

3/22/16
Week 13: Spring Mission Feeding
Lauren Chandler

James: Thank you! Thank you so much! We welcome you to *LIFE Today*. I'm James Robison. Betty and I are honored that many times people will come here to be with us, to tell their story; sometimes they bring let's say their heart that may be heavy, even broken.

In the early days of *LIFE Today*, we prayed with grandparents and parents who were praying for the miraculous healing of a little child. And then oftentimes, they would come back to tell us that that prayer wasn't answered. But our prayers for them enabled them to walk through the valley of the shadow of death and the greatest heartache they could ever imagine -- and your love lifted them up.

We had a pastor and his wife come here years ago. I'm going to ask her in a few minutes if she remembers exactly how many years ago or approximately, but her husband was fighting cancer in his brain. The prognosis, the situation was grave to almost make that sound like an understatement it was so grave. And they came and shared their hearts. Lauren is back, Matt Chandler's wife, and Christians everywhere prayed for him, The Village Church, they have campuses all over the D.F.W. area -- great church. They touch so many lives.

Well, Lauren wants to share about *Steadfast Love*. Would you welcome Lauren Chandler to *LIFE Today*?

Lauren, glad to see you.

Lauren: Glad to be here.

James: I just commented, your mom and dad are out here, I just commented to them what a beautiful couple they are, that your countenance is brighter. You've always been a beautiful girl, but your countenance is brighter, even my staff commented. Something has happened. Tell us how Matt is because this was very serious.

Lauren: So it was six years ago, I believe, in fact when we came on. Matt had no hair. He was going through radiation and chemo. I'm so grateful to say that he is cancer free right now.

[Applause]

Praise God!

And I just want to thank everyone for their prayers for how you lifted us and carried us through what was a really tumultuous season. The Lord heard and he was good in delivering Matt from that. But he would have been good even if he hadn't. So grateful to say that he is doing well. He is actually at home with our kids babysitting for me.

James: How many kids?

Lauren: We have three kids. We have our oldest just turned 13, a girl, and then 10 and six.

James: Matt, you need to get to right-to-carry now that that girl's a teenager.

Lauren: He does have that! So he's ready.

James: When you know the story, Betty, what goes on in your heart when you look at this as a wife and mother and thinking about what a load that is?

Betty: Well, it's a heavy load; I'm sure as a wife when your mate is going through something that serious. I know it was a heavy load for us as we watched our daughter go through, and she didn't get the same results that your husband has gotten, except that she is well now and she is happy. Some day we will see her again. But God is still good. It's just either way, God's good!

Lauren: And I'm so grateful for how you guys have walked faithfully and loved the Lord and continue to love people and comfort people with the comfort that you've received. It's such a testimony. So thank you for how you've walked it.

James: Well, you made it clear that you were going to trust the Lord and you were going to rejoice in the Lord always and that you knew that ultimately, we are absolutely free of all the damaging disease-ridden things that are in this world.

But you've written a book, *Steadfast Love*, and there's no question you're talking about the love that not only you all have for one another and the Lord has for you but you're talking about a love that carries each of us individually through the various challenges.

Now this situation with Matt is not the only challenge. I think you had some other losses that shook you pretty deeply and you share about it in the book.

Lauren: I do. I had a couple of miscarriages that, you know we had our first two kids according to plan. This is when we wanted to have a child so we got pregnant and it all went according to plan. Then as we tried for our third child I suffered two back-to-back miscarriages. I think before I just thought, well, okay, I'm just going to have a baby when I want one. It's just going to work out. And it didn't.

So going through those losses where before I think I presumed upon God's grace that he would just give me what I wanted. In fact, he gives me what I need. Through those losses I saw that when I was finally pregnant with our third, with Nora, I was so grateful for each day because I knew it was a gift where before I thought I'd just taken advantage. I thought I'll have a baby at the end of this, but going through those trials, it was like the Lord saying this is a gift. Steward each day, be grateful for each day. So went through that.

