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Week 18: Spring Mission Feeding
Randy Robison and Sheila Walsh
Nicki Koziarz

Sheila: Hey! Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm Sheila Walsh and I'm here with Randy Robison. Thanks for joining us. We don't take it for granted that you could keep flicking through channels but you stop and stay with us. We're very grateful for that. I think you'll be happy you did.

There's a great book out and it is called *Why Her?* "Six truths we need hear when measuring up leaves us falling behind." So would you please welcome my guest Nicki Koziarz. Did I get that right?

Nicki: Yes.

Randy: So good to have you.

Nicki: Thank you for having me.

Randy: I'm curious because the title of this is *Why Her?* Do you ladies tend to compare yourselves to each other a lot?

Nicki: A little bit. I mean Sheila's navy blue is way better than mine tonight.

Sheila: I like your navy blue. I think it is just one of those things we struggle with in life that we tend to look at, if somebody else is doing well or whatever area of life it is, women tend to compare.

Nicki: Absolutely.

Sheila: Is that what made you write this book, Nicki? What was the kind of Genesis for you?

Nicki: Well, actually, in Genesis is where the story really began because since the very beginning of time when Eve found herself standing in that garden next to that beautiful tree and that sneaky little snake slipped in and said, "Did God really say you're not supposed to eat that fruit?" From that moment on every woman and probably every man too, has had a "did God

really say" kind of moment.

And so comparison for me became a battle to see whose truth I would ultimately align my life with, God's or mine? Because we have this messed-up perception in our head of who God has really created us to be because we have an enemy charging against us to try to convince us otherwise.

Sheila: Was it hard for you because you're pretty vulnerable in this book. You're pretty open. And sometimes we can be selective about what we share and what we don't share. Was that a struggle for you at all?

Nicki: Oh my goodness, Sheila. Right before I turned in the book I almost pulled the very first story in the book because I share about my journey of getting pregnant at the age of 19 and not being so welcomed into the church and in my community because of that situation. Comparison really became a heightened struggle for me in that season because I became so disillusioned about how God viewed me because of the way people were treating me.

So yeah. But right before I was getting ready to send it in I was like, I don't know that I can really do this. Can I really share this story right now? Because my daughter is 17 so we're still living this story out. But I found when I can be vulnerable and when I can invite people into the darkest places in my soul, they're willing to come with me and they'll listen to what God wants to say to them.

Sheila: I think that is absolutely huge because I know that there's been things in my own life that I felt I'm not sure I want everybody to know that. But I think any time we offer our brokenness to God it is amazing what he will do with a broken life when you give him all the pieces. And I think it is tribute to your daughter that you didn't hide that part of your story.

Nicki: And I asked her permission of course. But yeah, we had a conversation about it and I said, "Taylor, this journey with you has really made me who I am today." So she was very willing for me to share that part of our story.

Randy: So I'm assuming, maybe wrongly but that you viewed that early unwanted pregnancy as a bit of a failure?

Nicki: Yes, absolutely.

Randy: Did that set you up to feel like a failure in comparing yourself to everyone else who seemed to have it together, even when a lot of them didn't, certainly have gone through other issues, maybe similar to yours?

Nicki: Right, right. I was 19 and when you find yourself in a situation where you're not married and you're pregnant and you're being very much criticized by your church and your community, absolutely. Did I stay in the posture of comparison with all these other moms and women who did it right, who did the right things? It very much caused me to have almost a mistrust of God, unfortunately, is what I found happening through my own story. But the more I've shared that story, the more God has brought healing to that part of my life.

Sheila: The very fact you're willing to share that though, Nicki, honestly, I just think of the girls watching who are in that position and who have been judged by the church. I always loved what Dr. Billy Graham used to say. He said, "It is the Holy Spirit's job to convict, it is God's job to judge and it is our job to love." -- And the fact that you're willing to share that.

But you use the story of Rachel and Leah in the Old Testament and I love your perspective on it. Talk to us a little bit about what life was like for Leah.

