11/14/17
Week 47: Fall Mission Feeding
James and Betty Robison
Luke Barnett

James: Thank you all! We welcome you to *LIFE Today*. I'm James Robison. Betty and I are just thrilled to be with you. We count it an honor that you spend this time with us.

I've had an incredible relationship with Tommy Barnett who pastored in Phoenix and still does. He's turned it over to his oldest son, Luke; you're going to meet him in a moment. But I actually -- you think about this, this is part of what I call the spiritual dynamic of God doing some great things in the family to bring us together. Baptists, which is where I was led to Christ and I was kind of along with Billy Graham, we were Southern Baptist evangelists. And Pentecostals and Baptists didn't always have great fellowship. It's like Church of Christ and Baptists; each group would go to seminary to learn how to out argue the other. That's how they got their degrees. It's been sad.

The miracle is that I began to watch a process where Christians and church people began to act more like a family than feuding McCoys and Hatfields. Of all miracles, Tommy Barnett really respected me in my outreach and it inspired him. He actually asked me to dedicate the First Assembly of God Church in Phoenix, up on a mountain. At the same time, North Phoenix Baptist church, which was the largest Baptist church in Arizona, they wanted me to dedicate their building. So here is this evangelist, miracle of all miracles, dedicating the biggest Pentecostal church and the biggest Baptist church. That pleases God. I'm watching miracles.

This young man, Luke Barnett who wrote this book, *The Dream Centered Life*, he is a miracle. His brother, Matthew, who started the Dream Center in Los Angeles that you all have helped support, he's here and he is now pastor of that church and it's no longer called First Assembly, it is called the Dream Center Church.

Would you welcome the pastor of that church, Luke Barnett, Tommy's oldest son?

Luke: Thank you. It's great to be here.

James: Your dad has been here several times and your brother has been here several times. This is your first time. You had to get this dream centered life before you could come and sit right here and have the Dream Center Church. I want you to tell us the journey that led to the book and about your dream centered life because the church is awesome. Now it's larger than

ever. It's expanded to other campuses; kind of like our church where I go, Gateway has. And to me, I'm looking in on a miracle. I thought I was looking at a miracle when I came there to dedicate that church while I'm dedicating this other church and all the people seemed to love me and they seemed to love each other. So are you seeing a church now that looks more like the New Testament church as Jesus seemed to envision it?

Luke: Well, we are. First of all, you didn't know, my dad loves you and Betty so much. He just admires you so much. You've had a big part in his life. I think your hearts are knit together because you both are soul winners, and we love to see people find the Lord.

But I tell you, for many years of my ministry life, I really think I was operating on a secondhand revelation from God. When I began to minister I just did what my dad did. He was a very good role model for me. He reached out to hurting people, he ran buses, did big productions and really, any method to get people inside the building to hear the message of Jesus Christ. So that's what we did. We saw addition; we saw God blessing the church but I was always curious why we never saw that supernatural, why we didn't see the supernatural surge I was seeing all over America.

So when I became the pastor of Phoenix First Assembly, which is where my dad pastored for all those years, I felt a strong oppression or a depression that fell upon my life during that time. I really didn't have the language to identify what was happening. But I really felt like I lacked vision. I lacked a fresh revelation from God about what our church was supposed to do in the next ten years.

So when I was a little boy I'd watched my dad every day climb the mountain every day behind the church. We actually built a little plateau for him halfway up the mountain where he would just go up there with his newspaper and a cup of coffee. He would look over the city and he would receive God's vision for the future of the church. So here I was at a place in my life where I lacked vision for the future of the church and now here I was the pastor, going to lead this church into the next decade.

So I said, "I'm going to go for 40 days up on that mountain, right where my dad went and I'm going to pray and I'm going to fast for 40 days. I just desperately need fresh revelation from God." You know during that 40-day period God gave me, I believe, his God-sized dream.

Five things he spoke into my heart on that mountain. Number one: I didn't know how this was going to happen at the time because we only had the one campus; it was a large campus but I didn't know how it was going to happen but we're going to reach 50,000 people with the gospel of Jesus Christ in the next ten years. That was the first thing I heard. I didn't debate with God about that; I just received it by faith. I said, "Okay."

Second thing was: We're going to be a multi site campus. We're going to take the gospel into different cities all across Arizona. In fact, these days what we've been saying is, "Why can't there be one state in the United States of America that's known as a Christian state? Why can't someone dream that big?" There's a state known for Mormons, Utah. There is a state known for entertainment, California. Texas is known for oil and millionaires. Why can't there be one state in America that's just known for people who love Jesus? So we want to be that state. So we want to plant a prevailing church in every city of Arizona. That's what God showed us.

