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Week 46: Fall Mission Feeding

Randy Robison and Sheila Walsh

Michael Todd #2

SHEILA: Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm Sheila Walsh here with Randy Robison. Let me ask you a question. Do you feel in the last few months, the last couple of years, that maybe your faith's been waning a little bit? Maybe getting a little depressed, a little lonely, a little sad? Does it feel like it might be time to restoke your faith? Well, we have the perfect person with us to do that. Pastor Michael Todd has a great new book out now, and it's called *Crazy Faith*: "It's only crazy until it happens." Welcome! So good to have you here.

MICHAEL: Thank you guys for having me. This is fun! I'm excited about sharing this message with people. God is about to do something really, really special.

RANDY: So Michael, you're a pastor of a large church. You're really young.

MICHAEL: I'm pretty young. Yeah. I'm pretty young. I don't feel as young as I used to be. I'm 34 -- I'm about to be 34. And I've been pastoring for the past almost six years. I grew up in ministry, but I never thought I would be a pastor. But you know how God has other plans for your life than you do, so I'm grateful.

RANDY: There is an interesting thing that happened with you that I'd love for people to know because it looks a little crazy. Like, oh, this guy came out of nowhere. He got this big building; he's bringing all these people together. But I think God was at work long before we realized what was going on, even to the point of your parents having to have a little bit of *Crazy Faith*. I think it typifies what we need to hear today.

MICHAEL: Well, I tell everybody that the big thing that God does always starts with the small thing; I call it "baby faith" in the book. But my parents are what I call modern-day faith heroes. I believe that's what God wants to make all of us into. We read about Paul and John and Abraham and Noah.

But what about Michael? What about Steve? What about Susan? What about Sarah? He said greater works would we do. And that's one of the things I believe I saw in my parents that before I was born, there was a ministry in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and the pastor came up and said, "You should come up and visit Tulsa." And both of them felt very strongly that they were supposed to move to Tulsa from Louisiana to help this pastor start a church. No job, nobody they knew, no security, but they felt that they were to step a faith in *Crazy Faith*.

RANDY: Well yeah, your dad left a good job.

MICHAEL: Left State Farm. Did all these different things to follow God. And so I was born into a house of faith where I got to see it. And when you get to see it, it sometimes exposes you so that you can believe God. And I watched them do that. Because of their obedience, I was in the right place for some of the things that happened in my life to begin to take place.

So, Tommy and Brenda Todd, I love you! And there is a steak on the way when I get home.

[Laughter]

SHEILA: In your book, you talk about this vision that God gave you for a church and a building that seemed impossible. You wrote the vision down, you made it plain, but it was five years before. So I wanted to talk about "Waiting Faith." What do you do in the waiting period?

MICHAEL: So many people in the waiting get frustrated, they get disgruntled, and they think God forgot about it. And this is why I tell people don't waste the wait. Don't waste it. Don't think God is not working. If you don't see him, he is somewhere else doing something. And what he did for us is he was preparing us in the five years; I wrote this vision down 37 days after I became the lead pastor of the church. So like we had nothing at this moment. And five years later, it took that long for me to get the understanding I needed for us to build the team that we needed, for us to have the resources that we needed. So what I want to tell people is what many times looks like a setback is actually a setup. And what it did for us is it set us up to be able to be in a place for this vision to come to pass. I literally was believing God for an arena, 192,000 square feet, built by the city of Bixby for \$58 million.

Hear me when I say, when I say crazy -- this is completely unheard of. And we were able to acquire that building because, in the wait, I did not stop rehearsing the promise. So I want to encourage people right now that wherever you are if God has made you a promise, if there is something that he has said to you, if there is something that he's said about your children, your family, your business, do not stop rehearsing the promise.

I would look at where we were at that looked like it was running out of space. We went from doing one service in 2018 to doing five services. They were trying to kill me! [Laughing] And I was like, what are we going to do? God said, "I've given you the promise. Rehearse the promise." When I went to them and tried to get the building, they said, "They're not accepting offers right now." I was like, "What are we supposed to do?" God said, "Rehearse the promise."

I'm telling you as I began to rehearse the promise and got other people around me that were faith-filled to rehearse the promise, it began to grow our faith together. That said, even if God is holding this up for us, we know that this is going to happen, or something better is going to happen because we did not give up in the wait.

RANDY: I find that when I feel like I've heard from God, but there is that waiting period, I don't doubt God, I doubt me. And I don't even doubt my faith. I doubt that maybe I misheard. And so part of me does the unhealthy thing you talk about in your book, is I want to protect God's reputation, so I don't want to go out and say, "Well, God told me this."

MICHAEL: He doesn't need us to protect his reputation.

RANDY: I think a lot of people hit that point where they're like, did I hear God? It can be an honest question, not a statement of doubt.

MICHAEL: No. So one of the things I tell people in the waiting, it's all about serving. And this is where people-- like think about a waiter at a restaurant at your service, "What can I do for you?" Serve other people's needs. So one of the things that we did in our waiting season is we intentionally gave to other people who believed God for churches and helped them do what they were trying to do. We served other people while we needed to be served. And it changes the dynamic of how you wait when you're actually waiting, when you're actually serving other people and saying, "God, I'm at your service. You want me to serve in the children's? Do you want me to go and do this? You want me to go to that business owner and offer them my services for free?" That changes the heart posture, and then you're able to make it through that waiting period.

