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Week 47

Betty Robison & Randy Robison

“Mission Feeding”

MALE ANNOUNCER: The following program is sponsored by friends of Life Outreach International.

FEMALE: Maybe it was a mistake, there's no way.

ISAK PRETORIUS: The thing is, they--.

ANNOUNCER: On this special episode of "Life Today", Blynda recounts a shocking discovery that the team made on their recent trip to Angola.

RANDY ROBISON: You saw something that really shocked you.

BLYNDA LANE: It was very shocking.

RANDY: It was so hard to believe that we had to go verify it.

ISAK: It's from the church.

BLYNDA: I mean, it's official. It looks very official. It's even stamped.

RANDY: Because this is the reality: Starvation is when you don't have food and it takes your life, but malnourishment, it can affect you, and the results can be devastating.

♪♪♪

RANDY: Welcome to this very special "Life Today", I'm Randy Robison, and I'm here with my mother, Betty Robison, how are you?

BETTY ROBISON: I'm doing good.

RANDY: Good to see you. And we have another guest that you will recognize, but I want you to stop for a minute because we're talking about something that is very important. In fact, the situation is urgent, but there is hope, and so we want to show you the hope,

because you today can be a blessing to someone as a part of what we'd like to call our Christmas Meals Blessing.

So, joining us today, Mom, is another co-host, Blynda Lane. Blynda, how are you?

BLYNDA: This is so fun, to sit in this-- I'm not usually in this chair, so.

RANDY: Well, and you're in that chair for a very good reason, because recently you went on your first trip to see Mission Feeding in action.

BLYNDA: I did.

RANDY: How was that?

BLYNDA: Oh my goodness, life-changing. I mean, I really--like, you see this excitement when I talk about it because I came back with such an amazing passion for what Life Outreach does. You know, there's one thing to sit as a co-host with you, Randy, and previously, before going, it was hearing about the work that's being done and believing that such great work was being done, but there's something different from seeing it on a screen to being there in the field, and the opportunity to be there.

And this is what is so interesting about the trip for me, that was so impactful, and I'm grateful that it was organized this way, but the trip was in two parts. We went first to villages--a village that needed our help. They have a terrible malnutrition and water crisis there.

And then we finished the trip going to villages where Life Outreach has come and transformed a village. And seeing those two was so--it was sobering to see, but it was also really amazing to see, like, what is really being done. But I will say, being in that first village where they have a lack of food, a lack of water, it was one of the more painful things I've ever seen in my life.

RANDY: It is, yeah, and you know, that is what we want to show viewers. We want you to see that the need is real, but we really also want to communicate that the solution is there. And when Blynda and me and my mother, when we say, you know, "Life Outreach" or "Mission Feeding", you need to understand, that is only because of viewers just like you.

We can't do it on our own, one person can't solve the problem of malnutrition. But we do it one life at a time, one village at a time, and it absolutely works because of your support.

So I'd like to take you behind Blynda's eyes a little bit, to give you a glimpse of what she's talking about and the impact that you can have through this current Christmas Meals Blessing. Watch this.

BLYNDA: The day before we went to the malnutrition clinic, we held a malnutrition screening in the village. Hundreds of children showed up, and this was my first encounter with severely malnourished children. I had never seen children in such desperate need of nourishment.

When we arrived at the Quibala malnutrition clinic, I thought I was prepared for what I would see. But I don't think anything can quite prepare you to look at a severely malnourished child who has no idea if they will live another day.

ISAK: The clinics here are where we have children that we can't treat out in the community.

BLYNDA: When we arrived, we first went to an outdoor pavilion. Though there were some faint cries of children, what I will never forget was the silence of most of them. So many were too lethargic and sick to even utter a cry.

As we greeted the moms, I tried to look at each one in the eye, or at least give them a touch that let them know we loved them and we cared. I remember one mom specifically when I touched her, she was hot with fever.

