4/26/16
Week 18: Water for Life
Chris Brown

James: Thank you. You're kind. I appreciate it. We say thanks and welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm James Robison.

Betty and I have had the joy of having Dave Ramsey on several times. It is amazing that he teaches people about finances and about keeping everything -- well, living below your means is an example and really being able to balance things and deal with crisis. I keep finding myself saying, any chance you could just get Congress locked in a room and maybe really teach them simple truth like living below your means?

How would y'all like if Dave Ramsey taught the United States Congress something about managing money? Well, I'll tell you where it starts. It starts with us managing money.

Betty and I have been married over 53 years. And as a matter of fact, you spent a week with us while Sheila Walsh was talking to us about it. We made it some more weeks. I'm getting an extension.

Betty: That's right! -- A week at a time.

James: Here's a fatherless kid. Here's a girl. She was talking to some people earlier today and she said we had so little. We were poor. Her dad had a job but they would be considered poor, no question about it. Yet Betty and I made some decisions that we have reaped continuously the wisdom of. So that when Dave Ramsey comes in and starts talking to us, he is talking about a lot of our journey but we find out most people don't know. Betty and I sort of took it for granted that people knew. We were shocked at how little people knew. So Dave's been a real champion.

Well, he's got a very gifted young man, Chris Brown that is truly gifted to communicate. I'm tempted to Dave and say probably better than you. Okay? Your daughter, maybe she is a little better than you. Do you agree? Well, Chris has got it. You're so wise Dave and you love people so much that you want to share the ability to learn the things that make a difference. Chris has got it. He's doing it.

I want you to welcome Chris Brown to *LIFE Today*. Chris, good to see you.

Chris: It's an honor to be here.

James: Now Dave won't mind me saying nice things about you. Will he be all right with that?

Chris: Yeah. And I'm encouraged by it. I need to hear that. Yes!

James: You're doing something now to help people with finances. I can tell you care because the moment I started talking with you when we had some private conversations, I could tell that there was a love, a genuine interest, a very sense of compassion for people. Tell me your story.

Chris: It's much deeper than finances. It's more about the position that you put yourself in in life and whether you can do all the things you want to do. Many folks that contribute to this show and do a lot of great things, they just can't. So that's a passion of mine to get them in position.

This passion for me started all the way when I was a kid. I was 11 years old. I was sitting down on my 11th birthday in a empty roach-infested apartment. There was no food, there was no furniture, and I was just sitting there staring out the window. I can remember thinking, this is not your typical birthday. Multiple father figures going to jail and spending night after night in abuse shelters and traveling from...

James: That's where you would be.

Chris: This was my upbringing. I'm thinking through, this is not normal. I was hoping for bounce houses and friends over and laughter and a little bit of ice cream cake. But I'm sitting there thinking through those years of pain and disappointment and all the violence.

James: Was this a typical setting that you found yourself in where it was like that empty? -- Void of people, void of things that you might need?

Chris: It was -- several violent fathers. Mom was always running from them going from abuse shelter to abuse shelter. So I found myself sitting there and thinking through the years of disappointment and pain. So I turned my attention towards the kitchen. I can remember this like it was yesterday. There's nothing on the countertops. There's nothing in the cupboards, no dishes, no canned goods, no paper plates. But in the kitchen was my mom and I can remember fixing my young eyes on her face. What I saw was this stoic stare of hopelessness; just silent in this empty apartment complex. I can remember thinking as a 11-year-old boy -- I didn't know what the word stewardship meant, I didn't know what that word was but I knew there had to be another way. I thought, there's got to be another way. This is not normal. I also knew when I grew up I'm not going to do this to my family.

I went through middle school, I went through high school, I went through college. Met my wife in college. We started -- had two jobs, were rocking and rolling, doing great. We flipped a house with cash. It went great. I'm like whoa! That was kind of fun! That's kind of easy. This whole adult thing is pretty easy. And I flipped another one and another one.

James: Had you heard Dave teach before this time?

