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Week 24: Spring Mission Feeding

James and Betty Robison

John Bevere #1

James: Hey! You're fun! We're glad to see y'all and we thank you. I'm James Robison. Betty and I welcome you to Life Today. John Bevere is back with us. I say back because we want him to come as often as he can and will. And Lisa Bevere, his wife. Probably her a few more times than John if we get our order. This is a phenomenal couple. I just love them like crazy. I know you do.

Would you welcome John Bevere to Life Today?

John, good to see you, buddy.

John: Good to see you.

So good to see you, Betty!

James: All right! We've got to cover some ground. This is a phenomenal book. I'm begging you to read it.

John, it's so amazing. You say, "God, where are you?" Like you can't find him. And finding strength and purpose in your wilderness. And wilderness doesn't feel good because we, if we know the Bible at all, we know that when God took his people out of Egyptian bondage they ended up in the wilderness and they wandered around for forty years, God miraculously taking care of them.

But there was a process that was supposed to happen. But then you show us throughout all the Bible, you actually show us in many ways through history, but you show us that wilderness experiences are just a practical reality in life. It's just undeniable. And you even point out that Jesus was led by the spirit. Where?

John: Into the wilderness. After God said, "You are my son. I am very well pleased." So, that's the first thing we need to say. First of all, what is the wilderness? The wilderness is when God seems like he's a million miles away and his promises are even further. In fact, you feel like you are regressing away from the promises that he has made to you. And what we think, we think that God has rejected us.

Because the first wilderness I ever encountered, my first thought was what have I done? What sin have I committed that has breached our fellowship. Because to me, here I am playing varsity tennis at Purdue, I'm raised in a denomination, but I have no relationship with God. When Jesus came into my life, what was amazing was his presence. That filled a void that tennis, varsity tennis, Junior Davis Cup tennis, USTA circuit tennis, prettiest girls, fraternity life, making great grades – nothing could fill – going to church didn't fill. That presence was absolutely amazing for a couple of years.

What happened was all of the sudden he started becoming illusive. I'm thinking what have I done? So, most people go there when they go into these seasons. God, how have I disobeyed you. How have I disappointed you?

So, the wilderness is not God's punishment. It's not him abandoning us. Because he said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." It's not him putting us on a shelf until he's ready to do something with us. God is the one that says redeem the times. So, time is very important to God.

It is rather a time of preparation. Because in our life with God, everyone of us has a destiny. And God will give us glimpses of where he's sending us. You know, James, I actually have in a file folder right beside my desk drawer, right now it's sitting there, it

has a word that God gave me in 1981, July 1981. And do you know there are things that he gave me glimpses of that I would do that I didn't start doing until I was in my 50s. We're talking 35 years later. So, he gives Joseph a glimpse. Right? You're going to be a leader. He gives David a glimpse. You're going to be a ruler. He gives Jeremiah a glimpse. He does this with all of his children.

When you seek him diligently in faith this is what he does for you. But then once he gives you that promise, then the process begins. And the process is what I've called the wilderness. That is when God develops in you the character to handle the fulfillment of that promise.

If you look at Joseph when he started out, he was kind of a braggart, kind of a tattletale. But if he would have been made a leader right at that point when he shows up in scripture, he would have been a very narcissistic insecure leader.

So, when I was – God showed me, you're going to preach the gospel to the nations when I was a baby Christian. I mean I had men of God coming up, women of God coming up, God was speaking it to me in my prayer closet, and I thought man, this is 1984. I need to go! I mean he's coming back in '88, I've got to go!

[Laughter]

So, I thought I'm ready. But I look back now and if God would have allowed me to enter into what I'm doing right now back then, I would have destroyed myself. Because my character was not ready for it. So, I'll never forget when this all started with me.

First of all, I'm just going what's going on? What's going on? Lisa and I were in a church that we didn't talk about character. We didn't talk about holiness at all. It was never mentioned. All we talked about – and this isn't bad. I'm just saying all we heard about was the promises of God, receiving from God, faith, miracles...

So, I'm out in prayer one night and we had an apartment and I'm out in this field and it's late at night and the Lord said, "I'm going to begin to teach you to deny yourself. Take up your cross and follow me. I'm going to begin to do a work of holiness in your life."