BLYNDA: She's very, very warm, very warm. So what we're finding out is not only does this precious mama have her son here for malnutrition, she herself is very sick, and so she has to choose between taking care of herself or taking care of her little boy. And you can just see the emotion in her eyes, that her little baby boy is hurting.

And it's just so hard as a mom to watch a baby suffer, and she's doing everything she can for him. He's so precious.

BLYNDA: Once we left the pavilion, I had the chance to visit the rooms where the children sleep and stay. I felt a range of emotions as I walked through the room. I wanted to cry upon entering, as internally I'm processing the dire level of suffering these children were enduring.

But also I wanted to be strong for the moms, believing they would sense the hope I felt for them and their children. My prayer was that they could sense, from our hugs and prayers, that they were loved and seen, not just by our team, but ultimately by God.

RANDY: Wow, I mean, what a difference Mission Feeding makes, Mom. It's hard to see, but it's exciting, you know, to see.

BETTY: You know, when your dad and I first went, I wasn't sure that I wanted to go. That's what I wanted to ask you, because I was real reluctant. I had no idea what to expect, and I know conditions are different now, hopefully they've improved a little bit.

BLYNDA: You know, Betty--.

BETTY: Were you excited or were you a little nervous?

BLYNDA: Such a good question, Betty, because-- it's interesting because I've been on a mission trip before, you know, when I was younger, actually, many, many years ago. So I knew that it was gonna be different than the conditions I'm used to at home, so I had that mentality that I'm going--and we slept in tents, I mean, that's not normal for me to wanna rough it like that, but I embraced that side of it. I think what I wasn't prepared for, you know, you can go without the luxury of the food you're used to or the pillow you're used to or whatever, but I wasn't quite ready for the fact that I'm struggling every day to figure out my way of life there.

How do I brush my teeth, how do I--all those things that I am used to doing at home that I don't have there, then realizing this is their permanent life all the time. This is the--these conditions that are so tough on me for 12 days, this is what they have all the time. They don't ever get to get out of this without help.

And so I think I just became so much more aware of, they are really at the mercy of the people who will help them. And then to find out and to really realize, it really doesn't take-- I mean, it takes everybody coming together, but once everybody comes together, a transformation in a village can happen really quickly and really impactfully, and I think that, to me, that's why you sense the excitement, Betty, it's because I left with so much hope, because I saw it with my eyes. I saw what happens when everybody comes together and says, "Okay, I wanna be a part of this."

You know, you might not always be able to be on the mission field, but you can be a part of that story. That's what was so impactful to me is I got to be a part of the story.

BETTY: And that's what amazed me is when I got over there, God pulled me into their world, and I saw those precious children and I thought, "Oh my goodness, I have children." If they were in situations like that, it would have broken my heart.

And you see mothers weeping. I saw you holding back tears, because it's tough not to let your emotions out when you see those children.

BLYNDA: What's so interesting, Betty, about that, is I cried many tears that you won't see on camera. So many of my tears were off camera, because a moment will hit you and the camera's not on you, but you cannot hold back because it's so painful. This is what's so interesting about one of the days that we were there, and one day I interviewed four moms, all who had lost children.

It was one after another, tragedy after tragedy, all from lack of nutrition. And you're sitting there talking with these mothers about, she said goodbye to her six-month-old, this one said goodbye to her three-year-old. I mean, just the most painful stories you can imagine.

And ironically, that day happened to be my birthday. And you know, I just--I was there to do a job, and so we were there for that day, you know, so busy, so full, so I didn't really think about it a lot until I laid my head on the pillow that night. And I got very emotional because I thought, here I am, the life I have had.

Maybe not the easiest life, but in perspective, a very easy life. And I've gotten to make it to the age I am, and not one time in my life did I ever wonder if I was gonna be fed, if I was gonna be taken care of, and I have gotten to live as long as I get to live. I'm avoiding the age, as you can tell, I'm avoiding saying the age, but--.

