

5/24/18
Week 21: Spring Mission Feeding
James and Betty Robison
Ruth Graham

Betty: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! Thank you so much for joining us. I'm Betty and this is James. We have one of our dear, dear friends with us today.

James: This is real family. This is a sister. This is Billy Graham's daughter, Ruth named after her mom, Ruth. This is *A Legacy of Faith* book; that's Ruth there with daddy. We really love the Graham family. We thank God for them and the way the Lord was honored during this whole time of expressing thanks for the witness and life, the impact of the gospel proclaimed and demonstrated life by Billy Graham. Would you welcome Ruth Graham to *LIFE Today*?

[Applause]

We've been family in the true sense of the word. We've co-labored. Your dad actually encouraged you and your husband to come help us. I've always wondered. He started helping me when I was 19. Why do you think he wanted to help me?

Ruth: Because he knew your heart. He knew you loved evangelism and you loved people; and you have such a tender heart and compassionate heart. You reflect daddy's heart. So that's why. I think he saw somebody like himself and had the same vision and goals.

James: Well, it's been such a blessing to walk with you.

Now I want us to talk about that time we said good-bye because we tracked with you all the way through. I was communicating with you some while -- I knew what y'all were bearing. But at the funeral the Lord was really honored. He was really honored at the rotunda. Were you amazed when you stood there in that incredible rotunda?

Ruth: Oh my! It was really something I almost can't describe because you saw all of the magnificence of that building but then you saw all these leaders, these were powerful people and my father's simple plywood casket lined with a mattress pad sitting in the middle with just a simple cross on top. It was so eloquent and so beautiful and it said volumes.

James: Built by a prisoner who had experienced grace. It's just a -- it really was a precious time. All the family just did incredible. It was so beautiful to hear your mother's written request

for the kind of man she wanted to meet. Wasn't that beautiful? I wish we had all of it. My goodness! Your dad, he just talked about your mom so much. He thought compared to her he wasn't much of a Christian. But anyway, they both loved the Lord so much.

Ruth: And they adored each other. They really did.

James: They really did. Now you spoke at the funeral. I want us to go there for a moment because we knew you, you've shared here so much of your story. We didn't know what you were going to do there. We were so pleased because the grace of God was magnified and God was glorified. Let's watch that. Many of you saw it.

Begin video clip

Ruth: I want to thank each one of you for being here today; from those in the very back here in the tent to the very front row. We are blessed and honored that you are here. Thank you.

I have learned this week as never before that everybody has a Billy Graham story. And even this week, President Trump told us about his Billy Graham story. As a little boy his father took him to Yankee Stadium to hear my father preach. And he said, "This is a big deal." Little did they know that their paths would cross many, many years later.

But I had my own Billy Graham story so I'm going to tell you that one. I've told it many times and some of you have maybe heard it many times but it bears repeating because to me it speaks to the essence of who my father was and is.

After 21 years my marriage ended in divorce. I was devastated. I floundered. I did a lot wrong. The rug was pulled out from under me. My family thought it would be a good idea for me to move away, to get a fresh start somewhere else so I decided to live near my older sister and her family and near a good church.

The pastor of that church introduced me to a handsome widower and we began to date fast and furiously. My children didn't like him but I thought they were almost grown, they couldn't tell me what to do. I knew what was best for my life. My mother called me from Seattle, my father called me from Tokyo. They said, "Honey, why don't you slow down. Let us wait to get to know this man."

They had never been a single parent. They had never been divorced. What did they know? So being stubborn, willful and sinful I married a man, this man on New Year's Eve and within 24 hours I knew I had made a terrible mistake. After five weeks I fled. I was afraid of him.

What was I going to do? I wanted to go talk to my mother and my father. It was a two-day drive. Questions swirled in my mind. What was I going to say to Daddy? What was I going to say to mother? What was I going to say to my children? I'd been such a failure. What were they going to say to me? We're tired of fooling with you. We told you not to do it. You've embarrassed us.

And let me tell you, you women will understand you don't want to embarrass your father, you really don't want to embarrass Billy Graham.

[Laughter]

And many of you know that we live on the side of a mountain. As I wound myself up the mountain, I rounded the last bend in my father's driveway and my father was standing there waiting for me. As I got out of the car, he wrapped his arms around me and he said, "Welcome home!"

