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Week 46: Mission feeding

Randy Robison and Sheila Walsh

Michael Todd #1

RANDY: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm Randy Robison. Sheila is here as always. Sheila, now you know that I lived in Tulsa, Oklahoma, for about ten years off and on. It is my sort of second home. I love the town. There is a fabulous church in Tulsa called Transformation Church. It has just blown up. I've got tons of friends that go there. They speak highly of it. We have the pastor of Transformation Church with us today. He has also authored a new book called *Crazy Faith*. We are excited to have Michael Todd on *LIFE Today*.

MICHAEL: What a pleasure to be here with you guys. Thank you so much for having me.

RANDY: We're going to try to get this in because we've got lots of great questions. But this is a great topic. Now, Sheila, you've got your list of questions.

[Laughter]

Let's get into this!

SHEILA: First of all, I want to ask how you would define -- how do you unpack *Crazy Faith*? What is that?

MICHAEL: Well, I believe that the one thing that God calls every believer to have is faith. When I look at all of the stories in the Bible, and I think about Noah and Abraham

and David and all of these people. They didn't just have common faith. They had crazy faith. They had to believe God in a situation that did not look like it was probable, like it was able to happen, like it was anything that anybody else had done.

I think about Noah building an ark, and it hadn't rained yet. What type of insanity do you have to be living in to convince your sons and their families and tell your wife every morning, hey babe, going out to build this ark. But it's one of those things that was only crazy until the first drop of rain started to happen. And what was counted as crazy in one season became the thing that he was known by, a man of faith.

I just believe in this day and age where the world is getting darker and darker. People are getting more skeptical, and they believe in Google more than they do God. They want certainty, and they don't want to have any mystery or any place where they have to believe God. I believe that the key to revival, the key to seeing the next move of God, is a group of people, a remnant group of people believing God is crazy faith.

RANDY: One thing you do say that I really liked, and you mentioned Google there; that's where we go to, to get the facts that we want. But you say the facts that we want can actually get in the way of the faith that we need.

MIKE: I say it like this, they erode. The facts that we want erode the faith that we need. We all need faith to do the things, to be a mother, to believe for that business, to be able to just not hurt nobody -- like we need our faith in God to be strong. And a lot of times, because we want facts, we stop believing that God can, he will, and he desires to do something amazing through all of us.

I just remember so many times in my life where if I would have stopped at the facts. The fact that I was a young black man leading a multi-ethnic church, the fact that I didn't have the education that they said I needed, the fact that -- just fact after fact. We can all look at our lives and look at the facts like, oh I'm too young, I'm too this, I'm too that. God says you don't need facts to walk by faith. You actually need crazy faith to do something that

goes beyond the facts. That's what I'm excited to share because it really is my life story.

SHEILA: Okay. So let me just ask for up here, what's the difference between crazy faith and plain crazy?

[Laughter]

MICHAEL: That God is leading you that way. So a lot of people do crazy stuff. But I believe God leads us in a direction, the Bible says, "The steps of a good man, a good woman, are ordered by the Lord." So I believe he begins to nudge us in ways that seem completely crazy to our natural senses, our natural mind, our circumstances, even our situation. How I'm here today, and I'm a pastor of a church, and my past and my background, that's crazy! But God was nudging me in a direction, and I had to have the faith to say, this may seem crazy, but I'm going to take this step of faith. And that's why some of y'all are just crazy -- let me just be very clear. Some of the stuff you're doing is just crazy. But when you pray, when you get in that quiet time, and you feel God nudging you in a certain way, it may still be crazy, but if he's there, if God is for you, who can be against you?

RANDY: Yeah, I think that's important. I think if anybody can take away one anchoring fact from what we're talking about with the faith is that you have to hear from God first.

MICHAEL: Or you're going to be out there by yourself. And he'll rescue you, but the scars, the pain, the trouble, the trauma that you might have to go through is unnecessary. I tell people that's why you have to ask God. That's why it is so important. That scripture, I'll say it again, "The steps of a good man are ordered." I think about going to a drive-through. Like the only reason they know to get my order at the window is that I ordered it. God wants to tell you, speak to you, hey, I'm ordering you, this is what I want to do, and that's how we get the intended result. So yeah, doing crazy faith stuff without God is just plain crazy!

SHEILA: One of the things I found really moving about your story is the way that in that particular area of Tulsa, where the blood of Christ is now redeeming, the blood that was shed so many years ago, and one of the worst things that ever happened in our nation, talk about how you came to be there.

MICHAEL: So in 1921, there was a horrible race riot on Greenwood. It was a very affluent African American area that impacted the whole world. Because of some racial tension, there was a massacre that happened there where basically the entire neighborhood was burned down. To this day, there is like a quarter of a mile strip that stands from this affluent community in town.