Nicki: Well, first of all Moses was not very kind in the way that he described Leah. He was not very -- he wasn't like oh my goodness, this woman is so ugly. Like, he didn't say that. But he describes Rachel, her sister as lovely in form and appearance and Leah is described as having weak eyes.

Now there's all kind of opinions about what that means but the very first form of comparison is in the story about appearance in the Bible. At least, Sheila, we've got that going for us; like our appearance isn't being compared in scripture. But it showed me very early on that Leah's struggle was much deeper than just ending up in this marriage with this guy that didn't love her. Can you imagine what that was like to be in her beautiful sister's shadow all those years?

Sheila: And particularly the fact that he didn't, the guy she married didn't even realize until their wedding night when she took her veil off that he'd gotten the wrong one. Can you imagine that? What kind of honeymoon is that? Oh it is you!

[Laughter]

Nicki: It was a messy, messy marriage. Absolutely!

Sheila: And she could have really given into incredible despair and bitterness but you point out areas where she actually stayed strong.

Nicki: Yes! I think what I saw through both of their stories is they kind of went on a roller coaster; like they would make peace with the situation and then they would not make peace with

the situation. But then I also saw them take some things from God, they would say things like "God vindicated me" and "God blessed me" and kind of some messed up theology. So whenever we see someone in the scriptures saying things that maybe don't represent the character of God, it is important for us to step back and go, this is the author telling this story. It is not actually who God is because God never blesses somebody to burden somebody else. He doesn't give us redemption bullets to shoot into other people's lives and say, "Look what God did through me!"

Sheila: You have these six truths and that's why you have to get the book for yourself because we don't have enough time in one show to unpack them all. But truth number four, I'd love for you to unpack that for us. "You didn't do anything wrong." You have a phrase in there that I stopped and underlined. "What doesn't kill us still hurts."

Nicki: Absolutely! Sheila, I love -- you are such a preacher of that message. Absolutely! It is time for us to stop trying to say, "Oh my goodness. This was just a little bump in my life." It was a painful experience. That truth as I've been talking with some women about the book and hearing their feedback, it's been the one that has brought the most freedom because we would love to blame someone or something for our failures in life or what we perceive as failures but sometimes God just looks down from heaven and says, "My girl, you didn't do anything wrong. It just is what it is."

Sometimes when we're comparing our assignments to other people and we see another person get this opportunity while we didn't we start to think, well, what did I do wrong? What's wrong with me? And maybe it just wasn't our assignment. Sometimes I think we just need to let God rub that inside of us; you didn't do anything wrong. That's just not what I had for you.

Sheila: How do you think social media compounds the way we compare ourselves?

Nicki: Well, it is awful! We can't pop open our phones without comparing. One of my favorite authors is Jon Acuff and he recently posted a quote that said when I was growing up our moms had like the only moms on the block to compare themselves with. Like five neighbors, a couple moms at school, the people they worked with -- that was it. But now if I pop open my phone I have hundreds of moms to compare my life with.

So it's there front and center all the time. I think it has made this struggle a little more heightened than maybe we would like to admit.

Randy: Just know that most of them are lying; right? That does feed into another point of yours that stood out to me and that is if we look on Facebook or Instagram or whatever and we see all these beautiful success stories of the children and their adventures and we see all of that, you say don't let someone else's successes become your failures.

Nicki: Right, or discourage you.

Randy: Right! Just because someone else does well doesn't mean that we have failed in some sort of way and we shouldn't be discouraged when they excel. We should enjoy it.

Nicki: Yes! And there's always something we can learn from people ahead of us. So I think success can do two things to us. It can either completely numb us like we go, "Oh, that's never going to happen for me. I can't do that. That's not my level." But then there's this posture of, how did that person get to that place?

My husband, he runs marathons, so one of the things he does is he compares his time to like Olympic runners, okay? -- The best; right?

Randy: I don't do that. Do you do that?

Sheila: No! I never do that.

Randy: Never been tempted.

Nicki: Well, me neither! But it is a good form of comparison. So not all comparison is bad; it is when it starts to compromise who God has created us to be.

