

6/15/17

Week 25: Spring Mission Feeding, last week

James and Betty Robison

Benjamin Watson #2

James: Wow! I tell you what. It is a joy to be with you and to come into your home. Benjamin Watson is here. I'm James Robison. Betty and I welcome you to *LIFE Today*. This man is a gift from God for this moment. He is a football player, N.F.L. player, won a Super Bowl ring. He's written a book called *Under Our Skin: Getting real about race and getting free from the fears and frustrations that divide us*.

Listen to what Tony Dungy says. Tony Dungy Super Bowl winner, great coach of the Colts and other teams too; and just a great man of God and great commentator now. "Benjamin Watson is one of the most intelligent, thoughtful men I have ever met, inside or outside of football. I know you will benefit from his insights."

Now I want you to just listen: "For so many people the racial divide is an argument, a political position, a debate on TV but keeping our distance isn't working. It is not an option anymore. This is about you and me. It is about our neighbors, our children and our world -- and change starts here."

Would you welcome Benjamin Watson to *LIFE Today*? Benjamin, good to see you. We did a program you can watch on *LIFE Today* online; we did a program earlier where we were talking about fatherhood, and he's got five kids and a beautiful wife, and had to have a kid a year. It's pretty rapid progress. But he knows that there is not a whole lot of help there. So that book is in the bookstores.

This book, *Under Our Skin*, I guess it came out after you had made a bold statement about what had disturbed you. I'm actually going to read it later so unless you have memorized all of it, I'm going to read it. I don't know if you went to the trouble of memorizing what you said, you just came off the top of your head, you were bearing your heart and you said you were angry. I'm going to read that. But that led to the book. Can you just kind of capsule for our viewers what you're concerned about?

Benjamin: Well, I think you read it on the back of the book. For so much of us this whole race debate is something that we get on TV and we yell at each other and we have our talking points and we speak from our point of view and we're not really looking for really any type of change of heart. We're not really looking for a solution, we kind of like the conflict.

James: Well, the media loves a conflict. They feed it.

Benjamin: Exactly! And that goes on both sides. Sometimes conflict has become more comfortable than change. As I'm sitting there watching Ferguson like many of you watching on TV and all these other race, I guess, inciting incidents that have happened whether it's been a police officer, even here in Dallas, the tragedies that happened here in Dallas. These things keep happening at a rapid rate. I, like everybody else, had an emotional response to it. When I saw Ferguson, it was at the end of a three year period where there were a lot of these deaths of black men that were on videos. We see everything on video now and I was angry because it seemed to me that the things that I had heard about from earlier in my life and in my parents' life and talking to my grandparents about their parents, keep happening over and over again.

And then I was sympathetic, because a lot of times your first reaction is not the one you need to listen to. You need to unpack it. So I said, let me unpack it a little bit. I talked about being sympathetic because I don't know really what happened in the situation; I wasn't there. I'm jumping into this with my lenses on about being a black man in this country and knowing what that entails. So I'm approaching it from a certain perspective.

And I talked about being hopeless and hopeful and a bunch of other emotions that will read but eventually I end up saying that I was encouraged because although we have an issue, things had gotten tremendously better over the course of time. But ultimately, we know the person who can change the heart of men and women. The law can't do it. The government can't do it, laws changed.

I believe Billy Graham one time said, he mentioned in one of his crusades talking about we can change -- we have the civil rights movement, we need all these things, we need voting rights, we need civil rights. All these things are very, very crucially important when it comes to equality but at the root of it, it is a sin issue that manifests itself in racism, in pride, in selfishness, in non-repentance, in the unwillingness to forgive. This is a root issue that is sin. And I'm encouraged because on the one hand we know that one day this all will be gone and there will be a new heaven and a new earth. But I also understand that even while we live here, the power of the gospel is what makes the playing field even. It doesn't matter what you're ethnicity is, or how much money your parents had, or how much education you had, the gospel is what puts people on a level playing field. So my hope is that we grasp that, we're able to grasp that and we're able to live from that. But in the world we live in, there are really issues that we need to talk about that need to be dealt with.

James: I've tried to impress upon our viewers the importance of Jesus' prayer in John 17 about supernatural unity and I'm asking everybody to pray for that. If it were not important and if it

were not possible Jesus would not have prayed it. And it certainly would not have been in the last prayer where we hear basically the sum total of what was on his heart. We hear glimpses in the garden, glimpses from the cross, but in John 17, we hear the prayer of Jesus' heart.

And he concludes with the importance of us being able to show the world what his disciples looked like by pointing to a supernatural unity that is so supernatural it is like the oneness he has with the father. I don't think we can have that supernatural unity among one another without first having it with the Father.

You and I will have no problem immediately knowing we're family. We may be a different shade but we're one. We're part of the ultimate family, the family of God, as well as a human family.

