

12/1/20

Week 49: Fall Mission Feeding

Randy Robison and Sheila Walsh

Toni Collier

Randy: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm Randy Robison. Sheila Walsh is here with me as always. We have a fabulous, fabulous guest today. Someone that is really going to inspire you and lift you up. Sheila, I know you're excited about having our guest.

Sheila: I am! I'm very excited because her whole ministry is something I profoundly believe in. I don't know if you've ever seen this meme, it's called "Broken Crayons Still Color." So please welcome Toni Collier. We're so glad you are here!

Toni: So grateful to be here. So blessed.

Sheila: How did the crayon get broken?

Toni: Well, I'm a mom and...

Sheila: Well that's enough. That will do it!

Toni: There you go, period, it is over. But I'm a mom to a six-year old strong-willed blessing is what I like to call her just to give myself some internal hope. As always, kids break things. They break things on accident, they break things on purpose. They break things on accident and make it look like an accident, it is bad.

And so I remember getting my little one a box of crayons. Was going through a really hard season. I was going through a divorce. I was transitioning out of a really toxic ministry and I just needed a mom break. So I went in the kitchen, left her with a 64 box

of crayons. It was a mistake. It was a mistake! That quiet came over the room. You know that quiet. It's like someone's lost an eye here today; right? And that quiet came over the room and I come back in the room and there is just crayons everywhere. And all their little clothes is off and their dignity has been robbed by my daughter. And then it was in that moment where I had to clean up all the stuff.

I had to speak at a school the next day. I was a youth pastor at the time and I just didn't feel qualified anymore. I had gone through this divorce. I was processing through being a single mom and just had a really unhealthy and bad experience with church. I just remember that night sitting with the Lord saying, I don't know if I should be on the stage tomorrow. I don't know if I can perform, if I can show up.

God just led me to Second Corinthians chapter 12 verse nine where Paul is just telling the Corinth church that it's not up to us; that success doesn't mean perfection or how much we can show up and strive but instead it means surrender all of our weaknesses.

So I took that message that night and got up on that stage and I told 200 middle schoolers that broken crayons still color. That no matter how broken you are, God still can write an incredible story with your life.

Sheila: You know when I read that in an interview the contrast between the life you were able to give your darling little girl and the life you had when you were a little girl, so starkly different...

Toni: Are you going to make me cry right now?

Sheila: Well, if you do, I will. But would you just fill us in a little on the early story of your life?

Toni: No. 100 percent. Elementary is when it all started. My mom got very, very sick. She had a massive stroke, paralyzed on the left side. My dad was just working full time

and not really present in the house and really verbally abusive as well. So just missing a lot of nurturing, had to kind of become the mom of the house. My counselor would call it parentified child syndrome where we kind of miss the mark of natural progression in taking care of your parents; that comes like 30 plus, 35 plus, 40 plus. Well, I was eight driving my mom around to doctor's appointments.

Sheila: Whoa! Whoa! Whoa! Driving your mom around?

Toni: Yeah! They have a hardship license for kids under 12 and 13. My dad just worked all the time. My counselor says even now that our childhood wounds really turn into the detriment of our adulthood. So without nurturing, and without a father that could really speak life into me, you know our moms give us our worth but our dads give us our identity; just didn't know who I was.

And grew up from that thinking I was grown at 13 and I was running my entire life by myself. Got caught up in drugs and alcohol. Lost my virginity at 13. Just kind of thought that was my life. But battled with validation and performance a whole bunch growing up.

So I was always like the kid that did a lot of stuff. I wanted to succeed because I wanted to make my dad proud. But yet at the same time, I struggled with validation. So boys, and numbing the pain. Ended up leaving the house at 16 and putting myself through college.

Sheila: That's amazing. You didn't just put yourself through college. You graduated from college at 19. I was on the train getting to college at 19.

Toni: Trying to just make it! Yeah! It is the difference of wanting to choose how you deal with your brokenness. I think for me, I wanted to win. I wanted to succeed. I wanted to excel. I wanted to prove to my dad that I could be everything that would make him say the words, "I'm proud of you." And that's just how that surfaced for me.

Randy: I love the idea of "Broken crayons still coloring," but is there a wholeness to be

found after being broken?

Toni: One hundred percent! One of the things we get to do with our ministry, Broken Crayons Still Color, is to talk with women about wholeness and healing and holiness, which is really where our wholeness is found. I think what's unfortunate is that, especially in the church, we have decided to separate faith and feelings as if they can't co-exist. Hurt and hope can't co-exist. We can't have faith in Jesus but also fight for our mental and emotional stability.

