

5/30/24 from 5/18/23

Week 22: Spring Mission Feeding

Randy Robison

Debra Fileta

In the studio

RANDY: Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm Randy Robison. I'm glad you're here. I have a question for you. Do you have any bad habits? I don't. Unfortunately, I don't. That's not true! But if you have some things in your life that you maybe are like, I wish I could hit the reset button, you're in luck because today's guest has written a book literally called *Reset*. She is a licensed psychologist. Is that the right term?

DEBRA: Licensed professional counselor.

RANDY: Professional counselor. I knew I had it wrong. Debra Fileta, great to have you on *Life Today*.

DEBRA: Thank you. It's so good to be here.

RANDY: I try to get the credentials right because I think it is important to know where you're coming from. But I'd love to hear it in your own words. Where are you coming from when you approach these issues?

DEBRA: Well, you know, you mentioned is there something in your life you want to change? Is there something where you need to hit the reset button? The reality is we all have something in our life we want to change. And if we don't, that might be a problem because we should have something that we're working on, something that God is revealing in our life that needs healing. The problem is, Randy, oftentimes we try to

approach healing from the outside in, instead of approaching it from the inside out. We try to tweak the external behaviors—behavior modification. But our willpower doesn't last forever. And so when our willpower runs out, we find ourselves right back into old patterns and habits and behavior. So we have to start doing it a little bit differently.

RANDY: Yeah. If you're wondering if you have anything that needs to change, just ask your spouse. Am I right? But you know what's interesting, is if you do ask someone around you, hey, what do I need to change? It usually starts there. It's like well, you do this or you say this.

You said something in our interview online that I've really been chewing on ever since that time. You talk about the thoughts and the feelings which I know our thoughts impact our words and our actions. So if you have issues with the words and actions you need to go back. But I always—I think—I just rather assumed that the way I felt determined the way I thought but you say that's not correct.

DEBRA: It is not correct. You know what's interesting is, years ago, scientists used to believe that how you feel influences how you think. But more common and modern research has shown us that the opposite is actually true. How you think impacts what you feel. So thoughts lead to feelings, then feelings lead to behaviors, and I really believe that is a biblical model.

In Romans 12, when God is reminding us to not conform to the patterns of this world, where does it begin? By renewing your mind. Because behavior change starts with thought change. And that's something that's really important. I think we often want to change our behavior but what is interesting is around this time of year, we've all failed in our New Year's resolutions. Over 90% of people have failed their New Year's resolutions at this point because we want to change but instead of starting with our thoughts and our feelings, we go straight to the behavior. That's like trying to fix a car without getting under the hood.

In college, I used to have this car that I called a lemon of a car. The windshield wipers were going off at the wrong time. The alarm was blaring. The windows would just roll down. And I could have fixed all those things externally, I could have muffled the alarm. I could have taken off the windshield wipers. But if I didn't get under the hood and figure out what was really going on underneath the surface, I wasn't able to actually achieve change. What I consider underneath the surface are our thoughts and our feelings. And that's why it is so important that we tune into them.

RANDY: Okay, now that's interesting. Let me ask you about that. Because we hear, you can't follow your feelings. Feelings will betray us. I think there is a level of truth in that, but can our feelings tell us anything important?

DEBRA: This is the problem. Oftentimes, we make something out to be the bad guy; feelings are the bad guy. But let's be honest, feelings are biblical. Even Jesus had feelings. Biblical scholars have identified over 39 different emotions that Jesus experienced and expressed in scripture alone. So feelings are not bad. What they are is a signal. Our feelings are real. They're not always telling us the truth, but they are always signaling to something going on underneath the surface. And so we've got to be in tune to that signal.

I think of a metal detector. You'll find this funny, but I really want to get a metal detector for my upcoming birthday, Randy. [Laughing]

RANDY: Like the kind—on the ground? Okay!

DEBRA: And I think of our feelings in that way. It is a signal. All of the sudden, we're signaled that something is going on underneath the surface. We may not have found gold. It might not be real, but it is signaling that we need to pay attention to what's going on inside of us. We need to pay attention. I think that's what feelings are for. It's God's way of telling us, hey! There is something here I need you to pay attention to.

RANDY: Okay, so it is a signal more than something we should follow. Right?

DEBRA: Right!

RANDY: On a practical level, give me an example of maybe what that would look like.

DEBRA: So let's talk about triggers for a minute, Randy. Because what I consider a trigger, we hear that word a lot, trigger. A trigger is a strong, exaggerated, emotional response to something. Let's say you say something to me, and it just triggers me. I get all mad and angry at what you said. We live in a trigger-avoidant culture, don't we? If you say something that triggers me, I'm done with you as a friend. If I'm listening to a sermon that triggers me, I'm done with the church.

