

3/14/16
Week 12: Spring Mission Feeding
David and Nicole Crank

Betty: Thank you so much for joining us on *LIFE Today*. I'm Betty and this is James.

James: This is the first time I've ever interviewed two Cranks.

[Laughter]

We've had a lot of folks on that there might have been a period after we talked to them maybe that was the truth, but their name is Crank.

Now think about this. This is David and Nicole Crank and they are pastors of Faith Church; there are three campuses in Saint Louis and another in West Palm. I tell you what, they're a neat couple.

Here's what I want you to know. If you have ever felt like and I'm telling you, there is a liar and a father of lies that will tell every one of us that we're totally disqualified and there is no way we can do the things that someone might imply that God has for us. Well, you're going to get hope right now because if there have ever been two people that were totally convinced they were disqualified it's this couple.

Would you welcome David and Nicole Crank to *LIFE Today*? Good to see you!

Nicole: Good to be here!

James: You came in here with your iPhone. I had them take it away from you and put it on vibrate. But you were on what is called "Periscope."

David: Yeah, we're big social media people, James; like Twitter, Facebook, you name it. The *Periscope* allows us to just talk back and forth to people right away.

They were loving you guys! A lot of us are fans. By the way, I want to say that we have watched you -- when I was 15, I used to watch you in those big crusades preaching and you inspired me. I was like, "Man, I was to preach like that!" You were always so honest and it was just great. So thank you for what you guys have done.

James: Well, am I still honest and even though I'm not in the stadiums?

[Laughter]

David: Betty keeps you honest.

James: I'm excited about what God has done and is doing in your life but you really did feel like, both of you, were disqualified. I want to start with you, Nicole because you really had a rough start. Tell our viewers what you went through as a young girl.

Nicole: Well, I started out fatherless. My father didn't claim me from birth. So at three years old, I was born in Canada but adopted in the United States by my stepfather when I was three years old.

There are things that stick with you over time. I didn't find out that I was adopted until fourth grade. And fourth grade was really a significant year. That was really a blow to me to think, why didn't my dad want me? What was wrong with me? What did he know about me that I didn't know about myself?

Fourth grade was also the year what I got introduced to Jesus. And fourth grade was also the year I got molested. So an incredibly difficult year for a ten year old.

Here's how the enemy lies to you. The enemy will tell you even at ten years old, "Well, you shouldn't have let that happen. This is all your fault. See, you weren't wanted anyway and now you're trash, it's over."

James: Evidently, that's what everyone molested at a young age hears. Which amazes me how a child can put that on themselves but in fact they do.

Nicole: Oh, absolutely! And I'd be lying to you if I didn't tell you every now and then those thoughts don't come back to me today.

I learned not to share my story at a young age too because in the fifth grade I finally had to tell somebody and I told my best friend what happened to me and asked her to keep it a secret. And do you know what little fifth grade girls do with a secret? They tell.

And then I went through a terrible time of being isolated all through middle school. Stories spread, they get exaggerated and I started eating lunch by myself. Nobody would sit by me on the bus. I didn't get invited to birthday parties and I was so lonely. I was so terribly lonely.

Then in the eighth grade I was raped. Kind of in my mind, I was done. How do you even just keep going through life?

James: Did the thoughts come back then that it was your fault too or not?

Nicole: Oh, absolutely! The situation that happened there's no way I could have had any control over what happened to me in eighth grade but it didn't stop it from happening. But then you start thinking I should have been smarter than that. Who are you going to tell? I didn't tell anybody until just a few years ago when God made me share because what happened when I had shared the first time was isolation and being alone and being ostracized.

So God had my parents move; I'm pretty sure it was God that had my parents move and I got a fresh start in a new high school. Well, what do you know? I could be friendly and boys might think I'm cute and I got this attention that I just took the wrong way and I ended up a pregnant unwed mother at 17.

So if I needed to seal my fate, these things I couldn't control but this thing I could control, everybody in the world had failed me and now I failed me. What was left?

James: Did you consider having an abortion?

Nicole: In high school in those conversations in history class, those are things you think, well, women do have rights because that's what they try to teach you is that women have rights. But God, I would have been gone, if my mother had taken that right, I would have been gone. If I had taken that right, my son would have been gone.

That's what I learned right away as soon as I knew, I thought, there is no way in the world I could ever let this baby go.

James: Thank you! How old is that baby now?

