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Week 19

Randy Robison and Sheila Walsh

Curtis Grimes

SHEILA: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm Sheila Walsh, here with Randy Robison. Let me ask you a question. If you were to think of three things that Scottish people love, I wonder what you would come up with? You might come up with haggis. You might come up with the movie, *Brave Heart*. But did you know that something huge in Scotland is country music? We love country.

And today we have a very special Texas country star with us. Curtis Grimes, I want to welcome you to *Life Today*. Thanks for being here.

CURTIS: Thank y'all for having me. Yes, ma'am.

RANDY: Back us up a little bit before we get to the big stages, the country music stages. Take us back a little bit so we can understand how you got where you're at and how because you didn't start with a guitar, you started with a baseball bat. Right?

CURTIS: That's right. I lived about two hours east of Dallas, and Nolan Ryan was my guy! So from early on, five years old, I wanted to pitch for the Rangers. I was pretty good at it. I'd been blessed with the talent. I was a pitcher so my entire childhood, that's what I did. We did the spring ball, fall ball, year around, everything. Wound up getting a scholarship to go to Shreveport, Louisiana, and play college ball.

My roommate there had a guitar sitting in the dorm room. And I was just getting into this whole like Texas country underground; didn't get to play it on the radio kind of stuff. You had to dig around on the internet to find it. So when I picked up the guitar those are the kind of songs that I

tried to play and write. And so that's where it started really, at 19 years old in my college dorm room, and then it kind of just went from there.

SHEILA: I read this somewhere and this can't be true, that you gave up baseball for a girl.

CURTIS: It is true! Unfortunately. I quickly regretted that when that fell through. So then I didn't have baseball, and music was kind of what I dove into to fill that void. It was therapeutical in a lot of ways. That's what got me into writing songs; it's feelings on paper and then putting that to music.

So the next year, I went down to San Marcos, Texas, which is about an hour south of Austin and that was the live music scene; that's where all these guys I was listening to played a bunch of shows. So I started going and I would just be in the crowd watching the guy on stage where he put his fingers on the guitar, then I'd go home and try to do the same.

Did that for a couple of years, pieced together a band, and then in 2008, three years after I even touched that thing, we won a local radio contest to open for Kenny Chesney. And this was like I don't know if y'all remember, Kenny was like the man for like five years! Fifth-year entertainer of the year, biggest country music concert event of the year, and there we were. You go from playing in front of like playing 30-40 people at a little dive bar to 16,000 people in the Erwin Center. It was just so surreal; like just happened so fast. The only thing I specifically remember was my mom was there, like in the rafters. Hi, mom! That was the only thing in the moment I remembered. Then I got to see videos later and kind of relive it through that.

But that happened three years in. Three years after that, I get a call from my manager one day, "Hey, there is this new show called The Voice that's going to be auditioning in Austin on Saturday." The problem was I was supposed to play at my mom's 50th birthday party on Saturday. So I said, "Well, if they can squeeze me in early in the morning I'll go do that and then make it to mom's thing." So they did. And wound up making the cut. So I had to drive up there and do that, drive back. Do round two, and they said, "You may never hear from us again but if you do, then good luck."

Two weeks later, on a plane to Los Angeles. Had never been there, never been on the camera side of things. All I knew was to show up, set up the P.A. play a show, and go home. And so that just opened up an entirely new world of music in the industry and the business side of it for me.

RANDY: Okay. From a career standpoint, great! I'm curious also at the same time, what was sort of the spiritual background of your life?

CURTIS: So I grew up in the Southern Baptist church. So we were in church Sunday morning, Sunday night, and Wednesday night; and that's all I knew. And had a very good, good faith foundation, very godly home; no drinking, no cussing, just pretty straightlaced, and I'm thankful for that -- very thankful for that. So that's kind of all I knew.

When I was in high school -- back to, I got saved the day I turned nine. So the day before I turned nine, the night before was revival week at our church, and the Holy Spirit was just at my heart. And I was in there the night before, I was crying before I go to bed. My dad is like, "What's wrong?" I was like, "I need to accept Jesus as my Lord and savior. And if I die right now, like I'm going to hell. I need to get this right like right now!" He said, "Okay. Tomorrow we'll go talk with the pastor and share with him how you're feeling." And so we went down there and did that. So that's where I was, nine years old, very active in our R.A. Program, youth group.