I want to read what you wrote and he said this is not like preparing for Monday night football. But he was playing and preparing for it. And he was watching what's happening in Ferguson and trying to figure it out. I think you said you were sitting in your car in a parking lot of a shopping center.

Benjamin: I was sitting in a Target parking lot. Monday night football ends late. It was the day that the grand jury decided not to indict the officer. So everything had been leading up since that August in 2014 about what was the decision going to be. So everybody had an idea of what was going on. We were all watching the news. I played the Monday night football game and we lost to the Ravens, which ironically I'm on that team now. And my wife tells me they made a decision in the Ferguson case. So late that night into the wee hours of the morning I was sitting there watching the protests.

James: And you said this and it went viral. It was just unbelievable, in a short period of time. Listen to what he said: I'm angry because the stories of injustice that have been passed down for generations seem to be continuing before our very eyes. I'm frustrated because pop culture, music and movies glorify these types of police citizen altercations and promote an invincible attitude that continues to get young men killed in real life away from the safety of movie sets and music studios.

I'm fearful because in the back of my mind I know that although I'm a law abiding citizen I can still be looked upon as a threat to those who don't know me so I will continue to have to go the extra mile to earn the benefit of the doubt.

I'm embarrassed because of the looting, the violent protests, the law breaking only confirm and in the minds of many validate the stereotypes and thus the inferior treatment. I'm sad because another young life was lost from his family, the racial divide has widened, a community is in shambles, accusations, insensitivity, hurt, and hatred are boiling over and we may never know

the truth about what happened that day.

I'm sympathetic because I wasn't there so I don't know exactly what happened. Maybe Darren Wilson acted within his rights and duty as an officer of the law and killed Michael brown in self-defense like any of us would in the circumstances. Now he has to fear the backlash against him and his loved ones when he was only doing his job. What a horrible thing to endure. Or maybe he provoked Michael and ignited the series of events that led to his eventually murdering the young man to prove a point.

I'm offended because of the insulting comments that I have seen that are not only insensitive but dismissive to the painful experiences of others. I'm confused because I don't know why it is so hard to obey a policeman. You will not win. And I don't know why some policemen abuse their power. Power is a responsibility, not a weapon to brandish and lord over a populace.

I'm introspective because sometimes I want to take our side without looking at the facts in situations like these. Sometimes I feel like it is us against them. Sometimes I'm just as prejudice as people I point fingers at and that is not right. How can I look at white skin and make assumptions but not want assumptions made about me? That's not right.

I'm hopeless because I've lived long enough to expect things like this to continue to happen. I'm not surprised and at some point my little children are going to inherit the weight of being a minority and all that it entails.

I'm hopeful because I know that while we still have race issues in America, we enjoy a much different normal than those of our parents and grandparents. I see it in my personal relationships with my teammates, my friends and my mentors and it is a beautiful thing.

I'm encouraged because ultimately the problem is not a skin problem but it is a sin problem. Sin is the reason we rebel against authority. Sin is the reason we abuse our authority. Sin is the reason we're racist, prejudiced, and lie to cover for our own sin. Sin is the reason we riot, a loot, and burn.

But I'm encouraged because God has provided a solution for sin through his son Jesus and with it a transformed heart and mind, one that is capable of looking past the outward and seeing what is truly important in every human being.

The cure for Michael brown, Trayvon Martin, Tamar Rice, and Eric Garner, tragedies is not education or exposure, it's the gospel. So I'm finally encouraged because the gospel gives mankind hope.

Would you just say thank God and thank you, Benjamin? Now that was a message and you had no idea while you were just bearing your heart and writing these things down that it would actually become a gospel message proclaimed around the world. That shocked you; didn't you it?

Benjamin: It did. It did. I wrote it on my Iphone notes ap, sitting in a parking lot, didn't know how to post it to Facebook; had to send it to somebody else to post it to my Facebook page because they do that. I don't know how to do it. I know how to do it now.

It's the Holy Spirit. I think what whatever the situation is, this is race, obviously, this is something that since 1619 when the first Africans got here, this has been part of our history; right? But whatever the topic is, whether it is race, whether it is abortion, you named it, immigration, whether it is sexuality, violence, whatever it is that we're dealing with, we have to look at everything with a biblical world view. We have to filter everything through the word. As believers we attack this issue differently. It doesn't mean we negate the reality of things that happened. We address those things from a social justice standpoint, from a governmental standpoint but we're seeing things through gospel eyes, not through human eyes. So there's a different power there. So it turns into a gospel message because I believe that no matter what we do, no matter what our profession is, whatever we're talking about, the gospel has huge ramifications for whatever the situation may be.

James: If somebody read that book, what do you think they would take away from it?

