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Week 22: Spring Mission Feeding

Randy Robison and Sheila Walsh

Jeff Little

RANDY: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm Randy Robison. Sheila Walsh is with me.

SHEILA: Hey, everyone!

RANDY: We are going to have fun today. We're going to talk about *The Way to Win*! I don't know anybody that says in the morning, I think I'll be a loser today. We want to win. Right? Well, Jeff Little is our guest. He's a pastor of Milestone Church here in the Fort Worth area, a multi-campus church, and a long-time friend of the ministry. We're glad to have him. I think he is going to bless you. Jeff, great to have you, man.

JEFF: It's great to be here.

SHEILA: I love your church. I had the privilege of coming and speaking to your women. And there is just -- sometimes you can just tell when you walk into a particular group of people that it's healthy, vibrant, growing, compassionate. I remember saying to my husband on the way home, "I feel like I could tell anybody in the worst days or the best days of their life, you could show up there and you'd be welcomed." Is that intentional as a church?

JEFF: Well, thank you so much for that, Sheila. The ladies loved you. Of course, I think intentionality is important, but I think it's also just the sincerity of the people. I'm humbled by the people that I get to pastor because as a pastor, you can have all the intentional plans in the world, but I just feel so honored that the people are genuinely sincere, really love God, and really love people. You can't replace that. When people

come into an atmosphere and it feels sincere and homelike, it's sometimes a surprise in our culture today that you go anywhere and it is sincere. Yes, that's an amazing thing.

SHEILA: You started small. I was wondering about the history of Milestone.

JEFF: Well, I started as a senior pastor at 21. So I graduated from Baylor University and found myself the pastor of this small church. I'd like to say I wasn't necessarily a good pastor, but I was a pastor at 21. There were people there thinking, I don't know if we can follow you. I thought I don't know if I would follow me. I started as a pastor young.

But around 28 years old I felt a call to the area that I pastor in; 32 people moved with me. Some recent college graduates and again, I'm humbled by it. People sold their homes and we started in a school cafeteria, and then a leased building. And of course, we have nicer facilities now. But you learn along the way, it's not the building, it's not the programs, it's many times, not the preaching, it is the atmosphere of the people and the sincerity of it.

RANDY: You guys moved into an old grocery store that the church that I was a part of had converted from a grocery store to a church. When we got a building, you guys moved in there, and the roof leaked. I know that.

JEFF: That's true. I was preaching one Saturday night and it started leaking so I just kind of kept going. Yeah.

RANDY: Let's get to *The Way to Win*. What is your sort of foundation here? What are you trying to communicate?

JEFF: Well, the thought is that I think every person, there is no one watching that doesn't look for a scoreboard in life. We look many times to maybe our bank account or we look to career or maybe how our family is doing. And that's why, a lot of times, when we hit challenges in life and what we're looking to as our scoreboard, it becomes challenging.

You can walk through a real struggle when you have the wrong scoreboard.

I like to say the greatest tragedy in life is not to have a scoreboard with no score on it even, because there are a lot of people be like, I'd like to see a few more points on the scoreboard. But to have a scoreboard that you score a lot of points only to realize you were playing the wrong game.

I think our world pulls at us, and even our own thought about what winning is. Two things, a lot of times, and I know some people are watching that maybe had a little more experience in life, now I'm not as old as some but I'm kind of getting to that mid-stage. I just married off a daughter in November, my oldest daughter. I cried so much at the rehearsal dinner, I had no tears to cry at the wedding.

SHEILA: We were hoping she would marry our son. But we're not bitter.

JEFF: But you go through a few life events, and you realize that a lot of things I focused on may not be winning in life.

RANDY: What are some of the things you think we should be focusing on to score in the right column.

JEFF: Well, I wrote the book for every -- I believe every person. Paul even says we're all running a race. And he says you can run it to win no matter where you come from, whatever circumstance you've had. Even if you've gone through a really difficult time, Paul says to us, you can run your race, not someone else's race, and you can run it to win. And so I wrote the book to -- it's short chapters, just short thoughts, and maybe a daily thing you could do or a weekly, and grab something. It's a little more thought-provoking about winning.