And I was so excited, James and Betty, I ran off the field and I went back to the apartment Lisa and I were living in and I said – she's taking off her makeup and getting ready for bed and I said, "Babe! Babe! God says that he's going to begin to do a work of holiness in my life! All the excesses in my life! The excessive TV I watch, the sports I watch on TV!" Because I watch so much sports. "The food!" Food was like -- I ate even when I wasn't hungry. He's just going to get rid of all of this stuff. Right?

So, it was amazing. The next three months I ate twice as much as what I ate. I watched twice as much sports on TV. I'm eating twice as much food. I remember three months later, now it's early in the morning, I go out to that same field and I said, "God! What's going on? You said you were going to begin to purify me and do this work of holiness."

And he said, "Son, holiness is not a work of your flesh. It's a product of my grace."

And I went okay!

And he said, "You've been doing it your way. Now I'm going to do it my way."

Well, the next six months, in regard to relationships with people and job position and everything else, I started going through trials like I have never faced in my life. I mean, trials to where I was living in pain. So, when Jeremiah says, in Jeremiah 15, "Why is my pain perpetual." I understand what that statement means. I woke up in pain. I went to work in pain. Just everything was going wrong.

James: In a way, were you saying the title of the book?

John: God, where are you? And I'm crying this out. I'm just like, God! I don't get it.

And I'll never forget, I'm angry at Lisa. I'm angry at my nine-month-old son. I'm angry at my pastor. I'm disillusioned with my fellow employees because they are not giving me the sympathy I think I should get. I'm just mad at everybody.

After six months of this, I walked outside to that same field. It was early in the morning again. And I said, "God, I don't get it. Where's all this anger and bitterness coming from in me?" I said, "What do I bind? What do I cast out?"

And that's when the Holy Spirit said to me, "Son, you don't cast out flesh. You crucify it." And he said, "Look at your gold ring."

And at that time, I had a different ring. I had a 14-karat gold ring. We all know 14-karats means 14 parts out of 24 parts is gold, 10 parts out of 24 parts is other metals, impurities, copper, zinc, nickel.

And he said – now I have an engineering background, so he starts speaking to me like this – he said, "What happens if you put –"

He said, "Does it look like pure gold to you?"

I said, "Yeah, it looks like pure gold."

He said, "What happens if you put it in a furnace and heat it up to a couple thousand degrees?"

I said, "Well, it liquifies."

He said, "Then what happens?"

I said, "Well, the impurities, which are the lighter metals, the copper, zinc, and nickel, they begin to surface."

He said, “They appear. Right?”

And I went, “Yeah.”

He said, “You didn’t see them before you put it in the furnace, did you?”

I said, “No.”

He said, “You keep saying, ‘Where’s all this coming from?’ Son, you didn’t see it, but I did. So, I’ve allowed you to come into this furnace of affliction and now these things are surfacing to you. Now, what you do with them will determine your future. You can keep blaming your wife, blaming your pastor, blaming your friends. It will all go right back down and we’re going to start the process all over again. Or, you can own it and you can say, ‘God, it’s not because of my wife. It’s not because of my pastor. It’s not because of what happened at work. It’s because of me. I’ll take my ladle and skim off those impurities.’” Well, right then I realized that there were things hidden to me.

Do you know what God said to Israel? He said, “I brought you into this wilderness to humble you and to test you.”

And we always have negative thoughts about tests. But I find tests to be very positive. I just flew over the ocean two weeks ago. I’m so glad the pilot passed the test because he and I didn’t end up in the bottom of the ocean. So, testing just shows you what’s in you. Okay? So, he said, “I know what was in those people. I brought you into this wilderness to humble you and to test you so you could know what’s in your heart.”

We don’t know what’s in our hearts. And a narcissistic person, a person who is very self-focused, has a very hard time seeing these things. And this is why, when you come into a wilderness, the first thing you want to do is blame everybody else and you want to get angry at God. And that’s what Israel did. They got angry at Moses.

God said, “They don’t have guts to say that they’re mad at me. But they’re really mad at me.”

That’s what I find, is we find ourselves getting angry at God. And if you look at the children of Israel, what kept them in the desert for 40 years? It was their complaining.

James: They murmured. Every time they murmured all hell broke loose; fire burned, serpents came. Murmuring...

