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Week 21: Spring Mission Feeding

James and Betty Robison

Shannon Bream

JAMES: We welcome you to *Life Today*. Betty and I are thrilled to have Shannon Bream with us. She is, as I've actually told her, and did just a few minutes ago when we said hello because we're doing this on Zoom. But she is a radiant, in my opinion, a manifestation of the glory and the grace and the love of God every time you see her. She has *The Women of the Bible*. By the way, Shannon, we welcome you to *Life Today*. We're so glad you are with us.

SHANNON: Thank you. It's so great to be with you guys and to see all the things that you are doing around the world, and just to be a small part of the conversation with you today.

JAMES: Well, this book you wrote about *Women of the Bible*, a lot of people are thinking, and I've even heard you say, and others say, "Men need to read this too." Let me just go ahead and set the record straight, I didn't need to read it. She read it to me because she would just get so excited. And she would be either zealous with excitement or she'd be weeping. So she's reading me your book. And I can't help but think because husbands and wives, oftentimes, don't have the interactive relationship/communication that they should have and that God wants us to have, this would be a good way for them to go at it. So maybe the same is true here because she is already doing it here. She can't hold it back. Does that please you to hear that?

SHANNON: Yeah! I love to hear it. My husband and I read together before bed every night where we read through on marriage and some verses, and we read it aloud. I think it is a really special thing to share the joys of what you're discovering. Sometimes it is of

convicting, and sometimes it is a good reminder about what marriage should be, and about how we should care for each other. But we enjoy that time together; it is pretty sacred to us.

BETTY: Well, I loved your first book, and like James said, I couldn't put it down because it kind of opened the door for a lot of women, especially, to hear about women in the Bible and their journeys that God took them on. Because they were difficult journeys, especially for women, back through the Bible days. They depended so much on their spouse or the community to hold them up and help them. They worked very, very hard.

But this book really touched my heart in that it ministered to me personally in my relationships, my relationship with God. I just thought it brought us into a time like well, I can do that! I can do that. I can be like that if I have God first in my life; things, goals that are obtainable. It blessed me so much.

I loved the story about Naomi and Ruth; the relationship that they had there. The love that Naomi showed Ruth as her daughter-in-law; she was her daughter-in-law. But as they traveled and they got to know each other, Ruth went out of her own country, away from her family to be with Naomi; and the love that she saw in Naomi's heart. I thought that's the way we could be as Christians. We don't have to have a platform as you talked about. Evangelism isn't necessarily a platform, it is our life, it is where we live right now. So could you talk a little bit about that relationship?

SHANNON: Exactly! These two women were bonded together in tragedy because Naomi was her mother-in-law. Her husband died and then both of her sons died leaving these two women who were her two daughters-in-law. Now all three of them were widowed. And in those days, that was a very precarious position for a woman without a financial provider and without a physical protector.

Now here there were the three of them. So Naomi tried again and again to get her daughters-in-law to go back, start a fresh family, go to their families. They can still have

children and have a life together. And they're just weeping. And finally, Orpah, the one daughter-in-law goes home.

But Ruth says, "Entreat me not to leave you. Wherever you go, I will go. Your God will be my God, your people will be my people."

We often hear that in the context of a wedding ceremony, but it is such a beautiful commitment saying we're going to stick together in this. And it wasn't just that, as you point out, that Ruth chose to go with Naomi, and to her land and to her family, but Ruth said, "Your God will be my god." And that was a huge decision to leave behind the gods, the small "G" gods of what she had grown up with and what would have been popular or familiar for her nation or her family. But they bonded together in their relationship but also in their faith. That was the great denominator that took them through living on the edges of poverty and just really difficult times.

But I do think that Naomi must have been in some ways a kind of evangelist. The fact that her religion, her God, and what she believed were so enticing and attractive to Ruth that she made that pledge to her is a very powerful thing. It reminds us that just as you said, we can live through our lives, through our relationships with people the way that we treat them and treat others and can be a real practical witness for Christ every day.

JAMES: It's amazing to see what God's done with the book. When you wrote women of the Bible, you had hopes for it. Let me ask you, what was your initial hope for the book? Of course, you hope people buy the book, and read the book, but what was your hope for the book to accomplish? Did you have a set focus on what you hoped the book would accomplish?

SHANNON: I'd never written a book like that before and I just prayed over it, Lord, I pray that people, whoever gets this book or shares it or however it gets into their hands that you would draw them to you. Whether it's their first time trusting Christ as their Savior and understanding God's love and compassion through these stories or if they're

already a believer to go deeper into these relationships and to see how God cares for us, how he is aware of every bit of our circumstances, and you're not alone if you're walking through suffering or deep valleys. I was hopeful.

