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Week 51: Fall Mission Feeding

Randy Robison/Sheila Walsh

Nicole Crank

Randy: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! We're thrilled to have you. And we're thrilled to have a wonderful guest. Sheila, tell us about today's guest.

Sheila: I love this woman! I had the privilege of speaking at her woman's conference in West Palm Beach, Florida. There is just something so -- your first impression will be wow, she is beautiful! And then you get to know her heart and you think, wow, she is beautiful! So please, welcome our guest, Nicole Crank.

[Cheers & Applause]

Randy: You've got a nifty little book with a great title, it's called *Hi God (It's Me Again)*. I like that. I know all the women resonated with that too because sometimes we feel like, God, I don't know what to pray but man, God, I just need help all the time; right?

Nicole: Well, when I said it it was more exasperated. It was more like, "Hi God! It's me again." Because sometimes I don't feel like I can sit up in my chair or know what to tell God when I'm in a bad spot. I've shared with *LIFE Today* before kind of my back story. I was given up by my dad before I was born, adopted by my stepdad in the U.S. when I was three.

I was molested in the fourth grade. I told my best friend in fifth grade and the thing is I didn't think that all the way through because what does a fifth grade little girl do with a secret? She tells all her friends. I spent sixth through eighth grade very largely alone because in a country town living off a dirt road in not a wealthy family, that's where I ended up.

I was raped in the eighth grade and then luckily we moved. I told no one about the rape until after I got married because of what happened when I told somebody about the molestation.

Sheila: Where in that journey, Nicole did you meet Christ because some of these people think, if you just give your life to Jesus then everything will go smoothly and that was far from the case with you.

Nicole: Well, you know what's amazing, Sheila is that I met Christ and got molested in the

same year. So often I think, if I had not met Christ before my life crashed, I guarantee you I wouldn't be here today. I would not have made it.

Sheila: That's a fantastic perspective because so many people would be tempted to say, "Lord, I gave my life to you; where were you?" That's not what you're saying. You're saying, "Thank you that I knew you."

Nicole: It's the only thing that saved me -- literally saved my life. Because there were times as I walked through each one of these things that I contemplated not going on anymore.

I went to a new school and I found out I wasn't an ugly duckling and I did anything I could to be invited to a party. "Okay, we're going to be drinking." I'm like, "I'm in!" "We're going to be..." "I'm in!" "I want to hold your hand." "I'm in!"

It doesn't take long that I became a pregnant unwed mother at 17 years old. So life had failed me to that point but at that point I failed me and now it was all gone. I didn't know who was going to marry somebody like me with all the baggage that I had and now a baby.

I met a guy with all the right medical initials after his last name. He cried when I walked down the aisle. He had high cheek bones and I thought I had finally made it! He got addicted to prescription painkillers which turned into cocaine which turned into crack cocaine which turned into an abusive man: Broken ribs, herniated C7, multiple restraining orders. The police in our town knew my name. They wanted to make sure I was safe.

He would come down from being high, he would make it home and the game that we would play would be how long will it take me to get out of the house and will I make it with my life? He would put a gun in my mouth. He had done all of these horrible things. There was another time in my life where I actually had to leave my life, Randy and hide from him. Because of the drugs he became fixated on me and I couldn't use a credit card. I couldn't get a job. I couldn't rent an apartment because he would find me.

Sheila: That's terrifying. This might seem like a strange question but I wondered when I hear stories like yours, at those worst moments when you're literally running for your life, where's God in those moments?

Nicole: Thank God he was with me. He never left me. Even when I didn't see him it was only because I wasn't looking at him. He was always looking at me. Truly, the night my husband had the gun in my mouth and didn't pull the trigger, that was God. It was me who had gotten myself into the mess of marrying the wrong man.

If I'm honest with myself there were things that scratched a little bit but I was looking for love and unfortunately for me, in all the wrong places like the old country song says. So I passed that up looking for love. I should have been looking for the love of Christ. Instead I tried to substitute it with the love of a man. I got myself into a place but still Christ kept him from pulling the trigger.

