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Week 46: Fall Mission Feeding

James and Betty Robison

Ruth Graham

James: It is an honor to have all of you here and it's an honor to come into your home or wherever you're watching. It doesn't matter. We're honored that you would give us a moment.

I'm James Robison. My wife Betty and I welcome you to Life Today. One of our best friends and, as far as we're concerned, family forever is Billy Graham's daughter and Ruth Graham's daughter, Ruth; which would be quite a tribute that you got Mom's name. Because, boy, Dad sure thought a lot about Mom, Ruth. Precious moments of just how much Billy loved and respected Ruth, a missionary family.

Well, Ruth Graham has been close to us a long time. Would you welcome Ruth Graham?

[Applause]

I do feel like we're family.

Ruth: You're the big brother I never had.

[Laughing]

James: Well, I tell you what. I didn't have a sister. I was an only child, you know. And gosh, you are our sister. And your daddy sent you down here when you were quite young to help me when I was quite young. Your dad really loved our ministry. We really loved

him.

Ruth: And he loved you.

James: I know that he did.

Now, this is really something. I think this could be one of the most important books that anybody's written. Not just because you're a Graham but look at what it says. It's on forgiveness, and the title, Forgiving My Father, Forgiving Myself.

Two biggest challenges?

Ruth: Absolutely.

James: So people would say, "What in the world are you forgiving Billy Graham for?" Or what were you forgiving Daddy for?

Ruth: Well, James, I grew up as a little girl with a Daddy that was far away. I wanted him to tuck me into bed, but he wasn't there. I wanted him to teach me to ride the bicycle. But he wasn't there. When I needed him the most, he seemed to be the farthest away. And I grew up with a sense of abandonment. I did not want to believe that was true. But someone confronted me some years ago, before my father died but after he was conversant, so I couldn't have that conversation with him. But they told me, "Ruth, you grew up with a sense of abandonment."

I did not want that to be true. But it was true. It's the – That piece of the puzzle fit. Because, you see, James, as you know, I've been married and divorced four times. And I thought that I might not even be saved. I mean, how could I possibly keep going through this thing. You know, the definition of insanity is doing the same thing thinking you will get a different result.

But I grew up with wanting security that my father couldn't give me. So I kept looking for security. And I married Ted at 18. We were married for 21 years. But then that ended in divorce. And I quickly had a rebound marriage and had to flee him, actually. I was afraid of him. Then I married a man I love very much. We were married for ten years when he decided to leave. And then married another man.

James: You were looking for something you felt was never there.

Ruth: That's right. Now, I don't blame Daddy at all. These were my choices. But I had to face the fact. Like I said, the piece fit the puzzle. I was able to then forgive myself because I realized there was a reason.

Sometimes there are no excuses, but there are reasons. It was Vance Havner who used to say, "An excuse is the skin of a reason stuffed with a lie."

James: Wow! Vance was a precious friend and he was a great encourager. He made a great writer. He was like your daddy, encouraged me as a young preacher. You see, I know your dad felt bad, because when I look back – I actually traveled more than your dad because he would do a number of crusades a year. And I would do 30 to 40 crusades a year and they were all eight-day crusades. They weren't five day. They weren't part of a week. It was insanity. I'll be honest with you, it was insanity.

If you have a gift and it's effective, well the spirit of the world will program you but the spirit of religion, the spirit of the church will too. Because they see that gift and it helps them grow and people get saved. But they don't realize that you need a family too.

Robert Morris is going to be with us. I think probably in about a week he's written a book, *Take a Break*. It's on the Sabbath rest. My failure to rest nearly led to my destruction. But I also knew that I had failed our children, because I was missing. And I really tried hard to get back to do things. And you were awesome. And I've said to you many times and I repeat it, your prayers for our family, that were so focused because

we're sitting here talking to you, and you really did pray, boy, our kids are a miracle.

Kids there -- Frank, I'm sure, was a rebel, with a cause. But the point is that he, you had plenty of tension in the family. There's plenty of things going on there.

Ruth: We were a dysfunctional family, like every family.

James: That's exactly the word. I think I know it about as well as anybody because I love the whole family. And they know that. You all know that. Right? There's no question about it.

But the deal is that it did hurt. Daddy knew it. We both realized we missed it.

Billy, I love you so much. And I really do believe, you're with a cloud of witnesses glimpsing down right now. Just like you watched Anne a couple of weeks ago when she was here, and she was just glowing. You are too. Ruth, you really do have just a beautiful radiance. And that is the Lord. That's the beauty of God.

So, Billy, this girl -- all the kids, even the grandkids -- coming on strong.

Okay, you really have forgiven. How did that forgiveness play out? It showed you the adverse effect that the lack of forgiveness had. What happened when you realized this was what was going on and you forgave Daddy? What happened inside?

