

Week 51
12/16/10

Betty: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! Thank you so much for joining us. Maybe you're at home watching or you're on the road but thank you so much for being part of *LIFE Today*. I'm Betty Robison and this is James.

James: I've been talking to our guests that you're going to meet and I've still got kind of a... tear in my throat, in my heart because I'm talking to two people that have had the kind of experiences no one even imagines in most horrific thought patterns. You can't imagine. Well, this guest of ours, he did turn in front of someone and it hit his six year old son and it physically, medically decapitated him in that it separates his skull from his spine and pulled up several inches apart and made his spine, ultimately the x-rays reveal like just a huge curve, just totally destroyed. The boy came back from heaven, basically, is what happened after being in a coma for two months. It inspired the story, "The Boy Who Came Back from Heaven." It is a NEW YORK TIMES best seller already. And Kevin Malarkey is here with us; it's the father that made the mistake. Then we have Carol Kent who speaks all over the world for God, about how great he is, and her son is serving a life sentence in prison for murder and made just a terrible mistake in an emotional moment that he thought was a sound moment of defense, and there is no chance of parole. She has written a book, "Between a Rock and a Grace Place" -- not a hard place. It was a hard place, became a grace place. Both of them are here with us. As I've visited with them and heard their stories I couldn't contain the emotion. Not just because of the pain but the emotion of how the grace of God is sustaining. They're both here. We've talked to them individually. I hope you've heard them. You could always go online to LifeToday.org and stroll back to a particular day with a guest and hear their story. It is very worthwhile to do that and even forward it to others. But they're both here with us and I want to talk about this enabling God that gave them grace to not just endure but to really have peace that passes understanding. Would you welcome Kevin Malarkey and Carol Kent to *LIFE Today*?

[Applause]

I almost find myself having a hard time saying we'll share because I become a wreck.

[Laughter]

Carol: That's why we love you, James. [Chuckling]

James: Thank you for that. I identify with what you feel in your heart and I certainly -- just the joy of the Lord can bring you to tears of joy, his grace. Carol, you told me that you wanted to talk about people pouring out love and compassion on you when your heart is broken and your son is in prison. Now then you have a prison ministry and you're speaking everywhere and setting people free from their own personal bondage and their misery and helping them find this grace place. Tell me about some of the expressions that helped you walk through this incredibly difficult time in your life.

Carol: Well, we had a team of people who became literally our stretcher bearers and they put together a monthly e-mail list of how tangible help could be sent to us. We were financially needy, emotionally needy, spiritually needy and they literally did become the hands and feet of Jesus to us. And then as the years go by, sometimes those gestures of compassion wear down when there is a long illness or a long prison sentence or a forever time and not being able to walk; as we began to go through all of this you feel less and less control. We had just gone through another Christmas. I was putting away the Christmas decorations with my husband and the phone rang and it

was one of the officers at the prison. He said, "Mr. and Mrs. Kent, your son was rushed to the hospital yesterday with a burst appendix. He's had surgery. He will probably be back at the prison tomorrow." I said, "Excuse me? He had a burst appendix and he'll probably be back to the prison tomorrow? Where is he?" They said, "Well, that would be a security risk for us to tell you where he is. We're not allowed to tell you where he is and don't try checking around; that would not be good." Every day for the next five days we called and asked where he was and how he was doing. All we knew was that he was still alive. And so with my broken mother heart, knowing my son had had very serious surgery, I began to pray that God would send someone to my son who would be like a mother. I knew he had two armed guards in his room all the time and when he finally got back to the prison he said, "Mom and dad, you won't believe what happened!" He said, "My legs began to swell up and I had on leg irons with a chain between my legs. I couldn't even have walked let alone run in my condition." But he said, "There was this lovely middle-aged nurse, nurse Betty who saw my physical need and she went to the officers and said, 'Gentlemen, you're going to have to remove those leg irons so that I can get some circulation going in this young man's legs.' And she talked them into removing those leg irons and she massaged my legs. And then I needed to learn how to stand up again and she got me standing. And she said, 'Now son, you just lean against me until you get your bearings.'" And he said, "Mom, she

just held onto me and it was just like you were hugging me." And I realized that God had very specifically answered my prayer with this divine surprise of mercy when I could not be there myself. I just love that about God. How he -- it's like Corrie ten Boom said, "What did you do today that only a Christian would have done?" And there are people in our lives who have just poured themselves out on our behalf in the most loving ways and we didn't even know nurse Betty, God just prompted her to do that.