Sheila: Sometimes you talk in your book about a particular writing assignment and when you were asked to do it you didn't realize perhaps at the time that one or two other people were being considered. But you poured your heart into it, you did some amazing stuff and then you got that call saying actually, it is not going to you. I know what that feels like. I wondered how did you navigate your way out of that to a good place?

Nicki: Well, I'll be honest. It wasn't like instantly I was like oh okay. That's awesome for her. I definitely asked, "Why her?" But there is another truth in the book that says her gain is not your loss. Through writing this message God's really given me a kingdom perspective on what it means to do God assignments. So I started to shift my mindset from man, this stinks because it did. Sometimes we just have to admit, this was really not a fun thing to walk through. But her getting that position doesn't make me a failure. When we start to move from "why her" to "bless her" and "yes, her" we have experienced freedom in the struggle.

Randy: That's so true.

Sheila: I love that! It's something I make a point of doing whenever I see any of my friends

releasing a new book, I absolutely consciously get down on my knees and I'm like, Lord, I pray you'll bless this book. I pray you'll open doors that nobody else can open. Because it is like when Paul says, "Hey, if the gospel is being preached it doesn't matter whether it is through me or not. The message is getting out there."

One of the other things you have that I thought was --

Randy: Are we going to talk about truth here? Can we talk about truth -- about how important truth is? Will you say a word for me in your wonderful Scottish accent?

Sheila: Truth?

Randy: Donkey.

Sheila: Oh! Where we going to donkey in the middle of a program for?

Randy: That's a great question! And maybe you can answer that.

Sheila: We're back to the donkey thing. Yes, indeed!

Randy: We can't let the show go by without talking about this. This is great! This is great!

Sheila: This is an interesting program, people.

Randy: No, this is wonderful! Just entertain us here because this is wonderful.

Nicki: Absolutely. So one of the other truths in the book is it is not always like it seems. So my husband and I have a fixer upper farm where we have a house, a bunch of misfit animals, and two of them are donkeys. One of them is named Fred and one is named Helen.

[Laughter]

Randy: Of course!

Sheila: Fred and Helen!

Randy: What else do you name your donkeys?

Nicki: And unfortunately, when we brought Helen home we were told that she was expecting. And so donkeys are pregnant for 11 to 14 months just to expand your territory. Yes, whoa!

Randy: No wonder they're cranky!

Nicki: So I like to invite people into my crazy. So I started this whole thing on Instagram called "Baby donkey watch 2017." Like ten months went by, 11 months went by, 12 months went by; my husband was like, "I think you might want to get somebody out here to see what's going on with Helen."

So my friend Chuck came out and he's this good ol' country boy. I'm telling Chuck about the baby donkey watch and all these people are waiting for this baby.

Randy: And you've been doing this on social media for awhile.

Nicki: Yes! For a whole year.

Randy: Is it true you felt the baby kick?

Nicki: Yes, I felt the baby move, everything. She was getting wider and wider every month.

Randy: Well, yeah, as they will do.

Nicki: Yes! And so Chuck starts walking around Helen and he's checking her out and he's listening to me go on and on. He goes, "Ma'am, I'm so sorry. But that there donkey is not pregnant. She is just fat."

[Laughter]

Sheila: Many a time people have made the similar comment about me! This woman is not pregnant, she is just fat."

So Helen just had a hardy appetite?

Nicki: Yes! She just was eating too much at our farm and so, no baby.

Sheila: So what did you say on social media?

Nicki: Well, I just tried to make light of it. I was like, "Ha ha! First generation farmer here; don't know anything about anything." And people were very gracious. But maybe one day we will have a baby donkey on the farm.

Randy: But you got something out of that. You got a point in your book.

Nicki: I did! It was a really good point. Yes.

Sheila: You talk in the book about one thing that I found really interesting. You talk about not being offended by God. It made me think of the story of John the Baptist when he is in prison and he sends his disciples to Jesus saying, "Are you the one or should we expect another?"

