

7/24/18
Week 30: WFL
James and Betty Robison
Michele Rigby Asaad

James: We've got a lady out here who is a cheerleader. We want to welcome you to *LIFE Today*. I'm James Robison; Betty and I are just thrilled to have this opportunity of sharing with you.

I want you to think about this, here is a woman, Michele Rigby Asaad who was with the C.I.A. and she's written about her secret life in the C.I.A. Central Intelligence Agency and "What it taught me about what's worth fighting for." Now this precious woman, very brave, faced a lot of danger to try to keep us from danger and was able to help people who were held captive, many of them Christians, nearly 150 Christians who were held captive get set free. They've been set free by the Lord but then they were set free by love for them and the wisdom that she and her husband had with the C.I.A. I think that we need to praise God for those who try to keep us safe and pray for their safety because it is a miracle that she and her husband made it on the journey that they were on. And I know they'd probably tell you prayer made all the difference in the world for them, and then for the people they helped.

Would you welcome Michele Rigby Asaad, *Breaking Cover*, the book?

[Cheers & Applause]

Do you feel concerned about *Breaking Cover* even having been with the C.I.A. and the things you did, and now then you've written a book about it, you're talking about it, does that ever give you concern? Does it ever frighten you that people knowing that could want to do you harm?

Michele: There is an element of risk but when God calls you to do something you pretty much have to do it. I never intended to write a book, it wasn't on my bucket list but God spoke to me one day and told me to write this book and share my story. I knew that I had to do it in true name for it to be meaningful and not pseudonym. But I was still working for the C.I.A. at that time and it is a big deal to drop cover. They don't have to say yes but thankfully, eventually, it did fall into place and they did allow us to drop cover.

James: What was the main thing that probably moved you to want to share? What was it that happened that made you say, "I've got to tell this story"?

Michele: So my husband and I worked together as undercover counterterrorism officers for ten years in the agency and the majority of our career was spent in the Middle East. And I'm just a simple girl from a small town in central Florida and I never dreamed of doing anything like this.

James: But you were homecoming queen. What am I doing over here in the Middle East?

Michele: I wanted to be a ballerina. So what I think is so fascinating about my story is showing that when you commit yourself to Christ and when you put no conditions on that commitment he can take you to places you don't even know exist.

And so for me, that was he placed these passions inside me for foreign cultures and I just one step at a time followed that passion to its next step. So that was mission trip after high school, it a study abroad program in Egypt as an undergrad, it was a master's degree in Arab studies. As I was doing all this my family said, "What in the world are you going to do with an Arab study's degree?"

I said, "I have no idea." [Laughing] But it was so interesting because the government on September 11th had plenty of Arab experts. On September 12th we became the hottest commodity on the planet. And incredibly, Joseph already had just gotten into the C.I.A. and I was just about to start training when that happened.

James: Now how did you meet him? He is an Egyptian; and how did y'all connect?

Michele: Yeah! It is a fascinating story. We met as teenagers in central Florida. So Joseph is originally a Christian from Egypt. He was denied a university education because of his Christian activities. So a little church in central Florida, First Baptist Church, Tavares heard about his story. They worked with a local Christian college and got him a full tuition scholarship to Palm Beach Atlantic University and changed the course of Joseph's life.

James: Praise God.

Michele: So the pastor's son was my classmate and so we met after a football game in central Florida.

James: Okay! So here you are. You got married and you're Asaad. And then all of a sudden you're both in the C.I.A. So did he kind of recruit you in because he was in? Did he talk you into it or what?

Michele: It was actually a very long road into the C.I.A. which started with me being recruited

out of Georgetown and then that job was taken away from me before it ever began. Part of sharing this story is showing people that when you walk with God, it doesn't mean you're going to not have a struggle. That road is going to be bumpy and uncertain and very difficult at times and you might not know where the next step is leading you. So for many years all my friends were getting these amazing jobs on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. and I couldn't get a job. God intended for us to go to a place we didn't know existed, the C.I.A. But I could not give up my faith in God and that eventually he would reveal the next step.

So what's really fascinating is after getting into the C.I.A. together and working undercover for ten years, we felt God leading us out of the C.I.A. But what are we going to do? You have no resume. You can't tell people what you've done for ten years. You have no rolodex of contacts to energize to get a job. But incredibly, God put us in touch with Hollywood producer Mark Burnett and his wife who is also Roma Downey, a Hollywood producer who were trying to help Christians in the Middle East and said that we're doing all we can do to help them live better lives where they are but some of them have been threatened by ISIS, "Convert or die. And we're going to take over your village." And we've got to help those people find a safe haven.

James: You were being touched by an angel that wanted as an angel touch a lot of other people and wanted you to become one of those angels.