The book was written and came about in the first wave of really terrifying COVID where there was just so much we didn't know, and a lot of people were suffering in so many different ways. I had no idea that people would connect with it so well. I'm glad they did. I get messages from people all over the world that people have shared it with friends or done a group Bible study because there are Bible study questions in there with their church or just a book group in the neighborhood. I've had men say to me that they've read it too or read through it with their daughters and wanted to share it.

So I think the reach was far beyond what any of us truthfully had expected but was just grateful. I pray over this book and every word of it the same way.

JAMES: Did it surprise you how well it went? Did you find yourself a little overwhelmed that it took off like it did, and the feedback was so profoundly positive?

SHANNON: We always lecture ourselves. I say, Lord, help me not to worry about the earthly success of this book or what man, how they rate it or what they do with it or how they rank it. But there is a part of me, as a human being, that was startled when it ended up number one on the New York Times bestseller list. I was like praise the Lord! And it really, to me is just a God thing. There is no other way to explain it. That people -- that it would stay there for weeks and weeks. That people -- it resonated with them. And hopefully, met a need that they had when I think as you guys know, there is tragedy, hearts are more open a lot of times when people are searching, and I think last year was one of those times.

BETTY: I think this book is going to do just as well or maybe even better than your first book, and I loved your first book. But you also shared the story of Moses's mom and his sister and the journey they went on. And just the great love and the courage that that mom

had to have to give her son up, to put him in that basket that she especially made to keep him from drowning and keep him safe. But also the sister, the great protection she had over her brother as he journeyed down that stream, not knowing what would happen particularly, but knowing God had a hand on him.

JAMES: I know when you told me the story, it touched your heart in a way that you said, I don't know if I'm going to be able to share that. What was it that moved you so deeply that you had a hard time even talking to me about it?

BETTY: Well, yesterday, when we were talking, it was back on the other story of Naomi and Ruth and just the great love that Naomi showed her. And she didn't preach to her, she just lived her life as an example.

I think sometimes, so many people think, well, I have to have a pulpit to do it. I have to have an audience to do it. No. God says let me do it through you and you just walk the life and the journey and the purpose that I have in your life. And no, it is not always going to be fun, it's not always going to be smooth. Jesus's journey wasn't smooth at all, but he continued with what God had told him he was to do. And that's the way with most of it.

Isn't it amazing? I think you brought that out in this book; the things that challenge us, the tragedies that we go through are the things where we learn the most lessons. That's hard sometimes to understand but God gets our attention. He knows what great truth he will speak to our hearts during that time. We've known that in the loss of our daughter several years ago, the heartache we went through. But boy, did the relationship with God grow. Yes, it did because our hearts were receptive to his will and his purpose for our life.

JAMES: Jesus said when he made his announcement of why he is here and he talked a lot about freedom, which I've preached, and about how we all seek that, and know he is the only source of it, and we all have battles of defeat. Let every mouth be stopped, all the world becomes guilty before God. There is none perfect. He uses the imperfect to

accomplish His perfect will. We so need that love and that forgiveness. That is what was being seen in the commitment and the love for one another that was unshakeable.

I think what God is using people to do, like you, because like I said when we began the show, you are a radiant display of the Father's life and the Father's love. I think if we would show a fatherless world a world that's been taught there isn't a creator Father, there isn't a God, there are no absolute truths, if we would show people the family of that Father, I think people would run to that Father. They're not impressed with religion, but they would be impressed with a meaningful life-fulfilling relationship. I think that's what your books, I think it's what your testimony does every time we see you. It is a magnificent display of the light of God, the love of God, the glory of God, and the grace of God. Why don't we show a sick world that is literally about to explode, why don't we show what happens when we get in the shelter and shadow of the Almighty and let the Lord be our shepherd and lead us to the green pastures and restore us and heal the broken hearts? Can't you get excited about that? That sounds like the next awakening to me and that's exciting.

SHANNON: Yes! And I would love to see that and his mercy that covers us, the promises, his faithfulness, in a world that is so searching. There is so much evil in the world and pain, and people that are hellbent on the destruction of lives and good things. To me, what a sad place! To go through life if you feel like there is nothing bigger, there is nothing better, there is nothing that can save you from all of this, and the pain of this world. Or that you are in charge of your life and you've made a mess of it.

