

12/5/17
James and Betty Robison
Katie Davis Majors #1

James: Well, this is wonderful! A young teenager went to Africa and basically, so to speak, never came home; she came over to visit. *Kisses from Katie* became a New York Times bestseller. It is amazing. Katie Davis, now Katie Davis Majors is here with another book. I want you to give Katie a real good welcome to *LIFE Today*. Would you do that? Are you glad to see her? I know you are.

[Applause]

Katie, I hate to tell you but you've made such an impact; all these people came, they want you to adopt them.

[Laughter]

They're looking for a home. Yeah, they're looking for a home with all the love you talk about. That's it.

By the way, in this new book, the challenging, *Daring to Hope*, there is a picture and I'm sure they will be able to give you a close-up where you're sitting at home of all the family and her husband now. Did he actually know what he was getting into?

Katie: He did.

James: He really did. You didn't sneak up on him?

James: He found his way in. I want you to tell us a little bit about the journey. You went to Africa to stay no more than a year; right? What happened when you got there?

Katie: I moved to Uganda after graduating high school. Originally I was on a one year commitment to volunteer at an orphanage teaching kindergarten there.

I was surprised by a lot of the things that I saw. There were too many children packed into the orphanage; very few people trying to care for them. I also learned that about 80% of all children in institutions in Uganda have parents that are living who want them, love them, desire to parent them

but can't do so due to poverty. In Uganda specifically, these orphanages are full not because of a lack of love but because of a lack of money. I just didn't like that.

So I saw lots of community members who were hoping to get their children into some kind of institution so that they could go to school. Paying for children to go to school is one of the greatest living expenses that Ugandan families incur. So I just wondered, okay, if somebody would step up and pay for these kids to go to school, couldn't they keep living at home?

So I'd made a few friends in the community and people would welcome me into their homes. As I walked around and asked community members, "If I could pay for your children to go to school, would you keep your kids at home?" Unanimously the answer was yes.

So I began to call my parents. I began to call friends from America and share with them what I was seeing and what was going on. They would say, "Oh sure! I would love to give to that." My mom and dad would tell their friends, their neighbors, people that they worked with, and they would say, "Oh sure! I would love to contribute to that."

Before you know it, within that first six months we were collectively paying for about 40 children to go to school and therefore, be able to stay and grow up in their own homes. That's how my ministry started. Not with the intention of it becoming a ministry but really just encountering a person and saying, "How can I love you well? What can I help you with?"

And also, other people around the world hearing that there was a need and being willing to give. Because I'd raised very little money to come and live for a year so I couldn't have done any of that on my own. It was other people's willingness to say, "Oh I can get behind you in that," that really helped these kids go to school and Amazima continued to grow to the point where today we have 600 children who we're sending to school through people's donations.

This year we've built our own secondary school. The heartbeat of our ministry is really relational. We really want these children to be mentored and disciplined and taught the word of God above all else because they can go to school but if they don't come to a saving knowledge of Jesus then it's kind of all for nothing. So we have mentors that are in their homes discipling their families, doing Bible studies with their parents, doing community Bible studies and then teaching these guys the word of God even on their lunch break during their school day.

We really felt like when we were sending them off to high school, a lot of them had to go to boarding schools to get a good education, so we felt like we were kind of severing the family relationship but also we were losing these teenaged kids during these critical formative years. So we've now opened a high school with the intention that every single staff member, every teacher, every grounds worker, every janitor, every cook is somebody who loves the gospel and wants the

message to be known to these kids. So we have 72 students. This year was our first year open and those 72 students, we've already seen 30 kids come to Christ. We actually last week had a baptism for 38 construction workers, guys that are just on the campus building the school.

[Applause]

Betty: How far into this one year you were going to be there, did God start changing your heart about staying there?

Katie: I think it was pretty quickly. I just felt... we talked a little bit earlier, Ugandan people are so gracious and so warm and so inviting and they make you feel at home really quickly. They are very relational. They're very generous with what they have. In my American perception they had so little but the little they had they were willing to share with me. So I think I very quickly felt at home there.

What cemented it, though, was that I began fostering a sibling set of three girls. They were children that I had a relationship with through the sponsorship program that had started. I had started paying for them to go to school. Then in the course of that year they lost their one living parent and then their house fell down, actually crushed one of the children under the wall and she was in the hospital. But she had been caring for her two younger siblings. So I offered for the siblings to come and stay with me while she recovered. And then I offered for her to come stay with me while she finished recovering.

