

10/27/15
Week 44: Fall Mission Feeding
Craig Groeschel #2

James: Well, Betty, what do you think about all the young people that are basically filling the studio?

Betty: It kind of energizes this place; doesn't it?

James: It makes me feel as young as you! I'm James Robison. Betty and I just welcome you to *LIFE Today*. The studio is filled with a lot of young people who greatly appreciate Pastor Craig Groeschel, Life Church. They have campuses all over -- I guess outside of Oklahoma and Texas; are you any other states?

Craig: We're in seven different states.

James: This is Craig Groeschel that answered the question here. I'm interrogating him. Will you all welcome Craig Groeschel?

[Cheers & Applause]

Craig is back. We brought him back. He didn't answer all the questions so we brought him back because all these young people have a lot of questions. This book, he tries to answer a lot of them. He explained to us that this is not just a pound sign. Y'all get that? It's not just a pound sign. It means hashtag. What does hashtag mean?

Craig: I have no idea what "hashtag" means.

[Laughter]

James: I don't know if anybody out here knows? Do any of you know what a hashtag means? Is it just something that came out with social media?

Craig: I think so. So if you post something and you put (hashtag) #compassion because we're talking about helping people in need, then you'll go and see everyone else who posted something with that same #compassion. So they're probably would be tens of thousands of

people who did something like that. So if we went to one of the places where you're helping people who are in need and we put in #LIFEToday, there is would be thousands of other people who put that hashtag in. So you can see what other people are posting based on a similar theme is really where it came from. And #struggles, that's a real common hashtag. People say, "My shoes, I can't find my shoe -- #struggles. Stuff like that.

[Laughter]

So I've kind of borrowed off a common hashtag to talk about how technology is so wonderful and has so many amazing benefits but yet we're finding a lot of unintended negative consequences to social media and technology.

So that's what we're talking about in the book. How do we still follow Jesus in a selfie-centered world? Because with all the benefits of social media it's actually changing the way we relate to other people, in some ways for good, for other ways not so good. So how do we manage that tension and still be faithful to following Christ?

James: By the way, they started YouVersion of the Bible. How many of you know about YouVersion of the Bible? They launched that in their church, over 190 million people there. If you want to know -- they want to know about the church, they want to go and maybe listen to messages can they go by topic to see some of the things? Are they archived there?

Craig: Yes, all the messages are free. You can go to the web site, LifeChurch.tv. You can go to the app store and type in Life Church on your mobile device and download the app. Then of course, the YouVersion Bible app has 1100 different versions of the Bible, 800 different languages. So if you speak a language we've got a Bible for you; that's available for free as well.

So that's leveraging technology, which we want to do to get the gospel out. At the same time, we don't want to become a slave to it and we don't want to be mastered by it. I've got my trusty phone with me right here because many people today we're finding are absolutely a slave to this and we want to talk about how do we manage that well?

James: We took your YouVersion of the Bible for the first time when you put it, when you put the Catholic Bible in, and you had me take an iPad to Pope Francis. I wish I'd picked up -- I'm just not sharp enough as an older guy with an iPhone or I could have had my pictures because Pope Francis was like a little kid at Christmas opening it up. And when he saw the iPad and then he found out he had the Catholic Bible there.

And you say, "Why did you go and see the Pope?"

I wanted to find out for sure if he was a Christian. Is that okay? I want to build rapport with everybody and I want to be able to talk to people and love people. We had a tremendous time together.

But what you've done is you're trying to reach out with the Word of God to everyone and you're saying to them, "No strings attached, we love you." I really think that's what you're saying right here. In a (hashtag) #world with #struggles and people following Jesus in a selfie-centered world, which is what people are taking. You have really, in my opinion, really gotten through.

I'm praying everybody will get this, not only for your young people but for yourself, and learn the things that Craig is sharing. I got the -- by the way, this is the first week it's in the bookstores. I got an advanced paperback copy they sent me so I could go through it before it actually got finished. I had to edit it for you.