James: I live with nurse Betty.

[Laughter]

Nurse Betty has taken real good care of me. A year ago I had staph infection, fighting for my life and nurse Betty took real good care of me because Jesus is in her. I tell people I see Jesus every day because I live with somebody full of Jesus. I really do. I know exactly what you're talking about. I think that's awesome. And everybody watching, you can be that expression of Jesus in somebody's life. You can undergird the ministries God has put before you to help and thank you for doing that. But you can also find someone to touch with God's love.

Betty: That's what I heard, God cares so much about what we care about.

Carol: He does! And Betty, the Bible says he is close to the brokenhearted. And because I've been flat out needy, I feel that. I call my first identification picture that was taken for my prison visits, "Momma's mug shot" because it is the ugliest, sorriest, sobbing-est picture you've ever seen in your life. When I have experienced being so distraught that all I could do is say, "Jesus... Jesus!" And that was enough.

James: By the way, when you're distraught and distressed you might just try that. Because he is listening. Just go ahead and cry it. And Kevin, you saw your son become paralyzed from the neck down. Now six years ago, now six years later, still is, he's had the surgery, which we've got the x-ray pictures of how they straightened his little spine. It just looks like it's got an awful lot of help to be straightened out and he is still fighting a lot of difficulties; could have died in some of the surgeries that you've had subsequently. But you have experienced grace where your whole family is talking about Jesus. I want to read from your book, "The Little Boy that Came Back from Heaven" which is about your son, about Alex. I want to read what you wrote. You wouldn't claim to be a poet, right? That wouldn't be...

Kevin: Not in public, no.

[Laughter]

James: Listen to what he wrote about his son who is paralyzed. This little guy did see Jesus, saw heaven, it is an incredible story. You talk about -- theologically leak proof but things that Jesus told him and showed him. And he said, "You can share this. You can share this with your parents. Don't share some with anybody ever, this is our deal. And you can tell your parents some things they can share; some things are not to be shared." But he shares what he can. It's awesome. But Dad wrote a poem about his son: "Alex cannot walk; Jesus walked on water. Alex cannot talk; God spoke the universe into existence. Alex cannot breathe; the Holy Spirit is the breath of life. Therefore I will not look to the world but to the word. I will not look to my son but to my father. I will not see with my eyes but with my heart. I will not fall victim to the prison of circumstance." Powerful! "I will worship my God and abide in his hope. Let it be." Those are powerful words. "Not be the victim to the prison of circumstance" and Carol, you certainly identify with how quickly that can happen. What all does God want people to hear through you and Alex and your entire family as you walk in grace?

Kevin: I think we have a choice in what we choose to see in the world and what's happening. And if you look at a situation like Carol's or like ours, you can choose to see God or you can choose to be angry at God, which always baffles me. I drove -- in my case I drove the car, why would I be mad at him? But we can see all these negative things but we have an opportunity to see God and then God uses those things. If we would stop feeling sorry for ourselves sometimes he will use it. We're sitting around talking about present circumstance, Alex -- I don't feel sorry for Alex. Alex doesn't feel sorry for Alex. As a matter of fact, believe it or not, we've developed a top ten ways daddy's tried to hurt Alex. We laugh about it. The car accident is number four.

[Laughter]

So you have a way you can look at it. We laugh about it now. It is painful. You can tell, I tear up. Both shows, it is painful but it is also -- that's when God is at his best. The Bible says he is strong when we are weak. And what I've learned, if I won't get weak on my own he'll help me.

James: What does Alex want everybody to do? You told him the book was a best seller on the NEW YORK TIMES list. He loves sports so here you are, you've got -- setting some kind of record, getting this book out on NEW YORK TIMES best seller.

It's got to be pretty big like batting 300 or hitting 30 or 40 home runs. But that is no big deal to him. What was the big deal to him? What did he want?

Kevin: I tried to explain to him. He didn't know what it was at first. I told him, I said, "It is kind of like making the Yankees." He said, "Oh, I don't care."

[Laughter]

I said, "Really?" He said, "Tell me when they know Jesus." I said, "Well, I'm hoping that if they read it they can know him better or something." They're supposed to be finding him in our book. He said, "Oh, then have them read the Bible."

