

Week 23

5/31/11

Betty: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! Thank you so much for joining us. I'm Betty and this is James.

James: You look really pretty. But you always look really beautiful. I mean that. I didn't just tell her that... like we showed up on television so I want to make a good impression. Not the case -- I tell her that all the time because I mean it. I was looking at the title of our guest's book, *Permission to Speak Freely*. Betty's... basically her life story is *Free to be Me*. Couldn't help but think about that. And if you've never gotten Betty's story you might ask for it. I think it will be a real blessing to you. But Anne Jackson wrote this book and I'm going to welcome her in just a moment but I was captivated by the notes because she began to get all these questions and notes and comments on her web site like here's a little note: "After my divorce nobody called me. It broke my heart. Again." Signed "Mark." It is just sad. Just little expressions of in so many ways loneliness and coming oftentimes from people in the church setting, and yet feeling so alone. It's like they don't have anyone to really talk to openly and honestly. I think that's too bad. Anne, that's quite a story. A pastor's daughter but was actually sexually abused by a church worker, someone on staff; had horrific -- horrific impact. I want you to welcome Anne Jackson and let's hear her story. Anne, we're glad to see you.

Anne: Thank you so much for having me.

James: I have to imagine it is tough to talk about your own journey because of what all happened, and then to think that you've shared it. But what I see in you sharing is that you not only experienced pain and tried to learn how to deal with it, and defeat, and you take responsibility for a lot of your choices even though you were misused and abused. It seems to me that you were more open because you found how important it is for others to speak openly. Am I right about that?

Anne: Absolutely! There definitely is the pain and the shame and the weight of carrying guilt around. But I had somebody confess to me something very dark and secret in her life and I saw in her a freedom and I wanted that freedom. And I also felt safe to confess to her because she had trusted me with her secrets so maybe I could trust her with mine and I opened up to her. Almost the immediate freedom that came with that was so profound that I knew that was something I had to live out for the rest

of my life and let others know that it was available. Because just the weight and the shame carrying that around for so long is not what God intends for our hearts.

Betty: And isn't that one of the first steps is realizing that you're not alone? Because that is the ploy of the enemy to make us feel alone and like no one has been as horrible as we've been in life and no one has failed as much as we have? And to find someone that will listen?

Anne: You do. Through my own journey, there are very shameful things that I think we'll talk about that I did feel so alone and I felt I couldn't talk to my parents about it, I couldn't talk to my friends about -- even my closest friends, I felt there is no way they would accept me if they knew I had done this or that I had said this or this was the path that I was taking. I had a secret life essentially and if I told someone then I would be even more alone than the way I felt.

James: Anne, I referenced the fact that you experienced some really totally inappropriate relationship that someone manipulated to some degree, you may have appeared vulnerable, you may have even played the cards of getting attention, who knows what all -- I really don't want to know. But as a result of that, some other things happened later that caused you to feel even more ashamed, that you even found more difficult to talk about. And in talking to you, just even before we came out here, you said that as you had talked about these particular areas, you found out there are many people in the church, many girls, many women who are facing these problems. Share what you share in the book but also what you would want our listeners and our viewers to hear.

Anne: I was abused sexually by a youth pastor when I was 16 and 17 years old. I grew up very naive, very sheltered. Didn't really know much about sex or sexuality, and that awakened some curiosities, some questions and some emptiness and shame as well, so it just messes you all up. As that relationship continued, I turned to the Internet. First innocently just to research what was going on because I didn't have an education about what was happening. But as I went to the Internet and looked up porn and looked at what things were I found this comfort -- it comforted me almost. It was like porn was a medicine, almost. It numbed out some pain that I was experiencing; it numbed out the weight and shame that I was carrying from this relationship with this youth pastor. At the end of our time together he broke it off very suddenly. He was engaged, I was not aware of that fact and said never said to contact him again. I thought he loved me because of the things that we were doing so I was left devastated. And the first thing I did, what numbs me out? -- Porn. So I went back to that computer. And I graduated high school and moved out, had my own

computer, my own time, nobody around me to be concerned with what I was doing and kept looking at porn, kept looking at porn. Felt so, so dirty because I knew -- it was very typical for men to look at porn. You hear guys even celebrated, it is like a guy thing. It is not right either way but for a woman to look at porn... and I started questioning, am I attracted to somebody of the same sex because why do I enjoy looking at pictures of women? But I think I'm straight. It was very confusing. That just again brought more shame and more weight and I never felt like I could talk about it. That escalated from online things, numbing that eventually didn't fill the hole anymore so I took those relationships offline and started getting involved with different men and just random encounters and that sort of thing. For a little while that filled that pain and numbed it out but I was so afraid -- I would never -- nobody ever had any idea, even my best friend had no idea that this is happening.