During freshman year, I made the varsity baseball team as a pitcher. And probably, sophomore year I went to one of the baseball parties and started hanging out. Well, then there is stuff going on there that was not going on in my house. So that's like where I had my first beer. I remember it was so bad that I went into the bathroom and poured it out just so I was cool and finished the beer. So that's where I was. By the end of my senior year, I had gone to more of these things and got into that. Then, of course, there was the temptation of girls and everything that comes with that as a youth.

And so that's when I went off to college, that increased; the accountability of my parents wasn't there anymore to get up and make sure I was going to church on Sunday. And that's really where

I fell off, stopped getting in the Word, stopped praying, other than maybe blessing food on occasion. And that's where I was when I got into the music thing. Well, of course, if you're not familiar with the music industry, a lot of that is drinking and partying. How can we profit off of this lifestyle? So I thought that's the lifestyle that you live and that's what you did if you sang music for a living; completely contradictory to everything I knew was and wasn't right.

And the whole time, I had the conviction the whole time. I was just ignoring it and just really trying to justify everything. About six, seven years into that, probably about three years after The Voice, I just started having a lot of conviction for this lifestyle I was living, for the content, the words that are in my music. And here I was with this opportunity on this platform, and not only was I not using it for God's glory and honor, but I was doing the opposite in most ways. So I was on the way to the gym about midnight one night and this song, Andrae Crouch's song, "Through It All" came on. And that was just like the most reassuring thing in the world, the simple fact that through all of this, through how I was living, how hypocritical I was being, how professing to be a Christian and then not just, that whole thing -- if you're to stand on trial for being a Christian, is there enough evidence to convict you? For me, there wasn't in every other regard.

And so I just made a point from then on that if I'm going to do music, I've been given this talent, this platform, then not only one, should I get my priorities right and start living for the Lord, not just be a Christian because I got saved and now I got the fire insurance, and live how I want -- that's not how it works. And so that was when I started pursuing walking with the Lord; started actively trying to live like Christ who dwells in me.

When I was a kid, I'd always tell people, "When I grow up, I want to pitch for the Rangers, and I want to use that platform to tell people about Jesus." Because I always read the Sports Illustrated for kids and they'd have little articles from people like Reggie White who would share their faith. And that was so cool to me as a little Christian that was on fire for the Lord. So here I was, not playing baseball but definitely had a big platform and reach. So that was probably just as hard as just the conviction of being a hypocrite.

SHEILA: I want to ask you though, is when you make this, when you hear this song, which I

love that song, and you determined that you're going to change direction, you're going to change your life, how did the people around you receive that, like your record label or all your people?

CURTIS: So the next trip to Nashville, this is like in September, and I was going to go to Nashville. We're supposed to have a marketing meeting with a little plan of -- and they wanted to release this song called "Keg Party" and so all this stuff, just that brand. So before the meeting starts, and there is like this Entourage office and the goal to Nashville, ritzy stuff, 12 people around a big table. I'm like, "Hey guys, before we get started today, this is where I'm at. I don't drink anymore. I want to do positive, faith-based, traditional country music. And I don't know how it's going to work, but like that's just where my heart is. I don't feel comfortable releasing this kind of song. That's just not me." And so one guy out of the 12 came up to me afterward and was like, "I'm proud of you. That's awesome. That's respectable." And in December, everybody dropped me.

[Laughter]

Management dropped me, the booking agent dropped me, and everybody that was working with me dropped me except for my radio promoter. She didn't give up on me.

So I didn't know what to do at that point. I knew that after I said, "This is what I'm going to do," my initial thought was well, maybe I need to remove myself from this environment. Get out from being surrounded by people that engage in the temptation aspect of it. But God was like, no, I put you there for a reason. So whatever you think you're going to do, go lead worship in a church, or whatever else, do that at the venues you're playing at now because that's where the people that need to hear it most are. So that's what kept me, I guess in this realm, in the Texas country music industry.

Also too, I never really understood the concept of walking with the Lord; like actually pursuing Christ in that manner. Not just when you die and go to heaven, I need him just as much if not more right now than on the other side of the dirt. So that really came to, I guess, clarity of what that meant and actually applying it. So then, it changes everything. It changes how you engage

with people, how you try to reach people versus like hey! You're doing something wrong. That's bad, don't do it. Here's why. Versus like hey, I love you. I've been there. I've done that. And when I removed all of that stuff out of the way, then God was able to use me and not just me walking around with the cross badge on my chest.

SHEILA: We cannot have Curtis Grimes, the country star with us and not sing something for us. Would you sing something for us?

CURTIS: I will! I just wrote a song last Thursday night. We went into the studio to record in Nashville on Tuesday, and I needed another song. A pastor friend of mine had given me this idea a couple of days before but I was playing with my kids. I was about to be gone for a week, so I was like, you know what? Priorities -- I'll try that later. And so I played with my kids and did a little voice memo.

