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Week 24: Spring Mission Feeding: Last week

Randy Robison and Sheila Walsh

Mark Mittleberg

RANDY: Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm Randy Robison. Sheila Walsh is with me as always. One thing I enjoy doing is a live online interview during the week called *Life Today Live*. You can catch that on most of the social media, love to have you. A few weeks ago, I got to talk to a gentleman named Mark Mittleberg. In fact, this is his book called *Contagious Faith*. I was like, the rest of our broadcast audience needs to hear this. So I'm excited to have Mark Mittleberg in this studio with us for *Life Today*. Great to have you!

MARK: Great to be with you. I'm just honored to be on the show. I've watched it for years. I love how God uses all of what you guys are doing here.

SHEILA: This is one of the best books I've ever read on evangelism. After I got to the end, I said to my husband, it's almost like -- like we all want to share our faith but sometimes we feel completely at a loss. And it was almost like Mark came in and turned a light on. And it was like, oh! I could do that. It really -- what was the Genesis for writing it?

MARK: That's very encouraging, first of all. The Genesis was my own struggles with this whole area. Like many of us as believers, I know I should share my faith, I know it is important. I know the Bible tells me to and I know I don't like most of what it entails. I'd had experiences with it where I'd felt out of my league. A lot of that is in the opening stories of the book. And I learned some lessons through that that were helpful for me,

first of all, and I wanted to encourage others with it.

SHEILA: You've got to tell the London story. When I read the story of you going and evangelizing in London, I literally laughed out loud because I have been there.

MARK: Yes, that was one of the ones that I realized I was out of my league. My wife and I signed up for a summer tour of duty and we were in south London. I didn't know quite what I was signing up for. Sure! Let's go do ministry! That will be cool. Overseas, that will be fun! And we got there and found out what I had just signed up for was eight weeks of cold-call knocking on doors, talking to strangers, trying to tell them about Jesus, and it was tough. Americans fresh out of Heathrow Airport in London, England knocking on doors to tell strangers about Jesus was not like a real popular thing in British culture.

We did that just week after week. It was -- I just had to force myself to do it because it just didn't fit me. And it was so bad, in a sense for me, that by the time I was done and flying back to the U.S. at the end of the summer, I just said evangelism is not my deal. I know it's important, I know Jesus commanded it. I'll pray for you. You go and I'll write a check and support you.

But something did happen while I was there and it was the inklings of what ended up in this *Contagious Faith* book. And that was, I reached a point where I realized, first of all, I'm not alone, I have the Holy Spirit, but more than that I have other people around me, including my wife who is very outgoing and real vivacious, attractive personality, real friendship builder; the kind of person that gets on an elevator and has a new best friend by the time you reach the eighth floor. This is just the way Heidi is.

And so I finally realized, why am I knocking on the door? Let Heidi knock on the door and I'll hide behind her; which is hard, she is five feet tall, but I kind of let her take the lead because that fits her better. And all of the sudden, we're getting invited in a lot more. And all of the sudden, we're having tea with people, and then they were more open spiritually. So what I began to see was a division of labor where Heidi could get the doors

open, then when they would ask a hard question, the baton would naturally go over to me. And I like talking about people's questions. So we would work together as a team.

Then after we got back, I heard a sermon at my church where the pastor talked about how even in the pages of scripture, he said they didn't all do it the same way. They found approaches that were natural. He talked about styles of evangelism. I realized that's what I had begun to experience in England. And then I began to flesh that out and ended up writing about it, and finding tools that I think could encourage all of us to share our faith in ways that fit who God made us to be.

RANDY: Yeah, that's what I want people to hear today is that we are all evangelists but not always in the way we imagine it. We all share the good word, the gospel in however God empowers us to do it.

Before we get to the styles because this is where the rubber meets the road for people before we get to the styles there was something that happened to you when you were completely unprepared, really not, maybe, the perfect person to share your faith but it had a radical difference. And I think God put that in your life so you would know.

MARK: I think you're right. That was right after I'd come to faith. I made a commitment to Christ when I was 19 years old, and this is just a few weeks earlier. It was my first Christmas as a real follower of Christ, and I was sensing this nudging from the Holy Spirit to talk to Peggy, a gal I had known in high school who had begun visiting a Bible study I was a part of. But what I want to emphasize is I'd only been a Christian a few weeks; I didn't have any training in this area, hadn't read a book like this, and had no idea but I keep sensing God calling me to talk to Peggy.

