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Week 48: Fall Mission Feeding
Randy Robison and Sheila Walsh
Jonathan and Wynter Pitts

Randy: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! We're so glad to have you, especially in this season of family. Sometimes Sheila, that is a little tough. It's a good thing or a bad thing but it is part of the deal.

We're going to talk about a little bit of family today. We have Jonathan and Wynter Pitts on and they are the authors of the book called, *She is Yours*, which is talking about raising daughters, not just any daughters, secure, godly daughters. Would you welcome Jonathan and Wynter to *LIFE Today*?

[Applause]

They're not alone because the subjects, the ones that provided you all of the fodder for this fine book, they're here. Do you want to introduce your children?

Jonathan: Sure! I'll do that.

Randy: Y'all stand up for just a second.

Sheila: Can you stand up so we can really see your beautiful faces? Ta-da!

Jonathan: So Alena, the oldest is 13, and then Olivia next to her is eight and has a twin sister on the end named Camryn. That's Kaitlyn in the polka dot shirt there.

Sheila: Welcome girls! Great to have you with us.

[Applause]

So when you're writing books about raising daughters do you have to run your material by them, first of all?

Wynter: They get the material first and then we're like, oh, we can do that because we just did that.

Randy: Well, you should have taught my dad that because I go back and I read his books and there is my childhood. And I was never asked permission.

[Laughter]

Sheila: You tell a very funny story in the book though about when we get married we often have plans of I'll wait five years and then I might start a family. But your first arrival was a little bit of a surprise. But describe what happened when you decided to share the wonderful news with your husband.

Wynter: Yes, so we thought -- we got married right out of college and we thought, that's fine but we'll wait to start a family. We had a five-year plan. It's about two weeks after we got back from our honeymoon, well, probably about a month later I kind of realized, I think I'm pregnant. So I called Jonathan and made the announcement. And just as a new wife, just excited to tell him, I'm like, "Babe!" Somebody had a dream and I was like, "I took a test and I'm pregnant." He was like, "What? You are? Okay, well, I'm going to go finish my round." He was golfing. So he wanted to finish.

Sheila: Finish a round? Imagine you have more children!

Randy: What did you shoot after that?

Jonathan: Not very well. I just wanted to finish my round of golf. I was new.

Wynter: I don't think he's finished a round since, actually.

[Laughter]

Sheila: Tell us a little bit about -- I find it interesting that you've written these great books for, what I consider an area of the market that there are really not a lot of books available. I write books for little girls and there are some good books for older teens but you're writing some really great stuff for those kinds of "tween years."

But tell us a little bit about your own story of growing up because it wasn't the kind of world that you describe for your own daughters.

Wynter: No, it wasn't. I grew up in the inner city in Baltimore, Maryland with a single mom, with my grand mom, raised my brother and I. There was always faith. When you're in that sort of situation where there weren't a lot of resources, material resources but we always had our faith.

Regardless of all the details that were happening outside, just drug infested and crime, just in the heart of the city; we were in the heart of all that. But inside of our walls we were praying. My mom was bringing us together and she was on her knees and my grand mom was on her knees in the midst of all of that that was happening around us. They just surrounded us and covered us in prayer and faith.

Randy: What did that teach you about the power of prayer even in a tough situation?

Wynter: It is not until now that I can go back and say the fact that I'm writing... I always say every statistic was against me. My dad was addicted to drugs. We're in the city, in Baltimore; my mom, raised by my grandmother, everything was against me. And the fact that I'm sitting here now with my husband and my four girls and have resources for girls, it just goes back and I can remember their prayers and them praying. At the time I didn't. It just was what we did and we prayed before we left the house and oftentimes it was more annoying than it was anything else because I wanted to go do something else. But now I see God answered those prayers and has answered them in ways that I don't even know that they realized when they were praying them. They were praying for safety and that God's hand would be on our lives and that we would know him. And that impact, God has taken that and been able to use that way beyond anything that they would have thought.