We thought we would place them with their grandmother afterwards but their grandmother actually became very sick as well and it soon became quickly apparent that these young women didn't really have anywhere to go. They're young women now; they were little girls at the time -- they were very little. So I committed to foster them first, short term and then long-term. And then God really impressed upon me that we were to be a family permanently. So that's how we began to grow my family. And once I had my family there, I knew it was home.

James: So you actually adopted those siblings?

Katie: I began the process to adopt them. And in Uganda it is a fairly long process. Then of course, as most people know, as the story unfolds over the next several years, God brought ten more children. So we now, my husband and I now have 13 adopted children.

[Applause]

James: This is really I think the heartbeat of *Kisses from Katie*. You talked very dramatically,

and in my opinion, very inspirationally and moving in how you lost your life there in Christ. Explain what you mean because I think this television studio is filled with people, and viewers all over the world are saying what happened for you to say your life came to an end and yet Christ's began in you in a new way. It actually sounded more to me, and I actually had tears rolling down my cheeks.

I have a pretty tender heart but it has to be pretty real. It can't be kind of with something trying to stir, it's got to be genuine. But as Betty was reading, I realized that you had lost your life in his. Explain what you meant by losing your life. What did you want us to hear? Everybody here.

Katie: I think once we experience Jesus' love for us, this true love that does not make any sense that he would love me and choose me, I think once we experience that, we want to love the people he puts in front of us.

So for me, it was really just making myself available to the people that were in that community where I was living and saying, "Yes," as he brought needs to me. I didn't set out to have this huge ministry or school or this huge family but God would bring a need and if I was available to be willing to meet that need and show kindness and love and mercy to the person in front of me then God took that and he grew it into something that I never really imagined.

James: And then it expanded to more and you stayed there though. Why didn't you think about the wonderful comforts back here at home and there are plenty of people over here that need love; what was it that caused you to stay there? What captured your heart?

You know we've worked in Africa for 25 years. We've been in war-torn countries. We've been there where we're just walking through the dead bodies and trying to pick them up. And I understand everything about the love and the desire to plant your life in the midst of theirs. But you stayed there. What led you to say, "This is where I have to be"?

Katie: I think for me, that's home. I feel like God specifically placed me there. But also, I think also because our children are from there and we really have a desire for them to grow up in the community where they are from, and we have a desire for them to have relationship with some of their biological relatives that are still in the area, and so for me, I couldn't see uprooting them.

But also, it is amazing to be in a place where you're kind of almost sitting back and watching what God is doing. People give me a lot of credit for doing it. But I don't feel like I really did it. I feel like I kind of did just the next thing in front of me and the next thing in front of me. But really, God did it. I think to sit in amazement of that is so captivating that I could never leave.

James: What did you think when your book took off over here and people just started reading it?

Katie: I was surprised. I was so surprised. I had no idea that people -- as many people would read it as they did. I certainly didn't expect it. But it felt like God confirming, "Yeah, yeah. This is me. This is what I'm doing." Because if it wasn't the Lord it would never have taken off like that; people write books all of the time.

Betty: We've traveled, of course, to the mission field, all over the world at different times and every missionary that we would be working with there, we would ask them about why they were there, and did they feel like they were sacrificing? And it was really amazing. They said, "We don't feel like we're sacrificing."

We said, "Why is it?"

They said, "Because we're where God has put us. And when we're at peace with God we're complete in him. So we're not missing out on anything because we're where he has planted us."

That makes a big difference; doesn't it?

Katie: Absolutely. I kind of even chuckle when people use that word *sacrifice* because there are hard things; I mean really, I think the only really hard one is being away from family. There is a lot of distance there.

But it all feels very, very small in light of being part of what God is doing. And Paul even says that; right? He has known what it is to be afflicted and he's known what it is to have plenty and yet he can be content in all circumstances because of Christ.

James: You found all the circumstances there that were challenging. So how did these other ten children start drifting in? Did you just find them? Did they just show up? How did you come across them and they become a part of your life? They're Your Kids.

Katie: They are! For many of my children I had already been in relationship with them through our ministry because the primary goal of our ministry really is to keep children in their families in their local communities. Out of 600, we found about 13, who for whatever reason couldn't stay. So maybe a dangerous home situation or maybe some of them lost their last living family member who they were living with while they were in our program.

