

3/15/16
Week 12: Spring Mission Feeding
Gabe Lyons

James: Thank you. Thank you very much. And all of you, thanks for joining us. I'm James Robison. My wife Betty and I welcome you to *LIFE Today*.

Gabe Lyons is with us. He has a meeting with young leaders that's called Q. It is for question -- questions because there are plenty of them. Here's a book where he took many of the things that he's observed, and along with a very gifted communicator/writer, David Kinnaman, wrote this book called *Good Faith*. Subheading: Being a Christian when society thinks or at least seems to think that as a Christian you are irrelevant and you are extreme. You don't matter anymore.

Would you welcome the author Gabe Lyons who founded Q.? We're glad to have you back. Gabe, you're a real friend.

Gabe: Thank you, James.

James: I think you go back, you heard me years ago when you were at Thomas Road Baptist and Liberty and you watched Dr. Falwell and me and others try to have influence. Then you saw how sometimes we can perhaps be misappropriated or applied in our influence and it looked like -- and this is what I've said, and I wrote in *Indivisible*, the book I wrote with Jay Richards -- that I watch the "religious right," I watched it appear to be an arm or an appendage of a political party rather than a standard bearer to all political parties, candidates, and citizens because that is the role of the church. Which doesn't mean you can't participate in a party; be active in it in trying to always bring it back to center and back to biblical truth as a Christian, that's our responsibility. I was willing to admit that.

But you watched it from the inside. You saw some things that did concern you. Am I right about that?

Gabe: As a kid, some things concerned me as a reflected on it later. But I have to say I have such respect for you, for Dr. Falwell in my life because I know God used weekly, Sunday morning, Sunday night, Wednesday night, prophetically calling the church to engage our culture.

James: Which they should.

Gabe: Yeah! I think the only things I've learned along the way is just only engaging in the political space could be a mistake if that's the only place you're focusing. Then we have to engage in media, entertainment, education, the social sector and such.

James: But don't dismiss yourself from responsibility as for what's going on in the country because it determines the future; the policies, the laws that are passed, we labor on them or we are blessed by them or burdened terribly by them. So we really need to participate. But we need to participate in all the areas which is what light does. It pierces all darkness. So we're in agreement on that. You're a young guy, I'm an older guy.

Now in *Good Faith*, it seems like the church in a lot of people's eyes have lost the culture war. A lot of people say they have. We've lost the Supreme Court doesn't even make the right decisions about simple things like marriage or about sexuality. And there is this incredible movement that seems to be saying, we are going to redefine right and wrong.

It would seem to me as a Bible preacher and believer that what is being demanded by much of the culture is that we move the standards that God says are reliable, essential, important, meaningful. So now we're either going to move them or discard them. Is that what it seems that the culture is saying?

Gabe: That is what's happening. I think Christians are feeling the fact that they're on the outside of the cultural consensus about a lot of these social issues: Same sex marriage, discussions around gender and what it means to be man or woman, discussions about religious freedom. There are so many of these discussions where Christians for a long time, we did hold sort of the power in those discussions and there was a consensus that we were on the right side of history. And now the whole world is saying, "No, wait! Christians, you are on the wrong side of history. Catch up with the times. And as soon as you do, the better off you'll be and we'll all be."

What we're saying in this project in this book is we, as Christians, have to maintain our confidence in scripture, confidence in the truth of God's Word that supersedes what the times say to us.

James: And the principles?

Gabe: Absolutely!

James: That God says are important foundation stones. Jesus seemed to call it building your life on a solid, unshakable rock even when the storms that are sure to come do in fact come.

Gabe: I think we are feeling some of those storms in American life, the church is; certainly compared to other countries and other groups of Christians around the world, we probably aren't feeling quite the storms that many people are feeling. I think it's important to keep that in context.

James: But it's building. It is building.