Sheila: I think that's got to be a tremendous encouragement to moms out there who are raising their children by themselves. I was raised by a mom who raised three of us and a lot of statistics against. But there is something that our culture doesn't consider and that is the power of a praying mom.

Randy: So how did you two get together? When did he come into the story?

Jonathan: We actually met in college. She was just a girl on campus. I remember seeing her; I was in a five-year program. In my third year I remember seeing her on campus and thinking that girl looks really stuck up.

[Laughter]

But she was carrying herself with class and it just struck me. I actually was introduced to her by a friend at a party one time and the rest is history. So I fell in love with her and been together ever since, 14 years.

Sheila: Didn't you have all of your children within the first like five years?

Wynter: That's what I always say, "Within five years we were surrounded by four girls."

Jonathan: Three in diapers.

Sheila: What was your background like, Jonathan? What did you -- were you raised in a different sort of a home?

Jonathan: Interesting, I was raised in South Jersey in a very rural community. My mom is German, my dad is African American and we grew up in not the greatest of circumstances but we always had what we needed and God always provided. But a loving home; my parents love the Lord, they fear the Lord and they taught us to do the same.

I always say that my testimony is that I tasted and saw that God was good. The Bible says, "Taste and see the Lord is good." So I tasted it. Anything else as I aged up and started experimenting with different things just tasted bitter and God was always better. That's my testimony.

Randy: Tell us a little bit about what you two guys are bringing to the rest of us in your book, *She is Yours*; some of the lessons that you have learned or are learning as they unfold.

Jonathan: I would say first of all, the book is broken down into three sections. It talks about her relationship with the Lord, talking about your daughter's relationship with the Lord; her relationship with you, as her parent, and her relationship with the world around her.

Really, the core of what we're trying to do is help parents understand of girls obviously, but of parents in general that God wants to have a deeper relationship with your daughter and to the degree that they see Christ in you will be to the degree that they are actually set up well to know and love the Lord; and hopefully, puts other people in their lives as well and he will. That you are a large part of the Lord's testimony in their lives and you can be.

Randy: So those three things you mentioned are oftentimes, there's some tension there. The world is dragging one way and we're trying to just maintain that relationship this way and we're hoping and praying that they will have that relationship with God. How do we balance those all? How do we live their lives for them and I know we can't, right? But how do we get all those three things going in the right direction?

Wynter: I think we're both excited about that one because I think that is the heart of the book, *She is Yours* and just believing and trusting and knowing that God gave us these girls so clearly, they're ours, he gave them to us but he gave them to us -- they are his. They are a gift from him.

So in all those areas, we look at anything, her relationship with him, her relationship with the world, anything you can be discouraged, you can feel hopeless, and kind of out of control in those three areas because they're pretty big and intense areas. But when we look at it through the eyes of seeing them as a gift from him, then it allows us to relax in that because what we need to do is not control those areas but we need to focus on reaching out to him for how he wants to rule those areas in their lives.

So that's the heart of the book is that even in those sections, as we talk about how we're journeying through those things and practically what that looks like with four girls, at one point all under the age of five, being intentional about our devotional time, or being intentional about our quality time with them, being intentional about our quality time with God. So as we talk about all those things in the end, there is a prayer because we know that we can only do so much and we have to just say, "Lord, I'm yours so are they. So here's what we have to offer. We trust you to do the rest."

Randy: Jonathan, you make a point of that. There is a difference between good intentions and intentionality.

Jonathan: I think most of us have good intentions but the reality is that intentionality takes a lot of hard work and on most days... My wife was just at a conference this weekend. To be an intentional father, it is easier to check out, to hold my ear buds in and listen to some talk radio as I do the dishes. But to be intentional means to dig into their lives, to understand what's going on in their world.

