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Week 51: Fall Mission Feeding
Randy Robison and Sheila Walsh
David Marvin

RANDY: Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm Randy Robison; Sheila Walsh is with me always.

SHEILA: Greetings!

RANDY: And always good to have her. It is great to have you because we're going to talk about something we've all been dealing with and still dealing with around the world, and that is this level of anxiety.

SHEILA: But this book title. Read the book title; it's so great.

RANDY: Yeah! Basically, *We're All Freaking Out*. Are we not? Are we not? The author of this book is David Marvin who is a pastor at Watermark here in Dallas. He leads a thing called "The Porch" for those of you who know what that is. If not, we'll tell you how to find it. Great to have you on *LIFE Today*.

DAVID: Man, I'm so pumped! Thank you for having me. So good to be with y'all.

RANDY: Why do you think *We're All Freaking Out*?

DAVID: I think anxiety levels in America had exploded way before the pandemic. And then the pandemic, of course, has created all types of mental health problems for everybody. I think the explosive amounts of change in the last 30 years have contributed to it. One study showed that the amount of change that has taken place in the west in the

last 30 years is equal to the previous 300 combined.

SHEILA: Wow!

DAVID: That study was done in 2010, which is nuts because that was before Uber, Netflix, Instagram, iPads, Alexa. So think about how much it has changed in that. And all of that change creates stress, and then the digital connections that we have, in the ways of comparison and how we're constantly looking at the highlight reels of other people, only contributes to that anxiety. So I think there is a lot of reasons.

But as Christians, one of the primary reasons is that we're not turning to the principles God has given us in the Bible; either because we don't know them, or we don't understand them. And then, not turning to them, we're not experiencing the peace that he promises us.

So that's the heart of the book is not to be -- my wife is a counselor, and I love counseling; I'm all about it. I think it is amazing. It's been such a gift in my life, but for Christians, counseling is not our first line of defense; God's Word is and the Spirit of God, which is the holy counselor and the Word of God.

So this is not to be a replacement for any of that, but it is to be -- this is the first line of defense, which is God's word. And my heart really is to unpack and connect the dots on what God actually teaches about anxiety. Because in doing ministry the past 12 years with, especially, young adults, 20s and 30s, my experience has been most of them don't understand what it actually teaches. They just think it says have more faith, pray more. If you just trusted God, you wouldn't be anxious, which is an oversimplification, and really not helpful, and can be a little insulting if somebody throws those things out.

SHEILA: Totally. As I was reading through this, my son is 24. During 2020, he was stuck in his apartment doing all his graduate classes on Zoom, just he and his cat. I could see the physical impact on him, and just the not knowing what would happen. What have

you seen with the 20s and 30s that you work with? Because a lot of parents are watching right now, what have you seen happen?

DAVID: It has exploded. It was already, young adults were three times more likely than the previous generation to have anxiety disorders or symptoms of it. And today, it's risen even higher. Where one study went from between 15%, 10-15% having anxiety disorders to the height of the pandemic, 41% being marked with symptoms that seem to indicate an anxiety disorder. So it really has exploded.

To anyone listening, I think knowing that if you're a child or struggling with anxiety, you're not alone; you're not crazy. If anything, it makes sense when you live in a broken world, and there is a pandemic and economic challenges and all that is involved there. But you're not alone in terms of having principles and solutions that really can help and that God wants to provide, not just to treat some of the symptoms of your anxiety, but to treat the root causes and what's actually going on.

RANDY: You mentioned a verse, and most Christians know the verse: Don't worry about anything. Don't be anxious about anything. So what am I missing when I simplify it that way?

DAVID: Yes, this is one of my favorite things; one of my passionate points where I don't think Christians understand. So Philippians chapter 4, Paul lays out a very famous verse that a lot of people know: Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything with prayer and supplication, let your request be made known to God and the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Most people hear that verse and assume Paul is saying don't be anxious about anything, just pray. The reason that is a misunderstanding is the Greek word that Paul uses. The New Testament is written in Greek. The word that he uses there is the Greek word *merimnate*. It is a Greek word that is synonymous with meditation or dwelling and fixating on something.