To me, to think, there is a God in heaven, good will triumph over evil. He promises us all good things. The best possible ending in the world and he will take our cares, he will take everything that besets us and every struggle that we have. He wants to bear those burdens. To me, that is great news, that is powerful news that everything that we ever suffer or struggle with and the Bible tells us Christ understands all of it? He walked this earth and suffered in every way as we did and as we do. So we don't have a High Priest who does not understand that suffering, whether it is temptation, physical, financial,

family disasters, whatever the problems are, he gets it. Nothing is new to him.

So what a relief to those of us who trust him and know that there is great mercy; I need his forgiveness every day. There is great unconditional love and power in all that he promises. So why not run to that? To me, what a great relief. Everything that we chase on this earth and listen, I get distracted by social media, and all kinds of fun things on this planet, and things that are good -- even service in a church or whatever you're doing. But anything that gets in the way of him will only be short-term joy and happiness. Many of the things that we turn to in this world will lead us to long-term destruction and pain that is even worse than what we were trying to escape in the first place.

So what a comfort to me that God is a God of forgiveness and mercy and grace and all good things. And that he will triumph! So why not sign up for that team where he will take the worst of us and give us the very best in return? There is no other situation or deal you could ever make that would be better than that.

JAMES: I want to say something very directly to the audience right here. You didn't just hear religious talk just now. You heard about relationship -- a relationship with a very real person. Our Father in heaven who created us, and the Savior, the Son he gave to redeem us as the fallen man who disregarded his life, who didn't enter into the promised land and continue to live in the shelter and shadow with the watch care of the ultimate shepherd who could protect us from the wolves and the beasts of the field and the Goliaths that come against us. And we don't have to have the armor and protection of the world we have his. That's where he invites us to live. And yet we rebel. But he gave his Son to redeem us.

And literally, Shannon, what happened is, we were born into this family with this spiritual birth and what you were talking about was not religious, it wasn't traditions of men, it wasn't the tradition of men taught us the commands of God or ignoring the plans of God, you were talking about relationship. Relationship with God, relationship with others, relationship with the people who don't understand; people that we love because

God loves them, and he wants to love them through us. We don't need to be angry at defeated people -- we're all defeated people, and he wants to lead us into a freedom that is so far beyond religion. People are not running to religion because it too often divides us as seriously as political boundaries divide us and partisanship divides us.

You were talking about relationships. Your books talk about relationships. This is what the Father is inviting us into. A relationship with the living God, with the King of kings and to be the family in the shelter and shadow of that Father with the perfect Shepherd protecting us and guiding us and blessing us and restoring our soul and being with us in every dark valley and moving the mountains and anointing our head with the oil of his presence, his love, and his power.

That's what I see coming out of you. That's what you write about. And from the bottom of our hearts, we thank God, and we thank you for being a source of inspiration to everyone in some of the most challenging places on this planet, in the news world. And we love you and we thank God for you. I pray everybody gets the book. I pray the women will read it to their husbands. They will go back and forth and grow because it teaches men too. You make that very clear in this particular book. Thank you so much for being a blessing!

SHANNON: Thank you, both. God bless you and all the work that you're doing and the truth that you're sharing too. Great to see you.

JAMES: Well, we're going to talk to our viewers about something they love. One thing they know if they watch James and Betty on *Life Today*, they're going to be challenged to share Life Today every day! And we share with the least of these, the most overlooked, forgotten people. And our viewers love it! They have become an answer to people's prayer and the miracle that people long for. And our viewers love that! So we're going to talk to them about feeding hundreds of thousands of children in desperate need. And we're going to also add to the other gifts we're giving, your book today. If they will give a child something to eat and put God's hands of love on people, we're going to be blessing

them with your book too. You are a blessing to us. We're going to be praying for you all the time and I know you're going to be praying for us.

SHANNON: Well, thank you. It is a wonderful honor to be any small part of what you guys are doing and changing lives as we were talking about but for eternity. Some of these folks you'll meet in heaven, and they'll be able to trace back to the people that were kind enough to join you in this and to support changing lives in practical ways. Us being the hands and feet of Christ, not just with great platitudes and encouraging words but showing up where people have enormous daily needs to sustain their lives.

JAMES: Well, we're going to look in on some of that right now, and you'll see it. And everybody is going to watch but we're going to be the miracle they need. Your prayers and your support mean so much to us.

I want you to watch right now, all of you, just please right now, I want you to look into a setting that's very real right now! And I want you to know you are -- listen to me -- God's love through you, you're the solution. You're the miracle they long for. You're the answer to their hopes and prayers. Watch closely.

On the mission field

ISAK: James and Betty, last time we were in Mozambique together, we were walking through schools where Mission Feeding was happening. There were children dancing and singing, and just life! Life because of Mission Feeding in those villages, because of the friends of *LIFE*, because of each and every one of them opening their hearts, partnering with you, partnering with us to make that joy and that life possible for each and every one of those children.

