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Week 17: Mission feeding

James and Betty Robison

Chad and Kathy Robichaux

JAMES: I want to welcome you to *LIFE Today*. James and Betty just--we just share life every day. I know we've not been hugging for a long time, trying to be wise and will continue to be but here's the deal. Sometimes you just wish you could get your arms around people that you are grateful for. I've been saying to all of you who watch *LIFE Today* that if the family of God will be healthy, the body of Christ, we can put God's arms around the people he gave his son to redeem. And it's love that is all that's going to change things--his love, unconditional love, and truth delivered in that love. If I can get my arms around the people that my guest today reaches out to, and represent, I'd do it--and that's all our military and their families. There is no way to thank you enough. Just like all the first responders. You march into hell--you run into hell for a heavenly cause, for freedom. And I just want to thank you for life. I wish we could hug everyone in the military.

Well, Chad Robichaux and his wife Kathy, they understand what it is to have an unfair advantage. They understand what it is to have victory in the midst of battle. And they understand the battle and they understand many people that have really been impacted by it, trying to deliver a help to all of us, have not had enough people reaching out to them. And after an incredible journey they're doing it.

I want to just say to you, Kathy, to you Chad, you Robichauchs, you are amazing. We're going to talk about your ministry but Chad, you feel free, Kathy, to jump in and carry this thing because you've known him a long time. You probably didn't realize he was going to be such a fighter, but you knew he was tough. But you didn't realize what was happening to him until you began to see it. Just tell us about your childhood, just sweep us through

that, and then how you get into the military. He did what, eight tours in the Middle East?

CHAD: Eight in Afghanistan, yes.

JAMES: In Afghanistan; so you really marched into hell. You kind of moved into hell. All right, tell us about your journey.

CHAD: Well, my military background started with my father. My father was a Marine and served in Vietnam. In fact, we have two sons that are both Marines and one of them actually been serving in Afghanistan. I was a Force RECON Marine which is special operations in the Marine Corp. I did deployments in that capacity.

But my experience with trauma from the military really started with my father coming home from Vietnam not getting the help he needed. Many of our Vietnam veterans, you guys are aware, did not get the help they needed. And he was just a very angry, violent man. Lots of alcohol, women, and a lot of physical abuse in our home. So we had a very physical abusive childhood, my brother and me.

My brother was a year older than me. During those times we became close. People that grow up in dysfunctional homes become very close to each other. He was the closest person to me. We made a decision when we were about 13 and 14 years old that we were join the military to escape the lifestyle. We started running and swimming and watching videos. We decided we wanted to be in special operations. Grew up in southern Louisiana. We liked to be in the water and swim and do all those things.

I remember about a year into that, doing that, tragedy hit our family and my brother was shot and he was killed. It was devastating to me as somebody in a childhood like that, in a dysfunctional home, having that close person to them, to lose them like that. What I had left of family really disintegrated. My mother, his biological mother could not handle that. She pretty much lost it. My dad left the country because he didn't want to deal with it, and left me and my older sister to live by ourselves when I was... I pretty much went

into deep isolation until I was 17 years old. Went to a Marine Corp recruiter and asked him to help me get into the Marine Corp to fulfill that childhood dream.

I got that second chance at life that the military gives so many people, a clean slate for life. I wanted to fulfill that childhood dream of being a special operations, being a reconnaissance Marine. And the first year I tried out and I made it. Did all the training, the difficult training it takes to do that job.

But this was 1993 so it would be almost ten years in being a special operations, ten years of us being married, is when the World Trade Center buildings were hit, and it resulted in me being deployed to Afghanistan. I joined a joint special operations command task force. I did eight deployments in that capacity.

And being in Afghanistan, doing the job that I began to do, the manifestations of frustration and anger is really what we saw first. I'd come home from Afghanistan, having to be just intense, very focused on my job, to come home and now have to be a husband and a father. It's always a shame for me to say, especially knowing how many people are probably listening but it is necessary for me to say that my home was not a safe or a happy place for my family at all. I was a raging lunatic. I would throw things, break things, slam the door, punch holes in the wall, scream at my wife and children. I was just really, to be that person in Afghanistan and to come back and try to fit in my home wasn't a switch that I could flip. So it was very difficult for me and obviously, very difficult for them.

