

8/1/16
Week 32: Mission Feeding
Host: Sheila Walsh
Bobbie Houston

Sheila: Hello! Welcome to *LIFE Today*. James and Betty are not here today so I get the awesome privilege of sitting in this chair.

Can I just say we just don't take it for granted that you tune in and that you support us? We're so grateful. It is my prayer today that whatever your real need is in your life that God will meet you wherever you are. Sometimes you can't even express what you need. But you know in those times the Holy Spirit has promised that he will be able with sighs and groans to communicate your need to the Father. So it is my prayer that during this time together that you will be incredibly blessed by a sense, the closeness, the presence of God. My guest is going to do that.

I'll never forget the first time that I met Pastor Bobbie Houston. It was at a Colour Conference in Wimberley arena in London. I remember she took the stage thinking, I think this is the way we were always supposed to be as women: Grace, strength and beauty and kindness. You're going to hear a lot more. Please welcome my guest Pastor Bobbie Houston.

Bobbie: Thank you! And I'm so happy that I'm here with you.

Sheila: I'm thrilled! I'll never forget that very first time because I was so nervous. I hadn't been back in England to minister in over 20 years. I remember the very early days with Youth for Christ when we would pray and pray and pray to see one person come to Christ.

But to see that arena filled with girls worshipping God and what you presented on stage was better than any West End show I'd ever seen in terms of the quality of the production. But take us back a little bit.

Before we get into your story, tell me a little bit about where the vision for a conference for girls came from.

Bobbie: Well, first of all, it is just lovely to be here. I really appreciate the time. It's always an honor to come and have a chat and I love you. You're beautiful -- the best!

Well, Brian and I -- obviously, Brian and I are pastors of Hillsong Church so we are local pastors at the core of everything. When you're local pastors, obviously, you're hopefully caring for the well-being of men and women, young people, youth, what have you.

So a lot of years ago, 21 years ago I just felt God really speak to me and compel me to create an environment -- first and foremost an environment which just happened then to become a conference -- but an environment that would actually believe in girls, believe in women; that would gather them and tell them two things.

So when God spoke to me and gave me that directive, which was so out of character for me, (he had to speak quite clearly), he said, "Create this environment for young women, girded with older women, (which is a beautiful picture). Tell them two things: I've never forgotten. Tell them number one there's a God in heaven who believes in them, truly, and people need to hear that. And second, that they're not alone; that there's actually a company of others in context of this sisterhood alongside so that they're not doing life alone."

So that's really where it began. That was the prompting. That was what I feel was the directive. I call it "the God whisper" for me now. And like all these years, 20 plus years now, I guess the movement that has emerged and what we're seeing God do on the earth with his daughters is actually proof for me that what I actually heard was actually what he said. It took me awhile to say that because it's like you start with small beginnings and then it becomes what it becomes by the grace of God. So that's where it began for me. I just started with what was in my hand, 600 girls from our local church; very humble beginnings.

But you know, what Sheila, I've never by the grace of God, I've never deterred from that original directive. So it keeps it simple for me. I know what I'm doing in this regard. So to see this thing roll out around the world and to see the ripple effect of it, it's miraculous! To God be the glory, actually.

Sheila: I remember trying to explain to my husband after that first night after Colour; it was kind of like -- I tried to explain it to him because I was actually sobbing on the phone because it was what I'd always dreamt might be possible for women. You had some older women, you had younger girls and it was just the sense of we stand together. You so encourage women to stand up.

Bobbie: Yeah, you disappeared that night. We went to supper, I'm like, "Where is Sheila? She is my guest. Where is she?" And they're like, "She's gone home." And then I found afterwards that you're like having a little God encounter in your hotel room.

Sheila: I honestly was -- I mean I can't put it into words because I knew I was supposed to be at that blooming dinner. But I'm back in my hotel room and I'm literally sobbing on the floor because of all the years of loneliness in ministry as a woman and not imagining that this could happen. And to see what happened on the platform that night was really overwhelming for me.

