

11/14/16
Week 47: Fall Mission Feeding
James and Betty Robison
Cyndy Feasel

James: Thank you very much! Welcome to LIFE Today. I'm James Robison. Betty and I are thrilled to share this time with you. If you keep up with anything in the news related to sports and sports injuries, we've heard some really, really sad stories. This one – now I want you to look at this. This is quite an impressive cover. Thomas Nelson published this: *After the Cheering Stops*, an NFL wife story of concussions, loss, and the faith that saw her through, and continues to see her through.

Cyndy Feasel is the writer of this story. Her husband, Grant, he played in the NFL for many years but he had concussions. And she is going to tell you what that was like. Would you welcome Cyndy to LIFE Today?

[Applause]

Cyndy, it's good to have you.

Cyndy: Thank you.

James: It's not fun to talk about the journey that you and your husband, Grant, experienced. I want you to tell us how it affected you. You wrote the book, *After the Cheering Stops*, you wrote it to try to help people who have been impacted by this pain that a lot of people don't even seem to be aware of how it carries out. Let me just ask you the question: he played how many years in the NFL?

Cyndy: Eleven years in the NFL.

James: And was with the Seattle Seahawks, right before they went on and won the Super Bowl. So he got to see a lot of preparation. Right?

Cyndy: Well, when he played they won the AFC West.

James: Well, that's progress.

Cyndy: Yes! That's progress! Absolutely.

James: Dallas used to win a lot of awards too!

[Laughter]

James: We're a little happier when some of those great things that are happening.

Okay, so did you know that he was suffering concussions while he was playing? And did you see any effect of that after they would happen other than maybe he's just uncomfortable?

Cyndy: Well, when he was in college is the first time that he said he had a concussion. I remember that he went out and I wondered what happened and after the game he said that he had his bell rung. I had no idea what that meant.

And he said, "Well, I had a concussion."

Well, to me I thought that meant it was serious because my sister had had a concussion when we were growing up and it was serious enough for her to be hospitalized.

But he said, "No. They just gave me some smelling salts and went back into the game. It's not a big deal. Don't worry."

So we didn't talk about concussions anymore until he got into the NFL. And I only remember him talking about one specific one and it was the last years of his career and he was in Denver at the Mile High Stadium. He went out for a series. That was before we had cell phones, so I didn't know what happened to him until he came home that night. He said everything went black.

And he said, "Somebody helped me over to the side and I didn't know where I was but I went back in because they needed me."

You know, he went back in. And he said that he'd just remembered seeing just what was in front of him, just enough to get the ball. He couldn't see anything else. And he could hear loud noises because that was one of the loudest stadiums to play football in. And so he said it was just excruciatingly painful because of the noise.

James: But did he perform? He could actually play?

Cyndy: He went out for a series and then he went back in.

James: Okay. Then played the rest of the game.

Cyndy: So I wondered what happened the whole time until he got home and he said he had a headache.

James: Could you see a difference in the way he played after?

Cyndy: I couldn't.

James: They must not have either or they wouldn't have left him in.

Cyndy: No, I couldn't. And he complained about a headache but he went on and continued to – there was no time out, in other words. He continued to play.

That was the only time in the NFL that I remember him talking about a concussion, specifically. But then he got a staph infection. That was later on. And after the staph infection he never seemed to be the same.

James: And that was related to some kind of a surgery he had, right? It had nothing to do with the concussion.

Cyndy: Right it was. It had nothing to do with a concussion but he had a knee problem and he got a staph infection and so he seemed to be different after that. He continued to want to play and he did play but when he retired, I remember, the night he retired he drank a bottle of Jack Daniels and I remember thinking something is not right. And he had been bringing –

James: Did he do this privately?

Cyndy: Privately. And he had been bringing alcohol into the home and drinking it after the kids were in bed, then taking the bottles out in the morning. I thought all of that was odd. He also was bringing in pills in little bags. So I wasn't sure exactly what it was but I knew that he was taking something to alleviate some of the pain that he was having. You've compounded the thing.

Betty: Do you think that the concussions added to the problems that came later?

