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Week 19: Spring Mission Feeding

Randy Robison and Sheila Walsh

Bobby Petrocelli

RANDY: Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm Randy Robison. Sheila Walsh is with me, as always. It is great to have you here. We're going to talk about a rather difficult topic today. When tragedy strikes, when things out of your control happen, what do you do? Well, Bobby Petrocelli is here. And Bobby, we are thrilled to have you on *LIFE Today*. Welcome!

BOBBY: I am so absolutely honored, I'm grateful. I love the ministry. In my travels, even as a speaker, just to share this, I've got to know John Melton over the last decade.

SHEILA: He's awesome.

BOBBY: He's awesome. The whole crew is awesome. Your whole crew is phenomenal. And in all honesty before I left, I went through my room because I hadn't done this in so long, and I literally have, just so you know this, this is how much I love this ministry and how I stand behind it, I have 21 of those different figurines and three of the huge paintings in my office.

Because here's what happens. When I travel and speak in public high schools, colleges, universities and middle schools, when I sell books, and wristbands or stickers or anything, I tell the kids upfront, "This is going to *LIFE Outreach* because they're one of the first organizations that have been rescuing kids sold in human trafficking. And we're going to get behind them and we're going to put shoes on kids' feet at Christmas, and we're going dig water wells, and we're going to get some food to those in need."

And the wild part is over these years, a long time, these kids have gotten behind it and it is wonderful. I tell them, "You never do anything good by yourself or bone-headed by yourself. There is people that are influencing you." I'm honored that kids get behind it and support.

SHEILA: And that was today's program.

[LAUGHTER]

RANDY: We're honored that you would even think of us and be a part. Because it is people like you that make what we do possible in saving lives. I've got to ask you because you started at a point where your faith could have gone completely off the rails in a circumstance that was just beyond your control and hard. Honestly, I don't know how you dealt with it. Tell our audience a little bit about what you went through.

BOBBY: Well, I'll say this upfront. The only way I was able to deal with it was through the power of the Holy Spirit, number one. Number two: When people would say to me at the time I went through the tragedy, "Take life one day at a time." I'm not being rude, but I'd look at them and go, "Are you crazy? I can't get through this moment! How am I getting through the day?"

So God showed me as clear as day life does not happen one day at a time, it happens one moment, one choice, one word, one action, one reaction at a time. And every choice has the power to build patterns, habits, and routines that lead to success and failure.

But literally, my life was changed forever. I met my wife at Oral Roberts University. Randy and I were on the same type of wing called "Youngblood," a few years apart. But we were ORU students and friends, and it was so cool to catch up with that. And long story short, I met Ava, she was from Texas. My friends told me, "You're getting along with a Texas girl." I'm thinking, I say "youse guys," she says "y'all." Our kids are going

to say, "youse all"! That's what I'm thinking is going to happen.

Well, I moved to Texas. I'm a teacher and a coach. I come back after coaching in a football game and I was blown away because I'm coaching in front of 20,000 people. I was more enamored at how many people showed up at a high school football game in Texas! Brooklyn, we get 20 fans but they came on the field to beat up our opponents. It was a different set up.

But I loved it. I get home this night. I talk to Ava, have a little food to eat. She says good night to me. The next thing I know, I wake up an hour later. I'm sitting in my dining room window, and there is a pickup truck in my house. A drunk driver lost control, crashed through my house, the first house in the development. We'd only been there for seven weeks, renting. We're married for two and a half years. My life is changed forever in one moment. When physically nothing happened to Ava, I was the one completely run over and beat up, she suffocated under the sheets and the mattress. And my life was changed within one moment.

But the reality was this and this is where God opened the doors, was seeing the day I'm burying Ava and having the church funeral ceremony at the church and going to downtown Houston. Every single student, all 1100 students on a school day from the high school I worked at, every teacher, coach, counselor, except for the principal, because by law it was a school day, he had to be there. They came to the church and drove another 25 miles to downtown Houston. And out of the 2,000 people that were there, literally, 1600-1700 of them were the students, their families, teachers, coaches, counselors. And to this day, I still have a relationship with those kids and their families in Texas over 30 years later.

