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Week 37: Christmas Shoes and Smiles

Lisa Harper

Betty: Welcome to *Life Today*! Thank you so much for joining us. I'm Betty and this is James.

James: Well, we're thrilled to have you join us. I want to say this to you and please just give me a moment to relate to you. I don't think it's an accident that you're looking right now at the program, *Life Today*. I think the guest that is going to be sharing with you in a few moments, I think may help you clearly see what God desires to do in and through your life beginning with what He wants to do for you. Because you see, there are many challenges we all face.

Sometimes, Betty, and we've been through challenging times, we know what heartache feels like. But we also know what it feels like when somebody else cares enough to share their concern and their interest. So let's just get this really clear. Betty and I are here because God put a very legitimate concern in our heart for you and any person that faces challenges and feels like sometimes you're facing them alone.

Well, you're not and that's the reason we are here. Our guest, Lisa Harper has just been so gifted of God. Now, she's not married but she's got a little girl and it's quite a miracle. She had to deal with this issue; like I'm alone. I'm getting a little older. How do we deal with it?

She faced a lot of challenges. She's written a lot of books that are really good. This one is just kind of a fresh word right now that's very relevant, *Believing Jesus*. It's preceded, "Are you willing to risk everything?"

We live in a very radical age and we've got radical extremists on every hand. It really seems to me if I read the Bible correctly and this really deals with the book of Acts, these Christians were radical about what they believed and they were filled with a zeal and a courage and a compassion that was really indescribable because it was supernatural. But it's what God wants for us. Would you welcome the author of this book, Lisa Harper, to *Life Today*?

Lisa, we're glad to see you.

Lisa: Thank you, James! Thanks Betty!

James: Tell our viewers about this woman that was not married but you've got a little girl.

Lisa: I love that you started with that. I thought maybe I'll get some dates as a result.

[Laughter]

I really thought for years I could not be a momma. I was pretty broken in my 20s and 30s; was drawn to abusive men. God protected me from them and the good godly guys I dated He protected them from me because I was such a train wreck. So I missed that biological window of being a mom. I thought, well, I can't if I'm not married be a mom.

I can still remember. I turned 40, I went to a mission conference and one of the breakout sessions was on adoption. This woman talked about how there were 147 million, give or take a million or two, kids who are orphans, many of them in third world countries who will die if somebody doesn't stand up for them. They quoted from James, that we're to take care of widows and orphans as Christ followers.

I thought, there is no qualification there. It would be best if there was a dad in the picture, we've talked about that a lot but I thought for some of these kids in third world countries if the option is death or a fluffy single woman in Nashville, Tennessee I think I'm the better option.

[Laughter]

So I told just a few girls at church that I was praying about it. I said, "I'm not sure what God's going to do."

I didn't want to tell the whole church, I just told a few. One of those girls asked me to coffee afterwards and she said, "I don't think it's a good idea for you to be a momma." She said, "You've got that molestation in your background and I know you've been to counseling but you could unwittingly transfer some of that on a kid." She said, "I know you want to nurture kids but why don't you give up the dream of motherhood and go to the humane society and adopt another dog because you're good with pets."

James: Boy, she was an encourager!

Lisa: Yes! Strong gift of encouragement.

I tell women, "If a woman with a Vera Bradley Bible cover tells you she needs to give you a word, go with a friend."

[Laughter]

But long story short I wished I could have told you I was wise enough at 40 to say, "My Jesus

might say wait or He might say “no” but He would never tell me I wasn’t good enough to be a momma.” So it took a long time for me to trust the Lord.

I finally told some friends who worked with kids who didn’t have a shot. I said, “If there’s a kid who doesn’t have a shot at a momma and a daddy, put me on that list.”

By the grace of God I got the greatest little girl in the history of time, except for your grandchildren, from Haiti. It took two years but it was a miracle.

James: Describe her challenge.