When God called me to be a pastor, and that's a whole other story for a whole other day, the church he asked me to pastor was a church titled Greenwood Christian Center after the race massacres. It was in the hood, in this area, and it was started by a white pastor who God told to go to that area and help reverse the curse.

So 16 years later, pastor Gary and his beautiful wife, Debbie, hand this crazy dude the baton and say, now you're supposed to lead this. And God told me four things. He said this church is supposed to be multi-ethnic, multi-generational, multiplying, and multi-campus. We were none of those things. There were about 300 people that came to the church at that time, and that was 2015. And what God has done since then is everything that he said he was going to do. He made it all of those multis, and now we get to spread the message and give God glory and see reconciliation in a place where there was so much devastation. And we're just grateful to God for that.

RANDY: That's special to me because, being in Tulsa, I used to go to the Greenwood Jazz Festival every year. I know that area, and I've seen how it's improved so much over the last 30 years. But beyond that, there's still some north and south division. Right?

MICHAEL: Yeah, yeah.

RANDY: But what the world is telling us right now is that the black and white can never really --

MICHAEL: Oh no. That's not true. They just need to come to Transformation Church on Sunday. That's it!

RANDY: Right! We seem a little crazy by going, no, look. We've got all the answers right here in the Bible. Love your neighbor as yourself. Do you want to know what love looks like? Let me walk you through that in Paul's letters too. You're expressing it.

MICHAEL: The key to that is making something bigger than race the thing that brings us together, and that's Jesus. And so, for us, number one, you've got to be open to it. I openly declared that our church would be a multi-ethnic church. And many pastors, whether you're white, black, or Hispanic, feel comfortable just having people like you; that's the easiest way to go.

But we intentionally said from day one that this is going to be a multi-ethnic church. And the craziest thing is to see white people who have never been in north Tulsa lined up off the highway to get to our church and come in. And their first experience is now with people who somebody looks like a gang banger, somebody is a bank owner, somebody bags groceries, and the other person is the car dealer, and they're all serving on the same team? It changes the perspective, and now people get to see what they don't know is possible, and it becomes possible because there's an example of it.

And so today, Transformation Church is one of those places that is more diverse than anyplace in Tulsa that I go to during the week, and I'm grateful to be in such a healthy community.

SHEILA: I sometimes wonder if people would feel a little intimidated by the title *Crazy Faith*. But then you unpack it in such a helpful way, Michael because you talk about 51 percent is enough. Talk about that.

MICHAEL: I talk about this concept of maybe faith. I'm probably going to mess up some pastors' and preachers' whole theology right here. But people always ask me, like how do you know it's God? I want to be sure it's God. I just tell them, you don't know! Like there is a part of walking by faith that is maybe. Like it will prove to be God, or it will prove to be a lesson. But what you have to do is you have to walk. And many believers are paralyzed at the start because they want certainty that it is going to work. And there is nothing in the scripture that talks about certainty, except that we're going to die and we're going to be in heaven if we accept Jesus. That's the only thing that is certain.

So for me, I live my life by this philosophy of 51 percent faith. If I'm 51 percent sure it's God, I'm going. Not 90 percent, not 75 percent, if I'm 51, I just need to be one percent past my doubt -- one percent past my fear -- one percent past my ambition. If I know it's God, I'm going to go, and people are like, what if it doesn't work? I say the grace of God is so amazing. When that scripture says that all things work together for the good of those who love him and are called, I thought it was God. And the thing that people don't realize is that even if it wasn't God, even if I missed him in prayer, even if it was the wrong unction, maybe it was the ice cream I ate last night, and it wasn't the Holy Spirit. Like even if it was that, God now knows that if he speaks to me, clearly he has somebody that will go.

SHEILA: That is so good.

RANDY: So you have four kids.

MICHAEL: Four kids.

RANDY: I'm on the other side of that. Mine are all in their 20s. So I'm just warning you now, you're going to get some father's day gifts, some birthday gifts, and some Christmas gifts that you don't want, but they think you want. But you're going to love those kids

even when they bring you what you didn't want.

MICHAEL: Literally, we're in the best time of our life, me and my wife, Natalie. We have four kids. We just had a new baby; she is four months old right now. So everything is crazy at the Todd household right now. So *Crazy Faith*, if it wasn't written for anybody else, it was written for us to be able to survive this season we're in right now.

RANDY: Even when we miss it, we're not -- if our hearts turned toward God, man, he's got the grace.