SHEILA: And you say, "Don't buy a Kmart." [Laughing] That's a great principle in that. Tell people what that is.

MIKE: I am human like everybody else. So we get in that waiting period, and now my circumstance tells me we need a building. We're doing five services; people were jam-packed everywhere. We're in a converted grocery store in the hood of Tulsa. And it's like, we've got to do something else. So my circumstance is pressing me.

And so, my team is like, we know what God said, but maybe there is something before

that happens. So I'm sitting there. I'm like maybe, maybe that's-- in that doubting, just trying to figure it out. And they took me to all these buildings, and one of the buildings was an old, abandoned Kmart. And I go into that Kmart, and it is enough space, but it's got low ceilings and poles everywhere, and it is in a bad -- I said, "I'm not buying this Kmart! We're not going to settle."

And this is what many people do. Trying to protect God's reputation or to hurry the process and not wait on the pace that God set for you, they settle for the counterfeit. And we could have made it seem like it was God, and it was not his best for us. It would have been different and better than where we were, but it wasn't his best for us. And that's why I tell everybody, do not buy a Kmart! Don't settle with a Kevin if God has another man for you. Don't settle for the wrong business. Like, don't buy a Kmart. And there is so much blessing in waiting on what God has for you.

RANDY: Another point you make, you mentioned marriage there. I heard you talk about don't settle on, "Well, at least my husband doesn't cheat on me." When God really wants you to have a great marriage. I think that's the nuances there where we settle a lot to our great detriment.

MICHAEL: Well, if anybody wants to know about relationships, my last book was called *Relationship Goals*. You can go and look at that. But we want people to win in relationships. But honestly, I tell somebody, they're like, what are you more excited about? *Relationship Goals* because it did really well, or *Crazy Faith*? I said I'm more excited about *Crazy Faith* because to have good relationships, you have to have faith. You've got to trust God. You've got to walk in wisdom. You've got to do the different things. You've got to step out in faith and do some things that aren't conventional. So I'm excited for people to get this message.

SHEILA: When you talk about "stating faith" and you talk about "use your words," what would that look like?

MICHAEL: I believe that all throughout the Bible, God gives us words that have more power than the words that we just say by ourselves. When you start to say what God's word says, when you start to believe those things that he's told you, it starts something in yourself, first off, to believe God for more, and then it makes you remember who you believe in. See, a lot of people believe for things; they don't believe in the giver of the things. A lot of people believe for the healing; they're not thinking about the healer. Do you understand what I'm saying?

And so when I declare things like, "I'm healed. By his stripes, I am healed." I'm stating something that God took stripes for my healing. And now it puts my focus back on Jesus. It puts my focus back on -- when the Bible tells me he is the supplier of all my needs; he is Jehovah Jireh, the God who will provide. I'm looking at this building, and we don't have the money when he is telling me to write it down. So when I state that you're Jehovah Jireh, the God who provides, it makes me focus back on Jesus, the one that will bring this stuff to pass.

And so I think it is one of the things that we have to do often is not just put our Santa Claus wish list out there; we need to be focused on the giver of the gift, the giver of the grace, the giver of the mercy, and the one who can make everything in our lives come to pass.

RANDY: I can't tell you how much I appreciate you saying that because I know there is a tendency, and there is a tendency in Tulsa, you and I both know it, to have faith in faith. And our faith is not in our own faith. Our faith is in Christ alone.

MICHAEL: It is anchored in Christ alone. That's it!

SHEILA: With your son, with M.J., you have had to face some challenges, and I found that very -- I love the fact that you shared that your family has gone through some struggles. Because I think when somebody looks at you and you're this dynamic preacher that's filling the place, share a little bit about your son's story.

MICHAEL: Well, I talk about it in the book because the only thing I know how to be is H.O.T.: Humble, open, and transparent. That's what we say. We're going to be authentic, and we're going to be H.O.T. Right at the moment that God is doing all of these miracles for our church, impacting, and people are getting saved, and tons of people are coming, we find out that our only son has autism. M.J. today is six years old, and he's nonverbal. He's still not potty trained. It's one of the hardest things in life to know that God has done amazing things in all of these other areas, and you're still waiting for him to do it in this one area that matters the most.

I think it is important for people to know, one, that God has no favorites. He rains on the just and the unjust. It doesn't matter that I'm a pastor or anything; we still face hard trials, harder trials than anything that money has to deal with.

I just think it's interesting that God would give me this message of *Crazy Faith* and then give me someone that I have to believe him for every single day. And it's changed why, how, and where I believe God. I believe him in everything now. Because somebody said, "Well, what if he doesn't do it for your son?" I said, "It won't be because I didn't believe God could do it." I feel like Martha, talking to Jesus after Lazarus dies, and she says, "If you would have been here, my brother wouldn't have died. But even now, I believe that you can do something about this situation."