Really, it's in that and understanding, digging into their world, we really understand where they are, we understand how God's made them, their personalities, which is very different for four different girls -- five different girls. But yeah, intentionality is a lot of hard work but it comes with great results, I believe.

Sheila: When you talk about your girls' relationship with God, you use a really helpful illustration. You talk about pediatricians saying, "You can't make your kids eat good food but you can provide them with a lot of good choices." That that's the same in their relationship with God; you can't make them love God but you can create an atmosphere.

Talk to parents of young kids who at the moment are thinking, how do I do that in this crazy world? How do I make my children understand that this is not something they have to do but this is this glorious invitation from a loving Father?

Wynter: Well, I'll let Jonathan answer practically the things that we have done. But I will say just to start off is that we say that but we say that fully understanding that it is messy, and it is

not convenient and it is times where we are, it is not pretty, it is not this beautiful worship service at our kitchen table. But it is "sit down" and "come here" and "no, don't feed the dog that." And "Listen, we're trying to read the Bible." So there's all of that. But it just still takes us being present in doing that.

Jonathan: Yeah, I would say the biggest thing, and for me, I had to do this last night. I had to sit down with my one of my daughters and literally apologize to her and own my mistakes. So a lot of times what Christ-likeness looks like is asking for forgiveness ourselves and owning our own mistakes. I really think that's where the gospel is truly exposed when we as parents can show our own brokenness and be really open with our children about our own need for God and our own need for forgiveness.

I don't know, to me the softest, the most intentional moments I have with my girls is oftentimes owning my own mistakes but I think they can clearly see Christ in that.

Sheila: I think that's beautiful, actually. I think it's a beautiful gift to give your children, to admit the fact, "You know what? I'm not going to get this all right. But here's my heart."

I think that gives them permission then to come to their heavenly Father saying, "I didn't get this right."

So I think that's...

Talk about what it's like. You talk about your kids' relationship with God but your child's relationship with you. You talk about how tempting it is to just check out. What does it mean "the gift of your presence"? I relate to you in the book because you're like sometimes you just want to get away and be quiet for a little bit.

Wynter: There's a story that I tell. I was having just a day and I just wanted to be by myself and everybody else was happy. So I felt like I was actually disturbing the happiness. So I just got up from the table and just went to the room and thought, like, they're happy, I'm not. So let me just be alone.

And I hear one of the girls coming down the hall and so I kind of brace myself because I'm like she probably needs help with homework or what is it that she is going to need? And so I'm bracing myself for her to come into the room. And she comes in and she is like, "Hey mommy!"

I'm like, "Hi baby! What's going on?"

She said, "Nothing!"

I say, "Did you need something?"

She's like, "No, I just like being with you."

And it was in that moment that it dawned on me, like oftentimes we feel like they need us to be doing and they need us to be producing for them and showing them and teaching them and really, they just want to be with us and that our presence matters but not often in the way that we think it matters. But it just matters that we're there. She just came in and there was nothing else. I wasn't at my best. I wasn't happy and doing a dance with her and singing. I was in my bed kind of having a moment. She still just wanted to be with me.

Randy: Some of the things that you've talked about, just being present, being willing to be admit your mistakes, being intentional about your time and focus. They go beyond just raising daughters or even raising children. How has some of these ideas that you've learned in your parenthood changed the relationships between yourselves, between other family members, where you work, in your community; have you seen any of that translate over?

Jonathan: Yeah, I would say that oftentimes and especially in our society right now that the goal is perfection; if we don't get perfection then we just want out. You look at that with divorce rates, you look at that with all kinds of relationships and the reality is that in any good relationship there is a level of grace and a level of understanding and a level of pushing through things that most people aren't used to doing or want to do.

So that's really our home is like a school. Like we want to really teach our daughters that life's not going to be easy, it is always going to be messy but there is always a level of grace that's going to be necessary in order for you to have lasting relationships that matter. That's not just a relationship with each other in our home but it is outside of that, and it's even in understanding your relationship with Christ.