Because it is really simple, as my shirt reads, "They showed me I mattered, it doesn't." And through that moment by moment that I would cry out to God, "I can't deal with this. I can't do this by myself." It is okay to mourn. But when people would come up to me and try to give me answers--don't give me answers. Just love on me and mourn with me.

Mourn with those who mourn. I know Ava is in a better place. I need to get through now, this moment. And it was moment by moment that I was able to get through. And God surrounded me with people that loved on me, starting with those students at the high school.

SHEILA: You know when I first met you, Bobby, it was when I was actually co-hosting the 700 Club, and I was familiar with that part of your story. But this new book that you have, which says that *You Matter, It Doesn't*, tell me what was the Genesis for writing that book?

BOBBY: Literally, Sheila, for well over 20 years, people, one of my closest friends that was in Youngblood with me at ORU, he said to me, "You know, Petro." That's my nickname, Petro. He said to me, "When you share your story..." And I always share a little portion, no matter what audience I'm speaking to and literally, over all these years the majority of the audience I've been speaking to, I've spoken 6500 times in 30 years and most of those are high schools. I've been in every stadium in America--high schools, colleges, middle schools, educational groups. And he looks at me and goes, "Petro, you know what you're really telling your audience? You matter--it doesn't!"

And for years I was incorporating that into ten seconds, "One moment can change your life." But finally, about six or seven ago I finally wrote the book because those kids and the people that rallied around me said, "Listen, you matter Bobby. Coach Petrocelli, you matter." My friends from ORU, family, "You matter." The "it" which we all have its in our life doesn't define who you are.

And what I go after more than ever with people in this world is before I go after somebody's sin and behavior, I go after their heart condition and where were they broken in life. That's why Jesus even said, "Man looks at the outer appearance, I look at the heart." Because the heart, the word *heart* is used 836 times in the Bible because "Out of the heart flows the issues of life." The reason why there is pleasure in sin for a season is because sin anesthetizes the pain of our brokenness temporarily. And Jesus understands

it. That's why he said it is the sick that needs a physician. He knows that.

So before he goes after behavior, and I'm never here to condone wrong behavior, let's get to the *whys* behind the *what*. I knew that when I threw out to the people that drinking and driving had a part in her death, but do you know why he didn't kill her? The fact is you can't drive drunk unless you're drunk in the first place. Well, he was drunk in the first place. Why? Because he was anesthetizing his brokenness. He was more than doubly illegally drunk. So he ran to alcohol abuse like people run to other things to anesthetize their pain.

RANDY: Here's my question though because we hear you now and you obviously have a message, you have a purpose, God is blessing your life. You are in a wonderful place. But for people who are recently faced with something like this, a devastating loss, a devastating diagnosis, the pain, when they're in the middle of that pain, they can't see themselves where you're at now. How did you get from that point of confusion and pain and loss to a place where you've got purpose and peace and just where you're at now?

BOBBY: Well, to start, as I said earlier, Randy it really came down to I could only get through the moment. The very first night I'm lying in the hospital bed, Ava's dead for about three hours. It's the middle of the night. I'm surrounded from people from Lakewood Church where I worked in the youth department under John Osteen.

And I always joke about this, but I said, "The fact that Joel is even on TV there is a God."

They go, "What are you talking about?"

I said, "You talk about that chair had a better chance of being a preacher than Joel. Because the guy was so shy." And God worked through him.

But long story short I worked at the church. John Osteen actually did Ava's funeral, Joel's father because Ava was best friends with one of Joel's sister, Tamara, she was in our

wedding. So I know the whole Osteen family.

Well, literally, they started packing in. John and Dodie packed in, and people from the youth department, and everybody from Santa Fe high school. It was like I couldn't believe how many people are showing up. And all of the sudden I'm lying there and as clear as day I pray this prayer. I said, Father, I can't even imagine, and please excuse the expression, the hell on earth I'm about to go through. But I know your word tells me I have to forgive this man. There ain't no way on this earth that I could work towards forgiveness apart from your Holy Spirit. And your Holy Spirit is the only way I can do it.

