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Week 46: Fall Mission Feeding

Sheila Walsh

Megan Brown

Sheila: I'm Sheila Walsh. Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I just want you to know on behalf of all of our staff here, we don't take it for granted. We don't take it for granted that you watch our program, that you support our missions. I want you to know that the whole, I mean you see me, or you see James and Betty, or Randy, but I just want you to know there is a whole staff here who love you and are praying for you. And we want to be there for your needs as well.

One of the things I've become aware of recently is that we honor our military during this time as we absolutely should. But I'm thinking Lord, are there ways that we are missing? Sometimes they slip through the cracks and there are other ways that we could support them. So it is my great joy today to welcome Megan Brown to the program.

Megan: Hi! Thank you so much for having me. I'm so excited to be here.

Sheila: I met you first of all through, remember we did a thing called, "She Loves Out Loud" prayer movement. But you came in and your heart was to represent the needs of the military. Tell us a little bit about that.

Megan: Yes. Today's military community is so different than maybe what the public thinks. Our lives are chaotic and it's really hard to come to the terms with the fact that we have been at war for over 20 years. And military families are constantly feeling that pressure and frustration of all of the things that we endure on a daily basis. And so many times we do it without the support of a local church or a local community. As a faith

community in the military, we have the greatest propensity to be one of the biggest mobilized missional forces that this generation has ever seen. So when we talk about what it is to do ministry with the military, we do that in the hopes of releasing a global missional force on fire for the Lord that can carry his story to the ends of the earth.

Sheila: Wow! Okay, I want to know way more about that. But first of all, let's go back and tell a little bit of your own story, Megan. How did you grow up and what was your early life like?

Megan: Shout out to my mom! Hi mom!

Sheila: Hi mom!

Megan: Hi mom! I grew up in the south and we grew up kind of around the church, but I never really took an interest. I struggled and I was a rebellious child. And if my mother is watching she would totally agree. But when I saw this very good-looking man in a blues uniform, I was done for. So like most of us we married very young. We were barely 20 when we made it down the aisle.

Sheila: Was he in the military at that point?

Megan: He was in the military. He is active duty Air Force. So almost 15 years ago this very sharp looking man in a blues uniform won me over. And so when I embarked on this journey as a military spouse, I wasn't really sure what I signed up for. We hear that very often, "Well, you knew what you were signing up for." I promise you, none of us had any idea what we were signing up for.

And really, I was not a practicing believer. If I believed in God, I knew some vague stories, maybe a few children's tales but none of them had connected. And so very early into our marriage, maybe about six months in, my very sweet, very loving, cradle-to-the-grave believing husband politely asked me to join him for a Sunday worship

service. I remember waking up and thinking, how about you carry me to lunch after your worship service? I'm going to go back to sleep. I'll see you when you get home. I just remember how intently he asked. He said, "I would really be frustrated and disappointed if you didn't join me at service this morning." He didn't tell me the rules. You don't wear flip flops to the church.

Sheila: It depends on the church.

Megan: So I show up in a very casual outfit with flip flops. I'm sure the deacons thought I needed financial assistance. And we get plugged into this church, and we're sitting in the pew. And this very short, round man waddled his way to the front of this pulpit. He had this beautiful comb over. His name was Brother Mickey Dalrymple at Fairview Baptist Church.

Sheila: Wow! You just identified him as well. Wow!

Megan: Yes. Well, I love you Brother Mickey. He started preaching line by line through the book of Ephesians. I remember when he said, "Beloved, open your bibles to the book of Ephesians." I'm looking around and I'm like what's an Ephesia? Where are we going? Thank goodness this Bible I brought from graduation has tabs!

So I'm listening and he's talking about the gospel in such a beautiful way. I remember going to the car afterward and just crying in the car and saying, "Is this true? How did I not know these things?" And my husband was so encouraged and he just kind of patted me on the knee and he's like, "Sweetheart, I've known that since I was five. But I'm really excited that you're here with me."

So for the first two years of our marriage he patiently disciplined me and he was very gracious. He didn't push me or pressure me to join this study or do these things or live up to this list. But as a new believer I was very lost. The Bible to me was the scariest book in the world. And so it would be years later where the Lord would kind of crash on me in a

very non-typical way.

Sheila: Yeah. I wanted to talk about that because I know that there was one point when your husband was deployed, and you thought something devastating had happened. Tell us about that.

Megan: So at the time I was 26, I'd been a believer for about four and a half years. I have children that were at the time five, three, and one. And as a young mom in a new place, we didn't have a lot of support. We were 50 minutes away from any military installation. So it was really life on my own. There was a knock at the door, and it was a postal worker. This postal worker had my husband's footlockers. Well, at the time he was driving convoys in Afghanistan. And I remember this wave of terror washing over me and all I could think is are you here to tell me that my husband is dead? Is that what you're here for? Why do you have his things? I haven't heard from him in weeks. Why are you here?

