

12/05/16
Week 50: Mission Feeding
Stephen Arterburn
Randy Robison and Sheila Walsh

Randy: Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm Randy Robison. My parents, James and Betty Robison are taking some well-deserved time off. But we're glad that you're here. I'm also glad that Sheila Walsh is here, always good to see you.

Sheila: We have a lot of testosterone in the audience today, which says we have an amazing guest with a lot to share. In fact, it is kind of fun for me because our guest today and I go way, way, way, way, way back. So please, would you help me welcome Steve Arterburn?

Randy: Steve, good to see you.

Stephen: Thank you.

Randy: You've got a new book called *Take Your Life Back*. Did you lose control of your life at some point?

Stephen: Many times.

Randy: Tell us the message here that you want to discuss.

Stephen: I think a lot of people spend most of their life rather than responding to what God wants for our lives or what we would like we are reacting either to a person or something in our past. If we've been hurt or if we've hurt ourselves or maybe we're in a relationship that's kind of a relational dictatorship, we're reacting all of the time; maybe to these hurts or to this pressure that someone has put on us. So we're trying to help people go from that reactive life to a responsive life.

The best example I've got of this is my little boy, Solomon is 10 years old. Last week -- I wish I'd had this in the book but it just happened last week. He came home and he said, "Dad, a bully called me a dirty name, three words."

And I said, "Okay. So what did you do?"

He said, "Well, I waited a couple of minutes and I went over and I said, 'Are you okay?'"

I said, "You did that?"

He said, "Yeah."

I said, "What did he say?"

"He said, 'I don't want to talk to you.' "

I said, "What did you do then?"

He said, "Well, I waited about five minutes for him to cool down and I went back over there and I said, 'Hey, are you okay? Do you need a friend?'"

And he said, "Dad, I became a friend of a bully today at school."

Now a ten year old doesn't have a lot of baggage so he is responding to a need underneath. I think that's what God wants us to do. He's still mean to his little sister so he is not a perfect child.

[Laughter]

But he was able to respond. And if we could do that rather than always trying to defend ourselves or react or be defensive or whatever, our lives would be totally different.

So what we've helped people do is go to that responsive place where you can live out of your real self rather than the false self. A lot of people, they're ashamed of who they are. They feel inferior. So when somebody says I love you, it doesn't mean anything because they're thinking well, if you only knew me you wouldn't really love me. And so many people in the Christian community don't feel love.

So we've encouraged people to be who they are, to enjoy who they are, to live full of God's grace rather than judgment of themselves or by other people.

Sheila: One of greatest lessons I've learned in my marriage, Barry and I've been married almost 22 years, is that if I find myself reacting it's usually not about him, it's usually not about -- because it feels out of control and often out of proportion to what's actually happened. I think that's one of the greatest lessons I've been learning over the last few years. When I react to stop and ask God, what is that really about?

Stephen: I think a lot of people are in a relationship where they're wondering is there somebody else's head on my shoulder? Because this doesn't really match up and if we don't resolve those past hurts then we drag those around with us. I was watching this film on the Exxon Valdez and there was this bird just covered with sludge. I thought man, that is what I used to look like inside and it wasn't oil, it was shame. And shame controlled everything that I did. I'd been promiscuous. I'd paid for an abortion and when I woke up I realized what I had done. I thought my job was to show God that nobody had felt worse than I did about what I'd done.

Then I realized, that's what Satan wants. That's what Satan wants from everybody out here to feel guilt and shame and hold you down. But God, I actually heard Chuck Swindoll say this and it changed my life. He said, "Your past just ended one second ago. So why are you living in it? If it ended a second ago, why don't you accept Christ's grace?"

So we've tried to provide a path and a process to do that and we encourage everybody, if you're going to *Take Your Life Back*, you have to be your own decider. You can't let somebody else decide for you.

Sheila: What do you mean by that?

Stephen: Well, let's just take a single mom who is desperate and a guy comes along and gives her attention. And so out of desperation she chooses to marry him and he is abusive and he is unhealthy. She doesn't have any friends to tell her not to. She didn't decide, desperation decided. So we've got to get to a place where we decide.

Or you're in a relational dictatorship where somebody else says, "Well, hey you're supposed to submit to me. I make all the decisions and you submit." Well, if you look at the whole passage in Ephesians 5:21 it says that we need to, out of reverence for Christ, "submit ourselves to one another." So there's mutuality there so that each of us decides for our lives. But some people are so beaten down other people are making the choices.

And then everybody needs to be their own defender. You have value. You need to defend the value of your life. You're fearfully and wonderfully made so defend that value.

Sheila: Let me ask you about that because I think of the numbers of women that I meet every single weekend who have perhaps been sexually abused. When they're children it leaves such a stigma on your heart. How do you begin to build better foundational stones for your life so you're able to defend?

