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Week 24: Spring Mission Feeding

Sheila Walsh

Kathie Lee Gifford #2

Sheila: Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm Sheila Walsh. I'm so glad you stopped by. I kind of have a sneaky suspicion you will be too at the end of today's program. Today we've been joined again by just the wonderful, beautiful, straight-shooting, God-loving, Bible-loving woman, Kathie Lee Gifford. Thank you so much for being with us again today.

Kathie: Thank you for having me again. I'm sure you got some nasty comments when I was on before.

[Laughter]

You're showing me mercy by having me back.

Sheila: No! Interestingly enough we probably got more positive comments about you. Even--but I think I told you this. After we did the show on *The Rock, the Road, and the Rabbi* with your oratorio with Nicole C. Mullins, I had two letters from prisoners who said, "Please, could you get me that book?" And "Please could you send me a Bible so that I can study along with the book?" So God is using you in ways, Kathie Lee that only heaven will reveal. Isn't that awesome?

Kathie: Yeah! We're going to continue on with that whole series of books too because it was a lovely discovery to make, which is that people are hungry to know the word. I thought there was no intellectual or spiritual curiosity left in the world anymore. Just a few people that want to dig deep and go... I think it is the cry of every human heart to tell you the truth.

Sheila: I think so too. You talk about your extraordinary journey in your new book, *It's Never Too Late*. I didn't know that you worked for like maybe almost a year with Kathryn Kuhlman?

Kathie: Yes. The last year of her life.

Sheila: What was that like?

Kathie: Bizarre, honestly. Very bizarre. She was a very, very interesting woman. She was a lot like Oral Roberts. The exact opposite of Billy Graham. Billy was for the masses but Billy, when you were talking to him, you'd be the only person in the world. He had that beautiful way of just seeing you and loving you as an individual. When I went to Oral Roberts University, Oral was the exact opposite of Billy. He was a great preacher and evangelist and all that but was uncomfortable one on one.

Well, never have I met anybody more uncomfortable one on one than Kathryn Kuhlman was. She had a magnificent faith-healing ministry. She actually tried to pattern herself after Aimee Semple McPherson who I had written a musical about. I spent 13 years bringing her story to Broadway.

But I wasn't writing that story at the time when I met her. I had just moved to Los Angeles and I needed to work. My agent at the time said, "Audition for Kathryn Kuhlman." I had heard of her, but I'd never met her.

She said, "Hello." And she was a very regal woman. And then I sang "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" and maybe "Amazing Grace," I don't remember. She walked over to me with those long fingers and she put her fingers on my face and she said, "It's adorable." And then she walked away.

I went, "Oh no!" She never said another word to me that I remember for a year. Yeah. But that didn't mean that she wasn't a godly woman, wasn't doing what God called her to. It's just

everybody is different. Not everybody is warm and fuzzy. She was not warm and fuzzy.

Sheila: We're all a little bit weird.

Kathie: She died that year. I didn't kill her. I promise you.

[Laughter]

Sheila: You did another show with us and I've referenced the story but didn't give you the time or the space to unpack it. And that's, I think it was initially Frank's relationship but with Evel Knievel. Tell us how all of that came to be.

Kathie: Well, the whole world knew Evel Knievel. He was the biggest dare devil stunt person in the world. He was legendary for doing insanely dangerous things and usually carrying them off. So I'll just take a brief, brief--it's not about any of the stunts but I became friends with Frank's friends, obviously, and Evel would call all the time. And he would say, "Hey, Kathie, it's Evel. Can I speak to Frank?"

I'd go, "Sure."

And then he would say, "But before you go I just want to tell you something."

I said, "What?"

He goes, "I hate Jesus!"

And I go, "Why? Why do you hate Jesus?"

And then he would do this litany of things that were wrong and therefore he hated Jesus.

So I said, "Well, you can hate him all you want, Evel, but he loves you and nothing is going to

change that. I'll get Frank for you."

And I'd get Frank because I didn't want to hear anymore from Evel.

And then as the years went on Evel would call really for me. And he'd start out, "Kathie, I'll talk to Frank in a little bit. First of all, I want to tell you that I still hate Jesus!" And it would start all over again.

And I said, "You know what, Evel?" I prayed for him by that time every day because he was in my list of people that needed to know Jesus.

So I said to him one particular day. I said, "You know what, Evel? One day you're going to call me and you're going to say, 'Kathie, you were right. I love Jesus! You were right!'"

