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Week 46: Fall Mission Feeding

Randy Robison and Tammy Trent

Sheila Walsh #2

In the studio

TAMMY: Hello everybody! I'm Tammy Trent and I'm hanging out with Randy Robison today. It's going to be a great day. Another great day! We have someone so special in the house. Thank you for watching *Life Today*. And thank you, Sheila, for being such a part of *Life Today*. You've set me up for something very special in my life as God has transitioned you in so many new places in your life.

One of my favorite things that is happening right now in your life is your brand-new book, *The Gifts of Christmas*. So we were talking about this yesterday and there are so many great days and stories in your book. I'm just going to dive in. Can I dive in? Want to dive in? I want to hear, I'm going to take you to the day, day nine, write this down, can you tell me about the candy cane? I actually, didn't know so much about this. So there are so many—I just want to say this. There are so many great stories in this book, inspiring stories. So many great scriptures, so many things about the Word of God, all wrapped around Christmas that honestly, I didn't know. So even the candy cane was one of them. I'm like I've got to ask her about the candy cane because we all want to know.

SHEILA: Of course, we do! Well, it is funny because it actually came out of—do you ever do a radio interview and they're asking, "Tell me one thing about you that your audience doesn't know."

I'm thinking, we're all on social media. Our audience knows way more than they already want to know about me. So I'm doing this radio interview and the guy says, "Tell me one

thing about you that your audience doesn't know."

I looked down at my desk and I said, "I always have a dish of candy canes on my desk."

He said, "You mean in December?"

I'm like, "No, all year. I love candy canes so I always have them."

So it made me a little curious as to well, where did they come from? And it's a sweet story. It's a church in Germany and they're rehearsing for the Christmas pageant. They have a children's choir and the choir director can't get the kids to behave during rehearsal because they're little. You know what it is like with little kids. They're all making noises. That's fine for their part but when it comes to the more serious and bringing the message, they're all talking. So he's thinking what on earth can I do?

So he goes to the local candy maker in the village and said, "Can you make something that we can give each one of the kids that they can suck on to keep them quiet?"

So he comes up with this peppermint stick. So he gets it back to the choir director and says, "What do you think of this?"

And he was like, yeah. But it kind of looks a little irreverent, just a candy stick for a Christmas Eve thing. So what they decided to do was bend the top over and make it look like a shepherd's crook.

So that's how it begins. So each one of these children in the choir held their little shepherd's crook and it kept them quiet and it looked like it was part of the Christmas story.

TAMMY: I love it. I'll never look at a candy cane the same again as I hang it on my tree. I love that there are so many great moments in your book like that that are teachable. But

there is always something based around all of these little details about Jesus and his birth. I want to ask you then, do you have a favorite memory, a Christmastime memory that you always go back to every year that's the most meaningful to you?

SHEILA: It's funny and actually, I think it ended up being the first devotion in the book because it is one of my most potent Christmas memories.

We had the same routine. My grandmother would come over every Christmas Eve and she would help my mom get ready for the Christmas meal, and then she would spend the night. And then when my brother and sister and I would wake up—we'd start, my brother and I, my sister was always well-behaved but my brother and I were not. We'd start at 4:00 in the morning, "Mom, can we get up?"

She would be like, "No, go back to bed."

We'll try at five. Usually, by seven, we were allowed to get up on Christmas morning. We would come downstairs and my mom would go down first to see if Santa Claus had been. And then she would say, "Okay, you can come down."

The only thing I wanted for Christmas was this beautiful baby doll. Our little fishing town in Scotland, the West Coast of Scotland, just a little town had one toy store and my nose was glued to the toy store window because A, it had Robbie the Robot which my brother wanted, but it had this beautiful baby doll and that's all I wanted for Christmas.

And so we ran downstairs and my brother's gifts were always on the table, my sister's were on the chair to the left of the fire, and mine to the right of the fire. So I almost didn't even dare to look at mine first. First, I looked at Francis's and she had books which would keep her busy and antisocial for weeks. My brother had his robot. So I finally looked at my chair and she wasn't there.

And my mom said, "Sheila, you're not opening any of your presents."