Also went through our son had a febrile seizure, actually not long before I read Psalm 107; which *Steadfast Love*, the book is really an extended meditation on Psalm 107, probably a week after finding Psalm 107, our then 18-month-old son had a seizure out of nowhere. He had a cold. I'd taken him to the doctor, and then he went down for a nap. And thank God Matt was there because I don't know if I could have done it without him. He had this seizure. The words that kind of the Lord gave me as I was reading Psalm 107 were you see these different groups of people in all kinds of distress, was this phrase of sometimes God wrings the worship from our hearts. And he gave me this picture of a heart being wrung out kind of like a damp rag and these swirly things coming out, which were kind of like praise. So here I am looking at my son who is seizing and thinking, okay, God, is this it? Is this how you're wringing the worship?

So what I mean by "wringing the worship" is in Psalm 107 there is this refrain of these people that are in distress and they cry out to the Lord in their distress. Not when they're okay, not when they feel like it, not when they feel good, but they cry out to him in their distress. So I saw that twisting of the heart as that deep heart cry, that worship, that deep worship of crying out to the Lord and saying in the midst of this distress, you are enough, and you are the only thing that can do anything about this situation. You're the only one who can rescue. You're the only one who can redeem. You're the only one that can save.

So looking at my son and I'm like, okay, God, is this it? Because you're really the only one who can do anything about this. And riding in the ambulance, once he had calmed down, and thinking, Lord, I don't know when we get to the hospital if something will be revealed that is more life-threatening, that is more serious, but just trusting him. Lord, I see in your word that when we cry out you hear and you send us your steadfast love. I know it will be enough.

James: How many years ago was that experience?

Lauren: That was coming up on nine years.

James: So that was an experience, almost, in some ways might have prepared you a little bit for what you went through even when you and Matt were there, that *Steadfast Love*, because when you sat here in the midst of that battle, there was a peace on you. We may say well, there's a little brighter countenance right now because of the fact it is. It is probably because you've had the joy of just releasing, not only the glowing reports but also comfort people with that steadfast love.

Have you seen people respond to what you're sharing and it's like they get it?

Lauren: They do! Who hasn't been touched by some kind of suffering or some storm? Either our loved ones, us personally, or we're either on this side of the storm or in the middle of it or on the other. So I've seen people identify with seeing God prepare them for the storm in advance. Him just bringing scripture to light that maybe they hadn't really looked at before and then seeing that God was preparing them for this storm.

A lot of people that I talk to that struggle with a lot of anxiety, which I understand where they're like okay, a storm is coming. Oh, my gosh! Am I going to be ready? I would say, "You know what? Trust him and he will give you what you need in your moment of need so don't worry about it now. His grace and his mercy for that moment will be there in that moment."

James: That's what you try to unfold in the book?

Lauren: Yes.

James: As you have seen what's happened with Matt afterwards, how do you share the joy aspect of that with people to understand, look what love did. But that love also prepared us for what if it wasn't -- by the way, how is your son now? Has that been a recurring thing?

Lauren: No. It only happened once. We couldn't believe it.

So in the book and in Psalm 107, so I try to go back to Psalm 107 a lot because it's the Word of God and it reads us and it offers a lot of life. But when the people caught in the storm in that Psalm, it says that God delivered them and he brought them to their desired haven. When I was in the midst, when I was sitting in this chair so many -- six years ago -- I didn't know what it was going to look like. I didn't know that six years later, if I'd be sitting here by myself because my husband's babysitting my kids or because he had passed away. I couldn't know from that moment. But what I was convinced of and what I read in scripture and the Lord has been so

tender and near is that that desired haven wasn't the situation I'd be sitting here. It wasn't that Matt would live. It wasn't that the scan would be clean. My desired haven is God himself; that I would know him; that he would feel near; that he would feel like a loving Father who would just scoop me up and just be there no matter what the storm might bring. That he would be my desired haven, not a prognosis or a diagnosis or an outcome because we know how fragile that is.

Betty: We have to ask him to be there, to show up and to really be the comforter and the one that brings peace in those times of trouble.

You have an anchor on the front of your book. Explain a little bit about that because you'd shared with us earlier something about some anchors that weren't so good.

Lauren: When I was writing the book, just another image, images are important to me. I'm a very visual person; just this image of an anchor and how God's love, his steadfast love is the true anchor that we can tie our vessel to that and know that it's unshakable, unbreakable.

But then we have a lot of things in our lives that are false anchors. Some things that look like they can hold, they look like we can put our trust in them. It can be our health. It could be the safety of our family. It could be our identity, our profession, what we do, our gifts, where we're living right now, our situation in life, where we look to that -- or even good things! Or it could be that I'm a good Christian; that I do everything that I'm supposed to do. That I'm enough.