And he would just laugh and say, "No, I'm always going to hate Jesus. Can I talk to Frank now?"

One day, darn, did he not call me with exactly those words, "Kathie, you were right! I love Jesus! I accepted him last night into my heart and I'm healed." He was sobbing--sobbing! He didn't even want to... He said, "Now can I tell Frank? I want to tell Frank I love Jesus and Jesus loves me."

There is so many stories like that, so many! God is faithful. We aren't faithful but he is. You know, Sheila? He is.

Sheila: One of the great collaborations that we're benefiting from now, is you've moved to Nashville and you've begun doing some musical collaboration with Brett James who is just kind of a legend. How did that all unpack for you?

Kathie: Oh my gosh! Well, Brett is, he won the Grammy for "Jesus Take the Wheel," for Carrie Underwood. A couple of other people wrote it with him. Yeah, he is a legend in Nashville as a song writer. I'd never heard of him. When Hoda and I came down in June of 2017 to cover the

C.M.A. Awards, that's Country Music Association Awards, or something like that. One of the things we were doing was, what's it like to sit in one of those rooms with one of the best writers in the business and write a song? So I just wrote some bawdy little country lyrics, and then I'll have something to play with. I said I'd never heard of him. They said he has 500 hits. I said okay. We go and we sit down. And within 15 seconds we'd written a little song. It was boom, boom, boom.

And I was leaving, and he said, "I was such a huge fan of your husband, Kathie." It had been two years since Frank had passed. He said, "How are you and your children doing?"

I said, "Brett, we're doing great. We really are. I found him that day. This was the look on his face. I knew he saw Jesus and Jesus took his breath away. And one of these days I'm going to write that song."

And he looked at me and he goes, "Let's write that song."

So I came back to Nashville the next week. We wrote it in about 20 minutes. Started writing all the music for my movie that just been out this year, *Then Came You*. Brett and I co-wrote all the songs on that.

And then we wrote another one that we premiered at the White House called "Jesus is His Name" for Christmas. And he's written one of the oratorios about "The God of the How and When" with me as well. He's actually, although I don't write with him much anymore because our worlds have just gone off different ways. I'm writing, because of him, I'm writing with everybody else in Nashville because I got street cred because I was writing with Brett James, which was lovely.

But God's used Brett hugely in my life and I thanked him for this because I had worked in Nashville off and on all my life, but I never contemplated ever living here. Because I was coming every week and then towards the end of our getting prepared to shoot our movie every weekend I was coming. And I'd get on the plane, Sheila after working all weekend with him and I'd go, why am I so happy when I'm down here? And I realized it's because it's such a joyful

place here. Nobody cares who you're voting for. They just say, "After you vote let's get together, have a drink and write a song." And they love their country, they love God. They don't tell you how to live your life, how to think, they don't cancel you if they don't like your opinion on something. And they really, really have a heart for God in this part of the country.

I didn't realize how much my soul was starving for it. So because of all that time I was spending with Brett I said I'm going to get a little place down here which turned into within a couple of months, a much bigger place and I live here full time now. I kept my home in Connecticut because my children love it and I love to go back and visit but this is my home now. I'm a Tennessee girl!

Sheila: I love that. We used to live in Nashville, and I loved Nashville so much.

Kathie: It's an amazing place. Yes.

Sheila: You're right. You bump into people.

Sheila: It's fun!

Sheila: And they're big names but there is no pretension. You go to church and there is five people that are on the charts at the moment just there worshipping Jesus. It is amazing.

Kathie: Yeah. I just was taking a long walk in my park yesterday and I walked into Dan Haseltine from Jars of Clay. We had just written a Christmas song. Hey! You run into everybody. Reba at lunch. Wynonna, and everybody is down here, and everybody is just out with all the people. There is no... I don't run into the arrogance that I had in New York and in L.A. I don't run into the self-righteousness. People are just, they let you be. They let you be. I'm so grateful for that. I feel like God has led me out into a spacious place, the Bible says.

Sheila: I love that. When I read your book *It's Never Too Late*, I find myself wishing my mom could have read it. My mom became a widow when she was 33 years old. Yeah, my dad took his

own life when he was 34.

Kathie: That's right. I remember now yes.

Sheila: I thought this would be a great book for anyone. I was thinking of women in their 30s and 40s, it would be a great book to read. Because you have a heart too for those who have been, who have lost their husbands. There is so much practical stuff through the book that I thought, oh gosh, I wish Kathie Lee could have sat down through her book with my mom and encouraged her to dream again.

