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Week one: Fall Mission Feeding: Last week

Randy Robison and Sheila Walsh

Amanda Pittman

SHEILA: Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm Sheila Walsh here with Randy Robison. I'm excited about this show because we have a great guest who has written a book called *Stand in Confidence*. Amanda Pittman, welcome to this program. Thanks for being with us.

AMANDA: Thank you so much for having me. It's such an honor. I'm happy to be here.

SHEILA: Oh, that's so sweet! I wanted to -- you start in the beginning of the book and you're doing this thing where you're scrolling through old posts, which I've done that too. And you come across this where you say, and I think you're a teenager maybe in high school at this point, and you say, "I feel like my insecurities get in the way of everything in my life."

AMANDA: Yeah.

SHEILA: When you read that further down the line, how did that impact you?

AMANDA: It stopped me dead in my tracks because whenever I read that it was from the perspective of at that point, 28-year-old me and I'm leading a ministry called Confident Women Co, which equips women to stand confidently on the finished work of Jesus. So it felt uncanny. It felt ironic. It felt like God had a sense of humor.

And so I remembered what it felt like. I remember how debilitating it was in my life. It impacted all of my relationships. And it impacted even my opportunities because it stunted what I thought I was deserving of and what I was capable of. And so yeah, for me, it was a very surreal moment to see that.

SHEILA: When you look back on those years as a younger woman, did you base your relationships on how you felt about yourself or how the other person made you feel about yourself?

AMANDA: I would say a little bit of both. It's a very interesting question because I believe that how you view yourself will determine what type of relationships you accept in your life. But then again, I accepted certain relationships simply because they gave me affirmation; they made me feel like a somebody when I didn't feel like someone. And so because I didn't have an internal sense of value, an eternal sense of identity, I tried to find that value, significance, worth, and identity in relationships.

I tried to find it in performance. As a flute player, I went to school for flute at S. M. U.

SHEILA: Wow! That's a hard instrument to play.

AMANDA: You know, I loved it. Where there is a will there is a way. For me, my love for music was secondary and my love for the significance and validation it gave me was primary because I was good at it. I was used to getting the first chairs, I was used to winning competitions. And so what it taught me was that my value and my significance were based on my performance. And that's built into relationships as well because I'm thinking, hey, if I can perform well enough for you and meet your standards, then I'm worthy, then I'm significant, then I'm good enough. And so I conflated so much of my value and so much of my identity with these external things as opposed to where it needed to be.

RANDY: So you're touching on insecurity, the validation, the what we do is who we are kind of idea that so many people -- we all deal with that at some point. We all lack confidence at some point for lots of different reasons, some of them valid at times. What was it that shifted your mentality away from that? A lot of people never realize what's going on. How did you get the realization?

AMANDA: I think because the insecurity in my life was so debilitating because it stunted so many things, I saw that there was a huge gap. There was especially a gap between the salvation I had in Jesus and it's translating to my life and confidence. I felt secure in my salvation, but I felt very insecure in my identity. So because of that -- I would say this, I had a very clear understanding of the gospel from a young age. I was raised in the church. My parents raised me in a very biblically based church. Very sound. I was in Awana's, I memorized all the scriptures. Even though I understood the gospel, for me I always understand it as I'm saved by grace through faith and I'm always going to be this dirty sinner who needs saving versus my new identity in Christ; that I am a new creation, the old has passed away and the new has come. And no longer identifying with the sin that once entrapped me but instead identifying with I'm seen; when God looks at me, he sees the righteousness of Christ and identifying myself as his treasure and his royal possession.

So I think because I had a strong view of salvation but a limited view of my new identity in light of it, I felt as if the gospel only applied to my eternity, but it didn't apply to my reality.

SHEILA: That's huge, Amanda! I can't imagine the number of viewers who are saying, I totally get that. One of the things I love about your book is that it is very intentional. In fact, you break the four components of confidence down into -- I'll let you say them. There is clarity, connection, competency, and conviction. What would you say about clarity?

AMANDA: I would say when you know who you are you will know what to do. For

such a long period of my life, I didn't know who I was. I was constantly trying to search for my identity rather than standing in my identity. I think that was a missing link for me; that was a missing link to my confidence. I thought if I searched deep enough within myself, if I search the crevices of my soul, if I'm introspective enough I will finally discover who I truly am. When in actuality it's not something to be discovered, it's something to stand on.

Whenever you give your life to Christ, what I understood as I gave my life back to Christ in college, what I understood was that your identity is already established in scripture. You're identified by God. Whenever you give your life to him, you belong to him and you're his child. You're identified as his child. You're identified as his beloved, a rightful heir to all the inheritances of God.

