

3/17/16
Week 12: Spring Mission Feeding
Gabe Lyons

James: Well, you've come to the right place. I really believe that! I'm James Robison; Betty and I welcome you to *LIFE Today* because I think you're going to see it and experience it.

Here's what I'd like to say to you that I think is real important. Everybody faces challenges. When you've got a challenge in your family, with someone you love, a child, a grandchild, some distant maybe relative; maybe it is a child of a brother or sister, but it is somebody in the family. Or maybe you've got a close friend that they really have a battle, a struggle and it seems big.

When you find out that somebody really cares and that someone might actually offer not only comfort but offer some counsel and some direction, some insight that's meaningful that would first, let's say lift your burden, alleviate your pain and the heaviness because someone got under the load with you.

Jesus said, "If you'll let me be in that yoke, you get in my yoke, you'll be amazed how light I make it."

And this is what I want to really impress upon you today. Whatever the challenge, however impossible it may seem, it's not. With God all things are possible therefore nothing impossible. I want you to know that God cares so much that he's leading us right now to share in some areas that are very difficult for some to touch on.

Well, I have a friend who is your friend too, who has written a book dealing with what good faith is and when being a Christian seems to be something that society thinks makes you irrelevant and extreme and unloving if you believe certain biblical things. Well, what Gabe Lyons has done is reach out in those situations where people feel unloved, unreachable or some say, "Well, there's no way we can deal with it" or "we don't know what to do." Gabe is going to tell you why he cares.

Would you welcome Gabe Lyons, the author of *Good Faith*, along with David Kinnaman? I appreciate you Gabe. I want you to cut to the chase. You and I have been friends for years. You've listened to me preach years ago at your church where Dr. Falwell was pastor, Thomas

Road, and Liberty. I remember helping Jerry claim the mountain, "Whoop that mountain" and giving everybody a brick; and these big trucks, semis are hauling bricks to everybody's house. And so you saw the vision and you knew Jerry and I were very close friends. I love you and thank God for the memory and for Liberty.

So you've been around me a long time. I've watched you on your journey and you came to me years ago here with other leaders when we were praying for our nation. I think we're seeing some prayers answered. Do you agree God is in the process of answering some prayers significantly?

You shared that you really felt like a lot of people have been turned off by the church's apparent lack of love for people they disagree with, and especially in these areas of human sexuality and so forth, and you were burdened by it.

Gabe: Well, that seems to be the most pronounced place; right? That's what's getting the most noise is where there is this divide between how Christians view human sexuality and how the world views it. And certainly, our culture and our society thinks freedom is just unrestrained; it is whatever you feel, whatever you want, whatever you desire. That's what freedom is. Here you have the church who is saying, "Wait." We actually have this vision of freedom that says restraint, as part of our freedom; self-control, self denial, that this actually brings more flourishing. Yet, that can put some boundaries around things and in our culture today people don't want boundaries.

So a friend of mine, who identifies as gay, has said to me before and this really touched my heart and made a lot of sense and I think a lot of people listening, they'll understand this. She said to me, "Look, as a person who believes in Christ, I want to pursue that. I have these attractions but here's the challenge for me. I can live without sex but I can't live without intimacy. And the church has not been a place where I can find intimacy. It's not a place where I can find those deep relationships where people will accept me where I am at right now with these attractions."

James: Because I have the challenges, so to speak. She said, "I've got these issues" so therefore intimacy and love coming from the church towards her, she just doesn't feel it.

Gabe: She doesn't feel it.

James: She feels what? Like she's dirty or leprous or unclean?

Gabe: Not able to come into this place, into a church or into relationship or into community and really talk about what she deals with, what she's dealt with since she was a child; the attractions, the feelings that she had.

So there is a combination of that, James, and then, why engage this topic; right? We know it is the most toxic thing you could ever talk about. So why go there? The reason I have felt compelled was I was having a lot of private conversations with church leaders who were saying how are we going to deal with this? Because in 2007, David Kinnaman and I's first book, *unChristian* laid out that nine out of ten 16-29 year olds think Christians are anti-homosexual. It's the number one perception of the church. So of course, I cared about why does this perception exist and how do we work through that?

So lots of private conversations of church leaders going hey, we've got to hold to the truth here but I don't know how to engage my gay friends and my gay neighbors and we're being perceived as anti gay. It's keeping people from the church. How do we engage it? But nobody wanting to talk very publicly about that.

And in our society, we've obviously ostracized this group of people for a very long time and the church has played a part in that. I think we have to repent of that. We have to recognize in some ways how much harm we've caused.

James: From school days through the military and into the mature years, they have literally been ridiculed and made fun of and called names.

Gabe: And we've done awful things and told them they could change by just changing their mind or if they prayed enough. A lot of damage has been done to people who have said, "Look I've tried all that and nothing's changed. So how am I supposed to engage in my relationship with Christ if I still have these attractions?"

James: What does the person say that says, "I've been trying to quit eating. I keep eating too much. I've been trying." What do you do with them?

Gabe: Well, a person -- I deal with that sometimes; right? I like a good meal!

