

12/15/16
Week 51: Mission Feeding
Randy Robison and Sheila Walsh
Liz Curtis Higgs

Sheila: Hi! Welcome! I'm Sheila Walsh here with Randy Robison and I am so excited about today's show. I'd read this woman's books long before I ever met her and the fact that I actually get to call her friend now is just a pure delight. She writes amazing books. She writes Scottish historical fiction.

Randy: Oh, boy!

Sheila: Yes, indeed! Right up my alley. Would you please help me welcome the wonderful Liz Curtis Higgs?

Liz: Thank you. God bless you.

Sheila: You know one of the highest accolades I could give you is that my mom, who passed recently, but she was so picky about getting facts correct. Like if I wrote in a book it was in June when something happened. She would say, "Actually it was May the 14th." But when I sent her your Scottish fiction that was written in the area where we live, where we grew up, mom said, "She got every single detail right!" That's a lot of work, Lizzie. How did you do that?

Liz: Oh, I love to do that. First of all, I got to go to your beautiful home country, spend a lot of time there doing all the walking about research and then I met a beautiful Scottish book seller who was my first reader of all my novels. So he would fix things. He would say to me, "You have your bird tweeting in the afternoon and it only tweets in the morning."

Sheila: Only a Scottish woman would know that. Yes! -- Just a morning tweeter. Wow!

Liz: So he was a huge help to me, really to get it right. So really, the credit goes to Benny but I tried hard.

Sheila: But your books have -- I mean they've helped so many of us. They've enthralled us. Your tales are wonderful! And then your *Bad Girls of the Bible*, and all sorts of stuff. But I have to tell you I love this new book of yours. This is a little different for you in a way; isn't it?

Liz: It is because usually I'm telling stories. Bad girls, really bad girls, slightly bad girls; we're telling their stories. The novels of course are all about stories.

But this one is favorite verses of a thousand different women. They all voted. Some voted for two or three because who could ever just pick one, right? I tallied them up and these are the 31 favorites. I had to really fight the urge to vote myself and push some over the top. But I love them all and learned from them all. Some are favorites we know well and some were not new to me as wow, I never read that before, I just had never parked on it before.

Randy: Since you couldn't vote on the initial one by your own rules, can you maybe vote out of the 31 that made the book and tell us some that are most impactful in your life?

Sheila: In fact, I think it is maybe even the first one kind of ties in a little bit to your story because I know more about your story than maybe you do.

Liz: Too much! Sheila, you know way too much of my story. Second Corinthians 5:17 was the first verse I ever learned. We're going back 34 years now when this wild woman with a wild past met a wild and wonderful Jesus. When I stumbled on this verse it was like, "Ah! That one is for me!" You ever do that? You open the Bible and this one has got my name written in the margin. You're shocked it isn't like lifting off the page with bright letters. But I thought, this is it: Therefore, if anyone is in Christ he's a new creation. The old things passed away, behold -- I love that! It's only in the N.A.S.B. but I love the "behold!" It is kind of like "ta da!"

[Laughter]

Behold new things have come. That was the best news for me as an F.B.G., a Former Bad Girl to think that I wouldn't have to carry the weight of my sin the whole of my life; that Jesus would in fact not just clean me up, not just freshen me up but he would make me new -- entirely new!

Sheila: How did you get that, Liz because I know some of your background and you're a rock jock in radio? Where did you find yourself in a place where suddenly that became true for you?

Liz: Well, I had to find myself in the bottom of a pit. Some people are smarter than that. They start down in the pit and go, "Wow! This is a pit. I'm out!"

I said, "Oh, baby! It's a pit!" And down and down and down I went. The party was happening at the bottom of the pit. But then you get to the bottom of the pit and you realize this party is really not happening. Everybody there is stoned or drunk or strung out and not -- they don't really care, they're not really friends.

And at the end of the day, in the morning, when you wake up next to somebody you don't know, hung over with something you don't remember drinking, this is when you say, "Is this all there is? Is this all life is?" Because I couldn't think of a good reason to keep going if this is all there is.

Well, the happy news about hitting bottom is you're already halfway out because you have to hit bottom. I pray for parents with prodigals. I say, "I'm going to have a very weird prayer for you to pray. Pray they hit bottom." Now that's a hard prayer. No parent wants that but for most of us if we're naturally rebellious we don't look up until we've gotten as far out as we can go, like the prodigal son in the pig pen.

Sheila: How did Jesus find you, Liz?

Liz: He found me a mess but he used two wonderful people who had just come out of a pit themselves as his ambassadors. They showed me Jesus, Sheila. They loved me. They hugged me into the kingdom. They made Jesus real to me. He wasn't just a man in a book; he was living and breathing and he was my savior.