Lisa: My little girl has H.I.V. Her biological momma died of AIDS. They told me she probably wouldn’t live when I started the adoption process. That’s part of this book. I thought I’d really grown complacent in the prayers I was praying even if I’m a vocational Christian, whatever that is, we’re all ministers of the New Covenant. I just have the grace to get paid when I talk about Him.

But I thought I’m not praying huge prayers. I’m going to pray that God will heal my little girl. I brought her home from Haiti 15 months ago and she is now – her H.I.V. is undetectable. It’s still an issue. As a matter of fact, Acts talks about loving more people more. You talked about them being compassionate. I never had the occasion to rub shoulders with men who are dying of AIDS -- never even really thought about that. But now once a month I go with my baby to a specialty pharmacy and I stand in line with men with Kaposi sarcomas who are dying of AIDS and usually Missy is the only little girl in there. And Missy will go up to these men; she doesn’t understand. I don’t know where she got the gift of being so outgoing because I’m so shy. But she will go up to these men who are dying and she’ll go, “Hello, sir!” To some of them she loves to sing. She either sings, “Your great name, El Shaddai” or “Shake your booty.” She has a vast repertoire.

[Laughter]

So it’s not always holy. But she will sing worship songs to these guys and I cannot tell you how many awesome conversations I’ve had about Jesus with men who are dying of AIDS because I’m a little more radical than I was when I was 30 and 40 and was a safe Christian.

James: I think it’s so beautiful what you told us about your little girl and what she’s actually doing is exactly what I see in this book you’re trying to inspire people to do and that is to live with such a free flow of love and holy boldness, not obnoxious actions but a boldness which she is manifesting. That really has to be disarming to people; it may be shocking but it’s also disarming and it’s inspirational and it’s helpful.

I think your book, every chapter in it, “The cost of discipleship,” “Earth, wind and celestial fire,” “Checkered past can make incredible preachers,” “What’s mine is yours,” “Loving more people more,” “Sinners who would be saints,” “A compassionate compulsion,” “The need to be re-gospelized,” “Kicking safe comfortable Christianity to the curb” is the last chapter.

By the way, in a very radical age when people are radical and extreme, I believe we need the kind of conversion that Saul of Tarsus experienced that could go right into the Philippian jail in stocks, beaten, and he’s praising God and God shook the foundation, threw the doors open and the jailer entrusted with keeping them in prison sees they can walk out, takes his sword – you’ve got to be serious about suicide when you take a broad sword to kill yourself. I mean you’re desperate! But they didn’t allow him. They said, “Do yourself no harm. We’re here! We’re not going anywhere. We’re not going anywhere. We’re free. We were free before you put us in the stocks.” That jailer – that jailer that was afraid somebody would find out they got out takes them down Main Street to his house and his whole house gets saved and all of them are baptized.

Lisa: I love that he caused their wounds, before he put them in the stocks, he caused their wounds, supervised the beating, then he ministered to the wounds and came to know Jesus. But that’s radical!

James: And Saul and Paul and Silas were radical and we need that today.

Betty: Don’t you think we live in an age and time where we have a choice to make as Christians. Are we going to draw back or are we going to go forward and be brave and bold?

Lisa: My parents divorced when I was little. Momma was Baptist; Daddy was Pentecostal and the older I’ve gotten, I always said I’m Bapticostal. Went to a Presbyterian Seminary and got all confused. But I’ve said the older I’ve gotten I need more Spirit because He said, “You will have power from the Holy Spirit and you’ll be My witnesses. You’ll talk to people.”

My Missy, the only way I could explain Santa to her, she didn’t speak any English when she came here a year ago, so I thought how am I going to explain any of this, chunky guy in red velvet all over the place. I don’t know how she is going to understand him. So I said, “Baby, Santa is -- he’s one of Jesus’ friends here on earth. Jesus just gets him to help with the birthday festivities. So he hands out presents.” Because I thought to a five-year-old Haitian girl, she kind of understood that.

Well, I got pictures taken with her with Santa. She didn't cry or anything but she was very wary sitting on this guy's lap and of course, I spent way too much money because I'm this old momma so I took her to a real professional, not the mall. This guy really looked – had the real beard and everything. Not that if you're a mall photographer, that's so cool.

