshest possible water.

These precious people have no access to anything but filthy contaminated water. But it is available. And the missionaries bring us not only the information about the need and the inspiration to want to do something but the confirmation that the water is accessible.

Sometimes we have to go very deep; most the times we can reach it at 150 to 250 feet, and that means we're able to stay on a fairly economical basis. In many areas, they know the water is sub-surface because the people have drilled a bore hole and the bore hole reaches water where they can actually reach it by drilling but it becomes contaminated, it becomes filthy just from not having any protection.

What we do is go in the area and give them a steel-cased well. We give them a manual pump. We can't give them an electrical pump because electricity is intermittent. This means a child can actually pump it and get water. So it is accessible.

We have actually, Betty, at some of the schools -- and we try to feed children at schools -- we'll try to put water close to it but we've actually put it in a little merry-go-round where the children can push it and then it pumps up into a holding reservoir, then it gives more water. So we're able to use the creative energy of the wonderful caring missionaries and the resources and support of people like you.

So would you do this please right now? If we can drill a water well for \$4800, that's the average, if you can drill one, we believe you will. So would you go online to LifeToday.org and make that gift? Use a bankcard like a check. Or dial the number, use the bankcard and say, "We're giving a well."

We know many people can't do that, we understand that. Most of the money that comes in for wells comes from people who give \$48 or \$72 or \$144; \$48 gives ten

people water the rest of their life. That's about what it takes -- that's the average; \$144 will give 30 people water the rest of their life.

If you can give at any level please go online or dial the number and make the gift God put on your heart. You're actually giving far more than a monetary gift, you're giving these people a chance at life. And we're going to let them know it was because of the love of God, not only expressed through the missionaries but through people like you who gave them water.

Would you please go online right now? And from the bottom of our heart, I say thanks!

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 "Every Day a New Day" devotional broken out into the four seasons of the year. This daily devotional features scriptures, inspirational thoughts, a Bible reading plan, and a place for you to journal each day.

With your gift of \$100 or more, you may request "The Names of Jesus" pen set; one inscribed with the names of Jesus found in scripture and the other reflecting the gifts of the spirit.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1200 to help provide water for 250 people or a gift of \$4800 to help sponsor a complete well.

And request this beautifully framed canvas print of "The Forest Chapel" by Thomas Kinkade.

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

End of clip

In the studio

James: I don't know anybody more gifted to make you smile, to put joy in your heart but also to point you to the source of joy that will remain even in the darkest, most challenging days.

If you'd like to have *Laughing on Purpose*, a DVD, that I think will bless you, you help us give a cup of water, we're going to put a smile on your face that you can share with people you care about who may not be smiling very much but they will when they see this. So you ask for it. And thanks for helping us.

Tell Michael Jr. thanks for being here.

Michael, I love you, buddy. You have a great gift!

God bless y'all. Thanks for being here.

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