[Laughter]

James: We're talking about a 12 year old. The two of you have tasted pain that none of us want to taste. I've had my share. When I think about what you all have been through, you just think you'd scream at the top of your lungs and get no relief. You think where is God? You can ask all kind of questions. Why this? What if I had done X? What if this had happened? Why didn't this happen? I really feel... and God is basically shouted this into my spirit that we'll never have a satisfactory answer to all the why's but we could get one about what do you want to do with it? What do you will to do with it? What can you do with it if I yield this to you? Is that where you all are?

Carol: James, I would just say that the big thing God is shouting to me right now is to be surprised by thanksgiving. To give him thanks in all things. I thank God Jason is taken eight groups through Dave Ramsey's Financial Peace University course teaching these men how to do a budget and draw up a checkbook properly.

James: You need to take the whole country through that!

[Laughter]

How about we start in Washington and teach the group up there about that?

Carol: He has 12 guys, inmates in a prayer group and these men fast and pray for the needs of each other and their families and they just get on their faces before God. I know that God is using these men in profound ways and I rejoice in that.

James: I want you to do something for me while Kevin, I want you to respond to some of Carol's chapter titles. I want you to listen to this: Grace in the hardest of places: Surprised by faith. Angels in disguise: Surprised by mercy. Your boy knows a lot about angels, he talks about it in this book, "The Boy that Came Back from Heaven." Longing for a better life; surprised by contentment. The secret power of gratitude: surprised by thanksgiving. Unexpected kindness: surprised by favor. Why do you weep: surprised by joy. A different kind of liberty: surprised by freedom. Dwelling in the grace place: surprised by adventure. Does any of those chapters jump out to you? How about angels in disguise: Surprised by mercy.

Kevin: Yeah, one reason it stands out is the use of "surprise," that we think we know God. He's always got a surprise, he's always got more. I related to what you said about the people, the nurse helping you when you didn't know. We had so many people help us that we didn't know praying around the clock. People at the hospital would say, "Wow, I can't believe that person prayed from 2 a.m. to 5 a.m. Who are they?" I would say, "I don't know."

James: Did you meet people that came to you that their kindness was so appropriate in a godly fashion and so timely?

Kevin: By the thousands.

James: Did you meet people over and over that surprised you in the way they revealed Jesus to you in that moment?

Carol: Absolutely! A businessman said, "I want to put a generous amount of money into Jason's inmate account every year so that he can bless the lives of inmates who have no one who cares anymore." He said, "I know the average number of lifers like -- the average number of years lifers like Jason even get visits is five years and then nobody comes anymore." He has empowered our son to buy postage stamps and deodorant to show kindness to these men when they have nothing! And the gift keeps spreading because when people do those gifts of favor and kindness to you, you can't help but do it for somebody else.

James: Let me just say, I'm going to close as directly as I can with you. You really do need to hear this. You can watch us every day and be blessed by what you hear and I'm glad you are and you can help us do what God has called us to do and bless others and I pray you will, but do you know where you will really find life? When you start looking for somebody you can just touch, just care. I'm telling you, do you know that the enemy has got many of you by the throat to where you never speak a word of

blessing? Never speak a kind word. Never say, "How is your day? Can I pray about you about something?" Just notice. Just help somebody do something, do something for a neighbor. Notice them! Speak to them. Encourage them. Ask God to make you sensitive. You have so much more that you can release of God if you just begin to let the river flow, just begin to open the faucet of your heart and release the love of God toward somebody. Please let God's love begin to flow through you. God will use you. Would you say thanks to our guests for sharing their heart? ...And I really believe sharing the heart of God. Both books are in the bookstores, "The Boy Who Came Back from Heaven," "Between a Rock and a Grace Place" and I pray you'll get them. You know both of you, I appreciate the fact that you have let us know you like our program.

Carol: We love your program!

James: You've watched us for a long time, Kevin, you and your family, and Carol, you've been a fan and a supporter for years and not only been here. But let me tell you something, right now we are reaching out to people who will not live if we don't give them a way to live. I plead with you not to turn away, not to look away... okay, I know what's coming now. Do you really know what's coming now? It is your opportunity to begin to let the river of God's love and his life flow through you where you can make that connection. You know what I used to say? The missionaries that help people and save their lives and show the love of God, they're the greatest people on the planet. Do you know what the missionaries have told me over and over? This is what the missionaries think, "No, James, the greatest people you'll ever meet are the people you know who watch you who help us did what God has called us to do; they enable us to do it. Those are the greatest Christians and the greatest people!" You know what? When I realize how you enable them to have express God's love so freely, I realized in so many ways they're right. I want you to watch then I want you to be the answer to this need. Watch closely. You can cover with love.

