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Week 50: Fall Mission Feeding

James and Betty Robison

Blair Linne

BETTY: Thank you for joining us on *LIFE Today*. I'm Betty, and this is James. We have a wonderful guest. You're going to really be blessed.

JAMES: Well, in many ways, our past is similar in the sense that I let you know because my mother was raped as a 40-year old hospice nurse. She took me to be aborted, and the doctor just refused to do it. It was a miracle. Well, Blair Linne, she is written about finding her father, which I did find mine, too. And actually, he came in and tried to kill my mother and told me he was going to kill me, and I almost killed him. Only a miracle kept that from happening.

Well, she wanted to find her father. We'll hear her story. But really and truly, it's a miracle journey. You're going to be blessed by it. *Finding My Father*, tremendous story, tremendous book.

Blair, tell us what you want our viewers to hear about what happened on this journey that caused you to write the book, *Finding My Father* and the importance of it and its effect and impact.

BLAIR: Yeah. So my mom and dad were never married. My mom was a single mom. She had had my sister, and so when she found out she was pregnant with me, she was going to abort me, as you said, and then decided she was going to give me up for adoption. The Lord had a different plan, and she kept me. She moved us from Michigan to Los Angeles when I was three years old. My dad was still living in Chicago. So he was 2,000

miles away, and our relationship really wasn't a relationship. It was a few phone calls a couple times each year.

And so it was just so many challenges that we dealt with coming up. We experienced poverty. I remember counting up the amount of times we had moved from our initial trip to Los Angeles until the time I could have my own apartment at 19: 25 times we moved around. I really struggled with authority. I respected my mom.

JAMES: You don't get to know anybody very well. You're always the stranger, and nobody knows you, and you don't know anybody. I remember, I moved 17 times in a ten-year period, so that put a lot of pressure on you.

BLAIR: Absolutely! Absolutely! I certainly respected my mom. My mom was the type of person who sacrificed tremendously for us. She gave us all that she could have, but the truth is, she couldn't take the place of my dad. I really needed him there. I wanted to communicate that to him, but I was so afraid if I shared that with him, maybe he would leave, and I wouldn't even have a few conversations.

JAMES: Had you been around him long enough to actually feel like you got to know him to a point?

BLAIR: Not really. When he was around, he was kind, so he would bring candy. I was three years old, so he would bring bags of candy to my sister and me. But I didn't know him as a person. He didn't know me; he had never come to visit me in Los Angeles. I struggled with authority as a result. So I respected my mom, but I didn't quite respect any other sources of authority. I remember even trying to steal at a young age from a store. Just getting into trouble, not realizing at the time I was on my way to becoming a statistic because fathers are so important. It's just often something that is neglected, the importance of having a father in the home.

And then also, I struggled with identity; who am I? I didn't have that fatherly blessing to

pour into me, to understand who I was. So I remember even at 18, as guys started expressing interest, I thought, what do I even look for in a guy? I didn't have any experience to know.

So my prayer in writing this book and walking through my own journey is ultimately pointing to how the Lord has shown me that he is my Father. When I came to the Lord, I was 22, and I thought, okay, here is a judge who has pardoned my sin. Praise be to God! But I didn't get to the point of recognizing until a few years in, as a believer, that he wants to be my father and that he loves me tremendously. So not only do I have a father in God, I have a family in the church. The Lord used the church to come fill in some of those holes, those gaps that I had from not having my dad in the home. And I'm just so grateful. I just want to point people to God as Father. He loves us.

JAMES: When people have never seen a father that was attractive, effective, present, rather than absent or dysfunctional, they don't really know how to even have a concept of what it would be to have a real good father.

How do you feel? You seem to see that, and you're talking about finding your father. I'm assuming you're going to talk about your physical father and finding this Father, God. You saw that this is really what everyone needs. And it's what men need to realize that they need to be like the ultimate Father. I've tried to say to people over and over now if we would show a fatherless world what the family of the perfect Father looks like because we behave like the family of the perfect Father, don't you think that would attract people to come to him? So you began to obviously see some things in your life spiritually that caused you to make better decisions.

How did you handle the boys that are liking you now, and this journey, and in this process? Tell me how God played a part in that? And then I want to know what happened in what the title implies, something important about finding your father. Somehow, I feel like it is not just that Father, but you must have wanted to find your father, right?