Gabe: It's building. It's a different kind of marginalization I think that people are feeling. But I think it is important to walk into that with joy, to look at this moment as a missionary moment. Like we're in a new age where we have to put on a little bit of a different skill set, a different talent, a different way of looking at the world the way Jesus sees the world and not just assume people believe what we believe or care what we think because they really don't. That's what the research is showing. They think faith is irrelevant. They think faith really doesn't matter much to their life; religion is kind of bad for the world. So as a result we have to be the church in the midst of that.

So the question is how do we do that? How do we do that with joy but also conviction? This is one of those tensions that we have to work through. And I think, James, you and Betty have modeled this incredibly well over the years that you have joy in the midst of trial but you also have good faith. You actually demonstrate this. You practice what good faith shows up in. It cares for the orphans. It is not just this empty religion.

James: It cares for the overlooked and the forgotten.

Gabe: That's right! And so a lot of this is just getting back to basics and I think it can be a blessing to the church to remember that in some ways we may have gotten off track from what it looks like to be the church. Some of this pressure is going to force us back into what does it really mean to be Christian? What does it mean to be a citizen of the kingdom of God? Even as I'm a citizen of this nation, I have a higher citizenship that I have to recognize and has to play out in my life.

Betty: I think we have decided, sometimes, in our world that we want to change what used to be principle; we want to change right and wrong. What we used to consider wrong we want it to be okay. Whatever you feel good about. And there's really not anything wrong if it's okay with you.

Gabe: Well, 50% of Americans believe that. They believe there is no moral right or wrong. So you can understand the divide in American culture right now is that half of the country thinks there is literally right and wrong. The other half says hey, right and wrong is sort of decided by me in the moment, whatever I'm feeling.

So you can quickly see why we are having such tension, clashing. Where is this problem? I think for Christians then the way forward is to say how do I live with my courage and conviction in these principles in understanding what is right and wrong but still love my neighbor who doesn't agree and doesn't start from this same foundation? That's a new moment in American life.

James: You're saying in the book that there is good faith and good standards. How we present those to others who see it differently and who don't even like the church.

Many people who have an issue with same sex attraction, they feel like the church is the biggest problem they've got -- the biggest enemy. They don't like it. They feel like there is terrible opposition and tension. It shouldn't be that way.

Here's what I contend. There is not a single one of us on the planet that is not a sinner, that hasn't got weaknesses and we have failed -- we have all missed the mark. End of that discussion. The point is we still admit there's a mark and a standard we missed. So there is something to get back to.

But what brings us back to it, not condemnation and a sense that people don't like us or want us. We have to be able to come with any defeat or area of weakness in our life, any addiction or compulsive behavior that we know simply doesn't line up with a sensible standard or principles that are undeniable, we need to feel like we can come to somebody who loves us.

I get the impression that people that have same sex attraction have never felt like they could get that love that their heart is actually crying out for. And the last place they think they're going to get it is from the church, and too often they've been ostracized and ridiculed even more so than they were school or in a public place. Am I right about that?

Gabe: You're speaking truth. That's right. That's what we find today is that the church is the last place someone who is experiencing same sex attraction or gay orientation wants to go have that conversation. They see the church as a pariah. They see the church as a place that has in many ways preyed on them over the years to say you're one of the worst kinds of sinners. We don't want to have children in our church who are feeling that way or talking that way or thinking that way. We don't want to have any adults around our children because of fear.

Instead of embracing them in love and saying, "Hey, like you, I've had my own experiences with brokenness." That's the story of being a human being. It's the story of all of us being disordered intrinsically, and that part of the gospel is that it helps us properly order our loves and to know where Christ sits and that our identity is found in him. But they can't do that alone. So in a lot of ways the church has to repent for how we've handled this.

James: We've handled their sin so differently than we do the fact that we've got people sitting in church with all kind of out of control compulsive behavior and practices. We've got people addicted to various substances or alcohol; they're closet alcoholics. They know their defeated but they come and sit in church. We don't try to ostracize them. We want to lead them to a better way or a freedom.