Michele: Yes! So we got pulled into this project that had a group of Americans that said, "Let's just see what can be done." So we were asked to operationalize this idea. It miraculously -- in four and a half months, after traipsing around the world trying to find countries willing to take these refugees, finding a group to work with, vetting them to be sure there was no ISIS in the ranks or criminal networks, and setting up this amazing evacuation with this special plane, on December 10th, 2015 we evacuated 149 Christians out of Northern Iraq and flew them to their new homes in...

James: A miracle! A total miracle! No question.

Betty: Even in all the struggles and the danger and all that, that whole time, did you feel like God was carrying you the whole time? Because if not, you'd be covered with fear.

Michele: Right! Indeed. We were covered with so much prayer at that time. It was really interesting; Joseph had to carry this suitcase full of all the documentation for these refugees to the Vatican in order to get the Vatican approval for this project. While he was there, I flew back from Iraq and I was at home with nothing to do but pray. As I was literally on my knees in prayer on the floor asking God to intervene to make this possible he said, "Michele, I'm not doing you a favor. This is my project."

I realized in that moment, we were just tools and this was his will and it was going to be done and we just needed to get behind it. So to watch him move like that was pretty incredible.

James: How do American Christians who should be praying about everything, leadership, we know and I've been involved behind the scenes in what goes on in Washington for more than 40 years. I don't talk about it openly a lot except to express concern but the needs in the Washington area leadership are critical. The worldview that's been perpetuated in our academic settings today in schools, from even our public schools for children all the way up through universities and colleges, is not just an anti biblical worldview, not just not teaching it but they're attacking that point of view. Many of the people who have a worldview like that have found their way into various agencies and there is a lack, sometimes of spiritual sensitivity and discernment.

Had you not had spiritual sensitivity and discernment, how much more danger would you have been in and without the prayers of people? How serious is it for Christians to realize we must be in prayer for all the people who have taken these places? Some of them don't supernaturally have good discernment, they need it, and those who do have it still need protection.

Michele: Critical! Critical to be an intelligence officer for example. So when you're in a meeting with a terrorist who is a penetration of a group that's targeting Americans or Iraqis, and you're meeting with that person, to have the discernment that that person is not telling me the truth, that person might be a double agent and realizing that could save mine and my colleague's lives. And that happened over and over again where I would get a gut feeling about someone that proved to be true, and had we not realized we would have ended up putting a lot of lives in danger.

James: Could have brought the wrong person in which has happened because there has been a lack of discernment in too many places in bureaucratic agencies where people, their lifetime, turf protectors oftentimes, not sensitive to really protecting the people or sensitive to the one who knows how to protect. I think it is very critical that we have spiritual discernment in all areas.

Michele: Also, I like to tell people, we need a lot more Christians to realize full time ministry is wherever God puts you. So if God has put it on your heart to do something that seems a little different or off the beaten path, he needs people who love him everywhere. So this passion to study the Middle East and understand the Arab world, that was something he could use. We need more people in government who have subject matter expertise and all kinds of things, not just Middle East, Russia, North Korea, Afghanistan, all these foreign languages and cultures.

James: Well, God led your steps. What do you want him to do with the book *Breaking Cover*? You told the story, there is some risk involved in it, you knew that, why would you tell it if you didn't have some hope that something would happen to the reader? What is your hope?

Michele: So my passion is for people to see this, people here, "Okay, Michele, you've been to 50 countries, you've lived in six places in the Middle East, you are such a courageous person. You're so impressive."

And I say, "Wait, hold on. There was nothing that I walked into feeling capable, prepared or ready. And yet when God opened the door I walked through it anyhow."

So God doesn't call us to do interesting things. They don't happen in your comfort zone. They come in places where you're uncomfortable and so you have to be comfortable with letting God lead you into what for me was the C.I.A. and for everybody is something unique. So the idea is that I'm sharing my stories and my authentic struggle so people can see that ordinary people can do extraordinary things when their faith is greater than their fear.

[Applause]

James: Were you ever at a point where you were frightened, fearful that you might lose your life? And by the way, were you say disguised trying to present yourself with the name of Asaad as a Muslim, perhaps or not? Or were you just neutral?

Michele: No. So most of the time they knew they were dealing with C.I.A. when they were dealing with me. I was scared almost every single day of that career. But there was a time in which I was serving in a particular country that was a kidnapping and carjacking capital, one of the capitals of the world. And at that time, tribesmen were snatching people off the streets and selling them into Al Qaeda; it was very lucrative. So my husband and I would always tell each other, "You can never get taken."

One day as I was driving to work by myself, Joseph was not with me...

James: Were they sending them like to be toy, a slave or what? Sex object or what?

