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Week 38: Christmas Shoes and Smiles

James and Betty Robison

"God's Plan for Us"

JAMES: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! We're so grateful to God for the opportunity to share this time with you. We were praying just a moment ago. Betty, in my prayer, I talked about how he has his arms around us, and we trust him. And how he wants you to know he wants his arms around you, and you live in his shadow and his shelter. But I also thought, Betty, that Jesus gave his life so we could get the Father's arms, literally, around all the people Jesus died for.

Betty, the viewers of *LIFE Today*, as effectively and consistently as any people I've ever seen, in what will soon be 60 years preaching for me, this fall, I've never seen people so faithful, so committed to putting God's arms of love around those most overlooked. Jesus called them "the least of these." So from the bottom of our hearts, we want to say thank you. And we welcome you.

We're living in a real time of almost unpredictable crisis every day, and yet we're seeing things in many instances more horrific than we've seen in my 77-year journey. It breaks my heart, the hatred and the hurt and the shooting, and the murder, the hatred prevailing in hearts. But you see, we're able to overcome the power of hate with the power of love -- God's love that never fails. We too often fail to let it flow. We need the wisdom of God to open our eyes and direct our steps.

Five years ago, God led me with the prayers of many, scores, hundreds of church leaders, many of them you would know to launch what we call The Stream. Betty, don't you thank God for the great people we have writing for The Stream every day?

BETTY: Absolutely! They care about you. They care about what's going on in our

world. We do care about you so very much. James and I talk and pray for you; talk about you and pray for you; and wonder what's going on in your life, so many times because we all sense those struggles. We all sense those times when you feel frustrated. You feel hopeless. You feel like what's going to happen here? Are we just going to fade away? What's happened to our world, our nation, that we've always loved so much? As we begin to do that, James...

JAMES: Let me ask everybody to make this note in light of what we're talking about with The Stream. All this wisdom, and really wise counsel flowing, make STREAM.org, literally make it your opening page for whatever, let's say, internet connection you have; whether it is an iPhone or an iPad or a computer, let it be your home page: STREAM.org.

Betty, we oftentimes spend an extended period of time in the morning praying. You, the other morning, were reading in Ephesians, and you couldn't even start talking without me seeing that there was a brokenness. I know that there is a passage in the last verses of Ephesians three, that after the loss of our daughter became so precious to you. But you wanted the power of those words to be precious to everyone.

But you were seeing some things there, and I wish you would share with our viewers what you literally saw. Let's talk about Ephesians.

BETTY: Ephesians has become the dearest passage to my heart in the loss of our daughter. I go to it very, very often because Paul writes about God's plan. He starts off writing about God's plan for his children. He has a plan for us. He has a plan for you. Sometimes I think, James, with the things going on in the world, we forget about God's purpose for our lives. We think we're not worth very much.

Well, Paul wrote himself. He said, "I'm the least qualified." And I thought back about Paul's life. Do you understand that Paul crucified -- James killed Christians. He was against what God wanted to do in our lives. And then God got his heart. God changed his

whole life around.

You may feel like you're unqualified. Except by God's grace and his power and his strength and his knowledge, none of us are qualified. We are only qualified when we're in the center of his will and purpose for our life. As I read Ephesians, I read about God's plan for his children. He wants the best for you. This is what grabbed my heart, especially during our time of loss, James.

And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.

Do you understand a little bit of what that says? How deep God's love is for us? You can sense that deepness of God's love if you'll just grab hold of him and let him grab hold of your heart. And hang on and say, God, every morning I get up, and I give you my heart, my life, my day, and let it please you in everything that I do.

What you do for God is as important as anyone else -- as a pastor standing up in the pulpit, as anyone on the mission field. You are as important to God as anyone else -- everyone else! Just like our children. We have three beautiful children. They're all different. But I love them all, as much as my heart could give love. That's the way God feels about us. He loves us all with His whole heart.

JAMES: *That you would be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ.*

It is beyond anything we can really explain or fully understand. This is the power of God that never fails. His love working in us.