One of my memories that I can recall to share what it was like, my daughter was having a birthday party and she was so excited for her birthday. And she is very opinionated, and she didn't like the icing on her cake. Something so simple, and I like flipped out. Picked up my little girl's birthday cake and through it against the wall and destroyed my little girl's birthday. I remember in those moments like thinking, who behaves that way? What kind of dad behaves that way? I was just really out of control.

So I felt more comfortable being away from them, isolating from them, to be in Afghanistan, and thought it would just get better. But eventually, I started having these physical manifestations of these physiological effects. My arms would go numb. My throat felt like it was swelling shut. My face would be numb. Sometimes I felt like I had a thousand-pound weight on my chest and I couldn't breathe. And these were signs of a panic attack. And when those symptoms began to get worse and worse and worse, and I didn't want to tell anybody I worked with because in a special operations group I knew the guys would think I was weak. If I went to mental health, I probably would have been taken out of my program.

So I pushed it down and kept trying to function. And eventually, those symptoms did get worse. I had what is called disassociation, where you, almost like a third person, like you're in a video game of yourself. And then during the end of my time there we ended up losing 12 team members that were killed. Two of them were Americans, ten Afghans; some people may not think that is as big of a deal but to me, because of my job I lived in these Afghans' home. I ate dinner with their families, played soccer with their kids. They're my brothers. I loved these guys and they loved me. I would die for them. In fact, I believe they died for me. If I was hanging on by a thread in that moment, that thread was broken.

I came home shortly after that after realizing that the things I was doing and not asking for help was putting other people in danger, not just myself. So when I came home, Kathie and I sat before a clinical psychologist and I was diagnosed with P.T.S.D. Neither one of us even knew what it was at the time. But to tell you the level of despair like I was in, the only way I really know how to describe it is imagine if you're drowning, and you're chained to the bottom of a swimming pool, and how desperate would you be like for one breath of air. But you never drown, you never die. Like you're in that level of panic, that state of panic all the time. On top of that, I was completely ashamed because I was felt like a failed at my job.

So that's when my wife and counselor talked me into getting into the wrestling matches

and trying to find something to keep me busy.

JAMES: You know, I don't even think I have to be a Christian or love God very much to just fall in love with the person I'm listening to even in the midst of your struggle.

Because I see a guy that had some real tough times as a kid but really respected what his dad did, even though things weren't right. Over there you're just in the middle of hell that you were able to love the ones that you were taught were your enemy, but you brought them over and they began to fight for the same freedom you felt like you were fighting for. You were not only fighting for our freedom, but you were actually fighting for the freedom of the Afghan people.

We've been teaching, Franklin Graham and I and others, we've been teaching English to the girls in their schools over there for years. I've been supporting mission outreaches just like Franklin does with Samaritan's Purse. So I love these people that have been used. So everything you've said you've just caused me to love you. I see you as a hurting person where you are now. How long did it take you to know something was really drastically wrong when he was coming home? This simply was not normal.

KATHY: It took a while because there was a lot--there was a lot of anger that we started with in the marriage. It's only because of what he had experienced growing up. So the immaturity, the youth in us getting married at 18, 19 years old and trying to figure it out and how to be married was not easy. So that anger in him was something I was kind of used to and almost in a way as it would get worse with him dealing with these struggles he was dealing with, it almost made me just feel... I was just so naive to understand that it was something he was going through. I just thought something was wrong with me. What am I doing wrong? Where I think a lot of young moms go through that. Young wives go through that. What am I doing wrong? Of course, being... going through what he's going through and me not really understanding and just having this friction between us this wall just started to build.

JAMES: Did you still feel love for him in the midst of it?

KATHY: Yes! I loved him through it. I just got to a point after three years of it, of just, I didn't know how to do it anymore. I didn't know how to love him through it.