[Laughter]

Craig: You pointed out all the typos. [Laughing]

James: But here you said, I would like to touch on this: Authenticity, what do you mean by that?

Craig: One of the things that we're talking about before, like if I took a selfie picture of us and I'm going to post it for my followers to see, you can put on it what's called a filter. You can kind of edit it, doctor it, and really make it look a little better than it does. We can make all of us look pretty good if we just had the filter.

James: Could you make me look like you?

[Laughter]

Craig: We could absolutely do that.

James: I'd roll up my sleeves and all?

[Laughter]

You wouldn't want to see! We would do some doctoring!

Craig: We kind of laugh about it but that's absolutely what's normal today, is to try to show

everybody the "me" that we want them to see. People are literally creating social media moments.

In other words, like I feel pressure to post something, therefore I need to do something exciting, therefore I need to get the right angle, I need to have the right caption, I need to have the right hashtag, I need to put the right filter on it. Literally, the more filtered our lives become the less authentic we are.

What's happening is there is a generation of people coming up, number one, they're afraid of unfiltered communication meaning they text rather than talk. And so when you're in text, you're always in control. Big portion of this audience today, if I called you, you would let it go through to voice mail. You would listen to the voice mail and then you would respond with a text. So many of these people go to my church; I'd hope they would pick up actually, if I called them.

[Laughter]

But the reality is this is the norm today; is that I don't want to talk because I'm not in control. So you've got people that were being trained to present kind of a fake self. So we've really got a generation that really doesn't know who they are. Basically, people post a picture and they want likes. How many likes did I get? So we talk about people are living for likes but they're longing for love and they're really longing to be loved as they are.

There's a phrase now, psychologists call it "deferred loneliness." In other words, I feel a little empty right now so I want some attention. So I'll post a picture and hopefully people give me some feedback, they'll give me a comment, "Oh, I like your shoes!" "Oh, girl, you look so pretty!" -- Whatever they're going to say. And so what it does is it gives me a false sense of meeting that need but I'm deferring loneliness to later on. So I'm still empty; I've got lots of online activity and yet I'm still empty on the inside.

So we really talk in the whole chapter about comparing their veils or filters for years and years. When Moses came down from Mount Sinai he put on a veil not to protect people from being touched by the glory, which is what I thought for years, but really to keep them from seeing the glory was fading away. So in a very real sense, that was an older version of putting the filter on.

So we really try to get honest and say, "Where are the filters?" Or "Where are the veils that we're wearing and not showing people who we really are?" Yes, we're going to connect on FaceTime. Yes, I'm going to follow you on social media because I can stay in touch. But I'm not going to settle just for screen to screen when God wants us face-to-face as well. Loving is

not liking a post; loving is caring for a person. So we really want to help people engage in that true intimate community that God wants us to have.

James: Is there something wrong with Betty and me that we appreciate texts from grandchildren or children or friends, but we really like to hear from them. We really want to talk to them. Is there something wrong with us that we've not quite made it over?

Craig: Absolutely! There is something wrong with you.

[Laughter]

I think what's going to happen is, texting is the language of the day. But after awhile, we're all going to recognize we're missing something. There is something about tone of voice, there is something about vulnerability, and so yes, I text all day long. My 20-year-old daughter moved to another city; I want to hear her voice and I want to ask questions. So you can take conversation to a more intimate place that way than you can otherwise.

Betty: And if you don't have that voice connection, that conversation connection, it tends to hide any sensitivity you could have to that person. You don't know necessarily as they're texting they're weeping from a broken heart or they're struggling with something.

Craig: Some people almost joke that in a marriage, you text, you're dating, you're text, you're dating. Then you get married like, "We've got to fight. We need to go into the other room and text this out."

It's kind of a joke but the reality is that... Like I met with a group of 25 and under staff members and I wanted to spend the day with them asking questions. So we talked about do any of you fear talking on the phone?