Ruth: Well, I came to understand forgiveness is not a "letting go." It's not a just a way to get healthy emotionally. It's not a gift I give myself. James, it is so much more than that. It is sacred. It is a sacrament. When Jesus was being nailed to the cross is when he said, "Father, forgive them." He was dying for us. That is a sacrament. And we can enter into the very nature and character of God when we forgive. That is what he's all about. His heart is all about forgiveness.

James: One of the miracles in my life is – Betty, I know you want to jump in here – One of the miracles of my life is I never knew my father. You know, he was a drunk. He raped my mother. And then he came back and tried to kill her. Then I nearly killed him in self-defense. Yet I held him in my arms and told him, “I don’t know you. But I love you.”

And this is something I’ve said and it’s a miracle and I know now that’s where you are at this moment and where you come. I cannot *not* forgive. The forgiver lives so fully in me, and I mean this, I’ve had people do everything they could to hurt me. Sure things hurt. But I forgive. I can’t not. There’s a forgiver in me.

All the people that look like they’re just off the charts wacky and they’re just griping about everything... I’m just saying, “God, they don’t know that they’re hurting themselves.” And I’m hurting for you. If we go the direction some of you want us to go, we’re all in trouble! You’re digging your own pit. You’re digging your own ditch. You’re digging your own grave and it’s breaking my heart. I just wish we could sit down and talk to you. Because even though I’m convinced it’s wrong, there’s a forgiveness.

So as you forgave, did you sense something release inside?

Ruth: James, it doesn’t happen all at once. It’s a lifetime process. It took a while for it to play itself out. I can’t tell you how it happened, or when it happened. But I can tell you that it did happen. And I know for myself –

Not too long ago I was in Sunday School class. We were studying First Corinthians and we’re comparing the Corinthian culture with our culture. And the Sunday School teacher asked, “When did we begin this downward slide in America?”

And somebody in the back said, “Well, when we started accepting divorce.”

That went in one ear and out the other. Normally, I would have -- [gasps] [Laughing]

But it didn't phase me. And after Sunday School class was over, this man called me aside and said, "Oh, Ruth! I'm so sorry! I meant to say easy divorce."

And I realized at that moment, James, I was living in Romans 8:1. "There is now therefore no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus."

Normally, I would have condemned myself around the block and back again. But no longer! I live in the freedom of forgiveness.

Betty: Don't you think forgiveness is something we have to walk in everyday?

Ruth: Absolutely!

Betty: Because I look at it and I think, and how can we not forgive someone or something that's happened, something when we were wronged or something like that. And I have to just look back to that time when I accepted Jesus. He forgave everything about me. And he said, "Be mine forever!"

So, how can I --? When we've got a God that forgives like that, how can we not have a forgiving heart?

Ruth: He died for us while we were yet sinners. In our mess, that's when he died for us.

James: Does it mean that if you forgive that you forget?

Ruth: No! Only God chooses to forget. I think that because we haven't forgotten we need to forgive.

James: And he does take it away as far as the east is from the west. No question. He covers it. You know, somebody says, "Is there anything God can't do?"

And someone said, “I think that he can’t see what he covered, what he forgave.”

And that really doesn’t seem unscriptural or even unsupernatural. It seems like the way God would be.

If you would say something to the average person, that maybe they didn’t have a divorce. Where do you see people getting stuck in the area of being unable to forgive? What do you think are some of those sticking points that keep them back? You’ve talked about your own situation. You’ve talked your dad. But what do you see holding people back?

Ruth: I think we don’t forgive ourselves and we get stuck there. And we think that God’s mad at us. And we don’t see the loving nature of God.

Joyce Meyer had that book, *God’s Not Mad at You*. I thought that was a great title because I think a lot of people, especially evangelicals, tend to think that God’s mad at us and he’s just waiting for us to do something wrong so he can whack us. That’s not at all the case. He hurts with us. When we suffer the consequences of our sin, it’s not a punishment for us. He is hurting with us and he wants to come alongside of us and love us. I don’t think we realize how much he loves us. I don’t think there’s any way for us to know how much he loves us.

James: How much he is focused on us.

Betty: How do we forgive ourselves? How would you say that?

Ruth: I think you make the choice to forgive yourself, like you would somebody else. And then renew your mind with the scriptures. Because that’s the only truth we have.

James: And I really do believe there’s healing in doing that, going through it. As you wrote the book, and you were just going through the scriptures and you had to be having a hope that God would do something special with the book. So as the book goes out, do

you think it's going to lead a lot of people who would think, you know, you wouldn't have needed to have forgiven this great preacher, to stop and look at their own resentment in their family or in someplace that's pretty hidden and they didn't realize it was there. Or that in itself, the very thought that it might be there would make them even condemn themselves even worse. How do you feel like the book is going to come down in the average hands? What are you praying for?