And I was like, "Oh, sorry!"

So I opened up some puzzles and a couple of things.

And she said, "Are you not going to look at your main gift?"

And I was like, "What main gift?"

She said, "Sheila, look at your feet."

And there, under my chair was the baby doll. I mean I just remember the absolute joy.

But I thought, how many years do you and I go through where we miss the gift at our feet? It's like we think this is what Christmas is about, that's what Christmas is about. Or you find yourself in a tough place right now. I honestly think, I mean, I have no scripture to back this up but I honestly think since COVID life's been different. I just think things are different.

Our son is studying clinical psychology and he came over today and he was having a meal with his dad and I, and we were talking about one of the things that is a recent phenomenon. It's not anxiety, it is social anxiety where people don't know how to be around people anymore. And they think a lot of that happened during COVID where people were isolated, and now they're finding themselves in very socially isolated situations.

I think of the number of people, even our viewers, who find themselves lonely, questioning things, wondering God where are you in the midst of all this? And it is so easy, even as believers to miss the gift that was laid right at our feet. That Christ promised peace. He promised that he is the hope. He didn't just say, I've got a way. He said, "I am the way, the truth. I am life."

So it's just one of those pulling stories from your life but to remind them of this greater story that's always true.

TAMMY: Sometimes we're missing it because our focus is on something totally different. Or where we think we're going to find something and we miss it so many times. And I think so many times people also like I've missed it. I'm just going to move on. My faith isn't as great. I'm lost. I'm only ever going to be lost and without.

But when we change that paradigm and then see that and we focus in a different place and then we see it like you say, at your feet or wherever that is, but there is—it's almost the last place that you'd want to look maybe is there because you're looking at the chair where everything should be. It should have its place but you found it in a different place. And sometimes, I think maybe we need to stop looking in the same places we've always been looking because you're not finding there so start looking in a different place for Jesus.

SHEILA: There is something about this longing. I've read it—so many people, even like famous authors and playwrights and people who have talked about it—I read a story of a guy yesterday that said, "I'm out of here. Because I've spent my life looking for success, got success, climbed to the top of the ladder and that box is empty."

And I think, it's this part of every one of us, it is in our D.N.A. that we were made not to go to church, we were made to know God, to know Jesus in a personal way. And that to me is what the longing is. So I think sometimes it takes something like the Christmas season, the Advent season to remind us this is what you're longing is for.

RANDY: It is interesting when you talk about the COVID thing because I see the blessing of solitude can become the curse of loneliness. The blessing of fellowship can become the curse of social anxiety. What's the difference? I think it is in that name we hear around Christmas, Immanuel—God with us. Because when we know God is with us,

we can enjoy the fellowship and the community. And yet, we can also enjoy the solitude because we're never alone. I love that.

You mentioned the shepherds, the candy cane bit. There is another chapter where you talk about something with the shepherds, the grace that was shown to the shepherds. And that stands out to me because I think a lot of our anxiety comes from the reality that we're not good enough for God. Does he really want to be with us? Look at me. But what do we learn from the shepherds?

SHEILA: I love that God came to the boys on the night shift. I love that. There is something about the fact that Christ, that the angel came to give the announcement about Christ to shepherds who were the most—I didn't realize this until fairly recently, they were the most despised people in the community.

RANDY: It was the low level.

SHEILA: Yeah. And if the shepherds even tried to go through the town, merchants would throw things at them. But the other thing I found that was interesting is if you go way back to Genesis to the story of Joseph and his brothers, as you know, they've trafficked him into Egypt, it is a disaster. Then they end up 14 years later in desperate need of his help. And they think once they realize this is the brother we thought we'd got rid of. He's now in power. We're coming to him, he's going get us all back. But he's not like that because of the grace that God has shown in his life.

But what I think is interesting is they say to him, all we'd like to do is keep doing what we do, look after our dad's flocks. So he says to them, "Tell them you're shepherds. Because if you tell the Egyptians you're shepherds they'll send you to the outskirts. You'll still be able to get all the food you need, but if they think you're shepherds they'll keep you well away from the other Egyptians."