Well, I'm driving through my town that day on Christmas, a snowy day up north, and I see Peggy walking. I get in a conversation with her and I sense God is working in Peggy's life. She's getting more open; she is talking about how God is working in her life. She confesses she's feeling really bad. She had stolen a Bible from a hotel room. It was like, I

don't think God can forgive. I'm going, yeah, I'm pretty sure God can deal with that. It was hilarious.

I ended up that night by God's grace praying with Peggy and she gave her life to Christ. I'm going, God can use a rookie like me that doesn't know anything? If he can use me, he can use you.

And the rest of the story is amazing because we both moved away from our hometowns and kind of lost track of each other, until a class reunion where I was handed a little card that showed that she had gotten married. She and her husband, Wayne were raising money for their ministry with Wycliffe to go overseas to Papua, New Guinea to bring the gospel. Here's this woman who had pilfered a Bible from a hotel room who is now giving her life to spreading the scriptures and spread the gospel to a dark corner of the planet, all the way over on the other side of the globe. She ended up serving there for almost 23 years.

I'm going, I got to be a part of this. And I just want to encourage the viewers to say God wants to use you in that way. You know more than I did then. If he could use me, he can use you and you can be a link in the chain to someone like Peggy coming to faith. And then there is no telling what God might do through them to touch many, many more.

SHEILA: This book excited me because I thought, you break it down into different styles. You've got Friendship Building, Selfless Serving, Story Sharing, Reason Giving, and Truth Telling. But what I realized as I read through this is if every single one of us who is in a relationship with Jesus found out how God has built us, and we began -- can you imagine the reformation that would happen in this nation?

MARK: I couldn't agree more, and I think this is a key to unleashing our whole churches. Because we can send the signal, look, you don't have to be Sheila or Randy, you don't have to be Mark Mittleberg or someone else that -- you think of Franklin Graham or you think of Greg Laurie or whoever you think of when you think of evangelism, God made

you and he gave you your personality on purpose, and you can take one of these approaches. They're all biblical. We give biblical examples of all five of them. We also show how Jesus used all five of these approaches. And I'm telling you, it is liberating.

For me, the fifth one is the more direct truth-telling one. When I realized I'm the fourth one, I'm the reason giver. I love to study Christian apologetics. I love to answer people's questions; that was what was liberating to me. I don't know if you figured out your styles yet.

SHEILA: Yes, we both -- I took the test online. You can do it. You simply go to ContagiousFaithBook.com and you can take this test. I'm the story sharing.

MARK: I can see that for sure

SHEILA: I love that. But you tell the story in there about -- I'll not give his name as we know it, because I want you to be able to tell the story. But it was at this funeral of this man who had lived completely one way for all of his life, money, fame, power, um, until he got one of our mutual friend's books, Lee Strobel's book, *A Case For Christ*.

MARK: And Lee Strobel, by the way, is the story sharing like you; that's his top style. And I think this is important, his secondary style is reason giving.

A lot of us have two or three of these. We're not trying to limit you to one of these and say stay in your lane. We're saying you can do at least one of these and you may get a combination of several. Lee is those two as well.

Yeah, he wrote his book, *The Case For Christ* and this man named Robert had a really rough life. Very successful, but very rocky, and Jesus spoke to him. He was walking on the beach and he sensed God saying, "I've saved you so many times. You need to reach out to me." So Robert called a friend and found out about this book, *The Case For Christ*, read it, and gave his life to Christ. The way we know about this is he shared his testimony

on a national Christian TV program. And Robert's name that everyone knows him by is Evel Knievel. His life changed through the gospel. He ended up becoming buddies with Lee and would call him and ask him theological questions. "Evel Knievel, got a Bible question for you. Mark 14, what does this mean?"

When he died about a year later, thousands came to his funeral. He was an Icon. This motorcycle daredevil found Christ. And on his tombstone now it says: "Follow Jesus Christ."

I love the story because we tend to think, my husband, or my son, my guy I work with at work, or somebody I go to school with, they'll never bend a knee to Jesus. I say if Evel Knievel can come to Christ, and for that matter, if Lee Strobel can come to Christ, an atheist, a skeptic who wanted it to be false, and for that matter, if I can -- if any of us can come to faith, then your friends are within the reach of God's grace if you'll just learn some natural approaches and take a risk for the sake of the gospel.

RANDY: That's what I want everybody to hear is that you are built to be an evangelist. You might just have some misconceptions because everybody thinks like the truth teller, that's my dad. He's going come in argh-argh-argh-argh.

MARK: Praise God! We need those!

RANDY: We need those! I've seen these people --

MARK: He was one of them that reached me when I was 19. So I praise God for them.

