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Week 51: Fall Mission Feeding
Randy Robison and Sheila Walsh
Susie Larson #2

RANDY: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm Randy Robison; Sheila Walsh is with me always. We're very excited during this holiday season to have Susie Larson with us again. If you missed the other program with her, LifeToday.org, you could see all our programs there. She has a book called *Prepare Him Room*. As Sheila and I were both preparing for these shows, it really touched us. We want to encourage you today. Susie, thank you for being back with us on *LIFE Today*.

SUSIE: I love any time I get with you both. So thanks for having me.

SHEILA: One thing I noticed is that sometimes you'll get devotionals in, and you think I can flip through this pretty quickly. This is not a flip through this pretty quickly devotional. This really dives deep. And so, honestly, all we're going to be able to do on this program is give you some highlights and make you understand why you need this book for yourself.

But I wanted to talk about one of the days, and it's called "The Kingdom is Yours." How Jesus turned the world right-side up. And you speak about humility. Unpack for us, Susie, what true humility really is.

SUSIE: What's so amazing about Jesus in the way that he operated when he was on earth is that in that ancient time, ego was king. Ego was considered a virtue. Pride and arrogance, and condescension, positions of power. People were constantly posturing for positions.

So for Jesus, you see it in John, as well, he knew that the Father had given him authority over

everything, that he'd come from God and would return to God. In other words, he knew his identity was not up for grabs or changeable with popular opinion. So the King of the universe put on a servant's robe or a servant's apron, and he washed the disciples' feet. That's in the gospel of John, where we read about that.

In this particular chapter, we just look at the beatitudes and how he really turned -- we say he turned the world upside down, but he actually turned it right-side up, the way that it was intended. Because he said, "Blessed are you, happy to be admired when people hate you because of me. Blessed are you who are poor in spirit." And poor in spirit means blessed are you who know your need. That one has radically impacted me in the way that I -- I can go to guilt, I can go to self-contempt because I want to do right, I want to do the right thing.

And when you look at "Blessed are those who know their need," you're going to come to the edges of yourself. It seems like Jesus repeatedly brought people to the edges of themselves, not to condemn them, but to invite them. Because you come to the edges of yourself, you'd be supremely joyful and happy, and you are to be envied because there's more of the kingdom to inherit. Because how do you know what you have access to unless you know to ask for it and know that you need it?

SHEILA: That's not a light statement -- that's radical. Happy if you come to the end of yourself. But we don't tend to think of that. We tend to think, when we come to the end of ourselves, oh, gosh! We better tidy ourselves up. We sometimes pull away from God. Just the way that you've thrown open the door to understanding that when you get it that you can't do this by yourself, you've arrived in a really good place.

SUSIE: So, so good. You and I were talking before the show that when you suffer enough, you realize you're not made for this life; you're made for another life. You're made for eternity. We know that may be in a cerebral way. But in our gut and souls, and I think a lot more people, you and I who are talking, know this after the suffering that's happened in the last couple of years.

But if you could enter into that and lean into it, rather than trying hard not to feel it, lean into it to

go, there's something of Jesus I'm invited to encounter here that I can't experience no other way. And there's a point in there where Jesus is talking in the beatitudes that those who mourn, you're going to laugh one day, and that day is coming. And those who are overfed and arrogant and shrugging their shoulders at those in need, and they're laughing at others' expense, that day is going to stop.

I think it was Martin Luther who had two days on his calendar: This day and that day. This day: This is the day the Lord has made; I'm going to steward it. And then there is that great day. So I'm going to make sure that I live this day with that day in mind. And I think when you suffer, when you're hated, when you've come to the edges of ourself in that lowly place is where our savior meets us.

And he says, "I'm the king; I'm the Lord. I have completely validated you and equipped you, and empowered you to live like me. You're a representative of me on the earth. And you may get battered and beaten by the storms, but be of good cheer. I have overcome, so you will most certainly overcome."

SHEILA: I love that!