A lot of them were, "I really do."

"So explain this to me."

One girl said, "Well, for instance, if I'm going to call to order a pizza, I get nervous and so I script that out -- because I'm so nervous."

I was trying not to look like, "Oh!"

So I asked the group, "How many of you would be nervous calling for pizza?" And this was just 25 or so young adults and about 75% of them said, "That would be out of my comfort zone" because they just haven't done it.

So there is so many different ways that social media they're helping us relate and stay connected, we know that, but there are so many unintended consequences that are really important.

In fact, one of them, I think is important to what you're doing is there was a study the University of Michigan did over a 30 year period of college students and they found that over a 30 year period that people actually care about others 40% less. You can Google this study online. It is fascinating how they came to it. Basically, I care what other people think -- I care about their feelings. Anyway, there is a 40% decline.

In the same period is a rise in social media, and what the theory is behind it is there is really three aspects why we care less. One is because we're consumed with our self. About 80% of social media involvement relates to me, how do I feel? What is the dopamine release in my brain when you like my post? So it's really turning us toward our self. Secondly, everything on our feed is in the same line. In other words, there's grandma's guacamole recipe, there's a funny cat video, there's someone who got beheaded in another part of the world, and there's someone deflated a football. So it's all equal --

[Laughter]

And we don't know -- our brains can't discern which one is more important. So we're desensitized to really knowing what's important.

Then the third issue is that it's easier not to care when looking at a screen than it is when you're looking at a person.

For example, when you showed the video of a child who is hurting and you see the mom crying, that impacts me. If I'm there, I'm never the same -- ever the same, ever the same! Because I can smell the smells, I can hold the baby, and that just totally wrecks me.

And so we have to understand that just liking a post is not showing love. We're in a world where people are becoming more obsessed with ourselves. Jesus did not call us to love ourselves but to deny ourselves, to take up our cross and to follow him. In a world that's becoming selfie obsessed, God calls us to something greater.

That's why I just have to say again, on behalf of our family, thank you because we supported your ministry long before we knew you personally because we believed in what you were doing. Then seven or eight years ago we got to know you personally and support you all the more because we know you up close and see the integrity of it. That's why I love what you're doing so much is because you're caring, you're helping us show compassion and you're showing us places that we could never go. When we do go there, and we can go there with our giving, it is an honor to be able to partner with you.

James: Well, a picture does say more than a thousand words and especially if you can tell that it's a very real situation. But the beauty is when you can do something about it that is positive because nobody likes to look at hopelessness.

You and I both had a situation where my father wasn't in my life because of alcohol. When he came into my life drunk, he tried to kill my mother, said he was going to kill me, I nearly killed him. So it was a miracle that that killing didn't happen and it was really because of prayer. Then I came to know the Lord; but as far as I know, my father didn't even though I witnessed to him until he died.

Your father was an alcoholic, tell me what happened.

Craig: Well, I wrote about that in the book. And part of the reason I did is because so many people are addicted to technology, to social media. What I wanted to do is really illustrate that no matter what's happened in the past Jesus can set you free in the future. My dad was an alcoholic for years and years, all through my childhood growing up. He actually came to Christ later in life.

He was a baseball player and so he says of his salvation moment, he said, "I was safe under the tag." In other words, I barely made it; I got in on a tag. He was radically transformed by the grace of God now, he actually serves on two non-profit boards that help people overcome addictions. He leads a -- he has about 110-120 people that meet once a week that are now sober and he's helping them learn to rebuild their lives.

To see a man that was broken and dysfunctional become whole in Christ and be transformed only by the power of God inspires me to say no matter what addiction, no matter what hardship, no matter what hurt, no matter what brokenness, Jesus is bigger. He can heal. He can transform lives. And so I'm proud of my dad today, of who he's become because of Jesus. I know that no matter what somebody is facing today they can be transformed by the same grace that saved me, by the same grace that saved him, by the same grace that saved all of us.