On the mission field:

>> You can see the skin. The skin is loose here.

In the studio:

James: It does save lives, mission feeding. It is where you get to be, literally, the hands of Jesus. Betty, I saw that little boy trying to cover up and then I saw his little hands on his face. I wish I could put my hands -- and I have many times -- put my hands on little faces and turn them up to say, "Jesus loves you, we love you!" We can

save those children's lives. I couldn't stand to see those stick like figures wrapped up in some kind of cloth, blanket covering to be put down in a grave. Those children will never go to an entertainment park, they'll never have the things that our grandchildren and our children have here in advanced countries in the world. They just want a chance. They can have more fun with a stick and a string ball and just playing, give them a chance. Give them a chance. This is the last week of mission feeding. Betty, I tell you, we need a miracle. We need the biggest outpouring of response. We need everybody watching all over the world to call. And whatever you give it will be doubled: \$30, \$50, \$100 we can feed three, five, or ten children for the next six months and that amount will be doubled. But I'm telling you, I'm being honest with you, there is a food crisis. There is some economic shortages and we feel it. And there have been some people that have been unhappy with me because I said our nation needs to repent and we need an about face, and I'm getting scolded. But I'm never going to stop calling us back to God and I'm never going to stop asking you to be the hands of Jesus. I'm never going to stop trying to help the poor. I want to help the poor everywhere. Would you please help us right now? Whatever you give will be doubled. Betty, I pray everybody watching will help.

Betty: I can never ask you to help in situations like this and separate my heart as a mother from these children. I think about the mothers that watch their children just like these little children you saw; they're just skin and bones, that's all they are. But that mother has watched that child, if they have a mother still around, watched that child die slowly, and sometimes just hours after hours and watch them die and then have to bury them. Please join with us. This is something that doesn't have to happen because we can solve the situation; we can be a part of helping these children to live by giving them food. That's all they need. Food! To have a chance.

James: The missionaries, Betty, have found a grave situation where the need is critical and they're in place. And they say, "We'll stay here but don't leave us empty-handed. We'll feed them; we'll take care of them." So I'm asking you to dial that number, please. Take a bankcard, use it like a check or write a check and make it to *LIFE*. You can go online -- that would be wonderful if you could do that, LifeToday.org and say, "Here's my gift." It depends on you. Three little children, somewhere, will cover up like that, five of them, ten of them. Would you cover them with love? Would you cover them with care, please? Would you give us something to feed them so we can keep the missionaries in place? We found the children. Will you give them a chance? Please? Whatever you give will be doubled. This is our last week of this mission feeding emphasis. Please help!

Begin video clip:

Announcer: At this very moment children are drawing their last breath, struggling to stay alive due to a lack of food. Today you can help stop the cycle of death... you can help save a life! Life's mission feeding teams are in place right now ready to answer the hunger cries of hundreds of thousands of children throughout remote areas of Angola, Mozambique, and Sudan. With previous food reserves gone, we desperately need to replenish our supplies for the feeding programs *immediately*! As an answer to prayer, a group of *LIFE's* friends has set a \$750,000 matching challenge for mission feeding. This means your gift today can have a double impact! \$30 to help feed three children will be doubled to impact six children! \$50 to help feed five children will be doubled to help save ten children! And \$100 for 10 children will be doubled to help feed and minister to 20 children! With your gift of any amount we'll send you the "Living Free" audio series and companion study guide. With your double-impact gift of \$100 or more to help save the lives of 20 children, you may request the "Living Free" series on both audio and video. Finally, please consider a double-impact gift of \$1,000 or more to help save the lives of 200 children, and you may also request the beautiful "New Creation" bronze sculpture, as well as "The Butterfly Effect" by bestselling author Andy Andrews. This is the last week! Please call, write, or make your gift online!

End of clip**In the studio:**

James: Would you please, if you got a busy write the number down or go to LifeToday.org but please be determined. And I'm asking you for the best gift you can, if possible the largest you've ever given, for some of you it will be your first gift. It will be doubled. This is the last week. And with all our heart, we thank you for your help. Thanks for caring! Join Betty and me in saying thanks to our special guests. Carol, Kevin, thank you! Great books! It's in the bookstores. I hope you'll get them. Thanks for watching *LIFE Today* and sharing *LIFE Today* with someone.

Announcer: Join us next week as Dr. Caroline Leaf, Dr. Janet Maccaro, and Marty Copeland team up to show us God's plan for physical health and emotional wholeness.