So when Paul says don't be anxious about anything, he's not saying never have an anxious thought, which most people think. That's impossible. You're going to have them; I'm going to have them for the rest of your life. He is saying that don't meditate on those fearful, anxious thoughts when they pop up --, which is possible. I don't have a choice to decide if somebody is going to break into my house, but I do have a choice if I decide to sit down with them or help them carry out the TV.

And Paul is saying, hey, don't meditate, don't fix your life focused on every fearful thought. This is why he then goes in that chapter, here's what you should meditate on, which is right after that; instead, whatever is true and noble and lovely and worthy of praise.

So I think that's just one example of going, oh. A verse that seemed impossible now, oh, that is possible. I can choose to meditate on what is true and right.

SHEILA: That's great, actually. That's a huge difference. One of the things I found interesting as I read your book is you talk about anxiety hitting you at a place where you expect joy to hit you, on your honeymoon. Talk about that.

[Laughter]

DAVID: Yeah. It was probably the most -- it was the most real, and also, looking back, a hilarious moment to be struck by anxiety. I was panicked over the honeymoon I was about to go on with my wife for eight days. I'd booked --.

I'm like an extra- extrovert; I love being around people. In the words of Ariel, I want to be where people are. And I booked this hotel that was like to the nines, incredible in terms of luxury and boutique and quiet. And I realized, like the day before we were about to leave, I booked an eight-day vacation at my own nightmare. We're going to be all alone. What am I going to do? And I just began to panic.

I use that as a comical way to bridge in the book how, when you look back at it or even when I describe it, it seems like that's crazy. What's wrong with you? That's irrational. I segue that into all anxiety is irrational. By that, I don't mean it is not understandable or is not something universal. I just mean it is not rational in terms of me dwelling on anxious things that may happen or could happen or even will happen. Me fixating on those things, whether my car is going to break down or my children are going to get sick, does nothing to prevent that from happening.

SHEILA: It is not productive.

DAVID: Yeah! It doesn't change the future; it just ruins the present.

RANDY: I hear what you're saying, and it is easier for some people than others, but some people feel like they just can't control the anxiety. They say, okay, I'm feeling anxious. I'm worried about something. Lord, I give it to you. It's back on again, and here comes another -- okay, I'm just going to trust God. And then something happens.

How do you get someone to that place where they're walking it on a daily basis, and they're truly overcoming? Because you're right, saying it sounds simple, but we both know that doing it is not always that easy.

DAVID: You're so right. One thing you said yourself is relevant to the conversation because it is important to remember Jesus when he talked about anxiety in Matthew six; he said, "Take it one day at a time. You take it one moment at a time." It is not something that will ever leave, just like sin will always be a part of this world, until we're home. Anxiety is going to be something that you don't ever fix once and finally full, but you battle daily.

I think one of the ways that you and I battle is getting to the root. Beliefs and values and things inform our anxiety and anxious feeling and really tracking down what's fueling

that; sometimes, there are lies that are fueling that.

Well, at the same time, I think there's -- a counselor I was seeing explained it to me like this. That anxiety, when you say I have anxiety, it's a little bit like someone saying, I have a problem with my computer. And when someone says they're having a problem with their computer, they mean a couple things; one of a couple things. They either mean there is a problem with the hardware like my keyboard is broken or my screen is broken, or there is a problem with the software; there is a virus, it needs to be updated, whatever it is.

When we talk about anxiety, the same thing applies. There's either a problem with the hardware, which happens physiologically, the brain, hormonal, different things, or there are problems with the software, if you will, which would be our spiritual life or psychological aspect, which is kind of our upbringing, traumatic experiences or personal wiring.