[Laughter]

But this is my first time, I won't do it again. Anyway, the guy has the real beard and everything. She's sitting on his lap but she's not smiling. She kind of has her face back. She's looking at him and he's trying to connect to get her to grin and she will not talk to him. Finally she goes, "Do you know Jebus?" Because to her, Santa is no big deal but if he's one of Jesus' friends, that a big deal.

I thought my baby is ministering because first of all she doesn't know she's not supposed to. She knows Jesus is why she's alive. She knows Jesus is who gave her medicine. I'm sure we'll have prodigal seasons with her but at this point in her life I want my child to go, "My momma believes the Bible. My momma talks about Jesus out loud in our house."

Acts 17 says they turned the world upside down. I don't want my little girl God to have rescued her from certain death in Haiti for her to have some complacent momma who goes to Bible studies and cross stitches. I want to talk about Jesus in the mall whether it's with Santa or some guy who's single and needs to be somebody's baby daddy. That would be good!

[Laughter]

James: You are talking about the New Testament Christian was so full of life you couldn't stop them. We seem to try to stir and manipulate people to go out and witness. If you have it inside, which I detect you do, your little girl is seeing it. It's like it's contagious in a glorious way and she's speaking it. Don't you think and isn't that what you're trying to say, we as Christians need to become what the book of Acts says the New Testament Christian was. Isn't that the way it should be today?

Lisa: Absolutely! I think we're coming to an age where it is not going to nearly as easy to be a Christian in America.

I got in trouble not too long ago at a Christian Women's conference because they said I said the name Jesus too often. They said, "We've just found that a lot of women, they're a little uncomfortable if you use the name of Jesus. So if you'll just say God more than you say Jesus that would probably go across better."

I thought, you know, and I don't want to be unkind, I don't want to provoke for the sake of provocation but I'm not ashamed of the name Jesus. Jesus is who walked up Golgotha and stretched out His arms and redeemed me. I'm a sinner – I need my Jesus.

So I think we're coming into this day and age where people are talking about hey, dial it back a notch. Let's just be safe. I'm like no, I want people to accuse me of, "Man, that woman loved people who were difficult to love. She was with these guys who most people in the church might turn their nose up at. But she also said the name Jesus all the time. She prayed in Starbucks. She did things that embarrassed us a little bit in public because she wouldn't pipe down about what Jesus had done for her."

I want the second half of my life to be more radically about the glory of King Jesus than the first half was.

Betty: And if it's in your heart and that's what you're showing, that's what people are looking for. They know the difference between real and fake. They know the difference between a relationship and religion. That's what we need to show them now.

James: I have actually found people were, let's say, drawn to a legitimate zeal, not an obnoxious, repulsive, religious air but a real legitimate concern and interest in individuals and they can see that. People can tell if you care about them.

One of the best things to say sometimes when you see someone, maybe you've never seen them before, just say, "I believe in prayer. I've seen God answer prayers and somehow I just wondered, is there any way I can pray for you?"

I've had people just suddenly lower their head and begin to weep that somebody even thought to ask, "Is there something I can do because I noticed and I cared enough to ask."

I think it's amazing how that opens a door – just a gesture of kindness.

Lisa: And doors are open all day long. I drive myself crazy when I pray for opportunities. There are opportunities all day every day.

Now in the airport, because people see this old white woman with this darling – my baby is the most beautiful color of brown you've ever seen. And people --- sometimes people will be unkind and that leads us to different WWF moves on my part but most of the time people kind of look at us and go, "Now, is she adopted?"

I'll go, "She is! It's amazing. Let me tell you what God did."

Now they aren't asking for a testimony but they're curious about how this little girls with braids, or if the issue of H.I.V. comes up, they're curious about that; that's a relevant topic for them.

I just go, "Let me tell you what God." It may be someone who doesn't even believe there's a God but redemption is undeniable. So when they see where God has rescued someone from death to life, even if they're not sure of God they go, "I can't deny the truth of that story."