Sheila: That's huge! I don't want to run over that because that's huge, Toni! I think it's why so many people within the church are struggling because they feel that all of them can't show up.

Toni: One hundred percent! And then we get stuck in shame cycles and we unfortunately see pastors fall because they've been in this dark place by themselves not able to process. And we see leaders taking their lives because they're just stuck in these shame cycles that we've just perpetuated through the church.

So yes! Randy, like there is a journey for us that God has paved for us in so many different ways from counselling to even small group models inside of the church. Having accountability and dependability on people that can really walk with you through that journey is so important.

Randy: People just need to hear that because people are hurting and to know that you can have hope even while you have the hurt. One of the lies is that if you're hurting there is no hope and that's where people end up in terrible places. And the other thing that you touched on, Sheila, what is it you say about guilt and shame that's so powerful?

Sheila: Because I ended up in a psych hospital after being host of a Christian talk show and I just felt like my life was over. But what I learned was guilt tells me I've done something wrong but shame tells me I am something wrong. What do you do with that?

Talk to us about that because if shame showed up in color in the church we wouldn't need lights.

Toni: Here's what's so interesting. I just feel God here so strong. I literally say those words on stage. I'm not... Is that a quote? Did you find that somewhere? I literally talk about the difference between guilt and shame. And let me just say this. If there was a scheme of the enemy to hold us down mentally and emotionally from everything that God has for us on the other side of hope and healing it would be shame. Exactly what you said, "Guilt says I have done something bad." And gosh! We are going to do something bad. As *Brené Brown* says, "We're imperfect, we're wired for struggle but we're still worthy of love and belonging."

But shame says I am bad, and it is an identity snatcher. And my friend says this all the time, "Thieves don't steal from empty houses." The enemy knows--he knows that we have something of value. It is our worth. It is our identity. It is who God says that we are. And he's going to attack that and come after it. And out of that seed he's going to just tear our whole lives apart and we don't have to live there. We don't!

Sheila: You said something that you kind of passed over, but it made me want to pause. When you went through, you got married and it was a very abusive marriage and so you had to get out of that. But I wondered, did you not find the support and love you needed within the church community?

Toni: No I did not. And that's why I vie so hard now with the local church. Sam and I, we partner with the local church. We want to come alongside the local church and provide resources and coaching and whatever it is that we can do because the local church can be the anecdote to society's ills. However, when you have shame cycles embedded deeply in leaders and no accountability and no one coming alongside saying hey, that's not how we should do that. We need to do it in honor and respect, you get unhealthy church experiences.

I really do believe that if I had that local church to support me and walk alongside me and give us the counselling that we needed, gosh, I think our story would be different.

Randy: You used a phrase earlier, you said I was transitioning from a toxic ministry. I went wait, wait, wait a second because it's not supposed to be that way. How do we know if we're in a toxic church? Those two words should not ever go together, which tells me that one is not really being what it should be. And what do we do? Because a lot of churches will try to say, no, if you leave the church you're walking away from God. But if you're following God you might need to walk away from a particular building and gathering of people. How do you know when to stay when to go?

Toni: I think the first part is evaluating where you are Monday through Saturday. If your church is focused on just those four walls and not the progression of your relationship with God and Monday through Saturday is a continuous battle that you don't feel equipped for and you're going to church and you're investing and you're trying to do everything you can, that's just something to look at.

Our churches should be relationship over religion. It is not about us sitting in rows hearing a pastor preach. It is about us getting equipped to go out and be the church. I also think what is really big is about loyalty. Andy Stanley says all the time a leader in those capacities that request loyalty, that require loyalty is maybe not a leader worth following. We are loyal to God and we *get* to do the ministry and invest in people and be leaders and have influence.

But our loyalty first and foremost should be from God because that may be something that you hear from God that you're not hearing from a local leader because it has to be about your relationship. I would say the last thing is church is not celebrating community outside of church. I think there is something to be said about the small group model. I like to sink my teeth into it.

Sheila: That's where you're known, and you get to show up.

Toni: Just some things to look at.

Randy: My pastor likes to say, "Church begins when you walk out those doors." That's so good. Let's get back to the idea of the broken crayons and the colors. I look at you and I think, man, she's got it together. How did the inside get it together? What was some of the practical process of coming to a point of wholeness?

Toni: Environment is big. You've got to know what you're around and how that's producing toxicity in your life. I had to evaluate my relationships, my workplace, my church, everything. What am I around that is really seeping into the fabric of who I am? And then what we don't like to say is I have to evaluate myself.

Sheila: Oh dear!

