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Week 19: Spring Mission Feeding

Randy Robison and Sheila Walsh

Andy McQuitty

RANDY: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm Randy Robison. Sheila Walsh is with me, and we're delighted that you are here. Now many of you have children, grandchildren, what do you tell them? What are the things you want to impart to those generations? We're going to be talking about that today with Andy McQuitty who is a long-time friend of the ministry. He has a book out that is just that, it is what he has been telling his children and now they're grown and seeing the fruit. The book is called *Your Best Life Later* because it is about the things that you sow young and you reap later in life. Andy, great to have you on *Life Today*.

ANDY: Thank you, Randy. It is a pleasure to be with you.

RANDY: So this is fascinating to me because I've got four children. They're in their 20s now and you're starting to see, did I do this right? You try to put these things in their lives. Why was it important to you, because you planned way ahead, I've got to commend you for that, to sow these things into your children?

ANDY: Well, it is a mystery to me, Randy, how I ever started and finished this project because you just paid me a great compliment that I planned way ahead. I was a 30-year-old pastor in my pastorate at Irving Bible Church, just beginning that pastorate, and I had a baby girl who is then five years old, and then a little sister to Julie, Elizabeth was born right about that time, right when I was coming into my pastorate.

I was very concerned in those days with my growing family to do what the Bible says. As a father, I'm supposed to impart instruction. In fact, in the intro to the book, I quote

Proverbs 1:7-9, which says this: *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction. Listen, my son, to your father's instruction, and do not forsake your mother's teaching. They are a garland to grace your head and a chain to adorn your neck.*

That verse captured me as a young father because I began to ask myself the question, what if someday my daughters say to the Lord, I wanted to follow my father's instruction but where was it? What is this teaching of the mother? What is this instruction of the father that God tells our children to follow? What is it if we don't actually intentionally and strategically provide it?

SHEILA: I was just going to say, did you ever intend for this to be a book? Or was it just a gift for your children?

ANDY: Sheila, I never intended. In fact, this is the biggest surprise in the world that this book is sitting here. I wrote these journals to the children. Started Julie's when she was five, and then I had four more. And I started all of theirs when they were infants; wrote for 18 years for each one of them. And gave them their journal when we dropped them off in their freshman dorm room at university. And so I gave out five journals when each child reached the age of 18 in their college dorm room. And then promptly forgot about it. I gave it to them and explained to them why I wrote it for them and so forth; but then I forgot about it.

And went through 31 years as senior pastor at I.B.C. where I started out writing these journals and retired just two and a half years ago. The staff was very kind at I.B.C. They threw a big celebration banquet for me. And my assistant, Donna O'Reilly, who had been helping me for years and years, she, unbeknownst to me, reached out to all five of my children; and they were all over the world. One was in China; she couldn't come but she came via streaming. And she asked them all, "We want you to come back to your dad's celebration banquet. We want you to bring the journals that he wrote for you and read from those journals. And you're going to be the main speakers at your dad's banquet."

I didn't know any of this. You might wonder how did Donna even know about these journals? Well, she was with me when I was sending them with the kids to their freshman dorm rooms, and I asked her to make a copy. I said, "Donna, I'm going to give this to my child in a freshman dorm. I want a copy." Right? So she knew about that, and she'd made the copies. And so she brought them all in.

At the banquet, they all got up there and read from the journals. And the crowd was just, they were under the table. For weeks afterward, my friends were saying, "You've got to publish that! You've got to publish that!" So that's how it came to be.

I never wrote it for publication. In fact, after I gave the last journal to my youngest son, Jeff, almost ten years ago now I forgot all about them. So that's why I'm amazed that it is sitting here in front of us. I think it is a God thing actually.

RANDY: The interesting thing about it, is I'm reading through this and yes, it is from a father to his children, but these are things that apply to us still as adults every day. For example, and this is great advice, I think especially, girls are a little more sensitive to this, but it is true for everyone: It is best not to have your self-worth, your self-esteem rooted in the opinion of others. Why was that -- that's like the first thing in your book.