Nicole: He is 26 years old and God has the most amazing way of -- you know we tend to think we need to be able to qualify it ourselves like Second Corinthians 3 says. It's like what can we do to qualify ourselves? Or we think we can do it by qualifying ourselves but it is God that qualifies us. So if God qualifies us, really if you think about it this way, how could we possibly disqualify ourselves because we're not the qualifiers in the first place?

The Bible says he uses the foolish things of the world to confound the wise. I have no doctor of divinity, I don't have Bible school training, how did I end up a preacher in all of this? Now on top of that I got divorced. So when I finally found a man to marry me because I thought I was unwanted, unused --

James: This was while you were still a teenager, right?

Nicole: I met him, it was about 20 years old, I met this guy.

James: With a little baby.

Nicole: Yes! And he had all the right initials behind his name in the medical field. I thought, how could a man like this ever want me? He ends up getting addicted to prescription drugs, turns into cocaine, turns into crack cocaine and the second he starts crack cocaine he becomes

abusive; it changes everything. He breaks my ribs. He herniates my C7. We have restraining orders and policemen -- and robbing jewelry stores. He went insane with this drug.

I had to actually leave my life. I had to disappear. I had to leave my son; I had to leave my life. I had to completely go underground, live off of cash so he wouldn't find me so I could stay alive.

And it was in that lonely place again, I got lonely a second time in my life that I just told God, "God, I cannot do this anymore. I need you."

He said, "Nicole, if you will trust me I will cut off what is close to you but I will never cut you. I need to cut these things off of you. I need you to share your story."

I did not want to do that. I just said, "God, whatever you want me to do."

I came back to my life and I started reentering my life. I started working again. I got back to my hometown and God kept me safe. I have not heard from my ex-husband. God's just really kept me safe and protected me. And you don't think you can be protected from certain things but God can protect us from things that we can't figure out how to protect ourselves from.

Then I met this boy and this boy --

[Laughter]

David: Hey, I was a man!

Nicole: I thought all men were dumb. I thought men were stupid. I thought what use do I have for a man in my life? They've only caused me hurt and rejection.

We had some mutual friends and they kept inviting us to parties. He kept giving me his phone number. He was like, "Hey babe. I lost my phone number. Can I have yours?" No!

James: Did you know he was a preacher's kid?

Nicole: I didn't really know what he did.

James: Were you keeping it a secret then?

David: No. I just really didn't bring it up.

Nicole: I didn't talk to him that long.

David: Yeah, it was quick.

James: So you were having trouble even getting her attention.

David: Oh, yeah! I still have trouble getting her attention. Look at me now! I'm right here.

[Laughter]

It's funny though, James because at the time, like you were saying a minute ago with Austin, I'd been married before. That's one of the reasons I felt disqualified. My dad was a Pentecostal preacher and it was very much known that if you were divorced you were done. So you actually see some people stay together just because they want their career to go on.

I realized right away, you know what? If 50% of all people have divorce and I don't know if you know this, the reason for divorce is marriage.

[Laughter]

And so I decided, you know what? We're just going to move forward in this and I'm not going to let my past dictate my future and just started thinking that things could get better. But I was also disappointed because I'd been married for eight years, never had a kid.

So I meet her, we go on a date, actually we went to a party, a little party she had, a get-together at her house and a lot of her friends are there.

Well, I meet Austin who now is a 26 year old campus pastor, by the way, at one of our churches. So he's walking around. He's got his big people teeth and his little people teeth and I just fell in love with him. I knew you know what? If I'm going to get her I've got to get him. So I went and got him. He falls in love with me. Then she's like, you know, I'm looking for a good dad. It was a perfect plan!

[Laughter]

James: You were pretty wise.

David: Yeah, hey, you've got to work with what you've got. So he had his big people teeth, his little people teeth, and he's like right away, when he found out we're getting married he's like, "Can I call you Papa?" And so we just lived beside each other.

He went on to get his degrees at college. I thought for sure he would get a job in Dallas here with his dad. He came to me after it was all done because I never pushed ministry on him, and he said, "I really do want to go with my dad but at the end of the day, I want to stay with my father." Man, it just brought tears to my eyes. I still have trouble with it.

James: He was calling you his father.

David: I'm so proud of him. It's crazy. He's married now. We've got a grandpuppy.

