

Week 22

5/23/11

James: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm James Robison. Betty and I are thrilled to introduce a young man that just captured my attention here recently, even though we had crossed paths when he was pretty small. He actually grew up in Thomas Road Baptist Church. His parents were active there. Grew up watching Jerry Falwell go through a transition where he was very much "Christians stay out of anything related to political action" to then becoming a very strong activist. Jerry and I were close friends. I did not agree with the title "moral majority." I said, "It sounds a little pompous. I think it will come back on you, Jerry..." to he and Paul Weir, two very good men. But interestingly, in this church, this young man growing up and watching all that's going on and loving the Lord, which Jerry -- by the way, Jerry, Jr. and Jonathan, all the family are our friends. We love them. Praise God for Liberty University. What an incredible university. I believe they're trying their best and effectively are training champions, that's the desire of their heart. But Gabe Lyons grew up in the church and he really had some encounters, Betty, about the same time you and I did where we began to see a great need for some readjustment in our own lives as Christians, and then how to more effectively impact the whole world -- and we're still learning -- but we're excited about learning because we're not stuck. Boy, we launched out into the deep and we're moving. We believe the cloud and the pillar of fire are moving and we're not camping. We're going to live in the shelter and shadow of the almighty and he is on the move, which means we live as students and pupils. Well, our guest wrote a book a couple of years ago, the "UnChristian." Became a best seller -- I'm going to be asking him about that. But he has a new book and this is what caught my attention and the attention of our son-in-law and some of the other young people, you know the 35-and-under group like Craig Groeschel and his church and people we've had on, but the "Next Christians" and I was quite captivated by some of the insights God has given him. I want you to meet this leader of young men. He has an organization called "Q." I'm curious to know exactly what that might mean. I think his friends understand it but let's ask him about it, his wife Rebecca and three children. I want you to welcome Gabe Lyons to *LIFE Today*. Gabe, good to have you!

Gabe: Thank you for having me!

James: Tell me what "Q" stands for. I'm curious about it. Give me the low down.

Gabe: "Q" simply stands for questions. We felt there was a need to have a place where Christians who are trying to engage in a world that has changed a lot from even when

I was a kid, faithfully, to have a place to come together and ask questions where we could say, "We might not always have the answer for you but we certainly believe in a God who can give us the answer." And if we can just create an environment where asking questions isn't something you get in trouble for but something that was encouraged about our world, about our culture, about how do you express the gospel in a culture that has become largely disrespectful of a lot of Christians, it was an environment that we could create for that. That's become a really fruitful place for a lot of dialogue and learning, for others but also for myself.

James: I've written several times that if you have a lot of questions, The Answer is quite comfortable helping you find answers to your questions. Jesus was never uncomfortable when people challenged him or asked him questions right in the middle of his sermons. Frankly, I am not either. I'm very comfortable there because he made me comfortable there. I'm thrilled with the fact that you're doing this. I know that you've worked with a group called "Catalyst." You've worked with a lot of young leaders, and I want you to know I appreciate what you're doing. Let me just ask you to comment on the "UnChristian." When you delivered this, were you addressing a whole lot of it to the church world?

Gabe: Yeah. The primary goal and the reason we even did this book, me and David Kinnaman, who is the president of Barna Research, I commissioned this book as one of the first jobs of our non-profit organization because I wanted to understand how 16-29 year olds really felt about Christians; not just what they would tell us when they showed up at church but what would they tell a researcher who said, "When I say the word 'Christian,' what comes to mind?" What are the top of mind receptions? We did that study and later developed a book so that Christians and church leaders specifically could better understand what was going on because I think like me, a lot of people were experiencing this phenomenon where they would share with somebody their faith and immediately feel the walls go up and the conversation not go any further. I wanted to get into understanding how a new generation was thinking about Christians because I felt like if we could understand that dynamic it would equip us to know our context. Just like any missionary going overseas wants to understand the culture, how people are thinking about God, religion, all the ideas that drive the way they think and live, if we could better understand that it would just better equip us to be faithful to the gospel in our season.

Betty: Could you tell us a couple of things that they would say?

