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Week 49: Fall Mission Feeding

Randy Robison and Sheila Walsh

Sam Collier

Randy: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm Randy Robison. Sheila Walsh is with me.

Sheila: Hey guys!

Randy: We have such a wonderful guest. Sheila, I'm excited about today's guest.

Sheila: I am too. I want to read you just a paragraph from his book. It is something he does when he is interviewing guests. He says, "I remind my guest of the accomplishments he or she has racked up in life, all the high points, all the victories, all the wins, and then I say, 'But we know it didn't start there. Take us back to where it did begin, to the little version of you, to you as a child before all the growth and successes. Give us the story of you.'"

So welcome Sam Collier. That's from your book, *A Greater Story*.

Sam: Wow! I'm so excited and honored to be here. I see you guys from afar on the couch or on a cellphone or on an internet screen. So it is awesome to be here doing I guess a little bit of COVID-19 madness here in Dallas. So it is just an honor to be a part.

Randy: Well, we're thrilled to have you. You do have a lot of credits, author, speaker. We can go down the list. Like Sheila said in your introduction, we want to go back a little bit and hear about those small things that set you up for these great things.

Sam: One hundred percent. You know, Randy, I know we connect a lot in this kind of arena. Speaking of books, Sheila, I know we have the same publisher.

Sheila: Yeah, Baker Books!

Sam: My life began in poverty. Our mother was 21 when she had me and my twin sister. And she had three kids already: that's five kids at age 21. In the middle of a hospital faced with a decision; my biological father at the time had left the picture because he was addicted to all types of substances. Actually, if I put a pin in the story and just go back three months ago, we lost him from COVID-19 in New York City. It's okay. God has done what he's done. But he had diabetes and he was in the hospital. And he actually left the hospital in the middle of New York City when COVID was at the highest, when it was kind of the hotbed and went down the street to get drugs, contracted COVID-19, came back to the hospital and passed away. Only talked to him twice in my life. But I tell you that part of his story to let you know how long substance abuse has been a part of him.

So jump back to my mother being 21, he was gone doing some other things so she's faced with a decision, do I raise them in poverty, these two twins, or do I give them up for adoption in hopes that everything will work out? Kind of send them up the river like Moses. And that's what she did. And prayed. Don't get too sad because I'm here, right? We did get adopted by a lovely couple who had met in Washington, DC a year prior to that. There is a couple of details, it's kind of like a little movie, a year prior to that in Washington, DC in a laundromat at 3:00 P.M.

Sheila: Oh my gosh!

[Laughter]

Sam: My dad, I call him my adopted dad, my dad who raised me, he usually went on a Saturday but on this day went on a Sunday and was just washing clothes. And my mother, who adopted us, she was in there for a different reason. The night before she had been hit in the head with a hammer by her ex-husband now, husband at the time, he was a

Black Panther. And not all Black Panthers are violent but if you know anything about the Black Panther party--right? So he was aggressive.

So she got up that next morning saying by any means necessary I've got to get out of this situation. And I'll just be honest, she was walking around the laundromat with a gun in her purse because she said whatever it takes, I'm not going to lose my life in this marriage. And in the midst of her creating an alibi, runs into my adopted my dad in the laundromat. My dad is in his second divorce, she is in her, getting ready to go through her first divorce. They walk out of the laundromat together. They start dating and give their life to Christ for the first time.

Sheila: Can I throw a pin in it just for a second because there was something I read in your book that really broke my heart? You and your twin sister, you end up in foster care for about three months, which probably felt like 30 years, and then when they came to adopt, I was horrified by what they were told about you and your sister.

Sam: Well, what's wild is, after they gave their life to Christ they get married and realize my mother can't have kids. So they come down to Augusta to adopt us. And when they walk over to our crib, they tell the lady, "We want them."

And she says, "No, you don't want them because where they come from. They're probably not going to be much: Addiction, cocaine, potentially even prostitution." She said, "So if this is your opportunity to do it right," my dad was in his 50s at the time, going through the last season of his life, "You don't want to do it this way."

So our life began with this idea of being spoken down to, words spoken over us. My parents prayed. You've seen the movie, *War Room*, Priscilla Shirer, Kendrick Brothers, and they form a little War Room in the adoption home, and they hear from the Lord. They say God tells them no, they're going to be okay. These are your kids. They adopt us in spite of the words, take us home. Channel 2 news came to the house and Christmas miracle: Twins have been rescued.