And I laid my head on the pillow that night, and I said, "I'm getting to celebrate another year of life, and I interviewed four moms today whose children never got to see another day." And the suffering that they have endured, with the juxtaposition that I was getting to say hello to another year, was so painful, I went to bed crying.

And this is, I think, what I had to process is I could stay in that really sad place, because what you're seeing is so sad, which is why I said I'm so thankful too that we also got to see what happens with our yes, because it went from despair and feeling like life is so unfair and there's so much suffering, to hope. There's so much hope.

RANDY: And you know, I struggled with that after being on some of the early trips, and through prayer and Scripture, because that's where I go to find out how to respond to life, to the difficulties, you land on the Good Samaritan. I did, anyway, and you go, "Okay, how do we respond to this? Is it just with sadness or is it just with resignation that that's just the way it is, or even resentment of the wealth and the prosperity that we have here in our lives?"

And I don't think any of those are correct, I think the correct response biblically is to say, "Okay, I see that person on the side of the road, as it were, that person in need. What am I going to do? I'm going to respond and help."

And that's what Mission Feeding is, that's what we're talking about right now, and we're talking about you seeing what Blynda saw, seeing what my mother has seen, what I've seen, and not just passing by, but saying, "You know what? I'm going to, as a child of God, take some responsibility, and I'm gonna do what I can." And you know, that's really all you need to do is what you can.

But it's really simple. It's about 11 cents per meal to deliver that bowl of life-giving, nourishing soup to a child who is malnourished, and to begin the process of turning that child's life around. It does make a difference.

What can you do today? That's my question. You've seen some of the images, you see the need, you see the solution.

What can you do? I pray you will do whatever you can.

ANNOUNCER: This holiday season, many families will gather around tables filled with food, but for mothers in impoverished communities, simply finding enough food to feed their children can be a daily struggle. Through Life's Christmas Meals Blessing, your generosity can help provide 20 million nutritious meals for hungry children. One meal, one child, and one precious life at a time.

Eleven cents, that's all it takes to provide a life-saving, nourishing meal. Your gift of $44 today can help provide 400 meals. $77 will provide 700 meals.

And $110 will help provide 1000 meals for children in desperate need. And with any gift, you may request James Robison's final book, "A Life Proclaiming Freedom", as a thank-you for your support. Discover the freedom James found in Jesus and how you can experience it too.

With your gift of $110 or more, request the "Fruitful and Flourishing" bundle, a beautiful collection of daily encouragement to remind you of God's faithful care and his promise of guidance from Isaiah chapter 58, verse 11. Finally, with your gift of $1100 or more, you will help provide 10,000 meals for children in need, and can request Life's beautiful bronze sculpture, "The Good Shepherd". So please call, write, or make your gift online today.

RANDY: It's so simple, if you'll just join us. Again, that $44 will provide 400 meals, $77, 700 meals. Some of you can give 1000 meals with $110.

What a blessing you would be. Some of you could even give as many as 10,000 meals or more. That's how simple it is to completely change a village.

I want you to do that, and do it now, because the situation is urgent. Don't just pass by. You see the need, let's do something about it.

And you know, Blynda, it is life-changing when you live amongst the people that you have the privilege of helping. What else did you see out there that struck you?

BLYNDA: I love the word--that you said "privilege" there, because that's how I felt. I felt so privileged that they let us into their life. We will talk about a sweet mom, one of the ones I mentioned earlier, I interviewed four moms who had lost a child.

One was a mother named Rute, she's a beautiful woman, and she took me into her hut and she showed me, all that she's been able to feed her children is sorghum and then sweet potato leaves. And the interesting thing about that is it's not the sweet potato because their crops are having such a drought, they're having such a hard time cultivating any kind of food because they have no water, and they have no rain, and so they put these sweet potato leaves in with this sorghum, and this feeds the whole family.

And Rute has a few other children, though she lost one at six months old, Teresa, which was so painful to hear. And then they eat this sorghum at, you know, one time a day is all they're getting, and it's nothing, it's a paste.