[Laughter]

The cutest dog I've ever seen. It's hairy like me -- this dog.

But God does, he does qualify you. I think grace is what a lot of people miss in life; is that God will grace you when religion sometimes will try to erase you. He will turn the reverse around for a promotion. And he did that with Nicole and I. She never thought she was going to be a preacher. When I met her, we never even thought that my dad would go on to be with the Lord so young at 56, he died of cancer. We took this church of 180 people, didn't know what we were doing. Still don't know what we're doing.

[Laughter]

Just started doing what you guys do is just love people.

First thing we did was we took off our suits and ties and started not pointing the finger at people this way but this way. Say, "Jesus is here to put a ring on your finger, a robe on your back. He's not mad at you but mad about you."

Well, the church grows from 180 people to 18,000 people! And at so many campuses, Nicole, I'm like, you've got to start preaching! They come to find out, she starts preaching. It is good people are like coming through television going, "Hey, is your wife preaching today?"

I'm like, "No, I am."

They're like, "When is she going to preach again?"

[Laughter]

James: And you're sitting here talking to a Baptist preacher about a preaching wife. How big is God? To stretch the church like that, where we can really love one another and understand the grace of God.

Isn't this a great story to see what God did with two people that the enemy has told are totally, totally disqualified. Every time I begin to talk to Christians about being the witnesses as salt and light and having a kingdom impact on planet earth, it is like, "I'm not qualified. Who am I to talk to anybody?"

I'm telling you, the enemy points at me. I think you may have heard me say on this program, I can remember telling God, "God, I'm just not worthy." He said, "Shut up! You never have been. You never can be. Worthy is the lamb. Now do what I tell you to do, witness about his worthiness, his value, his greatness." Have you found out that works?

David: Totally! Because a lot of times we get the focus on us, which is exactly Jesus does not want us to do. His grace is made perfect in our weakness. So the weaker we are the less qualified we think we are, the more God can get the glory. Hearing your story and reading your books and everything, you thought you were the least likely. I think the enemy tries to work on

the inner me to tell us, [singing:] "You're no good, you're no good, you're no good! David, you're no good!" And the devil comes up again and you're focusing on what you're not instead of what he is and it limits you.

So I would suggest to everybody right now to stop focusing on you. I think the best way to get freedom in your life is to totally start helping other people. That's what you guys are doing, feeding people around the world.

James: And our viewers enjoy doing it. They find great joy and life in becoming life to people who feel like they have none.

David: You know what it does? I was just watching you a minute ago on television and I said, "How old are these people?" 39.95 and some change. Should I Google it or should I ask the staff? They told me your age and I was like, "Unbelievable!" You guys have so much fire and energy and passion. And I think that sometimes you'll see teenagers that look like they're 80 because they have no passion, because they're focusing on what they're not instead of saying hey, there is a greater cause. God is going to do something great. So we look at you guys and say, "Man, that's what we want to do." I know you guys are doing that as well.

Paul said, "Follow me as I follow Christ." Let's follow the role models that you guys are saying, which is it's all about Jesus and not about us.

Nicole: Right! And the enemy will tell us every single time that we can't because of our mistakes. Austin, the biggest mistake I thought I had made when I failed myself and I became pregnant, I didn't know for 23 years that God was going to use that mistake to go into ministry. But you know where we are weak he is strong and he uses the foolish thing of the world to confound the wise.

And I've thought about it over and over again. I'm like, "God, why would you want someone like me in ministry? I don't understand why somebody would listen to me."

It really keeps me from being able to get in any kind of pride because it is not something I've done for myself; it was something that he has done for me. That's what I want to say to you today. If you have a mistake in your life in your past that you're not able to get over and it keeps coming up in your mind, just think, that might be the very space, and the very place that God wants to work in your life and do a miracle through your life so that you never have the opportunity to say, "Hey, this was me and I was gifted, and this is how I did it." No. We just have to back up and say, "Wow! Look what God did!" And just be brave enough to tell it.

So don't let your mistakes hold you back. Just give them to God and see what he can grow out of that.

Betty: And he just wants us to be available vessels for him to fill up to overflowing so we can live what he's done through our lives, be an example to others. It may not be being a preacher or being in public but maybe it is just the neighbor next door. It's walking in what he has called us to do and being available and being submissive to his will.

James: You seem to be witnessing everywhere God gives you an opportunity. You witnessed at some kind of wild party recently where something happened. Can you tell us about it? Real short!