I'll fast forward the story and simply say my sister gets all A's from kindergarten up to 12th grade, becomes an industrial engineer, Georgia Tech grad, and I'm on *LIFE Today*!

[Laughter]

Randy: I love, your book is called *A Greater Story*, the podcast, the television show that you do, *A Greater Story*. To me, that is so important because the world does say things like what was spoken over you and your sister. No, this is their story. And the God we serve says, hang on a second. I've got a story. If we will let him will play it out. When you look at where you're at today, what is your story?

Sam: I think it is a story of God taking a mess and turning it into a miracle. I think it is a story of extreme redemption and what can happen when certain individuals get out of the way and let him come in. I think it is a story of God rewriting what the enemy wanted our story to be and could have been had my parents listened to the lady that was running the home. So I think an encouragement to all of us is we've got people in our lives that have spoken things over us from aren't from God. We're gone through things, we've heard things, but God wants to come along and rewrite it.

Sheila: One of the things, Sam, that I noticed is it is like you go from your early beginnings to who you are today. But there was a lot of discovery along the way. Because there were so many things you thought, this is what I'm supposed to do. This is what I'm supposed to do. I'm thinking of our viewers at home who feel disappointed. Something that they thought was their mission or something that they thought was their... How did you find out, how did you work through the mess to think this is why God put me on this earth?

Sam: I'm going to try to restrain myself from running around because this is a really passionate topic for me. I was mad at the church for a really long time, for probably about three or four years. Because I hit a point after I gave my life to Christ when I was 16,

about 16 to about 21 where I was doing everything the preacher told me. I was reading the Bible, but I was still broke. I still had all these dreams but had no idea how to get them out. I would go to conferences and hear speakers say, "God has great things for your life" and then I would try to do it and I'm like, maybe he doesn't. God, why would you give me...? So it created this really deep frustration in me with the church. Is Christianity even real? Does it even work? To the point to where, at one time I even considered taking my own life. When you are struggling with suicidal thoughts it's because you can't see any other way out.

So for me, I said, God, either tell me how to fix the Rubik's cube or just take me home. He took me on a journey of discovery, and he let me know that it wasn't him that was wrong, it was some things that I didn't know that were hidden in the scriptures. Scriptures talk about the mysteries of the kingdom. So often, understanding how God is weaving our lives together and how he helps us discover who he has already created us to be is really more of a combination of a lot of passages together as opposed to just a chronological... Okay here's what happened here, here's what happened here. So for me, I went down this journey of just discovering that I am who God has already made me to be and purpose is more to surrender to than it is found.

Randy: That's where I wanted to ask you about that because in the church, it's been on your background, I can tithe and obey as much of the Christianese kind of law that we create. Or in another circle I can name it, and I can claim it, I can have the faith. But when my plans don't work out, I blamed God. How much of really finding our place and our purpose and our greater story is letting go?

Sam: I think it is 100 percent. It is at the place of surrender that purpose is found. I think we can spend our lives trying to find something that's already there. I think God will, and he did this to me, he will push us to our lowest, he will let us run into as many brick walls as possible just to get us to say, okay, all right, all right, all right. What do you want me to do? Whatever you want me to do, even if it is something I'm not passionate about, I will do because it is not about what I'm passionate about, it's about what you're passionate

about for me.

Sheila: You have an interesting little formula of "Passion gifting and provision collide." Unpack that a little.

Sam: We took about, on this journey of frustration and on the other side of God showing me these things, I started noticing that I wasn't the only one in this situation that was frustrated. And so we went on a three-year journey with about 70 young adults helping them, some with master's degrees, some with no degrees, but loved God, helping them discover what their purpose is because I'd just gone down this journey. What we found is that purpose is surrender to, it's found, it's discovered. When passion collides with gifting and then ultimately meets provision. And it has to be all three, it can't just be two.

So I think one of the best ways to even describe it is this show, *LIFE Today*. Right? There are some things that you guys are passionate about. Changing the world obviously for Christ but also it marries your gifting which is speaking, hosting, ministering. And there is a level of provision there where God provides through giving and through so many... I think when you see all three of those things come together you find purpose. And if you're missing one, you may not fully be in what God has created you to be in.

Randy: Yeah. And to dovetail on that, as you're going through this process, how much of it starts with the small things before you get to the big great things that God has in store for us or we think that God has in store for us? How much of it is really being faithful in the little?

Sam: I've got a quick story for that. It is everything. Because I think you hear the phrase, it is not about the destination, it is about the journey. And so I think our entire life is about God fixing us on the way to the promise. Molding us on the way so we will have everything we need.