I remember it like it was just yesterday. I remember how filled with joy your heart was in seeing those children thriving, full of joy, and full of energy. And all of that starts with

just a bowl of food a day in the Mission Feeding program in their schools changing their lives, providing them with opportunities.

But James, as you know all too well, life is hard here in Africa for many of these families with the drought that we've experienced. We've seen areas where they're just unable to produce food and what it has resulted in is a severe critical need, a need that is putting children in malnutrition clinics. I've seen some of the fullest malnutrition clinics I think I've ever seen in this area. We've seen children, many of them who I don't think will make it. A name on a little wooden cross. Another life stolen by malnutrition; stolen by the simple lack of food.

James, we have to do something about this. We have to reach these children now. It's urgent. It's critical! We have to get to them now because if we don't get to them now they're going to continue to dig more and more of these graves and bury more and more of these children. Please, James! Ask the friends of *LIFE*, ask them to help you and to help us so that we can save these lives.

End of video

In the studio

JAMES: I can remember the first time, Betty, we knelt by those little graves. They were tiny graves, and they were digging them rapidly. It didn't take long. And it was obvious they were for children. So I began to meander through, maybe there were a thousand, 2000 graves that were there, and they didn't even have a suitable marker. They had kind of a memory.

And Betty, it was so horrific that we talked to our viewers. And to be honest with you, let me say this straight, we didn't know that people would help. We knew we would. But a miracle occurred. And Betty, we went back about two or three years after the death cycle of thousands being buried, and we went to a church that was a school and the children were just beautiful. They were singing and they were so happy. The pastor was a little

guy; he said, "Because you fed us, now these children are alive and they're in church. They're learning English and they're learning it. They're so happy you hear them singing."

As we walked away to go back to the mission vehicles, the little pastor stopped Peter Pretorius and this is like 25 or 30 years ago, and he said -- and he was crying and he said, "I guess you are not coming back anymore because you see the children and they're not hungry now, they're going school." He said, "If you quit feeding them, they won't come to school because they come here now to get food."

And Betty, that is what started school feeding. And we told that little pastor, we're not ever going to not come back. This is the process of love and life. Not Pharaoh, not Caesar, not Uncle Sam, not a government but the love of God. And this is what you do. Listen, your love, God's love through you changes everything. And right now the situation in Angola is worse than it was then! The graves that were dug as those children were dying before we reversed it in certain areas are now being dug in new areas and they're about to have the same crisis because the situation is worse.

So here's what I'm going to ask you to do. We have found the people that have the need. If you would make a gift of \$30, \$50, or \$100 you would feed three, five, or ten children for the next months. And dear God, if you could give \$1,000, you'd feed 100. We're going to send you some gifts. We will send you, along with the other gifts, we're also going to send you Shannon Bream's book. It will be a blessing to all of you.

Would you do this right now? Would you go get your bank card? Would you use it like a check? Would you go online and say here's my gift. I'm always going to ask you if you can possibly feed ten; make the \$100 gift. Or three for \$30, five for \$50, or could you feed 100? Whatever you can do, do it! If you want to write a check, make it to *LIFE*; but call us and tell us you're mailing it. By the way, you can use that card by dialing the number.

Father, please help everyone who can help to help right now. We need a miracle in order

to help. They need a miracle in order to live. You can be that miracle. Please be the miracle they long for.

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

ISAK: 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 its life. 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, that we can reach them before their children end up in malnutrition clinics.

You can be an answer to their prayer. You can provide the resources today to enable our mission teams to bring that food to these villages, to bring food to mothers like Marta. So please, I'm asking you today to go to the phone or get online and give the very best gift that you can give. Give the gift of food. Give the gift of life!

End of video

In the studio

JAMES: Well, I know you've been blessed by the program. I want to say to all of you who are watching, we're going to send you, *Mothers and Daughters*. We've gotten *The Chosen*, and this is a 40-day devotional from those who wrote *The Chosen* and presented it. How powerful that series is. But this is just great. But we're going to send you, if you help us feed these children, whatever gift you make we're going to send you Shannon's book too. And you can go online and tell your friends to get it. It would be good if your neighbors got it.

Shannon, thank you for being a blessing. You come and be with us any time you've got something on your heart, and you want to share with an audience beyond FOX, well, you just call us. You've got a place right here. Okay?

SHANNON: Thank you so much. I hope next time I'll see you in person. God bless you guys!

JAMES: We want you to. God bless you. Thank all of you for your help. Thanks for giving life today.