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Week 46: Fall Mission Feeding

Randy Robison and Sheila Walsh

Lisa Whittle

SHEILA: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm Sheila Walsh here with Randy Robison. You probably get this too, Randy but every now and again, quite a lot, I'll get a book in the mail that a friend or someone has sent me or publishing company send. And I try to read most of them but every now and again, one lands on my desk, and I'm like, Lord, this is a book for this time. And this is exactly how I felt about this book. It's called *the hard good*: "Showing up for God to work in you when you want to shut down." Boy! If that doesn't resonate, nothing would resonate. Lisa Whittle, thank you so much for writing this book.

LISA: Thank you! Thank you, Sheila. And thank you for those kind words.

SHEILA: It's great. One of the things I think is interesting is you call it *the hard good*, not "the good hard." Why does that matter?

LISA: It actually matters a lot because we know that we go through hard things. Everybody knows that, right? We could all name our hard. But it doesn't end with hard. When you know the Lord, and you follow Jesus, it does not end with hard. And so that wording is actually very important. I thought about should it be the good hard or should it be *the hard good*? And I knew it had to end with good. So it's a very important distinction.

RANDY: Where did this come from? You've been through -- are you at the good or are you in the hard?

LISA: Well, I think life is always a mix of both. So honestly, I feel like I am the reader. I really am. More than any book that I've ever written, I feel like I'm journeying in this still. Lessons learned, certainly, but I feel like I'm in the hard good all the time in my life as a lifelong learner.

This book came to me, really, after my father went to heaven in 2017. My father was a pastor, a very gifted orator, and my favorite person, really, on the face of this earth. After he died, I felt like the Lord was saying to me, Lisa, what are you going to do with all you know? I had watched this man really wrestle his whole life. We moved around a lot. Every time things would get very hard or complicated in a pastorate situation, he would say, "Well, I think God is calling us away." So we would move. And I would put my posters up in my new house and make that sort of my new home, my brother would hunt frogs in the yard, and it would feel normal. My mom would cook in the kitchen. But we all sort of knew, in this way, that dad was running from something that a zip code couldn't fix.

So it was like God wanted me to write sort of, not just that history, but what happens when all of us sort of run away from hard things rather than letting God transform us.

SHEILA: The book is such -- I was deeply moved by your book. But it is a beautiful tribute to the relationship between a father and a daughter. It talks to us about that special bond that you had.

LISA: Well, you understand. My father was my favorite person. My father was complicated. My father, you're going to touch me so deeply when I talk about my father. It doesn't matter how long that you have someone, losing someone you love is just profound.

It was also complicated, Sheila, because so many people would say, "You're so much like your father." So there was this sort of legacy and D.N.A. piece tied in there that a lot of

people can relate to having to sort through. It was tender, Sheila. It was tender. But I feel grateful to have had that bond with him because I believe God had me have that bond to be able to write his story.

SHEILA: One of the things that I found really moving in the book is you talk about, at one point, while you are still quite young, maybe late teens, you discover something about your dad that's very disappointing. But when you talk about coming to a place where you have to let go, I think of a number of people, women I've talked to, and I know you do, too, who are stuck in a place because of something that happened. What was that like for you when you discovered something disappointing about the person who is your favorite person on the planet?

LISA: Well, I had a large emotional crash because, first of all, it was complicated; my father was my pastor. So I think a lot of us can understand. When a person of faith who leads us in that capacity has a large public crash, there are complications. But it was also complicated because he was someone that I loved so deeply. It was disappointing.

There had been a rumor that he had possibly had an affair. It was one of those things that I had to let go of, eventually, even knowing if he did or didn't because I realized at one point I would never fully know. I would never know the full story. The only reason I included that was because I felt like it was important for that person who felt like I'm not sure if I can go through my life if I don't know this certain piece of information. I wanted to testify, yes you can. You actually can live with the not knowing. You can accept not knowing and be free.

RANDY: Where's the good? Because I hear this and, I understand the difficulties in the relationship and the expectations and the not knowing and the disappointments. Where's the good?