Chris: I had. Actually in that same apartment complex I was sitting down and I didn't have much because you're traveling around. You can't have a bunch of toys and those kind of things but one thing I did have, I had one of those old yellow Sony walkmans before the disk came out, the sport edition. It was amazing!

James: Oh, yeah! Great!

Chris: But I grew up listening to Larry Burkett and Charles Stanley and James Dobson and they were in my ear. And that's actually, they raised me on the radio, which is so funny that now I get to be a radio host and I'm teaching the same stuff.

James: What is your radio show called?

Chris: It's Chris Brown's True Stewardship. It's a Christian radio station network all over the country. So I grew up and we're doing great financially.

Next thing you know, I walk into a mortgage office and was like, why would you flip one house at a time? Let's do more than that. So I walked into a mortgage office and said, "I want to borrow a million dollars."

James: Now this wasn't something Dave taught you though.

Chris: Not so much.

James: Just wanted to be sure. Dave, just trying to check out things.

Chris: I decided I was going to get cocky and I was going to go out and say, you know what? I'm 30 now so I know everything. Dave who? So I decided to borrow a million dollars and the year was 2007 when I did that.

James: Great timing!

Chris: Yes! Brilliance overload. So the next 36 months I paid payments on eight vacant homes until January of 2011. I walked into a full courtroom, looked the trustee in the face and I said, "I have no money left, what do I do?"

She said, "Honey, you've got no options. You're done. You're sunk."

So probably the biggest memory of that day is not looking the trustee in the face. It was that morning looking into my bathroom mirror. And guess what I saw? I saw the same face that my mom made decades before. Here I was, I'd done the same thing to my family. It looked a little different.

But I've got a passion as a kid and as an adult. I've seen it done right and I've seen it done wrong. I've seen the world's way of handling money and God's way of handling money. One is rooted in entitlement and one is rooted in gratitude and I want to help people with that. Because so many people want to do more for the kingdom, they want to volunteer, they want to attend, they want to go to the baptism event, they want to go on mission trips, they want to give and they just can't. They're good people and I want to help them with that.

James: Are you seeing that it is effective?

Chris: Yes. The research is so daunting that 70% of people are living paycheck to paycheck -- 88% are living paycheck to paycheck or worse. One-third of American adults are currently in a debt collection process. It's a major issue. It is a major uphill battle.

But I'm telling you, we're seeing people that instead of getting out of debt in 6-16 years they're getting out of debt in 18-24 months. So I want to wherever I go, want to make sure people know that there's hope.

Betty: Finances is a thing that can really break up a home too -- a marriage because you get so under it that you find no way out.

Chris: Finances touch every aspect of your life. So I was just recently talking about financial infidelity in the home on a broadcast; that is cheating with your finances. A lot of that is because of this weight that we feel like we've got to hide it. So it is affecting our marriages. The number one cause of divorce is America is money fights and money problems.

So if this is the number one thing holding the church back, if I can give my life to that, I want to do that. Here I am grown up with no father and I just see that this pain in people's face, no father figure, they got no guidance. I want to be that for them.

James: I'm looking back over our life and we did talk to Sheila Walsh during our kind of our 53rd anniversary week and the decisions that we made. I didn't have a father either. I did have an adopted father that he let me call him dad and he was a pastor. He showed me so many good and wise things.

I don't know that I recognize where I got this but Betty and I determined that we wouldn't buy a nonessential, and that included a washing machine, a dryer or a television if we couldn't pay cash for it. That was just our decision. Now we did think that we could rent an apartment. We weren't going to buy that apartment. We could do that.

A lot of people tried to buy because they bought the thought that everybody ought to have a home and the government is telling you that. And the government contributed perhaps more than anyone to what happened in 2007. We can thank Freddie and Fanny for that and the people that put all these things in place driving us into debt. Foolishly, people buying homes who didn't have the credit, who couldn't do it and they just created a terrible burden.

We adopted this thought and I don't know if this is part of what you teach but you kind of referenced it. We decided to live well below our means. That has continued to this day; 53 years later in marriage, we live below our means. It enables us to be able to give. It enables us to be able to meet crisis needs; not that might come in our lives but maybe in other's lives.