Randy: It probably better prepares them for leaving the home eventually one day; right?

Wynter: Yeah. That's what we're trusting and believing.

Sheila: Because the third section of your book is your daughter's relationship with the world. A lot of the world is kind of scary right now and I was even wondering, because your darling daughters are here with us and I was thinking, as parents, how do you help them understand everything that's going on in the world? We face tragedies, we go through all sorts of different things, how do you as parents determine where you step in and say, "Here's what's going on" and

bring a perspective of God's still being in control no matter how things appear?

Jonathan: We've got a scripture. It's so funny. There is this one scripture; I was actually afraid to fly for the longest time and I fly way too much to be afraid to fly. There is a scripture that says, "Have no fear of sudden death for their ruin overtakes the wicked for the Lord will be at your right side and keep your foot from being snared."

My wife's like, "That's such a depressing verse."

[Laughter]

And it kind of is except for the fact that it's God's promising that he will be with me and him promising that even in the midst of all the chaos in the world happening he is with me. For me, that's the greatest thing that we have, the assurance that God is with us, that he is for us.

We try to give that to our daughters every day. Regardless of what tragedy happens, we are open with them about the way the world is and just knowing that God is with them regardless of where they go.

Wynter: And I think I'll just add, we always try to take a proactive response and not a reaction when it comes to talking to our girls or telling them about things that are going on. So in doing that we approach topics; we just approach the hard stuff. But it gives us an opportunity to approach it from God's perspective and God's standpoint on those things.

So we do that; and just going back to God's word. We just go to God's word constantly because we don't know anything else to go to. So for them, just going back to scripture. I try to find ones that don't talk about sudden death.

[Laughter]

Jonathan: I would add to that just that it's intentionality but for us it's offensive. Like so many of us Christians want to huddle up and just wait for Jesus to return. But ultimately, he's calling us to go out. I want my girls to be world changers. I want them to be girls that are going out into all the world just bringing the good news.

Wynter: Because we do talk about their -- oftentimes we think about the world's influence on them; that brings fear and anxiety because the world is going to influence them. But we like to approach it from actually, you've been placed here to influence, and to be the one, to have the impact. And so just challenging them to do that, to not see it as a time for them to be afraid and come back. But no, this is actually a time for you to stand up and be different.

Randy: A great approach. Now I'm not going to do this but if I were to ask your girls what they thought about you as parents that are very intentional about how they go about raising their girls in a rough world but in a godly way; right? What would you hope they would say about you as parents?

Jonathan: You can start that one.

[Laughter]

Wynter: Well, actually my hope is that they would say, (a couple of things) one, that they would say when they saw us do interviews and things like this that it is actually what they lived. That this is who we are and not just what we're saying but this is what they saw in our house and how we lived. I think we have asked them and they do say, "We apologize often." Like we are quick to apologize and just say, "You know what? We were wrong on that one."

And then I think it is just a great testimony, what Jonathan says about just his family; just that he has tasted and seen. So that's my prayers; that they've tasted and seen and they didn't see perfection but they saw that God is good and that God's grace is real and that we need it and that because we need it, it is good.

Jonathan: I would add to that and just say I Hope and pray that my girls know that they are deeply loved, and that they would never ever question God's love because I was a bad example to them in that. So that's my heart; that they would know that I love them beyond any decision they could ever make, anything they could ever do and that they would know that God's heart is good because their daddy's heart was good, even in my mistakes.

Randy: So good! So good! I think what you just heard is a glimpse of the heart of God because what he wants for us is good. He has a plan for us and it is good. It is life. Not everyone is getting to see that. Some people need to hear that there is a good God who loves them, who wants to bless them, who wants to provide for them and just say, "Come and taste that I am good."

There are some people in need right now, Sheila. You've been there, you've seen it but the good news is that when you help us we can change what's going on. We can give them the life and love of God. Watch this with us.