Toni: Oh! I don't want to do that. Our unhealth does not stay in the confines in one area. When we become unhealthy people we leak on to our kids and our boyfriends and girlfriends and our husbands and wives and our workplaces. So we've got to look at ourselves. And I had to look at myself and I said, "Toni what do you need to heal, sis? Go and do that." And then I had to go get professional help.

We have somehow bought into this idea that counselling is for like the people that have psychotic breaks only and they're just rich and they're in a bubble over there, especially for my community, the African American community. It is just not a thing. We don't talk about it.

But I am shouting counselling from the roof tops at this point because sitting down with someone who specializes, who has studied in how your brain is wired around emotions and how you interface with the trauma in your life and the toxic relationships in your life, that is a treat. That is something I want to sign up for, for the rest of my life and am I signed up for, for the rest of my life. It is a process. I had to process all of my stuff.

I did have to change my community and that was hard to transition people out. Jesus had circles too. He had intimate circles of the three that he'd gather around, and then the disciples, and then big crowds. And he shared certain aspects of his life with the intimate three that he didn't with the 12 and he didn't with the massive crowds. And we have to protect our temples that we have here on earth by surrounding ourselves with great people.

Sheila: There is something about your message, Toni that is so the heart of God for right now I believe. Because I remember when I spent a month in a psych hospital. When I left somebody said to me, "No one will ever trust you again. Your ministry is over." But you know what I've discovered? My brokenness was a far greater bridge to other people than pretend wholeness ever was.

If we could learn to be transparent and vulnerable in the church, not that we bleed over everybody but that we share our stories. Because what I discovered is when you're initially hurt it's an open wound but then it becomes a scar. And our scars are proof that God heals.

Toni: Come on, somebody! I want to shout in here. Yes! But imagine a world of leaders that said, "I'm going to walk boldly in my weakness."

Imagine how much more people would say, "Well, how did you get on stage? How did you get all that influence?"

And we get to say, "Well, it is not us. It is God!" And it is through the boldness of our weakness.

Paul literally says it to the Corinth church, "Therefore I will boast all the more loudly so that," this is the formula, "Christ's power will rest on me." Come on! That's the kind of life I want.

Randy: As you've pursued this, what has happened to other relationships, even some of the broken relationships?

Toni: Honestly, one of the most broken relationship is the one with my dad. A lot of verbal abuse there. I longed for his approval. I look now and I just came back from Houston, he turned 61 and we have one of the most beautiful relationships ever.

Sheila: Oh wow!

Toni: Let me tell you this, it started at IHOP in Houston and it started right after a counselling session. I flew down and I looked my dad in the eye and I was able to articulate the wounds that I had and the hurt that I was carrying because I'd sat in a counselling office and I discovered them.

The way I was able to communicate it to my dad, it was almost like shocking for him. "I didn't know that my words did that to you. I didn't know that me being aggressive with you did that to you." And it was just this awareness. I think it is like the wise old cliché of you become who you are surrounded around. And the truth is if my friends decide to stay and honor where I've place them in the circles of my life they will inevitably get leaked onto, but from a healthy place from my healing.

Sheila: That's what's beautiful because it's like the redemptive nature of God; that your healing then brought healing to your father. That's amazing!

Randy: I was going to ask how did he respond?

Toni: Well, it's been a journey. But the first thing he said, was, "Okay, I understand." And then there was prayer. Two years ago, my dad prayed for me for the first time in my entire life. And now he is just honoring and respectful. But even more than that, he is kind of started to curate his own personal relationship with God that's separate from me

because he is gleaning from my relationship with God. Even as a 61-year old man. It's been beautiful. Truly!

And not everyone's story is that. Not everyone has the period to that, that sentence in their life. But what we can trust is that God does and he knows. And he's walking with us in whatever that looks like.

Randy: As we wrap this up, the person that's sitting out there watching and they're saying, "I wish I had what she had" because they're on the side of it where they don't feel the hope, they just feel the hurt, what do you say to them?

Toni: Well, what I would say is don't fall into the comparison trap, it is the scheme of the enemy. Do not! And then I would say, we have to get used to this fact that hurt and hope can co-exist in our lives. We do not live linear lives. We don't! We live lives of bumpy roads and bridges, and ups and downs. Our seasons change. As Ephesians says there is a time for everything.

If you want what I have it is the ebb and flow and the honor of getting to live a life where some days anxiety comes back a little bit and I get reminded of God's power. And some days I'm on a mountaintop and I'm like yes, Jesus is sustaining me right now. And other days I don't want to do virtual school with my daughter anymore. Okay? Sign me up for P.T.O. Instead. But if that's what you really want you would embrace hurt and hope.