LISA: Well, the good is always as a follower of Jesus Christ with God. That's not a trite saying. That is the core belief of my life that God is good. I don't mean that as a bumper

sticker. I mean that as God and good cannot be separated. So anything that draws you to the actual good God is good for you. It doesn't feel good at the moment. You don't want it. You wouldn't wish for it. But does it draw you to the sustenance of your life, the only thing that matters? And that's good. Growth is good. Spiritual transformation is good. And because culture has told us that good is something else, we've bought that. And that's why we spend our life in comparison and feeling like we've done something wrong when our good life doesn't measure up to their good life. And so that's why very early on I had to say let me tell you what good actually is because when we know what that is, then we can understand this process of hard good.

SHEILA: You talk about things that hold us captive, that hold us back, and you list these three things. I related to every single one of them! [Laughing] You talk about accepting you. I mean, that's a huge thing. I told my husband last night. You know I've been on a diet for 52 years. It's like, how do you come to that place of accepting you? Not the you you think you could be, but you?

LISA: Oh, Sheila! This was so easy for me to write because that's been the story of my life. I think I felt like, in some ways, if I pushed back on acceptance that I could make it not be true. Now, I knew cognitively that wasn't possible, but I just felt like, oh, somehow, if I can just not accept that, I can make something not be true.

At one point, I realized that I could separate two things, acceptance and preference -- and it changed me. I can actually accept something that I wish were something different and at the same time still not prefer it. And I could make peace with that. And something about that allowed me to move on in a different way, and that was something so crucial for me.

SHEILA: Talk about this thing of two things can be true at the same time. That made me think of when I was nursing my mother-in-law in the last days of her cancer and she's in pain and I'm trying to monitor her morphine. Out the window, my son is talking to the neighborhood cat, and it is hilarious. It's like this strange juxtaposition of agony and joy.

Why is that hard, do you think, for us to accept two things can be true at the same time?

LISA: I think we are -- I think it is a combination of who we are as humans. We feel like we have to choose between one thing or the other in almost every situation. I think we live in a polarized culture that says you must choose this, or you must choose that. I think we don't have the wisdom sometimes to have nuanced conversations and even believe nuanced things in our hearts. It doesn't water down the truth, the Bible, conviction.

As you know, I'm very strong in those ways. But you have to believe that you can be holding joy and pain at the same time, or you're going to live in a very frustrated way because you're going to think that your life is somehow not the way it's supposed to be when you're only living one way or the other, or you've done something wrong, or you somehow missed the instructions. It's really important.

SHEILA: One of the things I loved, and I ached at the same time as a mom, you talk about your son Michael playing football, so gifted, and then doesn't make what you believe he should have. But what you saw in him that was more important. Talk about that.

LISA: Yeah, I included that in chapter two about cheering for someone who gets what you want. I talked about my son, who was very talented in football and watched one by one, all of these guys that he'd sweated out on the field with, practiced just as hard as and in some cases harder, watched them get football scholarships, one by one by one. But what was remarkable about that, Sheila, was not just that he was happy for them; he took it a step further. He actually cheered for them. So he would, I would see him on Twitter every day, and he would say, "Look at my man, Mike. He actually got this scholarship to wherever." You know, what struck me was that I thought I'm not sure I cheer for people that well. And I thought I want to be that kind of person.

And what I realized at that moment, it is not hard to cheer for someone who has less than you, but it is really hard to cheer for someone who has more. And it inspired me, Sheila.

And that's why I included it in the book because I think a lot of us deal with that. And I wanted to not shame us with our jealous feelings that we all get sometimes. I wanted to say, what can we do about it? And that's why I talked about it in the book.

SHEILA: That's huge!

RANDY: It is. And I think it goes to the point of what enables us to get through a lot of the most difficult circumstances, which is getting our eyes off ourselves. Looking out and seeing the needs of others, taking care of others, not doing the comparison thing, which requires you to focus. But as you've struggled with these very real issues, how much of that becomes, God, more of you and less of me? Does that make sense?

LISA: Of course! I think that is the goal. I think that is the prayer. I think that's the Christian life. I think it's hard. And I think it's good.

[Laughter]

RANDY: Right! Yeah!

