

11/19/15
Week 47: Fall Mission Feeding
Jenny Simmons

James: Oh, thank you so much! -- So many happy people. We have got Jenny here with us. Jenny Simmons is here. She has a great song. By the way, I'm James and this is Betty; we welcome you to *LIFE Today*. *The Becoming* -- and *The Becoming* led to the writing of *the Road to Becoming*: Rediscovering your life in the not how I planned it moments. We've had some of those. As we've gotten older, which we are, we've been here, many...

Betty: Watch it! Watch it! You can't tell how we are.

James: Many of you watching us now, you're parents and grandparents, you were little bitty kids when you started watching us. I have so many people come up. They have white hair and barely walk. They say, "I used to watch you when I was a little kid."

[Laughter]

It just makes me feel so good. But you know, Betty and I have said good-bye to some of our most precious friends in our life. It's one of those things. Jenny's encountered some things that are really challenging. But what a gifted singer and communicator she is. I think you're going to enjoy hearing not only her story but the story that goes way back relating to her mother. Would you welcome Jenny Simmons to *LIFE Today*?

We're glad you're here. Thanks! I heard about something that happened -- and you're going to tell us about some things that happened to your family -- but I heard about something that happened to somebody that's real close to you.

Jenny: Oh, absolutely! I have heard about you since -- you may be the first person I heard about when I was a little girl. My mom was saved at one of your crusades in the itty bitty podunk Mississippi -- Laurel, Mississippi.

James: I love it! Laurel and Hattiesburg -- I love you all!

Jenny: Yep! Laurel and Hattiesburg! She was a child of the 70s, just a wild child and had grown up in a very unspiritual, unreligious family; had never heard the gospel. Got in a huge

fight with her parents one night. She was a freshman in college, rolls a joint, opens a beer, and gets buzzed; and gets in her car, drives across town. She does speaking. She was going to college to get a communications degree, and walks into a football stadium thinking it is a football game and you're up there.

[Laughter]

She says, and we've heard this story since we were little girls. She tells my sisters and I, "He got people to put money in Kentucky Fried Chicken buckets."

[Laughter]

James: I'm still gifted to do that! We're going to help somebody today. You know that don't you? We're going to help somebody!

Jenny: Yeah, so she was so -- she stayed, not because she knew anything about God. I'm sure she was a little frustrated that it wasn't football, it was you. But she said you were so persuasive that you could make people laugh and cry and give money to a bucket.

[Laughter]

That night God spoke to her. The way she tells it, she says that you said, "If you're in the audience tonight, you're not here by accident. God asked me to come here. God called me here for you."

She said she looked around at the faces and thought they were all pretty and put together and thought, well, he may have come for them but I lost my virginity at 12 and I've been doing drugs ever since. He couldn't have come for me.

She said, "In that moment God said, 'I came for you, Debbie.'"

Then you said, "If God just told you 'I came for you,' you're the person."

She went, "Whoa!"

And she didn't know if it was the drugs or if something had happened. But deep down she knew something happened so she went forward.

My whole life, we've known that we serve in ministry, my sisters and I and our family because one night mom went to a football field and you were faithful.

James: And met Jesus! Isn't that great? And mom's here.

Go ahead and stand up out here. Debbie, stand up, will you?

Mom is here and she is in love with Jesus and she is a great communicator. And I love you!

Okay, now you have had these things happen that you didn't expect to ever face; kind of in a series that led you to really share about how you rediscover life when "not how I planned it" happens. Touch on those.

Jenny: Well, I was in a band called Addison Road, and my husband and I started it in college. I was a planner. So I, in my mind, I really thought I would get to the nursing home one day and still be rocking out this band. I really thought, the Lord will just use me all the way through. So I had it all planned out.

We were doing really well. You could hear us on the radio all over the world and we were selling tons of albums on these sold-out tours. And 2009 hit and I was eight and a half months pregnant leaving on tour and we went downstairs at our apartment complex to go get in our van and trailer.

You know, right before you leave for tour you have everything you own piled into this, and then you buy all this merchandise so you can sell it and pay the bills. We walked downstairs and my husband scans the parking lot and realizes it's not there. It's been stolen.