SHEILA: I want you to unpack this whole beautiful concept for our viewers at home because crazy faith for you might mean believing for an incredible building in your city. What would crazy faith look like for a woman in her 40s who is just thinking, well, I'd love to crazy faith, but where do I start?

MICHAEL: Crazy faith starts with baby faith. Like what most people don't understand is like the big things that God does always start in seed form. Let me just break it down clearly, and I don't want to give too much of the book away, but this whole story centers around 37 days after I became the lead pastor of Transformation Church. No seminary, a church that's voting, if they want me to be there or not. I don't know if I'm in the right -- I'm completely like, I don't know if this is you, God.

And 37 days after I became the pastor, I'm doing what I do every morning, spending time with God praying and asking God, please help me. And I hear this unction to get out a piece of paper and a notepad and start writing down. I got my computer, and I started writing down the Spirit Bank Event Center will be Transformation Church. And I have a piece of paper that I went to Google, and I Googled the Spirit Bank Event Center. I'd been in the building one time, and I spelled "transformation" wrong. Like I literally have the document that I put there. I believe God was telling me all these things. It was completely crazy.

But what I had at that moment was baby faith. I had enough faith to write it down. And there are so many people watching this right now and I don't know who you are, but the first step you have to do is write down what God is saying. Write the vision, make it plain. Do something that won't cost you any money. That seems a little crazy but do it now. So for me, nobody was rejoicing and clapping when I finished that document and hit save. Nobody, my wife, I was like, "Babe, I wrote this down." She was like, yay! There were no fireworks because it would be five years before this moment of crazy baby faith would turn into crazy faith.

And I'm just encouraging that mother, that business owner, that teenager, like do the thing that you can do right now, and that may be just opening up a bank account and titling it "Blessing fund" because you want to be able to bless other people, but right now you need the blessing. It may be taking a picture of your family who has been estranged and putting them all together in a picture, and writing "Christmas 2022." It just may be getting a vision. And I tell people this all the time, you've got to see it before you see it. And if you could get a vision, it could change the trajectory of everything that happens in your life. So don't start at crazy faith; start with baby faith.

SHEILA: That's so good because if you don't do something, you'll never do anything. It's like you have to start with something. The thing I love about what you're saying is every single one of us, it doesn't matter how old we are, it doesn't matter how long we've known the Lord, we can all start somewhere.

MICHAEL: Well, the faith journey never stops. The thing that people think is, oh, I've been in church this many years. God's done these things through my life. Abraham and Sarah were walking in faith at 90 and 100 years old. I want you to think about what God is asking you to do. And you know she had crazy faith to have a son at 90? Like, come on now! A lot was going on there.

I just believe that many times we think God is done with us, and he's just beginning. That's where I'm challenging every person that thinks they've seen the greatest miracles

and seen God do the most amazing things in their life. No, no, no! Let's go back again. What is he saying today? What is he saying now? Because he's always trying to increase our faith.

SHEILA: I love that!

RANDY: When you were writing down this vision, and it did come to fruition, I can remember in the Tulsa World, in the newspaper, and I literally was like, wow! That's crazy. Who is this guy? Right? But when you were going through that process, how many times did you think maybe I am just crazy?

MICHAEL: Oh yeah! Like every day! Like that's the thing. I didn't, even when I was saying 51 percent sure, that's not 59 or 70 -- it's 51. Because it's hard sometimes to do things that you've never seen anybody else do. And I believe that many times -- you know I heard it said that once a world record is broken that in the next month or two, five or six other people break the world record. But it can be standing for years until somebody does it.

I believe God wants some more people to break records, people that shatter and break the glass ceiling. People make the leap forward so other people can make the leap forward. I believe that he is no respecter of persons. I believe that if you have the faith to be able to trust that God could potentially do it through you and be able to go like the scripture says, "I believe but help my unbelief." Like that was the prayer that I kept having to pray, "I believe you, Lord, but help my unbelief." And God is okay with that prayer. And that's why I've been able to continue on this journey of crazy faith.

SHEILA: So the book is called *Crazy Faith*: "It is only crazy until it happens." You're going to want to get a hold of this book for yourself; you'll want to get a hold of this book for your teenager. This is a big vision in a doable way.

But first of all, we'd like to help you to help us carry out a big vision in a doable way.

Right now, even as we're sitting here in the comfort of a studio in Texas, there are some mothers who are struggling to get their children to a malnutrition clinic because they haven't been able to provide one single bowl of food for their children. I've met some of these mothers. I've met them on their knees praying, God, if you still hear me, will you please send some help? The great news is we get to do that. So please, will you watch this?

On the mission field:

SHEILA: We've met a lot of moms on our trip to Angola, but I have to tell you, Mariana's story has touched me so profoundly.