James: How were you able because you really put us into a little bit of a mini semi shock. Yes, you've said, a lot of people understand men can be unhealthily attracted or distracted but so unusual for a woman. You're right. At least it certainly seems unusual; even unusual for men to be willing to admit they're battling and ask for help -- and that's too bad that we can't ask for help in any area we're defeated, especially among quote "caring church people" or "Christians." That should be the safest place to go to get healing, to get help. But for you to be sitting here talking and you're talking about it quite casually. I don't sense that you're indifferent about it. It seems that you're quite comfortable admitting, I had this humiliating problem, this defeat of which I was so ashamed, and yet now you're talking about it. How can you talk about it like this and then write about it? What's gone on to bring you to a place that you're willing to say, "I was trapped, whipped, trampled, beat down," and you're talking about it, not flippantly, but you seem to be talking about it with almost an encouraging likeness, if I'm interpreting it correctly. You don't seem to be like here's this shame burdened woman. You know this woman at the well that Jesus said is married five times and you live with another man. You sound more like the woman that went into town and said, "Come meet somebody who told me everything I ever did! But he won't tell you." You seem to be sitting here like this woman at the well. Am I reading that right as I try to interpret the way you're talking?

Anne: Yeah! That's actually a really great description and it is not comfortable to talk about it. It is never easy to look someone in the eye and say this is the stuff I went through. This is -- it is a shameful thing. It is sin. Sin cost something; for us, for Jesus, it costs something. But the freedom that I've experienced because of confession, that is the woman running back and saying, "Look what I found!" It is not -- I feel like it is not my story. It is part of who I am and who I was but God has redeemed that and it is his story. I just get the honor to share what he has done and the freedom that I found from

it because it is so possible to be free and to feel you're not alone! You're not alone! Whether it is porn or whatever it is. Everybody, I think, has something that they feel like they can't talk about and that secret weighs you down and there is so much freedom in confession. "The truth will set you free." It is in the Bible, it is a promise and we're talking -- the Bible talks about confessing to God, which a lot of people think, well, I have the sin so I'll just confess it to God. But I don't need to tell anybody else about it. I did that at first. I confessed to God but I was still carrying that weight until I told one other person. And when I told that one other person my whole life changed.

Betty: Someone that may be dealing with the same thing that you went through, they would say, "Well, how do I find that person that I feel safe, that I can share my heart and just pour out my soul to?" Sometimes it is difficult.

Anne: It is very scary. And honestly, you have to be comfortable with being uncomfortable. It is not easy. You're not going to know that it is a safe person until you try. So you have to take a risk. There is wisdom in discernment. You may know somebody instantly that you look up to maybe in a Bible study or in your neighborhood or maybe you go to the gym with them. You're a mom and it is another child's mom. Someone in your life may come to mind instantly. If that happens, go to that person and try -- you never know. When my friend confessed to me she had no idea what was going on in my head going oh, my goodness! Here's a safe person that now I can talk to. And that just opened up -- she trusted me with her secret. She had no -- I could have walked out and said, "You are one screwed up woman" and left. She had no idea that I was a safe person. When I confessed to her, I still, even though she'd shared I still didn't know what her response would be. She could have shamed me. She could have said, "That's too much for me. I don't want..." But she didn't. But you're not going to know until you try. So it is trying and really trusting God.

Betty: But you feel like a healing process started when you were able to start sharing and opening up?

Anne: Absolutely! It was with one person and that grew to two people and then it grew to three people. And as God kept redeeming that story in my life --

James: Did that group grow to people that would have been perhaps a little more stable and not necessarily desperate themselves? Did it grow to people that you would say had stability and I found out I could trust people that weren't just having compassion because they identified with my areas of concern or some area of defeat but you found some stable people because I would recommend to viewers and to

anyone here in the audience that you really have to be careful who you confess your weaknesses to. And we don't confess to feel better. That even feels better. I've got a problem. Well, we feel better saying it. We wrote in our book, *Living in Love*, which I hope you read, talking about relationship that you confess to be made whole. We don't confess one to another because we feel better. We don't go to confessional so we feel better. We confess to one another that we may be made whole, that we may be restored. So the fact that you continued on until that circle became one of even increased stability it would actually be great if you could see a Christian strong enough and with enough love that in their strength, believing that they probably never did identify, but they could at least identify with the pain you're in and cared to get you out of it. That should be the image of the church that the church projects of Jesus. I hear you really seeking to communicate that in your book; that we need to offer the the place for people to open up and speak freely and we need to seek that place. So we have two fronts we're fighting on. One find the place; the other would be become that kind of person or place.