BETTY: Did you kind of feel like well, he's been there, he's fought, put that behind you. Now you need to be here and be a husband and father; and that's a new life for you. Did you find that hard for him to separate the two?

KATHY: Yes, it was definitely, that just seemed normal to me. I don't know if I ever even thought about it that way because I did such a... for me, I just knew how to go forward and be the mom, be the dad of the home and just take care of everything. I don't know if I ever completely had that feeling. Maybe there was definitely a desire. I wished that he would put that aside and that he could be the dad right now. One thing that worked out really great for him is that my boys loved jiu jitsu. So that was something that they were able to connect with on the mats.

JAMES: You became a fighter. You were a champion fighter, right?

CHAD: One of the things my wife and my counselor tried to do is get me to do something I did my whole life since I was five years old is martial arts. I was already professional M.M.A. Fighter; I was doing it on the side from the military. And so I just dove into that. Like somebody would dive into a bottom of alcohol or drugs, I dove into that. I think martial arts is great. And physical activity is great for people struggling with depression and anxiety. But I really abused that.

JAMES: You seem pleasant right now. Would you put a facade on that they didn't know what was about to get them? Or were you filled with anger? Were you like a whole different demeanor?

CHAD: No. As a competitor, as a professional fighter, I never allowed myself to bring anger in there. I like to be composed. I feel like the more composed I am the better I

perform.

KATHY: And that's where I had a hard time at because he did so well on those mats and yet at home, he didn't compose himself. He was hurting us at home. And I'd long to have that same appreciation or that same kind of attitude at home. But yet if you asked him too he would turn around, well, I wish that she was like this or she was like that. We just got to a point of, I wasn't filling his cup, he wasn't filling my cup. And I didn't know how to respond.

JAMES: I've got to move forward here because I think you're two beautiful people and I think the beauty that's in you is the love of God and the life of God. And you've started a ministry to the military to have what you had; it had them. As a matter of fact, you're the president, right? And it's destroying him. It's a horrific slow death and it is a death and a torment to everybody around you. It breaks my heart. Boy, you started reaching out. How is that going? Tell us how in the world you got moved into it.

CHAD: At the rock bottom of it, what we went through, we found ourselves facing a divorce, separated, and I found myself alone in an apartment and I attempted to take my life. Kathy intervened. On the other side of that journey was some mentorship, a restoration with my relationship with Christ and then a deep burden that God put on my heart to pay forward what I discovered with others. And so that manifested in us taking what we'd learned, and we discovered essentially the solution to these problems you're talking about, to the 22 suicides a day, to the 80 percent divorce rate to the 30 percent of guys who are being diagnosed with P.T.S.D. a solution to all these problems which is a relationship with Christ and living the lives he created us to live. We wanted to share that with others. And we started the Mighty Oaks foundation; that was ten years ago.

JAMES: Where did you get the name?

CHAD: Isaiah 61, which is the verse that I believe God called us to do this through.

JAMES: And you're raising them up.

CHAD: Raising them up.

JAMES: Making them stand and cast a peaceful shadow; that's what they do.

CHAD: From the ashes to mighty oaks.

KATHY: I love the part when he explained it to me. I really didn't have trust in Chad yet. It had only been a year of our restoration and he's reading this to me and every bit of me wanted to say, what are you thinking? But when he read me Isaiah 61 I said, "And it will be called mighty oaks." And that was it.

JAMES: How long has it been going?

CHAD: Ten years.

JAMES: And Dave Roever, who has been here many times, we love you. I'm so sorry about having said good-bye to your sweetheart. We love you, buddy. He's put his arms around a lot of people here and around the world. And he helped you. But you've got the foundation and you're reaching out to these military that have this challenge.

If people want to know and again, I'm trying to cover ground here. We don't have the kind of timeframe Oprah and Dr. Phil and some of them have, but if they want to know what you're doing and how they can support it because we're going to send them a check. We just want you to know that. Where do they go on the website to learn about the Mighty Oaks and how they can be a part of it?

