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Week 18: Spring Mission Feeding

Mission special #1

Randy Robison & Sheila Walsh

RANDY: Welcome to this special program. I'm Randy Robison; Sheila Walsh is with me. We're coming to you because there is a very serious situation in our world today. But there is a simple solution, and you are a part of that solution.

For over three decades now, *LIFE Outreach International* has been reaching into the hardest-hit areas across southern Africa to go into areas where malnutrition and starvation are a very real danger. We go in with a specially blended bowl of, we call it "soup" but it is a bit more than that, and we give it to people who are in desperate need. It turns things around.

This is only possible because of people like you. Many of you have joined us before and we ask you to stick around so we can give you an update on what is going on. For some of you, this may be the first time you've ever seen it or heard of it. I want you to stick around what I feel like is the love of God in action because we can really turn things around. But it takes all of us working together.

Sheila, I know you know firsthand how effective Mission Feeding can be.

SHEILA: Yeah, Randy. I will never forget my very first trip to Angola. I'd seen things on the news before, I'd watched programs from *Life Today* before, but there is something about suddenly your feet are on the ground in Africa and you're sitting beside mothers, and you're in malnutrition clinics, and you're looking at little ones who are in desperate need. Not because of some *incurable* disease, they're dying from something that is very curable. They are starving to death. You wouldn't think that is still possible in our world with all the excess we have everywhere.

But the little ones that I saw, it was so shocking to me. Their hair had turned a strange shade of almost orange or red because there are no nutrients in their system; their little bellies are swollen, and it begins to actually impact their skin.

If that was your child, I'm a mom, if that was my son, I would do everything in the world to be able to alleviate his suffering. Well, the mothers I met love their children every bit as much as I love my son, but they simply don't have anything to give their children.

The malnutrition clinic is not a place any mother wants to take their child. For many, it is the end of the road. But as we've seen, Randy, if we can get to these children before they ever end up in a place like that, we can turn their lives around.

RANDY: Oh, we absolutely know it! We've seen it multiple times. We've been doing it, like I said, for decades. And here's the thing, Sheila. You said as a mother, and I know as a father, there is nothing bigger than saving the lives of these children. So I want to take you over there to one of the most recent reports we've gotten back from a crisis area from our people on the ground just so you can see. But as you watch this, I hope that you'll not just empathize with these people who are going through a hard time, but I hope you will just pause for a moment and say, what can I do? What is my something? When these mothers have done everything and nothing is working, is there anything we can do? I think there is and if we want to show you and invite you to be a part of it. Watch this.

On the mission field

ISAK: People often ask me what does crisis look like? When you say there is a crisis in the field, what is that? This is the picture of a crisis. Mother after mother here in their screening clinic for malnutrition. You can see how overcrowded it is. Mothers have come here in absolute desperation.

Crisis is when there are more mothers than we can handle. Crisis is when there's not enough food

for each and every child. Crisis is when the silent killer of malnutrition comes in and starts to literally rob the lives of each and every one of these children. But I need you to understand where their crisis starts. It doesn't start here. This is where it ends and many times it ends with a tragic ending. But this crisis starts out in a village, it starts because of failed crops due to the worst drought in 40 years in this area. It starts because the mother isn't able to produce enough food to feed her family. It starts because a child goes to bed without a meal -- and the next and the next. That is how this crisis starts.

It's not because these mothers are not doing everything they can to provide for their children, it's because everything they can is not enough. How do we change that, you ask? We change it by reaching the mothers out in the villages. We change it by bringing Mission Feeding to those mothers, providing that bowl of food each and every day. The nutrients that that child needs, that's how we avert this crisis. Not here in the clinic. By the time we get here, many times it is too late.

So please, help us today to take Mission Feeding to the mothers out in the villages. I can give you a guarantee that we will literally bring hope to those mothers and life to those children.

End of video

In the studio

RANDY: It's hard -- it's hard really to look at those children with those signs of malnutrition but we've seen this for many years. You see the thinning of the hair where it sort of turns from black to red. You see the distended belly; that is not a sign of being full, it is actually malnutrition. And then in the worst cases, you start to see the skin flaking and peeling. I know that's hard to watch. And Sheila, it's hard for us to watch it and we've been there, we've seen what happens. But the reality is, when you start seeing those signs, if you don't do something about it, it just gets worse and worse. I've watched children -- I've watched children die in the malnutrition clinics because they're there because they're in such bad shape.

I prayed for a little girl and she didn't make it through the night. I've comforted mothers who

have lost their children. And something in me the whole time is going, this is not how it should be! I know God wants to bless all of his people -- all the people of this earth. He loves those mothers, he loves those children. He is a good God. What is the missing piece here? I think it is you and I. I think it is you and I reaching out and expressing God's love, showing it to them in very practical ways with the clinics, with the feeding. I just -- I want us to do more.