And so when I look at all that God has done in our church, and through the messages and with our platform, all of that is great. But even now, I believe God can do something for M.J. Even now, I believe that God can touch my son and have us doing treatments and therapies and all that stuff as we're doing it; we're believing God for a miracle. So *Crazy Faith* is not an ending. This is not an exclamation mark. This is a comma. I dedicated the book to my son. I said, "One day, I believe in *Crazy Faith* that we're going to talk about what God has done through your life."

SHEILA: Lord Jesus, we agree with that right now. In the powerful name of Jesus, we

agree with that for the life of this beautiful, beautiful boy.

MICHAEL: Amen.

RANDY: That's where it gets real, man. Hmm! There are some people watching right now who are -- they want that *Crazy Faith*, but they've got that M.J., they've got that tough spot in their life, and they don't understand. What do you say to them?

MICHAEL: What they have is fading faith. That's what's happening. They had faith at one time, and then life circumstances came in, and somehow, it's just starting to wane. It is the same thing that Thomas had in the Bible when all the disciples were in one place, and Jesus showed up in his resurrected form, and Thomas missed it. We call him "Doubting Thomas," but I think that's a bad rap because we don't know why he was gone. He could have been the only one that had enough courage to go out and get food. He could have been -- we don't know why he was gone, but he missed it. And everybody was talking in *Crazy Faith*, "Jesus came back! We saw him. This is da-da-da." He was like, "Until I see the prints in his hand, the piercing in his side, don't talk to me." His faith was fading. I believe that God's grace is so good that he will do something practical, as well as something personal, to prove to us that he sees us. So he comes back another time, and the first thing he says is, "Thomas come here." Thomas didn't even have to ask. He just put out his hands. He said, "Feel this." He said, "Hey, don't have little faith no more."

And for me, and for anybody that's out there, God's okay with you saying, "Can you show me something? Could you let me know? Could you confirm to me that I'm not crazy? Could you please?" And even with my son, M.J., there are things that God has told me that I've written down in my journal that are things that I'm like, okay, God, I'm going to stay. I'm going to wait in faith; I'm not going to let my faith be lazy. I'm going to start with baby, even when it feels like maybe. I'm going to allow you to do it until it becomes crazy. I trust God.

SHEILA: I love the way that you reframe "maybe" in your book. Because so often we

see "maybe" as a negative. Will this diet work? Well, maybe. You rephrase it, and you make a "maybe" point upwards.

MICHAEL: "Maybe" is optimistic to me. My daughters love when daddy says, "Maybe." Because they have me wrapped around their finger, number one, and like if I say no, they know it is not happening. But if I say "maybe." "Daddy, can we get ice cream?" "Well, maybe." They're like, maybe! And they keep -- their faith gets encouraged. And I would say let's not make maybe something that's pessimistic. If there is a maybe, let's make it optimistic. Let's see what God can do with a maybe.

RANDY: Well, that points to hope. Can we really have faith without hope?

MICHAEL: No! It literally is the fuel for faith. And I tell people all the time if you don't hope, like, you can never get to having faith in something. Hope is free. Like hope, you can do it right now, and there are people watching this right now that you've stopped hoping that your family comes together. You've stopped hoping that God gets you out of that situation. You've stopped hoping that maybe God will take your book or your song and do something. So all I'm asking you to do again before we get to *Crazy Faith*, just hope it can happen. Today I want you to know that we serve the hope of the world, and his name is Jesus. And if you would allow yourself to hope again, I believe something significant would happen, and it can turn into something that is crazy. And I promise you, it is only crazy until it happens.

SHEILA: Wow! It's so powerful. You're going to want to get a hold of this book for yourself because sometimes you might see a title like *Crazy Faith* and think, that's amazing for some people, not for me. The thing I love about the way that you've written this, Michael, is that there is an entry point for everybody here -- every single person.

MICHAEL: Because that was my entry point. It started with baby faith, it was faith as a mustard seed, and it continued to go through every process until people say, "Oh, that's a man of faith." No, no, no, no! What was crazy in one season is now counted as faith in

this season.

RANDY: That's so good. There is something that we want to happen, and it can only happen with you. I think it is more than a hope, Sheila. I'd like people to get that book, and I'd like for them to help us fulfill that hope of feeding people.

SHEILA: Yeah, this is a great opportunity. It is not an oh, please will you do this? It is like we *get* to do this. We want to send you Michael's book with any gift at all. First of all, would 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:

SHEILA: Thank you, Isak. Can you imagine what it would be like for a mother to make her way, to walk for hours and discover that the clinic is gone? So some of you can do more. For \$24,500, we can rebuild one of these clinics, either a permanent structure there or mobile to go where these women and children are going. So please, if you could help with that, do that.

RANDY: Absolutely! And be sure you ask for *Crazy Faith* with any gift today to help us with mission feeding. Michael, I love what you're doing. I love the way God is shining through in your life, and we appreciate you sharing with our audience.

MICHAEL: Man, thank you so much for being here. We're going to have to do this more often.

SHEILA: Let's do this regularly!

MICHAEL: This is going to be good. Thank you, guys!

SHEILA: Thanks so much for being with us. And we'll see you next time!