Benjamin: They would take away the importance of both/and -- both/and. We live in a time where you have to be either/or. You're democrat or republican. You're red or blue, you're not purple. You're either on the left or the right, conservative or liberal. When something like this happens, you've either got to be on the side of the cops or you've got to be on the side of the neighborhood. Whatever it is, we get in our corners and point the fingers.

What I want to do is tell people, look, let's put truth in the middle and let's find what the truth is and let's bow down to that. Not to our group think, whatever that is. Not because our grandma told us this or because our best friend feels this way so I've got to feel like they do. And if I step out of that think they're going to disown me. No. Let's have an allegiance to what is right and what is true and let's meet there not just staying in our corners.

Also I talk a little bit about something I call "the living room racist." I want people to identify racism and prejudice in their own heart. I want people to come face to face with it. It is a hard thing to do. A lot of times we have friends of different backgrounds and we think that that means something. It may mean something but where is your heart on this issue? Once you've identified whatever it may be that you're struggling with, be willing to repent of it.

There are times in the book where you're going to want to throw the book at me. That's great! There are times in the book people have told me that they want to stand up and give me a standing ovation. A lot of times that depends on people's backgrounds, what parts they want to stand up on and what parts they don't. But I want to bring people to a place where they realize their own faults in this whole racial spectrum, and then finally for them to see what they can do better. Are there intentional relationships that they need to make with somebody that is not like them so they can have a honest conversation about it and they can ask questions without being labeled because they have a relationship with that person that is not like them and there is a certain amount of trust there. That's just a couple of things.

Betty: Well, I think from listening to you too, I come away with every life is important. It is not -- we should look at people not because of their color or what they do, their life -- God created them. We've all been created in his image and what does God want me as a Christian, how does God want me to feel about that? Well, the only way I can know is to go to his word and to spend time in fellowship with him and know and God will answer us.

Benjamin: That's so true. We shouldn't look at people that way as far as an inferiority or superiority, but we do look at people as different shades because that's how God created us. And there's beauty in that. One thing I try to do in the book is be brutally honest. And so again, some people applaud areas some people don't applaud areas.

I try to be honest about my prejudice about certain things. I'm honest about the fact that when I was a kid I saw a woman not want to give my father change in his hand because his hand was the color of mine, so she slid it across the table. I tried to be honest about because you go to school or because you're educated or you talk a certain way, you must be white. But what does that really mean? What that really means is that our identity, what we think is good is always associated with whiteness, and that's an issue in and of itself but it is an issue that needs to be acknowledged and addressed and validated by white culture that, you know over the course of our experience here, the benchmark has been here. So it makes sense why you feel that way about yourselves.

And then, I challenge black people that even though you feel that way, I'm not going to tell my kids to succumb to whatever the standard is for them because of the color of their skin. I'm going to tell them to achieve whatever they want to.

James: And all things are possible with God.

Benjamin: So we all have a hand in this. And my overarching goal is for people to see where they can be better and where they have had missteps that maybe they didn't even know they had until they really were willing to be dead dog honest about how they feel about other people.

James: You said you're hopeful, I am too. Don't you think he gives us good reasons to hope with his wonderful communication? This book is fabulous! And it is in the bookstores, *Under Our Skin*; I think it is a great message for our day.

One of the things that I'm so grateful for about our viewers, Benjamin, is they don't even seem to notice what color somebody is. They see a need and say, let's meet it. They see love as the answer to all the challenges we face. God is love. Sum total of who he is, he is love. If we are full of his love then we're going to express it like a river and that river brings forth life.

You know that every time you watch *LIFE Today*, we're going to give you an opportunity and let me just say this to you. You're a very, in my opinion, wise and spiritually sensitive person when you don't just automatically change channels because you've heard the devotion and inspiration and now comes action, you may say. James is going to ask us to help somebody. Well, God asks us to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. And if someone is in trouble, we would want to help them like we would want to be helped ourselves if we were in a crisis. So we give you that glorious opportunity. And Betty, our viewers tell us that there's nothing they enjoy doing more -- and we can say the same thing, being a blessing is a blessing.

I want you to look here and see someone who was a miraculous blessing and we can be also. Watch closely.

On the mission field

Announcer: War and conflict are predominant in the short history of the world's newest country, South Sudan. Villages are routinely attacked. Innocent families flee for their lives as their meager homes are burned to the ground. Those lucky enough to survive the ambushes have nothing but the clothes on their backs as they wander in search of safety.

Parents are desperate to find food sources for their children and often go without so their children can go to bed with a little food in their stomachs. As the years pass, surviving family members ban together and do whatever they can to survive.

In 2015, the *LIFE Outreach* mission partners working in South Sudan met one such family, Leek, along with his father, grandmother, and older sister Nayagut were living under this tree. The family's main source of food was the wild fruit growing in the tree. As the fruit in the lower branches was depleted Nayagut began climbing the tree higher and higher as needed. She bravely and sacrificially tried her best to provide for Leek and her family.