James: And that's what the world needs.

Don't you appreciate the way Craig presents the message and testimony in the book, *#struggles* that we have? And really and truly, it is loaded with wisdom. I want you to have this because I just think this is just good stuff, especially in a social media age. But give it to someone.

Just say, "Lord, I want it but who can I share it with?" I really hope you will.

Again, if they want to go to YouVersion they can go to the app store, just put Bible in.

Craig: Go to the app store, type in Bible and the YouVersion Bible app is right there for you and it is totally free.

James: Totally wonderful! Totally wonderful! If they want to know about the church, web site?

Craig: The web site is LifeChurch.tv or you can also go to where you download apps and type in Life Church and we have an app there available and all the messages are on there for people as well.

James: He is not trying to sell you something, he's trying to help you. That's what he's doing. Craig, you talked about the fact that you appreciate what we're doing. I don't think you'd say that just because you see sad things that need to be addressed. I think you said that because you believe people get helped.

Craig: Oh, absolutely!

James: It is a miracle. I'm telling you, you take impossible situations and you put the compassion connection in place and it is a miracle.

Many of you, with compassion, prayed for me and Betty when our daughter, our baby girl fought a seven-year battle with cancer. We still lose it. You don't get over it. You live with it and through it and you learn and you want to heal other broken hearts.

She had three children, a wonderful husband Ken -- three beautiful children, one of them graduated from Baylor. They're all gifted and beautiful. They're all active and love Jesus. The oldest one graduated from Baylor.

Betty and I were there with other family, and then he went straight to the mission field. I want you to see our youngest daughter who is in heaven looking down at the son you're going to see

on the mission field. I'd like you to listen. And not only be blessed but then become a blessing. Watch!

On the mission field

Chris: Been here in Angola for about the last week. This is my first time overseas. This is my first time leaving the country. To say there's been some eye-opening experiences and some levels and degrees of shock would be an understatement. The malnutrition clinics, those have been, by far, some of the toughest things I've seen.

The first day in the clinic I held a kid that Mr. Peter said might have less than a 10% chance of living. And looking at the mother of the child and just knowing what it feels like to be in that position of helplessness is the hardest part because from personal experience I know what it feels like in those situations. I don't have kids but I've sat there in my own life experience as I sat next to my mother when she was going through chemo and I've been in those hospitals and I know what it is like to sit in that situation and you feel helpless, you feel like you can't do anything. There's nothing that you can do right then and there, and you want to fix it.

So to be able to see the productive feedings that L.O.I. has helped provide to these villages so we keep them out of the clinics is good to see. And just because you're not here handing a bowl to a kid doesn't mean that you're not actually feeding them because these kids can't survive without you. We can't be here without you to help them. When you see the kids smile when they get food and you see them happy and you see them so grateful, they're grateful for you.

End of clip

In the studio

James: There's no way to explain the joy that is flowing in our hearts right now as we see the children with their lives saved because the love of God through people like you.

But also, that is our grandson that graduated from Baylor just a few weeks before he went there to the mission field in Angola, Africa. That is the first son of our daughter that went to be with Jesus just over two years ago, that's Robin's son. The little kid that used to greet us when we would go up to see Robin and her husband and our three grandchildren, her children; they would meet us with a sack full of money running out to the car saying, "We've been saving all the money we could to help the kids over in Africa!" There he is.

And he's such a beautiful picture of the love of God. And when he says he understands suffering as he looked at the mothers and the children, he certainly does; and watching him hold that baby.

I just talked to him about two days ago for quite awhile and he said, "Papaw, I never will be the same. My whole life has really been changed."

I said, "I know Chris, ours was too when we saw very legitimate needs that could be met so beautifully and effectively with love." Well, Chris is there and those malnutrition clinics are miracles of love. It's just like now we need eight more ten ton trucks to keep delivering food. A lot of them have worn out and we've bought scores of them over the years -- you have -- but we need eight. That's very expensive -- over \$300,000.