I hit this point where I'm like, God, what's going on? Whatever you want me to do. And

I'm walking down this street in California one day and I just give it to him. Like all right, whatever! If you want me to go work at McDonald's that's what I'll do. So I tell him, this is wild, the next job I get offered I'm going to assume is you. I just said, I'm just like, all right, if you want me to go work at McDonald's, there is nothing wrong with working at McDonald's, if you're there, that's where I want to be. And I got offered a job to be a youth choir director from a random friend out of nowhere after a month at Ebenezer Baptist church where Martin Luther King, Jr. pastored.

Sheila: Oh wow! Wow! Wow!

Sam: I was like youth choirs? I hate youth choirs!

[Laughter]

Sheila: But you have a gifting in music.

Sam: I have a gifting in music. It ultimately wouldn't be, but it got me. So I show up to the choir rehearsal and there is one girl in the choir.

Sheila: Oh, it's more of a soloist.

Sam: It is the soloist. There is one girl in the choir for four weeks, her and her mother. And the Lord tells me, I want you to teach her, the one girl like it's 30. So me and the young lady and her mother all become close. Long story short, four weeks go by. The mother gets upset. She tells the pastor, "Hey! We need to tell the church to come and join the choir." So in four weeks we have 30 people in the choir.

Well, me and the young lady and the mother we've gotten close. The youth pastor comes, I didn't even know he was there. He says, "Do you know who that is?" He said, "That's the niece of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. It was in that relationship that my ministry was born.

Randy: Being faithful in the little.

Sheila: Let me ask you a very basic question but I think of the number of people who write to me, "I want to know God's will" and "I'm trying to do this." How important in your life is the Word of God?

Sam: Wow! I had to pause on that one because I can remember my life without the word. I can remember my life when I get outside of the word where it ultimately takes me, and every time it is a disappointment. The word is everything. When we are lost the word helps redirect us. I always say we talk about this three-prong strategy, but it has to be undergirded by the word. That's how you know. There are certain principles, and we talk about gifting and passion because we can be passionate about a lot of things but if our passion isn't rooted in scripture then the passion is off. I think the word, I mean it is life. It is called "the living word." It is living, it is jumping off the pages. We find our existence in it.

Randy: So good! Now I'm watching the clock here. There is something we have to get to. Because at the top of your book there is an endorsement from Steve Harvey, well known in our culture. Something really amazing happened on his show and you didn't know that it was going to happen. Just tell us what happened when you met your mother for the first time.

Sam: We've been talking about this idea of surrender and this is kind of, I don't want to say the last part but the kind of climax of the story on the heels of surrender it leads us to this moment. When I'm 24 and we're on the couch doing a little tradition we have in the states here called N.F.L. football.

Sheila: Amen! Amen!

Sam: The rule is nobody talks during the game. So the four of us are sitting there. My

dad breaks the rule. He is from the country. Not everybody from the country is loud, he is loud. So he starts yelling at us during the middle of the game and he says, "You need to go find your parents!" And we're like, "What?" He said, "Well, you could grow up one day and marry your cousin and you would never know it."

Randy: I had that fear.

Sam: Randy, you know about this! And he said, "And God told me Steve Harvey was going to help you do it." I got up at that point and left. He's lost his mind. He had a barber shop down in Auburn and he would watch the Steve Harvey show every day. And he said one day... So he convinces my sister to write into the show because she is like Ellen is not going to write you back, Oprah is not writing you back, it's not happening.

A year goes by, my phone rings, it's my sister. I answer the phone, my twin. She said, "The Steve Harvey show just called me. They're going to call you. Bye!" And hung up the phone.

My phone rings again in another two minutes. It's Dorothy from the Steve Harvey show. She says, "Hey, this is my first week on the job as a producer, and they put a hundred stories on my desk, yours is the top story. We think we can help you find your biological family. Do you want to do it?"

I said, "Dorothy, let me call you back."

I call my sister. "Do you want to do it?"

She says, "No. But I feel like it is God." That surrender thing again.

We end up doing the show. They fly me, my sister, my parents up and when we get there, they say, we haven't found anybody, we're so sorry but we want to bring you on the show to make a plea. We go to a commercial break, we come back, Steve Harvey looks at us

and says, "Hey, I know I said this but that's not the case. Your biological mother is here. Eleanor, come on out."

Sheila: Oh my gosh!

Sam: And on national television we meet our biological mother. And he says, "And your siblings are here." That we didn't even know we had until about four years ago. So it's been wild and whacky.