On the mission field

Isak: We're in this village where they've really been suffering with bad drought. They've had

no real rain here in the last year. You can just see how dry everything is. This is an area where they would normally plant crops but there are no crops being planted here. There is no food. There's also no life.

Announcer: In southern Africa drought and famine have deprived entire villages of food. For the mothers of children in these areas their only way of life is to plan for death.

Isak: Grave after grave after grave... for children who have a name, children who mean the world to their mothers and to their families, children who don't deserve to die simply because their village was ravaged by drought -- because they didn't have Mission Feeding. You see, we can stop children from filling these graves. We can bring the cycle of death to an end if we just act. You say, "But what do I do? How do I stop children from dying?"

This is how you do it. You open your heart, you give out of what you have, you give the best gift that you can give, you give Mission Feeding, you give life -- life in the form of a bowl of food that not only fills a stomach but empties a grave.

Please do it for the mother that doesn't want to lose another child. Do it for the children that don't deserve to die.

End of clip

In the studio

Randy: That shot of all those graves, it just breaks my heart. They say their only way of life is planning for death. That is not the heart of our Father, that's not what God wants. That's why he asks us to be his hands, his feet, to go to reach out. Sheila, we can change that.

Sheila: Yeah, I stood in that graveyard when I was there in Angola and the thing that was so moving to me were the little tributes that had been left on every single graveside by the parents, small things, just something. Like one little bootie. Something to say, "My child was on this earth and my child mattered."

Because sometimes we get used to pictures like that and we think well, mothers in Africa, they get used to losing their children. No, they don't. No mother ever gets use to burying a child. It would be overwhelming if it wasn't that we can make a difference because I've seen the difference it makes. The food that we provide, it looks like a bowl of oatmeal but it has everything that children in that area of the world need to thrive, vitamins, all the minerals they need. And literally, one bowl of food changes from death to life.

I've gone to the malnutrition clinics and held babies that look as if they have just moments left to live. But I've been in the villages where our feeding program is already in place and I've seen the difference. They look like our kids. They're running around. This is something that we can all do, Randy.

Randy: Absolutely! It's very cost efficient: \$30, \$50, or \$100 will help feed three, five or ten children for three months.

We've been doing this for awhile. My parents started doing this many, many years ago with Peter and Ann Pretorius, Isak's parents, who you saw earlier. One of the things, Sheila that we can do in addition to giving the food, we have food factories in country and the food factory changes everything. It allows us to reach more people, it allows us to be more efficient and we actually teach them a trade to take care of themselves long-term.

But we're at a point now where I've probably upgraded my phone five times since we upgraded that food factory. If we upgrade the food factory this year we can increase the production by 50% and that's huge! That means more food in emergency areas. That means more of that turnaround you're talking about, Sheila, where we see that child go from death's doorstep to running and playing. It's taking them life.

That's what we want you to do. We want you to join us in giving life to these children all across Southern Africa we can turn around the bad situations, we can give them life instead of just preparing for death. But we need you to join us so go to the phone, call us, keep calling if you don't get through immediately or go online and make the best gift you can. Together we can make a difference.

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

Sheila: Thank you so much. Every single gift makes a difference. Every single child, every single mother that's praying that we will hear their prayers are going to be touched because you and I reach out and do something now in Jesus' name. So thank you.

Randy: When you call, if you would like Jonathan and Wynter's book, *She is Yours*, the book can be yours just request it.

And of course, if you want Sheila's wonderful book, *In the Middle of the Mess*, just ask for that. But most importantly, just do what you can. We appreciate everything you do as we reach around the world and share his love.

We appreciate Jonathan and Wynter being here sharing that heart of God. Thank you so much!

Thank all of you for being here on *LIFE Today*. Don't miss us every day on *LIFE Today*.

Announcer: When planning your future keep their future in mind. Contact *Life Planning Services* today.