LISA: I think when he becomes more in our life, what happens to us is a remarkable sense of spiritual confidence that I think we see in certain people, and we say, wow! I want to be like that. And what we think is, well, maybe they're born more special, or they just have this certain gene that I don't have. What we don't sometimes realize is this is a spiritual muscle that's been built by not turning away from the hard and running. But it's by leaning into that and saying God, how can you change me? How can you shape me? How can you make me more like you? And he will do that if we'll ask him.

SHEILA: I told you at the beginning that this book is really going to impact you, and it will! I'm going to tell you in a minute how you can get your own copy. But one of the chapters that really spoke to me the most was chapter three: "Showing Up When You Want to Shut Down." I related to that so much, and I'm sure a large percentage of our

audience; that's why it seems so timely to me. What are you helping us walk through in that chapter?

LISA: Well, I think it's the natural reaction of all of us, especially goodness, in the last few years. There is not a person I talk to that doesn't say I want to shut down, or I've felt like I want to shut down, or on any given day I could shut down. I'm helping us walk through what to pay attention to in our lives. What needs to be dealt with that might have been something that might be what is coming out now or triggered, but it might be something that's been brewing for a very long time. Things don't typically just happen. They are things that we've neglected or things that have needed to be paid attention to.

So I talk about that a lot. I share some of my own personal stories in there of times that I've wanted to shut down. And really, Sheila, that's been a big learning lesson for me. And what happens when you do show up for your life. Which, by the way, does not need to be perfect. I'm so glad about that. And never will be perfect. It is a process, and it is important because when we show up for our life, it profoundly changes us. God can use us in a different way for his kingdom. And I think inside all of us, it's what we really want. If I'm going to be here if I'm here and I'm breathing, I want to be usable for the kingdom of God, and we have to show up for our life to do it.

RANDY: There is one that I think you touch on that I relate to, and I think maybe this is a little bit of being the preacher's kid kind of thing. And that is, oftentimes, we feel like God wants us to do something, but it doesn't meet the expectations of other people. I don't mean bad people; I mean other good people. And disappointing others, boy, that's a tough one. And sometimes, you kind of have to choose between the two. How do you handle that? How do you reconcile those things?

LISA: Yes. You know, what's interesting that you're saying here is that it is actually one of the things that resonated the most with people in the book because it is a universal issue. I really feel led by God to do this. I feel like this is where God is leading me. But others in my life don't support it. Others don't agree. Others don't understand it. But, like

you say, it might be people in your life that love you. And on the surface, because it might be a scary ask of God so they might have good reason.

I think, of course, there is a lot more in the book about this. But I believe firmly in good counsel. I don't believe we should dismiss folks, and especially folks that have our best interest in mind that have walked with us, that know us, that can speak into us. Because sometimes we can't see clearly. Sometimes we need that voice of reason to say, hey, think about this. And so, I would never dismiss good counsel.

What I will say is that God's voice needs to be the loudest in your life. And I will never get away from that. What happens when that happens, and we do what God wants us to do, even when it disappoints others because others will always have an opinion about what we need to do. It develops a confidence in our decision-making. And I've heard a lot of people that say, I never know what decision to make. I never know if it is God telling me to do it or me or someone else. What I will say is that as you begin to make decisions based on what God wants and not polling everybody around you to see what everyone thinks and checking their temperature, in future decision-making, it gives you a different level of confidence. It changes you.

SHEILA: The thing I took away from your book was I love the fact that you acknowledge how hard life is, how disappointing life can be. But you always, the whole way through the book, point back to Christ, who is our hope. What is your hope? When someone finishes your book, what do you hope is left in their life?

LISA: I hope that they will know that ultimately if they know and follow Jesus, they'll be okay. They don't have to wonder about that. They will be okay because our hope is in God. I hope that they know that God is still good and God is still God always. That does not change with our changing circumstances. And again, that's not just a fancy saying; that's based on the truth of the Word of God.

I hope they know that God can change them. I'm so grateful for that. That God can

change you. He can! He can change your mind about things that you thought. He can change your mouth about things that you've said. He can change everything about you. And I hope that that gives someone an enormous amount of hope.

RANDY: That's very encouraging -- very encouraging. Right now, there is a situation where you look at, and you wonder where is God? Would a good God allow this to happen? It is a hard situation, but there is a solution, and you and I are part of that solution. Will you take a look at this?

