

5/15/24

Week 20: Spring Mission Feeding

Tammy Trent

Hope Carpenter

In the studio

TAMMY: Hello everybody. Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm Tammy Trent and I'm so glad you're here with us.

Our guest today is someone I really love and I've watched the Lord do miracles in her life and her marriage. But Hope Carpenter nearly destroyed her family, her church, and her ministry. On the outside, she was living a facade of a perfect life. But she was dying inside, living a double life, and didn't know how to ask for help, until one day it all came crashing down. In her book, *The Most Beautiful Disaster*, how God makes miracles out of our mistakes, Hope shares her remarkable journey from the brink of destruction to redemption. Hope Carpenter, I love you! I'm so glad you're here.

HOPE: I'm so glad to be here. What a journey, right?

TAMMY: Oh! A total journey—and we have so much to unpack. I loved your book. So I want to start up at the top because there might be a lot of people that don't know you. And honestly, there is a lot of your story I don't know the depth of. So today I think it is going to be powerful for a lot of people.

But you're an open book. That's what I love so much about you. You're an open book. You're open about all the challenges you've had in your life and throughout your life. But take us back to the beginning days of your life, and maybe how in the early days of your

childhood might have become a downfall in your life.

HOPE: Tammy, I'm not one of those girls—I'm not one of those people who like to blame people for the things I've done. But I do believe that every adult problem is an unresolved child problem. I believe that everything that's touched our life, what we did or did not get growing up, you know, many of us come from broken homes. I always say we all come from dysfunctional families because no one is perfect, and you can't give what you don't have.

So I was raised in a very strict Southern Baptist home until my parents were filled with the Holy Spirit when I was 12 years old. We went to the Pentecostal Holiness Church. I've loved Jesus my whole life. I was saved when I was eight. I was filled with the Holy Spirit when I was 12. So church has been our whole life. But we had a lot of issues in our home. Today, people would call it abuse. Back then it was called being strict.

TAMMY: What kind of thing?

HOPE: Like the spankings with the switches where the blood runs down your legs, the punching across the room; those types of things because they didn't want me to end up like the other girls. So they were determined that I was going to be punished. That it was going to be harsh, that I was going to obey, I was going to be a good girl.

Well, I went on my first date and got raped. And so fearful of the consequences, I didn't even come home and tell my parents. So I carried that as a girl, as a young girl for years. And then that set up a cycle in me of fear that I don't want it ever taken from me like that again so I better offer it. So there are so many things. It's the perfect storm the devil creates. He wants to yoke you early so that you never get outside of that pattern, that way of thinking, that way of living.

The punishment was so harsh growing up that I would lie to stay out of trouble. Who wouldn't? Hope, did you do that? No, I did not do that. Hope did it though. Hope did it.

Usually, every time Hope did it. But the spankings and the punishment were so harsh that it set up a pattern of any time confrontation would come to my life I would lie.

TAMMY: So that pattern you're talking about started as a child, all these different little things, living out the different people's expectations, especially your family, your parents.

HOPE: Had to be perfect.

TAMMY: I was going to say living a perfect life, and then the lies creep in, and then all these things creep in. Did you have anybody to talk to? I can only imagine as a child into your teenage years that this probably then carried on into your marriage in 1990.

HOPE: Absolutely! I thought that by changing my last name and changing my address everything was going to be different. Everything was going to be great. It was going to be amazing. But that is not true. Even though I married an amazing man and I think Ron Carpenter walks on water. I really do! One day I'm going to wake up and realize he is an angel. I'm living with an angel. He is a good man.

But to me, even the rules of church and you've got to be there and you can't—even if you're sick you've got to go. And your kids have to be perfectly coiffed, and in the choir, and in G.A.'s and R.A.'s, and all the things kids do. You just had to be perfect, perfect, perfect. So the enemy comes and he tells you, "Maybe Ron's the problem."

TAMMY: Wow! So what did you do at that point? You're thinking, okay, I'm not the problem.

HOPE: I kept being a great wife. I kept being a great obedient wife.

TAMMY: And how did you do that?

HOPE: Pastor's wife, raising the kids—but on the inside, Tammy, and I describe this so

much in my book, I go into great detail in the book.

