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Week 51: Fall Mission Feeding

Sheila Walsh

Kathie Lee Gifford #1

Sheila: Hi! Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm Sheila Walsh. I'm so glad you joined us. And you're going to be very glad you joined us too. I will never forget the day when I heard that Kathie Lee was stepping down from her position with Hoda Kotb. My husband and I were devastated. We were no longer going to be able to run into the room and say at the same time, "How do we do it day after day?"

But if you thought she was retiring, think again! Please welcome my lovely guest, Kathie Lee Gifford. What a joy to have you on *LIFE Today*.

Kathie: Ah! Sheila, you know how I feel about you. So don't get me started. It's good to be you.

Sheila: This is a great new book, *It's Never Too Late*: "Make the next act of your life the best act of your life." That's a fantastic title. What led to writing this book at this stage in your life?

Kathie: Well, I had no desire to...you know we've talked often Sheila about the fact that all I want to do now is make films and do these oratorios that I'm doing, telling Bible stories in a brand-new way with symphonic music and all of that.

But I have a very dear friend who is one of my publishers at... Well, at my publishing company. And he came to me and said, "Kathie, I really think you're supposed to write this book."

I said, "I can't! I've got a little children's book coming out any minute now."

It was going to be...they wanted it within three months. And they knew I was leaving *The Today*

Show and it was just a heavy road ahead. And I don't like to write about myself. I'll write about the Bible, I'll write about Amy Semple McPherson for a Broadway musical, I'll write about lots of other subjects, but I know how my story ends. I mean not ends-ends but I know the end of every chapter because I lived it. And it is not a fun project.

But he convinced me that because of the interest in my decades-long career now, and it is, I can't avoid the truth. I've been in this business over 50 years now. I've been in the public eye for 40. There is a fascination that people have. So people are going to want to know what you're doing next. I've always been amazed that anybody cared but they do. God bless them. God love them.

Most of the people that have been in my life all these years have been great, great friends to me. Not just fans. They've prayed for me every day. I feel their prayers. They've supported me when the world came at me with stuff that wasn't true. They supported the truth about me. So I'm very mindful that I'm not obligated to people like that, but I'm extremely blessed and grateful to them.

So he said, "Why don't you write a book about how at the age of 67 now, (I was 66 when I was writing it) you have no intention of retiring. You're re-firing." You read the Bible, you're a student of the word, like many people are not. Sheila, you are truly a student of the word. I don't see any story in the entire Bible where somebody retired. There is no... I'm not sure if there is a word for it in the Hebrew. [Laughing] Just like there is no word for "coincidence" in the Hebrew because it doesn't exist. God is either sovereign god or he is not God at all.

Maybe there is a story of... I'd love for someone to tell me, yes, so-and-so retired at the age of... No, they died. They died and went on to glory doing what God still had them to do. So I mean that's one of our western cultural things that we retire and that our monetary system is built around hit retirement age and then you get your social security and then you get... Well, I don't have a social security--I mean I have it, but I have eternal security. You know what I'm saying? I don't want the government to keep...I don't look to the government to take care of me. I look at my Jehovah God, Abba Father, to take care of me. So I've never had any intention of retiring from my work. I couldn't wait to have the time to actually do the work I've been dreaming of doing since I was a kid.

Sheila: I remember interviewing our mutual friend, Billy Graham on his 70th birthday. And I asked him that very question. I said, "Do you have any plans for retirement?"

And he said, "Sheila, that is not a biblical principle. I will do what God is... "

Kathie: Oh really?

Sheila: Yes! "I will do what God has called me to do until the Lord takes me home." I just loved that.

Kathie: And he did! He did. One of the other things that Billy said, I live by so many of the things he said. Someone asked him once, "What has surprised you in all these years?" I think he was well into his 80s by that time. "What is the one thing about life that's surprises you the most?"

And I thought it would be some deeply spiritual answer. He goes, "The brevity of it--the shortness, the shortness."

And once Frank passed away and I held him in my arms and I knew exactly where he was, he'd gone on to glory, so I didn't lose my husband. I know where he is. The Lord has taken him from me for a brief time for whatever time he has, and I'll be reunited with him, my parents, all whom I love who have died and gone on to glory. They're just waiting. They're rejoicing and waiting for us. I think I don't know that they're praying for us. That I've never read about but they're sure talking to Jesus about us, I think.

Sheila: I think so.