We need a tremendous number of the little bowls that we give to the children so they don't have to bring the tin cans or the plastic bags. You're the ones that thought up the bowls. You saw Chris feeding there these bowls that you put the food in and we really need to replace a tremendous number of them and get the trucks.

When we hear our grandson and we know that journey that brought him to that place where he could speak with such brokenness and sincerity, I can't help but believe there's not a person watching, Betty that wouldn't say, "I want to help get those trucks. I want to help feed ten children or five or three." What's going on in your heart when you watch?

Betty: Well, first of all, with great joy I watch our grandson. I'm not a bit surprised to see him over there because, like James said, since he was very small he has been drawn to the children that needed food, that needed help, and he wanted to help -- as all our grandchildren do. They love to give to others that are in need.

I look at that and I think there is an opportunity for us to help these precious little ones. And it takes some of the things that don't seem so -- that we can't be necessarily drawn to so much but it's so important, and that's the transportation. We have to have the transportation to get the food to them so that you can see the smiles on their faces when they get that nourishment in their bodies.

So I hope you will join us. Please be a part of getting the transportation so that we can continue to save the lives of these children.

James: Thank you, Betty! I really believe Betty expressed the heart of the Lord, and so did Chris -- and I think you want to. I want you to be mindful that for \$30, \$50 or \$100 we can feed three, five, or ten children for months. You're the only ones that provide that. I find myself in my heart longing that if you could possibly help us care for ten you will so they don't end up where those children were, basically, maybe the last days or hours if they don't have a miracle. But let's get them before they get there.

We've got 400,000 of them we've located. We need the food and you're the only ones that can provide it. Would you right now go to LifeToday.org? Would you get up and move to make that mobile device or whatever you can get to go online? Or you can dial the phone number and just take your bankcard and use it like a check. Please do that. How often do you use it for something that really is not that necessary? -- But this is life-giving. Would you make that gift now?

Father, I pray everyone who can will; in Jesus' name.

We have some beautiful gifts to send you just to say thank you for helping us care for those children and giving them life and to provide the miracle of those trucks and the thousands of bowls that we need to replace.

Please go, LifeToday.org or dial that number.

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 -- and those at greatest risk are the children.

Life's mission feeding program is there able to feed and care for over 400,000 children in crisis areas of Angola, Mozambique, and Sudan. With previous food reserves gone and malnutrition levels in Angola rising due to increased food scarcity, we desperately need to replenish our supplies for our feeding programs immediately. Your life-saving gift of \$30, \$50, or \$100 will help feed and care for three, five, or ten children for the next three months.

Also, please consider an additional gift toward our \$316,000 goal to provide eight all-wheel drive trucks and 76,000 new bowls for the children.

As our thank you we'll send you this soft-covered journal Bible featuring the gospels, Psalms, and Proverbs for your devotional time in the word. With your gift of \$100 or more to help feed ten children please request the complete Holy Bible Journal edition perfect for keeping notes and insights as you read and study.

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 Thomas Kinkade.

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

End of clip

In the studio

James: I hope you enjoyed seeing our grandson and the fruit of the love of God and prayers, and a beautiful daughter that's, I think, looking down from heaven and rejoicing at Chris. He said, "Papaw, I'll never be the same." I know that.

This man that's with us, Craig Groeschel, Life Church, he is a gift from God to all of us and I believe what he shares is. And this book is fabulous. You help us just get food to the hungry, we want to give you spiritual food and help like we seek to do every day right here, we'll gladly send this to you. I hope you'll make it a point to get a copy for somebody else. I hope all of you will not only express your appreciation for Craig and pray for him and the family, and also for us, and for God to heal the church and heal our nation. But would you also like to express thanks to Craig?

[Cheers & Applause]

You know we appreciate you. We love you! Thank you! We love you! Thanks for helping us share God's love with others. Thanks for helping us share life. You're a blessing!