And as a believer in that moment, my first thought wasn't to pray. My first thought wasn't I have a father in heaven who can hear me. I really just panicked. So I sat in my living room staring across at this very white blank wall and all I could hear on a loud speaker is your husband is dead. Life as you know it is over. Prepare for the worst. I didn't know what to do.

And then what I now know to be the Holy Spirit prompted me to pick up my Bible. And I turned to the book of Thessalonians.

Sheila: I love that book!

Megan: I love that book! It is one of my favorite books now. At the time I had no idea what it was talking about. I couldn't grasp the words. I read it from cover to cover and all I could grasp was, "Pray without ceasing." And I thought, all right, Lord, if that's what I'm supposed to do then I'll do that. I would wipe down counters, "Please Lord, don't let

my husband be dead!" I'd be shampooing little baby hair, "Please don't let my husband be dead." And many times all I could get out was, "Please!"

And days later I got the sweetest phone call from my husband. He was fine. He was moving to a different location and shipped his things home without telling me. So after recovering from the fear, I was plotting my revenge; right? But really, it was just in that moment it convicted me so much that as a believer, as someone who professed to love and live in the hope of Christ, I did not have the answers. And what was even worse is that there was no one to tell me. And so what do you do with that? So that spurred me to know--I have to know what is in this book. I have to hide its words in my heart. I have to know what this book says about this life. So every night at 8:30 I would make myself a little bowl of Bluebell ice cream.

Sheila: Oh, there you go!

Megan: Hey! Not much that can't be fixed by homemade vanilla and the Word of God. So I sat down, and I just read. I didn't know how to study the Bible. I didn't even know context. I just read the words. Eventually, when my husband came home, we landed at a church that made a very big deal out of being able to feed yourself from the word. Once they unlocked the door for me, I've been running, and I haven't turned back.

Sheila: Wow! One of the things I wanted to ask you about, Megan is what is life like on a military base for those who don't know the Lord?

Megan: Well, I've been in military ministry for about ten years and I can say with certainty that military spouses will find Jesus in dark places. Military life in a word is lonely. It's living in willful isolation. We believe in liberty and freedom and we believe it so much that we pay the cost. We give up the most important thing to us, our spouses. We move every two to four years. We bubble wrap our feelings and ask God to bless the endeavor. It is insane. So even as a seasoned, solid, loving believer, it is lonely and isolating. And so for a non-believer, for someone who does not know the Lord and his

love, it is debilitating--it is debilitating.

Sheila: So did you begin to teach Bible studies?

Megan: Yes.

Sheila: Tell me about that.

Megan: So about seven years ago, I felt like the Lord was leading me to show other women the answer. In my greatest moment of fear, I did not have the answer and it just stoked this fire in me that said there are women that need to know the answer. So I opened up a Bible study in my living room, which is a 14 by 25 shoe box in military housing. So six women showed up. It was myself, my neighbor, a young mom, a commander's spouse, a rocket scientist and it was the strangest, military spouses are crazy in the greatest of ways. But there were different age ranges, life stages and the only thing that would bridge all of that was the Bible itself. And so we went verse by verse through the gospel of Luke. The first week we had six women. The next week we had 17. The week after that 25 women were dragging red wagons and lawn chairs to hear the gospel. And all I could think is Lord, what are you doing? Do you know how crazy I am? Why do you have me in here doing this?

And really, what I found is that many of them were not believers. They had heard about us through word of mouth and they were starving to understand how to grasp what is happening around them. But ultimately, how to reconcile the pain that they're experiencing with a loving God.

So we unpacked verse by verse. And by the next semester we had 40 women and 50 children in my living room--yeah! It was a Play Dough nightmare. It was bad. It is guerilla warfare. Military ministry is like guerilla warfare. And so we had this packed house. We partnered with our local chapel and eventually we had over 200 participants two years later. It outgrew the government funding, the facility, and the staff.

So ever since then I've been equipping military spouses to teach the Bible in their homes around their coffee tables sharing the gospel through radical hospitality and just an obedience and willingness to love others.

Sheila: I remember the first time I met you and I was like wow! This woman is on fire for the Lord and for the power of his word.

But I want to ask you, how can we as the church support our military families? Because I think there is one day a year when we honor, and we remember, and we pray. But what about all the rest of the days of the year?

Megan: Oh my goodness! That's such a great question. I get encouraged by that. So many military families are slipping in and out of the backs of local churches. They are viewed kind of as perpetual visitors. So even upon the third, fourth, fifth, sixth time in attendance you'll hear things like, "Oh welcome! We haven't seen you here before."