We realize that all those things are fragile. We can lose a job. We can get sick. Something can happen to our dear family. We can be moved. We can lose a job. -- All that is fragile. We can blow it personally where we fail -- miserably fail.

So when those anchors fall, when they fail it's God's mercy to show us look, that anchor for your life would have never held -- it would have never held. I'm plucking that anchor up so I can put the anchor of my steadfast love in your heart so that you would know me, that you know I'm with you and I'm for you and that I'm good and I want your good.

James: You talk about in the book something that really, I'd say Betty struggled with; it was probably major and that was fear. Touch on that if you would because I think a lot of people have fear and they may not realize exactly how that plays over into many areas of their life.

Lauren: It is interesting that you say that because I had a friend pray over us early in our marriage and I remember him saying, "I just sense fear." I remember thinking I'm not afraid of anything. I'm fine! And then as I've grown and the Lord has just like an onion peeled away

some layers, I've seen this fear of not being enough, fear of not being good enough, fear of missing it.

Betty: I can relate to that.

[Laughter]

Lauren: I'm glad I'm not the only one. Just that fear of not measuring up. So it's another false anchor because we won't -- we will never get it right. We can never be good enough and that's why Jesus came because he was good enough. He did it right for us. And we can rest in his work and not our own.

Betty: He wants to take that fear off of us because sometimes we can even hide behind pride with that fear because we don't want someone to know what's going on inside because we think, if they knew I was fearful, if they knew I wasn't confident or anything, they probably wouldn't like me. It would just throw my whole presentation of who I try to be rather than who I really am.

Lauren: That's what's beautiful is in Christ we can be free of that. That there's no condemnation, there is no shame that we can say, guess what? I'm a pastor's wife and I really mess up a lot. Just ask my kids! And to say, oh, but it is not my responsibility. It is not my load to carry.

Do I want to live a life that glorifies God? Do I want to walk in his commandments? Yes! But I'm going to miss it. Like I'm going to have weak days but praise God I don't have to put that front up anymore!

James: Would you thank Lauren for sharing her journey with us so that we can learn how, I think, Lauren, not only to experience steadfast love but what you're trying to do, share it, express steadfast love? That's what we try to do every day on *LIFE Today*. I hope you've been blessed.

Matt, we rejoice with you and The Village Church family, and all the people all over the world, and church leaders who prayed for you, for Lauren, for your family. We love you. We love the witness and the encouragement you've been to so many. Thank you for praying for us as we've had some battles and struggles and even lifting our ministry up.

Lauren, our viewers, I think, are remarkable. They literally want to, I think, in a simple way of expressing it, they want to put God's loving arms around a world. They want the steadfast love you've talked about to be poured out on people who never even heard about it. You know what

we found? That when you show people God's love and you demonstrate it you've got their attention. And they are willing to hear. That's what you enable us to do.

The first mission program that we started was feeding the starving, and the miracle -- you know when you tell people over 10 million people's lives were saved according to those governments of those nations where they were facing so much tragedy, and so much loss and so much famine, but then when the missionaries say, "We've led more than that number, whose lives we've saved, we've led more than that in those areas to Christ!" Why? Because they saw the love of God demonstrated.

We have a chance to demonstrate it and some friends of ours said, "I'll tell you what we'll do. We will match what you do if you'll just help us, we'll take those first 50,000 and we'll match it" -- 50,000 kids!

I want you to watch and see if you don't want to be an answer to heal this broken heart and to stop this from happening in so many instances. I think you're going to be moved to do it. Very prayerfully watch this.

On the mission field

Announcer: In a world of plenty, why do these children look like this?

>> I have no food here. I tried growing maize far away but the crops failed. I have no food for my family.

You can see it's not easy to talk about. My heart is broken. I feel weak, and it is difficult for me to walk.

I have lost my children. My children became sick and died. I had nothing for their hunger.

Announcer: Last week, Victoria lost two children to malnutrition caused by a lack of food over a long period of time. She'll never see them in this world again.

Mission feeding's goal is to prevent tragedies like these by preventing malnutrition in the first place. Because is there anything more precious than human life? And is there anything more miraculous than saving a life?