RANDY: Probably not a lot of nutrients in that.

BLYNDA: No, none at all, it's really just to fill. And they just don't have any other options. And so I think the fact that they brought us into the hut, they let us see where they live, and it's just so beautiful because truly, there's still an element, when you speak to these moms, they're so hopeful.

This is what was also so interesting that was so impactful, is if the food issue could be taken care of, every single mom that we spoke to, they would say, "Please help us with this food issue, because if we can get the food taken care of, I want my child to have an education." They all cared so much. They're thinking long-term for their children.

They're not thinking short-term, they don't want to think, "Can my child just live till tomorrow?" They want to live with purpose.

RANDY: Yeah, and you know, malnutrition like that, because a lot of times they do eat just filler, to fill their stomachs, it doesn't allow them to develop properly.

BLYNDA: That's right.

RANDY: And you saw something that really shocked you.

BLYNDA: It was very shocking.

RANDY: It was so hard to believe that we had to go verify it.

BLYNDA: That's true, yeah.

RANDY: How did that hit you?

BLYNDA: It was--I mean, when you say we had to verify, I think we asked the mom three to four different times, and we had--some interpreters had to come and make sure we were understanding, it was that shocking to see what malnutrition can do. So we think about malnutrition, if they don't get food they'll die, and that is absolutely true.

You don't think about what happens if you just, over a long period of time, are malnourished. It has a very devastating effect on your life.

RANDY: Wow, okay, well, let's show the audience what we're talking about, because this is the reality. Starvation is when you don't have food and it takes your life, but malnourishment, it can affect you for a long time and the results can be devastating.

ANNOUNCER: In the heart of Angola, Africa, lies a village not unlike any other. A mother, Julieta, walks with her son Jose to a meeting of elders and leaders to seek out a medical screening. It is there that their unusual story becomes known to the Life Outreach team, for the truth hidden behind the eyes of this young boy is that he is not a child at all, but actually an 18-year-old young man.

ISAK: This is why these screenings are so absolutely critical. So first I thought he was a 10-year-old that was really small.

ANNOUNCER: The missions team found it hard to believe Jose was 18 years old.

FEMALE: Maybe it was a mistake, there's no way.

ISAK: The thing is, they baptized him in 2009.

ISAK: This is from the church.

BLYNDA: I mean, it's official, It looks very official. It's even stamped.

ANNOUNCER: When his mother presented them with a record from their church, certifying the year of his birth and his baptism, it suddenly sunk in how years of malnutrition had taken its toll on Jose.

ISAK: He's 18 years old, from multiple years of suffering from severe malnutrition, has literally been stunted, obviously has suffered again and again. We'll see what his measurements are, but they're gonna be that of maybe a seven- or a ten-year-old or something. And then we looked earlier at how his belly is distended like it is, you can see how thin his arms are, you can see the external, but that's going on inside, and so this child actually needs to be in the clinic.

BLYNDA: Yeah, this feels urgent.

ANNOUNCER: Indeed, the following day Jose did go to the local clinic for a medical evaluation. From there he will receive the further care he so desperately needs.

ISAK: And it tells us the story of how malnutrition sometimes kills faster, other times it kills slowly, but what it does is it steals life.

BLYNDA: I'm a mom, and I actually had a son that was ill for part of his life, and I remember what it was like to get on my knees at night and pray over my son that God would heal him. And so, she deserves the same hope that her son could be made well.

Would you just be moved to action today, to help? Jose deserves that.

BETTY: I'm sure you were as shocked as I was when I first heard that that young man is 18 years old. That is unbelievable.

Blynda, how could--I mean, what was going on in your heart when you heard that? You know, that can't be true.

BLYNDA: It's true, I mean, we had to verify, because you looked at him and even though Isak said ten, I said seven when I first met him. I've never seen anything like it. I've never seen a body stunted, just, it literally stopped growing when it stopped receiving nourishment, and it's a miracle he's alive.