One of the things that we've been trying to communicate with you very, very consistently

and faithfully, is he did not leave us here to get us out of here. He left us here on a kingdom assignment with kingdom purpose. One of the most powerful things I've ever seen in God's word, and I've not heard pastors, preachers and teachers preach on it, but this jumped out at me. And I think when you're talking about Paul full of such hate that he was destroying Christians, he consented to the death of Stephen. When they stoned him, they put their garments at Paul's feet, Saul of Tarsus, while they killed him. But Stephen dying showed all those who were watching the living Jesus. And Saul, who didn't believe in Jesus, the Christ that died, Stephen was so full of Christ he said, "Forgive them! Lay not this sin to their charge" while they killed him!

That's the way Jesus prayed. Jesus looked out at the people that spit in his face, twisted his beard out, put a crown of thorns on his head, with spikes pierced his hands and his feet, thrust a spear into his side. How could you question that they knew what they were doing? They deliberately hit their target, the hatred for Jesus. And yet he looked out, and to his Father. He could have called 10,000 angels. He could have destroyed them in a moment. But he looked out and said, "Father forgive them. They don't know what they're doing."

Jesus understood that the deceiver had them in captivity and bondage and had blinded their eyes. And he knew that only the power of his death and his resurrected life could break the shackles and open the blind eyes, the deaf ears, and give them purpose -- God's kingdom purpose.

Betty, as I was reading Ephesians three, this jumped out at me. Now there are two mysteries in the third chapter. One of them was the mystery that God was calling Saul of Tarsus, now Paul the apostle, to take the message, the gospel to the Gentiles; not just to the chosen people Israel to whom God spoke and gave his law and had the prophets proclaiming truth not only to Israel but to all the world.

Look what Paul said. This is the first mystery: *I was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me according to the working of God's power.*

This is Ephesians 3:7. *To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, and to bring to light what is the administration.*

There's another mystery about to be revealed. Betty, most of the church has really not seen this. It's critical in this day when evil seems to be prevailing that we understand the second mystery.

He said it's been given to me: *This mystery which for the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things; in order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church -- through my body, through the church -- to the rulers and authorities in heavenly places. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which he carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

The eternal purpose of God is to make a kingdom implant on not only God's planet but all creation and all in the spiritual realm, the invisible realm. You can, listen church, we not only proclaim the gospel to those who are here and have ears to hear that may be dull but can be opened by the power of the good news of the gospel, but he says the church has been given the authority. This mystery has been hidden for the ages. You can speak to the invisible powers, which Paul talked about later in Ephesians, the powers of darkness. These forces fighting us, these principalities and powers, you can announce to them the eternal purpose of God, the kingdom purpose and tell the enemy, you can't rule my life, my family, or God's planet. That is what God wants us to announce to the world.

Betty, have we not watched God, just like Saul of Tarsus, change people that nobody would believe? And do you believe that if the church would stand up and lose their life in his kingdom purpose, do you believe we could announce to all the invisible powers of darkness you cannot rule our lives, our families, our communities, our cities, our state, our nation? You cannot control God's planet!

God, with all my heart, I am praying that you will reveal to everyone viewing and listening that you have given us that authority. And your love is so powerful it never fails. It's beyond anything we can comprehend or fully understand. But we can release it.

Let me just say this. The disciples, after three years with Jesus, did not understand kingdom purpose. Jesus spent 40 more days after the resurrection, seeking to explain to his disciples' kingdom purpose. They still did not get it. He's about to ascend into heaven, and they said, "Lord, are you now going to establish and restore the kingdom?" In other words, the future kingdom, the next kingdom, the kingdom to come. They had not recognized yet the kingdom that had come. Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand. The kingdom of heaven is in you. It's not of this world." They didn't get it.

And Jesus said to the disciples, "Quit discussing the future of the next kingdom. It's coming. It's settled. God's preparing a place for you. So do what I've told you to do. Be witnesses to me starting in Jerusalem, at home, neighboring communities, the next communities, the end of the earth. But first, tarry until you're endued with power from on high."