There are about a million and a half people right now who are desperate shape -- desperate shape in Angola. And we feed about 350,000 children a month. There is a gap there. We need to do more. We can only do more when people just like you partner with us and say, "We want to help."

Sheila, my cry today is let's not just watch these images. Let's not just shake our heads and say, "Boy, that's sad." Let's do something!

SHEILA: Absolutely, Randy. And honestly, as a mom, can you imagine holding your little one who is looking into your eyes absolutely desperate. A child expecting that their mom or their dad is going to be there for them is going to answer their cry, is going to give them what they need. And you love your child every bit as much as we do. But you have nothing to give them!

It is heartbreaking! And we've been there so many times and our partners are on the ground right now today. As you and I are talking, they're there. And that malnutrition clinic, I've never seen it so crowded. The need is desperate!

We shared with you some last year about in South Sudan, about some of our clinics being washed away. You helped us. We're being able to rebuild those. But the need right now, the cry from every mother's heart there is, "Please, please will you help me? And please will you help me now?" Would you watch this?

On the mission field

SHEILA: This is Maria. Maria is a mother of six children and only three of them are still on this

earth. You might be able to tell all around me that the crops this year have completely failed so she is not able to feed them with anything she has. She literally has to dig around to see if she can find some roots, anything to be able to feed her children.

I can't imagine what it must be like for a mom to have to bury three children. And not only that but to have to watch three children die because of malnutrition. This is her boy. She only has one boy left. He's 12 years old. She said to me, "I'm so worried about him because he is getting so thin. And he has a cough and I see the signs." See that's the hard thing. She said when she went to bed at night her prayer is God, will you please show me what to do? Or would you send somebody to help me?

I was able to tell her, "God heard your prayer and that's why we're here." That's what this is all about. Mission Feeding is all about an urgent need right now for families who go to sleep hungry at night but still believing that God answers prayer. We can be the answer to that prayer for this young mom.

End of video

In the studio

SHEILA: If you're ever tempted to think, well, Sheila, how do you know it works? I know it works because I've been there. I've seen the difference. Let me show you. This is a little orange bowl. Because it used to be, they would come to get food and all they'd have would be like an old rusty can, which would burn them and it wasn't safe. So probably you, and many of our partners said, "No, no, no. We're going to give you something to put that food in."

We have factories on the ground that produce the kind of food that these children need with the vitamins, the nutrients. I've stood in the line and been able to ladle out that food and watch the difference. Do you see that little 12-year-old boy? Did you see there was no life in his eyes, no joy? No anticipation for the future?

But the thing that's amazing to me is that mother still believes in prayer. That mother every

single night, even though she has buried three children, and she is watching her 12-year-old boy begin to lose a little bit more every day, she still believes in prayer. And she still asks God every night, "Will you send someone to help us?"

That's you and me. That's us! That's our joy. This isn't something we're supposed to do to be a good Christian. This is our privilege. Those of us who have so much compared to those who have so little. She's not asking for a lot. She is asking, "Could I have one bowl of food a day to give my children?" We can do this. Together, we can do this. It is very doable, Randy.

RANDY: Yes, and we know it like you said because we've been doing it. Let me explain how it works. We say for your gift of \$30, \$50, or \$100, you can feed three, five, or ten children for three whole months. A gift of \$1,000 will actually feed 100 children for three months.

If you're like me, you go how does that work? Well, it works because of the way we acquire some of the raw materials in the food, some of the grains, the way we have people on the ground at food factories in some of these countries, and the way that we go out into the villages usually, if not always, in a school so that the children will receive an education when they receive a bowl of food because we're thinking about the future here.

When we look at the whole project and the number of children we can reach, the numbers boil down to that average. Again, we've been doing this for decades so we've got some pretty good systems in place. We've got some wonderful, wonderful people on the ground. But on a practical level, I know when you sit there and you just pray for that one child, Lord, spare this child's life, and they're on the edge of malnutrition, you get to the point where you would do anything. What can I do? Tell me what to do and I'll do it to save this one child's life.

I just want you to think about that one child for one second. That one child whose mother is saying, "Lord, please, I'm desperate. I don't want to lose a child. I don't want to lose another child." That one child -- you will save that one life with your gift today.

We can do it. We can reach the big numbers but it takes all of us. Many of you have given to

Mission Feeding before. We say thank you, your gift saved lives. Many of you, this is your first time seeing this. God is stirring up something in your heart. Your compassion is coming forth and you're thinking the thoughts, you might be saying a prayer. I'm asking you to put feet to that prayer.

Go to the phone or go online and give the best gift you can. I promise you, Sheila and I promise you, your gift will get to the right place. We will save lives through Mission Feeding. So I ask you to join us right now.

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

On the mission field

Janice: Just a few minutes ago we rolled into this village, a very small village. I asked how many lived in this village and an estimate of over 500 people. Then we asked any women that had lost a child to come over. And here they are. This group of women have lost over 150 children. It is not a club you want to be in.