RANDY: I hear that all the time. My whole life.

MARK: But I'm not one of them either.

RANDY: See, I'm not either. I'm more of the reason-giver type. Sheila, you just watch

her share her story on *Life Today* and it just brings people to God. She doesn't have to get in their face. I think when you understand, yes, we can maybe employ different styles and the Holy Spirit will lead us at different times in different ways, but when you understand there is a way for everyone to comfortably share Jesus with others, it's liberating.

What kind of joy did you find, because you talk about it being miserable over in England, but when you figure this out, what kind of joy came with it?

MARK: Well, it's my life adventure. I came back from England saying I'm done with evangelism. Less than a year later, I was hired -- and talk about God's sense of humor -- I was hired as the first director of evangelism at one of the largest churches in America. I was at the beginning of an adventure in my life that I'm still on! I can't stop. People say, "Are you going to retire someday?" No way! I can't stop doing this. I want to tell as many people as possible, and I want to tell our viewers God wants to use you in the same way. We are all members of the church to which Jesus gave the great commission. So we're all called to do this. You've just got to find your niche, you've got to find the way that fits you.

And if I could add one more thing, you have to be willing to take a risk. It always feels -- you've been doing this for years, you feel a little nervous.

SHEILA: Yeah, sure.

MARK: You've just got to push through that and take a little risk. Jesus says, "Go into your world and make disciples." He says, "I will be with you always."

And so when you realize I've got the Holy Spirit, I've got the truth. I don't have to know that much. I mean read up a little, gear up a little, but then take some risks and the Holy Spirit will work, and you will see people impacted for eternity. I'm going to celebrate with Peggy for all of eternity. I look forward to meeting some Papua, New Guinea young man 37,000 years from now in heaven whose life was impacted through Peggy. And

again, I got to be a little link in the chain. There is nothing better than that.

SHEILA: I think we forget that this is the best news in the world. It's like oh, we have to do this. We have to -- we forget, in this world that's gone crazy and people are despairing and hopeless, we have the best news in the world!

MARK: That's right. People are dying to hear it. And we're trying to avoid it. We just need to say people need this, they want it. We're all sinners who need a savior. We're all lost sheep who need to be found and brought home. So you're right, it is the greatest privilege to go out and be used by God to bring people back to him.

RANDY: I do have to ask about the title because in the middle of a pandemic, is *contagious* the best word? Why did you go with that?

MARK: I get asked that. A couple of reasons, one is I had earlier materials back in the day that by God's grace two million people were trained, through some materials I had done called becoming a contagious Christian. So this is a new, all-new iteration of some earlier things we had done.

But also, if we've learned anything during a pandemic is that contagious things spread quickly. There is bad contagious but there is good contagious -- there is contagious laughter, contagious enthusiasm. We love it when we get in on that and everyone is laughing, everyone is happy. Well, the best positive contagious thing is contagious faith and I believe it can spread just as quickly as a pandemic. But with good news.

SHEILA: I really would encourage you to go online and take the quiz for yourself because it is just, I don't know, I found, when I got to the end of your book, Mark, I just felt so encouraged. In the midst of so much discouragement in the world we're living in, this is just like -- because remember, this wasn't our idea this was Jesus' idea. He wouldn't ask us to do something that he wasn't going to equip us to do.

MARK: Yeah, he calls us to it, and then he says, "I'll go with you." It just struck me, I was reading scripture last week that in the great commission he says he'll be with us until the end of the age. But in Acts 1:8 he says, "You'll be my witnesses," he said, "I'll be with you to the ends of the earth." So he is saying, in all of time, and on all of the planet, I will be with you empowering you to do this.

SHEILA: Wow! That is phenomenal. So trust me, you're going to want to get your own copy of *Contagious Faith*. It is a life-changing book. I will tell you how to get ahold of it.

First of all, one of the passions here at *Life Today* is to go to the ends of the earth in terms of bringing very much needed help to people who are starving -- who don't have anything. We would love you to help us help them, and then we'll let you know how you can get your copy of *Contagious Faith*. But first of all, would you watch this?

On the mission field

ANNOUNCER: *There was something missing in the Angolan village our team recently visited. It was the laughter and excitement of the children. The worried expressions on these mothers' faces confirmed what we had all been told. This area is in the throes of a food crisis.*

Maria has fought these battles before struggling to feed her family. But now, once again, she finds herself trying to keep her grandchild Mabina alive during this crisis.