A couple of nights later I got back from the gym kind of late and I was still wide awake so I said all right, I'm going to try to work on that song now. So I got my guitar and just conversation, all right, God, I need another song for the album. Would you just give me the words? And use this for you -- however it is. To be honest, I haven't done that a lot. You know we hear the "Ask and it shall be given if you're asking in his will." And for whatever reason, haven't done that a whole lot. But this time I did, and in one hour I wrote this song. And of course, it's testimonial and kind of my story of where I was at and kind of my message now, and how I approach it too. It's called "Honky-Tonk Preacher."

[Curtis Grimes singing "Honky-Tonk Preacher"]

He said I met Jesus on a bender one night
and through the smoke and the neon
I saw the light
I sat there and wondered
Well, how could it be?

that he cared about
An old sinner like me
he told me how Peter denied him three times
and how old King David
Failed once or twice
about love and forgiveness,
Mercy and grace
how a tomb was left empty
When a stone rolled away
he's a honky-tonk preacher
on Saturday nights
his church is a dance hall
Full of liquor and lies
he's telling a story
He knows all too well
about a highway to heaven
Off a dead-end to hell
he don't do it for the money,
The show or the fame
he's a honky-tonk preacher
Fit for a king

He said I spent years
In the bottom of a glass
chasing that demon
A ghost from the past
till I hit rock bottom
And all I could see
Was a hand reaching out
Where a nail used to be
he's a honky-tonk preacher

On Saturday nights
 his church is a dance hall
 Full of liquor and lies
 he's telling a story
 He knows all too well
 about a highway to heaven
 Called a dead end to hell
 he don't do it for the money,
 The show or the fame
 he is a honky-tonk preacher
 Fit for a king
 then he left me with this
 a soft-spoken word
 no fire or brimstone
 Just salt of the earth
 a few simple verses
 From First John three
 he's a honky-tonk preacher
 Fit for a king

SHEILA: Wow! You heard it here first, people! That was beautiful! I heard something interesting about what you have on the table at your gigs that people can just like pick up for free.

CURTIS: Yes, ma'am. So not long after I made all these other changes in my life, people started asking if I would ever consider doing a gospel album. I said I would love to but I just don't have money lying around to do a side project at the moment. So we started up a go-fund-me campaign and people donated and gave. We raised more than enough money to do this gospel album. I didn't want to profit off of this, it is just supposed to be here you go, some good positive country music going out in the world. So I started up a ministry. God just put it on my heart in that

moment of everybody that you come in contact with doesn't have a Bible. And for me, that was kind of weird because they're lying around the house. Of course, we understand across the sea there are people who are persecuted for having one in their house. But like here in America, there are people that just never had a Bible for whatever reason. So initially, I just bought some to put on the merch table. It would slowly kind of dwindle down. People are sometimes kind of awkward or nervous about asking for one. So I just keep filling them up. And then I started up a website where people could go online and request one. And different mission groups have come along so we'll send cases off with them.

At the time I was trying to figure out a name for the ministry, my grandfather had passed away and he had nine fingers most of his life. When he was little he was roping a horse and a dog spooked it and here we are. So after the funeral, we were at his house and my dad was talking about how now he's got ten perfect fingers to worship the Lord. So kind of in his Honor and piggybacking off of that, we named it Ten Finger Ministry. We've given out over 6,000 Bibles so far.

RANDY: I love it! So if you're ever wondering what Texas country music sounds like, there you go right there. But what you're doing, Curtis, and what I love about this is that you are giving away the gospel but utilizing what you have. What God has given you, you're giving it back. I just love it. I think it is a great picture for all of us, Sheila.

SHEILA: Yeah, and I love the line of the hand reaching out where there used to be a nail. We get to be that today. Some children around the world are at this very moment literally starving to death. And you and I have this incredible privilege of saying, "Not on our watch. We're going to be Jesus's boots on the ground." Will you watch this?

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, their 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

RANDY: I hope you will go online, go to the phones now. Make the best gift you can. You will be saving a life. We appreciate you partnering with us. We appreciate our guest today, Sheila. This was just fun.

SHEILA: I know it was. Curtis, beautiful story, beautiful music! And I know your songs are doing really well. One went straight to number one on iTunes. So people, look up Curtis Grimes music. Thank you for being with us.

CURTIS: Thank y'all so much for having me. This was awesome.

RANDY: It's great to have you. And it's great to have you! Join us again next time on *Life Today!*