I felt like a pressure cooker. My grandmama used to cook green beans in a pressure cooker and it would just start boiling little by little by little, and then the top would blow. Well, my top blew when I turned 35 years old. One day I woke up and I said, I cannot live like this another day. This was 2004. I did not know what that meant. I just knew what I felt on the inside. Couldn't even rationalize where the feelings were coming from. I had no idea all I had been through was causing all this pain on the inside of me because I had swept it under the rug. I pressed the minimize button. I didn't talk about it. It's the kind of home, what happens in this home, what? Stays in this home. Yes!

TAMMY: That's right! When you talk about that, I think about hiding. There's been plenty of things in my life where I felt like even in the church like I can't share this with anybody. Nobody is going to understand. And honestly, if I am trusting Jesus, and walking with Jesus then I shouldn't, maybe my relationship with the Lord isn't very good if I'm going through this or thinking this way or having this struggle. But I certainly can't share it with anybody.

So I think that's when the hiding, and I think there are so many people that are so good at hiding things because they don't feel like they have help or don't even know how to untangle the mess they've got into. And even maybe, how deep is this mess? And I think in particular, people in the church. Maybe the church isn't a very good help with when people hide.

HOPE: I say that in the book. After I've gone through all this, I'm 55 now so I've learned a lot, been through a lot of counseling, and gotten a lot of help. Thank the Lord for it. I don't think we've done a very good job as a church—church as a whole globally at really meeting the needs of the people.

Jesus, I talk about this in the book too. When you come into the presence of Jesus, he creates such a climate where you feel safe and you can show your withered hand. You

know the story in the Bible, the man with the withered hand. He had one bad hand and he had one good hand. And Jesus came to him and said, "Stretch out your hand." And you know us church people, we would have gone whoa, here's my good hand! Here's all my rings and my good fingernails—not the one with the broken fingernails.

But what did he do? He immediately stretched out his broken place. And that's Jesus. That's not so much the church. We want to make sure everybody is perfect and everybody is performing well. You know you had a fight in the car but then you get to church and they're like, "How are you doing, Miss Tammy?"

"Oh, I'm blessed! I'm just great."

Everybody is great. But we're not great.

TAMMY: No, we're not great. I'm going to tell you, I've loved you for a long time because I came to your church and did a women's conference with you. This was in September of 2013. I remember it was probably just like a month later when I heard that everything came crashing down for you. But tell us about that season in your life because it has changed the whole trajectory of your life.

HOPE: Yes! It rescued my life.

TAMMY: Tell me about it.

HOPE: So my life, okay 2004 is when I woke up one day and said, something was wrong. I can't live like this. I veered off the path just a little bit. I was going this way, the perfect little preacher's wife. Performing, being great but dying on the inside. I veered off. And listen, I laugh about it now but it was very traumatic at the time. In 2004, I went and bought a six-pack of beer, I bought three secular CDs and I bought a bikini. [Laughing]

TAMMY: All the things you shouldn't do or have as a pastor's wife.

HOPE: I just thought I'm going to hell on a slip-and-slide. So here I am doing all these things that were taboo but for the first time in my life, I felt like I could breathe. Since then in counseling, I've learned that is called individuation. It is what you're supposed to do at 12, 13, 14 in the safety of parameters of a home. Like touching your finger to a stove and saying, ooh, that burned. I'll never do that again. I never had those experiences. I was never allowed.

So at 35, I started. I did that for nine years. I ended up in places I never dreamed; that I would be doing things that I never thought I would do. I looked back in 2013 and thought, how did I get here? I loved my husband still. I loved Jesus with all my heart but I was so broken and had nowhere to go. Did not know how to get fixed. I couldn't even put a finger on how I got here or what was wrong.

So in 2013, I came to my husband and I said—everything was crashing around me. People were seeing Hope is not the same. You saw it. So I had to sit him down. We had argued. He had suspected. I was honest. Said, I've been unfaithful. This is what's been going on in my life. And I thought, Ron being the angel he is was just going to rescue me and help me get out of this mess. And he said, "You've got 30 minutes. Get your stuff, get out."

TAMMY: Wow, Hope! Wow!

HOPE: Thus the title of this book. We were the number three top story that year in the Christian news. How sad is that? He had people saying kick her out. Don't take her back. And he had filed for divorce. He told me, he said, "I love you," he said, "but being with you is too painful."