ANDY: Great discernment to put your finger on one of the main reasons why I think parents should do this for their children, whether in this form or another form, is to build their self-esteem on biblical values and to build up their character. And to praise them for godly character traits because Lord knows there are all other sources around that are trying to influence their character formation. And if our children build their self-esteem on the affirmation of the world then they're going to be headed off 180 degrees from where God wants them to go.

SHEILA: I even wondered as I read through the book if this was not only a gift to your children and a gift to those who read it but a gift to you. Because I wondered as you read

through these over the years you saw the pattern of God in your own life?

ANDY: Yes. Another very discerning observation, Sheila. I wrote these journals to my individual children. And at one point, I was writing all five of them simultaneously for about a 12-year period of time; the whole thing was 25 years to complete. But I wrote them because I wanted to disciple them. I wanted to be the father of Proverbs one and I wanted my instruction to be there for their growth in Christ, for their spiritual discipline.

But as you point out, the discipline of doing that for discipling my children actually turned out to be God's biggest discipleship program in my own life. That was maybe a guilt-inducing motivation for me to actually get into the word and prayer myself because I've got to write something in here. What do I write? It's going to have to be something God does in me. So this project was a discipleship project for my children, but it was the greatest discipleship program for me.

SHEILA: Wow! I love that.

RANDY: I'm interested because now we're older, our kids are out of the house, and maybe somebody has missed that chance to journal. What do you say to those of us who have the adult children, and now the grandchildren because surely there is still that role of imparting God's wisdom in their life.

ANDY: Absolutely! Absolutely! Well, with respect to your grandchildren, it is not too late to journal to them. You can write to them. I've got four grandchildren myself. I don't write journals for them like this but I do write to them. And you can do that for your grandchildren. But also, in this book we --

So let me tell you how we organized this book and put it into print. We wanted to make it a tool in the life of a young adult that this book would be given to. There are two demographic groups that I wrote this for. One is young adults who are starting out. Like I gave these to my 18-year-old children. That is the target audience that I wrote to. And so

that's one of the target audiences that we want this book to minister to. And we organized it into daily devotionals with a title and a P.S. at the end, an aphorism, or a scripture verse that kind of sums up modern-day what I was saying that day.

But there are 150 devotionals in here, and for that young adult demographic, we're hoping that that will develop the discipline of daily Bible study. You know Proverbs three says: Blessed are those who come daily to my gates and stand at my door and listen to me. So we kind of had a little ulterior motive here in getting young adults this kind of wisdom for life from the Word of God in daily doses that will set a pattern for the rest of their life.

And then, for the other demographic, which are parents and grandparents, maybe you're a parent and your child is about to go off to college, maybe you should get this book as a gift to them. Read it first so you can endorse it to them and say, this is for you. But it's also for those parents as a paradigm of how they might write journals like this to their younger children. Or to their children who have given them grandchildren; how they can do it for them. In fact, we have another follow-up project that we're going to create a journal template for parents to write according to this.

SHEILA: That's a great idea! One of the impressions I got when I came toward the end of the book was it seemed to me that it was a lighthouse. I think when kids go off to college, that's when so many of them kind of tend to fall away. But it is like this bright shining light that keeps pointing towards Christ. But you're very honest and vulnerable in your journals, and I found that encouraging. You talk about handling negativity. And you talk about disappointment; and sometimes, even disappointment with believers. Why is that so important, do you think?

ANDY: I think it is important, Sheila because it is the way life is. It's the truth. If our children are going to invest themselves in the wisdom that we are imparting to them they have to believe that we're being transparent with them. We're not blowing smoke, we're not sugar-coating it, but we're also not in despair either. We're telling it like it is, but then putting it under the lamp, the lighthouse of scripture so that they could see.

You mentioned that I'm very honest in the book. This was actually one of the first questions I had to ask myself in publishing this. Am I willing to be embarrassed before the world? Because I'm very open about times when I got angry or messed up or went off the tracks or whatever. And there's just a lot of honesty in this book. It is absolutely essential that you have that. And if there are any parents who are thinking of maybe doing something like this, your transparency and your honesty are what will motivate your children to listen to the answers that you bring from scripture. And if you don't have the former, you're not going to have the latter. It was an essential, but a sometimes-embarrassing element of putting this out there. But I would not change a thing about that because I think it's what actually animates this and makes it come alive for our children.