That was the first of four times within 11 months. We replaced it with insurance money. It was stolen a second time from a different parking lot. We replaced everything again, get in a head-on collision three months later, destroy it all again. And rent an R.V. so we can go out on the road with Sanctus Real. Four days in a row this R.V. breaks down. The last time it breaks down we're in the desert outside of Flagstaff, Arizona; and ended up getting rental cars and driving to the show leaving everything we own behind.

So at the time, now my daughter is 11 months old. Everything she owned, you know all the embroidered baby blankets and all of our gear, all of our equipment, everything we used to make a living, and the thing blows up and burns to the ground.

By that point we weren't insured because the insurance companies -- I think they have a three strikes policy. After the head-on collision they were like, they didn't want to tell you you're cursed but that's kind of what was insinuated. This was just stuff going on with cars.

I could peel back that year and tell you our daughter had emergency surgery, our cars were breaking down, we had family members who were being rushed to the hospital in life-and-death situations. It just unraveled.

So I woke up at the end of 2010 and my husband, I'll never forget the day my husband came home and said, "I think we're going to have to file for bankruptcy." He'd been carrying the shame of that and the weight of that. I had no idea. I had no idea how bad it was. I had no idea that we were completely out of money and everything came to a stop.

So I woke up one day and I could hear my voice on the radio. I could turn on any Christian radio station anywhere in the country and hear my voice in the top ten, top five. And secretly, what I knew was that my husband and my band mates had taken on jobs and I was at home.

I had no friends. I'd been on the road for years in ministry, nobody knew -- nobody knew that we were even home. I didn't know how to cook. I'd have breakdowns -- my most insane breakdown was the spaghetti aisle at the grocery store. I just got there and it had not occurred to me that I hadn't cooked in years because I had lived off of green rooms and tour buses and churches.

And I get to this spaghetti aisle and I don't know what noodles to pick out. There's a lot of noodles, James, Betty! There's a lot of them! I mean there was like -- I don't know where they all came from. But they were like options everywhere.

So I'm staring and all of the sudden I'm like, how am I going to be -- how do I start my life over if I can't even pick a noodle? And I start weeping like a crazy woman.

An older lady comes up. And I'm from Texas so she said, "Honey, I do not know what it is, only the good Lord does." But she said, "What I do know is this, some nights we just do take-out."

[Laughter]

So honestly, that's where *The Road to Becoming* starts is actually that night in the spaghetti aisle. Because I got in the car and I called my mom sobbing. And she said, "Jenny, this is your moment." She said, "You can either stuff all this down or this is your invitation to grief."

So for me, the next two or three years, in my journey, has been what does it look like to start all over again?

James: And you put the story here. What do you think it will do for people? Because I think most of them have "it's not supposed to happen."

Jenny: Absolutely. I think I had a lot of well-meaning people in my life who love the Lord who had absolutely terrible theology to offer me. We're not good with people who are walking through grief. So I think if you read this book, you're going to realize real quickly, you're going to be reminded of all the times that Jesus grieved. He grieved fiercely and intensely for John the Baptist, for Lazarus, for himself. He grieved for his own death, his own passing, "Lord, not my will."

James: He wept over Jerusalem, the whole city.

Jenny: Absolutely. So I want people to leave this book and know, it is okay to grieve in the midst of it. I can go on as long as you need to. It is okay to be lost. I woke up and I felt like everybody wanted me to be fixed really fast. Like "Okay. Well, now that that's behind you, you can move on." As if this magical yellow brick road just presented itself and it didn't.

And actually, what really got me is that I told the Lord, I'll do anything. I'll go to Africa. I will do -- I will be a teacher. Whatever you ask me to do, God, next, tell me and I'll do it.

You know what he said? He said, "Jenny, I just need you to be lost for a little bit because that's where you learn how to have faith." He said, "I just need you to be lost. I'm not here to give you answers."

I realized I'd kind of hijacked that Bible verse: "Come to me all you who are weary and I will give you rest." And I had changed it to: "Come to me, all who are weary and I'll give you answers."