Ruth: I hope that people will pick it up and wonder – It might be curiosity. And this is not a tell-all book by any stretch of the imagination because I adored my father. But I hope they will pick it up out of curiosity and then God will have something there for them, that he will meet them in the pages of that book. There's some need in everybody's life. We all have areas that we need forgiving or asking for forgiveness. Just the simple fact of asking for forgiveness can be so difficult. I've had to do that over and over again myself.

I had to ask my children's forgiveness. I can remember one Easter afternoon. We all gathered in the backyard overlooking the Blue Ridge Mountains and I told them, I said, "Kids, I need to speak to you all." And I said, "I've got something important. The kids can go play in the backyard."

And they blanched. They thought, oh, mom's sick. Or something terrible has happened.

And I said, "No, I need to ask your forgiveness."

"Oh, mom! You don't need to ask our forgiveness!"

And I said, "No!" I looked each one of them in the eye and I said, "I want you to forgive me."

Each one said, "I forgive you."

Do you know how freeing that is?

James: And you knew in your heart they thought you had failed in some ways that you –

Ruth: I had!

James: There wasn't any question about it. You I put right up front. Most people don't even know you went through those deals and I watched you. It was like somebody bouncing off a wall and into a truck. It wasn't good. And you know what? It didn't matter how much love we poured at you in those moments, and you didn't need my finger in your face, you needed us praying for you and loving you. And we watched the journey and we marveled at it, Ruth. You are – I'm telling you, you're just a – you're a gift from God today.

I want all of you to join us in praying for Ruth. She's had some very serious back problems. And she's had surgery that in many ways looked like it complicated it. She's just not ready for that again and she really needs a touch of God. I want you to join Betty and me right now and then I want you to just keep praying for her.

God, would you just reach down and touch those joints that you made and supernaturally correct and heal, I mean totally. In Jesus' name.

Now look at me right here, all of you at home. I just happened to turn on *Believer's Voice of Victory*. Ken, listen to me. I listened to a woman in far worse shape than Ruth. I mean, indescribable. I saw the x-rays and I saw the hopelessness. And somehow you spoke to her and she heard God and she prayed for healing, that you said God heals miraculously. And I watched and saw a woman totally changed and I saw where God put in her back a rebuilt perfect joint where there wasn't one. And I saw it on the x-rays. And I saw the amazement of the doctors.

You say, why do you tell that? Because I wish we would quit trying to find fault with one

another and love one another.

Ken, thank you for that!

And I tell that because I want that for Ruth. I want Ruth to experience such a healing that the doctors are amazed.

Listen, our god does still heal. Let me tell you this: we lost a daughter to cancer that believed in healing more than any healing preacher or person you've ever met. And I saw the dismay when she knew even dad. I didn't think it would be this way. But God didn't fail. Her faith didn't fail. And the God that doesn't always heal what we ask, heals a broken heart. This precious sister of ours, family, is trying to heal damaged hearts. I don't know, Ruth, anybody being anymore honest in trying to get people to find this forgiveness and healing that your offering. And we're really going to be praying for your health.

Ruth: But, James, even if he doesn't heal me, I want to do what he has for me to do even with this. I want to worship him even with the pain.

James: I know you do.

Don't you appreciate Ruth Graham? Don't you just thank God for the whole Graham family? All of you!

Franklin, we love you! Samaritan's Purse. Buddy, I love you. I'm glad I got to be your partner to go around the world with you. We've got to touch the little ones together and we'll keep doing it as long as we're breathing.

Get the book! It's in the bookstores.

Ruth, you've been to the mission field with us. Do our mission outreaches work?

Ruth: Oh, my! Yes! It's amazing to see. I just love my experience in Angola. I really did.

James: The love of God poured through those missionaries but it really, it could only be weeping with no ability to meet a need, but our viewers make it possible to be a miracle.

Ruth: And it makes such a difference, such an enormous difference in the lives of those – I can see those little kids coming from afar with their little red bowls and with their spoons ready. To just really just accept a bowl full of gruel.

James: Well you know what it is here, I'm going to reach out and pick up one of them, they used to just come with cans and we never did see cans this clean. They were the nastiest old cans. And you watched them, and you said, "Why don't y'all give them heat-resistant bowls? The hot soup is burning their little hands."

And you did, and it's life in every bowl and it has lines to proportion for the nourishment needs in areas so we don't run out of soup. And you did that. So you know exactly.