So take us back a little bit because what I did not know until I read -- Bobbie's book is called *The Sisterhood* and it's fantastic. The thing I didn't realize until I read the book was you never saw yourself as a platform person; that you were actually quite shy. I would never have guessed that from how you appeared on stage. You looked like you were -- it felt like we were in your living room and you were so comfortable and you were just calling us to kind of get closer.

Bobbie: I think it has become like that. So whether it is a stadium or not, filled with literally tens of thousands of women it feels like a lounge room. We actually labor to that end. So that girls can come in and it's like this, just multiply by a few thousand.

But I don't know. What was the question again, my love?

[Laughter]

Sheila: Let me explain something to you here. Bobbie has -- this is the tail end of the Colour conferences in Sydney, then she flew to South Africa, then she flew to Kiev, then she flew to London, then she flew to New York, and then she came here. So the fact that you're still sitting upright and didn't require a Lazy Boy is just --

Bobbie: We've just done six weeks of conference so I joke, look, if I'm not coherent, you fill in the gaps for me. [Laughing]

Sheila: But the fact that you were... When you were a young girl, what did you think your future was going to be?

Bobbie: I never saw myself like that. No! And I still don't, actually. It still shocks me. So I think in all truthfulness, it's the conviction of your life. So I'm compelled by conviction that makes me step over my fear line. So no, I am not ambitious in any way for platform or for prominence or for anything like that but it is a conviction. So I have learned to overcome my fears, my natural inclination to draw back to be behind the scenes. Like I'm happy if I'm in a room of high end personalities, I'll just draw back; that's my personality. But it's the conviction of our lives that actually compels us to probably do things we thought we were never capable of or able to.

But of course, that is the miracle of God, isn't it? He knows the greatness he has put within all of us. And he's put that greatness within -- there are seeds of greatness within every single person. We're all called to contribute to this great kingdom adventure in some way or another. We're all gifted and talented in different ways according to that. And I think when you again, water that in people, when you create an environment that believes in them, it ignites, it waters, it nourishes, and it comes to the surface.

That's actually one of the miracle stories within this whole dynamic and awakening that actually is the sisterhood, which are the daughters. It is God's daughters at this time in history. So I love it!

Sheila: The fact you've become a voice for those who were never given a voice. One of the things that shocked me in your book is you talk about going to Russia to Kiev for a conference and you have these little bracelets that you're going to give out as a gift because you always, you're a gift-giving person. Then you're trying to get them through customs and one of the customs officials in Russian said women... how did he put it?

Bobbie: Yeah, they weren't silver, they were just imitation silver and we were trying to get like 1300 of these bracelets to give to the girls. A few of us carried them in. And one of the girls accidentally declared them as silver so obviously that put an alert signal out. And then what happens is they confiscated them. Then the girls are trying to explain no, these are just a gift for women in this part of the world. It was very militant; that terrible misogynist spirit really. He was like, "No! Russian women do not deserve gift." And he stood his ground. One of our girls contended with him into the night hours. Because he dug his heels in and she dug hers in because it was like, "No, this is more than a bracelet. This is actually an inherent ailment in this culture."

So we fought for those bracelets. So we got them like one hour before we needed them. The women were overwhelmed. They couldn't actually believe, these beautiful Russian speaking girls, they were like, "We can't believe that somebody would do this. Somebody who does not know us, as in a company of girls who had donated them and gone to this effort, we cannot believe that somebody would do this for us when they don't know us."

I was just there like two weeks ago doing the conference and you've been up with me there and they love you. And I'm just saying, even like now with the war and all the complexity there, they're like, "Thank you for not forgetting us. Thank you for still coming."

And I was like, "Well, as if I wouldn't. Of course, I wouldn't forget you. We're coming regardless."

Sheila: But that's huge, Bobbie because it is easy to go to the places like New York or Sydney, the places where everybody just welcomes you and applauds. But the fact that you go to the places where girls would expect to be forgotten speaks volumes about the kingdom of God.