RANDY: These chapters are fairly short, but they're so loaded. There is actually one more point that you make in that one that I want to hit. Because you talk about how Christ, when he did that, when he met these people's needs, he often did it in a way that broke with the tradition of the religious people. And your point is that during a time of tradition, focus on the people, focus on the needs. That spoke to me because Christmas, the holidays, is a time where we have traditions, and a lot of times, we can get a little bent out of shape if people don't always act the way we want them to or show up on time, or whatever. So I love the reminder that God is focused on the people, not the tradition.

SUSIE: Amen! We all have an inner Pharisee, Randy, don't we, that wants to come out and play? But there's just something about --

RANDY: Yours is probably more inner than mine, unfortunately.

[Laughter]

SUSIE: But truly, the Pharisees, they had their expectations around their interpretations, and they had fossilized to the point where they were serving tradition at the expense of people. You knew that was the case because they got offended when Jesus tended to the people. And I love that he actually doubled down on the Sabbath and looked them right in the eye and said, "I'm going to heal him right now because this is why I came." I love that about him.

I think you can know that maybe you've idolized tradition if you're highly offendable if someone even dares to touch it. But Jesus came for people. Though we love our Christmas traditions, if we want his kingdom to come, I'm telling you what, you've got to put it on the table and say, "Lord, rearrange my holiday in a way that radically reveals your kingdom." He will do that. He loves to answer prayers. It will mess with you but will be good.

SHEILA: Beautiful challenge! Another thing I love about the way you write, Susie, is you've kind of given proper meaning to all the things that sometimes we just, like the Christmas wreath that we just stick up on the door. But you describe that in such a beautiful way to bring fresh meaning to that.

SUSIE: Yeah, I think maybe that is because I struggle so much; just daily health, chronic junk that kind of kicks my rear end sometimes. So I'm always looking for the deeper thing just because I need that. I remember, I don't know when I read about it, but just the symbolism of the wreath; the idea that the berries are red as the blood of Christ and the gold bow is the royalty that we have in him. So in that chapter, I write about, there's something symbolic for me in hanging that wreath on the door going, "Blessed are all who enter here. And as for me and my house, we're going to serve the Lord."

I paint an analogy, picture that you've made that declaration. You believe it, you say it, but then the enemy busts through your door, he bumps his shoulder, and the wreath is swinging. He's

spewing all kinds of insults, and you take it. And you let it in -- and you let it ruin your day. And then you snap at someone else. Well, that truly is opening the door to the enemy. So I say that when you're listening to his taunts and giving ear to his lies, you are taking Christ out of Christmas because this is why he came.

So there has to be a little bit of feistiness and a little bit of ruthlessness in us to go, "This far and no more! You don't get to talk to me that way." Because a guarded heart is a heart that is full of expectancy and love and hope and joy; where we have margin for people. But you will not have any of that if you're giving space to the enemy. You don't prepare him room; you prepare room for Jesus. Amen?

SHEILA: Amen! Amen!

RANDY: You said something, and I want to stay on the book and Christmas, but I think there is somebody watching right now who is experiencing a lot of pain, and you mentioned chronic pain. For those who don't know your story, could you share with them a little bit of the suffering you've been through so they can really relate to your words and know this is not someone who is just preaching it; this is someone who has lived it?

SUSIE: I contracted Lyme Disease during my pregnancy with my third son, who is now in his 30s, and I was deathly ill in those first years as a young mom. And then, for 20 years, I had chronic health issues, but I also worked in fitness, and I'm a fighter, so I just found ways to work around it. But I'd end up in bed a handful of times a year for a few days. My face would go numb and dizziness and all the neurological stuff. Lived with chronic neurological fatigue and inflammation, but I found ways to work around it. I had a pretty severe relapse about six years ago, which ended up being mold toxicity that attacked my brain. So it activated the Lyme and mold, and I'm working my way out of that. But it was a nightmare, to be honest.

You and I, we've talked about, my book, *Fully Alive*, came out of that. But the whole -- for me, it's not pain as much as it is inflammation, dizziness. My brain doesn't work when I'm having inflammation. So I have a hard time with my words. And as an author, I'm still struggling with

some spelling; like so, I hate it so bad. But if I don't sleep, I'll wake up with a numb neck and head pressure, vision blurring, and things like that. So it's a chronic thing for me.