John: Yep! So, I’m reading First Corinthians 10. Like, I’m in the middle of all this. And I’m like – because I’m suddenly reading about all these people’s desert experiences, you know, David’s, Moses, the children of Israel. And I’m like, okay, God. You just put complaining in the same list with sexual immorality, idolatry, and tempting Christ. I was raised in Sesame Street. One of these things don’t belong here.

[Laughter]

Okay! Complaining doesn’t belong on this list from keeping these people from their life destiny. I said, “Okay, you’ve got to explain it to me. I need understanding here. What’s wrong with complaining?”

And the Lord, I’ll never forget this, James and Betty, he said, “Complaining is a very serious affront to my character. Complaining says to me, ‘God, I don’t like what you’re doing in my life. And if I were in your place, I would do this totally different.’”

And I went oh, my goodness! So, when we complain what happens is we own still our character flaws. We have no opportunity now for God to get that –

Because he loves us so much, he wants this out of our lives because he knows what it will do.

See, David went through a 14-year wilderness. Right? Or a 12-year wilderness. God says you're going to be a ruler but his own boss. He's in caves and deserts. He can't even see his family. Right?

Saul never went through a wilderness. And if you look at Saul, he's got this really false humility. Because when the prophet approaches him Saul is like, "Who am I that you're speaking to me? You're the top prophet in the whole country and you're talking to me?" Right?

So then, on the day that the whole nation is gathered, and Saul's number is called. They can't find him. He's hiding in the equipment. Okay, so you'd look at him and go, "What a humble guy!" Right? But yet his very first victory he builds a monument to himself.

And the thing is, we all think, oh, I'm humble. I have character. I'm ready for this calling you've placed on my life.

And God's going, "If you only knew! I know! But you need to know what's in your heart." So, out of his love for us, allows us to see it; not so that he can blame us, but so he can rid us this thing that plagues us.

James: Have you ever felt like you've been in the wilderness, honey? You're such a little sweetheart, such a good church girl.

Betty: I think too sometimes, as Christians, we're reluctant to ask God to search our hearts because we already kind of know some of the ugly things that are in there. And we want to please him, but we are kind of reluctant to see – because we don't know what's going to happen. The unknown is kind of scary at times.

John: Yeah, even though I did know there were a few ugly things, I thought. There were multiple uglier things that God exposed. And I realized it was God's intense love

for me. So, the wilderness was redefined for me. It was redefined from being a place of hardship, a place of dryness, to a place of preparation.

And I think when we understand that, that God isn't punishing you, God is preparing you. And the thing that amazes me about God is, as powerful as he is, he will not violate our freedom of choice that he gave us. So, God will never ever remove something unless we pinpoint it, identify it, and say please take it out. That is when I find that –

Like, I just went through one two years ago. Like wait a minute! What?

I remember one of my friends, my board member said, "John, you pray those prayers when you're in your twenties."

Because I prayed again when I hit 50. I said, "God, I want you to shake anything out of me that's not right. I want you to burn anything out of me that's not of you."

And I went through this horrific time. My board member said, "You pray this when you're in your 20s; not in your 50s."

Here's the thing that I discovered in the desert. This was the most important thing. This is where God reveals himself. 90 percent of what I preach today have come out of the hardest times of my life. The biggest refining that I went through in this wilderness...

The very, very first – I'm going to revert to way back in my 20s – the dream of my life was to work for T.L. Osborn. He was my hero. He loved Lisa and I, he and Daisy. They had won 62 million people to the Lord. In 1986, I mean it was like whenever I sat with him, I felt like I was with Jesus. Because he would come to our church and I hosted him. I remember when he called and said, "I want to hire you and Lisa. Daisy and I want to hire you guys. We want you to be our righthand man and woman. We want you to set up a church in Tulsa and then set up churches in all these nations in Africa that we go to, like the one in Tulsa."

I was screaming. But inside there was check. And I remember we went up there. We interviewed, did a five-hour interview. They introduced us to the whole staff. We had a place to live. I told my whole church we're going there. But I just couldn't get comfortable.

So, I called them and said, "I don't know why but I'm not comfortable."

He said, "Why don't you and Lisa fly up and let's talk about it."

So, we flew up and all of us sat there and said, "We love each other, but we don't believe this is God's will." I was the one that said first, I said, "Somehow I don't believe this is God."

And he said, "Yeah, we don't either."