TAMMY: What did you do?

HOPE: I went to a ministry place called Living Waters Ministry in North Carolina that

we sent the "other broken people" to over the years.

TAMMY: You were walking in.

HOPE: Yeah, the island of the broken people, as if nobody else is. We're all broken. We're all broken and in need of Jesus. So I went there and I said, "I don't know what I'm going to do but I just need a bed tonight. I just need to get my mind together."

This little lady comes in. She takes her little sweater. The next morning she says, "Ready? Are you ready to get busy? We're going to dig into the bottom of this."

She never judged me. She never asked me who were you with? How many times? None of the things that mattered. She wanted to find out not what I did, but how I got there. "What happened to you?" That's the question she asked me. Not what I did, but, "Hope, what happened to you?" And we started going back all the way to childhood in unmet needs in my life, and the rape, and never getting counseling, and how it set me up to perform in performance orientation.

And for the very first time, Tammy, I've been in ministry my whole life, I was 43 at the time, and I ran straight into the unconditional love of Jesus for the first time in my life. And so I wrote this book, *The Most Beautiful Disaster*: "How God makes miracles out of our mistakes." Because I said, God, the world is sitting here trying to reconcile it. But to me, you saved me. This saved me.

TAMMY: Yes! You were set up for the story of your life—the real story of your life.

HOPE: And real freedom.

TAMMY: I was just going to say, Hope, there is so much freedom in your life. And I feel like your ministry is such a place, as I've watched you, of helping other people get free, especially in churches.

HOPE: That's what I live for.

TAMMY: Yes! Especially in churches and leadership, people that don't know where to go. What would you say to someone today who is struggling with understanding like freedom, even? Is freedom possible? Is it a one-and-done? Or is it a process of freedom every single day? What does that look like?

HOPE: For me, I can't speak for everybody but I was raised to where you go to the altar, you get prayed for, and you get up and it is supposed to be gone. Well, I did that for years and it didn't go away.

TAMMY: And I think, can I just say, I think many people are there. And they struggle with that.

HOPE: It is frustrating because you want to be free. You want to walk in freedom. But I do believe there is so much history in our life, there are so many memories, and there's so much we've been through. There is so much emotional trauma it reshapes, actually, our brains.

I'm not a doctor but I've done enough research to know that trauma reshapes your brain in how you think and how you process. I think we get stuck in these patterns and we expect God to be a genie in a bottle and he is not. There is a process of renewing our minds. There is a process of dying daily. Nobody wants to talk about dying, Tammy.

TAMMY: No, they don't!

HOPE: No! We want to say all the pretty scriptures and all the faith scriptures. And I believe all that too but Jesus said, "I've carried this cross, you've got to pick up one too." There's going to be some thorns in your side just like Apostle Paul did that keeps you from thinking that you're bigger than you are. There are times you've got to wrestle with

God and you're going to get up with a limp. It is a process that God puts us through and he knows what we need because he is a good daddy.

TAMMY: He so does. But Hope, you also put in the work. You put in the hard work. Healing is hard. I know the process of healing in my own life and it takes work, it takes surrender, it takes honesty. I had to be courageous at times, but it took work for me and it didn't come overnight. Your healing didn't come overnight. You stayed in that—

HOPE: Years!

TAMMY: Yes! I feel like sometimes there are different areas of my life where I'm still healing from the loss of my husband. But God is capable and there is healing and it takes work. You stayed in it. That's the thing that makes me so proud when I hear your story and what God has done, how he's rescued you, how he's redeemed the story, how he's restored your marriage and your ministry, and how God is using it now. Nothing is wasted.

I look back at that September 2013 girl and I sit before you now and say, man, God has done such a work in your life. What an honor for me to be with you today. And praying that people will get something from this. Even if they're just in a bad place, God is still in it with them. He wants to take them to a place of total healing and restoration.

HOPE: I think people get hopeless. When you've been in pain so long, when you've been in trauma so long, when you've been to the altar so many times, people get hopeless. But I want to tell people listening today, listen, there is nothing too big for God. We were counted out. I counted myself out. I thought there was no way God could ever dig to the bottom of my mess and my trauma. Or ever redeem it or anyone would ever listen; that God could ever use me again. I have ministered to thousands and thousands of women across the globe in the last 12 years. And I've seen miracle after miracle after miracle. But you do have to put in the work, it does take time. God is not a genie in a bottle but with him nothing is impossible.