James: When people read the book, I think they see the living Jesus, living through right now individuals, you talk about being re-gospeled. We just have a couple of minutes but what do you mean by "re-gospeled" when you say we need that?

Lisa: Matt Chandler is a pastor here in Texas and I heard him.

James: He's been on *Life Today* several times.

Lisa: Oh, he's fabulous! I heard him use that term and I thought that's about the best term I've heard recently.

He said, "Even as Christ-followers we have to re-gospel ourselves on a regular occasion." You see it with Peter and with Paul in Acts. Both of them preached, "Our faith is based on faith in Jesus Christ plus nothing – no circumcision, no kosher dietary laws. It's faith in Jesus plus nothing equals salvation."

Both of them fell off the wagon so to speak and they had to be reminded of... do you remember when Paul jerked a knot in Pete's tail and he had to be reminded, "It's all about Jesus."

So I think as Christ-followers sometimes we get so caught up in the business of being Christians or seeing people as a project or there are all these trappings for Christians and we've gotten so religious sometimes we forget Jesus.

So I've gotten to where now every morning I don't get out of bed without saying literally out loud the name "Jesus" in my room because I want to remind myself He is my hope today, He is my peace today.

James: We had Ravi Zacharias recently and someone asked Ravi, "You travel a lot. How do you handle being in a hotel room alone at night?" He said, "I'm never alone at night in a hotel room. I'm Christian."

Lisa: That's right! Let me tell you something about Dr. Zacharias. I followed him at the Cove, I

know you've been there, the Billy Graham training center. I was really intimidated because I thought good night! He's like Jesus Junior. I could not believe I'm following Ravi Zacharias.

I was in the green room and I was just thanking God. I was like I can't believe I have this opportunity. I was really overwhelmed thanking God He was just so gracious. I'm spraying my hair and I thought, this place is so holy. I mean, it smells like pine trees in the green room. I had sprayed my hair with glade.

[Laughter]

That's what I always think of when I hear Dr. Zacharias.

James: Get this book! Here it is. It's in the bookstores. You can get it online, *Believing Jesus*. As a matter of fact, we will gladly send it to you.

Lisa, we're doing something that's a lot of fun. I showed you this little Christmas ornament when you first sat down and you just loved it. You thought that's just the cutest thing! And it is but it's a testimony because when it's on your tree, here way ahead of Christmas we're talking about Christmas because we want to give shoes and cleft palate surgery. We want to give miracles to children for Christmas and we've got to do the fund raising for it, the gifts and expressing them now so we can actually deliver the gifts at that time.

I want you to just watch and see if God doesn't put a real holy book of Acts action/feeling in your heart that I want to do something led by the Spirit. Watch closely.

On the mission field

Jeanne: We've been privileged to have shoes go as gifts during the year to many of our mission outreaches. I have wanted to do this for so many years. From the very first year to the first village, it's really hurt me to watch the injuries that they have to their feet.

But look! Those are shoes and we can get them easily. They don't need to go barefoot. It is horrible! They get diseases in their feet. They already have enough to deal with without that.

So this is an easy fix for them to get their feet protected. Let's do it. It's great. Look at this! It's awesome. They're so happy!

End of clip

In the studio

James: Does that put a smile all the way down in your heart?

Betty: Oh, it does! I remember so well our oldest daughter, she loved to wear her little black patent shoes. I got such great joy. Every day she wanted to put on her little black patent shoes with her white little lace socks and wanted them so perfect, not a wrinkle in the sock. That brought such great joy to me to be able to do that for my child.

But you know, we've been over there and we've put the shoes on the feet of these precious children like what you just saw. There is no greater joy, especially when we know what we're doing is protecting their feet; their precious little feet that God created and he loves so much. We have an opportunity to at least prevent some diseases from getting to them through putting shoes on their feet. They like it as you can see. It is just a gift they've never expected. But they really don't understand what it's going to do for them, James.