Sheila: Wow! That's amazing that you're here. The amazing thing for me was at the conference where you were hosting and leading it, there is something so transparent about you. Like they pulled a sofa on stage and you sat cross-legged on the sofa and shared your heart. You do these Facebook lives where you don't wear any make-up and you just talk from your heart. Have you always or in the last few years felt comfortable in your own skin or has that been a tough battle to win?

Nicole: I'm still not comfortable in my own skin. If you do look at my Facebook you won't recognize me because I don't look anything like this.

Sheila: You look lovely!

Nicole: But that's something that God really had to work on me because I've tried to constantly win the approval of man or woman since I lost it in the sixth to the eighth grade. So ever since then I still want in the popular club, I still want to be at the cool kid's table and I never think that I'm worth it.

The enemy will constantly remind you of everything that you've done wrong. We have to listen a little harder for the whisper of Christ because God is a gentleman. He's not going to scream his message and ram himself down our throat. He is going to wait for us to choose him. So he says, "I'm here. I'm waiting."

Randy: It is interesting that you admit that you still are battling these types of things. If we look at the most famous battle of all in the Old Testament, that of David and Goliath, there was no shame at all in David battling something bigger than him, there was only the shame in the guys who were just sitting there not doing anything.

So as you fight these things, as all of us fight these things there is no shame in admitting that we're in the middle of a big battle and the enemy looks bigger than us. As long as we're battling, that's where we should be.

Nicole: That's such a great point, Randy. The only thing bigger than the Goliath in our life is the future that Christ has intended for us; the only thing standing between us and the future and a hope he promises in Jeremiah 29:11, the future that in Genesis 50:20, you intended to harm me,

but God intends to use it for the good, for the saving of many lives.

That's the message that he gave me when I ran away from life. Before I was alone in sixth to eighth grade and I could do nothing about it. Now I thought I could do nothing about it and that's when God came to me and he told me that I needed to go back to my life and that he would want me to use the things that I wanted to hide so desperately.

I didn't even know what that meant for years until I met this other cute guy who happened to be the worship leader who became a pastor of a church and he was interested in me. I had no idea why a guy from a church and a holy background wanted to marry a girl like me. But it is because God had things in me that David could see and that he could mine out of me.

Now I speak at our church every single weekend. Who would listen to somebody with a background like mine? But it is God who wants to take the rocks that people -- we think people will throw at us or make our tombstone and God wants to kick over the tombstone and use it for our stepping stone to lead us to the future that he has for us.

Sheila: I discovered in my own life that our brokenness is a far greater bridge to other people than pretend wholeness ever is.

Was it hard for you to think that you could get on a platform and -- because I know I've struggled with that for years. It was like, Lord, why me? Good grief! Listen to me. Listen to my accent. I remember when I first started at the 700 Club a woman wrote to me and said, "I know you love Jesus. I can see it in your eyes but I can't understand a single word you're saying."

Nicole: That's funny! [Mimicking a British accent] Because when I want to sound smart I try to sound like I'm from that part of the world. Though I'm not saying it with some accent but... [Laughing]

Sheila: But how hard was that for you to step into that rightful place that God had appointed for you?

Nicole: Still I think, why would they want me on *LIFE Today*? Do they really know... are their viewers really going to identify with all the pain of my past? But really, when we share our pain, there is so much in common between each and every one of us. What is so funny to me is when I share my story I expect to appeal to women and then I'll see these big huge bikers with all these tattoos and I get kind of scared. And they come up and they start bawling and talking about the molestation or the hurt or the abuse of their childhood and how the story related to them.

That's why I wrote the book. That's why I wrote, *Hi God*, because the enemy tries so hard to pervert communication in our life. He takes us from conversations to texting, from dinners where we look at each other to dinners where we look at our screen. If he can change the communication between people, how in the world are we ever going to communicate with our God?