So they loved me and loved me until I invited myself to their church because I wanted to see if anybody else was as weird as them. They were so weird, y'all! They were so holy and fun! I didn't know you could be funny and be a Christian. It seemed illegal.

[Laughter]

But they were funny, loving, grace-filled. Not perfect! They would tell you that themselves. But boy, they loved Jesus. And they loved his Word. They had Bibles in every room of the house. They had an ashtray in every room of the house -- a Bible in every room. They knew the word. They talked about the word. They were brand-new Christians, Sheila. They hadn't known Jesus more than three or four months when they came into my life bubbling over as only a new believer can. I needed to see that enthusiasm, God-in-me. I needed to see what that looked like.

Randy: I get the hitting bottom. I get the enthusiasm in someone that shows that they care about you but how did you know that there was actually a transformation that took place that was only attributable to Jesus Christ and not just you turning your life around on your own or some other program?

Liz: And I so didn't turn my life around though my father thought so. He always said, "You pulled yourself up by your bootstraps!" Its like, "Daddy, I don't even wear boots." It's not about boots. I actually have boots on tonight. Won't talk about that.

Sheila: Very nice boots!

Liz: I knew -- I knew that this was a power greater than me because I had a lot to lay down. And as I laid down each thing, the whole sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll bit, as I laid them down I didn't have the desire to pick them back up. Well, that could only be God! I'd been out in that place for ten years. So only the Lord could do that.

And his Word; I finally understood that the Bible wasn't just a collection of good ideas and interesting stories. That it was the inspired, holy, perfect Word of God. When I read it, it was like he was reading to me. That's I think the fun part is finding out from people what are your favorite verses? And I always wanted to know why, and there was always a story attached; that it got me through this really tough time, that it taught me something, that it sustained my faith. So that's the joy of it to me. So yeah!

Sheila: But you have unpacked some of the verses I was very familiar with. You've kind of gone in and you've just dug a little deeper. Most of us, I think the first verse that I learned in Sunday school was: Be still and know that I am God. I would sit around as a teenager and try and be still. I was horrible at it.

Randy: Now these Sunday School teachers use that one on purpose.

Sheila: You dug in a little deeper with that verse.

Liz: Well, all you have to do, as often is the case with the word, is back up a couple of verses so you're into the setting of what's going on.

God's people were really quick to fight. They wanted to win on their own strength and that's why God said to them, "Be still." There's a comma after it so we're supposed to pause. "Be still" -- also translated cease and desist, stop striving, stop fighting.

So suddenly this idea of still or sitting still or laying in a hammock with a lemonade and a novel, that's not what he's saying. He's saying, "Stop trying to do this yourself."

Randy, it's just what you said earlier about knowing that that transformation was of God and not of us. When God says "be still" he's really saying stop trying to do this yourself "and know" -- know in the deepest sense -- "I am God." Nobody else -- certainly not us. "Be still."

So we can still run around, Sheila and be still in our spirits, not striving, not trying, not working, not angsting -- I'm not even sure that's a word -- not struggling, resting in who he is.

Randy: And not trying to make up for what you think God should be doing but let him be God and actually do it himself.

Liz: I love you used it because I do sometimes say "I need to let God be God." But the thing is he already is God. [Laughing] Whether I make him so or not, he is already God.

Sheila: The thing I love though about the way you help us unpack that verse, Liz, I think of people watching right now and they're maybe struggling in their marriage, maybe struggling in their finances, they're maybe struggling in their health and the most natural thing is to try to do something. But I think the grace that you offer through that verse is in the midst of it you can still find peace and rest in the fact that he is God.

Liz: "Be still," you don't quit there. It's "and know that I am God." So we're not doing even the stillness on our own.

Randy: Yeah, I think a lot of times what to do comes at the point where we finally settle down and quit running around like a chicken with its head cut off, and be still and realize that he is God and then he shows us what to do.

Liz: Or does it for us. He's so gracious. Sometimes he just does it for us so we stand back in amazement.

Randy: What other scriptures really have jumped out at you and made a difference in your life?

Liz: Well, Jeremiah 29:11, I probably shouldn't tell you this. They're not in order in the book because I never wanted to suggest that one verse was more important than another but it was the most favorite, was Jeremiah 29:11. The tricky thing about that is "he knows the plans he has for us" and Sheila, you once in Women of Faith said, "Could you just show us the plans?" I've always loved that in life!

Sheila: Make a few suggestions and I'll sign off on the plans. I know!

Liz: "I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord. And I love that even though it is Jeremiah speaking it's very clear, this is coming right from God. So right away we're comforted. We don't see any plans. We don't know what is next. Somebody does and it's the one who made us and loves us.