Kathie: I would have loved meeting her. I would have loved that. You know what I hope I have a heart for, Sheila? Is what Jesus had a heart for which is any hurting person, whether they've lost a spouse or lost their health or lost a child or lost their way. So many people, there is a malignancy of the soul that every human being has in one way or another. We may not have cancer, but we have a malignancy of the soul that needs a healing touch from Jesus.

So this book really is for anybody that feels like they've given up on their dreams or God must have made a mistake with their dreams or they're blaming themselves or blaming others and so they're carrying around all of that too, which is a sure sign you're never going to get to those dreams if you're carrying around all that baggage. God doesn't want us to even if it is a Louis Vuitton. He doesn't want us carrying baggage around like that. He wants us freed up to be everything he created us to be. I love how the scriptures...

And that was sort of the other little book that I have for the children, *Hello Little Dreamer* book is about that. That even before the dawn of creation God saw us and he put our dreams in us while we were being formed in our mother's wombs. They're as ancient as creation itself. And God puts great stock in our dreams.

So I am just now as a mature, I guess senior citizen, still living out the dreams God put in me in my mother's womb, not fearfully making me in my mother's womb, which is again a bad translation of that word, wondrously and awe-inspiringly making us so unique, so precious in his

sight. So I wanted little children to understand that right from the beginning God has dreams for them that are bigger than they could even imagine.

Sheila: I have that book right here, *Hello Little Dreamer*. It's a beautiful book. It's beautifully illustrated too by Anita Schmidt.

Kathie: She did a gorgeous job.

Sheila: She did. It's really lovely. But here's what I want to ask you, we're at the end of a year that nobody anticipated. We've heard that word over and over, "unprecedented." How have you managed, Kathie Lee to maintain your joy, your enthusiasm, your get up every day and live that day as if it is the last, how have you managed to maintain that in difficult days?

Kathie: Well, I've been grateful for one thing for the fact that I don't any longer have to get up and go into New York City to work on the Today Show, although I love and miss Hoda, and I have so much dear friends there. But I would have been the most miserable human being on the face of the earth having to wear a mask all the way in there and sit so far away. What made our show so wonderful was our loving on each other and just laughing. COVID has just changed the whole complexion of that show. I would have been pretty miserable not being able to hug Hoda or anybody else there.

But as a result, I spent the first month of the lockdown at my home in the Keys, which I recently sold. But I had a beautiful home there. Cody, my son, said, "Mom, go where the old people go for this. Go down to our house."

We hadn't closed it down for hurricane season yet. So I went down and stayed for a month. And it was as if there was no COVID there. Everybody was still going on their sailboats. Everybody was playing golf. The only thing you couldn't do is eat inside a restaurant.

So I felt kind of guilty actually, blessed, but I was writing the entire time. When you are a writer you can do it from anywhere at any time. And then I live now in a state that opened early, thank

God. So when I found out that Nashville was opening up and Tennessee was open for business, I thought, I'm going home. I came back here and started working on these oratorios that are about to come out, and recording, very safely, socially distancing. You can do those kinds of things. And writing, you can write virtually. I'm sitting here in my writing room right now, one of my writing rooms and I had lots of people over. We were just careful--just careful. So I never missed a step.

And then I promoted my new movie, *Then Came You* from here and a new little book. And now I'm promoting the new book. I've had, maybe the busiest year of my entire 67 years on this planet. It's crazy. But because God is not limited by anything, as you so well know.

Time is nothing to God. He's created it. In fact, he told me, in a prophetic word through a dear friend that God was taking me back 20 years. He was going to take 20 years off of my life in terms of all the work, gave me at the age of 66, that I'm taking 20 years off for all of your artistic stuff so you can catch up.

And I tell you, I feel that. I feel like I'm 30 years old. I wake... I barely sleep I'm so excited every morning. I can't wait to get to the work that I'm doing. I've been told that the work I'm doing is going to touch the multitudes. These things--now go all over the world when you put something up. It can literally impact the whole world for the kingdom of God.

So I am thrilled, probably more excited than I've ever been in my whole life because God is not finished with me yet. I tell a story in the book about Paul Newman teaching me, if you've got a pulse, you still have a purpose. And I've been blessed to know all of these people. There are stories about Al Pacino in there. There's Dolly Parton. But that's been my life's work. I know those people. Many of them are my friends.