Gabe: Well, the research -- when I first read the research when it came back, it drove me to my knees because of the uncomfortableness I felt to see that basically what these

20-something's felt about Christians were that we were anti gay, that we were judgmental; 87% felt that we were judgmental, 85% would label Christians as too political, on and on and on. We saw that people thought that Christians were only interested in getting them saved. Seven out of ten said Christians are proselytizers. They don't really care about me or a relationship with me, they only look at me as a project, somebody they're trying to convert to their faith, or get me to show up at their church. And when I don't do that, they move on to somebody else. They were giving us this real honest feedback. So that research for any Christian, I think there are two responses. One is to kind of self-righteously say, "Well, that's not me. There is no way I've been a part of that." Or the other response, which we were so gratified to see happen throughout the church has been just a wide acceptance to say, "Look, perception is reality for this generation and if that's how they feel about us as Christians, that's how they're viewing Jesus and that's his reputation to them. So how can we be better at understanding what we've done to contribute to this? What beliefs have we held that have made us become self-righteous and made us look down on people who are different than us and treat them differently than really what we saw -- how Jesus treated people."

James: What I see are people looking at the church crowd and they don't see much of Jesus. They see Baptists, Pentecostal, Charismatic, Catholic -- they see some label or something like you said, an anti- person rather than someone that has a life that is so full of the life of God that it actually becomes magnetically attractive. Jesus said, "If I'm lifted up I'll draw all men to myself." Let the works show because the light shines appropriately and glorifies God, and brings honor and glory to him. We don't see that happening so something is out of place. We're either misguided or covered by something other than God and we're hiding the light of his glory. I hear you saying, "Hey, he's real, why do people out here see him inappropriately?" I think the media distorts the image. Anything Hollywood does, they show the ugly side or the ineffective or the inconsistent, hypocritical side of a Christian. The media tends to go and get the worst representatives of the Christian faith and put them up. If you really see the real clear deal they don't often get it to us. But the deal is that I hear you saying, if we get it right, the gates of hell and the walls of darkness can't stop this light from piercing it. It needs to affect every part of life on planet earth. That's what I hear you saying and that's what I hear you saying the young people are saying. If this deal is real, then it ought to make a difference.

Gabe: That's right. It shouldn't just be a set of beliefs that we ascribe to but it should really impact the way we're living in our neighborhoods, the way we participate in our school systems, the way we participate in the kind of business and entrepreneurial activity that God's calling many people to do. It should make a difference in the

songwriter, how they write music -- the film maker, the documentarian. Every single area and industry and space and sphere of society should be affected by the love of Christ and affected by the truth of the gospel. And I think this generation is hungry to see that and they're hungry not to just hear about it, they want to experience it. That's why they're going on trips overseas. That's why they're rolling up their sleeves and not necessarily caring about making more money than their parents but just getting involved in something meaningful and purposeful in their life. They're seeking transcendence, they're seeking after truth but many of them are not finding it in the Christian faith because to them being Christian has meant all of these negative things. So it is up to us in our generation and we need the help of people in the generation that has come before us to learn how to live and walk in love, and how to show and express that love to people because until we do that, do we even win the opportunity to share with them the truth of Jesus?

James: I don't believe anything is more powerful and more piercing, penetrating in a positive way than love. I really believe and again, I say this and Gabe, continually, that the greatest compromise of all is the refusal to release the love of God and to even love one another. We just divide and get conquered because we divide. We find a point at which we disagree and rather than honing the edge so that we become keener and sharper, which is what I hear you seek to do in question, I would just simply say to your whole circle, put me in the middle of your circle. Put me in the middle of all of the kids that have all of the questions, and I will be one of the first ones to say we missed it there. And you know what? The example wasn't best. We were off track but we want to be on track and we want to be on track with you. But let me answer some of your questions. This is what is really in my heart. Anyway, the "Next Christians," let me read the subheading here. "How a new generation is restoring the faith." Believe me, it needs to be restored. When Betty and I were changed years ago, and I mean literally, delivered -- delivered from religion, delivered from the image that people thought I was to go back to first love and to really begin to share the love of God and become a servant -- all of that, we were called "The people of restoration and restoring things" and people wanted to start kind of a restoration theology. I said, "I'm not here to start some new theology, I want to release the power of God that impacts all of our thinking." So man, I like what you're talking about. So when you see this next bunch of Christians, tell me what they look like. I hope I can fit in.