There was no shame. There was no blame. There was no condemnation, just unconditional love. And do you know my father was not God but he showed me what God was like that day. When we come to God with our sin, our brokenness, our failure, our pain and our hurt God says, "Welcome home!" And that invitation is open for you. Thank you and God bless you.

End of clip

In the studio

[Applause]

James: You know Betty was...

Ruth: And you want me to talk after that?

[Laughter]

Betty: Me neither!

James: We'll give you just a breather. She was at home because she had a knee situation challenge, like you've had some back challenges and we understand that. So she is watching at home. And of course, gosh, we're blessed to be close and to be friends and family.

She said, "James, it was just unbelievable to watch how the whole media on all different

networks, I just looked around, they were captured not by Ruth and you are a beautifully gifted communicator; I think as gifted as anyone in your family, including dad, and I really do believe that. But that wasn't it. Your story, yes. But more than anything it was his glory and grace that your dad revealed so clearly to you. There was no shame, no blame, he took it all.

And let me tell you, Ruth, you know me well enough to know, I've missed the mark, I've failed. Sometimes it's been foolishness, sometimes it's been almost like self-centered rebellion but he always reaches out and "welcome home." You saw God high and lifted up that day. You want everybody to know him like that.

Ruth: I really do and it changed my life. That has informed the rest of my life and it informs what I do today as I want to reach out to others with the grace and love of God -- that unconditional love and grace that was so generously bestowed on me. I didn't deserve it but God gave it to me anyway.

Betty: Well, I thought what was so beautiful too, your testimony likely was the testimony of a lot of people that heard your testimony and you offered them hope that only Jesus can give. As I wept and as I watched, I thought, thank you, Jesus. You pointed them to him. And I thought it was so beautiful. Because I did -- I watched it on television and the news people, they were almost, they almost didn't know what to say because it was so evidently God's power was there that day. And God was honored.

Ruth: And I had asked God if I could tell another story -- any other story! But it was clear as a bell, "Ruth, I gave you your story for my glory."

James: What you've been through, you've tasted brokenness. So when you look out and you see people who are broken, I just felt even in your expressions and even that day, you were showing people God's love through dad when you so desperately needed it. But you wanted everybody to hear it. You wanted everybody with a broken heart, everybody that felt ashamed, everybody that hurt, you wanted them to know there is a Father wanting to do just what your dad did and that's hold you very close and shelter you. So you see that. You want that.

Ruth: I do want that. I think it is so important for people to know because they feel that they're alone. When we're going through difficult times we think we're the only one going through that and we're not, there are a host of other people.

In our society we think that broken means useless, throw away, replaced, but not in God's kingdom. In God's kingdom it qualifies you. Peter, God couldn't use Peter before he broke down. He really had to break Peter and then Peter was useable. Within 30 days he was preaching. So Peter had a dramatic change. So God loves broken people because he can use them. When they

know they're broken, they're even better. Some people are broken and they have that stiff upper lip and they won't let God in but you've got to let God in and let him mold you again.

James: Now think about this. If Ruth Graham and James Robison and Betty would look at you and think, I wish I could heal it, think how much the one who is totally able to heal it wants to put his arms around you. Dad put his arms around you but something so much bigger happened because in that you were pulled back in to the shelter and shadow of the Almighty and you knew it; didn't you?

Ruth: I did.

James: That's why you wanted in every pew where there is a broken heart to know this Father, this shepherd that holds the lamb that goes for the one when he's got a whole fold of 99. He's out there. You want them to get into his arms; right?

Ruth: Absolutely! Because there is no better comfort, there is no better healing place, there is no better love, it is just pure... And to know that is really healing -- remarkable!

And yet, James, when we go around whether it is a church or neighborhood or wherever and we say, "How are you?" People say, "I'm fine."

I know I did that one day in church. I went in and sat in front of a friend. She said, "Ruth, well how are you?"

And I said, "Oh I'm fine."

And the service began and I thought, you know I just lied to her. I'm not fine. And I began to think about it. So after church was over I went to her and I said, "I'm not fine. I'm really struggling with something."

She said, "I'm so glad you said that because I'm struggling too." She said, "Would you pray with me?"

See that's where ministry takes place, where we're willing to let down the mask, then that's when people feel comfortable with us. When we're vulnerable then they feel free to be vulnerable. So I think that's where ministry takes place. We cannot minister mask to mask.

James: Betty and I are both 74. She says, "You don't have to always tell everybody that I'm a month younger than you." You had your 74th birthday, she will have one in a month. She says, "Why do you always do that?"