End of clip

In the studio

James: Boy, those precious little children, Betty are holding those bowls out that you gave them. I mean you are the ones that years ago, watching us over on the mission field pouring porridge and that soup mix into cans like this and sometimes some kind of a paper bag that would often burn right through and fall out in the dirt, you gave these.

When those children are holding that out, the first time this has ever hit me like that, that for years, churches have passed the offering plate and put in hopefully an expression of love to God and devotion. Well, what's happening, what fills the bowl, of course, it's a nourishing mix but what fills it, Betty is an offering of love. It's a love offering. You're even the ones that said give them heat-resistant bowls. You did that. We didn't do that. Then you are the ones who put the food in it.

We've got some friends, Betty that said they'll match for 50,000 children exactly what you give. If you gave \$100 to feed 10 children you'd be feeding 20 children. I think this is an answer to prayer. Our friends not only pray, they're an answer to prayer so often. And they make truly a love offering.

Betty: The bowls do no good without the food to put in the bowls. When I watched this spot that we just showed you, my heart just weeps with that mother because she did all she could do. She tried to grow something and it wouldn't grow. She tried her best. She reached out in every way she knew to get food for her children. But all she could do was hold them while they died - and love them. And feel so sad that she could not save her children.

We can know, we can join together, we can reach out in hope and let's make a difference in these families, these mothers that are losing their babies. It shouldn't be! We can make a difference. We can let these children grow up healthy and happy and a mother watch her children play instead of watching her children die. Please join with us and let's get the food to the children.

James: She was so heavy-laden. It will be love that lifts her burden. It will be love that brightens her countenance as she looks and sees others finding the hope that she longed for. It's not too late.

I'm so grateful. I want to say thanks to our friends that said they'll match what you give. And thanks to those of you who will help us. We've been doing this now for 25 years. This is something I never get weary doing. Sometimes I wonder, God, am I able to communicate it as effectively as I need to? Please do it in the power of your spirit. Betty, thank you the way you shared so beautifully and clearly.

Would you go please, right now and make an offering of love? And that love offering gives life and hope and a future. And we'll point them to Jesus, the beautiful expression of love. Go to LifeToday.org, take your bankcard, use it like a check. You use it for so many necessary things and sometimes not so necessary. This is critically essential. It is life to these children and their families. You can dial the number there. It's always there as a prayer line but would you be today an answer to prayer?

Call the number, take your bankcard, make the best gift you can knowing it will be matched. \$30 or \$50 or \$100 immediately doubled in its impact. Would you please do that right now? LifeToday.org, dial the number and very prayerfully make the gift God puts on your heart. Thank you so much for doing it. If you want to write a check, make the check to *LIFE* because that's what you're giving. We thank you so much for doing it!

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

On the mission field

Beth: Anybody who knows me well knows I am a kid person. Look how beautiful they are!

But as we look deeper into their faces, as much as I love children, my heart also begins to break because these children in Southern Africa that surround me have the signs, so many of them as you look closely, of malnutrition. If you'll see with me the light colored hair, the sores that don't heal. Many of them cough with bronchitis and so many colds; that just lack of health that I'm surrounded by.

What we're down to here are the basic needs of life. These are children who are hungry. These are children who awaken in the morning, whose parents have one thing on their mind, how am I going to feed my children today? They don't have the complexities we have to figure out many, many different kinds of answers. Really, we have one thing we're looking for in this particular village and that is feeding hungry children. It's really as simple as that.

End of clip

In the studio

James: Well, Betty and I say thanks for your help.

Betty, thanks for making it so clear, the incredible blessing that we can be by answering a mother's heart cry and children's hope.

If you'd like to have this beautiful, beautiful story of *Steadfast Love*, and miraculous love by Lauren Chandler, we'll be glad to send it to you. You just say, "I want to help some of those children," and you make a gift to give life and you'd like to have the book, say, "Would you send that to me?" We'll send it to just say thank you for sharing life with those who so desperately need our help and our love. Thank you for doing it.

Would all of you here in the audience, we appreciate you being here, join us thanking Lauren?

Lauren, you did great! Thank you so much for sharing your heart. Greetings to Matt. Rejoice with you.

Thank all of you for being with us! And all of you here, would you visit stream.org to get understanding of the times, why things matter? Stream.org -- check it out!