Christ sends back this unusual message, "Tell John what you see and hear." But then there's this little thing tagged on to the end, "and blessed is he who is not offended by me."

Will you love a God you don't always understand; when he doesn't always operate the way you think he will? That's something that you've included in your book.

Nicki: Yes, being offended is actually a condition we choose. It is not something God places on us. So when we can get to this place where even when God doesn't do what we have prayed and believed like we saw Rachel and Leah multiple times, we saw their disappointment come through. And disappointment in life is inevitable. It is coming; it has come for all of us. But it is what we do. Because God doesn't want us to settle in that place of being offended by our circumstances; he wants us to shift to a place of praising him through the process of it.

Randy: My pastor likes to say that people will give offense but you have the decision whether or not to take it.

Nicki: That's good! That's a good word.

Sheila: Do you go out and speak a lot or do you do most of your work through writing?

Nicki: I do. I'm out probably at least two or three times a month; doing a lot of traveling right now. So grateful to have a supportive husband who's running the farm and the many animals and also the children -- we do have children too.

Randy: Birthing lots of donkeys.

Sheila: Cutting back on Helen's meals.

[Laughter]

After this whole project, sometimes when you finish a book, like I just finished a book and sent in the finished manuscript, how do you think you have been impacted by your own message?

What do you think the greatest thing from writing this book has been in your own life?

Nicki: That's a great question. You know, just yesterday I actually was having a little "why her" melt down. I wasn't comparing myself to somebody else; I was actually comparing myself to myself just from some past experiences.

So pulling out these truths, I've had to pull them out at least once a day, especially through this book release and teaching the Word of God through the story of Rachel and Leah. It's really shifted my perspective inside of me and it's really helped me to stop asking that question, why her?

Randy: That's great. I think people should get the book and I think we've got a good way to offer it to them.

Sheila: We do! This will really help you. But one of the things that we love is to be able to help you; and then we're grateful, so grateful when you help us help others. There is a situation going on right now in Africa where it's pretty desperate and we have some boots on the ground but we need to do something and we need to do it quickly. So I wondered would you watch this with me.

Begin video clip

Open Captions:

Angola drought continues to affect an estimated 1.42 million people.

>> What you're seeing here is a result of the terrible drought. They have not seen enough rains, their crops have failed and this village is in desperate need. They have about two weeks worth of supplies if they're lucky. This is just the example of many villages in this area. It really breaks God's heart to see these people suffering like this.

Sheila: This is Maria. Maria is a mother of six children but only three of them are still on this earth. You might be able to tell all around me that the crops this year have completely failed so she's not able to feed them with anything she has. She literally has to dig around to see if she can find some roots -- anything to be able to feed her children.

I can't imagine what it must be like for a mom to have to bury three children. And not only that but to have to watch three children die because of malnutrition.

This is her boy. She only has one boy left. He is 12 years old and she said to me, "I'm so worry about him because he is getting so thin and he has a cough and I see the signs." That's the hard

thing. She said when she went to bed at night her prayer is: God, will you please show me what to do? Or would you send somebody to help me?

I was able to tell her, "God heard your prayer and that's why we're here."

That's what this is all about. Mission Feeding is all about an urgent need right now for families who go to sleep hungry at night but still believing in a God who answers prayer. We can be the answer to that prayer for this young mom.

End of clip

In the studio

Randy: That's so tough! That's so, so difficult. Sheila, what is going through your mind when you're sitting there with that mother?

Sheila: Honestly, what's going through my mind is that it could be me in her place. So often we think that what happens to mothers in over countries, well, they get used to that. No mother gets used to burying her child. I will never forget what it was like to walk to where some of these children were buried just little grave after little grave after little grave.

But do you know what did surprise me? What I didn't expect? I didn't expect to still see such faith. Some of these moms, even though they've had to bury their children, that lovely mom that I sat with and who shared her three children with me, she said that every night she still prays to God, that she still believes that even though she has had to bury three that God is still good, that God still cares, that God is still kind. So she prays: God, will you please send someone to help?