Michele: They were sending them to Al Qaeda and Al Qaeda was then trying to negotiate with the government for money but they always killed them anyhow. So they always had their throats slit and that was it. I was like I don't want to be that person.

And so that day as I was driving to work and I stopped at a stop light, I was surrounded by cars and then a man who was crossing the street in front of me exposed himself because he looked through the window and saw an uncovered face and it was just too much for him. He did something incredible inappropriate in front of my car, which was embarrassing but that was not the worst part of it. Suddenly, my car is being surrounded by dozens and what is going to be

hundreds of local men. And if they saw or when they saw that I was by myself in the car I would possibly get taken.

I had in that moment, I had this intuitive response which thank God the C.I.A. gave us ambush training and they said, "If it is either you or them, you've got to decide." I ended up having to use my car to hit that person in order to get them out of the way.

James: Use your car as a weapon, a defensive weapon.

Michele: A defensive weapon, exactly! It's not a place I hope anybody would find themselves in but that day, thankfully I had the right response. After hitting him the second time he finally moved. I know he was really stubborn! [Laughing] And then I realized that day how close I had come from a very, very unfortunate...

James: How far did you drive before you eased up on the accelerator?

Michele: I didn't touch that brake once the rest of the way to work. I mean the adrenaline was surging through my body. I was shaking. But I realized how very close I was that day and how God's protection over my life is really critical.

James: If you said to people right now who are watching, here's what I'd like to ask you to pray in light of all the world conditions we face right now; what do you see when you've been in the intelligence agency, you're trying to find out a lot about the enemy, trying to warn us, how do we pray?

Michele: We need transformative leadership. We need strong leadership that has substantive expertise in these key areas in the world and we need people who are ready to look at our bureaucracy which is bloated and burdensome and say, "There's got to be a better way." We need somebody to come in and transform all of these processes in government which are not working very well but that takes a very knowledgeable and a very strong person -- strong people.

James: Or someone who will listen who is taught. And who will be unflinching and who will be fearless and won't be trying to look out for themselves but what's best for America. So that's what we pray with all of our heart.

When we get what's best for us, we can bless the nations of the world. That's been one of the great strengths of America from the time we were birthed, I think miraculously, primarily because of prayer and people seeking real freedom that they understood comes from a relationship with the only source of freedom. And I think we experienced a miracle birth and I believe that we have learned how to develop resources marvelously, and we've been one of the

most benevolent nations in history.

Michele: People don't realize we are a generous people. Americans are incredibly generous. When you give them an opportunity to give, they really do want to make a difference in the world.

James: If we will show people what works our viewers say, "When I see something that works, love flows."

One of the problems we have is a lot of times when the agencies take it over, they begin to own the people who become dependent upon them and they're just dispersing things with no love, no compassion connection, no oversight, no accountability, and no responsibility. So there is no way you ever remove the compassion connection, the love connection. Which God has made very clear you love him, you love your neighbor as yourself, that means you're looking out for what's best. This is what we've got to have.

I think there is no substitute for a spiritual awakening going all over the world and seeing what you're seeing. Do you think the stage is set right now for the next great spiritual awakening?

Michele: I do. And I say that very personally because I felt so led to pray for that very thing. I had this feeling, okay, Michele, there is a lot of Micheles all over the world right now that the Holy Spirit's urging to pray for a transformation and like a move, a great move of the Holy Spirit. So I suspect -- I suspect I'm one of many, many people who have been led to pray in that manner. And also, for people willing to stand up and do the hard things, to walk in the hard places. I really encourage people to not be fearful, to have courage.

James: Would you like to say thanks to God and thanks to Michele and her husband for what she's done and for what you've shared? The book is in the bookstores. You can get it online. I hope you will.

You know, Michele, you've seen what happens when love reaches out to people in a desperate state and you watch what happens when that love takes effect because you've seen people set free, you've seen their lives saved.

We are right now literally doing what our viewers seem to enjoy. We give just a cup of water in Jesus' name. He says if you do that you don't lose your reward. Well, I think it is up to him to determine what that reward is. But to me, when I have blessed someone, that is a reward. I just love to see what love does. Well, right now we not only give a cup of water but we're able to give a well of water to an entire village where they have nothing but disease-ridden, contaminated water. It's killing them. Well, we can give them life because of the love of God

that's in our heart.

Betty, you know we believe right now the most sensitive people, I think on the planet, are the people who will look and see a need and not turn away. Not walk away, not walk by the person that's in need like the priest and the Levite but be involved like the Good Samaritan. And this is what I believe you are. And right now, would you just focus eyes of love on an area of tremendous need for love? And I believe with all my heart, you're going to be moved by love to release it. I think you're going to rejoice. Watch closely.

On the mission field

[Ominous music]

[Water splashing]

Ralph: This is heartbreaking! This little guy is telling a story about his baby sister who just died this year from drinking this water right here. It's just awful. Just listen to him.