Stephen: Well, we talk about that. People say, "Well, you have to forgive." No, you don't do that first. I think you have to grieve the loss of what that person took from you: Innocence, purity, all of those kinds of things. You have to grieve that and that means you get angry, you get sad, you go back there and you get rid of it so that you're not feeling it every day.

Once you grieve that then you can come to acceptance. Okay, this is my life. This is what I have to deal with and maybe, maybe I can help somebody else go through this.

Now I'm ready to forgive. I tell people all the time, you can start to build the bridge of forgiveness over the waters of anger and rage while they're still going. You can start to build that bridge.

But a lot of times in Christian circles we say, "Well, forgive and forget." You don't want to forgive and forget. And forgiveness is a process. Sometimes you get triggered after you have forgiven. But really, I believe it is grieving, accepting, forgiving and doing the work.

We were talking at dinner about there are so many excuses that people use not to do the hard work. I say to people all the time, one of the saddest things in the Christian community is you'll be going along, I've done this, every time you read a Bible verse is just jumps off the page, every time you pray you think God's got the phone to his ear. You just have this spiritual high, and you think, I don't have to do any work anymore. Look at me! I'm this spiritual giant but you still have to do the tough work to build the character that's inside.

Randy: Let me ask because you talk about forgiveness but I'm wondering if someone has done something that makes you feel like they've taken a piece of you, taken your life, kind of wrecked your life, is it possible to take your life back in a sense without forgiveness?

Stephen: Well, I don't think so. I think some people get hung up on they're not going to forgive until the other person earns their forgiveness or asks for their forgiveness. Forgiveness is just for you. You do it...

Randy: The most abusive ones are never going to ask you for forgiveness.

Stephen: No, they're not. In fact, I've had people tell me about how they call somebody and say, "Listen. I forgive you." And the person goes, "What? Are you nuts? I didn't do that." Horrible situation. So we have to let things go. We have to let God take care of it.

And then the other thing we have to do is in the process be the developer of our own lives. Don't wait for the miracle. Don't wait for God to do what God's waiting for you to do. Don't wait for somebody else to do it for you. You be the developer of your life.

I just heard of a church in Fort Collins, Colorado where the church took over a strip joint. And Betsy -- Betsy, when they took it over they said, "What are you going to do about my \$150,000 salary that goes away when you take over this place?" The church took Betsy in and last month Betsy graduated from the Colorado Christian University...

Randy: This is a stripper?

Stephen: Yeah. And now she ministers in the church where she used to strip because she said, "If anything is going to happen in my life I've got to do this. I've got to go to school. I've got to get a degree." That's what I want other people who are sitting around waiting for something to happen to say, you've got to pick up your life, you've got to take your life back and make it happen.

Sheila: One of the things -- my son is almost 20 now and one the greatest things I think he and I have learned together is I think children, and all of us have an innate desire for life to be fair. And one of the things I've said to him is, "Baby, fair doesn't live here but Jesus does."

Stephen: "Fair is where pigs win ribbons," is what I say. That's about the only fair you get.

Randy: I think hers is a little more spiritual sounding.

Stephen: Hers is more spiritual.

Sheila: I actually liked his. Actually, I liked that.

Stephen: Well, it was a spiritual pig.

Sheila: To me, forgiveness is God's gift to us to live in a world that's not fair because I used to think well, we have to forgive to be good Christians. I actually think it is one of Christ's most redeeming gifts. Plus Satan has nothing in his arsenal to combat forgiveness. It's totally a work of the cross.

Stephen: You know, Satan uses everything. And having told my story about abortion, I'll often have people say to me, "Well, you know I had an abortion at 16" or "I had an abortion at 14." And I'll say to them, "Did you really? Did you at 16 get in a car and drive somewhere and have that abortion? Or did someone tell you you needed to or they pressured you or your parents did it?"

I find so many people with all this shame and they had an abortion done to them rather than they, just out of the clear blue chose it. But whether you chose it or not God's grace is sufficient for that. And there's nothing worse for a man to destroy the life that he creates because his job after conception is to provide and to protect for that life. I felt like the worst human being ever. Like God couldn't forgive me. But he does forgive. You can't out-sin him.

And years later, I was able to adopt a little girl from a couple who did not have an abortion. Because that's what God does. He gives us back the very things that we mess up. Now a lot of people don't want to hear about that kind of God because they believe you should pay for everything forever. And that's not the God that I understand anymore.

