

12/29/16
Week 1: Mission Feeding
James and Betty Robison
Victoria Arlen

Betty: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! Thank you so much for joining us. I'm Betty and this is James. You're really going to be in for a blessing today.

James: You've got competition for your smile today. We have got a beautiful young lady. As a matter of fact, I think she just had her 22nd birthday. But when she was 11 she got a disease that in a short time put her in what some might reference as a comatose state but actually she was in a vegetative state. No awareness of what's going on. Her eyes were open but she has no consciousness of seeing. For two years knew nothing, and then for the next two years in that same state she knew everything that was going on around her but nobody knew that she did.

The journey is one of the greatest miracle stories you'll ever see because there was no way she could get better. The doctors probably thought this was just foolishness that the parents actually think something might happen.

But how about we just show you a miracle of almighty God? Would you welcome Victorian Arlen to *LIFE Today*? Would you do that?

Victoria: Thank you!

James: Arlen is the way you say it? Victoria, you are a blessing. Now I want you to tell us because I can't say the name of what you had. The disease is...

Victoria: It is a mouthful.

James: Yes. Say it.

Victoria: It is transverse myelitis, it affected my spinal cord and acute disseminated encephalomyelitis affected my brain. So normally you only get one. I decided to go all in and get both. As my mom says, "You just like to go big." So I went for it.

James: You are one of triplets and the others are boys or girls?

Victoria: Boys. And I have an older brother.

James: So this hit you at age 11, so it was a little over 10 years ago. Tell us the process and we want to move to the miracle. But I want you to tell us your story. And I want to say this to you. This beautiful miracle of almighty God can communicate the life and love of God wherever you want to invite her. I want you to keep that in mind because later we will tell you how you can invite her. When you do, she's going to pour love and grace and the power of God all over you, take care of her. I mean I'm talking about love this girl. And you send her on her way blessed so she can continue to help others.

Tell us your story that you want us to hear. I know you're writing it. I know it will be in a book but just tell us what happened. Tell us about this journey.

Victoria: So I'll kind of give you the CliffNotes version. When I was 11 I started kind of experiencing a lot of weird health issues. I would get pneumonia, I developed asthma, I was having fainting spells. I was the kid that never got sick and then all of the sudden I was getting sick every two weeks.

And then on April 29th, 2006 I woke up with a horrible pain in my right and really ill. I was not well. So two days later they took out my appendix. Two weeks later I lost a significant amount of weight and I started losing the ability to stand. So my feet would give out and then my foot would drag and all the while doctors are telling my parents I'm doing it for attention, not really seriously considering what was going on. Then I became completely paralyzed after two weeks so I couldn't get out of bed.

I'm 11 so I'm not really thinking the seriousness of it but I'm also like I have field hockey practice and dance coming up and why can't I get out of bed? So it didn't stop there though. All of the sudden my speech was starting to go, my fine motor was going, I could no longer swallow food. So it was literally as if someone was taking and just shutting off all the switches. All the while doctors are still not sure what's going on. So then I get this horrible headache and I slip into a vegetative state. For two years I have no idea what happened, who I was.

James: Were you in a hospital much of the time?

Victoria: I was in and out of hospitals.

James: So you'd stay at home and just have to take constant care?

Victoria: Yes, so it was kind of when things got too severe I would be in the hospital, when things were manageable we had a hospital basically set up in my little piano room where I used to play piano.

James: How did you eat?

Victoria: A feeding tube. So I was basically dependent on machines and 24 hour care. So those two years things would get bad, things would get better and it was really nothing consistent. Then it got really bad and then we were pretty much in a hospital constantly and that's when I kind of woke up on the inside. I was having seizures for 18 hours a day straight, just on and on and on.

So I kind of woke up and I remember having this vision where I'm looking at the ceiling and I'm thinking that I'm talking clear as day but I'm not. I'm actually speaking in my head and doctors and people are walking through and I'm like, "Hello, what's going on? Where am I?" No idea two years had passed either.

Betty: So they weren't seeing any signs.

James: They heard nothing.

Victoria: They heard nothing. And then I realized very quickly that I was locked in and started hearing the prognosis and hearing what had happened and how they kind of messed up and missed it; and realizing, oh, my goodness, I'm locked in. So no one could hear me, but God could hear me. So I really just kind of...

James: Now were you in this state of unconscious consciousness, were you talking to God?

Victoria: All the time.

James: Were you telling him you needed something to happen? Were you aware this is a situation that needs some repair?

Victoria: Yes. I think I just had this undying sense of just wanting to live and so I just would thank God every day that I was alive. So I would also find five minutes of gratitude and I would find all that I was grateful for. And find one good thing and just hold on to that. And also, just say God, I'm one day closer... one day closer.

All the while my mom is putting on Joyce Meyer and Joel Osteen and she is preaching like she is letting me know, you are a victor and not a victim and really, really filling my world.