[Laughter]

I want to make the cut.

Gabe: That's the thing, what I'm describing isn't just a young generation only, it is our generation responding to the cultural shifts that have taken place. No longer is the public square the place where we're having conversations about faith, whether that is in our cities or in the salon or whether it is taking place online where a lot of people are commenting and offering their opinions. In the place where these conversations are happening, the Judeo Christian way of seeing the world is not the one that is winning out. People don't necessarily operate off of that same foundation that maybe Christians did or you and I did when I was growing up in the 80s even; that is not just something we can assume anymore. So in that environment where the church no longer is at the center of culture, it's kind of been pushed to the periphery -- or we've taken ourselves, really, in a lot of cases, out of the center to the periphery -- we're in that place where we all need to know how to engage. And how can we be faithful to the gospel but also have credibility with our friends and neighbors? I don't think the gospel calls us to be weird in our culture in such a degree that we can't have conversations with people who are seeking after truth but just haven't found it in the church. I think we should be normal people who know how to get along and love people and meet them where they're at and let the love of Christ show through them. So what I do in this book is really lay out the characteristics that I've seen in a 20 and 30 something generation who is coming along and really have had to deal with this new terrain, this new landscape of where people don't necessarily like Christians and yet they're operating in every field of our culture, they're being faithful to the gospel and they're finding some ways to live out the truth of God's love in a way that resonates with people, in a way that makes people and provokes them to ask questions about what is driving them and motivating them to live that way. That's what I try to describe.

Betty: So when you talk about the "Next Christians," that could be us too.

Gabe: It is!

Betty: It is not just the next young -- because I feel like we still have some things that God has intended us to experience that we can offer to the younger generation that would be beneficial to them.

Gabe: There is no doubt. And I think the life you've lived and modeled publicly, and the experience you've gone through to put that out in front of everybody and go through that journey, and not just stay on track you could have stayed on where people loved you and would have loved to see you keep going down this path, you went through that transformation and you did it publicly so we all could see it; so people watching this could see what it looks like to really be transformed and I think

that's the kind of models we need. That's what I need because in your generation you have the ability to give us permission in a way we can't give to ourselves and in a way you can release the next generation to start thinking in a new way, to allow us in ways to apply it to the generation and the friendships and the new dynamics of our settings and neighborhoods and workplaces. But that's what we need, we need that empowerment. We don't want to just go off and try new things and repeat mistakes of history. We don't need to get off of our grounded orthodox ideas in theology, we don't need to get off the word and the authority of scripture. We need to stay grounded in that and rooted in that but we need your help. So I think that's the need and that's the call to your generation is to help us.

James: What I believe I hear you saying is that you believe Jesus is actually magnetically attractive, that he is exactly who he claimed to be and who he revealed himself to be as if you've seen him, you've seen the father. So he actually revealed the living God, living among us and saying that this living God that he brought to us, to redeem us so that we could be reconciled to God, that we could actually begin to behave like him because he is in us, enabling us to do that. You were saying that he is still attractive but there is something that the young generation has seen that doesn't look like him, is not necessarily attractive. It is not only turning people off outside the church, it is turning people off in the church. Dallas Willard who is a great philosopher and written some great books says that about the time kids graduate from high school, they also graduate from church. They think they have finally moved beyond it. It is because the relationships didn't always show them Jesus. They just had religion in substitution of relationship. I hear you talking about relationship, I hear you talking about relationship that effects others because of the way you relate to the other people, the way you communicate. Am I tracking at all where you're tracking?

Gabe: Absolutely.

James: Do I sound like I'm about 30?

Gabe: Yeah, you do! This is nice!