Randy: I have just done a study on the sacrifice, the whole sacrificial system, the different types of sacrifices and the sins that they didn't atone for but what I've seen throughout history is that we have a tendency to want to make us the ones that are the redeemers in the situation. If I can just sacrifice enough. If I can just give God enough. If I can feel enough... but that's the beauty of Christ's sacrifice. It's the only one that covers everything. So a lot of things that I see going on in the church to try to atone for our past is a big waste of time. He's saying get on with it.

Stephen: All of your effort gets you to the bottom side of the rug on the floor and God's got to get you to heaven. You just have a higher view of yourself if you think that you can earn his grace or you deserve his grace. That's what I love about it. I think that's why I'm so grateful to be living a Christian life because I've seen the other side and felt it.

Sheila: The fantastic thing too, Steve, you wrote this book with Dr. David Stoop and you guys have this phenomenal outreach across the country with New Life Radio, which I don't know if you guys have found it in your area yet but it is so great. You have so many resources that you offer daily to people. This book is just the latest.

Did you write out of seeing a particular need when people kept calling in and they're saying the same thing over and over and? You thought we need to put this in their hands.

Stephen: Well, we were just together saying what is the biggest need? And we really felt like in the Christian community the biggest need is for people to live the faith they've been talking about and it's not their life anymore. They're living somebody else's life or they think that this is what they're supposed to be doing and they're faking it.

So Dave and I, we're both recovering people and the 11th step says "practicing these things in all of your affairs." So we've tried to provide a way for people to practice this; the practical faith that has a value and a meaning to literally transform your life. That's what's so great about

new life and what Dave and I get to do. We're not just trying to get people to feel better. In fact, we want you to feel bad. We want you to feel so bad you want to change your life -- you want to transform your life. And we get to see that happen all the time.

Sheila: Do you still struggle in your own life with that? Do you still find yourself at times reacting instead of responding?

Stephen: I think if you talk to my wife she might mention something that happened yesterday.

Sheila: I know your lovely wife. Yes!

Stephen: So the thing is we're all imperfect. We're never going to arrive. But what do you do? You have to find a way to repair things. And that's another thing. You don't want to just keep going down a road where you're separate or whatever. You have to find a way to humble yourself and say, "Will you forgive me?" Here's what I'm willing to do to make it right. Then it's so painful making it right you think a little harder the next time you want to react.

But I've got to tell you something. I'm about 90% more responsive than I was 20 years ago, I can guarantee you that. But still I'm going to be messing up till I die.

Randy: Here's my question because I know right where this is going to end up for a lot of people. I can tell when someone else is being reactive. I may not see it in my own life but I can darn well tell it in your life. What should one do if they realize that that's where the other person is coming from? Is there anything we can do to move them into a better place?

Stephen: Well, you can move yourself into a better place by asking some people to give you feedback. One time I called my friends together and I said, "Look, tell me the three worst things about me and then the three best things so that I can hear the worst things." They did it.

So we need to have openness and honesty with each other and we need to say to people, "You have the right to speak truth into my life." The more famous people get, the more powerful they get the fewer folks are willing to speak truth into their lives. So many of us we think we're famous and so nobody –

[Laughter]

-- we don't listen anymore. So it's important that we are -- I call it the reflective life. If you're not willing to sit back and reflect, whoa, how did that go? What did I do that kind of produced some friction or distance? If I'm not going to do that you're going to go through life kind of like an idiot. People are going to see you, they're going to not really like being around you and you

think you're just doing great because you've never taken the time to do what the great prophets said, "Is not this thing in my hand a lie?" That's what he said about the idols of the day. So many people have things in their hands that are a lie.

When you *Take Your Life Back* you don't have room for those things that are counterfeits because you are so wanting to help other people take their lives back. You're so grateful you're reaching out to other people.

Sheila: The profound thing that Solomon, your boy who is only ten did was part of my daily prayer is every day I ask God, give me eyes to see what I'll miss, give me ears to hear behind what somebody...

Stephen: You do!

Sheila: Like the way Solomon did; I think there's nothing that so diffuses anger than love. To ask the simple question, "Hey! Are you okay?"

Stephen: I tell you the most powerful thing in the Bible is the phrase, "And if you have not love." How many people are doing all of this stuff trying to justify but there is not an ounce of Christian love in what they do. And I say, if you want to take your life back you have to have some of that love for yourself, you have to have compassion for yourself. Most people are more compassionate about a dog on the side of the road that's been hit than they are their own lives. So we're calling people to have compassion enough, love themselves enough to take their life back and make something of it.

When you are the decider and the defender and the developer of your life you can let God be the director; and that's what we're asking people to do.

Randy: I'd like to ask people that are watching right now that are interested in Steve's book in learning how to *Take Your Life Back*, something resonated with you and you're thinking maybe I should look into that. I'm going to show you how by taking you somewhere elsewhere where we're helping some people take their lives back -- literally take their lives back. Sheila, there was a woman you met. Tell us about this woman we're about to watch.