Bobbie: And then the girls at home, they actually contributed and helped sponsor and getting them across the line because the economy is a bit of shot up there in that part of the world.

But then again, we have a church there so of course we're going to go. Nothing is going to stop us in that regard.

Sheila: Let's talk about that because the one thing that was really clear to me from the first time I met you was you were a huge -- your life breath is all about the local church.

Bobbie: I love the church.

Sheila: So everywhere you go, whether it was Kiev or whether it was Los Angeles or Sydney, that's where you see the expression of Christ through the local church.

But you have a way of encouraging women because when I was there I got the privilege of preaching at several of the campuses. You haven't just created an atmosphere, an environment at Colour Conferences it is present in every single one of your churches as well. It is a place where you feel, if I'm in the best days of my life or the worst days of my life I can walk in here and I will be welcomed. Is that a very intentional thing that Brian and you have done?

Bobbie: I think -- not I think, at the end of the day we're pastors. We're pastors of a local church. For us, our local church just happens to be global as well. But we love the church. Jesus said the one thing he was going to build in this world is the church.

But I think sadly in the landscape of the church, the word *church* means many different things to many different people. That's a tragedy. So you say "church" to some people and all they see is an institution that has deeply hurt them. You say "church" to some people and it's whatever it is. So I think in speaking about the church we actually have to define the church that we're speaking of.

So my experience of the church is only beautiful. I found Christ at 15. I entered a church that was beautiful, that was missional, that had beautiful worship. My only experience of the church is that. I think one of the first of finding scripture in my heart, I was just weeks old in God but I read the Psalms like the new Christian counselor had told me to do; I read the Psalms and the gospel. And I read Psalm 27 where David, the Psalmist says: One thing I have desired of the Lord that will I seek after, that I might dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life to

behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple. So that is defining in my experience, my personal experience.

So I think that translates in the way that we have pastored and built a church and environment, hopefully; where people can come experience his presence, experience the Word of God, opened and divided beautifully. That is transformation. Then you build community that is real, that's not religious, that's genuine, that lets people come as they are. So you create this atmosphere of health. I think so many people in the world outside of Christ are broken. They don't understand home.

One of the things I fought for many years ago, I didn't have to fight for it but it was a revelation and it's become a revelation was the sense of welcome home. So you'll see in all of our foyers, everywhere you'll see welcome home because I think when people enter the house of God and come across that threshold and enter into the atmosphere it says "welcome home." Hopefully welcome home to eternity -- but like welcome home.

I think it creates family. I know we all use it now and it's normal and familiar but when people experience it, it becomes a revelation to them.

Sheila: Yeah! One of the things, you've divided your book into three sections. And when you get to this third section there is like a whole new thing that is rising up. You've started -- I don't exactly when it started, this prayer initiative, this: midday, baby, midday. Talk to us a little bit about that because I think that's one of the most exciting things I've heard in a long time.

Bobbie: Well, I think prayer is something that is inherent within the feminine heart. I think God knows that when the feminine heart awakens there is a prayer warrior in there; that maternal spirit I get. It's like we're going to roll up our sleeves and we're going to take care of business. So prayer has always been on the page for us.

Many years ago, we instigated these prayer maps. So we were seeing all the complexities of the world, the injustice, the human trafficking, etc., and we're like how can we intelligently address this? -- a capable, intelligent virtuous woman? So you've got to strategize. So we thought, okay, we'll just divide the world up into sections, regions. Well, we'll get intelligent resource on some of the issues that are happening in these regions and we'll pray intelligently. So it's the prayer maps. It's always been there. You can go online and find them.

But last year God spoke to me coming out of the London conference and preparing for this year, our 20th year. The one directive he gave me was in calmness of prayer. I found him just whisper in my ear and say, "Bobbie, let prayer do the hard work. Let prayer do the hard work."

Sheila: Wow!

Bobbie: And then at the same time I see an awakening in the body of Christ and I think God is actually awakening his church to this weapon that we have, to how to use it. I think there's like a renaissance of prayer happening where we're going to go, "Hello? How are we going to make a difference here? How we really going to see darkness pushed back? How are we going to see a break through?"