Open Captions: I loved my sister very much and always took care of her. She got diarrhea over and over again. She just died. I felt so sad. I cried.

Announcer: Right now these three siblings live with their grandmother who takes care of them the best she can. But every day they still either have to drink the same water that took their sister's life or else die themselves from dehydration.

We know there is a better option. Contaminated water may take lives but clean water saves lives. If you help us drill a clean water well in this village, you will protect children from ever having to drink this water again.

Ralph: I don't want to see that water take one more child away from this family.

End of clip

In the studio

James: I don't believe there is a single person watching us right now, Betty in what we just saw that can think about that little boy talking about his sister. He's got two other little girls, sisters, with him. But he is talking about his baby sister dying and how sad he was. That's a precious little boy thinking about that; it's not something that should even register in a child's mind.

But, Betty, that contaminated water is killing hundreds of them. That was a grave they were kneeling by and our mission overseer, Ralph Done was standing there by a grave. He said, "Let's stop this." And the way we stop it is by drilling a freshwater well in that area.

You saw there at the end the children rejoicing where there was a well drilled. You've helped drill at the end of this year 6,000 water wells! Think about that! That is a lot of love and that's million of lives touched and literally millions saved and led to Christ because we give them Water for LIFE because of the water of life.

Would you right now help us drill the 400 water wells this year? We've got 200 to go. We just need a miracle outpouring of love and I believe we're going to have it. Here's what I'm asking you to do. Go online, take the website there or dial the number that's there as a prayer line, always to help you and pray with you; take your bankcard and just make the best gift God leads you to make.

Here's what I want you to understand. The wells average \$4800 each. Sometimes individuals say, "I'm going to give a well." It becomes a great joy. If you can give a well please do or a portion of a well.

Please know this, the majority of what comes in to drill those wells, people giving \$48 or \$144. Example: \$48 gives ten people water the rest of their life; \$144, 30 people water the rest of their life. So there is a level at which everyone can participate.

We have some gifts to send you, *The Miracles of Christ*, which is exactly what we share when we give a cup of water. Jesus says, "You give a cup of water in my name, you won't lose your reward." We're giving away beautiful coffee mugs, one for the morning, one for the evening with the scriptures there to just really rejoice and praise the Lord morning and evening. Great way to start the day and close the day. We also have the beautiful Thomas Kinkade "Bridge of Faith." If you can give a gift of \$1200 or more toward the \$4800 well, ask for that beautiful framed canvas.

Thank you so much for being sensitive. Thank you for not turning away when you see someone with a broken heart and you see a need that love can meet. Thank you for meeting that need. Would you please right now make the gift God puts on your heart by calling the number or going online? Thank you so much for doing it. You are giving life. That's the greatest gift.

Begin video clip

Announcer: Today a mother living in extreme poverty will do the unthinkable: give her

children dirty, diseased-filled water that she knows could kill them. With no other choice, what's a mother to do?

With your help, clean water is on the way. *Mission: Water for Life* provides a new beginning for thousands of children and their families; a bright future with better health.

With your gift today you can help drill 400 water wells in remote villages in 15 nations. Your gift of \$24 will help provide clean water for five people. A gift of \$48 will help provide for ten. \$72 will provide for 15 people. And \$144 will help provide life-giving water for 30 people for a lifetime.

With your gift we'll send you *The Miracles of Christ; What Living Beyond Impossible Looks Like*. Filled with scriptures, prayers, and stories of Jesus' miraculous power, James Robison adds insight about how to walk in faith and live beyond the impossible.

With your gift of \$100 or more, request the Morning and Evening coffee mug set. Each mug features beautiful artwork and scripture from Psalm 92:2, a wonderful reminder of God's faithfulness each day.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1200 to help provide water for 250 people, or a gift of \$4800 to help sponsor a complete well. And you may request the beautiful "Bridge of Faith" framed canvas print by Thomas Kinkade.

Please call, write or make your gift online!

End of clip

In the studio

James: Well, Betty and I just want to say thank you so much for sharing life. We're sending the beautiful book, *The Miracles of Christ*; the miracles that I've shared and our guests have shared. Then the real miracle story here, Michele Rigby Asaad, this is *Breaking Cover* -- tremendous inspiration. If you say, "James, I know it is online, I know we can get it in the bookstores but would you send it to us if we just help give a cup of water, if we help drill those wells?" Yes! You want the book, you believe it will be a blessing and help to you, we'll be glad to send it to you just to say thanks.

Would you join Betty and me in saying thanks to Michele for being a blessing? Thank you, Michele. Thank you so much. Bless you and your husband, bless your family. Thank you for watching. Thank you so much for supporting the outreaches. Thank you!