I remember when I flew back, and this is amazing, I literally cried for two weeks in the prayer closet. I would get up every morning, go out, and all I could do was cry. It was like something died. After two weeks I was so angry, James and Betty, I screamed at the top of my voice. I mean I'm not in a remote place, and I said, "Why did you do this to me? Why would you put this desire in me to go work for this man and give my life to serve this man, and then him offer it, and then you take it away! Why would you have me do this?"

God said this to me, and I will never forget it. He said, "Because I wanted to see if you were serving me or the dream." And when he said that I went, oh my goodness! And I realized right there, God was trying to keep me from being a minister who had fallen in love with the ministry instead of Jesus.

I can honestly say that my number one goal...

I have goals. Like my marriage goal is the day Lisa leaves this earth, I want her to love me more than the day I married her. The second marriage goal is the day I leave this earth, I want to love her more than the day I married her. My number one goal in life is the day I leave this earth I want to be more in love with Jesus than the day I started.

So, God took that seriously. Because I prayed and I said, “God, never let this – Never let what you do in me grow beyond the character you dealt to me.”

I didn’t realize how wise that prayer was. So, he took me at my word. Sometimes you pray these prayers later and you go, “What in the world was I praying?” Like my board member said to me. But in reality, I look back and I’m so fond of those memories. I’m so fond of all that suffering. It’s like Jesus said, when the woman has the baby -- When the baby comes the joy of the baby is so great that she forgets how intense the suffering was. And my wife still says she’s going to contend with Jesus about that point, because she still remembers vividly how...

But anyway, I look back with nothing but fondness. But here’s the deal, the Bible says that there is a purpose for every season. Okay? There’s a purpose for every season. The wilderness is a season in our life. That means there’s a purpose for it. The reason I wrote this book, James and Betty, is because God has shown me that the body of Christ prophetically has been in a wilderness.

James: Let me say this to you, because we are already way over time.

John: Oh gosh! Sorry!

James: No, you’re okay.

John is going to do another program with us. We’ve kind of led into it.

John, it’s really important for everybody to hear what you’re saying here. Because you’ve

written a lot of wonderful books, best-selling books. This is critical, what you're just saying right here. God wants the church to become the answer to Jesus's prayer, so we can really see his body in his body the church.

John, one of the things God showed us to do, because I was being told by Billy Graham, by everybody that heard me preach, "You're the next Billy Graham." Did you ever hear that about ol' James Robison? Okay! See, that kind word became a false dream that could caption any of us. Thank God the Lord didn't let it happen. He showed me that my most effective ministry would be being servant. I've been a servant. Would you agree?

John: Yes, you have. You're servant to so many of us.

James: That's it and that's where I'm supposed to be.

Listen, we're going to talk to you –

By the way, the wilderness, we'll talk more about it because I want everybody to understand so much of what's here, even in the next program. Do not miss the next program with John.

John, you went with us to the mission field. We're in our mission feeding right now. You love Peter Pretorius. He's in heaven. His son is now overseeing, along with all the other leadership, our ministry leadership, the ministry leadership there in Africa. We're in Mission Feeding. I want you to listen right now to what God says through what you're about to hear. And then I want you to help us to take care of 400,000 children, plus miracles that are needed right now. You are the miracle. Watch closely.

On the mission field:

Announcer: Empowered and equipped by Life Today viewers, our mission teams continually search the world for areas of need.

Luke: So, we're here in South Sudan and it was a fight the trek just to get here. Four planes, over 60 hours of travel. But man, that's what makes Mission Feeding so special, is that we get it to places that so many can't reach.

Isak: By being here in these villages and getting out to the village, what we're able to do is Mission Feeding then kicks into place for children on different levels. Some will get a red bowl of food, like we see so many times in the Mission Feeding programs.

Announcer: If you're familiar with the iconic red Mission Feeding bowls, you know they've helped save millions of lives from death by starvation and malnutrition. That part is the good news.

But right now, outbreaks of tribal violence along the southern region of South Sudan are driving people from their homes. And children are caught in the middle.

Ralph: Margaret's story here is a story that just breaks my heart. She and her husband were chased out of their home. On their journey they went days without food. You can look at the health of these babies. We can tell it was many days, a long time, without food.

Announcer: Margaret and her children represent nearly 800,000 people who have narrowly escaped a violent death. And they're in desperate need of food if they're to survive. Mission Feeding is uniquely positioned to help save their lives.