Sheila: That's so true. Such a great point. Yeah! I agree with that.

[Applause]

The thing I love about your book though is the subtitle is: "What to pray when you don't know what to say." You haven't scripted this book together as like an expert. It is like you present yourself as one other broken person wanted to lead another broken person into the very presence of Christ. It is beautiful.

Nicole: I thought I was structuring it as a devotional except that it's topically based and not really meant to read day after day: Obstacles or opportunity, I feel rejected, I'm completely stressed out, I just need rest. I waited to write each piece until I was in that moment. We were talking earlier about how I would usually write in bed at night after all lights were out and David would wake up and go, "What are you doing? You're supposed to be sleeping! You're ruining your life! Put it away!"

Randy: What a wonderful man you met!

Nicole: I'm showing you one of his worst parts. He would go to sleep and I would start crying. And then when I feel rejected, "Hi God! It's me again and I don't think anybody loves me." But I waited until I felt like I wanted to cry and then I wrote. And I started in the problem where I was so that it was authentic. It wasn't manufactured.

Sheila: That's how it comes across. What kind of feedback have you had from women who have read the book?

Nicole: That's what really shocked me. When I released the book, I didn't know how vulnerable I was going to be. I didn't realize until other people had the book that this was really my feelings on paper. So then I wanted to cry again. I'm not really a girl who cries a lot. So when we put it out there people just started resonating, especially on Facebook just, "How do I get more?" And "I use this every day."

And I might do a Facebook on stress and they're like, "Read page 97." They're quoting page numbers to me. They know the book better than I do. So that's why we just came out with the

audio book so that people could listen to it on their way to work or before they go to bed. And a journal and a study guide so people could dive into it, which you don't do with a devotional.

Randy: Yeah! It's more diary than devotional, I think because you pour out your life, you emotions. Just like Sheila said what to say when you don't know what to pray, just admitting, there are times I don't know what to pray. But you're saying you can still go to God and say, "Hey, it's me again." How has that sort of raw honesty liberated other people?

Nicole: Well, I don't want to tell on pastors but I am one, and I still don't know what to pray sometimes. It seems like the enemy has got my tongue and I'm just frustrated or I'm mad. Somebody cuts you off on traffic and you just want to smack 'em and you're like, "I'm glad you're in a car right now because..." It's probably just me. But then I cool off and I realize, I'm not supposed to feel that way. God, why did I fail again?

Luckily, I got the gift of gab and I just thought, if I could get people to start talking to God. So I wrote it for people, it's not long to just read out loud. And if we start in the problem -- I don't like when people just talk about the problem because God didn't leave us in a problem, he gave us a promise about everything. So we start in the problem, we get in the promise and that's what the journal is really designed to do is to get people now carrying on that conversation and making it their authentic conversation with God.

Sheila: I read something earlier on today about a little boy who was having a hard time getting to sleep at night. So he would creep into his dad's bedroom and didn't want to put the light on, didn't want to wake anybody. But he would crawl up into bed with his dad and he would say, "Dad, is your face toward me?" And his dad would say, "Yep, my face is toward you." And he would go to sleep.

I think one of the things that I get from your book and I get from who Christ is is that the Father's face is always toward us. There is never a moment when you have to lay your head down on the pillow and you're alone. Some of you may feel that way. You may listen to us talking about life and think, my life is nothing like that. If you have put your trust in Christ, the Father's face is always toward you.

You pastor large, large churches. Is it St. Louis and the West Palm Beach campus -- huge!

Nicole: We have four campuses.

Sheila: Jeepers creepers, that's a lot! [Laughing] That's fantastic. What do you see God doing in the women in your church?

Nicole: God has really used us to raise women up or allow their gifts to flow. Today my daughter-in-law is speaking in our church. I never imagined that the son that I had as a pregnant unwed mother at 17 years old would be used as a pastor in a church but he's the campus pastor of our West Palm Beach, Florida campus.