Cyndy: I do. But I had no idea until after he died and the autopsy showed that he had CTE. I didn't even know what it was. I had heard it talked about a little bit but prior to that there was really not any knowledge that I had. I hadn't used the internet the way a lot of people were

using the internet and I didn't have Google, I guess you would say. So I didn't really have anything to go on.

And Grant had a friend that he played football with that died at 47 and he was diagnosed as having CTE. So Grant was already in the throes of addiction by then but it was that diagnosis of his friend that made him stop, I think, and start thinking himself that perhaps that's what he had.

James: Do you think the CTE – now he died and you -- How long was this journey with the two of you? Not knowing necessarily that these concussions had contributed to a total change in behavior, to a tendency to lean on alcohol, drugs. And that just became a part of his life, chronic, and totally committed to it. Now, how did that express toward you when you expressed concern for it?

Cyndy: When I would say I think you need to get some help he would say there's nothing wrong with me. He seemed to be more irritable. He couldn't perform some of the basic tasks. He was disorganized. All of the things that he had never been before, even when he had played football he was still able to do the basic things. And he held a job until the very end of his life. So he was still able to do a lot. But towards me he was aggressive and he was not happy with me, it seemed like, ever.

James: What do you mean? Verbally abusive?

Cyndy: Yes, and –

James: Physically sometimes?

Cyndy: Yes, sometimes. But not till the very end of his life.

James: You couldn't talk to anybody about this?

Cyndy: No. I think it's a classic case of the way everybody – not everybody but a lot of people are when they are in an abusive, verbally, emotionally – I think that it's embarrassing.

Betty: So you didn't relate any of this to possibly being from the –

Cyndy: No! I thought it was all because of the addiction. I thought it was *all* because of the addiction. I didn't know who to tell. I did start telling some friends at the end and wonderful people helped me through and I just want everybody to know that if you're going through something like that to reach out to find a friend, go to a church, get involved in a ministry or somehow reach out and get a lifeline because you need one.

James: And the spouse won't necessarily, or the person that's fighting the consequences or the addiction, compulsive behavior, won't necessarily even want to participate in what we call an intervention. Did you feel like he didn't want anybody to talk about what he was actually doing that was a concern, not just say the headaches might have carried on, but the way he was treating them, the alcohol, the drugs – that he wouldn't have wanted to discuss it. 'Cause did you ever ask him?

Cyndy: No! I begged him!

James: And we'd go for help.

Cyndy: Begged him! Begged him! And I remember crying on the floor begging him to get help. And he would say, "You don't know what I'm going through. You have no idea what I'm going through."

And I didn't! I had no idea!

James: You didn't really even take it back to the concussions. Are you seeing now that what you've done in the exposure to, let's say, the reality of what happened to you, that you began to seek. Have you found that this is actually something that becomes typical perhaps with people who've suffered concussions, that their actions become so out of balance that they can actually begin some kind of an addicted or compulsive or very unhealthy behavior? That's actually become a fact?

Cyndy: Yes! Because after he died I started pouring over all of the information and I remember looking on the Mayo Clinic's website to see what the CTE symptoms were and I just went – I couldn't believe it was just one thing after another that had been Grant's behavior patterns. And I had been journaling and by this time I had gotten into Christian therapy, which was fabulous for me as well. So, she had encouraged me to start journaling seven years prior to Grant's death. So I was just amazed at how I started looking back at our life and realizing that it had just basically played out with the CTE steps.

James: What was he like before that happened?

Cyndy: Awesome. I wouldn't have wanted anybody that wasn't awesome. He was great. He was tall and – the tallest guy I'd ever seen. And he was handsome. He was a California kid. He was from California.

James: What position did he play?

Cyndy: He played center. So he was huge.

James: Lot of responsibilities.

Cyndy: Yes! And he did all the extra points and field goals. So he had a lot of responsibility. He took his job very seriously. He had a full scholarship to Abilene Christian and he took it very serious.

James: Is that where you met him?

Cyndy: Yes.

Betty: Were these changes you saw in him, were they were gradual changes?