I just discussed today after lunch, Betty you're not in on this yet because I haven't had a chance to talk to you about it but --

Betty: What are we doing?

James: And you're going to rejoice. We're going to help a lady that doesn't have a home and I'm about to start crying if I tell you about it. And we're going to help a lady that we know that is fighting leukemia, and many people would know in our area who it is. It is going to be very excited what's going to happen.

Now the thing is that we made a decision. Is that one of the things that you and Dave and what you teach try to get on people's minds, make up your mind you're going to live below your means. Make up your mind that these things like doing things just for entertainment and spending borrowed money or borrowing money to do that, even for a vacation, very questionable. I'm asking you, was that a good solid foundational commitment that Betty and I made that would have meaning to probably everybody.

Chris: Yeah, for sure. Right now in America the average person is spending a $1.26 for every $1 they earn. So you go to go do anything, anything that's on your heart, you can't do it, there's no room for it -- there's no margin. So if I can help people with that I definitely want to for sure.

James: How do you define stewardship?

Chris: Managing God's blessings God's way for God's glory. It is not a math thing.

James: Run that by us again.

Chris: Managing God's blessings --

James: It is his; right?

Chris: Yes. It is all based on Psalm 24:1.

James: In other words, he doesn't just own 10%, he actually...

Chris: Owns it all. Yes!

James: By the way, we did settle on that didn't we? It's all his. Not 10% -- all of it!

I want to tell you, God is a better manager than most -- he is a better manager than Dave Ramsey or Chris Brown.

Chris: Well, just Dave.

[Laughter]

James: But the truth is, he really will give us his wisdom over his resources and he's entrusted them to our watch care. Would that be an appropriate understanding of stewardship?

Chris: Yes. Stewardship is managing God's blessings God's way for God's glory based on Psalm 24:1. It says: The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. Another version says: All it contains. In the original language all means... all. So it's everything.

James: That's the Hebrew word, all is all.

Chris: If we're not the owners then what are we? We're the managers.

James: I really do believe that.

Chris: It says in First Corinthians 4:2, it says: Those who have been entrusted to be managers must prove faithful. So it is not a math thing. People need to understand it is a heart thing. When you are really are thankful that God has entrusted you enough with his stuff, that's a crazy thought; right? But when you have that deep down in your soul and you are spending knowing that it is a spiritual practice not just an earthly practice well then everything starts to make sense, then budgeting makes sense.

Like oh, Proverbs 20:19: Where there is no vision the people perish. So I need to have a vision for my month or my quarter or for my year. You start thinking through savings.

And Proverbs 21:20 says that in the house of the wise is choice food and oil.

You start thinking about inheritance, and Proverbs 13:20 says: A good man leaves an inheritance for his children's children.

Then you think about debt. Proverbs 22:7: The borrower is a slave to the lender.

You start caring about all these things. But it's not about necessarily the physical handling of it, it is the heart behind it that we get to manage the creator's stuff, which is a crazy thought. You need to know that not up here, you need to know it right here in your heart. You're like, oh, he trusts me. That's so cool!

Betty: And how much better would it be not to have that particular stress in your life because we will have things that will come unexpectedly, which is another reason not to have that financial distress in our lives, to be able to feel freer about what has God has blessed us with.

Chris: Whether you're giving or you're spending less than you make, either way it is for God's glory. You can be managing God's blessings God's way but miss the last part of that definition and it is not for God's glory, it is just for you to build wealth, you just missed stewardship. It is the reason why also.

James: The first advice you give to somebody no matter where they are financially. What would you say to individuals listening to us right now, you recommend as perhaps the most important thing, practice or thought that they could put in place right now?

Chris: Number one is to have a plan, to know where you're headed. I'll go back to Proverbs 20:19, where there is no vision the people perish.

You think through Luke 14:28, it talks about who would build a tower without sitting down first and counting the cost. Who would build a house was a blueprint? We just wouldn't do that. But many times we're living our months and we're getting to the 25th of the month and we're like oh, shoot, what happened? So we're having to swipe the remainder of the five days. So it would definitely be to have a plan. Zig Zigler says, "If you aim at nothing you hit it every time." Many of us are living our life like that. So please, I'm begging you, have a plan.