David: The Reader's Digest version is this. A lot of times on television because Nicole and I speak every other week; she preaches one weekend, I preach the next. There was this guy and his name was Todd, and he doesn't mind me sharing this. I've shared a lot of times. He shows up at our church one day because of that story I told you point the finger this way, no, we do it this way. He didn't feel condemned. We don't condone everything but we certainly don't need to condemn everything.

So he showed up and he said, "I'm really hungry, I'm interested." He wanted us to come to his house. It was really awkward because Nicole and I went there with Austin, who is an adult now and our little girl who is 12 now, this was about three or four years ago. We came into his house and his pool and there he is in the pool with his wife and his girlfriend. You talk about awkward. He just made no bones about it because he was very financially successful.

He was just asking questions. He was hungry. We didn't sit there and go -- some of my training might have thought, oh, man, we can't even be caught here. What if somebody sees us in the pool like this? And we're just there. I remember the story of Jesus just being in some really weird places. We just started loving this guy. And come to find out, he ends up continuing -- like you said, I didn't try to get him saved right now. We just started loving him because the love of God draws people to repentance.

The next thing I know he's coming to church more and more. One service I look down and he's beside me because I've got him on the front row even though people are going, "Is that Todd?" He is a notorious sinner! I'm like, "Yeah, it is!" I just treated him like he was saved even before he got saved. One service he just drops down during worship and starts crying. I got down beside him and held on to him. He's like, "I'm ready to change my life. I want to get rid of my girlfriend. I want to get with my wife." I'm like, "This is incredible!"

It's been years now. We were with him yesterday at our church in West Palm Beach. And God's blessed his businesses, multiple streams, and it was so cool. We took a picture in social media, put it on Instagram. And here's this Saul-to-Paul conversion. That's what God does! Just takes messes and makes messages out of them.

With us, James, I want to say this to people. You were saying that people needed, whether they're preachers or not, know that God can use you in spite of you. If we hadn't been through all the stuff we went through, we wouldn't have anything to tell anybody. So if you want to talk about divorce, we've been there. If you want to talk about death and betrayal, we've been there. If you want to talk about financial upset, we've been there. So it's like, I could never run out of sermons because my life was so jacked. I can talk all day long about how messed up we were.

Nicole: What it does is it gives you compassion for other folks. I think that's what helps us with our church is people walk through the doors hurting, broken, mistake-laden with a past and instead of judging we're like, "Been there!" We're so much alike.

Betty: God likes to use brokenness.

James: And he definitely does. Our stories are like most people's; me being fatherless, and living in poverty. Many people feel that way today. They've been left out, overlooked, and you're not overlooked. That's why you're watching today. You're hearing about how much God thinks about every one of us no matter how broken or how bad we may feel like we are. He is greater than all of our sin and all of our weaknesses. Reach up to him. He is reaching down to you. He loves you this much. He stretched out his arms and died for you. Now he wants to hold you in everlasting arms. Just ask him to do it right where you are. You want to call and ask someone to pray with you? Please do! Because someone is waiting; he receives you as you receive him.

Do you appreciate this wonderful testimony we heard? I love both of you! You're truly gifted. I pray God blesses the church in Palm Beach and I pray in Saint Louis in every way.

I want to show you something. I talked about how my own past is reflective of many. I remember when it's like when I would be left and not know if anyone would come back for me. That's a lonely kid! There are a lot of people who feel overlooked. Let's show them they're not. I know what it feels like to be overlooked and then found, noticed. Let's be noticers.

On the mission field

Announcer: Each day we're bombarded with troubling headlines about different tragedies around the world. And unfortunately, events ranging from natural disasters to terrorism claims several hundred innocent lives each month. But beyond the headlines lurks one of the world's deadliest killers. It has become so common and proficient that it is no longer considered front page news.

Each day thousands of children under the age of five die from the effects of malnutrition. These children weren't victims of an act of war or just in the wrong place at the wrong time. They simply didn't have enough food to eat.

The early effects of malnutrition can be seen in the children's hair and skin condition. Later their bellies will become painfully bloated. And if they still don't get enough food, a child will end up in a malnutrition clinic or even worse.

This doesn't have to be. There is a simple solution. *LIFE Outreach* and its mission partners are providing life-saving food to hundreds of thousands of children. This daily bowl of nutritious porridge is the difference between life and death for these precious children.