I think sometimes we can beg and plead and hope that someone is going to change, a family member, or partner or whatever. I feel like God saying, "Hey, listen. Let prayer do the hard lifting. Let prayer do the work. Let it do the work. There is so much to accomplish. We can't do it in our own strength."

So I've seen this -- so I've got this hashtag. It's a bit of a story to it but spontaneously last August I started with this thing like: #midday --

Sheila: You're the hashtag queen!

Bobbie: Unfortunately, yes.

Sheila: If you're on Instagram, Bobbie is the hashtag queen.

Bobbie: I think it is a condition.

[Laughter]

I just make it up. People say, "You can't do that!" I'm like, "Who says? Who makes up these rules?"

Sheila: You're not the boss of me! Yeah!

Bobbie: I can hashtag!

[Laughter]

So it's become comical. But girls have bought into this. So it's a reminder a midday thing. There's a storyline behind it, nevertheless.

Literally oceans of people are just allowing midday, they're setting an alarm as a prompter, it's not a religious thing, it is just a prompter to remember: Pause, pray about something. Like let's get some prayers happening in the atmosphere.

Sheila: But that's huge, Bobbie! That's huge!

Bobbie: It is because so many people have actually lent in. I can't measure it. Only eternity will tell the story, Sheila. We know this. But so many men are stopping me... And after the Sydney conference I heard a story because we mobilized the girls in this context, the Sisterhood Fight Club and what have you.

Sheila: I love that! Sisterhood Fight Club! What's not to love about that?

Bobbie: Totally. It is not poncy. But I heard a story that after the conference somebody was in a hair salon. Four alarms went off at midday. They all didn't know each other. So yeah, I don't know.

Sheila: Well, I do it. I set it on my iPhone. But two Sundays ago I'm preaching in a church and suddenly my alarm went off in my phone and I'm not finished my message. I'm like, "You know what guys? Let's take a moment right now to pray."

It's great!

Bobbie: That happened in London in church, midday, all these alarms go off including mine and poor Holly was preaching and she was like, "What? What? What?" And it's like alarms going off everywhere. So I just stood up and gave them all a cheer. Then we turned our alarms off. But men are doing it as well, which is beautiful.

Sheila: You can actually go online to Hillsong.com or where would they go online to get the maps and everything?

Bobbie: The Colour Sisterhood.

Sheila: Fantastic! What I love about this is that you're encouraging us all to do what we can do. One of the things we're very committed to here at *LIFE* is to hear the cries of women who are crying out on behalf of their children. There are so many desperate situations around the world. I was made aware recently of the current situation in Angola and we're actually going back in a couple of weeks; pictures that I haven't seen since the 1980s of mothers who are desperate to be able to simply provide for their child one meal -- you know, that's all they're asking.

There's no way that with all these prayers in the atmosphere that something is not going to shift. And you and I are going to get to be a part of it. Please watch this; would you?

On the mission field

Announcer: Everybody knows that there are hungry children in Africa and we know that something needs to be done. UNICEF knows that Angola has one of the highest child mortality rates in the world and malnutrition is a major contributing factor.

This village leader knows that without crops his community is in grave danger.

Open Captions:

>> We are facing a serious problem with our food. We don't have enough. Without the rain, we cannot grow crops to eat.

Announcer: This mother knows the heartache of watching her children wither away from malnutrition.

Open Captions:

>> His skin is getting very loose. It started with a fever, then diarrhea and vomiting.

Announcer: And this child knows the pain of going to bed hungry. But just knowing about malnutrition in Africa won't help anyone. The actions we choose to do together will help save a child's life.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: I haven't seen pictures like that in 30 years. And this is not some piece that we pulled out of the archives, this is actually happening right now. You know what? Something my son said to me that has kept me accountable, he said, "Mum, once we know something, we're responsible to respond."

Every one of us can do something. But the amazing thing is that for \$30 you can feed three children for three months and that's like two movie tickets. For \$50 you can help feed five children. \$1,000 will help feed 100 children for three months.