And so I think that shift in my understanding of who I am and my identity gave me the clarity I needed. So clarity is all about embracing your God-given identity. And then defining your God-given design. Because there are lots of Christians, and I was one of them, who understand their identity but they haven't gotten the clarity on -- have not defined the way that God designed me.

And so I feel like I have to measure up to someone else's standard for me. I feel as if I need to live up to this denomination's standard of me. And the problem with that is that there are so many different standards for what a woman is supposed to be, inside the church, outside of the church, and across denominations.

So in my own experience, the more I tried to define myself by what was external, the more insecure I felt. But whenever I looked to God and said, God, can you show me the way you designed me? Can you show me the gifts that you placed inside of me? That gave me the clarity that I needed to say I don't feel like I need to be anyone else. And that gives you some confidence -- it gives you some edge because you feel like I don't need to be Sheila Walsh. I can honor her and still be me. That just gives me confidence.

SHEILA: And one of the things I love about that and I saw it all the way through your book is when I think about the number of women in the church who are kind of on the sidelines because we think because you're gifted to do that, you're gifted to do this. I don't have any special gifting. I wonder how much we're missing out on God's daughters owning who they really are.

AMANDA: Yes! And I love that you say that because when women lack confidence they don't walk in their calling.

SHEILA: That's really powerful.

AMANDA: And we miss out on a huge part of the body of Christ. And I think that's why I'm really passionate about it because I sat on the sidelines for such a long period in my life. I counted myself out. I said that's for people like them, not like me because I discounted myself.

But I think when we understand the way God designed us and we honor it, then it gives us the clarity and the confidence we need to stand up to our calling and step up to the plate.

RANDY: And unfortunately, let's just say it, there are a lot of men in churches who have sidelined women, either out of just inherent bias, maybe some improper understanding of scripture. I love that women are standing up and being who God called them to be. We need a lot more men standing up and saying, you are who God called you to be and applauding you. And so that's my two cents.

I want to ask you about -- you go through some positive actions to build confidence, and these are very practical things. I think these are very helpful for people who are hearing this, wanting this, but not knowing how to do it. What are some of those positive actions that someone can do to start making that shift that you did?

AMANDA: Well, in order for you to have clarity, you need to know the God that's assigned you. And so for me, a huge part of me gaining clarity and competence and all of those things were first just reestablishing my connection with God. For a long period in my life, I viewed love as transactional. And so because of the relationships I had gotten into, I based my worth on that and I based love on what could be given, what could be taken versus something that's a decision and a choice.

SHEILA: That's interesting the way you describe it in the book because you talk about Michael, who is your husband now. And I'm not sure if he was your husband at this point, but you would ask him things like why do you love me? And his answer was something that you didn't like initially. What did he say?

AMANDA: I was so offended. He said, "I love you because I choose to."

SHEILA: Not because you've got lovely teeth and big brown eyes?

AMANDA: Not because I'm so different than all those other girls. He said, "I love you because I choose to." He even wrote a whole blog about it. The title of the blog was: "Why I don't love my fiancé."

SHEILA: Oh, my gosh! And you still married him?

AMANDA: Still married him. He's a great guy. So the entire blog has a list of things that he likes about me. He's like I like this about her, I like that about her. And at the very end, he says, "None of these things are why I love her. I love Amanda because I choose to."

SHEILA: That's actually so powerful!

RANDY: I get it. Let me say marriage isn't about feeling, it is about commitment.

AMANDA: Absolutely. And I think that Disney has steered us wrong. Disney has lied to

us. It gives us a romantic view of marriage rather than a resolute view of marriage. And at the end of the day if marriage is the picture of Christ and the church it is less about -- it is not about our perfection because we fail him time and time again, it's about his commitment to us. So I wanted to be loved for how great I was until I wasn't so great anymore. And then I really loved that he chose me. Right?

RANDY: Are you too young for Jerry Maguire?

AMANDA: I may be.

RANDY: It has one of the worst lines, "You complete me!" I hate that line!

SHEILA: It's a stupid line.

RANDY: What it does is it says without this other person, or Mr. Right/Mrs. Right, I am incomplete. And it is not until you understand that you are complete in Christ, that you can really enter into a healthy relationship.

AMANDA: Absolutely! Absolutely! So I talk about the four components of confidence in the book. So you find clarity in understanding that this love isn't revocable. And then you also find so much confidence when you're connected. So connection is the second component of confidence. Connection with God because your relationship with God is the one relationship that affects every other relationship. And then your connection with others.