BLAIR: Absolutely! So yeah. What was so hopeful for me was rather than defining my relationship with God based on the brokenness of my earthly father, I had to go to the scriptures. Okay. What does God say about who he is and about this relationship he desires to have with me? So there is a scripture in Ephesians, chapter, verse 14. It talks about fatherhood coming from God. All fatherhood is derived from God the Father. It's not the other way around. I think oftentimes, yeah, we look at our earthly father and say, okay. Our relationship is tattered; it is broken. There is so much pain here. And so, how can I truly love God the Father? But God says, no, I'm doing a new thing. I define what fatherhood looks like. So turn to me. And actually, I think having these wounds from not having our father in the home causes us to have even greater desperation as we seek out God the Father. So yes, and then my story continues in that. A couple of years ago --

JAMES: So after you found this Father, now we're going back to looking for this. Okay.

BLAIR: Looking for my earthly father. So I was always told and thought that the father I always knew was my father, but it came out that he possibly was not. I was at a funeral, and someone just made a comment randomly, which brought a million questions to my mind, where did this comment come from? So I remember asking around, is my father my father? And my mom wasn't there at the time, so I didn't have the opportunity to ask her. But I told my dad, why don't we just get a paternity test to be sure? Because this comment was made, I just want to be sure. So through that test found out that my dad wasn't my dad biologically.

And so I asked my mom, do you know who my father is? And it has taken me on this journey of finding out who my father is, and actually, I was able to meet him right before the pandemic and everything shut down in March of 2020.

JAMES: How was that meeting?

BLAIR: It was good. It's hard as an adult to meet a man who looks just like you for the first time.

BETTY: Did he know anything about you?

BLAIR: He said he thought when I was young, he asked my mom, "Is this my child?" And at that point she had said no, it's this other man's child. And he just left it there. So it's challenging. I remember when my mom sent me a picture of him. I got the text message and thought he looks like me! Same features, but I know nothing about him. So we've taken on this journey of finding him and getting to know him.

JAMES: What does he think about your journey and where you are now?

BLAIR: He seems very proud. He's proud of me. He's encouraging. He's a kind man. And we still have a long way to go in building that relationship. But, thankfully, the dad that I always had, who I thought was my biological dad, has also been extremely kind and said, "Nothing will change. I love you." So he's been, in a sense, a bit of a Christ-figure saying, "I love you. I forgive your mom, and I'm here for you, and I'll always be here for you."

JAMES: Do you think because you found God as your Father, which changed everything for me, I had to learn a lot about fatherhood. I can remember so many times, Betty, kneeling by our children's beds while they were sleeping, saying, God, I never had a father. Please show me how to be a good father. So I prayed, and boy, what a great mom you were, what an awesome person.

But I'm just telling you that learning to be a father when you haven't had one is challenging. You getting to know the Father caused you to want to meet your father. And it looks to me like it's sent you on a meaningful journey. Has it helped you share with others and really effectively reach them when you try to minister to them, just like you were doing when you wrote this book? What do you want people to hear when you go out and communicate with them?

BLAIR: What I want them to hear is that you don't have to be bound by the sins of your parents. God is able to restore, and he's able to do a new thing. He's done a new thing in your life through your family. He's doing a new thing in our family. My husband actually writes a chapter specifically to men because he didn't have his father in the home.

I remember when my husband got down on one knee to propose, he said, he talked about legacy. And he talked about God can raise up stones for Abraham; out of these stones, he can do so much through us. And we're praying the Lord would just continue to redeem our children and their children and continue on through our line. But that it doesn't have to end with the pain and the frustration and the bitterness. God can heal you. He can give you a heart to forgive, as hard as that may be, and that's a process at times. But he's able to give grace for every situation.

JAMES: You know you've lived in communities and moving that many times where a missing father was a reality. You see the damage of not having fathers. Everything inside of you has to be longing to help people know there is a Father who is the ultimate Father, who can lift them up.

Do you feel like God's equipped you to be able to help people see that and hear that and get to know this Father? Are you watching that happen?

BLAIR: Absolutely. I think one of the things that's so important, even the scripture talks about the father of lies and God, the Father. So we want to point people to God the Father. I don't want the father of lies to be the one who is ruling you. But through Jesus and through his beautiful sacrificial death and resurrection, you can have a relationship with the Father. That is mind-blowing when you think of that truth. And then through the church, and I think this is so important, too, as we disciple and do holistic, full discipleship to say, I want to walk alongside the fatherless because God has called the church to.