And we'll say, "Yes, we know. We've been here for five weeks though. But thank you so much for asking us to stand again at the end of the service to recognize visitors."

But the other part of it is many times our spouses have boots on the ground somewhere else. So for me, I'm a mother of four. Getting my children to worship service on Sunday morning is an Olympic event. I have to plan to the nth degree the night before. We line the shoes up at the door. We are throwing toast at them as they're walking out the door. We're praying that they brushed their teeth. They probably didn't. And so we're trying to get our family into where we know we need to be. We need to be in the house of the Lord on Sundays. We need to worship. We need to feel welcomed and wanted and seen. And even more so, cared for by the church. I think they have this perspective that we might not be there very long, so they don't really need to plug us in or get to know us. But I would urge...

Sheila: That's harsh! Wow!

Megan: It is the experience...

Sheila: That would just make me feel even more lonely.

Megan: Yes! It is the experience that most of us, almost all of us unanimously can say with our experience with the local church is they don't really understand us and don't know what to do with us. But my hope is to start a paradigm shift. Because if you pull military families in, you mentor them, disciple them, you can commission them and commend them into the service of the Lord, and they can go places you never imagined. We don't have to raise funds to do mission. There is enough blood and brokenness on our streets. We can move every two to four years and Uncle Sam sends us to the new mission field.

Sheila: What an incredible perspective. Now you take this so seriously. Aren't you almost through with your, you've been doing a bachelor's degree? Tell me exactly what your degree is in.

Megan: So I'm at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. Yay! I'm so excited. But I'm finishing my degree, a Bachelor of Science in ministry leadership with a focus in women's ministry and theological studies. And really, the reason for that is I believe military spouses will be the largest missional force that this generation has seen. I think we can kick start the third Great Awakening because this people group already lives missionally. We've devoted our lives to the mission of depending this country. We are ardent patriots. We believe the same things that our spouses believe, and we stand beside them and shepherd our families while they are away doing what God has called them to do.

And what do we do while we're at home? We foster community, we build it, we connect people, we thrive. And if we can be shepherded and cared for and commissioned by the

local church because people have seen our capacity, there isn't enough grit and grace laced in the military spouse community that we could start revolutions.

Sheila: Wow! That is phenomenal and we will do everything we can here at LIFE to support you and get all our people to pray for you. But I wondered, what is it like, your husband can be gone for a long time and you have a new normal, and then he comes back. I'm not talking just about yours', how hard is that when someone who has been on, literally boots on the ground is suddenly back into a family situation; how hard is that?

Megan: Extremely hard! We call that reintegration. The period where your spouse comes back, and you have to reintegrate. You have to reintegrate two schedules, reintegrate two bank accounts, reintegrate two parenting styles. You have to reintegrate all of these different things. And to say that it is a challenge is one of the biggest understatements in the history of time.

Really, I wonder sometimes how we do it as believers and we're on solid ground. We share the same beliefs. We understand the call to biblical marriage, and it is still difficult. We have a running joke in my house when my husband comes home. He gets one day to ask this question, "Why did you do that this way?" You get one day to walk through the house, "Why did you do this this way?" "Is there a reason that this is the way it is?" "Why did you do that?" "How come this is over here?" "Why did you move the couch?" Well, you weren't here. And it worked.

Sheila: After one day, no more questions.

Megan: Yes! After one day no more questions. And that rule works really well for us. But that period can last a lot longer. Sometimes months go by and there is that occasional, "How come this is..." "What happened here?"

It's a difficult balance and it requires an immense amount of trust because I have to make the decisions for my husband and I together and I have to know what he wants and really

what it looks like. Part of it is really being in tune with your spouse's needs and really what they expect when he gets home and what I expect. Just open lines of communication. But it is one of the biggest challenges for military marriages today is reintegration.

Sheila: How can we "A" find out more about you? Where can we connect with you and how can we help?

Megan: You can find me at MeganBBrown.com and I'm also just finished onboarding, as a CRU, military missionary. I'm so excited about being part time staff with CRU.

Sheila: That's great!

Megan: Yes! So I will have a link on my website to find more about our mission there. And there is a link where you can give directly. Really, what we do is we make the gospel accessible to the military community through intimate home Bible studies, through discipleship, and then through large evangelistic events where we present the gospel and we encourage women to find the Lord where they are and to love him well.

Sheila: That's phenomenal. If you're not familiar, CRU is what was Campus Crusade for Christ and they do an incredible thing. And so we're going to tell you once again after, in a couple of minutes, how you can connect with Megan, MeganBBrown.com.