Because most of them are part of larger sibling sets they were difficult to place with other families. We have now had since I've gotten my girls, we've now had several Ugandan staff members who have adopted children and we have also seen several local families in the community start to adopt children. I even tell the story of one endearing staff member of mine who adopted a little boy

whose mother had died in childbirth. He said, "You know, my wife and I have been thinking."

They're this darling family that were friends with me when I was a little girl in Uganda. They were so sweet to me. This is many years later. We were fostering a baby boy named Geft, and Patrick, the staff member said to me, "We were thinking we'd like to have baby Geft in the way that you have your kids."

I said, "Oh! Adoption! It has a name."

But it was cool to see that that was the desire of his heart also. Now we have seen now a lot of children placed in local homes.

James: What do you want people to know about the ministry of the... you use the Ugandan title for your ministry. What is it?

Katie: It is called Amazima. It's the Ugandan word for truth because we feel like that's really what we want more than anything is just that the truth of the gospel would go forth. And we're really pouring into these children but we've had several parents, even this year come to Christ because their children are coming home and sharing what they've learned at school with their parents.

So we do this through a lot of different means. We provide food, we provide education, we do medical care, we do vocational training. We've got lots of programs. But at the root of all our programs is just that the truth of Jesus would be known.

James: If viewers say we want to help you, the address is -- say it again?

Katie: Amazima.org.

James: It's on the screen. We are actually asking our viewers to help us care for 400,000 children that are dying if we don't help them. They're that malnourished. You've seen that because I've known you've rescued some and put your arms around some who were facing death. You know what we're talking about.

But there is Katie's address. Now I want to ask you this question, and you help as God leads. If someone, because we're often asked, can we go over and help in some way?

Now our missionaries because we work in the remote areas where people are dying, there are no motel facilities and the missionaries tell us, "Don't bring a bunch of Americans over here and expect us to take care of them. We don't have the facilities and we have to take care of the people."

So if they come over here, they're not coming over as tourists, they have to come over here and work."

Is there any way that people who may somehow bear witness who say that I at least need to see if there is a fit, is there anything that you offer where people who are watching could help you in any way overseas with what you're doing?

Katie: Sure! We have great financial need always, of course, to do what we're doing. We really, a big push within our ministry is hire locals so we don't ever like to bring over an American or an expatriate to do a job that a local person could do. But something that could be really beneficial is when someone has a skill and they can train a local to do their job better.

James: And stay long enough to do it, to train them.

Katie: Yes. So we have some positions open on our website that people can see. We bring over some teachers, we bring over some medical professionals, all with the goal of training up local staff to replace them really.

James: Now we're going to talk in-depth in the next program, because we're going to do another program. We're going to talk about *Daring to Hope*. Let me just ask you why because it will kind of lead into when we talk about it more thoroughly. It is available. It is in the bookstores. What do you hope to accomplish here? What's your goal?

Katie: My goal with writing that book was really just to encourage people to put their full hope and their full trust in God. And sometimes that doesn't make sense, sometimes that's hard, sometimes we don't see what God is doing but I have seen that our hope doesn't disappoint us. We read Paul's words in Romans that our hope does not disappoint because he has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom he has given us. So my main goal with *Daring to Hope* was just to really encourage people to hope in God.

James: Do y'all like this young lady right here?

[Applause]

I want you to really, really join Betty and me and our staff in praying for her. You don't have to wonder, well James, you'll probably figure out some way for *LIFE Outreach* to help her. You know you can go to bed in peace. I will. Of course, I think one of our administrators sometimes watches in the wings and says, "O God! Here we go again. James is going to give away everything we got!" I can only give away like what Katie pointed out so well, it's amazing when you show people a legitimate need and show them an effective way to meet that need they will step up to the

plate. So this is what we do together.

I want to show you right now an opportunity to put arms of love around those that are more desperate than we can describe. Here's what I want to ask you to do. I want you to look in and just say, "God, let me see with the eyes of Jesus." Because that's what Katie did. She saw with the eyes of Jesus. Suddenly she is extending his hands. Just watch with his eyes.