Sheila: He's darling! He's darling!

Nicole: And then to think that he would marry somebody that God would use in that capacity as well. So we're just excited to let people's giftings flow and to empower whomever it is regardless of their gender.

Sheila: That's beautiful!

Randy: Sheila made a real strong point about God's face always being toward us and that's exactly what you said just a little bit earlier. You may not have been looking for God through all these difficulties but he was looking at you. What was the moment where things turned around? Was there something that just kind of broke through all the garbage and set you on a path that led you here?

Nicole: There was a moment in Florida when I felt like God told me that I will never cut you because I felt like I had been cut. I had been cut by my father before I was born, I had been cut by the molestation, I had been cut by the rape, I had been cut by who was supposedly my best friend, I had been cut by the person that I married; I had been cut by so many. God promised me as someone who said he loved me and meant it that he would never cut me but he wanted to cut off from me all of these things that were holding me back but it would require my trust and it would require me talking about it.

And the very things that I was so afraid to talk about as I've used them as a platform the more I speak about them, the more freed I am from them and the more healed I am of them because they're no longer this dark prison or bondage on the inside of me and a door that I refuse to open. That door is flown open wide and my feelings are out there and on paper. And the very thing that I thought would cause people to stone me, it's actually bonded them to me. My bondage has turned into bonds of friendship.

Sheila: That's beautiful! I think that's what James means when he says, "Confess your sins one to another and pray for each other so that you may be healed." So often we think, I can't let anybody know this secret. One of the things I love to tell women is, "God has seen your movie and he loves you." There is nothing you've ever done, nothing you've ever said even the things you think, well, that's not really a sin because I just thought about it, I didn't actually do it. God knows it all and his face is toward us.

Nicole: He loves us anyway. He is the only, only one ever in our history who will love us no matter what. We have such -- we always accuse God of judging us but isn't it us who judges him unfaithful in his love to us regardless of anything? He doesn't judge us, he loves us. He doesn't want us to sin. He judges the sin but he doesn't judge us as a person. All we have to do is give it back up to him and over and over again his love is faithful.

Sheila: I think our stories speak to the fact that nothing is wasted with God. He is such a redeemer. I discovered it is a beautiful thing that God will do with a broken life when you give him all the pieces. And the fact that when you got pregnant when you were 17, not married thinking this is a disaster, to think that he has grown into this amazing guy, campus pastor -- only God! Only God!

So whatever you think you've done wrong that disqualifies you, no. You give those broken pieces to God and see what he will do with your life to turn it around. I think this is a great way to start every day, "Hi God! It's me again."

[Applause]

Randy: There is an opportunity for you to help turn around some lives. Right now as many of you that watch, you know our hearts are around the world to share the life and love of Christ with people who are in desperate situations. There are a lot of them right now in Southern Africa.

There is a historic drought going on. There are some crops that have failed. We're there. We've been there. We've made a huge impact for the positive. But the urgency is back again. Would you journey with us to see a place where I think you'll find out you can make a big difference in someone's life? Watch this story.

On the mission field

Open caption: Reality of the worst drought since 1945 peaking in parts of Africa -- africanews.com.

Announcer: It's hard to wrap your mind around something like drought. The devastating impact it has on young and old alike is heartbreaking. And when there is no rain, there are no crops for food. Families resort to doing everything they can just to survive, even eating seed pods from trees.

LIFE's mission team listened as one man named Gabriel shared his story.

Isak: This man's story breaks my heart. It amazes me. His dedication to his family is applaudable, it is incredible and yet it breaks my heart at the same time because what you'll learn from Gabriel is that they lose their children because despite their best efforts they are unable to give them enough food.

Gabriel here works so hard making firewood. He goes and chops trees down. He burns it, he prepares it, he bags it. He walks for more than three hours to get to the closest market to hopefully sell his bag of charcoal. And if he sells it, he gets enough money to buy one, maybe two meals for his family.