Cyndy: Gradual. Yes.

Betty: It wasn't just something obvious.

Cyndy: No. And I remember thinking maybe it was me, for a while. Maybe there's something wrong with me. And then he started saying, "It is you! There is something wrong with you."

So, I thought I had done something to irritate him and bring his behavior changes on.

James: Well now you've found out as you've investigated that a lot of people are going through this and maybe don't even know what's causing it. Okay, for Thomas Nelson and a great writer, Mike Yorkey, to join with you to help because, you know, he's a New York Times bestselling author. And then you've got a forward by another bestselling author –

Cyndy: Dr. Daniel Amen.

James: Yeah! And Jeff Kemp, Jack Kemp's family member.

The thing is that they've said such wonderful things. For Thomas Nelson to be interested, they must believe that you had something to say to the families and to people who need to realize what may be going on so that they do what? What do you want them to do?

Cyndy: Get monitored. Find a clinic somewhere that it can at least agree with you, that your symptoms are CTE. There's no cure for it because you can't even find out you have it until you're autopsied; you've got to be dead. But they know some steps and they know some

preventative things. Dr. Daniel Amen has done a lot of wonderful studies and he has helped with supplements and just a change of lifestyle that has helped some people have a better life.

James: So you're advising families as much as anything here. You've got some issues that could go back to this. It's not like the person has suddenly just become compulsively addicted to substances. Something is going on that they're trying to medicate, they're trying to treat, ineffectively and damaging way. So do you feel like – I know you're at Gateway church now. I know that you appreciate our Equip program, everything related to freedom. And you want to help people. So if somebody said okay, we've got some things going on, and I don't want everything to just blow up. I want to help, but I want to do it the right way. If they wanted to ask you some questions, which they can get the answers, many of them, here in the book *After the Cheering Stops* but if they wanted to communicate with you, with either Facebook or social media, could they do that?

Cyndy: Yes! I have a Facebook page right now and I'm going to have a website soon. My Facebook page is Cyndy Feasel. It is already exciting.

James: It is being visited and you've actually try to deal with people. You have a heart to minister to people who are facing the challenges that devastated your life and your family, and you believe could have been avoided or dealt with far more effectively.

Cyndy: Yes.

James: Don't have to reach that place. Let's just pray.

Father, I pray for Cyndy right now, but Lord, I pray for everyone watching who has anyone in the family right now that's being defeated. It could go back to some kind of injury. We know that so many of our military right now that are suffering tragically because of the syndrome that follows the traumatic experiences they've been through. Lord, we know so often these miracles come about, of healing, because someone gets involved that has some insight and wisdom. We pray that happens. And we're praying you will bring healing to people right now that are concerned like Cyndy was, and like she is for others. So God, please, please touch lives today. In Jesus' name.

Listen, there's a telephone number there and we've told you about Cyndy's website we put there, the Facebook, how you could maybe ask her a question. Maybe you're in the area; maybe she could minister to you and help you, because that's what our church does. It's what all the churches want to do. But if you need someone to pray for you, there's a telephone number right there on the screen. It's always a prayer line.

In a few minutes I'm going to show you where it becomes a miracle line, a help line to an impossible situation immediately corrected. But see, that's what happens many times when people call and find someone to pray with. There's actually, in many instances, experienced some of the same concerns or maybe the challenges that you have. When you find someone that can identify with you, they're able to be really, really helpful. So don't hesitate to call.

If you don't feel like you have a personal relationship with the Lord, we've got a beautiful Bible study that I wrote based upon my own experience growing up without a father, *Knowing God as Father*.

One of the things I'm trying to show the church right now, Cyndy, is the fact that there's a perfect father and those of us who know him through faith in Christ should look like the family that represents the Father. And I'm really encouraging that. We're concerned about our future and Jesus says we're his body. The Bible makes it clear in the New Testament, we're the body of Christ if we're Christians. And he says the government is on his shoulders, Jesus. And where are his shoulders today? Christians! And you have to wonder, Christians, have you really shouldered the leadership? Even the government, which is on his shoulders? Or did we hand it off to other shoulders?