SHEILA: Yeah. You talk about choosing your circle wisely and who you let into that inner circle. That's huge!

AMANDA: When I think back to the most devastating times in my life or painful experiences in my life or times where I felt the most insecure, I could always connect it back to a person. And so when we partner with God in picking our people, when we hear

the voice of God before we seek the voice of the opinions of people, that's when we can choose wisely. And then those connections cultivate your confidence. I became far more confident when I surrounded myself with people like my husband who saw me the way God sees me rather than seeing love as transactional or making me have to jump through hoops to be worthy.

And then I would just say establishing competency and conviction as well. So those are the final two components of confidence --

SHEILA: Conviction is huge.

AMANDA: Huge! Absolutely huge! And competency, I talk a lot about -- I'll say this, the more competent you are, the more confident you're going to be. You said it earlier that there are some things we shouldn't be so confident about. I don't want -- I only want my brain surgeon to be competent if they've gone through all the schooling; right? But if we're going to be competent in all areas of our lives, we need to be competent in healing -

SHEILA: Old wounds.

AMANDA: Yes! And renewing our minds. So that's the competency piece in learning how to do that with God. And then conviction is all about seeing why this is all -- what all of this is for. Right? Because confidence for confidence's sake is sinking sand too. I'm the confidence lady; right? I'll be the first to admit confidence for confidence's sake is sinking sand too. It has to lead to something greater. And so conviction is all about understanding your responsibility to others and understanding your responsibility to God and using that authority.

RANDY: Let me ask you about conviction. Because we live in a world of fluid and relative convictions. We have people who are profoundly convicted or have this belief that they hold to so dearly and they're just wrong! How do we know that our convictions

are right and good?

AMANDA: I love that you say that because anybody who has made a huge impact in history has had a major conviction. Martin Luther King had a conviction. But then you look at Hitler. Hitler had a conviction as well. And then Jesus had a conviction. There are a lot of people who have convictions that are loud and wrong. They're leading people but they're leading them astray.

So I believe as men and women of God, our conviction needs to be found in Christ. Meaning there is going to be a day that we will stand before God. We will stand before Christ to give an account of everything that we've done. That's what the parable of the talents is about. We will also give an account for every idle word that we've said. We'll give an account of all of the moments that we've had. And we'll also -- we are responsible to people. So confidence doesn't matter if you're not going to impact anyone.

So you talked about it earlier, people are sitting on the sidelines and we're missing out on parts of the body. I believe that if we're going to be the body of Christ it requires me to stand in my calling and be responsible to you so that you can walk in yours. I'm so thankful for everyone who played a huge part in my journey of coming back to Christ because had that not been the case I wouldn't be here now. Right? And so it is our job to reach back and help others. I think if we believe that our calling only affects us, then we think it is optional. But if we were to see the magnitude of every single person we're called to reach, we wouldn't waste a second sitting on the sidelines.

RANDY: Can I ask you about something you said at the very beginning of the program? Because you said it really quickly and I think it is sort of the tagline either for your Confident Woman podcast or your ministry. But you said something about "the finished works of Jesus." Because I think that's, if we're going to be confident, we're going to have conviction, all that, it needs to be on Christ. So what was that tagline again? Do you remember what you said?

AMANDA: Yes. So confident women call my ministry equips women to stand confidently on the finished work of Jesus. (Doesn't make sense but can't check)

RANDY: There you go.

AMANDA: It's already done. This world says do, but the gospel says done. And that's why I can be confident. Not because I'm going to measure up but because I won't, and he did.

SHEILA: That's what I love about this book is that you can think, it's just one more woman trying to be all she can be. No, this is absolutely about understanding the finished work of Christ. And because of that, those of us who know that we're not enough, get to stand up and make a difference.

And for any gift at all, you can request a copy of *Stand in Confidence*. So one of the things you know here at *LIFE* that we're very, very committed to and very confident in is our mission to help mothers around the world and their children who are literally starving to death. But the amazing thing is, when we stand up in our calling, we can reach out in his name and make a difference. Would you watch this?

On the mission field

ISAK: All there is, is the dry burnt-out remnants of the last crops that were here. The dry soil is a testament to the fact that nothing can grow here.

Veronica has brought her child to this screening clinic here in the Kabala area of Angola today. You can see. I don't have to describe the condition of this child. You can see that this child is suffering. But you know the reality is it is not just a lack of crops. It is not just dry parched soil. It's lives! Lives are being stolen by the lack of food. Not a war, not some human-made crisis, simply the fact that there isn't enough rainfall to grow crops to feed their children. And that is what's stealing their lives.