Right from the beginning of Genesis, you see these were the least—these are the people

that are not invited to the party. These were the people that everybody else despised. And the fact that the angel was sent to say to these people, "Good news to all men!" Not just good news to people in the village, not just good news to people in the palace, but good news to the people on the hillside that nobody else would talk to.

RANDY: Well, it wasn't the priests. It wasn't the educated. It wasn't the powerful. It was the *least*. And that is such a beautiful message. Christmas is just that time where if we can understand the significance of it, the real meaning of it, not the commercialization that I react to negatively, God is with us and he's come to the lowest of the low. There is such a beauty in that, Sheila. I love all the stories that you share. Is there any particular one that is your favorite?

SHEILA: Well, even just going further into that whole story of the shepherds, and the fact that Jesus was wrapped in swaddling cloths. I spent some time hanging with Rabbi Jason Sobel who I know we've had on *LIFE*. And Jason talked about the fact that they're not just regular old shepherds, they're the Levitical shepherds. They're the ones out in the field who are getting all the lambs that would be ready for slaughter.

So when the angel says, "You'll find the babe wrapped in swaddling cloths they know exactly where to go—it is the birthing cave. We tend to think it's kind of a shed. No, it's the birthing cave where all the lambs would be born that had to be kept pure for sacrifice. And the fact that Christ, the perfect Lamb of God would be there.

But even the swaddling cloths. When you know that Mary, the mother of Jesus, her cousin Elizabeth, Elizabeth's husband was a priest. He was one who would get the chance to go into the temple now and again. And so they would use these priestly robes. Once they were no longer able to be used, they'd be torn up and they would be used to clean the candles or other things. It's quite possible that Elizabeth gave Mary some of these cloths that had been used in a place of worship to wrap her little one in that birthing cave.

There is just so much about the Christmas season that says, because here's what I think.

Right from the beginning, from Genesis when we blew it. When we had this perfect plan and we were never supposed to die, that's why people feel a sense of no, this was never supposed to happen when you lose someone. It was never God's plan. But then they rebel and they disobey and it's a mess and they're thrown out of Eden. It's the grace of God that they're thrown out of Eden because if they stayed, they would eat from the tree of life and live forever broken. God says no. But I love it. Nureslov Bhoeff wrote this thing where he said, "So either we will be dressed in animal skins for the rest of our life," because that's what God did, he killed an animal. "Or this is the first step on the way to a better wardrobe." And that's exactly what it is all about from Genesis to the cross. All the way from Christmas when that baby comes wrapped in those cloths that maybe the priests wore, to Christ dying on the cross and rising again, it's always been about God's redemptive plan that we don't have to live alone anymore. That God has come to us.

TAMMY: Something to celebrate! Something to celebrate. No wonder you don't like the commercialization of it because there is something more powerful here that so many of us miss. We get so caught up in the busyness, in the stress of it, that we don't take a moment to stop and think about what every component means, every detail of the birth of Christ means, everything that was put into place.

That's what I feel like when I pick up this devotion, Sheila. I've learned so much. Even that, I didn't know about the shepherds.

SHEILA: Isn't that cool?

TAMMY: Yes! It's so cool. I didn't know about that. When you even think about it, we've always talked about Jesus being born in a stable. It's like well, maybe it was a cave. Then it was a cave. The image of that changes for me. I'll never see it differently anymore.

But you teach us. You're such a great teacher. When you talk, you light up. When you're talking about Jesus, when you're talking about the things of God, I love it because you

kind of scooch up in your chair all the time.

[Laughter]

I don't know if you notice. It's great and you just go. And I just lean in. I learned so much from you.

So this is a gift. I'll go back and visit it many times throughout the year. I thank you for it. You talk about the star, day three. I love it because it's about when you're at *Life Today* and you travel to Angola with *LIFE Outreach*. And I got to travel to Angola one time. I said one time because we stayed in tents out in the middle of nowhere, no electricity, no running water. We slept in tents for three or four days.

RANDY: What did you see that you have never seen before?

SHEILA: I saw what Abraham saw.

RANDY: That's it.