RANDY: You also wrote much of this through a very serious cancer battle. Was there ever a time when you thought you may not be able to finish a journal?

ANDY: Oh yeah. Yeah. You were with me back in 2009 and through 2012 when I was going through Stage 4 cancer, surgeries, and chemotherapy. Those were very dicey days in my family and my ministry and everything because I was Stage 4. They gave me an eight percent chance of survival. And so I actually, man, I got my affairs in order. I had a wonderful funeral service planned for myself. It's a file in my thing I know who is speaking and the songs and everything -- and it is wonderful. Had the remarriage talk with my wife, all that stuff. Very cognizant of the fact that I may not finish these journals for my children.

But you know? The Lord was very gracious and brought me through. He has purpose. I wrote a book about that experience, which you know about, which I talked about on this set, *Notes from the Valley*.

RANDY: I'm curious what came through to your children during that time?

ANDY: I think what came through to them was the validity and the reality of living faith

in Christ. My son, I'll just give you an example, Jonathan, he's my fourth child. I get them confused sometimes. He was studying out of Savanna College of Art and Design, SCAD, out in South Carolina when I was diagnosed with the cancer. It really shook him up. He wanted to come back home closer to me, to be with me through that battle. So he transformed to O.U. and he was closer to home.

But his response to that was kind of like an example of all of their responses. They all, I think, watched very carefully. How is dad going to handle this? And what's he going to say? Especially in regard to the church. We have a large church. Are we going to be open and honest with this journey or whatever? Or are we going to try to? So I think they were very watchful. And it was for them as well as for all of my other family and friends, as well as our congregation. It was an opportunity for me to stand on the platform of faith and say, God's promises prevail. And I'm good.

RANDY: I think that's important because it is one thing to tell your children, your grandchildren something, it is another thing to live it out.

SHEILA: I have one final question. I want to take you back to the night of the banquet that was all a wonderful surprise. What was your most lingering memory of that evening?

ANDY: I would say, and at the risk of making four of my five children jealous, I don't want to because all of you, if you're listening, all of you were stellar in what you read, and everybody just praised all of you up and down. All of their CDs and updated careers and families are in the back of the book, as well as the comments they made.

But it was the comments of my son Jonathan that stuck with me the most. And the reason for that is that he brought the journal that I had written to him and read from it, but then he pulled out a journal that he has started for his son, my namesake, Eric Andrew McQuitty, who is now three years old in West Palm Beach, Florida, and Jonathan read some entries to his son, my grandson from the journal that he's writing for him -- and that just smoked me. It put me under the table. It shredded me as the Irish would say. Because

I saw at that moment the generational reach of this kind of a project; that this is legacy building for a family, not just for an individual.

RANDY: I love it. I love that you're building a legacy. I would encourage anybody watching to be very mindful of that.

Sheila, there is another legacy that we have around here at *LIFE Outreach* that has been reaching people for generations and that is through the Mission Feeding outreach. Take a look at this and then Sheila and I will tell you how you can be a part of it leaving that lasting legacy in the name of Christ.

On the mission field

ANNOUNCER: The devastating effects of a food crisis have driven these mothers to leave their villages to seek help. Their children are starting to show signs of the silent killer known as malnutrition.

ISAK: In malnutrition clinics like this all over Angola, there are children that are fighting a fight of life and death. These areas in Southern Africa have the worst child mortality rates under five of anywhere in the world. The children you see around me in this clinic are literally children that are being ravaged by malnutrition simply because they don't have enough food.

That is the reality for a child like this little Josephina. Josephina is a two-year-old child suffering from malnutrition; the silent killer that is ravaging her little two-year-old body to the point to where she can't even raise herself and hold her own body weight. Her mother Marta is left with nothing else to do. She has done everything she can do to save her child's life, and now all she can do is watch, wait, and pray. Pray that her child will survive.