So what the focus of the book is, and really what I specialize in, I'm not a doctor, I'm not a psychiatrist, I'm not going to test for serotonin levels, but I do pastor and work with God's Word and work with people, and that's where working through the psychological or the software issues I think are important.

So as you deal with the software issues, by that I mean spiritual, of course, psychological, I think you need to track down what is underneath the roots of the anxiety that I'm feeling and taking those things and then bringing God's Word and saying, what would God say about what I'm believing or maybe what I'm overvaluing or who I think is ultimately the provider in life? And whatever those ideas are.

SHEILA: You talk about something that's very personal and really hit me as a mom. In your book, you talk about when your wife is pregnant with your daughter, and you get some very devastating news. Talk to us about that. How did that change your perspective on who God is? And the fact that really, we don't have control over certain things.

DAVID: Yes, when my wife was pregnant with our daughter, we got a call on a Wednesday night about 9:30; it was in December. The reason I remember those details is because you don't get calls from your doctor on a Wednesday night at 9:30 just to say, how is the holiday planning? I knew something was wrong. And she began to explain to us, "We found out that you have a daughter, and we know that because she's been flagged for a chromosomal disorder that's unique to daughters or to girls. If she has it, there is a 99% chance she will die before she makes it out of the womb. And if she doesn't have it, or if she is in the one percent, and she does live, she'll have to have immediate heart surgery, and she will live with severe complications the rest of her life."

SHEILA: Devastating!

DAVID: Even talking about it now, I get emotional. In that, it felt like just a bomb went off. Like the movie *Saving Private Ryan*; those movies where a bomb goes off, and it's ringing, and it's like phhh. And I taught so much on anxiety prior to that, and my wife, as a counselor, specializes in helping people with anxiety, but that season where we had to turn to God and pray God, we don't want our daughter to die. But if that's what you have, we trust you. And I can't understand how that would be what you have, and I'm trying to honestly trust you because I don't have those moments.

And it really deepened the things that I talk about in this book in my belief, and even how it was so helpful for me; it was transformational. By that, I mean in Matthew chapter six, Jesus brings up a principle that I think is further misunderstood; it's one of the most misunderstood. Where he says, "Don't be answer about anything." He talks about your life and some incredibly brilliant questions he asks. And then he gets to a verse everyone has heard, or a lot of people have heard before: "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." In context, he had just told them, "Pray like this: Your kingdom come, your will be done in my life. Your kingdom above mine. Your will above mine."

And then 20 verses later, same chapter, he says, "Prioritize God's kingdom first -- his

will, his agenda." It's the same Greek word in your life, and it was like I began to understand the peace that comes when you say, God, this is not what I would want. I can't imagine and understand how this could be what you want. But if this is what's going to happen and this is part of your sovereign will, your kingdom comes before mine. And so, I'm going to trust you.

And that six months of praying and asking God, "We don't want our daughter to die," was not one that I could say with integrity; every moment was filled with us doing that. Like God, this is not what we want, but if that's your will, we trust you -- but I can say with integrity, every moment I experienced peace was a moment where we said, "God, we don't want our daughter to die, but if that's your will, we're not going to thwart it. Freaking out about it is not going to help. And so we're going to trust you. Help us to trust you. Please don't let that happen to our daughter but help us to trust you." And every moment we did that, we had peace. And thankfully, six months later, we had a healthy baby girl that was born.

I hesitate, honestly, to share that because sometimes that's not the case. But it was a miracle, or whatever happened, a flag, a false diagnosis, I don't know, but I do know that God really deepened our faith, our confidence, and even these principles, my belief and conviction around how much they really do bring about peace and can bring about peace.

RANDY: Do you think God lets us go through things that could/should cause us anxiety to do what happened to you guys?

DAVID: I think, you know, whether that's what the sovereignty and how all that stuff works itself out; it's so beyond any of our ability to understand or my ability at least to understand. But I think something unique happens in those moments because, interestingly enough, fear and faith require the same thing to grow.