On the mission field:

OPEN CAPTIONS: One of the urgent things for this challenge is the high mortality rate. Most of these children, some of them are not even able to live up to 5 years. Kwashiorkor causes high mortality in these clinics if we don't assist.

RANDY: Kwashiorkor is a specific type of malnutrition that's common in rural Africa. I've knelt by the graves of children who died from malnutrition, so I know its deadly effects. But while knowing and hearing about malnutrition is one thing, seeing it is another. Malnutrition, hunger, these words fail to convey the suffering of a child whose body is shutting down from the lack of food. And words alone will not heal that suffering.

My parents started mission feeding as an act of love and honor for human life. It continues to save lives in Africa today, but only if it's supported by our viewers. We cannot forget that there are those that we can still save. All those children who are on the edge of death, they're malnourished, they're hungry. When you help us get mission feeding to a village in need, you're stopping malnutrition in its tracks. You're telling these children that they matter and that they are loved. Help us provide food for children who desperately need it now. Help save lives today.

End of video

In the studio:

RANDY: I know that's hard to watch, but man, it is so good when you see the difference we make. And when I say we, I mean we. Your gift of \$30 right now will help feed three children for three months. \$50 will feed five children. \$100 will help feed ten children for three whole months. I hope many of you can give so \$1,000 or more because there are children, that line is long, and there are many lines around Southern Africa that we want to have that bowl at the end of that line filled for those children. That only happens when you partner with us. And I absolutely love when I go back to a village, and I see the effects of mission feeding because the children are learning, they're smiling, they're laughing, they're playing, they're being what children should be, and that is the fulfillment.

But right now, we have a great need. We have a need in the field where the feeding stations are. We have a need where we're rebuilding clinics. So there are many waiting right now for you to reach out. So we can reach out with the aid that they need.

Sheila, this is one of those things that it's painful, and it's joyful all at the same time.

SHEILA: I'll never forget my first trip to Angola because the first couple of days, we actually went to the malnutrition clinics, and that was one of the most devastating things. I'll never ever forget that. Because of the despair in the eyes of the mothers, the silence in so many of the children, little ones who should be -- I think I've taken my son to the doctor when he was little, and he would cry, and he'd make a fuss. These children didn't have enough energy to make a fuss.

I remember being in our tent that night and thinking, Lord, this is too much. But the next day, we went to a village where they had already set up a program, and it was night and day. I remember sitting there handing out these bowls of food, and it's specially made for

children in that area, the nutrients, the protein they need. And there was life in their eyes, and they were laughing, and they were teasing one another. It was the way children should be!

So we have made a commitment this year to feed 350,000 children. Our partners are on the ground right now. At the moment, Randy and I can't go because of all the travel restrictions, but our partners are there, and the lines are still there.

So please, would you join with us? Whatever gift you can give will make a huge difference. Just a bowl of food can literally begin the transformation from death to life. So please, go to your phone, make the best gift you possibly can, and then we'll bring you the stories of the lives that have literally been saved one child at a time.

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

Begin video clip:

DAVID: "A thrill of hope," the carol writer called the announcement of Jesus' birth. Hi, I'm David Holland, author of *Christmas Grace*; 31 meditations and declarations on the greatest gift ever given.

I'm thrilled beyond words to know that as you partner with *LIFE Today* to bring nutrition and hope to those who are in such desperate need, that you'll receive my newest devotional as an expression of their profound thanks.

I believe with all my heart that if you'll request this devotional and follow it through the holidays, right up to the new year, you'll come away with new insights about the birth of the Savior and a deeper love for him. You'll feel that thrill of hope. So share it and request your copy today, and may God bless you richly for extending hope and life to others.

End of video

In the studio:

RANDY: I hope you'll make the best gift you can. It does make a difference. And don't

forget, \$24,500 average cost for those clinics, the fix clinics, the mobile clinics; we're replacing them all. We've done many, but we need your help to continue with the rest. And today, Sheila, whatever they can give, we've got something for them.

SHEILA: Yeah! With any gift at all, please request a copy of Lisa's book, *the hard good*: "Showing up for God to work in you when you want to shut down." Thank you for writing this book.

LISA: Thank you, friend! Thanks for having me!

SHEILA: It was awesome. And we will look forward to seeing you next time on *LIFE Today*. God bless you.