It's just not right! They died because they didn't have enough food.

Nowhere in our world today should women expect to lose a child to malnutrition for lack of food. I just ran past each one of these ladies and asked them individually to show me how many babies they've lost. To lose one child would devastate you for life. But these women together have lost 150. Many five -- many over five!

I went one by one and looked each woman in their eye and held the fingers of the number of children they lost and I said, "Please heal them, Lord! And please don't let another child die in this village."

She's lost eight children. Can you see it in her eyes?

We as a body of believers are for justice and part of justice is making things like this stop, making the death cycle in a village like this stop. And if we have in our ability to change something we should do it. We must do it. Be a part of making this cycle end.

End of clip

In the studio

SHEILA: "Making the cycle end." I'll never forget the sight of coming across an area where they were burying some children. And there were four empty graves and I wondered, have these children already passed? And they said, "No. But we know they will be here soon." That's something that has to stop.

I want to ask you a question. Have you ever been in a really tough place? You're really in a

despairing place and somebody has come alongside you, a brother or sister in Christ, and encouraged you, and built your faith up again? I want to ask you, would you do that for these mothers? I mean we spend a lot of time talking about the children, as we should. But as a mom, I can't help but think about the mothers. When you're praying every night, "God, please, do you see us? Will you send help?"

You and I can be the ones that go and put a hand on the shoulders of these mothers and say, you know what? We're with you, we're standing with you. We're going to fight for your children as hard as you're fighting for your children. Because let me tell you, they fight hard. I've literally been on the ground with some of these mothers digging in the earth to see if they can find anything that they could feed their child. And they go to sleep night after night after night with an empty stomach. They're working hard but they're calling on us. And Christ has given you and I the privilege of being the answer of being his boots on the ground, his hands, and feet.

So please, first of all, thank you for staying this long. I know it is hard to watch. But please, would you do something now? Because Randy, if we all do something we can be this wave of hope across the world.

RANDY: Absolutely. You know when you watch that, you've got to understand one thing, and I know this question comes up in our western mindset. But no mother has a child, planning on not being able to feed that child, planning on that child dying of malnutrition. They're the only thing you've got. Family is everything over there and when they lose a child they lose a piece of themselves. They don't want to be in a malnutrition clinic. They're only there because everything else they have tried has failed. Oftentimes, due to things like drought. And that's what we're facing specifically in Angola right now; other situations in other areas where we feed. They are crowding into these places just to get something. And oftentimes, you'll see the parents don't even get it for themselves, they just get it for their children.

This is a situation that is desperate right now, but it is a situation where we can do something about it. And the more of you that participate in this, the more lives we can save.

Your gift of \$30, \$50, or \$100 right now will feed three, five, or ten children for the next three months. We need you to step up and join us so we can reach more -- we can save more. I don't want another mother to lose a child. I don't want another grave to be filled. Let's fill those bowls so that they can't fill those graves. Do what you can right now.

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.

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End of video

On the mission field

ISAK: This is a mother that doesn't have hope. Her only hope is, maybe it will rain -- maybe the drought will end -- maybe we'll be able to plant crops. But the reality is that that is not coming, that's not the situation here and that's not going to be the end of her story in the near term. They need a seed. The only positive thing to this story is if we're able to bring the food that Marianna needs; to bring the food that her children desperately need; to be able to actually come into this village and to give her Mission Feeding -- to give her life, to save lives and to sustain life. That's the only way that this story ends positively with any hope -- with any future.

Sheila, Randy, I know you understand this situation. You understand the crisis that's unfolding here. You've seen it, you've experienced it yourself. You've spoken to so many of these mothers in the past, and I've seen how your heart has broken for them. But I've got to tell you that the crisis right now is greater than I've ever seen it in this country. Mothers who are literally crying out saying, I hope you can help us otherwise we'll die.

Sheila, Randy, please, ask the friends of *LIFE* to do something extra special for us. Ask them to do whatever they can do because the gift that they give is genuinely going to be a gift of life.

End of video

In the studio

RANDY: Isak, we hear you. We know you guys are ready to go and we will not fail to ask everyone to support Mission Feeding. That's why we're coming to you right now and saying, we can save those lives. But we have to have your help. We can turn their sorrow into joy, their pain into dancing. We've seen it, Sheila. I want to do it again.

SHEILA: Isak, Randy is right. We heard you, and we heard the mothers, and we saw the children, and we're not going to fail you. I know many of you have given a lot before, let's do it again. Let's do it again. Let's do it again. Let's fill every bowl so we don't fill any more graves.

If you haven't called yet, please call. \$30? That goes like that, in our culture. When you invest it

into Mission Feeding, it changes the world for one child.

So for Randy, from all of us here at *LIFE*, thank you so much! God bless you richly as you bless other people. We'll see you next time!