Sheila: That's so powerful. It is one of the most, two things about our life in Christ, joy and sorrow walk hand in hand, and our savior knew that too. One of the things that we care so much about here at *LIFE*, you know it is part of our heartbeat, part of our D.N.A. is that there is some people who are hurting in very practical ways at this moment as we sit here. I want to take you with us and show you what that looks like and then let you know how you can be a help. Watch this.

On the mission field:

Open Captions: Instead of Coronavirus, the hunger will kill us. A global food crisis looms. New York Times. May 2020.

Isak: As you're watching today, I don't know if you're aware of the growing crisis that is happening here in Africa. We literally are seeing malnutrition clinics fuller than we've ever seen. We're seeing feeding lines stretching longer than what we've ever seen and we are literally now starting to see more and more children than what we've ever seen die of malnutrition, starvation, lack of food.

You say why? What is driving this crisis? You see, we had a crisis already that was caused by drought and food insecurity on the continent. But literally what is happened now with the COVID pandemic, that has hit and what it has done is it's not the virus itself that is literally creating the biggest issues. It is the fact that as a result of the impact of the virus economically etc., more and more children are food insecure and literally, we have a food pandemic, lack of food crisis that is growing every single day on the continent.

We're here. We're on the ground. We're committed. We're on the front lines. We're ready to respond to this crisis and to save those lives but we cannot do it without you. We cannot do it without the friends of LIFE. We cannot do it without the resources that we so desperately need right now. We have to do it now or children are going to literally lose their lives.

End of video**In the studio:**

Randy: The crisis is real. And I know 2020 was a year where we saw the crisis come home to us in our third world countries, U.S., Canada, Australia, wherever you're at, I know you experienced it. I remember when in the United States we crossed that number, that 200,000 people that had died from COVID, you felt the weight of the crisis right here at home, and I know you felt it wherever you're at too.

But you've got to understand the impact that that is having in these other countries where we've been feeding children for many, many years now, decades. The disruption in the supply chain, the instability financially, they have been hitting 200,000 deaths in a month and it all goes back to malnutrition. That is the underlying condition that's taking so many lives right now.

But here's the good news. We know how to stop that. We know that by filling a bowl with that nutritious soup mix will fill a stomach which will fight off disease. We know how to do this. We need your help right now. We can do as much as you enable us to do: \$30, \$50, \$100 will help feed three, five or ten children for three whole months! And that has to do with the systems we have in place, the people we have in place. We have maximized this entire process.

And we do what we say we're going to do. I know because I've been there, I've seen it. I've seen it working. There is great hurt right now in the world but there is great hope and we as the church are called to be that hope. Sheila, I know that is the cry of your heart too.

Sheila: Absolutely, Randy! Here's my thought for this time, let's skip something. You know can you imagine that \$30 can feed three darling little ones for three whole months? That's unbelievable! Let's skip something. Let's not get our nails done. Let's not buy a new something that we don't honestly really need. It's not life and death if your nails are falling off. It's life and death if you have nothing to feed your child. I've held these wee ones. I've prayed over their mothers. We've laid our hands on them and prayed for them. But we've said to them, we will come home and we have incredible people who watch our program. We will share your story with them and they will rise up in Jesus' name and say, not on our watch!

So please, we can't do everything but we've committed to feed 350,000 children this year and we need your help. So please, would you go to the phone? Will you give the very

best gift possible? We can skip a lot of things and bring so much joy. Thank you!

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: One of the things at *LIFE* we care about so much is bringing the hope of Jesus Christ. But first of all we want to bring hope to a mother that she can feed her children. Many times she has to put these two to bed hungry and she tries to encourage them. You know what she says to them? "Who knows what tomorrow will bring?" She is trying to keep hope alive.

That's why mission feeding is so critical. This is not a let's do this sometime next week, next month, next year. No! It is life and death right now. And mission feeding saves lives. We've done it before but the need has never been greater. We need your help today. We need your help now.

Randy: There is so much hurt out there but let me tell you, you are the hope. You are the hope! And I pray you'll give the best gift you can and together we can make a big, big difference. We can save lives, Sheila.

Sheila: Absolutely! What a joy. And I know you want to connect with our guest. I mean, I just met her today. I love this woman! She is anointed. So your website, how do people connect with you, Toni?

Toni: It is just broken crayons.com. We spelt it a little fun. It is B-R-K-N crayons.com. And we've got blog resources. We're walking 50 women internationally right now through a 50-video women's course for a year helping them actually heal. We want to be in the trenches. We don't just want to be on the stage. So yeah, they can get connected that way.

Sheila: Thanks so much for being with us!

Randy: Thank you for being with us. Join us again next time here on *LIFE Today*.