Kathie: Yeah. That gives me comfort to think that; it is not anywhere I can quote verse and chapter. But anyway, I just know that he still has plans for us, for our future and a hope. I don't want to miss out on it.

When I was holding Frank that day, I just thought... I think ever since then, honestly, I've been aware of my own mortality far more than I ever... I don't think about death. I barely think about tomorrow because I'm so busy today. But I started to be much more aware that my time was running out.

I mean I'm in the best physical shape of my life, thank God. I'm healthy. I've got a million projects going on right now that are really important to me. So I don't know if I have ten more minutes on this planet or 30 more years. I don't care. I've always said the greatest day in a Christian's life is the day they die. Because in a weird way...that's where we get our reward. That's when we go and be with our savior.

Do I want to rush it? No, of course not. If God has work for me to do and I'm so excited that both of my children got married this past year. They're all moving down to this part of the world that I live in now. And they're going to have families of their own, Lord willing. I would like to be around for some of that. Not to drive them crazy, not to hover over. I'm not that kind of mother, thank goodness. Because my mother was, and I learned how I didn't want to be one when I got older. I didn't want to be micromanaging my adult children's lives.

I adored my mom and I miss her every day, but she had a problem with control. And I don't want to be that kind of mother. Once they're adults and I've raised them they're on their own unless they need me or ask for my opinion. Otherwise it is, believe it or not, it's zip.

Sheila: That's a great perspective. But let me tell you something. I was fortunate, blessed enough to get an advanced copy of your book to read. So I sat down. Literally read it from cover to cover. There are several things I took away. But one of the things that was so clear to me, Kathie, and it almost made me weep, was the way God has used you to touch the lives of people most of us never will come in contact with. But you've never been in a traditional ministry role because we like to say, "Well, that's ministry and this is not." You have been out there being salt and light in the world and God has used you to touch so many people's lives.

Kathie: Well, it certainly wasn't my plan. I wanted to be an actress and a singer all my life and the Lord took me in a different direction. I started working with Regis doing a talk show. I never dreamed of being a talk show host when I was growing up. There were no talk shows. And there certainly weren't any women talk show hosts. I didn't even know what that looked like.

So I was just trying to follow Jesus and sometimes he takes us around a high or narrow path in a circuitous way. As a result, I remember knowing as a child, and I came to know the Lord in a movie theater. Billy Graham's movie, *The Restless Ones*.

That's how I became friends with Billy. When I was in my early 20s, I met him. He was a lifetime friend for me. As you know, when you meet Billy, and he won't let you call him anything but Billy. "If we're going to be friends you've got to call me Billy." We all want to call him Dr. Graham or Reverend or something. No. Wasn't he just the most incredibly humble man you'd ever known?

Sheila: Absolutely!

Kathie: Just so humble and he never changed his message that it's the gospel. Just as you are, come! Come to your savior, just as you are. I just so respected him. Even through this whole election year and season and all of that, I've never gotten involved with politics because of Billy. He did regret the few times that he was vocal politically. He said, "Kathie, just keep your focus on Jesus. Tell people about Jesus. He doesn't divide." Politics can be so divisive. They just are by nature. He said, "Just tell people how much Jesus loves them."

I found out that day when I went forward at that movie how much Jesus loved me. He said, "If you trust me, Kathie, receive me and trust me, I will make something beautiful out of your life." That's what he's done. Any ugliness in my life was my fault or someone else's in my life. But never because God brought despair into my life to punish me.

People say, "But it says, 'Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.'" I said, "Well, the word for 'fear' in the Hebrew is 'yireh'--Y-i-R-E-H. I don't think I pronounced it right, but I know it

when I see it. And 90% of the times it is used in the Bible it means: Awe and worship of the Lord. Not fear in the way we understand fear in the western world. Only people who should ever fear God are God's enemies. People who have chosen to be an enemy of God. Not his children! And for too long, through the centuries the church has used fear to control believers, preaching the hell fire and brimstone. And I never responded to that. I respond to love. I respond to acceptance and compassion and tenderness and understanding. That's who my Lord is.

So anyway, I just knew that God was calling me to a so-called "secular" career. But I'm not to separate the secular from the spiritual. I'm just one woman, child of God, living my life. I happen to make my living in a certain way, but God has used me more there, Sheila, I know with all my heart, than if he'd called me to be a missionary to anywhere in the world. I was called to be a missionary but to that world.