TAMMY: Amen! Amen! I love that you just say hope too. Hope is something that is a gift. It is truly a gift from God. It has been a gift from God to me in my life and hanging on to hope. You've done that.

I'm telling you, there are some special people right now who I've got to spend my time with in Ethiopia recently, who have been hanging on by a thread, who have been hanging on for hope. I want to share this story with you right now. I'm going to come back on the other side and we'll talk about it and I'll wrap up some end thoughts with Hope. So don't go away but take a moment and watch this.

On the mission field

ISAK: I've just been spending some time with Comida. He's a father. He's been explaining to us, he struggled—his life. He's disabled as well and so he is not able to work as most men would be. His father was a real help to him but then he explained that some months ago his father died because there wasn't any food, is the way that he explained it. So you could tell as he described his story, the fear, the pain, the struggle.

Open Captions

>> We are just trying to live one day at a time. My biggest fear is hunger. I don't know what will happen tomorrow.

ISAK: Because of eight years of drought in this area there is no food. He said how in the past when there was, they would grow. And even if they were struggling, they could go to the neighbors and the neighbors would help them. But now, he can't even get that assistance because his neighbors are the same as him—they don't have any food.

Comida's story is one of thousands of families in this area in the same plight. Not because they didn't do enough—because it didn't rain enough. They're doing everything they can

do. This man is doing what he really can do to provide for his children. Everything he can do is not enough. I need you to understand that this is a crisis—an absolute food crisis.

There's a way to fix this. There's a way to change this. We can't make it rain but we can provide the food that's needed. If you'll open your heart today and you'll do what you can do, because that gift enables us to respond to this family and many other families in this area that need our response right now.

In the studio

RANDY: You know what we've seen there in Ethiopia is heartbreaking. We've been working in that region of South Sudan, Burundi, Rwanda, and now over into Ethiopia because there is a great need. It is interesting because, for many years now, we haven't heard a whole lot because they've been taking care of each other. They will go to their neighbors and if someone has food they share it freely. That's how they survive.

But then, in something that our secular world calls "an act of God," a famine, there is no food at the neighbors—and their neighbors have no food. So you're seeing malnutrition come in. We've seen the signs.

But let me tell you what an act of God is. This is an act of God. We have the ability to do good, you and I. We have the means. We have the people in place right now over there to deliver the food. We just need to put the food on the trucks, get it to them, and distribute the food to the people in dire need. The situation is urgent. We really can't wait.

So this is how it works. Because we've been working in those areas for so many years, we have the things in place where it is very economically feasible. Not just feasible, your money goes a long way—our efforts go a long way. \$30 will help feed three children for the next three months. A gift of \$50 today will help feed five children for the next three months. Imagine the relief that a parent feels when they know, my children are going to have food at least for the next three months. A gift of \$100 will do that for ten people.

And a gift of \$1,000, many of you can give \$1,000 easily, and that will feed about 100 people for the next three months.

The situation is critical. But the solution is in our hands. And when I say "our hands," I mean you and I coming together with Isak and the others on the ground, to say you know what? We want to show you the ultimate act of God; it is his love in word and deed. Listen, there are a lot of good organizations that do relief work around the world and I applaud them. But we do it in the name of Jesus. We want the people to know, that not only is salvation here in the form of food for your stomachs, but salvation is here in the form of Jesus Christ for your souls.

Will you do something today to share that love with people in desperate need? I pray you will. Go to the phone, go online, and make the best gift you can. We can be God's people in the lives of those who need to hear from him right now.

Begin video clip

ANNOUNCER: Right now across the continent of Africa, children are suffering facing severe malnutrition and even death. Severe drought and famine, including in crisis areas like Ethiopia, means we must replenish food supplies immediately to keep feeding 350,000 children and help reach more people in desperate need.

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 lifesaving 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 *The Blessing of Taking Communion*. In this book, discover how the sacred ordinance of communion helps to feed your soul and reminds you of the transformative power of receiving the Lord's Supper.

With your gift of \$100 or more, you may request the LIFE Legacy Journal. This beautiful

journal and pen will help you write your personal story and share the experiences that made you who you are. One day, the generations that follow will be able to look back and learn from the legacy you've left behind.