[Laughter]

But here's the deal. If we live to be 100, we've got 75% of the life we've lived behind us. Do you ever find yourself and you're not as old as us, you're like a little sister to us.

Ruth: Not that many years.

James: Here's the deal. I said, "Lord, I'm going to walk out these last years the most effective way possible." Do you find yourself asking that?

What do you feel in your heart that you feel the Lord, let's say just raising up inside of you that you would just like that stream or that river to flow? What do you want?

Ruth: My heart is still with the broken. I still want to reach those who have suffered by their own hand or by the hand of someone else or by life itself. They're broken by something. My heart goes to them. I think our churches are doing better. I think some of our younger pastors are doing much better. But in our traditional churches, you just didn't talk about certain things and you didn't talk about if your child were incarcerated or if your child were addicted to pornography or if your husband was abusive, you just don't talk about those things.

James: And if you've been divorced you treated as a total outcast -- and 50% of the population basically has. And then you stop and think, how many tens of thousands of children out of those marriages are being impacted? Divorce impacts the kids every bit as hard if not tougher than the two getting the divorce.

Ruth: It goes on forever.

James: So you really feel like God's going to allow you to put his arms around people like this? Well, we want to join with you to do that.

You have joined with us from the time dad asked you to come down and you and your husband worked with James and Betty so you ended up living here in the wonderful state of Texas. I know it is tough to leave the Promised Land and go back up to the Carolinas but you know -- we love you, Carolina! You're great!

[Laughter]

But anyway, the deal is that right now we are really seeking to keep binding up the brokenhearted and you joined us with that on the mission field, Ruth. You went and saw the

need. Let people say, "Okay, Ruth, is the need really legitimate? Is it really desperate like they tell us on *LIFE Today* it is?" Is it that desperate?

Ruth: Absolutely! Absolutely! You have to see it. There's no poverty quite like it. When you see them coming to get drinking water out of a little puddle that has cow dung and mosquitoes and who knows what else in it, you just think, these people live this way. They have to walk miles to get that kind of water.

James: And then the malnourishment. Here's what people ask, okay, the missionaries are there really with love. Do you believe it is really the love of God?

Ruth: I do!

James: Now when they actually, with the people's help, feed them something that we're told is nutritionally balanced for their particular area of need, do they come and get it and have you been able to see that it works?

Ruth: Absolutely! It's so cute to see the kids all lined up. They try to be so patient but they're just really wanting some food. And to know that that food does make a difference. That may be the only meal they get that day. But they long for it and they want it and it will make a difference in their lives. Their little bodies are being knit together and they don't have the nourishment they need. And it is so sad when you see these little, especially little Africans with sort of blond hair and it's really not -- it's malnutrition. And they're just all over the place. Your heart aches and you know Jesus' heart aches and he wants to use us.

James: And you see what that love does. That love never fails. Well, we right now and I'm just telling you this, we have a chance and you literally went so to speak to the ends of the earth to ask our viewers to put the arms of Jesus around the suffering.

I want to take you back with a glimpse and our viewers and those of you here to just see the son of the lead missionary, Peter Pretorius, Isak Pretorius, to see him with a mother -- now think about this, who has a little five-year old that's in need and you can see it. But Betty, that mother has already buried two children. And just look at her. Listen to me. Love is the only healing balm, factor, ointment that can heal her heart. She wants that child by her to grow up by her. She doesn't want to bury another one. This is where love never fails.

Here's what I'm asking you to do. I want you right now you're going to listen to a missionary and a mother and then I want you to ask God, how many mothers' prayers can I be the answer to? How many children can I give a future to and a hope? Because that's what Jesus came to do. He came to give us life now and forever.

Would you share that life and love? They're going to be talking about Jesus and his love, the missionaries are, but you're going to demonstrate that love. They can see it in action. Watch prayerfully.

On the mission field

Announcer: A mother's love -- there is no power like it on earth. In every village our team visited in Angola they found mothers who worked tirelessly to keep their children from falling victim to the ravages of malnutrition even if it meant going without food for themselves.

>> These ladies that raised their hands, they sometimes go days without eating a meal at all.

Announcer: The sad reality is most of these mothers like Armalinda have had children die because of the lack of food. Isak Pretorius had a chance to visit with her and one of her surviving children.

Isak: The eyes that you're seeing on your screen right now are the eyes of a five-year old but they're looking to a soul that's seen more pain than most people see in a lifetime. A five-year old who has watched her precious mother bury two of her siblings, an eight-year old and a five-year old, buried in the last year simply because her mother just doesn't have enough food.