Sheila: This woman, she had buried two children; she has four children left. But what I discovered was that you can find Christ showing up in the most bitter place. We're going to let you know how you can get a hold of Steve's book but first of all, we really want you to watch this.

On the mission field

Open captioning:

>> As a mother, I feel like a failure because two of my children died.

Sheila: Armeda is a dedicated and hard-working mother but all the work she can find barely produces enough for one tiny meal a day.

Open Captions:

>> It start with lack of food, malnutrition, then leads to other terrible diseases. It's really hard for me to think back to the times when they passed away.

Sheila: We were amazed that she could go on like this. But then we noticed the name across her forehead. When we asked her about it she lit up.

Open Captions:

>> Jesus is the only hope we have. When we go to sleep, we pray, "Jesus, thank you for sustaining us for another day." It is our belief that whenever we sleep, whenever we wake, we depend on Him. That is why I wear His name on my head.

Sheila: Her prayer is a prayer of faith. This is a woman of faith. I just think what an incredible opportunity because you and I, we get the opportunity to be the answer to her prayer. What a joy!

There are women like this all across these villages. They are trusting Jesus for everything. So why don't you and I decide we will be the answer to her prayer? We can make her life a little easier as she continues to honor Christ with every single breath she takes.

Open Captions:

>> My children are a gift from God, and my hope is that I can provide for those I have left so they can grow up and make it in society.

End of clip

In the studio

Randy: She wants to provide her children with food. She's got Jesus across her forehead but let me tell you, she's got the mind of Christ. She has her hope in the right place.

But we can be an answer to her prayers. You and I can answer that prayer to just feed her children and so many more children. Sheila, I can't imagine just sitting there with her.

Sheila: She was beautiful! I said to her at the end, "I wish I had two hours to sit at your feet to learn from you."

It's so easy to see a woman like that and think well, that's just another woman in Africa. No, she was my sister in Christ. She is somebody -- I said to her, "Do you always have enough food for all of you?"

She said, "No. Some days I only have enough for the children. So I'll give them something and I will go to bed with no food." She said, "But when I lay my head down on the pillow at night this is what I say, 'The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.'"

If you're like me, we eat too much. Here's brothers and sisters around the world that are just asking, could you help us just give our child one meal? It's so doable. You and I can do this. Do you know that for \$30 we can provide enough food for three children? -- \$50 for five, \$100 for ten children. What an opportunity to be able to do that. Just don't go to your favorite coffee shop for a couple of days and you'll literally change the lives of some people.

The amazing thing is we have some friends here, some you know, Randy and they've said, "Listen. For this period of time we're going to put up \$400,000 so that every single gift that somebody gives it's going to be doubled."

If you can give \$30 for three children, suddenly it's going to be \$60 for six children. What a phenomenal gift that God is giving us to make a difference.

Randy: You're not talking about just one meal or one day or one week or even a month -- it's three months! It's crazy. The systems we've been doing it for so long and the African nations have credited us with saving millions of lives, and we also know through the outreaches we have spiritually saved millions of lives because they have come to know Christ through our outreaches. But we have such an efficient system set up in Africa right now to go into the places where the droughts hit, the famines hit, the emergencies are. We are ready to go and take food.

We need your support to make that happen. So we'll keep expanding like we have been over the years, as you keep giving because what we are doing is so life-changing and so beautiful, and so much the gospel of Christ in word and in deed.

So go to the phones, go online, we need to hear from you today. We've got some gifts we'd like to send you. But the most important thing is that you let us know that you're going to stand with us as we take this mission feeding outreach to mothers across the world.

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

On the mission field

Betty: I looked at this line of children here and I thought how can you not be touched? God's touched. He cares about them.

I just visualized some of my grandchildren's faces on these children and I think what if that was one of them? I would want somebody to come in and give them a bowl of soup. I would want somebody to care about them.

Well, these children matter. They matter to God a whole lot. I know that your heart must be touched as you look at these lines of children, look at their little innocent faces. They don't have a choice. They depend on someone. Can that someone be us? I want it to be me.

Thank you so much for caring and sharing and having a heart to reach out to those that are needy because that's God's heart and that's good.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: Thank you so much. It will make such a difference. Just miss that movie this weekend; it probably is rotten anyway. For any gift you send in we would love to send you Steve's book, *Take Back Your Life*. One of my best friends Henry Cloud says, "This message can help millions."

Would you help me welcome our guest -- I mean not welcome him, he's leaving now. Would you help me thank our guest?

[Applause]

Randy: Do call, do go online and if you want Steve's book we ask you to specifically ask for it. And most of all, thank you for being a part of *LIFE Today*. Join us again tomorrow.