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, "A Cup of Water." Please call, write, or make your gift online today.

End of video

In the studio

TAMMY: That's my prayer today too that we would all open our hearts just a little bit more and give something, even a little something to help these people that need it so desperately right now.

That trip to Ethiopia will be embedded in my heart forever. I think it was truly one of the hardest trips I've ever taken with *LIFE Outreach*. Both Isak and I spoke with so many hurting families. Picture waking up every day not knowing if you'll have food to feed your children, to feed your family. That's the reality of thousands of families just like this, day in and day out.

Could you imagine the sheer weight that must carry every single day? Can you imagine eight years of drought? Eight years of watching your crops wither away? Your cattle die? And your hopes slowly fade as you watch the ones you love be taken from you because of the lack of food.

You know what? They're doing everything they can. But there is only so much you can do when the land is parched and the skies are empty. These families, young and old, are hanging on by a thread praying for a miracle. Holding on to hope with every breath that they're able to take. I've cried with them. I've prayed with them. I've hoped with them for that miracle to come. And here's the thing, they weren't asking for handouts, they were

just asking for a fighting chance. They need our help in that fight, plain and simple. But they need it now before it is too late. Because they have today but they're not promised tomorrow.

Here's what it would take for us to be able to help them right now. \$30 will feed three children for the next three months. If you're able to do \$50, you'll help feed five children. And \$100 will feed ten children. If you've been blessed you can do \$1,000; you will help feed 100 children for the next three months.

Would you join us in this fight for life? Let's do this together. Let's come together where we can make a real lasting eternal difference. They prayed that God would send help. Well, here we are! Let's be the help. Let's be their help. Let's be the helping hands that they need today.

Begin video clip

ANNOUNCER: Right now across the continent of Africa, children are suffering facing severe malnutrition and even death. Severe drought and famine, including in crisis areas like Ethiopia, means we must replenish food supplies immediately to keep feeding 350,000 children and help reach more people in desperate need.

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 lifesaving 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 *The Blessing of Taking Communion*. In this book, discover how the sacred ordinance of communion helps to feed your soul and reminds you of the transformative power of receiving the Lord's Supper.

With your gift of \$100 or more, you may request the LIFE Legacy Journal. This beautiful journal and pen will help you write your personal story and share the experiences that made you who you are. One day, the generations that follow will be able to look back and

learn from the legacy you've left behind.

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, "A Cup of Water." Please call, write, or make your gift online today.

End of video

In the studio

TAMMY: I hope that you're going online and giving the best gift you can possibly give. You must know it will make an enormous impact in the lives of so many right now today.

And for any gift that you're able to give today, I want to send you Hope's book, *The Most Beautiful Disaster*. It is so good and I promise you, you will love this read. You will not be able to put it down. I couldn't put it down. So give us a call today and I'll get you this book out right away.

Hope, thank you so much for being here. I truly—

HOPE: Thank you for having me.

TAMMY: I think the world of you. Any last thoughts for us?

HOPE: I do have a mentorship program. I have taken women all over the world under my wing. We have over five countries represented and over 38 states in the United States. So if they go to HopesBookOffer.com, you can get the workbook for free!

TAMMY: Yes! That sounds fantastic. I'll take it all. You are a gift to the body of Christ. The changes in your life are incredible!

And listen, if you've been carrying a heavy weight for years, feeling like there is no one

to talk to or to trust and you sense that you're on the verge of a break in your life, then please, please allow us to pray with you today. Call that number on your screen. Let us pray with you. Let us come alongside you. Or reach out to someone who can help you right now. You don't have to do this alone. God's love for you isn't any less just because you can't see it today. You're no less beloved or no less cherished when you're in a bad place. Everything God says you are is still true through it all. No matter how badly you mess up, no matter how far you might have gone off the path you wanted to be on, no matter how much you've sinned, you are loved.

Open Captions

>> God, your God will restore everything you lost. He'll have compassion on you. He'll come back and pick up the pieces from all the places where you were scattered. No matter how far away you end up, God, your God will get you out of there and bring you back. It will be yours again. He will give you a good life. Deuteronomy 30:3-5a.

Yes, and amen! Hallelujah! I believe that. Thank you so much for watching and we'll see you next time on *Life Today*.