Recently, the missionaries returned to that tree and sought out Leek, Nayagut and the rest of their family. Although they now had a simple hut to sleep in heartbreak and tragedy still plagued this family. Nayagut had passed away a couple months prior; most likely as the result of malnutrition. Leek says he misses his sister and the mission team was heartbroken by the pain and the hopelessness evident in his eyes.

As famine and starvation sweep across South Sudan, families such as these fear for their future. The grip of this crisis is tightest on the children. Leek and many other children just like him need food and they need it now.

End of clip

In the studio

James: Boy, if that little sister, big sister could climb that tree day after day to try to get the fruit, higher and higher after they had eaten that which they could reach and then she's -- the one who did so much trying to help the others is the one who is gone, the one who helped.

And now, Betty, we have a chance to not only take her place but to feed many families like hers. The missionaries have 400,000 already located that we can feed that are in place that have the same need you saw there and we can be like that precious sister that you might say in a way gave her life trying to help her family.

Betty: And I'm sure each family member has done all that they know to do, James to try to find some kind of little morsel to put into their bodies to feed, especially the little ones that will likely be the ones to pass away first because their little bodies haven't developed and become strong like they could be.

I just ask you to join with us again. I know we ask you many times but we don't get tired of asking and I don't believe you get tired of us asking. So please join with us again and let's get food to these so desperate families that just don't know what to do. They love their children too as we love ours. So let's join together and make the difference and reach out. We can do it. We've done it before!

James: Well, when you think about the effort that that precious girl went to and the missionaries and relief workers, could we not go online or go to the phone and make a call and a gift that could save many lives and put in the hands of those beautiful little malnourished children and their families that which would give them life and a future while they overcome all the challenges they face?

Would you do it? Would you just reach out, even reach up to God and say, "God, show me what to do. Let me be the blessing they long for. Let me meet their need." Would you do that? This is the last week of this emphasis on Mission Feeding where we take a period of time. We try to raise the resources to take care of people for many months and we're asking you to do that right now. \$100 we can feed ten children for the next several months. \$1,000 we can feed 100. During this last week because the crisis is so great, the need so severe I'm praying many of you will give \$1,000 or more. \$100 we can feed ten, \$50 we can feed five, \$30 we can feed three. Don't think that that's too small -- for those three children it's life.

Would you right now go online or would you dial the phone number and take your bankcard and just make the gift God put on your heart. This is the last week now for this emphasis and we need to hear from everyone. Some of you have already given even in this emphasis but I'm telling you, we've not reached the goal. Together we can and I believe we must and I believe we will.

Thank you right now for making the gift God put on your heart. Remember this is the last week and it is really, really important that we hear from you and important to so many who have such a critical need. We can meet that need and we can do it together.

Begin video clip

Announcer: In impoverished and even now famine-stricken areas of Africa, children are suffering. The need is great and without food they face death by starvation.

LIFE's Mission Feeding program is ready. With your support, we're able to feed and care for children in famine areas of Sudan, as well as Angola and Mozambique. With all of our previous reserves gone and Mission Feeding facing the worst drought and food shortage in years, we urgently need to replenish our food supplies to reach 400,000 children counting on us.

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

With your gift of any amount we'll send you My Daily Word Devotional. This boxed set of four seasonal devotionals will help you read, reflect, and renew yourself through God's word with space to journal your thoughts and reflect each day.

With your gift of \$100 or more, you'll also receive Kari Jobe's newest music project, *The Garden*, along with the story behind *The Garden* companion DVD.

And finally, with your gift of \$1,000 or more, please be sure to request "Determined Eagle," our 2017 commemorative bronze sculpture.

This is the last week! Please call, write, or go online today and make your gift of *LIFE* to help feed and care for hungry children.

End of clip

In the studio

James: Well, I want to say thank you with Betty to you in behalf of all the precious families you have touched with love. Thank you for taking that big sister's place. She was absolutely beautiful going up there for her family and then we had to look at her grave. But I believe we're going to live with that kind of love carrying us and helping others.

We're sending you to say thank you, the seasonal devotional book. But if you would like to have Benjamin Watson's book, *Under Our Skin*, I think this is a word for the day as he's a gift for the day. So you simply touch someone with love, help us provide feed for those precious ones that so desperately need our help, and you'd like to have this book, just ask for it. It is in the bookstores. You can get it online. But if you would like us to send it to you, we will.

Join Betty and me in saying thanks to this truly great and gifted man.

Benjamin, thank you, my friend. I pray that you have a great season and maybe in the later years of your career you'll end up at the Dallas Cowboys.

Benjamin: My aunt would be elated.

James: Your aunt would be elated. Thank you so much for watching and thank you for helping us share life with people who desperately need our love.