But what we're not realizing is that that exaggerated emotional response is often a signal. It is revealing something that needs to be healed. And often triggers are a sign that there's more healing that needs to be received inside of us. That strong emotional response is kind of like a sore spot. Think of when you've got a black and blue spot recently. It is an emotional sore spot. And you may not have caused it but you're pushing on it. And what that's showing me is there is an area in my life that I need to be healed. Sometimes, Randy, that goes back to childhood wounds and trauma, difficult things we've experienced and never dealt with, never faced. I think Christians get really good at putting Bible verses on things, instead of dealing with them and healing them.

But scripture is meant to reveal. And God wants to reveal these things so that he can heal us. So that's just an example. When you feel a strong emotional response to something, see it as a signal and lean into it instead of leaning away. What is God trying to teach me here?

RANDY: So on the trigger thing, I get it in the context of trauma, but if someone was abused, you see this, especially with girls, the young girls that have been abused by men. As a man, you can do something or say something and get this really, almost violent

reaction. You're like what's going on? Well, there is something deeper in it. But for some of the other ones, I wonder if it is an oversensitivity to things that we shouldn't be so sensitive about at times. Does that make sense? How do we know what we're dealing with when these emotions flare up?

DEBRA: You know, it is almost always a sign that there is something in us that needs to be healed, something that needs to be addressed. And we talk about trauma, but you know what? Trauma isn't necessarily these massive situations like abuse.

I worked with a man who is triggered by his wife asking him to do something. He felt that she was correcting him. And there was this strong emotional response. When we traced it back to his trauma, he had a really difficult relationship with his dad, and he never felt that he was good enough. And so there is that sore spot, I'm not good enough, I'm not good enough. And all of a sudden, his wife is telling him, hey do this, do that, pushing on that sore spot causing this anger reaction.

RANDY: Okay, I think that happens a lot. Because the wife's now going, I didn't do anything wrong. What's his problem? I don't know that we're always good at spotting that and going okay, this isn't about me that you're venting at right now. It feels directed toward me, but it is not. How do we deal with those situations? Whether we see it in ourselves or we see it in someone close to us?

DEBRA: I think the best thing is to start with when we see it in ourselves because that's what we have power over. When you have a role in this situation you also have control. It's easier to be like, well, that was my husband's fault. He triggered me. He pushed my buttons. But really, it's like, okay, Lord, what are you revealing in me?

So we talked about that emotional response. Think of that metal detector. That beep, beep, beep, beep. That's God's way of saying, I want you to address this. I'm revealing these emotions in you because I want to heal something. I want to heal you on a deeper level. And so, instead of pointing at everybody around us, let's start with us first. Let's

process and deal and ask the Lord to heal us first, and then what's left over, I bring to you and say, Randy, when you said that in that way it hurt my feelings. But we've got to start with ourselves first if we really want to heal and change.

RANDY: Okay. So if someone is dealing with something, that first step of owning your stuff in a sense, you're saying that has to take place because a lot of people don't even get there.

DEBRA: A lot of people don't get there. And what I'm excited about, Randy, with *Reset* is that I want to guide people into the process of healing one step at a time. It is 31 different practices. You know, sometimes you get a book, and it is so overwhelming because there are so many things to consider and you're not even sure where to begin. But 31 easy practices to help you begin to open your eyes to things that maybe you didn't even recognize; what feelings are telling you, what underlying beliefs might not actually be rooted in truth but might be rooted in trauma. And how do you begin to change those things from underneath the surface so that you see real results and real healing in your behavior?

RANDY: You bring up an interesting point because when you talk about your thoughts and you talk about truth, which is a highly debated thing in today's culture, as Christians, we believe that we have, well, that Jesus is the truth and he's revealed in scripture where there is tons of wisdom and truth that we can go to. How do we even get to that place where we go, I want my thoughts to be in line with truth. But it just seems like that in and of itself could be a battle.

DEBRA: One activity that I'll have you do in *Reset* is to actually write down your negative thoughts for 24 hours. Write them down.

RANDY: All of them?

DEBRA: Every single negative thought you have in 24 hours.

RANDY: I'll give a lot of blank pages. Some people are going to fill those quickly.

DEBRA: You're right. But you know what's interesting? Oftentimes, our thoughts are so automatic, they're so on autopilot, they're so familiar that we don't even recognize the damage that we're causing because it is so familiar to us. When you write it down—the Bible says to take your thoughts captive. You have to capture them. It is an active process. It is not a passive process. Write your thoughts down and start looking for patterns. Where am I stuck? Maybe all of the sudden I realize I feel inadequacy in my thoughts. Or I'm afraid something bad is going to happen. All of my thoughts are rooted around fear. Look for patterns because those patterns are going to start revealing the things in your life that God wants to heal and change.