I don't know what you can do but one thing I'm absolutely sure about, we can all do something. Let me ask. If that woman and her little baby, if they were living right next door to you, the minute you knew about it, your immediate response, I know, would be to go next door and say, "Hey listen! I've got some food here. I've got a meal I've cooked. I've made double. Come over and join us."

The amazing thing about when we partner with you is that that woman is no longer just out in the desert in Angola, we've made her our neighbor and we can do something. When I think about a woman like that closing her eyes at night and praying to God, "Please send some help."

And then there are those of us who have been given so much. Scripture makes it really clear. However much we've been given we're responsible for. Some of you can give a big gift and that's fantastic! And if you do, whatever you do, we will send you this great new teaching series. It is called *Living Your Destiny*: Beth Moore, Lisa Bevere, Christine Caine, Sarah Jakes Roberts and myself help you find your destiny. If you want to give more than that we will also send Chris' new book, *Unashamed* and my new book, *The Longing in Me*.

But please, would you do something? Every one of us can do something. So even if you'll just go, call the number on the screen or go to LifeToday.org and let's answer those prayers to see those little ones like that and to know that for so little we can give them such tremendous help.

You've responded in the past and we're so grateful. I'm going to be there in Angola very soon and I'm going to bring back some reports of what God is doing. This is not we need to do something. This is a holy privilege that we get to reach out in Jesus' name and put a hot meal into the hands of those children and hope into the eyes of those mothers. Thank you!

Begin video clip

Announcer: In remote and impoverished areas of Africa, families are suffering, facing death by starvation and those hit the hardest are the children. Life's mission feeding program is there ready to feed and care for these children in crisis areas of Angola, Mozambique, and Sudan.

With all of our previous reserves gone and Southern Africa facing its worst drought and food shortage in years, we urgently need to replenish our food supplies to reach 400,000 children counting on us.

Your life-saving gift of \$30, \$50, or \$100 will help feed and care for three, five, or ten children for the next three months. Please also consider a special gift of \$1400 to help sponsor a school and help feed 140 children for three full months.

With your gift of any amount we'll send you the brand new audio series, Living Your Destiny. Hear five outstanding Bible teachers and women of faith share how to live the life God destined for you. With your gift of \$100 or more you'll also receive *The Longing in Me* by Sheila Walsh, and *Unashamed* by Christine Caine. And finally, with your gift of \$1,000 or more, be sure to request "Majesty," our 2016 commemorative bronze sculpture.

Please call, write, or go online today and make your gift of life to help feed and care for hungry children.

End of clip

On the mission field

James: Beautiful children! They're lining up because of love. Not just food -- they're lining up because of love. I just thank God for his love. And then I thank God for the love that you expressed that is the love of God for all these children. Betty is here right now and she is serving up the soup.

Betty: We've seen lots of lines over in states, kids lined up for games, kids lined up for parks, kids lined up to go to a movie. But these lines are different. These kids are lined up for food for life.

Won't you join with us? These are the kind of lines that really count. These children need our help. They need someone to make a good choice for them and that's for life. Please join with us and help us with the mission feeding. Thank you so much!

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: Thank you so, so much!

Let me tell you, Bobbie's book is called *The Sisterhood*. It is amazing! Go grab a copy. It will really change your life. Go online. Set your alarm clock for 12:00. Pray! Pray and let's see what God will do.

Will you please help me thank my beautiful guest, Bobbie Houston? We love you so much! You're amazing.

And we love you. Thanks for being with us and we'll see you next time on *LIFE Today*. God bless!

Announcer: In his new book, *The Stream*, James Robison charts a clear path to personal revival and spiritual revolution in our culture, values, morals, and in government. Reverend Samuel Rodriguez says: "*The Stream* is a Christ-centered, Bible-based prescription for these troubled times." Dr. Ben Carson says: "This important book points out many ways that we can use our lives to preserve those freedoms that made America great." *The Stream* -- available now online and at retail bookstores.