James: I hope you're getting something out of this. I hope all of you are. Do you appreciate Chris? Don't you love his spirit and what he's saying?

[Applause]

Again, don't all of you here in the audience and don't all of you watching at home wish that just everybody could hear these simple truths?

Father, I pray that each person that is being encouraged, I don't want anybody to feel condemned or put down if they didn't do something right. I've done so many things that weren't right and it required your magnificent, miraculous, supernatural journey to deal with those places where I've totally missed the mark or made a mess. But you've given us some good things, some understanding. We want to pass it on.

Please help everyone who heard not to feel condemned but to feel assisted, to feel uplifted and let them begin to put these practical truths in practice so that they can see and reap the benefits of it. I pray for everyone that's heard. I pray for Chris. I pray for Dave; for everything he is doing to reach out and help others; in Jesus' name.

Would you just say thanks to Chris Brown again for being with us?

And Dave, we thank you too -- your beautiful daughter. Thank you for the treasure that you've been.

And to all of you who are watching, you know something you've heard us say over and over? I think you've come to experience the reality of it. If you want your prayers answered, if you want to be blessed become an answer to someone else's prayers and be a blessing. It is amazing.

Betty, how much have you enjoyed blessing others in our journey together?

Betty: It's hard to describe how wonderful it makes you feel to know that you're reaching out and helping someone else. Because God has blessed us so much, we want to give out of that blessing to others. That's the reward that you get.

James: When we first discovered the need on the mission field and saw what was there, our first inclination was we're going to come over here and be missionaries. Wise missionaries who really had great vision said, "Please don't."

It wasn't that they didn't like us. They certainly would have liked Betty. Maybe me is another question. But they said, "Don't stay. Please go back and ask the people" -- and they actually referenced America knowing we were Americans -- "Ask them to help us so we can stay here and do the work."

Betty, when we came back we did not know if you would help, and we sold a lot of stuff to just start doing some little things. The ministry sold things. This building where this studio is had already been poured, the concrete to be tilted up. This building laid on the ground for four years until the missionaries came over here and prayed this building up because everything we had we said is going there. And then more and more and more, miraculously, you said this, you've shown us a need, we've seen the miracle answer, we want to be a part of it.

Well, this may be to most of our viewers the biggest miracle they've ever been a part of. I know you'll want to be a part of it. Watch closely.

On the mission field

Open captions:

I have one child left...

I had two children but the oldest, Mothsaman passed away. I don't know what caused my son to die. They told me it comes from an evil spirit.

Announcer: Punmom may not know what killed her son but we do. And it wasn't an evil spirit. It was the last thing Punmom would expect, the water from the family pond.

Open captions:

I feel so bad that I could not protect my son.

Janice: You've done a good job. Done good! You're a good momma.

Announcer: This is the story of Punmom. But it is not just her story it's the story of countless others in Cambodia. While we can and do educate those here about the death of their water, education alone cannot save them when they have no other water source. However, with your help, fresh life-saving water can become their source.

End of clip

In the studio

James: As we watched those little kids at the end drinking the water, the clean water, and you think about what it would have done for that mother that we first saw.

Betty: James, a mother feels so responsible. She loves her child so much. She does all that she can do, these mothers, but they take them to the only water source that they have knowing that that water, James could possibly kill their children. But what do you do? They have to have water in their bodies.

So this mother is just feeling the load of not knowing what to do but yet she knows there is something that we must be able to do. That's where we can step in and make the difference. We can drill those water wells that will last them a lifetime and then the children can come and drink the fresh water.

James: Well, we can actually do it. It is what Jesus referred to that "if you give just a cup of water in my name you won't lose your reward." A lot of people I think unnecessarily waste a lot of time trying to determine what is going to be the reward if I do this? That powerful passage of "giving and it will be given unto you, pressed down," that powerful passage is preceded by giving with no thought of return as the greatest, perhaps expression of love. You're not giving thinking about what you're going to get.