And I always tell people, for me personally, Randy, Sheila, that was the beginning part, though it be tough for the next--up to the next year because you have to go through every anniversary, every birthday, every special occasion without that loved one and any form of loss, no matter what that loss looks like, it's not only death, there are so many forms of loss, you start going through memories and things. They're not easy.

But I would take it one moment at a time. I would take it one second at a time. I would take it one breath at a time. And I began to just say and follow in God's word in whatever could help me. I would be one second crying hysterical. The next second I'm watching The Three Stooges falling off my bed laughing hysterical. I'm watching tapes. And I truly believe that God created The Three Stooges for Bobby Petrocelli while he was going through that because he knew what I needed.

But I realized that a simple word had already been planted in my heart, Randy and Sheila, is "A merry heart does good for the soul." "A merry heart brings healing." So in the middle of crying hysterical and being angry and picking up a bat and beating the slop out of my bed, the next moment I'm laughing, rejoicing, and literally, it became that roller coaster because literally my emotions would change moment by moment. And I tried to focus on those good moments.

So I encourage everybody out there no matter what they're going through, surround

yourself with whatever gives you help that doesn't destroy or hurt or break you even more. Surround yourself with the people that are going to love on you, push you forward. Find that inner circle that wants nothing but the best for you.

And last but not least, through the power of the Holy Spirit, I hear the most amazing sermons in the world preached but here's where we sometimes miss it. I can do nothing that God has called me to do apart from the Holy Spirit. My flesh can't do it, won't. So if I'm preaching about love, I've got to come back and say you will never love apart from the Holy Spirit. You can't! It's not going to happen. So the more I'm in the spirit the better I'm going to be. The less I'm in the spirit I'm going to struggle more. I learn that through this and through all these years.

SHEILA: A wee birdie told me that one of the stories that I love to tell is a story I saw growing up in Scotland of a bummer lamb. But I was told that you have a bummer sheep story too.

BOBBY: Let me tell you something, Sheila. When I heard you share it on this show one time, I'm like yes! Sheila and I are on the same page. I share the same thing! And my favorite thing is what does the Word of God say? "My sheep know my voice." And it's after the bummer lamb is born and is broken and rejected and cast away and thrown away. But here's the best part that God gave me in the whole thing of this and I love how you share it too, is when the shepherd brings the lamb back to the mom. You know what literally happened to that bummer sheep? It became born again.

SHEILA: Whoo!

BOBBY: Because it got restored and resurrected to who it was initially created to be. And I love the part when the shepherd comes out and calls for the sheep. The first sheep that run to the shepherd are the bummer sheep because they know the voice of the one who healed them.

You know what Satan's greatest goal for all of us? Is perception rejection. That we perceive we're rejected. That's most people's biggest concern. When I deal with kids, all the time they'll come up to me and say, adults will say to me, "Thank you because I thought it was my fault that..." And they go down the list of the that.

You know what the number one thing we don't even hear going on because I work with kids and my heart has been broken during this time because these kids are devastated. The suicide rates are the highest they've ever been. I've been working with kids for 40 years, teacher, coach, counselor and now as speaker, and the way those kids respond still it's, I won't tell you my age, but still at my age they still respond to me because I get into their world, but I go after their heart. And I try to show them you are not defined by the brokenness that chases after you to define you. You are defined by your uniqueness, your pricelessness, your one-of-a-kindness. And I've been sharing this for years when I say to them, "Will you be you? Because everybody else is already taken!"

But the reality is, and even in the public school I'll share this, did you wake up this morning, Sheila--pretend you're a student. I said, "Did you wake up this morning and your nose started to speak and say, 'I don't want to be the nose anymore. I want to be the eye. I want to be the ear. I want to be the mouth. I want to be the chin?'" No! Because everybody has a purpose.

Look at the Dallas Cowboys; we're in Dallas.

SHEILA: Whoo! Go boys!

BOBBY: That's our team. Randy and I are Tampa Bay Buc fans. We won't say anything. I'm happy they won the Super Bowl.

RANDY: Champion!