One of the areas is I find we have a lot of people who want to learn the Bible today. We as pastors want them to learn the Bible because that's where you're going to find God's

perspective on your life. But I think a lot of times, people are intimidated by it. Where do I get started? Or even if you've read it for a while, wanting to know how it works. So I have a section, I call it the Cliffs Notes on the Bible to give you the key nuggets. And probably, the largest area is -- I like to say it this way, your legacy is your scoreboard in reverse. It's never too late to start thinking about the legacy you're going to leave behind. We all know the older you get, people tell you, it's here today, gone -- it goes by fast. You try to tell young people, you're going to miss this.

[Laughter]

It's like those little kids are going to grow up and get married and you're going to look up one day and life has passed you by.

I think there's encouragement through this process too, no matter where you're at, you can start today, and you can start leaving behind something that will matter.

SHEILA: As a wife and a mom of a son who is 25, the way the book hit me, because initially, I thought, well, this is speaking to men, but as a mom, and a wife, it spoke to me about sometimes, the men in our lives are not finding the help in the areas that they are longing to be touched. And this is part of your doctoral work; isn't it?

JEFF: Yes, I did the last three years, actually doing empirical research. So for me, sometimes as a pastor you say, I think this, or I have a theory. I actually have real research that there's a longing and a need there to say, I want to win but no one's ever taught me how. I don't even know what to focus on. I don't even know how to get started. We learn how to do things in our careers. We learn how to get the trophies that somebody will sell in a garage sale one day, quite honestly. We learn how to do those things because we spend time with people who help us learn how to do it.

And, as a pastor, I see myself as a coach in life. It's like, let me give you some stuff that matters. Let me talk to you about what matters. I'm a bit of a life expert as a pastor

because I'm around people; not that I always hit the target myself but I'm around it. And I always love to tell people, I've sat at so many bedsides when it is all over, and you know what they're not talking about? Their 401K. What they're not talking about are their trophies. Well, they're not even overanalyzing some of the bumps along the way. They're thinking about people.

I sat with my dad in 2019. He was my hero. Had surgery that was challenging, and I sat with him. So now I wasn't the pastor, I was the son. And it doesn't matter how old your parents are when you go through that moment, it's like, life just flashes before you. I was so thankful that I had a father that invested and poured -- no one will ever know a lot about him; from a small town in east Texas and he was an engineer. He taught me how to prioritize the word. My mom was a praying mom. And so I didn't have a chance. If you have a -- aren't we thankful for all the moms and grandmas that prayed us into the kingdom of God? You don't have a chance. You can try to run if somebody is watching and you're running from God, but if your grandma is praying, God is after you. He's going to get you.

I just want to encourage us today, write that note, send that text, invest in that child. The world is -- now with social media and so many things, there are so many things competing for our attention. I want to just encourage people to live for the scoreboard that's going to matter. I like to say to people, sometimes as a coach, they give you permission, and I'm like, I just want to give somebody permission today, prioritize what matters.

RANDY: I'm curious about that because you sort of downplay your parents' impact, not high profile, not what the world would celebrate as celebrities or great wealthy individuals. There is a different economy going on here. There is a different scoreboard you're talking about. What is it about your parents that in your mind, and I think in God's mind, places them above a lot of people that we would celebrate as great but who are not spiritually-minded?

JEFF: So my dad was an engineer; he taught me the strategic side of my personality. My mom was an intercessor. At 12 years old, I had an encounter with Christ. Where after getting saved, I was in my bedroom and I felt like he said, "I'm calling you to ministry."

I didn't know what that meant and I'm just a small kid there in east Texas. I walked out into our family room. I had crocodile tears. I said, "Mom, Dad, I think I'm called to ministry."

My mom said, "Thank you, Jesus, I knew it!"

My dad said, "Sit down, boy. We're going to diagram this for a minute and figure out how you're going to pay your bills."

But I did, I lived in an atmosphere that sought to prioritize things that matter. My dad had surgery that went wrong, and so he went through a health crisis over a period. I actually interviewed him because his health was failing. I had the honor to just honor him one last time and do his funeral. He spoke at his own funeral, and he said, "Someone else is going to drive your car, someone else is going to live in your house, but what matters in this world is what you leave behind in the areas of the people that you loved the most."

So I just want to encourage you, that there is no one listening to me that can't leave a deposit and a legacy. That's why we've been honored to support what -- I just love James and Betty and you guys over the years because of the investment that's made in the lives of people we may never meet but we're leaving a legacy. When you invest in children and feeding programs and water wells, you're investing in a legacy and a future in people that you may never meet. And then we have a chance today, that's what I love about Jesus, his mercies are new every day. Like today, no matter how bad it's been, we can invest in something that will matter tomorrow.