ISAK: You can see by just looking at this child how malnourished the grandchild is. Yet, this grandchild is so fortunate to have this angel of a grandmother. A woman who knows what it is to suffer -- to suffer, to fight, but to persevere, to never give up. She explained that she's also lost her ability to feed herself or her grandchild; lost because of the drought here. Not because she didn't make an effort. Not because she didn't work hard. She's done everything she can do.

The question is have we done everything we can do? Are we prepared to fight as -- as hard as she fights? Will we give what she's given? Will we give up what she's given up? Or will we do the thing she didn't do, and that is turn a blind eye and say it's too much. Say, I can't do it. I know I can't and I know that I won't. And I'm asking you to have the same answer today; to say I can't, I won't turn a blind eye. I won't try and pretend that I haven't heard this story. Instead, I'll do all that I can do.

End of video

In the studio

SHEILA: Our friend Isak Pretorius' dad, Peter Pretorius, started this phenomenal, phenomenal work, and it is our passion to continue it. This is our last week of Mission Feeding. I'll never forget, my first trip to Angola, we were in little individual tents in a village and I remember going back to my tent that night and just sitting there and trying to take in everything that I'd seen and everything I'd heard. I had such a sense of the weight of the pain I'd seen in eyes like that grandmother, or like the other mothers I'd spent time with that day.

I felt the Holy Spirit was asking me, Sheila, what are you willing to give up that you can live without to give them what they can't live without? And I began to think of all the stupid things that I spend money on. It's not like God's against us doing things that bring us joy and bring joy to our family, but there is so much waste in our lives, and things I genuinely could live without to be able to be an answer to a grandmother's prayer, where she literally, her children can't live without a simple basic meal each day.

And to be able to go from these malnutrition clinics, where the pain and the silence and the desperation is overwhelming, to going to the villages where Mission Feeding is already in place and seeing the hope and the change. Their children are the way our children are when they're little, they're running around, they're happy. They've got joy and they've got hope. And we're committed to doing that again.

RANDY: The reason we can do that, well, is a few things. One, it's over 30 years of Mission Feeding, to the point where what my dad and Peter Pretorius started, Isak is continuing to do; I'm here asking you to be a part of it. We have the infrastructure, and infrastructure is important. We have the trucks that go into the field. We have the volunteers in the country who mix up the soup and serve it. We have these massive warehouses where we can keep and store and process food. We're doing this with years of experience because we know how to solve the problem. The problem is various things that happen, whether it is famine or flood or war, there are circumstances that happen.

We want to be there when those circumstances hit. I believe that in the community of Jesus Christ, the followers of the kingdom, that is you and me, we have the means to go into all these places and be their answer to prayer. That prayer is: Lord, give us something to eat; save us from the circumstances. We can answer that prayer if we come together.

Your gift of \$30 will be the answer for the next three months for three children. Your gift of \$50 will be the answer to a prayer for the next three months for five children. Maybe you can give \$1,000, \$2,000, \$3,000, \$4,000; whatever you can do, whatever God puts on your heart, know that we will be saving the lives of these children. We can do it. We've done it for years. We need to continue to do it.

Will you be a part of that? Will you join Sheila and me and my parents and the Pretoriuses and all those other people that have said we want to save lives through Mission Feeding? This is the last week, as Sheila said, that we'll be on the air to do this. I'm asking you to do it right now. Go to the phone, go online, and give the best gift you can. Let's save the lives of these beautiful children. We can do it. Let's be the answer. Do it 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.

This is the last week! Please call, write, or make your gift online.

End of video**In the studio**

SHEILA: Thank you so much for your help! And remember, please ask for Mark's book. We will send it with any gift that you send to help feed them. And honestly, Mark, I just want to say thank you for this book. It really is. I think it is a game changer.

MARK: Thanks so much. If I could challenge our listeners with anything, I mentioned it

earlier, taking a risk for the gospel. A lot of us get bored in our Christian faith because we kind of just do the mechanical routine, go to church, read the Bible, do our drill, pray -- that's all good! But there is no adventure, there is no excitement. You're not out on the edge where you must have help from the Holy Spirit.

And when you take a little risk and you bring up the gospel, you bring up spiritual matters, you just make an attempt to speak the good news of Christ into the life of your friends, there is excitement. And the Holy Spirit will energize you and you'll find yourself coming alive. When you see God working through you and you see them making progress and moving toward faith, and especially when one of them trusts in Christ, you're going to say, "This is the best! I want to do this more." It becomes contagious in your own life and in the Christians around you. But it starts with taking a little risk, opening your mouth and blurting something out, and letting God work through you and that would be my challenge.

SHEILA: And we will see you next time on *Life Today*. God bless you.