RANDY: And this is high-level suffering, frankly, that you've endured for years. How do you, just to steal a chapter title, how do you still marvel at the goodness of God when you've been through so much pain and continue to fight it?

SHEILA: Good question.

SUSIE: Well, that is a great question, and I will be honest, I haven't done that perfectly. There are times where I realize, for me, it's like when my disciplines become ought-tos and should-dos and not get-tos, I've lost sight of the love of God. I really ought to. I really should do. For me, it's always an indicator. If I've lost sight of the love of God, it's because my heart has been hurt because he hasn't rescued me yet. So I have got to get to places of surrender constantly. Because I'm holding the tension. God is a God who heals, but I've also heard people say, "A plus B always equals C," and that, I don't believe. I know godly people who suffer. And that is such a harmful theology that if you don't get your healing, you just missed a step. But our son had a miraculous healing of his back.

So I live in the tension going, I know we serve a God of miracles. Until my last breath, I'm going to believe him for one, but I'm not going to get offended that I have to wait for it. Just like Elizabeth and Zachariah, somehow, they kept their hearts in a fresh place so God could invade that place. And that, to me, is maturity; is living in the tension of going, "I will continually offer my heart, my attitudes, disappointments, and hurts, too, Lord. I'm keeping the light on." Because he has been good and he will be good again. And whatever he is allowing is working something in me that could be worked no other way.

So I told her, I'm going to go down swinging. I'm going to keep believing, keep praying, keep serving, and then I call friends when I need to when I'm hurting, and we get through it. But he is worth it! Some day -- some day I'll have a new body, and you won't be able to keep up with me.

SHEILA: That's for sure! There's something so huge about that, though, Susie. It reminds me of when John the Baptist is in prison, and he asks his friends, his disciples, "Go and ask Jesus, are you the one? Did I miss it somehow?" And Jesus tells them to go back and tell him, "The blind received their sight." But then, at the end, "And blessed is he who is not offended by me." That's huge!

SUSIE: It is so huge, Sheila! And I'm glad you brought that up. I feel this very much fits in with the Christmas message because we don't realize how often offense and disappointment, and discouragement cloud our view of who God is. And when we allow those walls to go up, the enemy sneaks in behind that wall, "Did God really say he's really sort of like this?" And when you have a wrong interpretation of God, you will not encounter God in the way that he wants you to.

We have to get to a place again, of holy expectancy where we say, you are good, your promises are true, and you will always make a way for me. And you know you've lost your way when you've lost your peace. So I just say get back to that place. If you're offended, be honest. I have, I have pounded on his chest, I've pounded on the floor going, how long? How long? How long? But then I get up again, and I find joy, and I find peace, and I see fruit from my suffering. So if we can really, that's the work, isn't it, of the heart? And that's where you *Prepare Him Room*.

RANDY: In light of what you just said, I want to go to day 11 in your book, "Ask, Don't Demand." And you have a quote in there. It says: Prayer is not conquering reluctance -- I'm sorry, not conquering God's reluctance but taking hold of God's willingness. What's the difference between asking and demanding when it comes to prayer?

SUSIE: I love that chapter. It's really an important one to me. I paint a picture because scripture does say Jesus snuck off every once in a while to spend time with his Father. So I painted a picture of him on his knees, smiling, and his hands are raised, and he's just having fellowship with his Father. And one of his disciples comes upon him and says, "Wow! I want to pray like that. Do you never feel fear? Why does everybody get healed that you pray for? Are we missing something?" But he had questions, and he's like, "Teach us, Lord, to pray." And that's where they

learn the Lord's Prayer.

But a little bit later, there are people, because when the crowd grows, you have all kinds, you have spectators, you have people who are critics who are just trying to find stuff. And then you have others who are hanging on every word.

It seems like Jesus was always trying to thin the crowd, but every once in a while, you'd have this massive crowd. Well, there are people in there kind of going, "Give me a sign, and I'll let you know if I believe." As if he's at the mercy of their perspective.