[Laughter]

I think what you've mentioned is how the next generation -- when we see statistics where they're leaving the church in droves at 18 but I would submit to you that they're not leaving the church because they don't want to be Christian, they're leaving the church because they haven't been discipled to know how to think about and live in a way that is Christian but also works in our world today. Part of that is because they've

been taught the only thing a Christian's responsibility is to evangelize and to get people saved. And while that's definitely part of our responsibility as Christians, that's not all. We also have a way of living our life in every sphere of society. And a lot of Christians, I'm finding in this generation are fired up because they no longer are living under the lie that the only way you can be a Christian that is faithfully following Jesus is to be a pastor or a missionary or run a ministry, which for many years when I grew up, I thought that. Bob Briner wrote a book called "Roaring Lambs" where he says many of us, and he was in business, a great business guy out in L.A. who did amazing work as an agent. But he talks about how those of us who aren't in those roles feel like second class Christians. I think what's happening is there is no more class system in Christianity. What's changing right now in this generation is we all realize we're priests and we all realize that we have parishes that we're responsible for. And that's where I see this generation going and that's what the opportunity -- that's why the opportunity is just enormous for us to move forward with your help and for all of us, not just the younger generation, all of us who are Christians today to move forward with this mentality and bring the gospel with us in every corner of our world.

James: I want to encourage you to get the book. Do you appreciate what Gabe is saying? I like it. I bear witness -- the spirit in me bears witness with the spirit in you. The moment you and I talked and we conversed, somehow we knew we were tracking on the same wave length, which is a wave length from above. I mean we're getting some signals from divine signals -- kingdom signals. If people wanted to access the web site, find out about "Q," find out the things you're doing, get the book, say online, but they want to know where would they go?

Gabe: TheNextChristians.com and then also the book's available anywhere -- Amazon, you name it, every bookstore has it.

James: All right, I just recommend you get it. Let me show you something that we're doing that basically you really impact here -- you make an impact in this regard and that is touching people's lives. And a lot of young people your age, they say, "I would rather go dig a well somewhere than just go down to some church and fit in the crowd. I want to make a difference." That's what we're trying to do. I'll be honest with you, Gabe, you probably never have a viewership anywhere you go where people have allowed the walls of sectarian divides to be pulled down any more effectively than the praying people who watch us. And they found out that living outside their world to make a difference in somebody else's world is actually living in the center of His World, His Will. I want to show you something -- see, I'm confident you don't change channels. As a matter of fact, you tune in because you're going to see Jesus in a young lady's -- really her broken heart. But here's the deal, you're the answer to the broken

heart. You're the answer to what breaks her heart. You're the answer to what breaks the heart of God. I want you to watch closely.

On the mission field:

Tammy: How do you even begin to prepare your heart for such a trip as this? I don't think you can but I do believe that your heart is forever changed. We travel out into the middle of nowhere and I stepped out of the car and I looked around at hundreds of children. You could physically see the signs on their precious little bodies, their hair was changing color and they were losing their hair. You could look around and see things aren't so good, but they didn't choose that for their lives. Things aren't so good for them because they had nothing to eat. In fact, I've learned of a child today who has collapsed, walks two miles every single day to come to school but there is no food here for her -- but she at least comes to school. Is it bad? Oh, gosh! Oh, Jesus! Jesus! These children are malnourished and they're collapsing because they're weak. I can barely take it, to be honest with you. I think gosh, what could I have done? There are so many moments like this that are happening all the time. That breaks my heart because I can love them. I can love them deeply for moments but then I leave. And I think for me even being able to hug a child is my way of saying, "God will provide for you."

End of clip

In the studio:

James: I can't tell you how my -- all that goes on in my heart when I watch that. Betty, I saw Tammy referring to little kids trying to come to school and I'm thinking, you know what? They're just barely even strong enough to even try to do that and they don't have anything to eat there. Peter Pretorius started telling us years ago, "We need to start feeding kids at school because we want them to go to school." And they go to school -- by the way, among girls, the attendance in schools jumped 70% on the part of girls if you'll feed them. It's where a lot of them get their only nourishment of the entire week -- their whole lives. What we try to do is find the most effective way to meet a need. But in many places, Betty, we go into the crisis areas like Sudan and other areas, even in Angola and various places and even some there in Mozambique where the kids are still just so weak and malnourished. You'll see in the malnutrition clinics that we actually help have the supplies there. It's where kids go like they're going to die and they go there as a last hope if they can find such a place. But the

missionaries find the places to put them. But here's the deal, I don't care how much Tammy points you to a need, how much the missionaries take her and others like us with a heart to care and show them the need. If we don't have the ability to meet the need all you do is stand there and cry and you just weep. Or you'll see them try to go to school and yet too weak to really learn. The missionaries say, "You know what? We could feed here if we just had the ability to do it." So we try to do a total program of really transforming their lives. Here's what I'd like to ask you to do. Twice a year we come to you and we say, "Look, help us feed children now for the next several months: \$30 or \$50 or \$100 -- and this is not an exaggeration -- this is not total child care. This is life-sustaining nourishment, it's restoring health, stabilizing them. We can feed three, five, or ten children for that amount. I don't think there is a person watching that can't do something. Betty, I believe if each viewer would just look and say, "Okay, I see those little children she's pointing at, I'll take three of them for the next months." Or somebody can take ten. Everybody can help somebody and we've really got the answer to their need.