And no one ever thinks of that, but by that, I mean, you can only have fear in the same soil that you have faith, which is uncertainty. You can't have faith without uncertainty;

you can't have fear without uncertainty. So they both require the same thing.

My heart behind one of the goals of the book is to help people; what if there was a way that you could grow your faith in the soil of uncertainty that right now fear is growing? Because I think that's exactly what God wants to do, is to grow all of our faith. Whether he allows it or causes it or whatever the right answer is, I at least think that he, in his divine will, graciously allows us to walk through those things and provides us the tools to grow our faith where our fear could grow.

SHEILA: One of the things that I found particularly helpful is that you talk about kind of cleaning out the closet of all the stuff that's been there in our soul. You talk about forgiving your dad. I thought that was tremendously helpful because sometimes those things that we've just buried that have hurt us can trigger other things in our life. How was that for you about forgiving your dad?

DAVID: Yeah, you're so right. One thing I that honestly learned from my wife was that anxiety because we're -- all of life is so connected. We tend to focus on just an acute worry, but oftentimes anxiety touches us at a soul level, and our soul is impacted throughout our whole journey. And like you said, one thing that I share about is working through healing from past hurts, past traumatic experiences. I had a friend, every father is imperfect, so my children someday are going to have to forgive --

SHEILA: We'll have them on the show.

[Laughter]

DAVID: They're going to have to sit down and forgive all the imperfections of their father. And I realized my parents had split up when I was about 12 years old. I was just doing some reflecting, and I realized I had some hurt, bitterness, harboring some pain from that. And I had someone encourage me that forgiveness biblically, according to Matthew 18, is canceling a debt. You know the parable cancels the debt. They said it is

really hard to cancel a debt if you don't know what it is.

And so they encouraged me, you should sit down and write it out, whether or not it is a debt or it's all accurate, or you understand everything, or you're blaming someone for too much, you should just write out what you feel like was taken from you. And then decide you don't owe me this anymore. Because only by understanding what the debt is can I look it in the face and say, and you're now canceled. That debt has been paid for on the cross.

So it was really, really helpful for me in something that I talk about with young adults all the time. For you to forgive someone, you have to cancel the debt. For you to cancel a debt, you have to know what the debt is.

SHEILA: That's very practical.

RANDY: When you're saying these things to people who are in the middle of anxiety and fear, are you seeing them turn any kind of corner when they apply them?

DAVID: I really am. I'm not saying it is a one-stop shop, or it's every time, but whether it's a friend who had some business challenges that was at risk of losing his home with stuff he owed to the I.R.S. and just real anxiety, what am I going to do? And he began to pray that prayer. Like God, please don't let me lose my home. But if that's your will, I'm not going to thwart your will just by panicking about it. So if that's what you have, I trust you. And it was like he'd used the words, I felt peace wash over me.

I'm not saying that works every single time, and that's a one-stop shop. But I am saying that when we begin to release that control, because you started to say it, I joke in the book about we say I struggle with control, which is a little bit like saying, I struggle with x-ray vision.

[Laughter]

SHEILA: You don't have it!

DAVID: Yeah! I don't have control, just like I don't have x-ray vision. I'll never have x-ray vision. And even saying, "I struggle with control," is like someone saying, you really struggle with not having control. So I think the more you can begin to live with that, and the more you can -- in that uncertainty remember the promises of God, remember who God is, and go back to what scripture says, I think you can really begin to experience peace. It's a journey. For all of us, it's a continual journey.

RANDY: Boy, that's good!

SHEILA: And there is so much more in this book that David has. I think one of the greatest takeaways is that when you understand that Christ is with you wherever you are, peace is not the absence of trouble; it is his presence.

But there are some things that we would love you to help us with now. Randy and I have had the privilege of traveling to Southern Africa and seeing the devastating poverty and malnutrition. And once you see it, you know you're called to change it. So we want to ask you to help us. So would you watch this?