And so, on the one hand, he is telling these humble, seeking hearts, "Keep asking, keep knocking, keep seeking. When you have a humble, audacious heart, it is irresistible to me." But someone who kind of just says, "I'll let you know, and I'll get back to you." He's like, "You know what? I don't have to jump through your hoops, and I'm not going to." Because he distances himself from the proud.

But again, in all of that, look what he did with Paul. Paul was a prideful terrorist, and he knocked him off of his horse, and he awakened him. So he knows who is who in the zoo. He knows who would respond to him if he encountered them.

So I love that about him. But he is not bound by our dictates, we are bound by his, and we need to get that right. Because I hear people sometimes demanding of God and I appeal to him, I'm audacious, I'm a wild woman in my prayer life, I am! Because I have a lot of things, I want to see him do on the earth today. But I'm very clear on who God is and who I am.

RANDY: He invites us to be persistent, but I think just to boil all of that down, it's the caveat, "Not my will but yours." Does that ring true with you?

SUSIE: Absolutely! And that's the thing is -- even you might show up with an impure motive where he's put a dream in your heart. Still, you've got yourself all mixed up and you're making this appeal. He's allowing a delay because he is purifying you, maturing you, and getting you

ready.

I often say the church maybe celebrates giftings at the experience of character too much. I think when you let God do his thing and have his way, when you prepare a way and prepare to change, honestly, there is no limit to what he will do in and through you. But when you have an attitude, when you make it all about you, God sees that, and there is a limit to what he will do in and through you. So I just think the condition of our hearts is just everything.

SHEILA: There's, as you can probably tell, there are so many chapters we could dive into. Maybe just touch on one more, Susie, when you talk about living like Jesus. You write that Luke chapter 17 is not for the faint of heart; it is for the serious follower of Christ.

SUSIE: That was a tough chapter. I looked at that as a kind of boot camp for the soul because Jesus is asking us to go an extra mile and then an extra mile and an extra mile again. On the one hand, he invites us, "Come to me if you're weary, and I will give you rest." And he will do that. But if you notice, even with the disciples, there are times where he's like, send the crowds away. We need to eat, and they need... He's like, no, we're going to work a little bit longer, and you're going to forgive a little bit more. And the stretch is so significant there where everything that you think you have a right to, you kind of don't when he's your King, and he gets to decide. And so, that's that invitation of living like him and understanding how deep and how wide is his love; but how deep and high is the call to follow him. It will cost us more than we ever want to pay, but it will gain us more than we can ever imagine when we see him.

RANDY: That's good!

SHEILA: So, so beautiful! You're going to want to get a hold of this book. It's changing my advent season, absolutely. It's giving me a fresh understanding, a fresh passion for Christ. So you'll want to get a hold of your own copy, and we're going to tell you how to do that.

But one of the things that are absolutely key to us here at *LIFE* is to have our eyes washed by Jesus, so we see people differently than we used to. And there is so many people in the world

right now who are not just praying that they'll get the right turkey at Christmas or a new iPhone. They would simply like to take a little bowl and fill it full of food and be able to give their child one meal.

Randy and I have met so many of these mothers. They're not asking for the world; they're asking for the right to be able to feed their children. And you and I get the privilege of being an answer to so many prayers.

So I just want to ask you to watch this. And then we're going to tell you how you can get a hold of this amazing book for yourself. Watch this.

On the mission field

ANNOUNCER: In Southern Africa, where the mortality rate for children under the age of five is the highest in the world, you'll find malnutrition clinics like this.

These children are living with the consequences of not receiving the nutrition they need because of the lack of food. Their mothers now wait and watch as their children cling to life.

ISAK: This is the reality of malnutrition. This is the silent killer, the destruction that malnutrition causes because it starts here. A mother doing everything she can, everything in her power that she can do, she's doing. A child that is helpless and hopeless just needs nutrition. So you say, what do we do? What we do is we reach out, and we help these children. But the best is not for us to help them here. The best for us is to be able to help them out in their villages, in the villages where we're not feeding, where Mission Feeding hasn't got to them. Because if we can get to those villages with food, with the Mission Feeding program, we're able to almost guarantee that we save each and every one of those children's lives.