On the mission field

Isak: James and Betty, last time we were in Mozambique together, we were walking through schools where mission feeding was happening. There were children dancing and singing and just life -- life because of mission feeding in those villages, because of the friends of LIFE, because of each and every one of them opening their hearts, partnering with you, partnering with us to make that joy and that life possible for each and every one of those children. I remember it like it was just yesterday. I remember how filled with joy your heart was in seeing those children thriving, full of joy and full of energy. All of that starting with just a bowl of food a day in the mission feeding program; changing their lives, providing them with opportunity.

James, as you know all too well life is hard here in Africa for many of these families with the drought that we've experienced. We've seen areas where they're just unable to produce food. What it's resulted in is a severe critical need; a need that is putting children in malnutrition clinics. I've seen some of the fullest malnutrition clinics I think I've ever seen in this area. We've seen children, many of them who I don't think will make it. A name on a little wooden cross, another life stolen by malnutrition; stolen by the simple lack of food.

James, we have to do something about this! We've got to reach these children now. It's urgent. It's critical. We have to get to them now because if we don't get to them now, they're going to continue to dig more and more of these graves and bury more and more of these children.

Please James! Ask the friends of LIFE, ask them to help you and to help us so that we can save these lives.

End of clip

In the studio

James: Well, you've heard the heart cry of a missionary; that's Isak Pretorius, Peter Pretorius' son. Betty, we have been where they were burying them by the thousands, little children. They

were tiny graves like some you saw there. The first time Betty and I saw them I thought I was going to die of a broken heart in the midst of all the digging.

But Betty, we actually asked our viewers to help in that particular crisis area that was even more severe than what Isak was referencing there. When he pointed out that the malnutrition clinics, that's where the children go and the children are dying -- and you pay for those too. That's part of what all the mission outreach feeding does. That's the last effort to save them. But if we get into the areas where the 400,000 are now we can head them off and they don't get there, we begin to restore things.

But where they were dying by the thousands, Betty, we went back two to three years later and the kids were in school singing about Jesus. They all had food at school feeding because we learned if we moved the feeding to the schools it brought the attendance up. You viewers are just amazing at doing what works! Because it is love that works. These kids were so happy.

When we got ready to leave, the pastor was a real little guy. I noticed when I looked back he was looking up at Peter and he was crying. So when Peter Pretorius came over to the truck, I said, "Peter, why was he crying? The kids were happy."

He said, "Because he knew you saw how happy they were and he remembered where they were and where you took them and he thought now that you see them, you'll never come back, and maybe won't be able to help anymore."

Of course, we all wept tears of compassion again for the fact that he thought love might leave but it didn't. We just kept feeding and we do. Anywhere we get the kids coming to get their little minds fed because we've got their bodies strong and you enable us to do it, we do it.

So here's what I'm asking you to do right now. I want you to go online or call that number and I want you to take your bankcard and use it like a check -- or if you write a check, make the check to *LIFE* but call us and tell us what you're sending.

Now please listen to me. For \$30, \$50, or \$100 we can feed three, five or ten children for the next several months. Now this is not like you'd have at your home. This is nutrition. This is nourishment that totally stabilizes their situation, whatever the need is. And it's balanced biologically by overseers and the medical profession, and even scientists who help us know this is the need there.

That's why upgrading the food factory right now is really important. We have a \$216,000 need to upgrade and I've been praying God would raise up 216 people that would give \$1,000 each. So if you're one of those, do it. But what we need for those 400,000 is the \$30, the \$50, and the \$100. For those three children you feed with \$30, that's no small gift so don't think that's too small, \$50 for

five or \$100 for ten. There is a level at when you can participate. There maybe some of you who can say, "I can feed several hundred kids. God's blessed me and I'm going to do it because it works!"

Would you please right now go online, call the number, make the gift God puts on your heart? We have some gifts to send you you're going to like, you're going to appreciate because you're going to arise and shine and reveal God's love. Thank you so much for doing it. Thanks for making that call. Thanks for the gift.

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: Betty and I are excited about the gifts that we're going to be sending. Sheila Walsh, I'll tell you what, she knows how to help us get out of challenges and get out of a mess and this book, she is such a writer. This is in the bookstores. I hope you will consider getting it. We're going to be

talking to Katie again in another program. We're going to talk more specifically about this book. But if you say, "James, if we help with those kids you were talking about, would you send us Katie's book?" Yes, we will. You help us feed some of these kids, you help us give them a chance at life and point them to Jesus, and you want it, we'll be glad to send it to you just to say thanks.

Would you join Betty and me in saying thanks to Katie again for being with us? Thank you!

[Applause]