And James, it talks about the true religion, that we're to care for widows and orphans. But

the "orphans" is the fatherless! So God, in his sovereignty and his goodness, has equipped the church to say this is your responsibility. Not only to foster, not only to adopt but also there are fatherless children in your pews. They have single moms, and you can walk alongside them, take them fishing, teach them how to balance a budget, teach them how to change a tire. Open up the scriptures, certainly, but what does it look like to say, "I'm here for you. You have a family in the body of Christ."

BETTY: And that's going to make a difference to know that someone is there to guide them. Because the fatherless, they're going to try to find a way to fill that void, and it is not always good.

BLAIR: Absolutely. That's right!

JAMES: You met me as a fatherless kid. We were 15 years old when I first saw her. It took her a little longer to realize she saw me. But I did know right off I saw her. But you got to know me, and you knew, because the pastor of the church had had me when I was a little boy before my mother, who told them they could adopt me, drug me out from under the bed and took me off into poverty where we moved 17 times in ten years, and the majority of the houses did not face the street, they faced an alley or a dirty river, or one, at least two different places were like dumps.

Well, you met me, and you saw a fatherless child that seemed to know this Father she's been talking about. Right?

BETTY: Absolutely.

JAMES: What effect did that have on you?

BETTY: For somebody that grew up in the church, knew all the right ways to do things, you do it this way, and you'll be a good church person. But when I met him, and he had come to know the Lord, I saw for the first time a young man that really knew the Father. I

knew about him, I'd been taught about him all my life, but it was different in that he had a relationship. That's what I desired. That's what I wanted. Through his walk and his growth in the Lord, I came to know the Lord for the first time, even though I grew up amongst all that.

JAMES: And you know if you have a relationship that's so real that as the pastor said, you're the sweetest, best girl in the whole church. Well, when she came out of the choir to give her life to Christ because she had heard me talking about how real this Father is, Jesus is, and she said, "Well, he is not like that to me. He's just someone I always heard about. I don't know him like you do." So you came out of the choir to give your life to Christ. And when the pastor said, "You're the best girl in the church." She said, "Quit telling me how good I am. I'm tired of trying to be what I'm not." She said, "Right over there on my knees, I gave my life to Jesus, and he just gave me life."

You saw a relationship with a Father that was so real that it impacted the sweetest girl in the church. To come to know this Father is that great. I feel like that's what you're actually doing. I feel the way you were able to relate to your past and to two fathers, the one you thought was father, and you found the one that is; I think you're impacting both of those fathers because you've been impacted by this Father. I believe your life is impacting people.

I think you're kind of where I am. You want to help the people who say they know the Father to begin to act like the family of that perfect Father, and begin to love one another and lift one another up, and quit finding reasons to disagree, and amputate that person, cut them off, rather than love them with the love of the prodigal. And I've said this many times, and I believe it, the father of the prodigal loved the prodigal as much when he was in the pigpen as he did when he was at the house. That father's love never dies, no matter what mess you made. No matter how deep the pit or ditch is you find yourself in, he loves you.

This is the Father. Boy, when you talk about *Finding My Father*, the father you went and

found was because this Father found you, and you found this real father, and it changed your whole world.

BLAIR: Amen! That's right!

JAMES: That's what we've got to have today. Do you agree with me that it is about time for the church to start acting like the family of the perfect Father?

Let's just pray they will. Let's just pray. Father, we look at this beautiful girl, beautiful, beautiful -- and she knows much of the community; they don't have dads at home. They don't have men that love a girl the way a girl needs to be loved, too often. And she wants everybody to know that Father, the same one all of us need to know, regardless of our race, our heritage, our heredity. No matter -- it doesn't matter! We've got to drop all those different things that divide us and come to you, the perfect Father, and be healed. We ask you to heal your family, in Jesus' name.

Let's just believe God to make us the beautiful family he designed us to be and desires us to be. The book is in the bookstores. I tell you what, if you say I'd like to have that, we're going to ask you to help us give life to children that without your love, God's love through you, they will not live. This is so much more than *LIFE Today* TV. This is sharing life today.

You talked about the father of lies; you've got the father of lies and the Father of life! And this is *LIFE Today* because of the Father of life. You watch *LIFE Today*, and when you begin to share it, and you'll find great joy. You're going to see what happens to the one you saved. And think about it now, 18 million children's lives have been saved. And we've led far more than that in those communities to Christ! Far more than 18 million! Because when they see the love of God, they want to hear about the love of God. You'll see this story. It's a result of God's love through somebody like you. This is going to bless you.