And we've got people who are shackled up together, so to speak and they're living together and yet they sit there every week and we don't necessarily try to point them out. We want to draw them out and into a right relationship but they can still sit there and not feel like we're just being branded.

Something has to happen because here's the deal. Most of the people watching us on television either have family, somebody in close family relationship or in their family or in their neighborhood or their community or someone they work with or someone they know who has this attraction. We would call it from a biblical standpoint a challenge and a problem. It is missing the standard and we need to move in a correct way.

How we address that person, how we help the father, and the mother or the grandparents who have a child in the family that's got this battle, we ought to welcome the fact that they can say, "I have an issue" and be glad they might call it an issue rather than them saying, "You've got the issue, I don't have a problem. I'm not listening." Because that's what's happening, Gabe, they're totally cutting us off. Or we've cut ourselves off.

Gabe: I think we've cut ourselves off. I think most people don't know how to approach this, they don't know how to balance this understanding of truth and what they know to be right and what they know to be true and true to scripture. The basic sexual ethic that sex is meant to be between a man and a woman inside of a covenant marriage, otherwise we're to remain celibate. This goes not just for people with same sex attraction but anybody who is single.

We all at one point in our life were single and one day we'll be single again so we have to understand how to live in this way. But we haven't opened up our fellowship to help those who have same sex attraction know that we need each other.

James: That we can love them without approving necessarily the lifestyle or the practice and somehow convince them. Now you've been talking to the leaders in this community; right? Have you been able to convince them that you legitimately care about them as an individual even though you differ? By the way, do you tell them that you differ with the practice?

Gabe: Yeah. So I'm in close relationships with several people who are gay.

James: And even leaders, right?

Gabe: Leaders in the gay movement. There is clarity that we have a theological difference about what's best and what's right; that there's love there. That we're able to express why we have a difference and what we think.

James: Did they believe you? You've convinced them.

Gabe: Yeah.

James: And are you trying to let them know that you'd still like to see them from your point of view freed from what you might see as something that is holding them in some sort of bondage?

Gabe: Well in my relationship with them, they know that's my desire; that I have a view that I think what's best for them is to actually find that love not in the arms of another person of the same sex but it is to be find it in their relationship with God; it is then to find it in healthy friendships that are not sexualized.

And so in knowing that, they know that I care for their best. But they also know that we can get along even if we have that disagreement that there's other areas in which we can still be friends. We can still have honest conversations. We can still enjoy time together. They can still come over to my house and hang out with my family, being in a real relationship with people even if you disagree with something that is part of their lifestyle.

This is what Jesus does all the time. When we look at the New Testament we see him sharing meals constantly with people who might be out of step with that he would say is best.

James: Drunkards and sinners, that's who he hung out with; an adulterous woman at the well in Samaria or sitting with a Pharisee and a prostitute at his feet, for heaven's sake. What did that do for his reputation?

Gabe: Like Simon the Pharisee in that story in Luke seven. He sees a woman throw herself at Jesus' feet and put her hair in perfume. That would have looked like completely inappropriate conduct. And yet Jesus still embraces this woman and says to her, he knows that she has these sins but he loves her. He expresses love to her that says, "I know where you've been."

James: It was transforming love. And here's what we would say. Tell me if you agree with me. To those who are trapped with any compulsive behavior that's in some way holding them in a grip, that is not in line with nature's law, nature's god, biblical truth in love, that there is a need to be freed. So you don't have to feel condemned but you don't also have to feel condoned in the lifestyle. Is there a fine line that the church needs to learn how to walk?

Gabe: There is a fine line. I think in our culture today the word love has turned to be mean something just like affirmation. That if you love somebody you sort pat them on the back and say, "Hey, whatever your desires are, wherever you want to go, I'm with you." -- That's love. But biblical love says no, you lay down your life for a friend. You're willing to tell the truth because you know that decisions they're making could lead to destruction. It is not going to lead to their flourishing.