James: Now when you're hearing this did that encourage you?

Victoria: Completely.

James: And you knew they didn't know you were hearing it.

Victoria: Exactly. But my mom had my nails painted. She had my hair done. They never really accepted that I was gone.

James: What's mom's name?

Victoria: Jacqueline.

James: Jacqueline. Hey, Jacqueline! God bless you. I'm telling you.

Betty: But it had to make you feel like you weren't alone.

Victoria: Exactly! And I think if anything my parents had just made me feel part of the family. They would hug me. We celebrated my birthday. We celebrated Christmas. I was never "gone" in their eyes and they just kept believing for that miracle.

And on my 15th birthday we had a healer from Uganda come, Father Bashobora, and he literally -- he doesn't make house calls but heard my story and came and prayed and said to my mom, "She will be healed." And that was the first like beacon of hope we had been given other than from God himself. And I remember it got really, really bad...

James: Like he really felt he said something that he knew built their confidence.

Victoria: I knew too in my heart that this wasn't how my story was going to end.

James: Did you know he was saying that? You heard all that?

Victoria: I was like thank you! Because I was feeling that, and I needed people to kind of reaffirm that. And I think my family would do that too. I remember after that things got really bad. So I made a promise with God because I feel like it is always darkest before dawn and we all have moments where it's kind of that 4:30 in the morning where it is really dark and you don't know where to go. So I remember laying there and just being like God, I don't know what to do but I'm trusting in you.

I said, "But I'm going to make a promise with you because I haven't stopped talking since to you but I was like if you give me a chance to not only live but thrive and survive and get back 100%, be able to stand up tall and be able to get out there I'm going to do whatever I can to make a difference and use my voice to change the world."

Because since I was five years old I wanted to change the world. So he kept his end of the promise. So it's kind of been now my journey to do the same. And that miracle, all I needed was a miracle and sometimes miracles come in the simplest of forms. For me it was literally a blink and that's all I needed. I'd been praying for that. I was like God, just let me give my parents one sign. And that sign was locking eye contact with my mom and blinking and that was kind of our Christmas miracle.

James: When she did the same blink and you'd blink.

Victoria: Yeah! She looked at me.

James: So they now know there is something going on.

Victoria: Oh, I locked eyes on her and she sees me and I'm like, "Hello!" with my eyeballs. Like I am like, "Hi!" I have big brown eyes so you can't miss these eyeballs. So since I was the baby you just knew it. So I locked eyes on her and she said, "If you can hear me can you blink?"

And I was like, "Uh-huh! Here I am!" And then it was just --

James: But then you couldn't do the "ahah!" you just did the blink.

Victoria: In my head I was like, "Oh, yeah! Here I am, momma!"

James: But you were hearing all the conversations. I've got to ask you. In the medical community sometimes it doesn't necessarily think they're going to see these miracles. Even a lot of church people believe this only happened back in the New Testament, like they somehow passed away and God changed all the sudden. But your parents didn't and you heard that hope and inside of you was hope. What were the doctors, some of them, saying that they didn't know that you were hearing?

Victoria: You wouldn't believe how doctors treat you and what they will say when they think you're not there.

James: Let's say not all of them.

Victoria: No! Not all of them. I have an amazing group and I can't tell you some of the nurses and doctors that really did give me just incredible care even they didn't know it was benefiting me.

But certain ones, you're always going to have a few I think everywhere the world and we're all different. I remember this one doctor, I was in the intensive care unit and my parents had stepped out and this doctor just came in and said to a nurse, "Can you believe these parents think that their kid is going to make it? This kid is a goner."

I'm like, "Excuse me! I can hear you."

But I think what a big problem is people tend to accept the diagnosis and the prognosis when you can accept the diagnosis but you don't have to accept the prognosis. At the end of the day God is the ultimate physician. So my parents knew that, I knew that and people just have to realize that no, miracles do happen. You just sometimes have to really grind it out and find that or even have that moment.

And to this day I'll see doctors and they'll look at my scans and they'll look at me and I was definitely a worst case scenario because I didn't get treated and it could have been completely avoided. So they say, "You shouldn't be here."

James: They mistreated it when you first came in or they could have stopped it but they didn't know. They missed it.

Victoria: It was very rare in 2006. Now there is a lot more and I'm very fortunate to be kind of more of a voice for that, for awareness. But just realizing that you always have hope. When you have hope and when you have faith and when you just have the power of a family's love and more importantly a mother's love, anything is possible.

James: What do you want as we pray for you, what do you want God to do with your life the way you see it right now? I've already said you would come and speak. If they want to contact you, web site they would go to?

Victoria: They can go to VictoriaArlen.com.

James: And it is there. You started swimming. Is that because you couldn't walk for awhile? How long did it take before you could walk after you were coming out?