The third thing was that we're going to reclaim the arts in the church world. We're going to be the arts hub of the state of Arizona. Now we were already pretty good at that because we do a Christmas production that has 17 performances and 75,000 people attend that production every year. So we're pretty good at that. But we were going to put that on steroids and use the arts to reach people with the gospel.

The fourth thing was: We're going to rebuild the front of our church for the arts and build a beautiful lobby about 25,000-square foot lobby. You wouldn't recognize the church if you came back today. Along with that, about an acre and a half power parasol outdoor lobby, solar outdoor lobby. That's all completed today. It's all done four years into the dream.

And the last thing was we're going to be debt free by the year of 2023. So back in 2013 when I got those five kind of messages from the Lord, I found out that our church was going to be 100 years old in the year 2023, in ten years. So we said this is what we want to see accomplished by the year 2023. That's what goals are. Goals really are just statements of faith. Just like I believe this is what God's going to do by this time period.

So we laid all that out. Today we have four campuses, not one campus. Four years later the lobby is all complete. Today we are the arts hub of Arizona. People know Dream City Church. They don't know Arizona State University or U of A, they know Dream City Church as the place where all the arts are happening in the state of Arizona.

It's just so much fun. I always tell young pastors, you can live your life on a secondhand revelation from God. God honors obedience but you're not going to enjoy the journey nearly as much as when you see God using your life and your ministry to really impact God's kingdom.

[Applause]

James: You know the policy, your dad set a good example and because it was a good thing going, it would have been very easy to just fall in and follow. But your dad also showed you something else and I know him well, Tommy, I love you buddy. You and I have chased and

pursued Jesus together a lot knowing he's always been after us. You've just -- I love you, my friend. You know I do. And Matthew, I love you -- and the whole family.

But you could have settled there but there was a lack of what you called a peace, a real contentment; there was something there that caused you to pursue. But you didn't pursue somebody else's vision, you didn't even go looking for what others were doing. You went back up on the mountain in the presence of God to hear what he wanted you to do.

So what you're saying in this *Dream Centered Life* is it's really beyond our dream or our vision. It's suddenly capturing his vision through us for his kingdom purpose. Does that make sense?

Luke: That's exactly right.

James: And everyone can find that. They can find his dream for them. Not just their dream because he does care about their dreams, he cares about everything they care about because he cares about them. But if they get caught up in what is on his heart then they become a fulfillment of what is on his heart and there is no small part in his heart.

Luke: That's right! That's exactly right. I was thinking as you were talking, in the Old Testament the way God communicated with his people was he spoke to prophets. And the prophets got the clear revelation from God and then when they would communicate to the people, if the people listened to the prophets things went well for them. If they didn't, things didn't go well. So I ask young people these days, "Whose job is it today to get a fresh revelation from God?" And the answer is it is our job, every single person who follows Jesus.

Jesus said, "My sheep know my voice and they follow it." Not just pastor sheep, not just prophet sheep, "*All* my sheep hear my voice."

So I believe that God's created every single human life with a capacity to hear God's dream for their life and then heed that dream.

James: We can all go into the presence of God and get *The Dream Centered Life* and it's actually his dream through us for his purpose -- his kingdom purpose. That's exciting!

Luke: Well, the best title for the book is the *Jesus Centered Life* because the reality is when you fall in love with Jesus, everything begins to make sense. That's when he really reveals the dream.

But I was, again, thinking as you were talking a moment ago, at some point every person has to have that moment of self awareness where they say, "Wait a minute, this average Christian life

stuff really isn't working so much for me anymore. There's something missing in my life, there is part of me that is dying every day." Because the Bible says without a vision the people perish. That doesn't mean that they keel over and die one day. It just means they don't sleep as well as they used to.

James: Well, life perishes, the real meaningful life, it ceases -- it's an existence.

Luke: And at some point I think everyone has to have more awareness where they say, "I want God's vision for my life more than I want food. I want your dream that bad." When you pay the price and you come out on the other side of that seeking and praying and fasting and solitude and you say, "I've got a God sized dream," that's when life begins.

James: We were visiting with Luke and we know that you had some things happen that kind of stunned your dad. You had an experience, of all places, at Disneyland. Why don't you just tell everybody so we can understand what preacher's kids go through? You kind of had an awakening experience since you went to the trouble of sharing it.

Luke: This story will give great hope to every parent who is praying for their kids. So I was -- I was a sheltered kid raised in a preacher's home and never got into any kind of trouble growing up. So I went to Southern California College or Bible School, Assemblies of God Bible School. Everyone knew who I was in the Bible School because my dad pastored the largest church in the Assemblies of God. So I was supposed to be the role model for this whole thing. But stuff rubs off. You know that? The people we hang out with, it rubs off.

[Laughter]

James: Deacons' kids.