Our Pastor Robert Morris is teaching on *Hearing God*, he began teaching on *The Blessed Life* that has grown one of the fastest growing churches in history, and one of the largest now in the United States and one of the most influential worldwide.

He said the blessed life is not getting it about getting. It is about getting about giving. First giving all to God, and giving him the first fruit of all your increase and keep God as the overseer of all that he's entrusted to your watch care and you'll find the blessing by being a blessing. So when Jesus says, "You just give a cup of water you won't lose your reward," how about we leave it in the hands of God to determine the reward?

I'm telling you. For Betty and me, just to see those children drinking that water and it's clean, and to know the mothers are happy and their hearts are not being broken, that's all the reward we need. We're not looking for a money tree. We're not looking for a cash flow to suddenly come our way. We're saying, "Look at that! Look at that!" And the viewers of *LIFE Today*, God bless you! You say "Thank you for giving us an opportunity to be a part of a miracle."

That's what we're asking you to do right now. 500 more wells this year. We drill them one well at a time in 15 nations. Could you drill a well? I believe if you can, you will. I believe you will do it with a grateful heart and a joyful heart. So $4800 is still the average gift of a well. $48 toward that well will give 10 people, when you break it down, 10 people basically water the rest of their life. Could you do that? That's how most of the income comes. It comes from people who give $48 to give water to ten or they give $144 to give water to 30. Those are the numbers that come in. But if you can give $1200 and pray Lord, get three more to join me. Or $2400, Lord, send another person to join me here. God will hear your prayers and you're sowing seeds of blessing.

Can you do it? If you can drill a well, I believe you will. But your $48 means a whole lot to mothers like those you just heard and like that one with a broken heart. LifeToday.org: Go online right now. Use your bankcard like a check. That's how you use them. Or dial the number, it is a prayer line but also it is a help line. You call, you say, "Here's my gift." We have some gifts to send you. The book by our Pastor Robert Morris, *Frequency*: Tuning in to hear God. *Hearing God*; a beautiful journal to go with it; a beautiful pen with the names of God and scripture, scriptural truth on it that will be a blessing to you as you journal. Also the beautiful bronze "Majesty" to say thank you for doing what God put on your heart.

Thank you for giving just a cup of water in this instance together a well of water for his glory. Thank you for doing it.

On the mission field

Announcer: Globally, contaminated water extinguishes hundreds of thousands of lives every year and nearly half of those lost are children under the age of five.

In Angola, mothers face an awful choice between giving their children dangerous contaminated water or watching them suffer from dehydration.

In Cambodia, waterborne diseases are wiping out entire families. Our team encountered parents who have lost as many as seven children.

In the Amazon, disease-causing organisms are not the only danger families face in their daily quest to quench their thirst. In this village, sending your child to the only available source of water means exposing them to a harrowing array of deadly creatures that lurk in and around the water. The vulnerable children who depend on this water for survival must run a daily gauntlet of danger risking their lives just for a drink of water. These odds are far from fair, yet parents reluctantly run this terrible risk with their little ones day after day because there is simply no alternative.

At *LIFE Outreach International* we can give them an alternative, one that will give them clean, clear, life-giving water but only if you act with compassion today before it's too late.
End of clip

In the studio
James: I want you to hear God; not near as much as he wants you to hear him. Here's the fact. His sheep know his voice, they recognize his voice. Many people have been taught you don't hear him anymore. He just wrote you a book and left. That wouldn't be much of a relationship if all you had was a love letter. What about if you could have a relationship with that person who wrote the love letter? Well, he's written us a love letter and we can hear his voice. Robert is a wonderful teacher. We're sending that to say thanks for your help and your gift.

Betty and I say thanks to all of you for helping.

We say thanks to Chris Brown for being a blessing. Thank you! Bless you in all you do.

And bless Dave Ramsey. Dave, we love you. Thank you, buddy. I still want to get you into Congress and talk to all of them. We'll have to lock them up to keep them in. God bless you.

Thank all of you for being here.