On the mission field

ANNOUNCER: James and Betty Robison, and *LIFE Outreach International*, have been sharing life and love for almost 60 years. As part of the commitment to putting love in action over 30 years ago, *LIFE Outreach* introduced the Mission Feeding program in Africa. According to our missionary partners, Mission Feeding has helped save the lives of 18 million starving children. Currently, *LIFE Outreach* helps feed 350,000 children in crisis areas and supports village feeding programs to encourage school attendance and education.

On one of our mission trips to Angola, our team met a young man named Jose, who grew up participating in the Mission Feeding program. As a child, he lived in a remote village and attended a school that received food every day. Jose went on to work as a mission partner within the feeding program, and his story embodies the heart of *LIFE Outreach International* and why it was founded.

INTERPRETER: When I was a child in a village like this, most of the time, we didn't know if we would eat each day. But when Mission Feeding came to my school, we got a hot meal every day during class. My friends and I were motivated to come to school and learn because we knew we would get to eat. If it wasn't for Mission Feeding, I don't think I would have gone to school. Before a feeding program comes to a village, not many children go to school. They stay home and work with their families. But when a school has Mission Feeding, the children are excited about school, and you see them running to the classroom each morning.

I am very happy to be a monitor in the Mission Feeding program. I'm very proud that I get to help these children just like I was helped as a child. One day, maybe one of these children will work for Mission Feeding too. I want to thank the Mission Feeding donors, not just because I work here but because I'm a human being. I live in this community, and I see the condition of the children. Please, do not stop helping. Carry on!

End of video

In the studio

JAMES: Wow! I can't help but just want to shout. That young man is now working under the national leadership in Angola. Betty, it is in Angola where after we had gone into Mozambique and some of the other hard-hit countries we ended up in Angola, civil war. Remember, you couldn't go the first time I went there. It was too dangerous, but we saw miracles. And that young man was one of those miracles.

But there was another one; we were in a malnutrition clinic where we were furnishing medical things, the things doctors need to help save children when they are at their very last breath, and we watched a child die. We watched another while they were trying to get some oxygen in with a little tube, a little squeeze bottle. They didn't have the oxygen they needed. And we saw those children die. And in that same place, and that's where we said to you, let's save their lives.

Betty, in that same place, one of the most famous pictures ever taken was taken. Princess Di, Lady Di, standing at that very clinic in the area where he came to Christ, holding a little baby. She said to the whole world, "We've got to feed the hungry." And that little baby was healthy. That little baby had been saved by love. So that young man that you just saw, he was saved in that program like that. And now he's touching other lives, like the millions that not only had their life saved, but they came to Christ.

I'm asking you to be a part of impacting millions of children's lives! We're feeding 350,000 a day that we found in very difficult areas where they're so stressed out for food that the parents are crying out, "Please God! Help me feed my child." Well, you're the answer to that prayer.

I want you right now to go get your bank card and use it like a check. Dial the number or go online and make the gift God put on your heart. \$30, \$50, \$100 feeds three, five, or ten children. \$1,000 will feed 100 children.

God, if every person watching would give \$1,000, Jesus! At whatever level they can help, God, move them now, in Jesus' name.

If you want to write a check, make it to *LIFE* but call the number and tell us what you're putting in the mail. We have some gifts to send you that will bless you. This is *Christmas Grace*, devotionals that will bless you and let you see Jesus so clearly, even as we move into this time where we're celebrating his birth. The tumblers, hot/cold tumblers, there are two of them we send, "His Love Never Fails" -- it doesn't! And that's what you're sharing. We want to send you things that will bless your life because you are a blessing. You are the miracle to so many like that young man you just saw.

Would you please go online or dial that number? And say, here is the gift I want to give. Please do it, and thank you for it.

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

In the studio

JAMES: Blair's story is the kind of miracle story that I'm glad we experienced. You had a father at home; I didn't. She had two fathers, it seems. But this one father made everything so much better, and you're able to share that.

If you'd like to have Blair's book, *Finding My Father*, that Father, as well as her father, we'll be glad to send it to you. You say you know what? I think I need what she shares or I know someone who does. So we'll be more than glad to send it just to say thank you for helping us share life with those who have such incredible hunger and deep needs.

Blair, thank you so much for being a blessing to us and everybody you minister to.

Thank you for watching *LIFE Today*. Thanks for helping us feed the hungry.