And you're right, in this book I talk so much about sharing him. Every time I was with somebody, I would share the hope of glory. But mostly if they asked me about it. Who was it, I think it was Saint Augustine or one of those that said, "Preach the gospel at all times but when necessary, use words."

Sheila: I love that!

Kathie: And I tell a story in the book about being on the latest movie set of the movie that I wrote with my friend, your Scottish brother, Craig Ferguson. And he asked me, he said, "Why do you love me or Ricky Gervais, Kathie? We're bad guys. We're not good guys!"

I said, "Yes, you are. I love you to pieces."

He said, "But why? We don't believe anything you believe."

I said, "But you're wonderful and you're talented and you're made in God's image whether you believe in him or not." Because I always called Craig my favorite agnostic, and Ricky Gervais my favorite atheist. I said, "But God loves you. You're created in his image and he loves you."

And I love everybody that God loves."

And this is the thing that I talk about in the book that breaks my heart. Craig looked at me and he goes, "Kathie, we've never had a person of faith tell us that they love us."

And I remember saying to him, "Well then you've never met one because if you don't love people, you cannot claim to love God." You just can't.

Sheila: That's scriptural--that's absolutely scriptural. You cannot say you love God and curse other people.

But you've been used to touch, I mean, really unusual, the least likely people to cross your path, whether it was shock jock, Howard Stern or Evel Knievel! The story of Evel Knievel in the book just blew me away!

Kathie: I know! 30 years it took for Howard to ask for forgiveness from me. But I prayed for him every single day. God is the how, God of how and when. If he makes a promise, and you start praying for somebody, he knows how it's going to come about, and he knows when. And we're not to question, we're just supposed to... Be anxious for nothing but just persevere and in all things keep praying. Thessalonians, right? Just keep praying. And watch. And then stand back and watch what he will do.

I know God always shows up but sometimes in our lives he really shows off too. He shows off. I was just shooting three more of my oratorios out in Utah last week. Talk about God showing off in that incredible geography there; and telling the stories of the people that came before us in our oratorio called "The God of the How and When." About Sara and Abraham waiting all those years for the promise to be fulfilled of the son Isaac. So that God could make Abraham the father of a great nation, which of course is the Jews. And then how everybody had to wait for a deliverer after 400 years of slavery under Pharaoh.

Who does he send? He sends Moses, "not the least bit equipped," for the job. And then after

40 years waiting to get into the Promised Land God raises up Joshua. And then it goes to the next one, 2,000 years later. The most unlikely of all people to set into motion via the salvation for all of human kind, a teenage girl and the man she was engaged to marry.

So I just love, love, love telling these stories. They're ancient stories but they're ripped from the headlines today. They really are.

Sheila: When will we be able to see that next one, Kathie?

Kathie: Hopefully Easter. It's three more, Sheila. It's called "The Way" now. It is the kind of thing in the morning when you have a lot of time to linger with the Lord or you're going on a walk or you're on a long drive to just listen to it and to realize that we're all a part of God's magnificent love story.

Ever since he created us, he has longed to bring us home to *beth ab*, the Father's house. And that's what this is all about. It's an hour and a half long. It's got some of the finest talent in all of the world playing these roles. Then we do the second one. The second one is called "The God of His Word," and that's Danny Gokey. Third one is the one with...

Sheila: I love him!

Sheila: Yes, our darling, engaged now friend, Nicole C. Mullen.

And then the fourth one, is called, "The God of the Other Side." Because when Jesus called his disciples and said, "Get in the boat and meet me on the other side," we as westerners just think well, he's just saying meet me on the other side of the Sea of Galilee. No big deal. I'm going to go on the mountains, and I'll meet you there. We've never been taught the context of Jesus saying that to his disciples.

The truth is that is the most terrifying thing he could have ever said to them. Because the other side was the Decapolis, the ten cities right there just five miles from Capernaum where

everybody who were pagans at the time ran from the Hebrews. They weren't the Israelites yet, they were the Hebrews who were under Joshua coming into conquer the land. They ran and settled in that area.

Well, that was unclean as any place could be for a good Jew. So here's Jesus calling these 12 men to follow him. Follow him where? To the most disgusting place they've been told their entire lives, "Never go to the other side!"

Jesus even then was saying, "If you're going to follow me, we're going to take quite the journey. And you're going to break every rule you've been told all of your life. I decide what's clean and unclean. That's the reason I came was for the broken, the unclean, the unloved, the unsaved."