So I'm not trying to write a book about look at me, look at me because I actually feel like I'm Waldo. I'm just--I'm Waldo who is with all these famous people and what the heck am I doing there? Except that God has placed me there for his purposes. There is no other reason for it.

Sheila: In fact, Dolly Parton wrote the forward for your book. I want everybody to get a hold of, *It's Never Too Late*. This is an incredible book. You'll want to read it. You'll want to get one for your kids, for your husband, for your mother-in-law. It will help her, trust me.

But we would love it if you would help us a little bit now. There is some children in the world who need us right now so let's step up in Jesus' name. Would watch this?

On the mission field:

Isak: You might have heard me refer before to malnutrition as "the silent killer." That's because it comes like a thief in the night and it steals a child's life away silently, many times an unknown and nameless child. Another small little grave but a life--a life that is lost because of something that we can so simply solve. A life stolen away simply because there wasn't enough food.

The desperation you can see written all over this child because this little body is fighting a fight that chances are, they'll probably lose--a fight of life and death.

It is a tragedy of epic proportion because one in 200,000 of these children die each and every month on the continent of Africa. And it can actually be changed pretty simply. If we can get to these villages where this child comes from and we can get mission feeding into those villages, what we're able to ensure is that we wind that clock back. We retell that story. Instead of going to bed without a meal that day that child goes to bed having received an orange bowl filled with the most nutritious food, nourishing its body and saving its life.

That's why we say mission feeding saves lives because it does! But mission feeding doesn't happen just by us being here. Saving this child's life doesn't happen because of us. It happens because of you. Please do whatever you can do and give the very best gift that you can give today. Give the gift of life.

End of video

In the studio:

Sheila: Hard to erase that kind of image from your mind. I cannot even tell you what it is like to walk with a mother to the place where she has buried her child. There are so many moms whose images are in my heart or who I still pray for to this day. I remember one in particular, we went and just knelt down by the grave where she buried her little one and her grief was overwhelming. Janice, who travels with us and takes all the great photographs for *LIFE*, we almost had to carry her back to her village, she couldn't stand. It was just...

What I felt from her was the weight of her hopelessness. Because for her, if you think about it, she had done everything she could do. She literally would go through and dig up, there is no rain, and it is dry and arid, but she would dig with her fingernails to try and find something to put in a bowl for her child. She would do anything she could, and it wasn't enough. So she had to bury her little one.

So for her if you put yourself in her shoes it is hopeless. But that's why you and I are here because we can be the answer to those mothers' prayers. They're not asking for a lot. They're not asking for a new house. They're not asking for anything like that. All they're asking is, will you help me give my child one really good meal every single day? Think of the great irony that half of us in America are on diets and just one plane ride away they are literally starving to death. But you and I can change that.

We're now at the end of the year. We have made a commitment to our partners who are on the ground waiting that we would feed 350,000 children this year. We cannot fall down. This is the last week of mission feeding. So if you haven't responded up until this point, let me tell you how easy it is. For \$30 you can feed three children for three months.

The great thing is that the child comes to school to get the meal. So not only does it give them a meal, it helps them break out of that cycle of poverty and lack of education. \$50 feeds five. If you're able to in this last week of mission feeding, maybe you want to give a year-end gift, this is the perfect place to do it--and the perfect time. \$1,000 will feed 100 children for three months.

What a blessing. Not that we *have* to do this but what a privilege that we *get* to do this in the name of Jesus.

So please, I'm asking you right now, will you go to your phone? Will you call that number on the screen and give the very best gift possible so that we can see these children, so that we can see the malnutrition clinics emptied 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."

This is the last week! Please call, write, or make your gift online.

End of video

On the mission field:

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, and you know what she says to them? "Who knows what tomorrow will bring?" She's 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! Its 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!

End of video**In the studio:**

Sheila: Thank you friends for watching this. And remember, this is our last week of mission feeding. I've been on the ground with these moms. I've promised them I'll be back, but I promised I'd come home and tell their story. So let's make sure we meet every challenge.

And Kathie Lee, I just want to say, thank you. What a joy! For any gift you send in today we'll send you Kathie's brand-new book, *It's Never Too Late*. We love you. Thank you so much!

Kathie: Love you, my darling sister. See you soon.

Sheila: See you soon! And we'll see you next time on *LIFE Today*. Thanks for being with us.