This village doesn't have the resources it needs. It doesn't have the ability to produce the food that they need to produce. They were telling us how they just eat pumpkin leaves and they make charcoal and try and sell some of their charcoal to be able to buy a little bit of food. But the food that they can buy, the food that they can provide for their families is not enough.

It is not because this mother, Armalinda is her name, it is not because she doesn't want to feed her children. It's not because she is lazy or she is not prepared to do what she needs to do. This mother will do absolutely anything to insure that she doesn't lose another two children. This village tells the story of what happens when you don't have Mission Feeding. It is the story of children who die a silent death -- life stolen because of famine, starvation.

Please help me right now to change that. Let's change the fact that mothers are suffering, that children are dying in this village simply because they don't have Mission Feeding. Let's bring them Mission Feeding, let's bring them life.

[Child's weak cry]

End of clip

In the studio

James: Do you understand that when Isak Pretorius, Peter Pretorius, our lead mission overseer of basically the continent of Africa, and we've just gotten an update of 13 million children lives saved by Mission Feeding. So when he is talking about Mission Feeding he is talking about locating areas. And who locates the areas? Missionaries filled with compassion, such compassion and love that they leave their comfort to go and be a comfort. And in compassion say we're going to rescue them and lift them out of this despair and hopelessness.

But they can only do it -- they can't do it just with compassion. They can't do it by just leaving and going there. They would be there with a broken heart and empty hands. Betty, the only way that Mission Feeding works is the missionaries find the need, they organize them, and they say, "Love is about to show up" because they're full of love. But like the missionaries said to me, "James, if you'll just go back and ask people, tell them we don't really need them to come over here. We really don't have time to take care of them. But if they would just send the support so we're not empty-handed and we can feed them and see a change."

I just heard 13 million lives saved and we've had more professions of faith in Christ in those same areas, winning more to Christ even. You say, "How is it you win them to the Lord?" Because they've seen the power of the gospel and the love and the willingness to put your arms around the suffering.

So Betty, we've been picking people up now for over 20 years and rescuing the perishing, caring for the dying. When I say we, it's you because you're the ones -- the missionaries are vitally important but they're empty handed. They're just brokenhearted. They weep while they die like the mothers. But we can change all that.

You simply go online right now or you dial that number that's always a prayer line and now it is a life line and you take your bankcard and you make the best gift you can possibly make. But keep this in mind, in Mission Feeding -- because Mission Feeding works, it is effective, a gift of \$30, \$50, or \$100 we're able to feed three, five or ten children for the next months. Did you hear what I said? \$30, \$50, \$100 -- \$1,000 and oh, dear God, how I pray those who can do that, it sounds so big but some can do it. \$1,000 we can feed 100 kids; we, being the missionaries and we, who are willing to reach out in love and touch those precious people with the love of God, not in word only but in deed, in demonstration.

Would you right now go online? Go get your bankcard, dial the number or go online. If you can give \$1000, \$100, please do it. We've got -- listen to me -- we've got 400,000 in need right

now already located basically organized in what we call Mission Feeding centers. Would you right now make the gift God puts on your heart? If you want to write a check, make it to *LIFE* but call the number please and tell us you're putting it in the mail because we need to know. We need to tell the missionaries its coming. The help and support is coming because love you share.

Thank you so much for doing it. We have some gifts to send you to bless you in your spiritual walk and growth. They'll be meaningful to you.

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

In the studio

James: I want to thank you. We're going to send you *Proverbs Power*. You're writing a book now that will be out next year. Do you know the title of it?

Ruth: Not yet but the publisher and I have different views. So we'll see who wins.

[Laughter]

James: What will be the basic content?

Ruth: It is going to be on forgiveness. I want to take forgiveness into the level of sacrament. We treat forgiveness a little bit glibly and it's really not. Jesus died to forgive us; he bled and died on that cross to forgive us and forgiveness is really something to be taken seriously. But it is so important. We're able to enter into the very nature and character of God when we forgive. That's what I want to stress.

James: That's great! Do y'all really love the Graham family? Do you love Ruth, what she's doing? And next year this book that she will finally get the publisher to understand and title, you be praying for her; okay? Ruth, we love you. Thanks so much for being here. Thanks for sharing the grace of God.

Thank all of you for being here. Thanks for watching. Thanks for sharing life.