He said, "I'm the answer. Can you trust me? Can you trust me today, whether you get the blueprint for what comes next?"

So I hope people will read that and be okay with grieving, be okay with being lost for a little bit and then be reminded of Isaiah 43: Forget the former things. Do not dwell in the past. Do you not perceive it? I am doing a new thing. Now its springs up among you; I am making a way in the wasteland, I'm bringing springs into the wilderness. I pray that you would finish that and you would think, my God is good at deserts.

Betty: The beautiful thing is that while you were feeling lost, you knew he was right there in the midst of it. You weren't alone, you might have felt lost but you weren't alone.

Jenny: That was it! It was like oh, I don't have to... That was the heart of my journey, I think, was that I left being like I don't have to be a girl that knows the blueprint and have control. I can actually be lost and that's okay because Jesus was with me. He is so close.

James: One of the songs on this CD that's very popular, I think touches on what you're talking about in the book, *The Becoming*. Would you sing that for us?

Jenny: I would love to!

James: Would you like to hear her sing this song? Will you do that?

[Jenny sings]

After the destruction
In the wake of every storm
The sun reveals the suffering
When all I've known is gone
Well, I can take the rising waves
But when I'm washed up on the shore
Oh, feeling just like driftwood
When nothing makes sense anymore
Jesus meet me
Oh, be everything I need
In the waiting
Oh, in the in-between
Jesus hold me
And keep me from running
'Cause I don't want to miss
The beauty of becoming

Well, something new is growing
I can feel it come alive
In the dead of winter
Spring is on the other side
So Jesus meet me
And be everything I need
In the waiting
Oh, in the in-between
Jesus, hold me

And keep me from running
'Cause I don't want to miss
The beauty of becoming

And give me beauty in the ashes of this pain
Give me water in the wasteland, let it rain
As I wander in the darkness,
Be my guide
Oh, creator, redeemer, bring new life
Oh, Jesus
Oh, be everything that I need
In my waiting
Oh, in my in-between

Jesus, hold me
And keep me from running

'Cause I don't want to miss
The beauty of becoming
No, I don't want to miss
The beauty of becoming

[Cheers & Applause]

James: Oh, thank you! And that is on this CD, *The Becoming*. It's a great message. The book, *The Road to Becoming*, it's in the bookstores. We'll be more than happy to send it to you.

We ask our viewers, Jenny, to help heal broken hearts and broken lives. I really think that our viewers, I think you've got to be among the most unusual people on the planet.

Jesus said basically, if you want to reduce all the great commandments, and they're all so important, to two, love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and then love your neighbor as yourself. Then Paul later in his writing said: If you love your neighbor, herein is all the law fulfilled in the word. That means, if you love other people, really care about them like you would want to be cared for, whatever area of need you might have, then you are actually obeying the Lord in a marvelous fashion and that's what you do. When we show you a legitimate need that can and needs to be met, and an effective way to meet it, you take joy doing it because you love your neighbor.

I want to show you some neighbors right now. I want to show you where a year ago you were invited to love and the change that came. Then though, right now, you have an opportunity to be an answer to a heart cry and a prayer -- and it is a perfect answer. It is one that doesn't fail. Watch closely.

On the mission field

Peter: Last August when we were in this village we asked a question and that question was, "How many of you have lost children to malnutrition? Have any of you mothers here ever lost their child because of malnutrition, of a lack of food? And if you've lost more than one then show us how many you've lost by showing us how many fingers."

So many hands went up. I mean it absolutely pierced me to the very bottom of my heart that so many people could have lost their children. One woman had lost seven children.

I struggled even for words to be able to explain what feelings are in my heart and I've never lost one of my kids, I've never lost one of my grandkids. I just think if one of my precious little grandkids, if I lost them, and I couldn't actually do anything about it because I didn't have any food.

But you know what? That's changed because we said we're going to come back here with your help and we're going to feed these kids. Look at the children now! They're no longer severely malnourished, no kid has been lost. And you know what? It's you who has made the difference. Yes! You who watched and said, "You know what? This is not right. I can make a difference with those kids. I can feed a child. I can help." And you made the difference.