BOBBY: But here's the deal. So watch this. The three things God gave me is one, we

can't do it without the Holy Spirit. Two, healing brokenness before we go after anything else. But number three, watch this. Take the Dallas Cowboys for a second. I'm going to ask you this, Sheila. Is everybody on the Dallas Cowboy have the same parents?

SHEILA: No.

BOBBY: Okay. Are they the same skin color?

SHEILA: Nope!

BOBBY: Are they the same ethnicity?

SHEILA: No.

BOBBY: Are they the same height, weight, and size?

SHEILA: No.

BOBBY: Do they play the same position?

SHEILA: No.

BOBBY: Do they like the same food?

SHEILA: No.

BOBBY: Do they have the same person they're married to, the same family?

SHEILA: Hopefully not.

BOBBY: There you go, exactly. Well, here's the kicker. They don't. But they're all on the

same team. That's the body of Christ. You're either for the kingdom or you're against the kingdom. It's that simple. I don't have to agree with everything I hear but either you're about shining the light and bringing the hope and the healing power of Jesus Christ or you're not. It's that simple.

RANDY: How do these students respond to that message?

BOBBY: They love it. They run with it. They run. I am so careful in a public school, I know what I can say or can't say. Well, here's the kicker to all of this, it was awesome. I do this stuff with Fellowship of Christian Athletes where I do this Fields of Faith event where on a Sunday night after I'd been there for the weekend.

And here's how I approached them at the end. I said, "Listen, kids, I'm in a public school. I have to respect the boundaries. Faith is so important to me; it's my life. I want to let you know that Sunday night at bop bop bop bop bop, I'm doing a Fellowship of Christian Athletes event. Everyone in the audience is invited."

I'm straight up. I'm not trying to manipulate, coerce, or like, come to hear the rest of the story. No, let me tell you what it's about.

Well, this one particular event, we had 800 kids show up. They normally only have 300 or 400. Most of them came from the schools I was at that week. Well, long story short we have this unbelievable, the kids are on their face on the floor, on the gym floor because it was raining outside, we couldn't go in the stadium. They were on the floor crying out to God because here's what I do. I'll say too them, "Before I go after your sin and behavior, I want to go after where you've been broken because that's what drives you."

So long story short, I'm out in the lobby signing books and kids are coming to me and talking to me and crying and everything else. This one boy waited patiently. He comes up to me, he goes, "Bobby." He goes, "I'm here tonight because you came to my school the other day. I had never heard anybody share the way you did. And you made it so clear

where I was broken and how I was broken. *But* you can never truly tell me how to get my brokenness completely healed until tonight. And you told me about Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit is what will heal my broken heart."

I'm weeping, I'm sobbing. I mean these kids. They come up to me, and I'm like, well, I'm Italian so I cry over only having two pieces of pizza instead of three, just so you know that.

SHEILA: That's a tragedy in itself.

BOBBY: But seriously, people in this world, and God gave me this simple word some years back and how it fits in now, the problem with America is not the condition of our country. The problem with America is the condition of my body and the church. And then he says to me, you keep on... and I know it came from the Lord, Sheila, Randy, because I'm not smart enough. I'm from Brooklyn. I can't use words like this. They're above my intellect. I'm serious. He says, "You keep on thinking the world is fragmented but my body is fragmented. Until my body is made whole, I can't make the world whole."

Because here's what we do. And please, nobody ever take this wrong. I'm not saying to ever, we're not condoning sin and wrong behavior, we need to discuss it. But before I discuss it, I want to get after a heart condition and a brokenness. And after I go after that we help to bring healing. And now, the behavior changes because the heart changed.

RANDY: A lot of this message is in a book that Bobby has called, *You Matter: It Doesn't*. He talked about. We want to give this to you if you'll support what Bobby has been supporting for all these years, thank you very much, and that is our mission feeding outreach that we're in right now. So take a look at this and then we'll come back and tell you how you can help change lives, save lives, and pick up Bobby's book. Watch this.

On the mission field:

Open Captions: Thousands of children cry. They are hungry, malnourished, suffering, and dying.