SHEILA: I've been thinking about just the way our culture is going at the moment. It is very distressing. I think of people the age of my son, mid-20s, maybe graduated from

college, and they look out at the world, and they look out even at times at the church, and some have drifted off. What do you say to that, Jeff?

JEFF: I gathered some young people in our city, and I asked the principal could I just have the library, and I gathered kids that I'd never, never met. I just sat down with them as a pastor and said, "Tell me about your life." I have to tell you, I learned a lot that day. They were crying, and I was crying, and it is a different pressure that they live with. When I went to school, you may have some challenges but when you went home, you went outside and played with a stick or made a fort or something. But now, all those pressures come a lot of times into their lives.

I know people are watching that are concerned about a grandchild or maybe have a prodigal. I preached not too long ago on the story of the prodigal son. And we're all praying if we have somebody like that, that they would come to their senses. I walked out into the commons because I'm still an old-school pastor and I was shaking hands. And a man, he had a picture, his eyes were welled up red, and he said, "Pastor, this is my prodigal. Will you pray for him?"

I said, "Sir, we absolutely will."

And the next few services and I said this is so-and-so's prodigal. By the end of the weekend, I had little torn-off pieces of paper, pray for mine, preacher, pray for mine, pastor. Pray for mine.

I think the pressure is real, but I always want to encourage people today, hope is not lost because I do believe that no matter what generation it is, they're always looking to a generation ahead of them to love them, to encourage them, to serve them.

I gave the book to a group of single moms, recently and said, "I want to invest in your sons." And so grandmothers, just an investment to say, look at this, you can win in life.

RANDY: That's interesting because a lot of times we say, yeah, we'll pray. And I'm not for one second diminishing the power of prayer -- I believe in it. But there can be a feeling of helplessness, like I prayed, and I feel like I should do more. What do you tell those parents and grandparents with that prodigal that are struggling with that, they're praying, they're praying fervently and they're believing but they feel like I should do more.

JEFF: I think it is a normal feeling. Can you imagine the father and the prodigal son while he waited? And what we learn a lot of times when we have a prodigal or we have a maybe a spouse or a friend or a brother or sister, what we learn is we can't control people, we can't make them -- I mean, we have a world that we're pretty in control and then we realize that we're just totally dependent on them having an encounter with God and them having that moment.

But I will say those prayers, God hears them. Because Luke 15, where the prodigal son is, talks about a lost sheep, a lost coin, and a lost son. In the Bible, repetition equals emphasis. So what Jesus is saying to us is, you'll never love them more than I love them. I see them right now where they're at.

SHEILA: Jeff, as a pastor, I was wondering, moms are watching and there are fathers, and kids, would you take a moment and maybe pray for our audience?

JEFF: I would love to. I know that right now there is somebody out there. Maybe you're praying for your prodigal, and I want you to know I join with you. Maybe you're there and you're just thinking a little bit about your legacy. And you might feel like legacy, that's a word for someone that's important or has a lot of resources. Or maybe you have a lot of trophies, a lot of things, but you're like, I haven't made a deposit in the areas that matter.

Lord, I just pray right now for that person. I pray you're listening and you're out there saying, I want to win at what matters. Lord, I pray right now that you would encourage,

that you would strengthen, that there wouldn't be chaos in their mind of a thousand thoughts and a thousand things. But you, by the whisper of your spirit, to take that child that's struggling or that grandchild out for a dinner and say, I want you to know I'm proud of you. I love you. I believe in you. Send a text, send a note, and tell your children how much you love them. Maybe write them a letter, even though it seems like it's broken, and it's not repairable, write a letter. And Lord, I join with the prayers of every grandparent, every parent right now and we know you hear us and you're moving beyond what we can comprehend, in Jesus's name. Amen.

SHEILA: Amen! There are a lot of grandparents and mothers around the world and their prayer right now on the ground at this moment is God, can you hear my prayers? Because my child has an empty tummy, and I don't know where any help is coming today or tomorrow or the next day. We have this glorious opportunity here at *LIFE* to be an answer to those prayers and reach out. You've done it before, and we thank you. I'm asking you, would you do it again? Please watch this.