James: I have never not had the challenge. People haven't left me and made me unlovable. They seem like they would like to maybe help me and say well, maybe we can be an inspiration to you. They don't ridicule me. If we ridicule people who struggle with anything we have alienated them, damaged them and even deepened them perhaps in the pain of wherever they may be.

Gabe: Yes. There is a big reaction to the church on this. And then when they come back into the church, when the church says, "Hey, you need to deny yourself of those attractions. We believe it is better for you not to have this relationship with someone of the same sex." They look at the church and say, "Well, you're hypocritical because I don't see you denying yourself of much. I don't see you denying yourself of food or your relationships, extramarital relationships. Or I don't see you condemning some of the things you're condemning in me."

So part of this is a callback to the church to say how can we become holy again? Let's not keep calling out just one group of people, and calling out that sin without looking at our own selves and pulling that log out of our own eye.

So I think that's a gift of this moment. That the church is having to reevaluate how we're treating people who are different.

James: How do you make them feel like you care about them without it seeming you're approving where they're choosing to live? That's the fine line pastors are asking.

Gabe: And what we've talked about with this idea of *Good Faith*, there are sort of three aspects to good faith today, which we would define as a hopeful, joyful faith even in the face of some of these contentious issues.

One is we have to love people really well. So you love people by truly caring about them, not with this agenda that says I'm loving you so you think like I will think, so that one day you convert to my way of thinking. I certainly believe we can have that hope but we don't do these actions as manipulations to try to make people do something we want and to manipulate and control them.

The second thing is we have to be firm in what we believe. We have to be convicted that that we believe to be true really is good for them. This is not bad news. The good news sets dead people free and brings them to life. So what we're caring about in their life will bring more joy to them, will bring flourishing, will take away some of the pain that they're feeling and their aloneness.

And then third, we have to live in such a way that allows them to start to experience our life. We need to invite them into our homes for dinner, to hang out and have a pizza party with our family; to not feel ostracized, to not feel pushed out if they're not in some committed marriage relationship.

So these are just very practical things we can do and these are from my friends who are gay who would say to me, "Look, this is what we never feel in the church. It's really basic, it's

called hospitality. And if we experience a little bit more of that, maybe we wouldn't long so much for just finding someone else that just could understand and relate to us."

James: Well, some church member will though perhaps even, with some degree of wisdom say, but you wouldn't bring a drug peddler in because they're having so much fun with their dope and their drugs and they're high and they want to come in and get your kids high. How do you deal with that? Because they're going to say they're liable to come in, somebody has a problem with attraction to some child or something and you bring them into the church and the next thing you know you have tragedies. I've had someone sit here and that actually happened. And then it actually happened to people in the church that they were trying to help and he did hurt their children.

There is a fine line here. It's a very difficult situation and you can't deal with it without love and compassion. Yes, but also truth and still holding the standard up. So somewhere there is that fine line where you're showing them here is the standard and it is a solid foundation upon which to build but I love you while you're in this situation that is not necessarily in line with the standard.

Is that possible to communicate that way? Because I can't personally communicate any other way. I can't sit here and say, I sure love you. I'm glad you're here. But it's like I ignore it -- I cannot ignore something that I think is going to do damage to them and others. Am I wrong in that?

Gabe: Well, here's where I would caution you. One of the mistakes we've made is to say people who have same sex attractions somehow are people who are also pedophiles. That connection is not something we should be making. So we can't do that.

Secondly, people who identify as gay or have same sex attraction doesn't mean they're acting out on it. So sometimes you might assume with the person who is addicted to drugs and they're coming into your home and they're bringing their drugs, the assumption that just because somebody has an attraction doesn't mean that when they're coming into your home they're exercising that, they're behaving and living it out.

James: All the men in the congregation who really have trouble not looking at other women and being lustful toward them, they don't necessarily need to get out of the church. You can still love them and want to help them get to the point of overcoming.

There's a fine line there though because you're not for a moment approving the lust in that practice, you still make the line clear.

Gabe: I think this is where we have to lead with love, not with fear. And part of how the church sometimes reacts in this situation is because it is an unknown, because we're not in real relationship with people or don't have a family member who might be gay or haven't had real relationship with somebody, we do fear that unknown. I think once you're in relationship with people who are willing to share with you what this is like for them, many who would say, "I would never wish this on myself. I wish I could get rid of this attraction because I don't like how it alienates me from my church or from society at large."

James: All of us ought to say that about anything that seems to have a hook in us; that seems to...

Betty: I think what I hear you saying is we're not going to be a part of the change in their life or anybody else's who has a struggle by putting judgment on them. It's only going to come through God's love.

Gabe: That's right! And so God's the one who changes people's hearts.

Betty: That's what changes us.

Gabe: Yeah! If there is going to be a transformation in someone's attractions that's going to happen through God doing that in them; that's not something anybody can possibly manipulate. So what is our call in the midst of that? I think we'll find in our society, more and more teenagers, 20-somethings, you can see there is more experimentation, there is going to be more and more of people who have had some of these same sex experiences and so they're struggling to know, who am I? What am I designed to do?