Betty, it is so important that not one person listening to us miss this. Don't miss it! He said, "Tarry until you are endued with power from on high." Jesus earlier said, "I'm leaving. It is necessary that I leave, and I send another just like me, and he's going to live in you. I've been with you. I'm going to be in you. And wherever you go, I'm there." He said, "Tarry until this power takes over; the spirit that's in you takes control." And you are losing your life to find it in fullness and fruitfulness in God's kingdom purpose.

When those disciples, and Betty, I'm absolutely positive about this, those disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit, the living Jesus, the resurrected Jesus in resurrection power. The living Jesus came into them. And when they walked out of that upper room, they went out unable to explain kingdom purpose, but they were experiencing kingdom purpose. And throughout the entire book of Acts, you go chapter by chapter, break it down. They address every challenge, every enemy, every spiritual force, all the powers of

darkness, all of these invisible robbers of life and joy and peace. They spoke to them the truth of God. They delivered the gospel in power! And thousands were transformed throughout the book of Acts. Everything they did.

If you want to know what the church does, the body of Christ does when totally filled with His Spirit, literally controlled by the power of the living resurrected Jesus in us, kingdom purpose, God's kingdom purpose is the result and effect of that life. You don't have to wonder if it touches every area of national, family, community, and all on this earth with God's power, his love, his transforming power, his truth, delivered in unconditional, redemptive love.

Betty, the stage is set. The whole world can see how ugly the deceiver is and the fruit of the deceiver. It is time for this world groping in darkness to behold the glory of the resurrected Lord and the Lamb. That is why he left us here. He left us here to announce to those rulers in the heavenlies; you're not going to control God's family. We will not allow you to destroy what God created. We're going to be a light that pierces the darkness. We're going to be an expression of transforming love.

Father, I pray that every person listening to us would say, you know what? I don't think I've understood what he meant by "the kingdom at hand" and "in us" but Lord, I want to experience it. And I want every moment of my life to be lived for your kingdom purpose -- and I mean it.

I think you prayed that prayer. Betty, many of the people who watch us, I don't think they realize they're fulfilling God's kingdom purpose. Every time they enable a missionary to give food or water or love, and now shoes like this, do you know that when you love the least of these, you are ministering and touching Jesus? He says, "You minister to me when you minister to the least of these."

I want to ask you if you would join us right now in giving Christmas Shoes and Smiles to so many children who've never had shoes -- never! And would you consider giving a

child with a twisted face or features or a cleft palate, would you give them a smile because of the love of God? I want you to watch closely, and then I'd like for you to make a kingdom impact. I would like you to allow God's love flowing through you to overpower the destruction, the dissension, the deception, and defeat that the devil throws on people. We can break that power. Watch prayerfully.

On the mission field

Clint: We're approaching a time of the year when *LIFE Outreach* does its Christmas Shoes & Smiles campaign. The smiles are for corrective surgery. But what we're doing today is we're getting these young boys and girls shoes for the very first time. You can actually see the importance of what we're doing because look at this little girl, Veronica, she's got these sores on her feet already. She's obviously never owned a pair of shoes. She's been walking around bare feet.

James: Betty, they just tough it out and they play. But we found out that right here in this area that hookworms get in the skin, get in the bloodstream, ultimately into the intestines and cause very serious disease and sometimes death. We can turn it around by simply giving them shoes.

SHEILA: Something as simple as a pair of shoes can really change a child's life. This is a happy place today. [Laughing] Look at this face! Who wouldn't want to give her a gift at Christmas? So thank you so much on behalf of her family, those who love her. I think you've put the biggest smile on her face that we've seen all day. So thank you. Thank you for the gift of shoes. Thank you for the gift of life!

[Children yelling]

End of clip

In the studio

JAMES: I tell you what, Betty, when I sit there and I watch, just watching Sheila, and watching

how happy those kids are, I mean God's love expressed freely, and you're the ones that do it, is what makes Sheila so happy. See, you can't look at these little children in such need and find it something to be happy about. When you see love touch that need, and you know it's love that inspired the ability to touch that need, it's going to make Sheila happy, every guest we send over, all of our mission team, all the missionaries, as well as the children. Betty, don't you love to see that joy?