On the mission field

ANNOUNCER: *Mandolina is weary. For years she has battled an enemy that thrives in the environment she calls home. Despite her most desperate efforts to protect them, five of her children have lost their lives.*

OPEN CAPTIONS

>> The sickness that has taken my children is hunger. I had to sell everything in my house just to help my children survive. But we are still struggling, and we have nothing left.

ANNOUNCER: *The most recent victim in her home was her four-year-old daughter. A dearly loved girl whose greatest joy was helping her mother. Mandolina clings to those memories even as her grief threatens to overtake her.*

OPEN CAPTIONS

>> She was so young, but she always wanted to help me with everything. I remember us cooking and cleaning together. I cry when I think of her. All we have left is suffering and hunger.

***ANNOUNCER:** In the face of such a relentless enemy, Mandolina continues to fight all the while caring for her children who have fallen ill because of malnutrition again and again and again.*

OPEN CAPTIONS

>> The future is so dark.

***ANNOUNCER:** This shadow of death has loomed over Mandolina's family and so many others like them for far too long. With your help, we can provide a daily bowl of food for all the children in Mandolina's village. The darkness can be rolled away, and a bright future can be revealed.*

End of video

In the studio

SHEILA: To lose a child is an unimaginable tragedy. To lose a child because of hunger is obscene in this world. To think that you'd have to lose, bury a four-year-old girl because you have slowly watched her disappear a little bit more every single day and you're doing everything at your disposal.

Think about how it was with your children. I know as a mom, if there was anything wrong with my son, I would have done whatever to get the help he needed at the time he needed to restore him to health. These mothers like Mandolina, they're the same as you and I. They love their children. They want their children to grow up to be healthy and strong. They want to set a different legacy than the legacy that was handed to them. But

they can't do it by themselves.

We want you to be able to get a hold of Jeff's book and we're going to make that available to you today, but I want you to help us just as we want you to win in your walk, in your relationship with Christ, with your family, we want to stand beside these moms and say, "You are not alone." As long as we, as the body of Christ are on the planet at this time, you're not alone and we are coming with real tangible practical help, Randy.

RANDY: Absolutely! I find it interesting that Jesus came into the world as the light of the world. But by the time he left, he was looking at his followers and saying, "You are the light of the world." I think he says that to you today, as a follower of Christ, you are the light of the world. And what does a light do? It dispels the darkness. And that mother that is facing the darkness, all those mothers that are facing the darkness of losing children sometimes over and over, and you wonder why they keep having children. That's all they have -- that's their future -- that's everything to them.

Let's be that light in their darkness. I think that's what the church is here to do. I support all the great things that we do in our communities and the activities and the sort of things that Sheila and I do, that's all wonderful. But my goodness, if we can't be the light in the darkest place, whoo, I just think we're not doing everything we should. But I know you are. You guys have helped us for years now -- decades now to be that light in the darkest place by going in with that little bowl. We're sort of that orange light out there in the dark places because you could see that bowl from so far. I love it because you know what it says? It says we care. It says we see you. We feel your pain and we come in Jesus's name, and we bring you food.

So will you do that today? Will you fill that bowl? Will you help us put that soup mix into the bowl to give to these children, to get them through this difficult time? I'm asking you to do it. Make the best gift you can. Remember \$50 right now will help feed five children for the next three months.

How do we do that? Well, we've been doing it for a long time. We've got people and processes on the ground in place ready to go, we just need you to partner with us. If you can make that \$1,000 gift, that's 100 children for the next three months. Whatever you can do, let's just be that light. Together, we can shine into the darkest places with the love of Christ. Go online or go to the phone and do it 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

In the studio

SHEILA: Thank you so much. And remember for any gift at all, say I would like Jeff's book, *The Way to Win* and we'll gladly send that to you.

RANDY: Absolutely! Jeff, man, we appreciate you sharing your thoughts today, your insight today. And helping people to win!

JEFF: Exactly! Well, it's been a privilege to be here with you and I do so honor and respect those that have continued to serve and be a part of what happens here at *LIFE Outreach*. We're long-term family and friends of *LIFE Outreach*.

But I just want to say to maybe someone listening who feels like maybe you've won at the wrong things or maybe you're losing. You can win in some areas of your life, and I just want to encourage you to not give up and to lean in because God has for you some places to win that he can help you with, with your family, with your relationships, with his kingdom.

RANDY: Amen! Amen! Be encouraged today and come back every day for more *Life Today*! We'll see you next time!

SHEILA: Bye!