By the way, that's what love does. Love did it. I want you to be a miracle right now. What you're going to see, you're going to say, "You know what, Ruth? We're going to be the answer to a mother's prayer. We're going to be the miracle those missionaries trust for."

Watch closely because you're going to get excited.

On the mission field:

Open Captions: God, you have all authority over my family. I pray that you will provide all my needs, so that I can help my children. You are able.

>> Like so many of us, Felicia prays earnestly over her home and her children. But in her world life and death are at stake every day. The circumstances faced by the families in her village are overwhelming and they are forced to contend with the reality most of us can't imagine.

Open Captions: We work but still don't have enough food. There are days we don't eat and go to bed hungry. Our children used to cry to us, but we had to tell them that won't help. Now they join us in crying out to God for help.

>> Despite already losing one child to malnutrition, Felicia's faith remains strong. The danger is real, and she fears for the future of her children. But her hope is anchored in a daily act of surrendering her family to God.

Open Captions: I can only depend on God and trust him with our future. I ask Him to give me wisdom, so I can find a way to feed my children.

>> Like Felicia, so many families in the quarter of the world feel the weight of malnutrition bearing down on them and threatening their survival. They can't collapse under the burden or give in to despair. They can only pray. And you could be the answer to those prayers.

End of video

In the studio:

James: Oh, look at that precious mother praying with that little baby on her back. And said goodbye to one child. I want you to pray with a baby on your heart. God, please, please help all our viewers to say I can save those children. I can help several of them. And they can, Lord. Give them an excitement and a joy about it, a commitment to it. In Jesus' name.

Think about this: you can feed ten little children like that for the next several months for

\$100. You can feed five for \$50 or three for \$30. It's not total childcare. It's emergency nourishing porridge-type soup mix that is especially designed for that area and the needs. It becomes a miracle for them. It changes everything. Thousands of them. Hundreds of thousands right now waiting to see, would you help me? Would you help three, five, or ten? \$1000 will feed a hundred. There are some of you here watching right now who could give \$1000 and do it gladly. Some could give more.

Thank God, Betty, for everything people do.

I'm asking you right now to go and get your bankcard and come back and go online. You see the online address or dial that number. It's always a prayer-line if you need prayer, because we care. While people are calling to save lives and feed those precious children, there will be eighty percent more calls saying, "Pray for me! I've got a need in my life. I need your prayers."

Would you be one of those who calls to be a lifeline? Would you please? Get your bankcard, use it like a check. Make the largest gift you can.

Father, help every person you can to be moved by your spirit to do it. In Jesus' name.

We need a lot of help. I'm telling you, the missionaries have found the need. They're going to pour love out but we're the ones that keep them from being empty-handed. You make it possible for them to save those lives.

We're going to send you Anthony Evans' incredibly beautiful CD, Altared. It means more than just the altar, it means an altar to life by the grace of God. Powerful!

And the beautiful cups that you can fill, and they will be filled with joy when you're sharing joy.

So we always want to bless you. This is not something to get a gift. This is something to

bless you. They become conversation pieces, where you can tell a friend where you got them. You can enjoy Anthony's music. Right now, make that call or go online. Make the gift God put on your heart. If you want to write a check, make it to Life but call us and tell us what your mailing. We need to know. We depend upon your support. Thank you!

Begin video clip

Announcer: Mission feeding began with a promise to be there in times of crisis for thousands of hurting and hungry children in their time of need.

Now more than ever we need your help to save lives by feeding and caring for children across the continent of Africa. With food reserves gone and many areas experiencing severe famine, we urgently need to replenish our supplies to reach the 400,000 children who are counting on us. Your gift of love can be the miracle answer to a desperate mother's prayer.

Call now with your lifesaving gift of \$30, \$50 or \$100 that will help feed and care for three, five or ten children for three full months. With your gift, we'll send you the authored worship CD by Anthony Evans. This powerful full-length album includes unique versions of some of today's most cherished worship songs that are sure to uplift and inspire you.

With your gift of \$100 or more please request the "Filled with Faith" and "...Joy" travel mug set. These 12-ounce mugs are crafted with large handles, double-layered insulation and vacuum sealed lids to prevent spills. Each mug includes a message to remind you of God's blessings and faithfulness.

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."

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

End of video

In the studio:

James: I want to say, along with Betty and Ruth Graham, thank you for your help. I want to let you know this: you just help us feed some of those children, and you say would you send me that book Ruth wrote, Forgiving My Father, Forgiving Myself. I think this is a really, really important message from a heart broken and a heart healed, mended, so she can mend other hearts. That's what God does.

Would you join us in saying thanks to Ruth Graham?

Thank you, Ruth! Bless you!

Thank all of you for watching Life Today. But most of all, thanks for sharing life today!

Thank you!