What I think, James, here's what I think. This is where the story plays out, is over years, it's not sustainable to keep going on this track that we're on where relationships are just casual; have sex with whoever you want; same sex relationships played out in families. I don't think it is going to be sustainable and I think 20-30 years from now we'll see some of the unattended consequences.

The question will be when people say, "Hey, what does a real relationship look like? What is God's design for a flourishing marriage, a family? What should that look like?" We as the church have to be in a place where we have some credibility to offer an answer, to offer the hope. We have to be modeling that along the way. If we give up our ground on that, if we give up our conviction, if we're not clear on that, we really have nothing to offer when the world's at a moment where it's actually asking for our help.

James: I think the faster way for it to play out to the positive is to keep pouring the love on without compromising or denying the standard is there. And we need love from God expressed through people but at the same time, we're expressing compassion, we don't have to compromise the convictions.

Now have you been accused by the church of doing that because of what you're trying to do? How have you handled it?

Gabe: I think what I've tried to do is help the church and help my friends who are pastors and leaders understand that there is a theological line that is uncompromising about what sex is meant to be within the confines of marriage.

James: And you go into great detail in the book.

Gabe: I go into great detail about the importance of our theology. Where I think the church and all of us will have some different opinions is what does it mean to do good ministry? What does it mean to be in relationship with somebody who disagrees with you? There is not 100% thick lines about how you have to love somebody well.

What does it mean to operate in the public square now in a country where gay marriage is law and what does it look like to run your bakery or be a florist? There are some Christians who would say baking the cake is the most Christian thing you can do for your gay neighbor. And another Christian would say, "I absolutely would never do that because I'm participating in a wedding and it violates my conscience."

I think Christians are going to disagree. Good Christians are going to disagree about how to handle that.

I think we should give some freedom for Christians to operate in that but the line is drawn when it comes to theology. What is God's best? What does he really want for human beings? We need to be clear on that because there is a lot of confusion, there is a lot deception, there is a lot in the next generation who say, "I want to love my friends. I don't want to be anti my friend." So they think they have to change their theology. They don't have to change their theology.

This theology that we've seen in scripture over 2,000 years that's echoed throughout scripture and in Jewish tradition and Christian tradition is something that we can hold to tightly because it is faithful, it will outlast this moment. Christianity will keep rolling on decades from now and we'll see that we just kind of live through a moment where we got tested.

So my hope is that Christians will remain convicted and still have courage to engage in these difficult conversations and do it with grace and love and also truth.

James: Amen! And I can say without reservation that sex between a man and a woman is far more fruitful. Now it definitely adds to the future.

Now do you see me as an old fella who is just tolerating you or putting up with you or do you see me as a pastor/preacher/leader/shepherd/evangelist who really loves you on your journey in the pursuit of God, his will for all of us and his love expressed? Do you see me as one who encourages you on your journey or am I a big obstacle?

Gabe: No way, James! You've been such an encouragement to me. I'm reminded of First Corinthians 4:15 when I think about you and your ministry where Paul says look, you have 10,000 teachers, instructors but you don't have many fathers. I see in you heart of a father. You're somebody that the church needs right now where you really want to father -- what a father does is he points out when something wrong is coming around the bend and he points it out even if it might hurt some feelings in the moment, maybe if people don't understand. Not so interested in just being popular or teaching to the crowd so to speak but you really have a father's heart.

And you've demonstrated that with me and you've loved me well, my wife well, been such an encouragement to us. And I think your testimony, your life, and your legacy is one of just commitment to truth and commitment to love. We need more models like you who are willing to go forward with complete boldness on both of those fronts, not just on one or the other.

James: Well, I do love you and you know I am your friend. I will say this to you, the Father, the ultimate Father, he's always looking around the bend to see if any one of us who have missed the mark, however slightly or miserably or to the extreme, would you just come back into the home of the Father whose heart is always reaching out to you to deal with every weakness, to cover every failure and to lift you up and welcome you home. With all my heart, I think that's what you want to see happen.

Would you join me and Betty in saying thanks to Gabe for the journey he's on? Thank you! Bless you! The book's in the bookstores. I'll tell you what; if you just help us put arms of love around some children that only love can save we'll gladly send it to you. You can go online and get it or get it in the bookstores. Or you can give a little child standing in a line looking for love, you can give them that love. And we gladly just say thanks so you can share the hope and the *Good Faith*. Watch this very closely please and prayerfully.

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: From the very bottom of our heart, in behalf of all the mothers and children and families, the lives you'll touch and save, thank you!

If you'd like to have Gabe Lyons book that he and David Kinnaman wrote to help us understand what *Good Faith* looks like without compromise; not compromising truth or love, you don't

have to compromise either. Unless we speak the truth in love, the truth will most often fall on deaf ears. Be aware of that.

Gabe, thank you! Join us in saying thanks again to Gabe. Bless you man! Glad to send you the book that is in the bookstores. Thank you for your friendship and your help.