TAMMY: Yes. Exactly. That's why I thought, the humanness of me was like, this is hard. I don't have a bathroom. Sheila, what I love is when you wrote it in your book I could totally relate. The night was so dark as dark. When you walk out of that tent, you'd look up and see the stars. It was something that happened. And I love how you write about it in your book.

SHEILA: It was just so amazing because my tent was next to Janice who takes most of our photographs. And you're right, I mean it is like there is no electricity. There is nothing anywhere. And so I had my little helmet on with my little—I felt like a miner, like I'm down there getting coal. And Janice said, "Sheila, bring your sleeping bag outside."

So I dragged my sleeping bag outside and we both laid down there and I looked up. And honestly, I wept because it is like when God said to Abraham, "Look at the stars." And we forget back then there is no electricity, so he sees everything. Because I didn't realize how much our commercial lights and living in cities and towns, it dulls everything. But suddenly, we just look up. And even though you're in the middle of Africa and you're very far away from anything you'd call convenient, but suddenly you see the awe and the wonder of our God.

TAMMY: I thanked God for that moment. I think I felt the same way. Like you could take it all away and if this were my last moment that you gave me, God, like I felt like it was just me and him in the big universe. You created the stars just for me and just this moment, so far away from everything but yet I'm home.

SHEILA: Beautiful.

RANDY: I'm out there and I'm like, imagine for most of the history of the world, people have seen what we saw in Angola. And again, I've never seen anything like that and I've been in places like Alaska, some dark areas around the U.S., but nothing like that. The clarity, the lack of moisture in the sky, the moon was not out, and I'm thinking, for how long have people looked up like this and thought, there is so much more out there than we realize. How big is this universe? How big is God? What is out there? And the beauty of Christmas is that God comes to us.

SHEILA: That's what's mind-blowing. That's what brings me to my knees. That he would leave the wonder of that. It's like that story of the man and the birds. Where the man is trying to help birds. It is a cold night and the birds are hitting his window trying to get inside. He thinks, no. So he opens the barn and puts a light on to see if they'll go in there. They won't because they're scared of him, he thinks. I would need to become like them. I need to become a bird so they'll follow me.

He's not a believer and suddenly he hears the church bells playing, "Oh come all ye

faithful." And he sinks to his knees in the snow and he thinks, that's what you did. That's exactly what you did.

RANDY: Wow! I love that story. So many great stories. I hope people will request *The Gifts of Christmas*. It will be a gift to you, that you can give to others. And Sheila, thank you for letting us get to talk about it.

SHEILA: I've loved being with you too!

RANDY: It's wonderful. But the biggest gift many of you can give is one, to many of the people in Angola and other countries where we do Mission Feeding because this is the only expression of God that some of them have ever seen. This love that says we would come to you as Christ came to us and give you what you need for life.

So I just want you to take a minute to watch this and pray. And say, Lord, what can I do to be a part of sharing your love? Watch this and you'll see how it's possible.

On the mission field

ISAK: So we're here in rural Angola and we've been talking to you about the drought that's ravaged this area. Not a one-year drought, not a two-year drought—five years of drought! For five years they've not had enough rainfall to grow a single crop. If you look here, you'll see what's left of this farm is just dry remnants of a crop that used to be.

How has the drought affected your ability to, lack of rain affected your ability to be able to farm?

Open Captions

>> There is no rain to cultivate and plant corn. We can't harvest anything. I usually close the door early, so the children can't go out and ask the neighbors for food.

ISAK: I'm sorry. I'm sorry, mom! I'm sorry. I'm sorry, mom.

I know that she would provide for her children—give her half a chance. Just give her the rain she needs, and she will cultivate that land. She will work herself as hard as she has to work to provide for those children. "But it never rains anymore" is what she said. Five years of drought.

I hope you feel like I do. And if you do, then I'm asking you to please say yes, I'm going to be a part of bringing food and changing the situation for this mother, for her child, so she doesn't have to close the door early anymore before they go to bed hungry.