Gabriel has a wife and two children. He had a wife and four children just a year ago. But unfortunately, he wasn't able to provide enough food for two of those children who starved to death.

You see, Gabriel doesn't only know what it is to work hard, Gabriel understands the devastating pain of losing a child, of burying not one but two of his own children. You see what Gabriel needs is Gabriel needs Mission Feeding to come to his village. Gabriel needs his children to get that bowl of food each and every day -- that bowl of life! Gabriel needs your help. Please give the gift of life to Gabriel, to his children, and to his village today.

End of clip

In the studio

Randy: I think Isak is so right on when he talks about how we can actually do something. That's not how it's supposed to be -- people are not supposed to be starving in this world. They aren't supposed to be walking miles and miles and miles just to provide a meal that may or may not get their children through another day.

God wants us to reach out and do something. He has given us the means to do it. \$30, \$50, \$100 will feed three, five or ten children for three months. Those are just numbers. We're talking about lives. So what I'm asking you to do is just say a quick prayer and say, "God, would you have me do something? How much would you have me do?" And then just obey. That's what he requires of us. He doesn't want you to sacrifice. He wants you to be obedient.

If you'll be obedient and join with us in reaching around the world, you cannot just share the gospel in word but in deed as we go into these dark places and share God's light and give them a bowl of food.

Sheila, I know you've seen this firsthand. What have you seen out there?

Sheila: I was just thinking, Randy, our son is almost 21 and when he was a young boy and a teenager, we had what we called this pantry full of boy food, just because I would feed him regular meals and then he would always be hungry so we had all these boy snacks. I look into the eyes of that man, Gabriel and I think of how hard he works, chopping down trees, burning it, turning it into charcoal, walking for three hours -- which means he has to walk three hours back -- in the hopes of selling that so he can provide the two children that he has left one or two meals.

God has left you and I on this planet at this moment. It is not a mistake. We are here for a time like this. We are called to be the hands and feet of Jesus. Not just by going to our churches and worshipping and studying God's word. Yes, we do that but out of that flows the love and the care and the mercy of God. One of us can't change it all but together we can make a huge difference.

I have held mothers in malnutrition clinics as their babies took their last breaths. And then I have gone to the villages where Mission Feeding is in place and it's death to life. That's what we are about -- *LIFE Outreach International*, we offer life in the form of food and then once we have earned their trust then we share life in the person of Jesus Christ.

So if you and I do something, maybe you can only do \$30, that's fantastic! Maybe you can give \$1,000 as an additional gift to help with our food factory upgrade. Our factory needs an upgrade; it is getting old and if we upgrade it we will get 50% more food. So please, please go to your phone, call the number on your screen and make the very best gift possible.

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

On the mission field

Isak: As a result of your love and generosity as friends of LIFE we've been able to build this food factory. This food factory has saved tens, hundreds, even millions of lives as a result. But we need your help today. We need your help because we've got to expand this food factory because there are children in villages here as a result of the drought in this area and the fact that their families are not able to provide enough food for them and Mission Feeding is not reaching their villagers, these children are facing a critical situation.

It is not just a factory filled with machines. No! It is a factory that produces life. So I'm asking you please today, help us so that we can produce more food, package their food more efficiently and get it out to the children that so desperately need it.

The way that you can do that is by going online, by picking up the phone and dialing that number and giving the best gift that you can give, give the gift of life, give the gift of food.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: Thank you so much! If the line is busy, please keep calling. Let's change this world in Jesus' name. We would love to send you a copy of Nicole's book, *Hi God (It's Me Again)*. When you reach into this, it will put words to some of the things you're feeling and help you to pray and help you to talk to a Father whose face is always turned toward you.

Would you help me thank our guest Nicole Crank? Amazing, amazing woman! We love you!

Randy: It's wonderful seeing you again. Great to see all of you again. Love to see you again every day on *LIFE Today*!

Sheila: See you next time. God bless you!