"I know I have the plans, I know the plans for you" but the challenge is, again, we have to back up a couple of verses. Jeremiah is called the weeping prophet for a reason. He was always bringing bad news. And the bad news was, "Oh, by the way, people." By the way, this is the L.R.V. version -- that's the Lizzie Revised Version.

[Laughter]

Not available in any Christian bookstore. But the L.R.V. says on this, "Look people! You're going to be here in exile in Babylon for 70 years."

There was a false prophet that was telling them, "Oh, this isn't going to be long at all."

He said, "No, it's actually going to be 70 years."

Now that is a lifetime; that is a human lifetime. That meant they knew that they would never see home again; that they would never go back to Jerusalem. And yet God has a plan. Who is the plan for?

Randy: That doesn't sound like a good plan at that point.

Liz: It doesn't but it is. "Plans to prosper you, to give you future and hope." That's when we get excited. But the future and the hope was really for their children and their children's children. And that's hard for all of us because we really want -- we'd like to know those plans and have them take place by Thursday, Friday at the latest. That is not what God promises. But he does say, "I have plans for you." And honestly, that is a great comfort in a world that it looks like there are no plans; that it is all blowing up. It's not.

Sheila: That's very true. Philippians 4:13. I love that verse. You've included that. We can't go through them all but would you talk to us just a little bit about that?

Liz: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Yeah. I've actually done a L.R.V. on that verse because here's the problem.

Sheila: I think this should be available in Christian bookstores personally.

[Laughter]

Liz: Well, here's why. "I can do all things." In fact, when we sing it, we kind of quit with that: I can do all things, I can do all things. So now it sounds like a motivational speech, "I can do all things." And that is not the heart of it -- "through Christ who strengthens me."

So the L.R.V. on that one is actually, "I can't do squat except through the..." Right? Right? "I can't do anything except through Christ who strengthens me." That's closer to the Greek and I think closer to what God is trying to say to us. Without Jesus at the very center of that verse, we really can't do anything. But oh, baby, what we can do with him is amazing.

Sheila: I love that! That's kind of what Frederick Buechner says; that the gospel is bad news before it is good news. Because the bad news is on our own, we're lost. There is nothing we can do. But the good news breaks in like daylight and says that Christ is here to give you strength for all of it.

One more. Philippians 4:8: Whatsoever things are good, true, lovely, think on those things.

Liz: Pure! Right! Think on those things. What a lovely -- and that's a word that our British friends use in a different way than we do in the United States. If we say someone is lovely we're usually describing them physically.

But am I not right, Sheila that for you, the word *lovely* means the whole of a person. She is lovely.

Sheila: That's what I used to say when people asked me to describe my grandmother. I would say, "Oh, she is just lovely!" I meant everything about her, her heart, her spirit; just who she was.

Liz: So there's what we need to focus on is the loveliness, not the physical beauty but things that are good and right and true. And if we get right down to it there would never be anything in us. I couldn't come up with a list of pure things about Liz Curtis Higgs. Ooh! Only the purity of God. The righteousness of Liz? What a joke! But the righteousness of Christ in me -- oh God is so faithful!

And so he is saying to us, when you are tempted to look at the world in all of the things that are ugly and cruel and mean... Those children, Sheila that we saw on the video that you minister to, we see that and we say, "O Lord, is there any hope?"

And he says, "Yes! And this is where I want you to look at what is pure and good."

The work that you're doing is righteous and lovely and pure. Think on these things; that's how our minds are changed. Not by judging the world but by loving the world.

Sheila: One of the things I love most, Liz's book is called *31 Verses to Write on Your Heart*. One of the things I love most about it, Liz is that toward the end you then give us very practical help as to here's how we can actually begin to commit these to heart, to memory. You give us very specific teaching guidelines that I found really helpful.

Liz: Oh, good! They're all the ones we know, memorize the address, then the verse, the address. Because that's what always goes away from me is the reference because it is number related so it's going to run right out of my head.

But there are some that are more fun. For example, your cell phone, your smart phone can be very helpful. Send an alarm to remind you, "Say your verse right now." Record them on there so you can have it sitting next to you while you're doing busy work with your hands. Here you are reading your verses to yourself. Easy!

I love Pinterest so I have pictures on there that remind me of the verses. So just seeing the picture brings the verse to mind. So many ways to use that phone that you have on you anyway to learn the Word of God.

Then you can get creative. You can draw, if you're artistic; how the verse works. If you're musical like Sheila you can sing a verse to a familiar tune. If you're not musical like maybe Randy and certainly me, you can tap out a rhythm to help you remember the verse. If you're dramatic, you can stand up and say it with vavoom and sketch it out as you say -- is this all too crazy for you?