You can't put the word of God on a cart. You've got to carry it on sanctified shoulders. And we live as yielded Christians filled with his spirit. And we deliver the word and the life he offers on sanctified shoulders, on lives yielded to his fullness. That's what we're supposed to be doing. And that's what you want to encourage people to do by reaching out with what you've experienced, what you believe could help people, and you're doing your part in God's heart in his body.

Would you say thanks to Cyndy? You understand what she's been through.

[Applause]

You understand the challenge. We're going to be praying for you. Alright?

Here is the book. You can get it online or in the bookstores. I believe it will be a tremendous blessing.

Betty, we're going to take – and I don't want you to miss this – you'll see I think – I know this week you're going to see me about 25 years ago. You too, because you still look the same. But you're going to notice right off, there's something different about my hair. Something's happened to it. But what you're going to see – I think you're going to see when God began to move my heart in ways that I never ever really imagined. But I've never gotten over it, never

will. As a matter of fact, it just ever increases. But in the face of incredible pain and challenge, I watched the miracle of love when it's released. Watch! I think you'll be captivated by what I saw, Betty saw -- captured our hearts forever.

On the mission field

Sheila: I'm here in what is a small part of a massive grave yard. I've never seen anything like this in my life. But this part I'm standing in, these are all children. And the thing that has touched us as a team so deeply is the way that the parents have tried to honor their children in some way by leaving something on the grave, whether it's just little booties, a little toy that meant something to the child. Some parents have literally, all they had was like an empty water bottle but they just wanted to leave something to say this is my child, and they were loved.

And James, you'll remember being here. You were here and you remember the impact this place had on you. What would horrify you is how it's grown.

James: Dear God! I'm in the midst of a thousand children's graves. [weeping] Most of them didn't have to die. They died, like this little kid here, that didn't have the nutrition. We're told that millions face death right now in Southern Africa, where I'm kneeling in the midst of children's graves.

Sheila: We're on the edge of such an epidemic again. In fact, just behind me they've dug four little fresh graves and there's no children in them yet but they're getting ready because they know they're coming. That's why we're here and that's why we need to do something *now*. We need to be able to go into these villages and feed these children and bring hope to these parents so that these four little holes back here stay empty.

We need your help and we need it now.

End of clip

In the studio

James: Oh Lord, thank you that we can help.

Sheila, I want to thank you. Sheila Walsh, I'm so glad you are kind of sharing the load with us and the missionaries. You're really a blessing, Sheila.

Betty, you'll remember when we walked in that graveyard. I look back and that's 25 years ago. I didn't walk away and forget it. We came home and told you and the missionaries said, "We really need help and I know you would like to stay here with us, James. But please go back and ask for help so we can stay here and be effective.

And we came back and we presented to you, people just like you, maybe some of you remember it that long ago because some of you have been so faithful. You're miracle workers in my eyes. And we came back and we shared it and it was like you wanted to reach out with the hands of Jesus and the arms of a loving father, and try to pick up as many of these who were suffering and facing death as you could. And we began –

Think about this, Betty! There were a thousand or more had already buried right there. Now then, when she's there there's many thousands. But we have saved the lives, talking to you, of eleven million children according to African countries, leadership reports. I mean, that's a lot of love, as far as those families and those children. Many of them have now grown up to be leaders in their community. Teachers, professors, law enforcement officers, government. They were dying and our viewers saved them. And right now there's a real crisis in many areas of Africa and our missionaries are right in the middle of it. We've got 400,000 kids that are facing terrible malnutrition and then we found out that if we will feed when they're stabilized there in school, if we'll feed them in school then we educate their little minds because their minds are keen to think. They've got nourishment.

So, Betty, our viewers have been a part of a miracle and we need right now their help to feed 400,000 more for the next months and I'm believing they'll do it.

Betty: I'm believing you're going to join with us and make that difference. You know, as we know personally, it's hard to stand by a single grave of a loved one but can you imagine a mother burying child after child after child. It's got to be so overwhelming, so breath taking, so heart crushing. We can make the difference. They don't have to lose their children like this. So please join with us and let's feed these precious little ones.