So that was the first thing, we could not believe he had made it, because I know malnutrition usually affects kids five and under the most, because they just can't make it. So the fact that he made it to 18 was a miracle, which gave us hope that we could get him into the clinic and maybe help him. But this is actually not as uncommon as you would

imagine, and that's what's so sad is that if they do make it to that 10, 12, 18 years old, their bodies stop developing.

And I did ask, I said, "If he is able to be saved, will he ever be able to start growing?" And they said no.

RANDY: Wow, well, the good news is that with the clinics, with the Mission Feeding program, he can get help, but that, I believe, is why it's so urgent that we reach those, especially, like you mentioned, five and under, because they usually don't make it, they don't survive. And so there's just-- I think there's just one response, which is, let's get in there, let's help them now.

BETTY: When we would go over there, they were just almost to death's door, you know? I think God has a real purpose for that young man, and all of them over there. You go over there and they are so gentle in their spirits.

They're starving, they have such good, good hearts. They have a heart of God, a lot of them, and I just pray right now you see the urgency of us helping these precious little ones.

It's not hard to do that. We can join together and make such a big, big difference.

RANDY: Yes, and that's why this Christmas, we want to celebrate 20 million meals given to children who are in need, life-saving meals. But we need to do it today. We want you to go online or go to the phone, give 400 meals for a gift of $44, 700 meals for $77, 1000 meals, 1000 meals, for a simple gift of $110.

If you can give more, $1100 for 10,000 meals, maybe 20,000, whatever you can do. Whatever God's enabled you to do and has put on your heart to do, I pray you would do it right now.

ANNOUNCER: This holiday season, many families will gather around tables filled with food, but for mothers in impoverished communities, simply finding enough food to feed their children can be a daily struggle. Through Life's Christmas Meals Blessing, your generosity can help provide 20 million nutritious meals for hungry children. One meal, one child, and one precious life at a time.

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ISAK: We've been hearing Rute's story. It's a tragic story. The story of a mother who lost her young child this year to malnutrition.

We can break the cycle of death in these communities through that silent killer of malnutrition that is literally coming and stealing their lives, and here's how we do it. We make sure that we can establish Mission Feeding programs here and sustain them, so that we're bringing the nutrition every day that these children both need and deserve. We have our teams on the ground, we have our infrastructure in place, thanks to many of you who've made that possible through opening your hearts and giving the gifts that you've given before.

But what we need now is we need the support to be able to provide the nutritional resources that ensure that the food keeps flowing to these communities, that ensures that that vital, life-giving nutrition is provided to Rute, to her family, and to the families that she represents in these communities here in Angola. We're ready to do the job. We're in place to make it happen.

But we can't do it without you. And that's why we need you to open your hearts today, and we need you to do everything that you can do, to give that gift of life, to give the gift of food.

♪ Oh, you can't hear me cry ♪

♪ See my dreams all die ♪

♪ From where you're standing ♪

♪ On your own ♪

♪ It's so quiet here ♪

♪ And I feel so cold ♪

♪This house no longer ♪

♪Feels like home ♪

♪♪♪ ♪♪♪

RANDY: Let's be a blessing. Together we can make such a difference, and Mom, I hope people will request Dad's latest book.

BETTY: We wanna be a blessing to you. James Robison's last book that he wrote, "A Life Proclaiming Freedom".

I promise you you will be blessed, and as you help the children, we're gonna help you through this book. It is so good.

RANDY: Thank you, Blynda for going out in the field, sharing your experience, and being a part of Life.

BLYNDA: So happy to be a part of it, and just so grateful.

RANDY: And thank you for being the heart of "Life Today". We pray you'll do something today, and come back next time.

♪Oh, you can't hear me cry ♪

♪See my dreams all die ♪

♪From where you're standing ♪

♪On your own ♪

ANNOUNCER: "Life Today" is made possible by the supporters of Life Outreach International. Your gift will be used exclusively for the exempt purposes of Life. The ministry features specific outreaches as examples of the programs it supports and conducts.

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