We believe in scripture and scripture says you will know the truth and the truth will set you free. I truly believe that as a licensed counselor. When we partner with God and we begin to replace our trauma with his truth, the truth in scripture, we will start to be set free from certain patterns that we've been living with for far too long.

RANDY: Yeah, have you walked through any of this yourself?

DEBRA: I have!

RANDY: Have you?

DEBRA: I sure have. Part of the reason I'm passionate about this is because I believe that God has replaced my trauma with his truth. You know, I say that there's a little child in each of us, Randy, that sometimes reacts to things that's going on. For me, it is an eight-year-old, little anxious girl who is afraid something bad is going to happen because she's been through hard things. And the Lord had to carry me through the process of replacing my trauma and beginning to see it through His eyes and replacing it with His truth and empowering me to live out of that truth.

Sometimes, that eight-year-old girl still wants to come up and say, oh, something bad is going to happen. You should be afraid, you should be worried. But God's truth is so much more powerful. The Holy Spirit at work in our life is so much more powerful than our past. And I think, sometimes, we're afraid to face our past because it is so scary, so uncomfortable, so painful. With God's power, we can look our past straight in the eye and say, yes, my past is powerful, but the Holy Spirit is more powerful in me. I'm more powerful than my past because of God at work in me.

And I really believe that some of you out there have some things in your past that you've been too afraid to face. But what you're not realizing is those things are having a ripple effect on how you think, what you feel, and therefore what you do. And maybe there are people out there who are stuck in pornography, stuck with an unhealthy relationship with food, stuck in a cycle of conflict, stuck in depression, and anxiety. God wants to heal us from those things, and he has the power to heal us. He wants to partner with us. And the process of healing, I think he's waiting for us to be willing and ready to partner with him.

RANDY: Yeah, I don't—I know God's not lazy on the issue. We tend to get stuck, whether it is out of fear or other issues.

But man, you've mentioned that we can be free, and I think a lot of people wish they could be free, but they don't go through the steps that it takes. How quick is this?

[Laughing]

DEBRA: I don't know that I would put "quick" in this at all. Because the work of healing is work. And sometimes, people will say to me, Randy, "Well, if the work of healing is work why would I want to do the work?" Here's why. Because though it is hard to do the work of healing, living unhealed is harder. When we live unhealed and allow that dysfunction to spill over into our families, our marriages, and our ministries that is harder than the work of healing.

And not only that, we have the Lord himself to partner with through the journey of healing. When Jesus healed the paralytic at the pool of Bethesda, he asked him an important question, "Do you want to be healed?" Because sometimes we say we want to be healed but really, we want comfort, we want familiarity, we want routine. But when we really want healing, Jesus is right there willing and ready to help us do the work.

RANDY: You also talk about layers of healing. I thought that was interesting. We've got just a little bit of time. But explain a little bit about what all that looks like.

DEBRA: I think sometimes people think that healing is this once-and-done process. I've dealt with it, I can move forward in freedom. That's not how it works. Healing happens in layers. Maybe someone listening today is like well, I thought I dealt with this. I thought I dealt with this pornography issue. I thought I dealt with this anxiety, this depression. Why is it coming back? Because God is inviting you into a deeper layer of healing. When you think about healing, there are layers, there are levels. Yeah, you might deal with something in one season of your life and it comes back up later, but God is saying, "You're strong enough now to heal on a deeper layer than ever before."

I see it as an invitation to go deeper. God is trusting us with healing. And he's believing that we can be healed. And so I think it is a beautiful invitation.

RANDY: I think it is also a principle he's laid down, whether you look at the manna in the wilderness, at the prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread." I think it goes back to the relationship that he wants with us, and the dependency that we have on him whether we acknowledge it or not. So I think a lot of this reliance on walking it out daily, praying on a daily basis, going to the word, it is about the relationship; and in that relationship, there is healing.

DEBRA: I believe that 100 percent and I'm so grateful for that relationship that we're invited to be a part of. Thank you, Jesus.

RANDY: Yeah, and that really is a great place to be. A lot of people, you know, are touched by when we have this kind of conversation. If they get *Reset*, what's it going to help them do? Because I know you talked about the 31 practices.

DEBRA: Yeah! I'll tell you what it won't do. You can read this book from cover to cover and live unchanged. Because I think the real work of this book is the practices at the end, the homework assignments, and the activities that take the information and begin applying it to your life, doing the work of healing. And so that's what I'm hoping people will be motivated to say, you know what? I want to start somewhere. Sometimes taking that first step is the hardest part. And this way you have a guide. I want to walk through this journey of healing with you and everything that I teach my clients, I want to give it to you in these 31 practices. And most importantly, I know that the Holy Spirit is going to lead and guide the process.