Be a part of the good news and help save a life today because without your help, this overlooked tragedy will continue to spread pain and devastation around the world.

End of clip

In the studio

James: Those painfully emaciated, suffering, starving children are not just loved by their family and their mother, they're loved by God. And God uses us to express that love.

Those are truly poor people. They have no hope if we don't offer it to them. I want to say a very personal word of thanks to you right now. I want to say thank you for not turning away because if you know Betty and James and you know anything about *LIFE Today*, we share life today in word, in teaching, in testimony but also in deed. We don't just talk about it, we share the love of God in action, in deed, in more than words, and you have stayed to watch. You didn't look away.

Those little children that don't make the headlines have somehow captured your attention, certainly God's. But Betty, we're the ones that give attention to the things God cares about. We're the ones that meet the need. I'm asking you if you would please make a gift today to help us feed those precious little ones, to get to them before they even get to that terrible state of malnutrition, which we're supplying the needs for those incredible clinics too. When I say we, viewers of *LIFE Today*, people just like you. But if we can feed three, five, or ten children for \$30, \$50, or \$100 we do that for the next several months.

Betty, we've got some friends that said they will match what we give for the first 50,000 children -- for 50,000! Which means that \$30 will feed six, \$50 will literally enable us to feed ten, and \$100 will give us the opportunity to feed 20. Many people will actually give \$1,000 and that goes from 100 children to 200.

So the love of God through some of our friends is doubling what people want to do. I'm believing everyone notices those children, who watch, and I think everyone watching can say, "I will help feed some of those children." I'm believing that!

Betty: I believe you will too. We've shown you some of the worst situations and it breaks our hearts and I'm sure it breaks your hearts. We want to show you the results of you reaching out and show you the good that comes from you helping these precious children that will starve and get in those kind of situations if we don't help them.

I like to show you the smiles. I like to show you the children jumping around and playing. You can be a part of that. Please join with us and let's feed these precious children.

James: Betty, we know for a fact that many of the children whose lives we saved 20 years ago, 25 years ago, many of them are leaders in communities and even in cities now in impoverished nations that have been digging their way out, like Mozambique. Some of them are actually

teachers and even some college professors who were dying when you reached out and lifted them up out of that state.

Would you right now go to LifeToday.org, take your bankcard and make the gift God puts on your heart knowing that whatever you can do will be doubled in its impact? Could you give \$100? Could you give \$30 or \$50? Whatever you can do, it's going to mean a difference to those children we're reaching out to. You can dial the number there and take your bankcard and make the gift. If you want to write a check, make it to LIFE because that's what you're giving but call and let us know you're putting it in the mail.

Thank you so much for doing that. Thank you for responding to that incredible heart cry and that great need.

Begin video clip

Announcer: In remote and impoverished areas of Angola, Africa, families are suffering, crops have failed. There is no food. And those hit the hardest are the children.

In response to this crisis, Life Outreach has received a 50,000 children challenge that with your help will feed and minister to 100,000 children over the next few months. With previous food reserves gone and Angola facing a severe food shortage due to crop failure, this challenge could not have come at a better time to help replenish supplies for the feeding programs touching the lives of children across Angola, Mozambique, and Sudan.

The 50,000 children challenge means more children can be saved and your gift will have a double-impact helping to feed twice as many children. Your gift of \$30 to help feed three children will now be doubled to help feed six children! Gifts of \$50 to help feed five children will be doubled to help save ten. And gifts of \$100 for 10 children will be doubled to help feed and care for 20 children.

With a gift of \$1,000 or more you can double your impact to help feed 200 children. And also request the "Majesty" bronze sculpture featuring a beautiful buck in regal stance reflecting God's presence and majesty in all the earth!

Please call the number seen here, write LIFE, or go online today to LifeToday.org and make your life-saving, double-impact gift today!

End of clip

In the studio

James: From the depth of our heart, thank you! In behalf of the parents of those children and the kids, the people you love.

Betty and I want to say thanks from the bottom of our heart to the Cranks. You sure weren't cranky! You are a blessing. Would you say thanks to David and Nicole again? Thank you so much! Tell all your folks to pray for us. Will you please?

By the way, visit stream.org if you want to get some wisdom and insight on how to address the issues of concern, go to the *Stream* and gain wisdom. Thank all of you. Thanks for watching!