[Laughter]

Luke: That's right! So I was a baseball player and I played on the baseball team. Most of the baseball players were not Christians, they were recruited into the college. So one night one of them had an idea. “Why don't we go sneak into Disneyland at 2:00 in the morning while it's closed and just see what Disneyland looks like at 2:00 in the morning?”

I said, "I'm not going to do that. You're crazy!"

About an hour later I found myself scaling that wall, that ivy wall. We get inside Disneyland. There are three of us. We're walking around and there's no one there. We go to the Pirates of the Caribbean and all the lights are on but no one is there. We walked through the haunted mansion

and nobody is there. We figured, there's no one in this entire park!

We start walking in the main streets and all of the sudden a security guard on a bicycle comes over the hill and says, "Stop guys!" And we scatter.

I found myself hiding out on that Safari ride; the big hippopotamus is right in your face there. Within five minutes there are 100 security guards all around us. They finally capture us and they take us into a little security shed there. They call the police.

The police lady walks in and she is interviewing me and she says, "Well, I'm going to write you a citation for trespassing. I need to see your identification."

I said, "I don't have my identification with me."

She goes, "You don't have your identification?"

I said, "No."

She said, "That's bad news. I've got to take you downtown to spend the night in jail."

So I've been out of my dad's house for one week and I'm going to Anaheim jail for the night. So they put me in this cell with three of the biggest guys you've ever seen in your life. When I was a freshman in college I was 110 pounds. I grew really late. I looked like I'm about 14 years old.

So I walk in the cell there and these three guys are talking about why they're in jail in a night. One guy looks all banged up; kind of a barroom fight. The other guy says, "domestic abuse." Another guy had some big story. Then they all turn to me and say, "Why are you here?"

[Laughter]

I wanted to say, "Mass murderer "or lie but I had to tell truth. I said, "I just wanted to see Mickey!"

[Laughing]

No! But I spent the whole night in jail. The next day they took me down to see the judge. The judge said, "Mr. Barnett, sneaking into Disneyland wasn't as much fun as you thought; was it? Time served."

Can I tell the back end of that story? So a year later I'm sitting in my dad's home and we're

having dinner. He says out of the blue, "By the way, I heard about what happened to you at Bible School." Because no one ever told him; I never told him what happened. I was afraid to tell him.

So I said, "Who told you?"

He goes, "I know these things."

I said, "Well, let me tell you exactly what happened here because you need to hear the whole story." I told the whole gruesome story.

He started laughing. He said, "You just spilled the beans. I didn't know all that. You just told the whole story!"

I said, "You can't pull anything..."

James: He was just kidding around with you like, "I heard about what happened in college."

Luke: He had no idea. I just told the whole story. That's right. You can't hide anything from him. He is spooky.

James: I think for everybody to understand the beautiful story of a young man who did have a father, who does have a father who really loves Jesus and loves people, and I count him one of my very best friends. And to say we have journeyed together and stood together would be almost an understatement because of the love and respect we have for one another.

But here is an incredible story. It is still being written but what's happened in Luke's life and is continuing to happen is an inspiration for everybody to discover the dream.

Would you say thanks to God and thanks to Luke for sharing? And pray for him, his leadership at the Dream City Church in Phoenix, Arizona.

Luke, you're going to appreciate what you're about to see. I want to say to all of you, do you know what a great scientist told me recently? He's worked with burn victims. He said, "James, we have a very difficult time raising funds to help burn victims because if you show people the children that have been burned they immediately turn the television off or change the channel. They can't stand to look."

I said, "I found..." I told him this, "I found people tend to want to turn away from what they don't want to see."

Sometimes when you hear pain, you can look away but here's what I want you to know. Every sign of need that you hear and feel, we have the perfect answer for. I'm not exaggerating. Believe it or not, you are -- yes, you are! -- you're a vital part of that perfect answer. So listen beyond a cry and hear the heart of God and the heart of missionaries.

On the mission field

Isak: You can hear the children crying in this malnutrition clinic but I've been here too many times, I've seen this too many times. The ones that scare me are the ones like this little child that don't -- they don't have the energy anymore to cry. In fact, to breathe is almost impossible; a two-year old child that weighs less than 13 pounds that has been here for well over a week. A mother who walked from a village to bring her child out of absolute desperation because this child is -- it's dying. They've had to wrap the little child's hands up because its skin is literally falling off its body because the body starts to shut down. So his little skin, if he just grabs on his skin it just tears.

This is a reality for way too many mothers in these areas. This child is not lying here because of some terminal disease, something that requires a massive investment and years of medical science. No, this child is lying here dying because we didn't do enough. Because we didn't get to their village in time, because we weren't able to take a bowl of food a day, something that costs so little and yet does so much. It fills the heart of a mother, it saves the life of a child, it wins the battle against malnutrition and death.

I wish I could be hopeful and tell you that I believe that this child will make it but I don't. Because children when they get to this condition, most times don't leave this place. But it is not too late for tens of thousands of others that so desperately need your help.