And that's the amazing thing -- you and I get to do that. If that family moved in next door to you, you would be on it like that. You would invite them all over, you would spread a meal, you would do everything you could to make sure that they went to bed with a full tummy.

That's the amazing thing. Through this ministry, through *LIFE Today*, and through television we can bring that family and we can put them right beside you and say, "Here's a mom and three children, one boy, I watched her watch her precious boy as he got up and walked away after the interview, a little shaky. I could see it in her eyes.

But here's the thing. This is not a situation where nothing can be done. Do you know that through our Mission Feeding the bowls of food that we give to these children, the first bowl of food literally begins the transformation from death to life? And we can do this. Randy, we have a program in place right now. It's our prayer that this year we will continue to feed 400,000

children.

Randy: That's a lot of children but we can do it. We can do it when you partner with us. It is as simple as a gift of \$30, \$50, or \$100 which will help feed three, five or ten children for many months. A lot of you can do much more than that. I just ask that you would stop for a moment and just say, "Lord, what would you have me do?" Then pick up the phone or go to the website and give whatever God puts on your heart.

We do have some spiritual growth materials that we would like to send to you to help you just connect and grow spiritually. So we care about you. We care about you spiritually and we care about all these other people physically who need some nourishment. So join with us. We really can transform people's lives. We can save people's lives.

Would you please join with us? Go to the phone, go online, make the best gift you can.

Begin video clip

Announcer: In impoverished and drought-stricken areas of Africa children are suffering. The need is great and without food they face severe malnutrition -- even death.

With your support LIFE's Mission Feeding outreach can save lives by feeding and caring for children in the hardest hit areas of Angola, Mozambique, and South Sudan. With previous reserves gone and Mission Feeding helping in areas with severe crop failure we urgently need to replenish our food supplies to reach 400,000 children who are counting on us.

Your lifesaving gift of \$30, \$50, or \$100 will help feed and care for three, five or ten children for three full months. And with your gift of any amount, we'll send you *Proverbs Power: Successful Communication*. This powerful CD series, along with study guide featuring Steven K. Scott unveils the secrets to incredible wisdom found only in the book of Proverbs. This series will give you the tools to transform your relationships in life.

With your gift of \$100 or more, request the complete *Proverbs Power* library featuring five power-packed sessions that include: The Power of Vision, Breaking through Mediocrity, and much more.

Finally, with your gift of \$1,000 or more to help feed and care for 100 children, be sure to request the "Bridge of Faith" framed canvas print by Thomas Kinkade.

Please call, write, or make your secure gift online today.

End of clip

On the mission field

Isak: My heart is just broken, sitting here in this cemetery surrounded by graves that are each and every one of them, graves for children; little lives that have been stolen by malnutrition, children who have starved to death because they didn't have enough food, mothers whose hearts are broken, devastated at the loss of their child. It truly breaks my heart.

But you know what breaks my heart even more is the fact that we could have avoided this. We could have changed this. We could have stopped these graves from being filled with these little lives. We could have saved these children if we'd just been able to act in time, if we'd just been able to get to their village, take Mission Feeding and give them a bowl of food a day.

I need your help today. I need you to help me to ensure that the next grave doesn't get filled with another child who died for no good reason. Please, give a gift of life today. Give the gift of Mission Feeding. If you can give \$30, \$50, or \$100 you can save three, five or ten children -- ten children's lives that are relying on you. Ten mothers that are saying please, please give that gift today. Please give the gift of Mission Feeding.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: Thank you so much. Please keep calling. We can make a difference in Jesus' name. And for any gift at all we will be glad to send you Nicki's book. I just want to thank you so much for being our guest. And tell Helen we send our love!

Nicki: Okay. Thank you for having me.

Sheila: Don't let anybody body-shame her in any way!

[Laughter]

But it's been awesome having you with us.

Will you thank Nicki, please?

Randy: So good! So good! We thank all of you for being with us today on *LIFE Today*. Join

us every day right here.

Sheila: God bless you. Thanks for being with us!