But first of all, I want to show you another mission field. A mission field of children who literally are starving to death, not from a lack of the Word of God, but from a lack of simple nourishment. I'm going to take you with me on this trip because it really broke my heart. Watch this.

On the mission field

Sheila: I woke up this morning in this village, this is my first time in Angola and I

honestly don't know what I expected but I didn't expect what I experienced. I didn't expect to see a child who is a year and five months old and weighs six pounds. How does a child like that even survive?

I think one of the things that surprised me most was the profound affinity I felt with the moms. If you're a mom, all you want is for your child to be healthy. You want to be able to put a meal on the table at night and know that your children go to bed with a full tummy. But here I've seen what the ravages of malnutrition do.

This morning, I'm sitting in my tent and I open my Bible. I'm just doing one of those going-through-the-Bible-in-a-year and here's what I read. Isaiah 58: Share your food with the hungry, give shelter to the homeless, give clothes to those who need them. Then your salvation will come like the dawn and your wounds will quickly heal, your godliness will lead you forward, and the glory of the Lord will protect you from behind. Then when you call the Lord will answer, "Yes, I'm here."

He will quickly reply, "Feed the hungry, help those in trouble; then your light will shine out from the darkness and the darkness around you will be bright as noon."

Mission Feeding is not some great idea we came up with. It's simply living out the gospel of Christ. And when we put one simple bowl of food into the hands of these children in Africa, it changes their lives forever -- thousands and thousands and thousands of lives, one life at a time.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: I will never, ever, ever forget that first trip. When our photographer here at *LIFE*, Janice tried to prepare me, but nothing prepares you--nothing as a mother would ever prepare you from seeing children like that. Where literally their bones are sticking out,

where their skin is beginning to peel off, where their hair has gone this strange rusty color simply because there are no nutrients in that child's system. I have a hard time every time we talk about this because I think, when we as the body of Christ are on this earth, this should not be happening. We get so caught up in our own lives, we get so caught up in what we think we need and sometimes we go through difficult years but it is nothing--it is nothing compared to what these moms in Africa go through every single day.

And even as I'm watching that and you can tell by my hair, it is probable two or three years ago but as I'm sitting here right now talking to you that's what's happening there. Children are being brought to these malnutrition clinics, and often it is too late. It is too late to save these children.

So what our commitment is here at *LIFE*, we have committed, James and Betty, and we pray about this stuff, committed to feeding 350,000 children but we wanted to make it doable. We wanted to break it down in such a way that you can enter in with us. And so literally \$30 will feed three children for three months. That's amazing to me. But you saw me handing out these bowls of food. In there is the most nutritious blend of vitamins, minerals, protein the children in that part of the world need.

And those mothers are on their knees right now praying that somewhere across the world people who love and serve the same Jesus as they do will hear their prayers. I just want you and I to say yes! We heard your prayers and we're coming! We're coming! And we're not coming empty-handed. We're coming with our hands full for your children. \$50 feeds five children for three months. \$100 feeds ten children for three months! We can all do something. We can't all do everything but sometimes we're tempted to turn away, to flip the channel but you didn't do that, and I thank you.

And so now I'm asking, will you call that number on your screen? Will you go online? Will you give the very best gift possible? Wouldn't it be amazing this year, a year that's been hard for so many, if we exceeded our goals, we can do that together. Thank you so much!

Begin video clip

Announcer: Today on top of the daily fight for life and food, families and children across Africa are now forced to deal with the challenges of a global health crisis. Because of COVID-19 food scarcity has increased drastically and the fear of dying from lack of food is far greater than the virus itself.

Even in these unprecedented times, mission feeding won't stop. With your help, mission feeding will continue to be a daily source of food, encouragement, and health for the 350,000 children counting on us.

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 *40 Days of Healing Promises*. This beautiful hardcover devotional will encourage you in your faith as you dive deep into the healing promises that are yours in Jesus' name.

With your gift of \$100 or more please request the "Blessings for your Home" bowls and tea towel set. This set of bowls and two beautifully designed tea towels will make a wonderful addition to your home and serve as a reminder of your help in blessing others as a friend of *LIFE*.

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, "A Mother's Strength." Please call, write, or make your gift online today.

End of video

In the studio:

Sheila: Thank you! And to all our military, we salute you. To our military wives, children, those who are on the front lines, thank you.

Megan, I just want to say thank you for who you are and what you are doing, and we will pray for you that your ministry will just go bonkers. MeganBBrown.com?

Megan: Yes, ma'am!

Sheila: So thank you so much for being with us.

Megan: Thank you so much for having me.

Sheila: And we'll see you next time. I'm Sheila Walsh for *LIFE Today*, God bless you!