Sheila: No! It is fantastic! It is fantastic as are you! One of the things I love so much is that the Word of God changes us. The Word of God shows us that what looks hopeless, that there actually is hope. We saw that recently in a place that was very hard and very dark but we saw the difference that the light and life of Christ will make. Would you watch this with us?

On the mission field

Announcer: Angola has been called the deadliest country for kids. Child mortality rates are among the highest in the world according to United Nations with malnutrition as the underlying cause in most of those deaths. The mothers our mission teams visited may know nothing about statistics but they do know the pain of seeing their children suffer and die because of a lack of food.

Sheila: You're a good mom. It's not your fault. It's not your fault.

I don't know if you can see this little one is struggling to take every single breath that she takes. Psalm 56 talks about the fact that God collects every tear in his bottle. I want this mom to know that God has collected all of her tears.

Peter: I'm afraid when it gets to that stage its prayer that helps more than anything else. Because that little kid is in real trouble.

[Praying] Restore her little body. Take them by the ravages of malnutrition, Jesus.

What we try and do, Sheila is we try and make sure that they don't get here. And that's why mission feeding is so important because it is mission feeding that prevents this from happening. When you see things like this, it absolutely breaks your heart. And the only thing that spurs us on to do this is to make sure that they don't get here.

Without the partnership with LIFE Outreach International I think many, many hundreds of thousands, even millions of children would have lost their lives.

End of clip

In the studio

Randy: I don't think a child should ever be in that situation, Sheila.

Sheila: I will never forget that malnutrition clinic or that sweet mom. Sometimes people say to me, "Well, that's just the way -- that's nature taking its course. Some people are just not..."

I'm like excuse me, no! We are the body of Christ on this earth. We are the ones who bring hope where there is no hope. We bring help where there is no help. We bring food when that's the need.

Some people say, "Did you tell that mother that Jesus loved her?"

Well, first of all my natural instinct was to hold her and say to her, "This is not your fault. You have a Father in heaven who loves you and is watching over you."

But what Peter Pretorius said there is so true. We want to get to those kids before they ever end up in the malnutrition clinic. No mother should have to watch her child struggle to take one more breath. And to be able to go with Peter that day, literally, I couldn't talk in the van but we drove for five hours and we went to one of the villages where mission feeding is already in place and it was literally like going from hell to heaven. It literally was like seeing darkness and

hopelessness to seeing a place where children were running around, where they had a meal. And it is all possible and it is so easy.

Do you know that literally \$30 will feed three children for three months? That's ridiculous! \$50 will feed five children for three months -- \$100, ten children. We have some amazing friends, you're probably watching, and they said to us, "Listen. We're going to give you a matching gift, \$400,000 on the table."

So for everything you give it will be doubled. And we can even with a school, we can feed a whole school full of children for three months for \$1400 and that will be doubled -- so two schools. I watched. The kids don't go to school if they don't get food. But we can say to them, "Hey, come on to school. We'll give you a good meal." And then they get an education and they can grow up to be men and women of destiny.

Randy: Sheila, you've wondered whether you should tell that mother that God loved her. You did. You showed her that God loves her. And that's what we're asking you to do. You can't travel over there or send them an e-mail or anything but you can show those people that God loves them when you partner with us, give them life, give them food, give them a chance -- give their children a chance. Sheila, that baby didn't make it.

Sheila: No. It was interesting. Peter prayed for that little one and we watched. They wrapped her up in foil because that was all they had but they couldn't get her body temperature up. Yeah, that little one didn't make it.

Randy: But there are others.

Sheila: But there are so many others. That clinic was full of children. I think this is the most amazing God gift. When you think so many of us spend half our life thinking what are we going to eat at our next meal? -- And overeating. We can make a difference. We can get our lives back in balance and we can reach our hand in Jesus' name and change the world.

Randy: Go to the phone, go online, reach out with love and let's give those children a chance. Let's show them the love of Christ in word and deed. Go to the phones and go online right now.

Sheila: Thank you!

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

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 much for helping! It really will make a world of difference to those moms and those children. And for any gift at all that you send in we'll be happy to send you Liz's wonderful new book, *31 Verses to Write on Your Heart*. You'll love it!

Randy: Absolutely! And please go to the phones right now, go online, and know that you are making a difference. You are helping to share life and love around the world.

Liz, we appreciate you sharing some life and love here on *LIFE Today*! Would you thank Liz Curtis Higgs?

Liz: Thank you.

Randy: Join us again next time right here on *LIFE Today*!

Sheila: See you then!