End of clip

In the studio

James: That's our family and I wish they could hear me shout, I love you! -- You beautiful children. Those beautiful expressions in their faces; just think about all the personality, all the potential in their lives.

And to think that Peter went back where so many mothers indicated by holding up fingers how many of their children they had seen die, and nearly all of them because of starvation or either contaminated water. And now then to see them there happy, feeding, and getting those kids stable and seeing the smiles on their faces.

Just think about this. This has happened, according to the government's reporting to our mission workers and to Peter Pretorius, more than 10 million lives saved. The interesting thing is that

we have led more people to Christ in those same areas that we touched with feeding programs and drilling water wells to win many more than 10 million people to Christ, who have come to Jesus. It's been a wonderful expression of love, and the power of love manifested in a very visible fashion but it is coming out of a heart of supernatural love that comes from God.

Here's what we want you to do. We want you to give life to those children. We have located 400,000 and we have organized them in different regions to feed them where we can do it. We need trucks to carry the food. We're going to have to replace some trucks. We have a real challenging need right now. We have to replace ten-ton trucks and we need eight of them in order to carry the food to all those different outreaches. We're asking you to help us pay for those trucks; that's over \$300,000. I don't know if there is anyone watching who can do that but it would be fine, we'd go ahead and announce it, if somebody did it. You never know what might happen. But could you give a few thousand dollars toward the trucks?

Think about this. For the hundreds of thousands of children that we're caring for, \$30, \$50, or \$100 will enable us to feed three, five, or ten children for several months. We're asking you to help us be able to feed those children. Would you right now go to LifeToday.org, take your bankcard with you, and use it just like a check? Or if you want to dial the number there on the screen, and take your bankcard, like a check, and make the gift God puts on your heart. We need some big help for those trucks.

Father, I pray some people will really step up, and Lord, make the large gifts that we need to cover that more than \$300,000. And Lord, to provide new bowls for the children -- they need them! In Jesus' name.

You make the gift God puts on your heart. Remember, if you gave \$100 for the next several months you'll help us feed 10 children. Whatever level you can help, \$30 or \$50, whatever, it's going to do so much. We have some beautiful gifts to send you to help you in your spiritual growth, to feed you and nourish you spiritually, which we want to do. We want to help you. We want to thank you so much from the bottom of our heart for helping those precious children and their families.

Thank you for showing them the love of God. Thanks for making that call or going online. God bless you for doing it.

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 Kinkadee.

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

End of clip

On the mission field

James: If you did not have four-wheel-drive vehicles, you couldn't go 50 yards. This is absolutely essential. We're going back into a village for a feeding program that none of the food would get here. They have to take enough food in to last oftentimes weeks. They load these big trucks up and then they drive way out into the bush. We've been driving for hours.

And so we need you to know that what we have is essential to saving lives, to maintaining the nutrition. It is absolutely critical, like Betty said one time, we're talking about a truck -- no we're not talking about transportation merely. She said, "We're talking about saving lives -- we're talking about lives." And that really is the truth.

So when we ask you to give a truck, provide transportation, it's critical to saving lives and maintaining health and I want to make that point. And from the depth of my heart for those of you who understand, I want to say thank you.

In the studio

James: Well, with all our heart, Betty and I express thanks for your help, and do thank you so much for reaching out and touching someone with love.

I want to remind you that Jenny's book CD, *The Becoming* is available, and you can get it, I'm sure, online or in the bookstores. If you'd like to have *The Road to Becoming: Rediscovering your life in the "not how I planned it" moments*. Boy, we have a lot of those! If you'd like to have it, we'd be so happy to send it to you. We just want to thank you for not only watching *LIFE Today* but above all sharing *LIFE Today*.

And all of you in the audience, thanks for being here. Would you join us thanking Jenny for the blessing she is?

Thank you so much! So glad to see mom out there still beaming; went to the football stadium and met Jesus!

Thank you so much for watching *LIFE Today*! Encourage your friends to watch all the time.