End of clip

In the studio

James: You've been listening to Peter Pretorius' son, Isak, one of our best friends weeping over the children on his continent. He said, "I'm tired of burying our children." He said that to me years ago. There he is looking at a situation where he says, "I don't -- I don't actually believe this child is going to make it."

But I've got good news. Beth Moore prayed over a child like that and heard "they're not going to make it" but that child made it. And not only made it but went back and played soccer with Beth Moore a couple years later. So that's what love does.

Isak is just being very honest. He's saying when they reach this point, that's where they've gone to intravenous feeding, that's where they've gone to all desperate measures. You say, "James, who makes those clinics possible?" You do. That's all part of the mission outreach. We don't have time to discuss every aspect of it but part what you give goes to that point of desperation.

What we're asking you to support in mission feeding is feeding 400,000 children that were like those that you saw at the end, those actually were on the way to recovery because they've been coming to the feeding centers, to the feeding areas where we've set up for all of these hundreds of thousands of kids. And that's where we've been asking you for years to give $30, $50, or $100 to feed three, five, ten children for the next months and it works and it changes everything! It saves their lives.

So this is what we're asking you to do right now. We're asking you if you will just go to our website, you can see it right there on the screen. I want you to go to that website, take your bankcard, and make the gift God puts on your heart.

Or you can dial the number that's always there as a prayer line. You have a need, a broken heart, you want someone to share, you want someone to pray for you or with you that number is there for you. Right now it is a life line. I want you to take your bankcard and I want you to be an answer to the need of children like that child and so many hundreds of thousands that won't get there if we help them. They're going to have everything changed. Six months turns everything around. We're able to get them back on their feet, we're able to send them back healthy, help their families and get them back on their feet and it is miraculous what happens. We've been doing it for years. It's effective.

Right now we need to hear from every one of you who can possibly help. $30, $50, or $100, whatever it is you can do. We have some gifts we want to send you. We're going to send you Sheila Walsh's book, how you live through the middle of the mess we're in. It's phenomenal.

And if you make a gift of $100 or more, we're going to send you the most unique cup set you've ever seen. You're going to get a cup that when you put your heated drink in it, it's going to arise and shine. It's an amazing thing to watch. But it is inspiring you to do that every day because God told his people to arise and shine with his glory on them; that's what we're doing.

We also want you to know the missionaries have told us they have got to refurbish our largest food processing plant where we make all of this food mixture that we're able to take out and distribute. It's got to be refurbished, expanded a little bit; it's going to increase their ability to produce even more food rapidly. So we need a $200,000 support right now, $216,000 they tell me. I'm praying 216 people will make a gift of $1,000. We'll send you that beautiful, beautiful

eagle, the "Determined Eagle." Would you please, right now go online, call that number, take the bankcard, and just make the gift God puts on your heart. Please don't put this off. Lives really do depend upon it and it really does work. Love does not fail. Thank you for sharing it!

Begin video clip

Announcer: In impoverished and famine-stricken areas of Africa, children are suffering. The need is great. And without food, they face death by starvation. With your support, you will help feed and care for children in crisis areas of Sudan, Angola, and Mozambique.

With Africa facing ongoing food shortages and drought, we urgently need to replenish supplies and come to the aid of 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 an additional gift to help provide critically needed upgrades to our food factory that will increase overall production by a staggering 50%. This is a $216,000 challenge above our normal feeding budget that could help save even more lives.

With your gift of any amount we'll send you *In the Middle of the Mess*. In her new book, Sheila Walsh brings insight to knowing the peace and presence of Christ in the midst of life's inevitable messes.

With your gift of $100 or more to help feed and care for ten children, we will send you Sheila's book, plus the "Arise" coffee mug. This heat-activated mug reveals Isaiah 61 each time you fill it with a warm beverage; a wonderful way to begin your day.

And finally, with your gift of $1,000 or more to help feed and care for 100 children, be sure to request our "Determined Eagle" bronze sculpture. Please call, write, or make your gift online.

End of clip

In the studio

James: Well, Betty and I both just say thank you so much. We say that in behalf of the missionaries and the family members and the children.

We'll be sending you Sheila's book if you'd like to have it. Some of you would say, "Could you send us Luke's book? I just feel like I need that, I want it." You want it? We'll send it to you. It's in the bookstores. You might suggest it to a friend or even get one for a friend. But you help us help those kids and you say, "Would you please send me that book, *The Dream Centered Life*?" Yes, we will.

Join me and Betty in saying thanks to Luke. Give your dad, your family our regards and the whole church family. Thank all of you for watching. Thank you so much for helping us share life every day.

Begin video clip

Announcer: Ambassadors for *LIFE* are people like you who see need in the world and want to do something about it. Contact us to start a fundraiser today and change someone's future!