ANNOUNCER: The mortality rate for children under five in Sub-Saharan Africa is the highest on record worldwide. Severe malnutrition and starvation are two of the contributing factors in an unrelenting food crisis causing misery and death.

ISAK: It's absolutely devastating to just walk through this cemetery here and see how they're digging graves. They're preparing graves for young children; more than ten graves that have been dug here. These graves don't have a name yet. They've been allocated to a child, but they've dug them because they know that children will die in the next week. Children who don't deserve to die. They don't deserve to die simply because they didn't have enough food. Because their families couldn't provide for them. Because their village was ravaged by drought. Because they don't have mission feeding.

You see, we can stop the digging of these graves. We can stop children from dying. We can stop children from filling these graves. We can bring the cycle of death to an end if we'll just act. You give mission feeding, you give life--life in the form of a bowl of food--a bowl of food that not only fills a stomach but empties a grave.

End of video

In the studio:

SHEILA: I'll never forget my very first trip to Angola and walking into a malnutrition clinic and watching these tiny little ones that are so fragile. They can hardly even cry, where their bones are literally sticking through their flesh. I have to tell you as a mom, as a mom it absolutely broke my heart. And I looked into the eyes of the other mothers. They love those little ones every bit as much as I love my son. And they would do everything they could to provide food for their child, but the drought has been so desperate in parts of Africa that there is no food--no food at all.

And here's the irony at this particular moment that's different than other moments. Parts of Africa the drought is so drastic, all the crops are gone. Parts of Africa the flooding has been so severe that all the crops are gone. It's just this horrible situation unless we as the body of Christ say, "Not on our watch."

We have our people like Isak that you just saw there on the ground waiting to make a difference. We commit every year here at *LIFE*, and particularly this year, to feed 350,000 children. When they bring those little red bowls up and they get that food that's especially made for them, all the nutrients, the proteins, everything they need, that literally turns the corner from death to life.

And if you'll join with us, if you'll join with Randy and I we can see life saved in Jesus' name, and it is possible, Randy. There is an entry point for everybody.

RANDY: It is. And you know what's interesting? We talked today; there are things that are out of our control--whether it is a diagnosis, a tragedy, an accident, a virus. This is something though that is within our control to do something about. We have the people in place, Sheila, you said that. We have the systems down. We've been doing this for decades. That's why I can tell you that for \$30, \$50, or \$100 you can help feed three, five or ten children for three whole months! Why? Because we've got this down. We've been doing this for a while. It's not always the same children. We go to where the crisis is, like Sheila mentioned, the drought or the floods in different parts of the country. We go to where the need is.

We just need one thing. We've got the people in place, we've got the processes, we need your support. We need you to reach out and partner with us to make this possible. \$1,000 will actually help feed 100 children for three entire months. Many of you can do that or even more. I'm asking you to go online or go to the phone right now and make the best gift you can. You will be saving lives. Do it now.

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 life-saving 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

On the mission field:

RANDY: This is a grave. It's an empty grave. It has no real significance until you put someone in it. Unfortunately, they're putting far too many children into these graves. Malnutrition is robbing children of their future and robbing families of their joy. They've already dug these graves because they're expecting death.

But I have a prayer. I'm expecting life. So I ask all of you: Will you fill a bowl, so they don't fill a grave? I hope everyone watching will do the best they can. Give the best you can because they don't have to be waiting on children to die. We can make that difference. If you'll just go to the phone right now, go online, give the best gift you can and know that when you fill that bowl, you give a child hope and life.

End of video

In the studio:

RANDY: We do value your support. And don't forget those 16 clinics that were destroyed, we want to restore those as soon as possible. So please consider an additional gift. Sheila, I so enjoyed today's guest.

SHEILA: Yeah! And Bobby's got a book called, *You Matter: It Doesn't*. And for any gift at all we'd love to send that to you. No wonder high school kids love you, and college kids love you. We love you! Thanks for being with us.

BOBBY: Thank you for having me. I'm honored, honored, honored. And youse matter!

[LAUGHTER]

SHEILA: And that's not the sheep, that's just Randy and I. So thanks for being with us. We'll see you next time on *LIFE Today*.

RANDY: Bye-bye!