On the mission field

Announcer: Everybody knows that there are hungry children in Africa, and we know that something needs to be done. UNICEF knows that Angola has one of the highest child mortality rates in the world and malnutrition is a major contributing factor.

This village leader knows that without crops his community is in grave danger.

Open Captions:

>> We are facing a serious problem with our food. We don't have enough. Without the rain, we cannot grow crops to eat.

Announcer: This mother knows the heartache of watching her children wither away from malnutrition.

Open Captions:

>> His skin is getting very loose. It started with a fever, then diarrhea and vomiting.

Announcer: And this child knows the pain of going to bed hungry. But just knowing about malnutrition in Africa won't help anyone. The actions we choose to do together will help save a child's life.

End of clip

In the studio

SHEILA: Statistics changed for me the first day I walked into a malnutrition clinic because I've heard the statistics, I've studied things, I've watched documentaries, but the minute I walked into that first malnutrition clinic and looked into the eyes of a mother, who could have been me, she looked like she was younger than me, but she could have been me, and she was sitting on a bed with this child that can barely move. This child where the bones are protruding, where the hair is red, and I realized that's because there is no protein in the system, there is no nourishment.

And to see a child, a little one who doesn't even have the energy to cry, who every single piece of energy they have left is used just to take the next breath. And I remember thinking, this is not about statistics. This is about people. This is about mothers and fathers and children who happen to be born in Angola or some part of Southern Africa. I happened to be born in Scotland, and that was never something my mom had to worry about.

But the fact that you and I are on the earth at this time, that we are the body of Christ, that we should be on mission 24/7 means that I will never ever ever forget these moms or the need that is there right now. Because we can watch a piece and we're so used to watching things. We're like, well, that was interesting. That's happening right now.

Our people that we work with are on the ground right now in these clinics, trying to help these moms. And the only way we can do it is if you will work with us and help us. James and Betty have been doing this for years and have a system set up to reverse this, to go from literally death to life if we'll all join together, Randy.

RANDY: Absolutely. Sheila, there is a story in scripture we all know where there were men, women, and children who were hungry, and they were out with Jesus listening to him teach. And the disciples said, "Lord, let's just send them away. It's time to eat. They're hungry; they need some food." So Jesus turned, and he said, "You feed them." And of course, we know that Jesus then multiplied what was given so that it would meet the needs of everyone. But I find it interesting that Jesus pointed to his followers and said, "You feed them." What did it require? They didn't have enough. They didn't have enough. I know when we present this to you, a lot of times, you think, man, I wish I could just feed them all, but I don't have enough.

I think that's the beauty of giving, of coming together and saying, "I've got a little bit, Lord, I'll give it to you." \$30 will feed three children for three months. Why does it go so far? Well, because we have the systems in place. We have the miracle of the volunteers and the technology and the partners like you to stretch that.

As we approach the end of the year, I hope you'll pray about giving and really giving. \$100 will feed ten children for three months. \$1,000 will feed 100. Many of you could give way beyond that. You could give towards the average cost of \$24,500 for the malnutrition clinic.

Listen. We can be that answer to prayer. We can be that miracle in people's lives. But we need to come together. That's why Sheila and I are really, we're privileged, honored to be able to ask you to be a part of Mission Feeding. So go online or go to the phone right now. Make the best gift you can, and we can save lives.

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

SHEILA: Thank you so much! If the lines are busy, please keep calling. You can ask for any gift at all. You can ask for David Marvin's book, *We're All Freaking Out and Why We Don't Need To*.

RANDY: No! And David, we appreciate you sharing. We appreciate you sharing personally but also offering just some guidance to get us through these difficult times. Thank you so much.

DAVID: Thank you guys so much. It's an honor to be here.

SHEILA: It's awesome!

RANDY: Thank you for watching. Join us again next time right here on *LIFE Today*.

SHEILA: Bye!