James: Betty, and I think a miracle answer to prayer. Several of our friends have come together who are able and they put up a \$400,000 grant, knowing that this is a real serious situation right now. They'll match what you give. Thirty, fifty, a hundred dollars, we can feed three, five, or ten children for the next months. If you give now, let's say you gave fifty dollars to feed five, it will immediately jump to ten. And it would be wonderful if you could give the hundred dollars and then we'd be able to feed twice the number that you normally can.

And then, Betty, there's something I think that's so incredible for people to know. \$1400 will feed an entire school. This is where the kids have kind of gotten over the main hump. Now they need to develop. \$1400 will feed a whole school for three months.

I want you to take your bankcard, go to lifetoday.org or dial the number and make the largest gift you can because you're going to be saving the lives of so many precious children. You're going to stop that death cycle that was represented in that graveyard.

We want to send you, I'm telling you, Lisa Bevere is one of the greatest communicators, teachers, and writers we have ever known in our life. She's been to the mission field. John has been to the mission field. Lisa's been several times. She just won't stop going. And we want to send you *Without Rival*. This is phenomenal. *Without Rival*. Embrace your identity and purpose in an age of confusion and comparison. And comparison! Comparing yourself to one another, you'll be void of wisdom, void of understanding. Let Lisa help you.

This again, then this is – We have got a eleven grandchildren. Most of them are grown up now. We're fixing to have a bunch of great-grandkids. I know. *The Complete Illustrated Children's Bible*. This is absolutely indescribably beautiful for your children or your grandchildren. And the beautiful bronze. I want you to listen for the opportunity, what your gift will do. And know this! It's going to be doubled! Whatever you do, it's going to be doubled. Whatever you do! You make that call. You go online. You make that gift. You make a check, make it to Life but it's going to be doubled because of love. Thank you for making the gift. Thanks for caring.

Begin video clip

Announcer: In remote and impoverished villages of Africa children are suffering, desperately in need of life saving food, facing death by starvation.

LIFE's mission feeding program is there, ready now to feed and care for children in crisis areas of Angola, Mozambique, and Sudan. With all of our previous reserves gone, and Angola facing a record food shortage due to crop failure, we need to immediately replenish our funding and supplies for our feeding programs.

As an answered prayer, a group of *LIFE's* friends have set a \$400,000 matching gift challenge for mission feeding! This means your gift today could have a double impact! \$30 for three children will be doubled to help feed six children! \$50 to help five children will be doubled to save ten children! And \$100 for ten children will be doubled to help feed 20 children! And don't forget, your \$1400 gift to sponsor a school will now be doubled to feed children in two schools!

With your gift of any amount, we'll send you *Without Rival* by author Lisa Bevere. With your double impact gift of \$100 or more please request *The Complete Illustrated Children's Bible*. Finally, please consider a gift of \$1000, which will now be doubled to help feed 200 children and you may request our beautiful Majesty bronze sculpture.

Please call, write, or make your gift online today!

End of clip

In the studio

James: I want to thank you for letting us go back. I wish I had that black hair. [Laughing] I'm glad I've got some hair.

You're still just as beautiful. I don't know how to show them how beautiful you were back then, but you still are. But I've changed a little, but my heart hasn't changed.

Thank you. Thank you for sharing what I believe is on God's heart and extending his hands. Thanks for your help.

I want you to pray for Cyndy to be real effective helping people. She can be a part of Gateway's outreach team, because she cares. *After the Cheering Stops*, it's in the bookstores. If you say, "James, we've got some of these issues we're facing. Would you mind sending us her book? I think we might be facing some of the same things." We'll be glad to, just ask for it. Okay?

How about helping us feed somebody while we help you? Because that's what we want to do.

Would you join us saying thanks again to Cyndy for being here?

[Applause]

Thank all of you! Thanks for watching. Encourage your friends to watch LIFE Today. Thank you for helping us feed these kids. Thanks for giving them life!

[Applause]