CHAD: The MightyOaksPrograms.org. We do several things. One is resiliency. I've spoken to 150,000 active-duty troops around the world, the bases, on spiritual resiliency. And then we have a recovery program where people come... we have five ranches that

they come to the program active duty and their spouses--first responders. We pay for everything including their travel. We put 4,000 warriors through those programs and we're doing thousand this year.

JAMES: So that's supported by somebody. The people... That's what I'm saying. It's not like you've got some big business that you're not such a champion fighter now beating up and being as rich as some of those fighters. So you're fighting for their lives and their future. The website if they want to help you.

CHAD: We're fighting for their lives, their marriages, their eternities; and we need help to do it. It cost us \$2500 for every one we put through.

JAMES: All right, how do they find you online?

CHAD: MightyOaksPrograms.org.

JAMES: MightyOaksPrograms.org. Look it up. We'll be sending you a check from *LIFE*. Betty and I may become your supporters. We try to get arms around everybody. And one of the things that I know...

By the way, if you'd like to have the book, you simply help us love some kids that are starving, which I know you'll want to. You're the most amazing audience. I don't have to guard your resources. You're overseers of the resources God's entrusted you to oversee. And the viewers of *LIFE Today*, I think you're the best overseers on the planet. So that's why it's joyfully sharing this with you because we want to get our arms around every one of these military people that have been hurt so deeply trying to help us. Do you get it? Please get it! So go there.

Let me just say this to you. Right now we're feeding 350,000 children a day that we have found. We, missionaries, planted their lives in the midst of hell to get these kids life and a future and their families; 350,000 of them right now. But we've had a real tragedy come

too. The flooding that has occurred in South Sudan and other areas has destroyed our malnutrition clinics which you've seen many of them. And that's where people go that have not been in the feeding long enough that they got restored and they go there as a last chance.

So we've got a lot to ask you to consider right now. We'll need some big-time help. I'm believing with all my heart... Father, I just believe everybody listening is going to say, hey, we're going to help those military families. And we're going to help these children. And we're going to help the malnourished; we're going to be the miracle, in Jesus' name.

I want you to listen to Isak Pretorius, 30 years or more now we've been working together to get God's arms around people, and you've been helping us do it. Watch this closely.

On the mission field:

Announcer: Right now the world's newest country is in peril. After suffering through a grim and tragic year, South Sudan's problems have been even more compounded by record breaking rainfall. And over a million of the South Sudanese people are reeling from the effects of the worst flood in recorded history.

ISAK: This is truly a crisis of epic proportions. But let me help you understand the real impact on these families because we say, "a million people." That's a lot of people, that's a lot of families. We say "flooding," the worst flooding in recorded history. That sounds incredible. But that's the reality for individual families. These are people living, many of them in grass huts, structures created from whatever they can find. Many of them we found actually just living under trees.

Before this crisis, they were severely food insecure. Well, now this flood has raged through the area and what that means is that there is absolutely no food. Nothing whatsoever. Many areas they'd still have some food. Their crops have been totally destroyed. Their crops have been destroyed for the next harvest as well. And so the truth is that many children are dying of starvation, literal starvation--no food at all!

This has impacted our ability to be able to reach them with food. We've had to use boats. Many of our warehouses are totally flooded. We've had to use helicopters in some cases at huge expense. Our malnutrition clinic, 16 of them have been totally destroyed. These are clinics that play a vital role in saving children's lives each and every day. We have to be able to reach these people. We have to be able to sustain our mission feeding efforts. We have to rebuild these malnutrition clinics and ensure that we are able to save these children's lives.

Without us, families, whole families that are suffering right now are going lose their lives because of the impact of this flood.

End of video

In the studio:

JAMES: Wow! I believe you hear God's voice through the missionary, through Isak, through all those efforts that are going forth from the mission and relief workers.