End of video

In the studio

TAMMY: Isak, I do feel like you feel. I do want to help. I know that there are so many watching today that feel the same way. When you see a piece like that and just think, what can I do to help? And is it even reachable? Is it doable? And the beautiful thing is, it absolutely is. This bowl right here is life-changing, life-giving. I would love to send a different story to that mama that says keep the doors wide open. There's enough for you. There is enough for your neighbors. There is enough for that entire village.

So we can do that if we come together today. We can do that, not just for her but so many other children, so many other families. Would you help us today fill this bowl? Fill it more and more and more so that we can go out and change the world one life at a time. It's completely doable.

Right now, Randy, we are feeding every day 350,000 children. It's amazing. But there are so many more that need this food. And so we have a vision. We've got it all in place but it's going to take you to join us.

RANDY: Right. And the only reason we can feed 350,000 children every day is because

of viewers like you have made it possible. We need to continue. As you saw there, the drought is ongoing and there are other situations in other countries where we do the Mission Feeding as you've seen, Tammy where you just find children who are going to bed hungry. We just believe no child should ever go to bed hungry. I know that happens here in the United States and Canada and Australia. In these areas where we're talking about, you have parents who have worked their whole lives to provide what little they can. And now something has happened to where even that hard work doesn't pay off. It is not neglect. That child could maybe go ask the neighbors for food, and the neighbors probably won't have any food either. It is what we call "abject poverty." And it is in this difficult situation, this hopeless situation that viewers like you have brought hope over the years. And we want to continue.

Will you make a gift today towards Mission Feeding that will enable this to continue to help for however long it takes to get these children out of the state of malnutrition they're in so that they can return to school and maybe sometimes helping with the harvest when it does come in?

Here's how it works. A gift today of \$30 will help feed three children for the next three months. A gift of \$50 will help feed five children for the next three months. \$100 for ten children. You see how it works. It only works that way because we have the people and the processes in place that we've developed over the years. And when we go in with that bowl of food, of nourishment, we go in with the love of Jesus Christ. We feed their bodies, and we feed their souls.

Many of you could make a \$1,000 gift today and feed 100 children for the next three months. Maybe \$3000, \$5000, whatever it is God puts on your heart. The important thing is a response. You see a need, it's very real. You are the solution. Will you respond today? I pray that you will.

Begin video clip

Announcer: Across the continent of Africa children are suffering, facing severe malnutrition, and even death. With food reserves gone, and many areas experiencing severe famine, we urgently need to replenish supplies to keep feeding the 350,000 children who are counting on us.

Through *LIFE's* Mission Feeding outreach your gift of love can be an answer to prayer for a hurting and hungry child in their time of need. Call now with your life-saving gift of \$30, \$50, or \$100 to help feed and care for three, five, or ten children for three full months.

With your gift of any amount, we'll send you the brand-new *LIFE* planner. Bound in soft-touch leather, this planner will help you with your daily walk, with space for you to record your appointments, goals, inspirational notes, and prayers.

With your gift of \$100 or more, please request the "God's Promise" serving bowl. This beautiful and versatile ceramic bowl is decorated with Second Corinthians 9:8 and will make a lovely addition to your table or home.

Finally, with your gift of \$1,000 or more to help feed and care for 100 children, be sure to request our inspiring bronze sculpture, "Consider the Birds." Inspired by Jesus' words in Matthew 6:26.

Please call, write, or make your gift online today.

End of video

In the studio

RANDY: I do hope you'll make the best gift you can. You are going to make a difference in someone's life. Not just physically, but spiritually as we share the gospel and share food. And if you request Sheila's book today, *The Gift of Christmas*, it will make a wonderful gift for you.

TAMMY: It's awesome!

RANDY: Isn't it great?

TAMMY: Yes, I can tell you and I can vouch for that. It is an awesome book. You'll want to get the book so—

SHEILA: Can I just say too? Please, please, please give to Mission Feeding. I've been there. I've been on the ground. I've seen the difference. This is life-changing. It's wonderful!

RANDY: Thank you for that. Thank you again for this book. You can have this if you want it.

TAMMY: I do! I do want it and one for my mom.

RANDY: But you're going to have to request your own.

[Laughter]

Thanks for being with us. We'll see you next time on *Life Today*.