I'm just asking you to give the best gift that you can give. I'm just asking you to open your heart and say, "I'll give to Mission Feeding. I will bring help to these children and to the tens of

thousands of children in this area that so desperately need the Mission Feeding program."

Please! Open your hearts today. Give the best gift you can. Give the gift of life.

End of video

In the studio

SHEILA: What a perfect, perfect invitation to change the way we view this season. I was studying James chapter 1, verse 17 recently. It is talking about pure religion, which is to take care of orphans and widows. That word *pure* in the original Greek is the word that we get "cathartic" from, "catharsis." And it means it is cleansing to us, a cleansing out of all that we are, or all we've gathered to look and care for others. I can't think of a more perfect time or a more perfect way to do that than through Mission Feeding.

Randy and I have both been in the situations where we're in the malnutrition clinic and watching children who don't even have the strength to cry. They're on their literal last breath, and the hopelessness in the eyes of those darling mothers who have just like us, they're just a mom like you and me. And then we've also been to the villages where Mission Feeding has already been set up. The difference is night and day. We have these orange bowls; I call them a bowl of hope. Because the special food that's made over there is specifically made for their dietary needs: Protein, vitamins. And your literal one bowl can turn from death to life in a child.

Let's make this Christmas not about us. Let's make it about inviting Christ into every broken place and then reaching out in his name. And if we all do it together, Randy, we can change this.

RANDY: Absolutely. We've seen it. We know this works. Sheila and I have been there, we've seen it, we know that it works. We can bring hope to these children in so many of the situations. I know the images are hard to see because it just looks hopeless, but it is not if you'll join with us.

Let me break it down for you. \$30 will feed three children for three whole months. That's

because of the people we have in place, the systems we have on the ground, the experience we have in doing this, and the wonderful volunteers that are already there. We just need you guys watching in the audience to partner with us. \$50 will feed five children for three months. \$100 will feed ten children. Some of you can easily feed 100 children for the next three months with a gift of \$1,000.

As we approach the end of this year, I just hope you'll take a moment and say, "Lord, what would you have me do? How many children would you have me feed just to get them through that season of difficulty, to stabilize them where they can function on their own again?" We've done this for many years, decades; my parents started this so many years ago, out of a burden for the needy. And we have brought this to you over the years, and you have responded. I want to say thank you, but I'm asking you to respond this time of year, reach out, give the best gift you can. And by the way, if you can help with one of the malnutrition clinics, the average cost on those is \$24,500. Join with others. Let's put those back in place. Those are critical. Those are the last stops before the grave. Let's rescue them. We can do it together. Go to the phone, go online, 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

In the studio

RANDY: I hope you are going online or going to the phones and giving the best gift you can. Remember, as we get to the end of the year, this is the time where you get your giving in order, and we invite you to just give life. We can do it together.

Sheila, I have been so blessed by having Susie on the program. I hope people will ask for the book. Susie, it's been a blessing.

SHEILA: Absolutely! Let me ask you, when people finish this book at the end, does it finish like on Christmas Eve eve?

SUSIE: Yes.

SHEILA: What's your prayer for how this would impact families?

SUSIE: That people would move forward with wonder and awe, and they would stay amazed at God's love. The one on "marvel," I know we don't have time to talk about it, but Jesus has given us authority over all the power of the enemy. And when the disciples came back and said, "Lord,

it's true. The demons obey us!" You would think, because he was always moved by faith, that he would say, "I told you this faith stuff works!" But he said, "Don't marvel that the demons obey you. Like I already told you, that is the case. But marvel that your name is written in the book of life." I mean, that was the most expensive miracle ever. And that's the thing that will keep us grounded. If we stay in awe that he transferred us out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of his dear son, but we do walk in authority, we keep expectancy, we guard against complacency and offense, we will be in a position for God to do great things.

RANDY: Yep! So, so good.

SHEILA: Need a big amen right there!

RANDY: Right there! Request that book when you bless others, and it will bless you. And come back! We'll see you again next time here on *LIFE Today*!