Victoria: Ten years. I was in a wheelchair for ten years and this past March, through the grace of God and also Mom on a Mission, I took steps. And then haven't stopped since.

James: I notice you're wearing tennis shoes. Is that for better balance?

Victoria: Yes, so I'm not at the point where I can wear heels yet so Converse has been very good to me and they give me shoes because I can't wear heels yet. So starting my own trend.

James: Now you're walking. So what did you do when you were swimming because you became actually competitive? What did you do?

Victoria: So I learned to swim kind of without the use of my legs and then I ended up in London at the Paralympics and I got to achieve a childhood goal of winning a gold medal. When I was five I told my mom I wanted to win a gold medal and she said, "Okay!"

James: Were you a swimmer then?

Victoria: I was. I was a water baby. I grew up loving water; like that was my place. I used to tell my mom I'd see angels in the water. That was my place. I think I wished I had gills when I was little because I would constantly submerge myself under water. So that became kind of my refuge to get out of my chair and to just not have to be reminded of my circumstances or what had happened to me.

James: Are you going to do anything competitively now that you're getting your strength as part of the testimony or just for fun? How does that fit in?

Victoria: It's funny now that I'm up on my feet I'm doing a little bit of everything. I want to do a triathlon. I had this notion of running a marathon. So I think expanding that. There is so much on my list of things to do. And swimming, I got to... I was very fortunate to check everything off in swimming very quickly so there is so much more things I want to explore and continue to kind of defy the odds and give the glory to God.

James: Let me ask you. Do you see the glory of God on this girl?

Betty: Absolutely!

James: Let me ask all of you out here. She is a beautiful girl but do you see what I would call like an aura of the glory of God on her countenance? Do you see that? Isn't she a special person?

I want you to really pray for her that God will use her and just open doors. And then I'm praying... I pray for all of our girls who have the most wonderful husbands, and our granddaughters are going to be in the process of doing the very same thing; several of them already are and our grandsons are getting great wives. But I'm praying that God will give you someone to love you that loves God more than anything in the world so he can love you properly. Can I say that prayer for you right now?

Father, I pray that for Victoria and I pray that for every girl watching right now, and every woman that has not found that love, and women who are married to some man that doesn't seem to really know how to love. Help us to learn that as men. Do it supernaturally.

But for these girls that are saying, "Count me in, I do." And Lord, for Victoria, I pray that you would put someone in her life that loves you so much, not somebody trying to impress her with some religious jargon that really is not there but the real deal so they can love her the way every woman should be loved. And then I pray that you'll open doors for her and use her beautiful gifting to inspire people to know that there's nothing impossible with you; in Jesus' name. Amen.

You had some kind of communication or something on E.S.P.N. or something? What was that?

Victoria: Yes. So I work for E.S.P.N. I'm a reporter.

James: Work for them?

Victoria: I work for them.

James: Right now?

Victoria: Yes!

James: Good job E.S.P.N.! Good job!

Victoria: That was a whole other series of Godwinks. But last year at 21 I became one of the youngest on-air talents ever hired. So it's been honestly...

James: What did you cover? Swimming?

Victoria: I cover everything. I cover swimming, hockey, S.P.'s, the Special Olympic World Games.

James: Did you go to the Olympics?

Victoria: No, I did not. So I was covering the S.P.'s and all those, x-games. So I do a little bit of everything. I'm en route to doing some...

James: So that's a steady deal now? You're still doing that?

Victoria: Yeah! I'm starting my second year in December.

James: Can you do your speaking engagements along with those assignments though?

Victoria: Absolutely. I feel like I'm kind of living on an airplane between E.S.P.N. and speaking and all these other amazing opportunities that God's opening up for me. So I'm kind of in like... It's funny, my mom always laughs because she's like, "It's like you have a pot of soup and there are just a lot of vegetables in it."

I love vegetables! So I'm like, "Okay!"

[Laughter]

James: You're amazing. If you got an invitation that would really excite you right now, you went to Joel Osteen's church in Lakewood? I know that was a joyful experience; wasn't it? And you knew you were loved; right? And they knew God miraculously heals her. If you could have something -- you say, "I'd just like to see God give me this opportunity."

Do you have something that's from when you were laying there, "God, I want to see you do this"?

Victoria: As my passion?

James: Yeah!

Victoria: So it's actually really funny. My passion since -- actually was one of my lifelines when I got sick is I've always loved acting and film. So when I was sick I would write screen plays. And now they're actually on paper and in some good hands. But I think that's an opportunity that I know in God's timing to be able to do that and to explore that, that's been my passion since I was a little girl and that was kind of something that kept me surviving. I was like, "God, I'm one day closer to following that dream so if I can get through this pain, if I can get through these seizures."

And also having my own show; I think I would love to have a show where I can impact people.