So the church has not done a great job of walking through that line. We tend to be way more comfortable, sort of making these judgments, proclaiming what we know to be true and saying, "Hey, get in line or go away."

I think in a new generation there is no way we can get away from doing that and it is a blessing to the church to say no. We actually have to know how to talk with people who are disagreeing, who are coming to our churches, who are experiencing same sex attractions, they need to know that within our church they can find community, they can find friends.

James: I want to ask you if you think you see some positive progress among Christians?

Gabe: I do. I have seen in the next generation...

James: Progress without compromise?

Gabe: Absolutely! People who are remaining convicted but are willing to talk about these topics and have these difficult conversations. I know with Q, we just created this whole podcast series called "The Gay Conversation" where 25 voices, Evangelicals, Christian leaders, some who have same sex attraction, some who disagree with us came together to say, we've got to

have a real conversation about that where we're not compromising historic belief but saying, hey, we need to do better. And here's how we should think about this well.

So I'm encouraged that people are willing to talk about it because for a long time, people have tried to basically avoid this topic.

James: If we could talk about this kind of topic in a reasonable fashion, come to the table of reason in love for the benefit of all, maybe we could get Congress to the table of reason. Now that might be a stretch; mightn't it?

You know what I really believe? If we don't come to the table of reason, we're going to live at the table of suicide because we're going to destroy our future if we don't learn how to sit down to reason together.

Let me just say this to you. One of the things that should disturb every gay rights activist is the total unkindness and the brutal assault that comes on people, let's just take like our friend Dr. Michael Brown. He has encouraged dialogue, even open debate, which he can't seem to get gays willing to do that openly. And the things that I read that is said about this man who is simply asking questions like you are, do you ever have those ugly things said about you?

Gabe: It is happening more and more.

James: See, to me that's sad. In other words, what they're saying we need to adjust in our attitude in the Christian community, what about a little adjustment on the other side to where we can try to have some understanding of the struggle? I see it as a struggle. I see it as a battle on all sides. I don't see room for us to compromise the Word of God, change the truth into a lie, and see all people given over to depraved thinking to where they can't even determine right from wrong, and that's where we're headed.

Would you in another program talk a little bit more in-depth about we realistically and with wisdom deal with what many people are facing right here with their own family and their hearts are broken.

One man said, and he was a very successful businessman said something that pierced my heart. I had just spoken to a whole group of businessmen about how we need to love people in the gay community or with any area of defeat, any area of bondage or problem that's pressing, to have love.

I brought up the homosexual issue of how much we need to love them. And this man, when I got through he said, "Can I say something?"

And this highly successful businessman stood up and looked at all the men in that room. And then he turned and looked back at me. He said, "If you have trouble loving someone that is gay, you need one in your family. My son just told me he's gay. I need to know that we can love him." And we love him, not just that dad and that family.

So I want to say to all of you, not just with this issue in your family somewhere, there are lots of issues. And in God's sight, one issue is not bigger than the other. The heterosexual sins that are there are just as grave and great and damaging, many times because they seem to be justifiable too easily. All these things that we do and all of us miss the mark, let's just go ahead and admit it, we miss the mark. But are we willing to admit we missed it and come back to the one who can forgive and cleanse?

Would you talk to me in another program? Do you appreciate Gabe being here and willing to talk about these very difficult and challenging issues? Would you say thanks to Gabe for his help? Would you do that?

[Applause]

Gabe, one of the things that the viewers of *LIFE Today* are incredible about is looking out and seeing a very real need and with love and legitimate compassion and expression they reach out with the arms of God. I want you to look right now and I want you to see if this isn't a place that you're anxious to reach out with love and say, "I can correct that challenge." Watch.