I'm holding here what we call a quiet time bundle, "It is Well." On the inside you have 31 prayers and then you've got "It is Well" hymns about how sufficient God is. The reason I bring this up while we're talking about these children is that there are battles and struggles here, just like the ones that our guests are trying to meet with the love of God, by reaching out to others. You are offering the hope that all of us need who have been impacted.

I want to ask you right now if you would, just say, God, show me what you want me to do, and you'll enable me to do. And I'll do it. Please understand that we're able to feed three, five or ten children, not total child care but save their lives in the feeding program; 350,000 right now we're feeding every day. When I say "we" that means you, all of us. \$30, three children for the next months; \$50, five children; \$100, ten children.

But we also need to rebuild these 16 malnutrition clinics; they're over \$24,000. We're talk about nearly \$400,000 to restore them. What this is, Betty, is when we didn't get them in the feeding programs early enough to stabilize or we never even found them or they didn't find the food, we take them to this last effort. And we need to rebuild 16. That's \$24,500 apiece.

There could be somebody that would say, "I can do it." I don't know what you can do but I know that if everybody gave \$1,000 toward it that's watching now, we'd be on the way. Betty, I'm just praying that everybody will do it. And we're going to send you some really beautiful gifts. Betty, is this not beautiful?

BETTY: Oh, I love it!

JAMES: I wish you could see it actually. No greater love. I'm telling you something, when you express God's love in action not just in word you don't love in word only but in deed, you talk about transforming power. Would you do that right now? We want to bless you with some gifts that will inspire you and comfort you. But you're going to be giving people the greatest gift, you're giving them life.

Would you right now go online, would you dial that number that's always there as a prayer line? Would you take your bankcard and use it like a check? And then you make the check for what God leads you to make the check out to. Or put it on your bankcard. Please do it right now. Thank you so much.

On the mission field:

Announcer: Across the continent of Africa, children are suffering facing severe malnutrition and even death. With food reserves gone and many areas experiencing severe famine, we urgently need to replenish supplies to keep feeding the 350,000 children who are counting on us.

Call now with your lifesaving gift of \$30, \$50, or \$100 to help feed and care for three, five or ten children for three full months. Also, please consider an extra gift to help immediately rebuild malnutrition clinics destroyed by record flooding in South Sudan. The urgent need is \$392,000 above our normal feeding budget and is critical to help save the lives of those who are suffering most.

With your gift of any amount we will send you "It is Well" Quiet Time Bundle featuring an instrumental music CD with 12 classic hymns and a 31-day prayer booklet to help renew your soul.

With your gift of \$100 or more, request the "No Greater Love" framed print. This portrait is a reminder of our Savior's love and the price that was paid for our salvation.

Finally with your gift of \$1,000 or more to help feed and care for 100 children be sure to request our inspiring bronze sculpture, "Divine Servant." Please call, write, or make your gift online today!

End of video

In the studio:

JAMES: I don't know when I've ever felt so moved where I just said, God, please, please, please! Help the children and their families. God, help Chad and Kathy. Get your arms around the people who made it possible for us to get our arms around our kids and our grandkids. I mean Chad and all the military, they fought for our grandchildren, 11 of them and now soon to be 11 great grandchildren for the freedom.

Man, I love you. If you'd like to have his book, and you just said, James, we helped you with some food, would you send us that book too? You better believe it. Maybe you know someone in the military you want to get it to. And then you go back, and you see, there is the website and you can even find it on LifeToday.org. But I want you to help

them with this Mighty Oaks Foundation. I want to hear great things about it.

I want y'all to let me know what's going on. I want you to kind of think about coming back maybe annually and give us a report on what's happening. I want to know if people watching *LIFE Today* started helping you share life today because we love both of you. Do you feel that?

KATHY: Yes. Thank you.

JAMES: God bless you. Keep it up. Thank you, Chad for what you've done. Thank you for what you're doing now. The glory of God is on both of you. She's not just pretty, she's got God's grace on her. And you're a fighter, but man, you've got the glory of God all over you, Chad and I love you.

CHAD: Thank you.

JAMES: Thank all of you. Thank you for sharing God's grace and his glory. We love you.