This child is suffering from severe malnutrition. Why? Because there is no food at home. Literal starvation. Children in these areas have been starving to death. Children dying of malnutrition. Many parents are telling us, "We don't know what to do. We don't know where to turn. We've done everything we can do. But we can't feed our children."

For five years there has been a drought in this country that's meant that mothers like Veronica are not able to grow food for their children and are not able to provide what their children need. And you can see that this child, Samuel, is just a representation of more than 250 children that are here today; 250 mothers that have brought their children saying, "Please help me. Help me save my child's life."

The solution is food. The solution is expressing God's heart and extending his hands. And I'm asking you to do that today. Please, give that gift. Give the gift of food, give the gift of life.

End of video

In the studio

SHEILA: Just listening to those little ones' cries is just heartbreaking. But the amazing thing about Mission Feeding is that we can provide hope in a bowl.

I'll never forget the time when I was sitting at home with my son Christian and he was probably I don't know four or five years old at the time. We were watching James and Betty and they were talking about the situation in Africa. They were talking about the fact that they had this great food, kind of an oatmeal that has all the vitamins. But so many of the people are either coming with these little cans that would burn the children's hands or else they would come with something that was paper and the food would fall right through it. I remember James talking about the fact that we are going to now provide these bowls. And my son for a whole year put most of his allowance in a bag and then asked, "Mom, can we go there, and can I give this to Mr. James?"

I'll never forget watching my son -- and I wanted to turn all these coins into notes so it would be easier to carry, and he was like, "No, mom, this is what I brought." And carrying this little bag up here on the platform and giving it to James. If it touches the heart of a child, how can it not touch us? And I have to tell you, that conviction has never left. He still wants to put hope in a bowl.

Please help us. As Isak said, there is a situation right now that is devastating. Those malnutrition clinics are so overrun. Some of the camps in South Sudan, they're just -- it's a hopeless situation. And as a mom, I can't imagine what that's like to hear my child cry and not be able to ease their suffering. That's why Randy and I today are asking for your help. We can change this.

RANDY: Yeah. Sheila, I know you noticed when you've been in these places that these people are bringing what they have in a sense to care for their own children. In other words, they work. They work harder than most Americans if we're honest about it. They work the soil, they work the land. If there is a problem, they will take their child wherever they can for whatever help they can. It's just a situation that most of us just -- we can't even fathom the situation.

And it does shift from region to region at times. We'll go in, we'll help, we'll stabilize an area. There will be another area where maybe there is a drought or a flood or something else and we will go. We'll respond to those who have the greatest needs. But we can only respond because you support Mission Feeding on an ongoing basis. And even though this is the last week that we'll be on the air talking about this, this year, as we get to the end of the year, and by the way, if you have year-end gifts, this is a great place to put it, a great time to make it, but we rely on you guys to enable us to respond as the needs shift and change. And so we will go as much as you will send us.

I'm asking you to keep sending us to these places to help these children. Your gift of \$30, \$50, or \$100 right now will help feed three, five, or ten children for the next three

months. Some of you could feed 100 children with a gift of \$1,000 today. Some of you could do even more.

I'm asking you to go to the phone, go online, and make the best gift you can. I can promise you just as we promised your son, we will take whatever you give us and we will help save lives. So do it now.

Begin video clip

ANNOUNCER: Across the continent of Africa, children are suffering and facing severe malnutrition. Lack of rainfall and severe drought has led to one of the deadliest food crises in 40 years.

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 *LIFE Planner* bound in soft-touch leather. This planner will help you in your daily walk with space for you to record your appointments, goals, inspirational notes, and prayers.

With your gift of \$100 or more, please request the scripture pen set. Perfect companions to the *LIFE* planner, these beautiful wooden pens are inscribed with scripture references to keep your heart focused on God's plans for 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

RANDY: This is the last week we'll be on the air talking about Mission Feeding this year. So please, go to the phone, go online, and make the best gift you can. Sheila, I've just been blessed by this program. I know a lot of our viewers have.

SHEILA: Yeah! Amanda, thank you so much. Thank you for writing this book. And for any gift at all, you can request a copy of *Stand in Confidence*. And you know the amazing thing is even though it is not in the contents, there is a godly grace that soaks every page. So thank you so much for being our guest.

AMANDA: Thank you. This is such a gift. Thank you.

RANDY: I appreciate all of you guys watching. And we'll see you again next time on *Life Today*.

SHEILA: Bye!