Anne: Exactly! I ended up going and seeing a professional counselor and have been in therapy on and off for the last ten years. And I highly recommend, if you can't find that person or you really don't think there is someone safe in your life to confess to, go talk to a counselor. They're trained in stuff like this. Talk to a pastor if you can. Find that person that is going to help you spiritually grow, and speak spiritual truth; again, not to condone anything and not to condemn you. I loved what you said, separating, not to condemn, not to condone but to speak truth and love into your life and show grace. It is possible and as you see that demonstrated to you, become that because that is how the church will become a safe place by me becoming a safe place, by you becoming a safe place and people recognizing that. You can sense in your spirit when someone is safe and when someone is not. It is just -- if you live your life transparently, I'm not saying air all your dirty laundry. There are churches I've heard of that, that require people to get up on stage and air it all out. I don't think that that's healthy or wise. But if you can become a safe person yourself and continue to live in that freedom people -- I saw that freedom in my friend and I wanted it.

James: See it is the morbid -- the morbid unhealthy curiosity of really a sick world that wants to know all the details of your failure, not only your weaknesses and what you did, who did what, when, how, what all took place, that is not a healthy curiosity. It is one that actually feeds innate desires and sensual appetites. It's simply not healthy. The church should offer, as Anne said, the safe haven. She emphasized what I said earlier, I appreciate the fact she caught what I was saying and understood its importance. You neither condemn nor condone the one who is failing. You offer them a way out, a way to be redeemed, restored and to rebuild their life on a solid

foundation. You speak at -- you've spoken at Catalyst; you speak at a lot of different groups with a lot of young people. I'm excited about it. I really encourage you to get the book because you need Permission to Speak Freely and you need to offer that to someone else. I think you can learn some insight here and just see what people shared on her blog and on her web just asking about help and saying things. It is very heart touching. What would you want to share with our viewers as we literally -- we're going to ask all of our viewers to help save lives in a few minutes. It is one thing to wish you could make a difference, it is another thing to know you can. What would you say to all of our viewers about the importance of being what I say sometimes a shoulder to lean on rather than just always having a sermon for someone?

Anne: I would say know that you're not alone. And definitely, people don't know what to say when you hear bad news or when you hear someone is going through a tough time, and you feel like you maybe have to give them encouragement or think of what's that scripture I need to give right away? Sometimes people just need to know that you have their back and that you love them and that you're there, regardless of what they're going through, how difficult it may be, that you were there for them and you are going to support them and walk alongside them and do whatever it is that God wants that person to do. You're just going to come alongside them. And I love the way Galatians talks about carrying each other's burdens. There is a time where we need to be carried and help to be restored and redeemed and then there is a time when we get to carry each other. It is a privilege; it is an honor to be able to carry each other.

Betty: And people aren't necessarily expecting, like you said for us to have all the answers, we don't but they would like to have someone that will listen well and that will just care. And just say, maybe I haven't gone through what you have but I care.

Anne: When someone is broken, when another believer is suffering in some way, any way, they're broken in any way, it hurts all of us because we're all united as the body of Christ, and to say you may not have had an addiction to porn or been abused but you may have other pain in your life. And just the fact that we're all broken, that's the common thread and that we're all being redeemed. And to not hide that brokenness either, I think the world needs to see that God actively heals us and if we're not showing our wounds just a little bit, at least to somebody, how is the world going to know that God heals if they think that we're perfect and there is nothing to be healed.

James: The fact is, that is the first step toward finding healing is that those who are whole don't look for a physician. It's only the one that knows I need a physician. It is really important for us to understand that. So I don't want to heap condemnation on anybody that's defeated anywhere. I want to show you there is a way out and the way

is a person who has said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. And he that comes to me I will in no wise cast out. No matter how defeated you are, I'll lift you up. I'll lift you up out of the miry clay, I'll put your feet on the solid ground." That's the promise of almighty God the father, who expresses love in Jesus. Really, I think that's what Anne is trying to testify and get out to us and I just say thank you, Anne. Would you join us in saying thanks to Anne Jackson? And thanks be to God and everyone who ever encouraged you -- and you be an encourager. And let me just say this to you right now. Do you see the phone number there? You say, you may need it because "I don't want to tell anybody what's going on." At least be willing to say "I've got a battle in this area." You don't have to tell them your name. Say, "Pray with me here." And just let them agree with you because we want to help you. Hey, wait a minute, we? The family of God, the father wants to help you through his family, not just a bunch of institutional religious church folks who may think they're better than you. No, no! But the real church, the real family of God who put the arms of God around you. I want you to look at something that a lot of times your first impulse might be to turn away. I want you to do exactly what you've been asked to do and that's to look at the eyes -- just look. I wonder if you could answer the longing that you're going to see. But can I just tell you? Absolutely, 100% you hold the answer in your hand. I want you to watch.