OPEN CAPTIONS:

>> I have lost two of my children. They both died because of hunger. There was nothing I could do to save them. I have nothing. My heart aches when I have to put my children to bed hungry.

SHEILA: She said that when she goes to bed at night, she just lies there, and she said honestly, she wishes she could give up; she feels such despair. But she said, "I can't give up because I've still got three children who need me."

But when she only has a little bit of food, she makes sure that she gives it to all three of her children, and many nights this mom goes to bed with nothing -- nothing in her stomach! Just a prayer on her lips, "Lord, will you send me some help?"

OPEN CAPTIONS:

>> I am very worried about my children because I know their bodies are not healthy. I know they're not getting enough food.

SHEILA: Maybe you think, well, how can we change her life? It's really easy -- through mission feeding. Can you imagine the burden that it would take off this mom knowing that her kids get one good meal every single day? It's not a lot to ask.

End of video

In the studio:

SHEILA: Some of the time with Mariana on that trip, we did not talk. We just sat together because I felt like we're just two mothers who had been placed in very different situations. I've never had a moment when I thought, what am I going to give my son to eat? It's always been there. It's always been easy. And she is no different than me. She just happens to have been born in a different part of the world. The drought has been so drastic that even the little bit of crops they did have produced nothing. I watched her literally with her hands scraping in the dirt to see if there was anything she had missed.

Can you imagine what that's like? It would break my heart. I can't imagine how you want to even go on. I understood when she said some nights I just want to give up because she wakes up to that every morning.

But here's what I love about what we do. James and Betty, from the beginning, their whole vision from God was we're not going to blow into a country and like here we are! We're here to save you all. They said, "No. Let's look at who God is already using in that nation, and let's underwrite their work." And that's what mission feeding is all. We go in, and we'll set up these feeding programs in schools. So the children will come to school, they'll get a great meal, and they'll break that cycle of poverty that goes from generation to generation.

We can do this. We need to do this. It's our joy and privilege to do this. And if we do it together, we literally can change the world one mother, one child at a time, Randy.

RANDY: We can. And Sheila, I think it is important for people to know the people that

we're helping; this is an emergency food situation. You mentioned the drought; that's what they were facing. These are people who work every day to sustain themselves, but when circumstances that they cannot control come in and you've got a three-month, six-month, maybe a year-or-two-long drought, that's when the situation gets bad.

That's where we step in. This is not a forever type of thing. This is where we go in. Where is the need great? How much can we do? How can we sustain them until they are on their feet again? We sustain them with your help. \$30 will help feed three children for three months. \$50 will feed five children for three months. You see a \$100, 10 children. \$1,000 will feed 100 children. This gets them through as they are going to school, as their working the fields, as the rains come back, or the floods recede, whatever the situation is, this is where we step into that gap, and we give them life.

I hope you'll go online or go to the phone right now and make the best gift you can because there are people in need right now, and they're praying for help. You are the answer to the prayer. Join us in mission feeding. Let's save lives. Do it now and give the best gift you can.

Begin video clip:

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

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

With your gift of any amount, we will send you *Christmas Grace*. This eye-opening, new 31-day devotional will give you a fresh perspective on the greatest gift ever given and the life-transforming hope found in Christ's birth.

With your gift of \$100 or more, request the "Love and Thanks" tumbler set with scriptures reminding us that "God's love never fails" and to always "Give thanks." These tumblers will keep drinks hot or cold wherever you go.

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: Randy, Sheila, I'm appealing to your hearts because I know your heart, I know your heart for the children of Africa. Sheila, I know your heart for the mothers. The mothers that do everything they can to save their children's lives, but many times they can't simply because they don't have the resources. That is what our malnutrition clinics in South Sudan are doing. That is why it is so critical that we complete this project. That we finish rebuilding all 16 of these clinics and reach each and every one of those children.

Please, Randy, Sheila, ask the friends of *LIFE* to give the very best gift they can give today because their gift truly will be the gift of life.

End of video

In the studio:

RANDY: Isak is so right, and I appreciate his work. Sheila, we have built back many of these clinics, but there are more to go. And I just pray, whatever you can do, you would help continue to rebuild those clinics.

Sheila, I would love to have everybody pick up Michael's book.

SHEILA: Yeah! Absolutely! For any gift at all, please say, I want *Crazy Faith*. Let's start with the little bit of faith and let it grow and let it grow until we can all say because of Jesus, we have crazy faith. Michael, thank you so much for being with us. It was awesome.

MICHAEL: This is my pleasure. I'm excited for what is going to happen as people start moving in crazy faith.

SHEILA: Amen! Absolutely!

RANDY: Thank you for watching! We'll see you again next time here on *LIFE Today*!