Ralph: So, let's don't let Margaret's story end with death. Let's let it end with life.

Announcer: Today you hold the power to offer hope for Margaret's children, the power to offer life, the power of Mission Feeding.

End of video

In the studio:

James: Boy, I tell you, I want them to bring an image back up of a little child that looks so hungry. And then the little child with a bowl, and then that last picture.

Now listen to me. As I was watching and praying and knowing the importance of what we heard already today, boy those -- You talk about desperate. You talk about desperate for a miracle. God worked miracles when the children were wandering in the desert. He fed them manna from heaven. God uses us to be his hands of love and express his heart. We can feed those children but it's going to take a miracle of God to give us the resources to take care of 400,000 we've found. To have another \$270,000 necessary to take food that's being offered by UNICEF, the United Nations, USAID. But they don't have the relief workers with the courage and compassion to go in. But they weep when they see our missionaries and they say we will give you this food if you'll just take it.

And we say, "Well, we've got to organize more transport and more people." And we put a pencil to it and it's another \$270,000 plus feeding the 400,000. And we can feed three, five, or ten children for the next months for \$30, \$50, or \$100.

I'm saying, Lord, please, please! Give us 270 people, or even more than that who would give \$1000 for the extra pressure that's come and the opportunity that's come. We need a miracle. God, I can't perform this miracle. I can't talk this miracle into reality. God, you touched the hearts of people that say, 'I'll be the answer to their heart cry. I'll be the answer to their prayer. To that mother. To that family that's represented there.

Lord, please. You are the answer to the prayer I just prayed, to the prayer of the missionaries, to the prayer of the families that want your children to live, that want them to be healthy.

Would you please, right now, go online or dial that number? It's always there if you need someone to pray for you and with you. Would you dial that number? Would you take

your bankcard? Use it like a check; make the best gift you can.

If you could give \$1000 or more, please know it's going to make a difference. If you give the \$30, \$50, or \$100, what a difference it will make.

This is the last week and we really do need a miracle response. Would you be a part of that miracle? The miracle of life for these we've just referenced, and we just pointed you to? Please be their miracle. Please make it happen.

Thank you for going online. Thank you for dialing the number. If you mail a check, call us and tell us what you're sending. We need to know. Thank 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 previous reserves gone and mission feeding helping in areas of great famine, we urgently need your support to replenish food supplies to reach the 400,000 children who are counting on us. Your life saving gift of \$30, \$50, or \$100 will help feed and care for three, five or ten children for three full months!

Please consider an extra gift to help ease the suffering of innocent families who, due to tribal warfare, have had to flee their homes in South Sudan to neighboring Uganda, in desperate search of food.

World Food representatives have asked for our immediate assistance. That's why an

additional \$270,000 is urgently needed to help provide food to those who are starving.

With your gift, we'll send you *The James Code* by O.S. Hawkins. You'll also enjoy this beautifully crafted leather bookmark.

With your gift of \$100 or more request *The Passion* translation Bible. This edition ignites *The Passion* of the Bible to modern readers by merging *The Passion* of God's heart with the life-changing truth of his word.

Finally, with your gift of \$1,000 or more to help feed and care for 100 children, be sure to request our commemorative bronze sculpture, "Safe in the Shepherd's Arms."

This is the last week! Please call, write, or make your gift online.

End of clip

In the studio

James: I really do want to say thanks to God for you. Thanks for John Bevere and Lisa. Boy, they've been a blessing. They really are like family to us.

John, y'all have been a real blessing to what we're doing. You've been there, you and Lisa have been there. Does their love work when it hits the fields?

John: The family that you work with, Isak and Peter, who's in heaven, are one of the most remarkable families I've ever met. And I've known them for years now because you introduced me. We want to help on this, so we want to join in with this fight so Messenger International is going to join as well.

James: Please know we appreciate your help. This last week, if you would like to have John's book, *God Where Are you?* And you know you're in the wilderness and he's

there, and he's there with purpose. So, you just ask for it and we'll be glad to send it to you, along with the other materials that we've told you about.

We really do appreciate your help. Join Betty and me in saying thanks to John Bevere for being a blessing.

[Applause]

We love you, buddy!

Thank you so much for watching. You get fired up!

[Applause]