Betty: That's right! I thought Tammy said something really interesting there at the close. She said, "I can only hug them and love them for this moment and then I leave." But there is a way through our giving, through our reaching out and saying, "Here! I'll give you some food. I'll fill your need. And I'll love you because it is Jesus' love it will continue." So please join with us and let's feed these children.

James: You know as I listen to you making that request, that appeal, you're pleading the cause of the needy, as the Old Testament prophet said, "the widow, the orphan, the needy" and that is so appropriate. But as I listened to her doing that, my heart leaped inside because I said, "Guess what? We're talking to people who care." You don't just turn away. You have no idea how much you encouraged us when we came back from the mission fields and we said, "We'll just give everything up; just come live here." The missionaries said, "Please don't! Go back and tell them so we can stay here and make a difference. Please tell people so we can stay and help them." You know what? You said, "We'll help you." From the bottom of my heart thank you! That's what I'm asking you to do today. For the next several months would you give \$100 to feed ten children? \$50 to feed five? Or \$30 to feed three? It may be that you can give more than that. We want to send you something to bless you. We always do. God's Kingdom in You, the kingdom that you're expressing, the love of God you're releasing, we want to show you a little bit more about what it means to live in that spiritual gravity, the reality of his presence. We want to bless you. Thank you for making that call. Use your bankcard like a check. Go online and make the gift. If you write a check make it to *LIFE* because that's what you're giving in behalf of those children you help in many instances whose lives you save. Thank you! Please make that special call.

Begin video clip:

Announcer: At this very moment a child is drawing her last breath struggling to stay alive due to a lack of food. Sadly, this impoverished child is not alone and without our help, many like her throughout Africa face death as well. Today you can make a difference. You can save a life! *LIFE's* mission feeding teams are in place right now ready to answer the hunger cries of half a million children throughout remote areas of Angola, Mozambique, and Sudan. With previous food reserves gone and Southern Africa facing its worst conditions and food shortage in more than two decades, we desperately need to replenish our supplies for the feeding programs immediately! Your lifesaving gift of \$30, \$50, or \$100 will help feed and care for three, five, or ten children for three full months. With your gift we'll send you the *God's Kingdom in You* audio series and companion scripture guide. James and Betty Robison, along with Beth Moore, inspire you to live every day in the power and presence of God. With your gift of \$125 or more to help feed ten children you may request both the video DVD and audio series with scripture guide. As a bonus we will also send you Jim Hylton's new book, *the supernatural skyline*. Finally, please prayerfully consider a gift of \$1,000 or more to help save the lives of 100 children and be sure to request the beautiful new "Heart of the Father" bronze sculpture. Please call, write, or make your secure gift online.

End of clip**In the studio:**

James: Well, Betty and I just say thank you in behalf of -- literally, the lives you are rescuing, we thank you. We are anxious to send you the incredible teaching that I believe will bless you, Beth Moore sharing with Betty and me as we poured our heart out in *God's Kingdom in You: Living in his presence in the present*, Jim Hylton's book, *The Supernatural Skyline*. We'd be really happy to send you Gabe's book today, *"The Next Christians"* if you would simply help us reach out and rescue someone. Do what you say you like to see be done, be a part of it -- be a demonstration of what you believe. I think you'll be inspired by the insights God's given Gabe. He's going to be back with us for another program. But would you join Betty and me in telling Gabe thanks for coming? Appreciate you being here, Gabe. I really do. Thank you for sharing with us. Thank you so much! And I repeat, thank you for sharing *LIFE Today* -- not just watching!

>> I think it is a good example of how we have to be provoked to see people differently.

Announcer: What will the next generation of Christians look like? Tomorrow!