James: Yeah I don't think most of them even have an idea that we're actually giving them protection from some of the discomfort. I think a lot of the excitement that you were seeing in the little children there -- they're so cute dancing -- is somebody gave them a gift. Somebody gave them something they never had before. Somebody gave them attention. Bottom line, somebody gave them love.

It's no exaggeration to say that those missionaries plant their lives there on a divine mission -- on a divine assignment. It is not comfortable. They don't have a lot of the comforts we have when we're here. But they just ask, "Would you at least keep us here doing what we do? And don't just leave us here empty-handed. We're going to love the kids and hold them but sometimes we need to help them."

Sometimes we need to do something for them not just feed them or clean water, but sometimes just a gift that will improve their health. It's going to make them really happy. So the missionaries have said, "Please do this!"

I think Samaritan's Purse, Christmas in a Shoebox is one of the most beautiful things. Betty and I have been close to Franklin and to the mission workers that even help see that vision of what they can do in a shoebox. So I think you want to share love and this is one way we can do it and point them to Christ, and they see his love demonstrated, not just in word but in deed.

Then remember this and, Betty, you know you were talking about how happy they are. So many little children have facial issues and deformity and cleft palates and we've got surgeons that will work with us and we have can do these serious surgeries for an average of \$500 each. And I ask

our viewers, for Christmas would you pray about giving two surgeries? Would do you that with a gift of \$1,000?

And then for \$36 you can give 10 pairs of shoes or \$144 you can give 40 pairs of shoes. Wouldn't that be great?

I don't know what level you can participate but please do. Go to LifeToday.org and just use your bankcard like a check or you can dial the phone number there and use your bankcard like a check. You can even text if you want to. You can actually -- that's a way a lot of people want to give. They just text and put in the shoes and the number there that's a unique number and just make the gift.

Father, I pray everyone watching will be moved by your spirit to express your love; in Jesus' name.

What a wonderful gift for Christmas -- shoes and smiles! We have some beautiful little gift ornaments, Christmas decorations to send you that will bless you. We want to be a blessing to you as you bless others.

Please now, go online, text, or call that number and make the gift God put on your heart. Thank you for doing it!

Begin video clip

Announcer: Poverty is a killer and because of it, children needlessly suffer not only from a lack of food and clean water but also from a lack of things we take for granted such as a healthy smile or a simple pair of shoes. For most of these children, they've never owned a new pair of shoes. And while that may seem minor in the light of all their needs, walking with bare feet puts them at risk of life-threatening infections that could lead to crippling consequences, disease, and even death.

By responding today you can help *LIFE* immediately secure and begin shipping Christmas shoes to 200,000 children around the world just in time for the holidays. Your gift of \$36 will help provide ten pairs of shoes. A gift of \$72 will help provide 20 pairs. And a gift of \$144 will help provide 40 pairs of Christmas shoes for children in need.

With your gift of any amount be sure to request this beautifully crafted green antique shoe ornament, a treasure to place on your tree each holiday season. With your gift of \$100 or more you may also request a special boxed set of *LIFE*'s Christmas shoe ornaments from past years.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1,000 or more to help provide over 275 pairs of shoes or two children with corrective cleft palate surgeries. And you may request our beautifully framed canvas print of "The Forest Chapel."

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

End of clip

In the studio

James: I do want to remind you if you make that special gift and I pray you will of \$100 or more, pray you'll give smiles too, wouldn't that be wonderful – we'll send you the four and the one for this year. Any gift we send you the little shoe.

If you'd like to have Lisa's book, *Believing Jesus*; it's so easy to read. It's inspirational. It is in many ways like the book of Acts. It's the acts of God through available people. If you'd like to have it, we'll be happy to send it to you. You just help us share some shoes and some smiles and we'll send you this encouraging inspirational word.

Would all of you here join in saying thanks to Lisa for sharing with us? Bless that beautiful little girl! I hope she just keeps witnessing!

Lisa: I do too!

James: Thank all of you so much. Thank you for watching. Thank you for your help. Visit the *stream* – stream.org and pass it on! Bless you!