On the mission field:

Announcer: In their eyes are stories you and I cannot fathom. The pain of relentless hunger. The slow death that it brings. Fear of who it will take next. But in their eyes we see hope. Do you see it? How about now? It's the power of love changing lives one bowl of food at a time. Don't miss out on the joy of it!

End of clip

In the studio:

James: You know even in those eyes that look so empty and hopeless... God, we've seen a lot of them, Betty. I just learned that love in a bowl because love fills our heart enough they'd put our hands out and at the bottom of this bowl, when you get all the soup out there is the big word "*LIFE*" and it is because we've received his life and his love we want to share it. Betty, we put a little porridge mix, a little soup mix in here that has saved the last time the missionaries told us the government national reports all over Africa was over seven million lives had already been saved because we put food one bowl at a time, one life. And you, the viewers, \$30 will feed three children for the next months -- not just a meal; \$50 will feed five; \$100 will feed ten. I'll never

look at that camera and look at you and hold a bowl that I wouldn't say would you please help us feed ten children for the next months? But remember, if it is three, to those three it is a matter of life to give them a bowl of soup. You look at their eyes, I saw them light up when they had that little bowl. I even see their eyes light up when they see your face. You remember that little girl that looked like she was afraid and then all of the sudden you felt somebody holding your finger as you were walking toward other needy children? This little girl just grabbed your finger.

Betty: It doesn't take long for... there may be a language barrier but there is not a love barrier when it comes to expressing the love of Jesus. You see that little bit of a smile come on the face of that child? I love it because that smile says someone cares -- someone has given me hope, James, because they've given me something I need and that is nourishment. Won't you join with us? Let's put some smiles on these faces that have been hurting so much.

James: I pray, Father, that you'll answer Betty's prayer that the line to help them will always be longer than the line that needs help. Hear that prayer. You are the answer to that prayer. You are the answer to the heart cry of mothers and children by simply reaching out and dialing that number. This is not wishful thinking, it is not a feeble hope. It is not "I wish we could find a cure for a disease" -- we've got the cure. It is simple nourishment that our love can provide. Would you dial that number right now and be the answer to that prayer, the prayer I prayed that the line to help will be longer than the line that needs help? Please dial the number. Take your bankcard, make the largest gift you could possibly make. Help us take care of as many children as possible. We want to send you God's Kingdom in You, living in his presence in the present because that's what we're doing. So we're manifesting his presence in the presence of his love. Please do that. But ask for the CD's. Thank you for your gift. The DVD's, Jim Hylton's book, *Where Heaven Touches Earth*; we want to be a blessing to you. As you bless others, we want to show you God's intended purpose now in you right now. You don't want to miss this. But please make that special life giving gift. You want to go online, LifeToday.org, write a check, make it to *LIFE* but call us and tell us what you're sending. Please, make that life-giving 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

On the mission field:

Isak: What we're doing here in this mission feeding program is we're providing life. We're giving children life in the form of a bowl of food each and every day because mission feeding truly does save lives. It is not a tag line, it is a lifeline. It is a reality for these children. This truly is a lifeline being provided to these precious children each and every day. I just want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for filling these bowls. And I want to stress to you how important it is that we keep this lifeline going to these children, that we keep mission feeding going here and that we keep saving lives. That's why I need you to go to the phone to dial that number on your screen or get online and give the best gift that you can give, give the gift of life.

End of clip

In the studio:

James: I just pray that if there is any way you can help us care for 100 children or more, do it. I sense that you will. I don't feel like I need to lean on you or push. But "The Father's Heart," we want to send you that beautiful bronze, but more than anything, we want to bless you with something that reminds you of God's love. But you demonstrate God's love when you help us save lives. Help us rescue as many as possible. And we want to send you God's Kingdom in You. I want to mention again the book by Anne Jackson, Permission to Speak Freely. She has been willing to do that because she found the freedom that comes in opening up and speaking freely, and then offering that opportunity to others. Anne, thank you. Join with Betty and me in just extend the question. Bless all you do to help others. May God strengthen you in

your journey. Thank you so much! Thank you for being a friend. Thank you for helping us help others!

Beth: Is that if we don't have to fight to take it, we won't be able to have the strength to keep it.

Announcer: The overcoming power of kingdom presence tomorrow!