RANDY: Yeah, what a wonderful thing. I'd like you, if you're interested to get this book, you can get it wherever you get books; but if you'll ask for it today when you help us help others, we can double up. You can do something good for yourself while doing something great for someone else.

So take a look at this, and consider making a gift towards this beautiful, life-changing outreach. And when you do, ask for *Reset* and we'll send it to you. Watch this.

On the mission field

TAMMY: Mothers in rural Africa experience just about every hardship that life can throw at them—floods, droughts, conflict resulting in crops being destroyed and food becoming scarce. Then the silent killer, malnutrition creeps in and steals the lives of young children. Not only do mothers lose their precious little ones, many of them lose hope.

This drought-stricken region of Angola is the home of Damingosh, a young mother, and

her five-year-old son, Yowan. Damingosh lost her other son, Moses to malnutrition last year. When he died, Yowan kept asking his mother, "Where is Moses?"

She could not bring herself to tell him, "He died because of the lack of food."

Her last words to our team were, "I'm worried about my son becoming sick and dying because we have no food."

ISAK: We've heard that story play out time and time again. Mothers in these areas, who we have spoken to right here and they've told us how they've lost children, children whose lives have been stolen from malnutrition.

TAMMY: Rosalia just spent the last three weeks in a malnutrition clinic. Her mother, Anastasia fears Rosalia will die because she suffered the same symptoms as her older sister, Evelishta who recently died because of severe malnutrition. Anastasia, defeated and tired from just trying to survive, told Isak Pretorius, "I have nothing. I can't really see a future for myself or my daughter Rosalia."

ISAK: Something you need to understand. For these mothers, hope is a game-changer. But they have no hope right now. When your children are dying, how can you have hope? When you've done everything and nothing seems to be enough, how can you have hope? You say, well, what do we do about it? What can I do? Here's what you do. You open your heart, and you help us to bring Mission Feeding to this area. And if we don't bring them Mission Feeding their children will continue to die. But if we do, we don't only bring hope, we bring life.

End of video

In the studio

RANDY: You know, when I see pictures like that I'm reminded of the story of the good Samaritan. And we think, hey, you know, you participate in Mission Feeding, you're

doing your good deed for the day, you're a good Samaritan, but I often wonder about the people that passed by that person in need. Why would a good godly person pass by a person in need and not do anything? I think sometimes we can be so preoccupied with ourselves or maybe think they must have done something to deserve it. Or think, that's not my responsibility. Or someone else will do that. Or you know, I helped out someone yesterday. But really, when we see a need like that, we as believers are called to stop, to take care, to take notice, to do something.

That's what Mission Feeding is. It is an opportunity to go into a place where people are—they're hurting, they're dying in many cases. But they're hurting not just physically, but emotionally and spiritually. They need that touch from God. And yes, God can reach down and comfort them, and I know he does in many cases. But we are called as believers, really as people, to reach out to those who are hurting and say, let me just show you a little bit of God's love, and let me do it through this simple bowl of food.

When your child is dying of malnutrition, that simple bowl of food means the world to a mother, to a father, to a child. You can do something right now that will impact someone who is in that ditch on the side of the road, that person who is in pain. It is very simple. When we come together your gift of \$30 will do that for three children for the next three months. It really will provide that life-giving bowl of nutritious soup mix. Your gift of \$100 will do that for ten children.

I can't imagine what would happen if everyone who is watching, because I know a lot of people are watching this program, just did what they could whether it is \$30, \$50, \$100, \$1,000, \$10,000—just did what you could to say I see you in your pain. And in the name of Jesus, I'm going to alleviate your suffering. I'm going to give you what you need. Wow! We could do it for far more. And we could do it with an impact that would change this world.

But it starts with us, you and me. Will you go to the phone or go online, make the best gift you can? Do it 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

RANDY: Do go online or go to the phone. Make the best gift you can. You really will be making a huge difference in people's lives. And it is such a beautiful thing. You can *Reset* their health as we talk about resetting your life. Thank you for one for being here. But I'm curious, at DebraFileta.com, at your website, what can they find? They can get the book

but there are some other great resources there.

DEBRA: They'll find my books, they'll find my podcast, and I also have something called the Debra Fileta Counselors Network, which is a team of Christian counselors that you can work with one-on-one.

RANDY: Virtually?

DEBRA: Virtually, to begin the journey of healing. I'm really believing, Randy, that this is the year that God is pouring out a deeper healing and I'm really excited to see what he's going to do.

RANDY: It's there for us. I love it. Thank you.

DEBRA: Thank you for having me.

RANDY: Absolutely! Thank you for being here. Come back. If you miss any programs go to LifeToday.org. We'll see you again next time.