BETTY: I truly do. I love this time of the year when we can put shoes on the feet of these precious children. It is like a gift from heaven to them; and to know that it's going to protect their feet from all the possibilities of diseases, cuts, and bruises.

You know when our children were small, when our great-grandchildren, always, when they bring, especially the little girls over, James, I look to see how they're dressed. And they always have the cutest little shoes on them. Not because their feet might get damaged like these other children might, but because they like to dress them well. Well, I want to do it because I know it's protecting their feet.

And then the smiles -- the first thing we look for in a newborn baby is that first smile. We're so excited. These little children should be able to smile for their mom, for their dad. So let's continue to make the difference for them. Let's give them smiles, and let's put shoes on their feet.

JAMES: You'll never see more beautiful smiles than when you do something -- think about this -- for a little child that has all those sores and walks in all those painful places that sometimes gets so diseased and infected, and sometimes get the hookworms that can destroy their mind and even kill them. And all of a sudden, because of the love of God in you, you talk about making his kingdom impact, boy, you're doing it.

We're going to send you some gifts. We're going to send you the beautiful little Christmas ornament, Christmas shoes and \$36 will give ten children shoes that will be such a blessing to them. And these four different colored shoes are for a gift of over

\$100. We have such a joyful experience to say thank you for something that has meaning to it. People will look at those shoes on your Christmas tree, and you tell them, "That's Christmas Shoes and Smiles." And they may want to have a part of.

I want you to say, "I'm going to give as many children as I can a pair of shoes for Christmas." Remember this, \$1,000 will provide two facial-cleft-palate-type surgeries. Would you please make a kingdom impact and show these precious little ones, and overlooked, the least of these, how deep and wide, incomprehensible, unexplainable is the love of God. But we can experience it, and we can express it. We can make a kingdom impact.

Father, give us the greatest response today to give shoes and smiles we've ever seen, in Jesus' name.

Go online, dial that number, take your bank card, make the gift God put on your heart. Thank you so much for doing it.

Begin video clip:

Announcer: Poverty is a killer, and because of it, children needlessly suffer, not only from a lack of food and clean water but also from a lack of things we often take for granted -- like a simple pair of shoes. Far too many children living in extreme poverty have never owned a new pair of shoes. And while that may seem minor in light of all their needs, walking with bare feet puts them at risk with life-threatening infections and diseases that could lead to crippling consequences and even death.

By responding today, you will help secure and make ready 150,000 Christmas shoes to be shipped and delivered to children around the world just in time for the holidays. Your gift of \$36 will help provide ten pairs of shoes. A gift of \$72 will provide 20 pairs, and a gift of \$180 will help provide 50 pairs of Christmas shoes for children in need.

As a thank you for your gift of support, be sure to request this beautifully crafted, green crystal shoe ornament, a treasure to display each Christmas. With your gift of \$100 or more, you may also request this keepsake boxed set of all four shoe ornaments celebrating the various outreaches of LIFE.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1,000 or more to help provide over 275 pairs of shoes or two children with corrective cleft lip or palate surgeries. And you may request the beautiful "Divine Servant" bronze scripture.

Please call, write, or make your gift online today.

End of video

In the studio:

JAMES: Betty, we know God answers prayer. You know one reason I get excited about us together with you making kingdom impact and putting God's arms of love around those God gave his son to die for, to give them life? I realize when we're doing that, we're actually destroying the intentions of the devil, and we're releasing the life and love of God to people all over the world. And we're doing it in answer to God's heart's desire and Jesus' prayer. In supernatural unity, we're showing the whole world the love of God. I want to thank you so much for being a beautiful part of that.

Don't miss the next program. We're going to be talking to you a little bit more and really helping you understand what it is to lose your life in his kingdom purpose and fulfill our Father's dreams. He always cares about ours. He wants the best for us. Don't miss the next program.