Randy: Now, I watched that and that moment, it got to me, especially as an adoptee. That broke you. What was it that broke you on national TV?

Sam: I would have to say the flood of emotions all at once. I describe the state as frozen--I was in a frozen state. I was happy, mad, sad, angry, surprised, all at the same time. Like I don't know what... The voice of the Lord had to really speak to me and say hey! Snap out of it we're on national television. We're going to deal with these emotions later. But your biological mother is standing in front of you. I want you to embrace her.

Sheila: Which you did.

Sam: Yeah, I did.

Sheila: As you can see, you're going to have to read the book. There is so much more to this story. It is called, *A Greater Story*: "My rescue, your purpose and your place in God's plan." But first I want to take you to a place where there is some desperate need right now. Some children who are being overlooked and forgotten but not by God. I want you, Randy and I want you to help us make a difference in their lives. Would you watch this?

On the mission field:

Announcer: *LIFE Outreach International* teams, along with our mission partners travel the world documenting the needs of families who lack the very basics of life. Without a doubt, Africa's children always tear at the heart of our teams when they see them struggling with extreme circumstances.

Sheila: I cannot imagine what it would be like to be a mother like this and want desperately to help your child. This is the hospital that some of these moms had to walk 10 or 15 kilometers with a seriously malnourished baby just to try to get some help. And if they can get here in time then there is some hope. But time is everything here as you can see.

Translator: I remember when my brother died. We were hungry and he was so thin. My mom took him to a clinic that was very far away, and he died on the way there.

Announcer: It is now up to us to do something to help relieve the plight of these little ones. A bowl of food a day provided through our mission feeding program can make the difference between life and death for young children.

Sheila: But my prayer is that we can save hundreds of other children before they get to this stage. No child should ever get to this stage. No mom should have to ever watch this. So if we do something now, we can stop this from happening.

End of video

In the studio:

Sheila: That is not a movie, that is not four years ago, that is right now. Right now as you and I are part of this program together, there are mothers who are walking for miles to take their severely malnourished children to a clinic. And usually, by the time they get to the clinic it is too late.

I've never seen anything like it in my life. You know what's interesting? Every single mother that I met when I said to her, when I asked her, "May I pray for you. May I pray for your child?" Every single one of them said, "Yes, please pray!"

But I came away and I remember thinking that night, it is not enough to pray if we're not willing to be the answer to our own prayer. How can you tell a starving child Jesus loves you? You need to feed that child first. You need to build that child up. You need to let these mothers know, we're not just going to come in and film and come back and forget about you. We promised these women we will not forget about you. We will come home, and we will tell your story and as long as the body of Christ is on this planet at the moment this is on our watch. We need to be Christ's boots on the ground.

We've made a commitment, Randy, this year to feed 350,000 children and it is a promise we need to keep.

Randy: Absolutely! I like that we're talking about the idea of *A Greater Story*. Not just in your life but in the lives of the children across the world. These children, in many regards, are written off by western societies as third world nations, those born into poverty. Unfortunately, we don't see them like we should. I know God sees them and I believe that you see them. So how do we go in? We literally go in with a bowl of food and its vitamin enriched. It is blended right there in country using the things that they need in their bodies. So it is made specifically for this purpose.

So how do we do more of that? It depends on how much you will partner with us. \$30, \$50, or \$100 will feed three, five or ten children for three whole months. \$100, 10 children! Maybe you can give \$1,000 and help feed 100 children for three months. You know what? We don't just feed the same children over and over and over again. What we do is we get them to a place where they are stabilized so they can go to school.

Sheila, you and I have been in these places. We have seen where mission feeding is not in the desperation that takes place there. Then we've gone to where mission feeding is and

we've seen the impact that it is having. It is giving them a future.

Join with us, go to the phone, go online right now, give the best gift you can. You can help write that greater story in a child's life today. I hope you'll do it right now.

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:

Randy: I hope you are going online or going to the phones right now and giving the best gift you can because you can write *A Greater Story* in a child's life by partnering with us today.

Sheila, I've enjoyed so much, Sam, talking to you but tomorrow we get to meet his wife.

Sheila: Yes! The other half of the story.

Randy: She is a little prettier.

[Laughter]

Sam: She is amazing. Her story is awesome. A story of brokenness that led to hope. She is going to have some great things I think to share with women and everyone. So I'm so excited about that.

Sheila: Sam's book is called *A Greater Story*. Get it where all good books are sold. And we will see you next time on *LIFE Today*.