My prayer is that we haven't reached this child too late. My prayer is that the therapeutic

food that we're bringing this child will save her life and bring her back to full strength. But my other prayer is that we're able to reach the many mothers in villages all over this area just like Marta; mothers who are so desperate for food, mothers who don't have the food to feed their children; that we can reach them before their children end up in malnutrition clinics fighting their fight of life and death.

In the studio

SHEILA: I've tried to put myself in the shoes of a mum like Marta. I remember the first time I was in Angola and went to one of the malnutrition clinics. I remember seeing these little ones who are just struggling for the next breath and wondering, how could things possibly get any worse than this? But what I want to tell you today is they have gotten worse. Angola is now facing the worst situation of drought and loss of all agriculture in 40 years. It was devastating when I was there a few years ago and now it is worse.

I think about that mom, Marta, she loves her little Josephina as much as I love my son, Christian. And I remember the joy it used to be when Christian was a little boy, and he would clean his whole plate and he loved it. And there was just something that just felt so right.

But these moms, they're doing everything they possibly can. I've walked with them for a long-distance where they try and dig through the earth to try and find anything that would potentially fill their little ones' bellies and come up empty-handed. Here's what's amazing to me -- the number of women who still faithfully look to Jesus and pray and ask God to send help. The great news is you and I, Randy, get to be the answer to that prayer.

RANDY: We do! And Sheila, we've been there before during difficult times. These are cycles that happen in nature and crops and things like that. It is no fault of their own. They work, they work very hard, but it is difficult in these third world countries because crops fail, or storms come or drought comes. And when those situations occur you have stood by us, our audience, our friends, our partners in going in and saying, you know

what? We're not going to let death win. We're going to intervene for a time, so we stave off the starvation and the malnutrition.

Sheila, we've seen it. We've seen it when we go into these villages where Mission Feeding is occurring and you see, it is a radical difference. The children are learning, they're preparing for their future. They're working a lot of times. They're happy, they're smiling, they're singing. But then we see the places where it's hit them hard, and they need Mission Feeding. They need someone like you and I to come in, just for a time period to get them through a rough season. Sometimes, if I miss a meal a day I think, no, I'm feeling faint. When you're talking about a week, two weeks, a month? Two months? It quickly becomes a problem.

But just as quickly as the problems arise, the solution can arrive for them. The solution is you and I. Your gift today of \$30 will help feed three children for three whole months. For a lot of them, that's all they need to get through a difficult period. Your gift of \$50 will help feed five children for three months. Some of you can give \$1,000 and feed 100 children for three months.

I'm encouraging you, whatever you can do, just reach out, and partner with us. Let's be the answer to that mother's prayer. She's asking, "Lord, help us!" I think God is saying, my people are there. Will you be that person? Go to the phone, go online, give the best gift you can and know that when you partner with us in Mission Feeding, you will be saving 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.

Through *LIFE's* Mission Feeding outreach your gift of love can be an answer to prayer for a hurting and hungry child in their time of need. 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.

With your gift of any amount, we'll send you *The Chosen: 40 days with Jesus*. From the creators of the widely popular television drama, *The Chosen*, this devotional invites you to discover Jesus through the eyes of those who knew him best. With your gift of \$100 or more, please request the "Amazing Grace" sheet music framed wall art. This timeless and well-beloved hymn can be displayed as a reminder of God's grace to you. 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, "Let the Children Come." This beautiful bronze is a reminder to care for children around the world in both word and deed.

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, keep calling. This isn't our obligation -- it is our joy to do this!

RANDY: Yep! Andy, man, we appreciate you! What do you want people to walk away with today?

ANDY: My heart for this book is to provide parents an opportunity to take back their God-given role of raising their sons and daughters to know Christ and to walk in his ways, which are ways of prosperity and joy and flourishing and fruitfulness. That's what we want. That's what we want from this project, both from the parents who read it to the young adults who receive it, and the generations after that; that we can start to take back

our biblical role in raising our children intentionally to be godly men and women.

RANDY: I appreciate you taking the time to share it with our audience today. And we appreciate you watching. That's what we're here for, to encourage you. We'll be here again every day Monday through Friday. Come back and see us on *Life Today*!