James: Where you could show where I could keep the glow. You're not going to take away the glow and the glory.

Victoria: I think spreading light and love has always been a mission of mine. So I think TV and television and even film is just a great platform for that. So being able to continue to explore that.

James: You want to talk to our son, Randy?

Victoria: Yes, we talked.

James: Oh, you have already? Did you tell him some of this? Because he is very interested in all of those things. He'll be praying with you. He'll probably call people up and say, "I found somebody."

Would you say thanks so much to Victoria?

Victoria: Thank you!

James: What a blessing! Didn't you enjoy that?

Father, I pray for people right now that need a miracle. And they may have the doubters all around them but Lord, if it happened here it could happen for them. And I pray that you'll build up hope like you kept in her heart. We pray for the miracle. And we pray for the peace that prevails until the miracle unfolds and the manifestation is complete; in Jesus' name.

I hope you feel loved because you are. You know what our viewers tell us, Betty? That they experience the greatest peace and contentment when they're sharing love. Our viewers tell us that there is no greater joy than meeting a need and knowing its effective, that expression of love.

I want you to listen. There is interaction here. Sheila Walsh who is so gifted of God and has a broken heart, I think she shares the very heart of God when she talks, when she sings. I want you to listen to her in a field of dreams for us to be the miracle that turns pain into indescribable joy and life because of love. Watch.

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 are 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: That's 25 years ago. Heck, you can tell I was a little different. But I'm really glad that my heart was tender when I was young. Some people think it's just that you get old. No, love never gets old. Compassion never gets old, it gets stronger. And to know, Betty that we stopped so many little children, you did, people like you, from being buried.

Betty: James, you look at all those graves and as I was watching them I thought those shouldn't be there. That should be a place where children are running around and playing instead of parents, mothers burying their children because they don't have enough food for them. They don't have any food. They don't have any resource. That's such a simple solution that we can help with. We can help offer hope and life to these mothers as they try their best to take care of their children, but when they have nothing to work with.

So won't you join us? Won't you give an opportunity to go there and see the children are fed and taken care of through your giving? You are there with your love offering when you give to help get the food to them. Please give.

James: I'm asking you to please, this is our last week right now and we end the year, we go into a new year. I know you can make year-end gifts and sometimes you can make a very large year-end gift.

I know that we've had a miracle challenge by some of our friends to match \$400,000 of what is given. In other words, what you give is doubled. This last week I'm just saying God, would you just pour out your love on those precious people that just need food?

Right now the missionaries tell us that there are several drought areas and that really hits these third-world countries hard and they've set up many new areas. We've got 400,000 that they're trying to head off from death. We have the malnutrition clinics, which is like a last resort. It is so sad. But many times we're able to save them there because of you. So would you ask God right now, "What do you want me to do?" Knowing that \$30, \$50, or \$100 feeds three, five or ten children for the next several months?

We're trying when we get them stabilized then to start feeding them at school, a meal a day, those five days a week for school and it will bring the boys and girls, and it helps their minds be strong and nourished. It costs \$1400 to feed kids in a school for three months. It's a whole different type of diet. It's not quite as let's say as scientifically analyzed because they've been stabilized. We try to meet the need of the region, what those kids need when they're starving.

So we're asking you right now, this last week, we want to see the greatest outpouring of love possible. If you could make a \$1400 gift it will be doubled, if you make a \$100 gift it will be doubled. Would you make even perhaps a gift that you say, "This is one the largest gifts I've ever made" knowing what it's going to do.

Would you go online, the website you see right there, take your bankcard and use it? Or would you dial the number there and say, "Here's my bankcard" and make the gift? If you want to write a check, make it to LIFE but call us and tell us what you're mailing. Betty, I'd like to be able to tell the missionaries we're going to be able to do more. You can actually go find some more kids that need food. You're not limited. Father, I pray that will happen; in Jesus' name.

Would you right now get up and move to your computer, your laptop, your iPad, however you want to do it or dial the number? Make the gift God puts on your heart knowing it will be doubled. I remind you this is our last week for this emphasis on feeding for the next months. 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.

This is the last week! Please call, write, or make your gift online!

End of clip

In the studio

James: We've got beautiful gifts for you that will bless you, *Without Rival*, Lisa Bevere. We love you, Lisa and John! And then the Children's Complete Illustrated bible; this is absolutely beautiful! There's just not a page in it that is not fabulous. And these are the stories about... Your children will hear the Word of God where they understand it.

Victoria said something while we were watching it. She said, "I want to go to the mission field." And she means it. And then she wants all of you to really pray that God will use her and I know that he will. Aren't you excited that she wants to go on the mission field? Would you tell her thank you! Thank you, Victoria. You've been a blessing to us.

I know you've been blessed and I think you're a blessing! Thank you for helping us help those children. Last week! We need your help. Thank all of you. You're great!