And we have lost our way in the western church, I believe. When we aren't loving people into the kingdom of God every day something is wrong with our theology.

Sheila: Absolutely! Okay, people. I know this for sure. You want this book. For any gift you send in today we'll send you Kathie's brand-new book, *It's Never Too Late*.

But first of all, I want to ask if you would help us to help some mothers and children on the other side of the world right now who are literally starving. So please watch this and then we'll be back.

On the mission field:

Announcer: For 30 years viewers of *LIFE Today* have been helping save millions of lives from malnutrition and starvation. Though you may never meet them in this life, people like Jose, Jacob, and Matthew are grateful that you chose to make mission feeding possible through your giving. But while there is cause for celebration, there are children we've still been unable to reach. Their tragedies caution us against growing complacent.

Randy: Angelica was only five years old when they buried her here. They put a marker in the sand with her name and the dates. If you look at the inscription here, you can see that it won't last that long. It will fade.

Malnutrition is robbing children of their future. These children must not be forgotten. I can promise you God knows them by name. Will you think about those that we can still save? There are so many that are right on that edge of life and death and we make the difference. Let's not forget them.

I'm asking you to do something right now. Support the mission feeding outreach because that's how we stop this cycle of death because you really can make a difference. You can give these children hope and a future instead of an unmarked grave.

End of video

In the studio:

Sheila: I think one of the greatest impacts when you finally begin to embrace how much you're loved by God, when you finally get through all our old mindsets of but I did this, or I did that, or I failed here, and I failed that. When you finally are able to begin to receive the grace of God, that God knows you exactly as you are right now, and he loves you. I don't care what you did last night.

Right now I want you to know that Jesus loves you. When you get hold of that, it changes how you see the whole world. There's no way that you can turn away anymore from children like these precious little ones. All they want is the ability to have a meal, a bowl of nutritious food.

And for these mothers, we've met so many of these moms in Africa. We've had the privilege of praying for them, but it is never enough when you see such devastating human need. It's so easy to pray and then walk away. But Jesus compels us to reach out in his name and change things.

We have made a commitment here at LIFE to feed 350,000 children this year. We're getting to

the end of the year. Do you know that every single one of us can do this? Because the way we've broken it down, \$30 would feed three children for three whole months.

I did an experiment last night. I went to one of those drive-through restaurants and got a meal for my husband and myself and got something for the dogs. It cost me more than \$30 and it was gone like that. \$30 will feed three children not for a day, not for a week, not for a month--for three whole months!

If you can do \$50 that will feed five children for three months! \$100 feeds ten! If God has blessed you this year, if you're looking for a way to express your love for the outrageous love of God, \$1000 will feed 100 children for three months! That's like January, February, March! Think of that! There is nothing else you could do with that amount of money that would make that big of an impact.

As I've said for any gift at all, we will send you Kathie Lee's fantastic new book. It will bless you.

But let's not just receive the blessings from God. Let's reach out and make a difference in Jesus' name. Our partners are on the ground now and they're waiting. So please, would you do it now? Would you go to your phone, will you call that number on the screen and just give what you can. If we all give what we can, we can change the world in Jesus' name. Please call. Please call 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:

Isak: We're here in this area of South Sudan. And we've been going from village to village where we're working here, and just hearing story from mother after mother, a pretty consistent story--a heartbreaking one of how mothers have lost children, some of them multiple children. They explain to us how they're basically terrified at the fact that they have no food, absolutely no food. They've lost everything as a result of the flood. Mothers telling us how they're terrified at the thought that they might lose another or all of their children because they have absolutely no food.

But if you'll just open your heart today, if you'll do whatever you can do, if you'll give whatever gift you can give, you will be giving the gift of life. I give you a guarantee from me that we will do whatever we can do, and we will use your gift. We will stretch that gift to the maximum to make sure that we save the lives of the precious children in this area who without our help are

probably sure to die.

End of video

In the studio:

Sheila: Thank you so much for helping us feed these children. They desperately need it. And remember, for any gift at all, you can request Kathie Lee's brand-new book, *It's Never Too Late*: "Make the rest of your life the best of your life."

We love you here at *LIFE Today*, Kathie Lee. Thank you so much for being with us.

Kathie: I love you back, my sweet friend. Lord bless you big time.

Sheila: And we'll see you next time on *LIFE Today*. God bless you.