On the mission field

Janice: Just a few minutes ago we rolled into this village, a very small village. I asked how many lived in this village and an estimate of over 500 people. Then we asked any women that had lost a child to come over. And here they are. This group of women have lost over 150 children. It is not a club you want to be in.

It's just not right! They died because they didn't have enough food.

Nowhere in our world today should women expect to lose a child to malnutrition for lack of food. I just ran past each one of these ladies and asked them individually to show me how many babies they've lost. To lose one child would devastate you for life. But these women together have lost 150. Many five -- many over five!

I went one by one and looked each woman in their eye and held the fingers of the number of children they lost and I said, "Please heal them, Lord! And please don't let another child die in this village."

She's lost eight children. Can you see it in her eyes?

We as a body of believers are for justice and part of justice is making things like this stop, making the death cycle in a village like this stop. And if we have in our ability to change something we should do it. We must do it. Be a part of making this cycle end.

End of clip

In the studio

James: Betty, when you see that and you listen to Janice, I wish you could know Janice and just see the continual flow of God's love. And when you see what she's expressing to these precious women, I can't even imagine anyone watching not saying, "I want to help stop that. I want to save some of those children for those precious mothers."

Betty: James, loss of a child is devastating. We know personally -- we lost a child. It breaks the heart of a mother to lose one. I can't even imagine that one woman that lost eight. Why though? Because of a lack of food and the starvation.

There are some things that happen that we can't change, we can't do anything about but this is something we can make a difference in. We can change the lives of these mothers and their precious babies. They can enjoy their babies because they have the food they need to eat.

Won't you join with us and let's reach out and help these mothers to help their babies? Please join with us.

James: Betty, you referenced our daughter Robin and I want to say this, and I know this, I'm positive about it. By the way, thank you. It's been three years now. You have no way of knowing how much just your care and your prayers for us means to us because it is a tough journey.

But I promise you, I know this, had we looked at the television camera and said, "Our daughter is fighting this disease and if you would just do this, if you would just do this, our daughter would be well," there would not be a one of you that wouldn't do it. I know you would have. Because you would say to Betty and James, "We love you and we're going to help you. We'll do it." And you would.

Okay, now listen to me. We couldn't find a cure. The miracle didn't come for our daughter. This is a miracle that's 100% guaranteed. All these little hungry children need is the nourishment and food. It is a positive, 100% effective cure expressed by love. If you will simply help us to put the food in the hands of those missionaries and relief workers they will deliver it to those children and those families in love and their lives will be turned and saved.

Here's the beautiful thing that God does. Several of our donors said, "We'll match whatever people give for 50,000 of those 400,000 that you have to raise the funds for." That means we'll double the effect of what people will do right now.

Would you do this? \$30, \$50, or \$100 will enable us to feed three, five, or ten children for the next months. With what these friends are doing, it will double that amount, three to six, \$50 goes to not five but ten, \$100 goes beyond 10 to 20. \$1,000 goes from 100 to 200.

Would you right now go to LifeToday.org and take your bankcard and prayerfully make the gift God puts on your heart? No gift is too small because we're giving life.

Father, I pray everyone watching will simply be moved by your spirit to give what you put on their heart and that you've enabled them to gladly do, to cheerfully and joyfully give; in Jesus' name.

Thank you. LifeToday.org, use that bankcard like a check or dial the number and make the gift God puts on your heart. Thank you so much for doing it. And thanks to our friends for matching your gift because of the love of God.

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: Many of you have said you don't need to send us anything for our gifts. I understand that. This beautiful "Majesty" bronze, God's creation, how majestic it is, how majestic he is, we'll send it if you'll make a gift of \$1,000 and that will be doubled. We're just saying thanks but all you need to know is we made a difference.

Join us in thanks Gabe Lyons again. He's going to be back with us and we're going to talk about some serious issues that the church faces. Gabe, thank you. Appreciate you very much!

Thank you! Visit stream.org, would you and let us give you some inspiration and some insight?