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Week 24: Spring Mission Feeding, last week

Randy Robison and Tammy Trent

Katy McCown

In the studio

RANDY: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm Randy Robison. That's Tammy. Tammy, you know, with our guest today, Katy McCown, I'm a football fan and her husband Luke played in the N.F.L. for many years. So I'm like okay, yeah. But you know Katy in a different context because y'all have ministered in the same group.

TAMMY: We did just like a week ago. We were on the same platform, although I was on a Thursday and then flew out to New York City, and she came in on a Friday. So I missed her. But this weekend I sat in my study and I just listened to her speak online and share about her new Bible study that's out. And I fell in love with Katy. I think she is amazing. And this new Bible study is really important.

RANDY: It hits people right where a lot of people have been, a lot of people struggle with—feeling alone, isolated. And you go, okay, look at the life of an N.F.L. player. You can be all over the place and that was the case with her. So, Katy, it is great to have you here at *Life Today*.

KATY: It is so great to be here. Thanks for having me.

RANDY: So go ahead and just scratch my ears because I'm like N.F.L. football. But for you, the N.F.L. was not all glitz and glamour. For you, it was a lot of movement and isolation.

KATY: It was. It most certainly was. Of course, so my husband and I were married right out of college. We were married in May and he was drafted and we set off on what I call now our adventure in the National Football League. It was certainly an adventure. We had no idea what we were getting into. We were in our early 20s and we were newlyweds and we had a car, boxes of wedding gifts, and a dog, and we moved to Cleveland, Ohio.

TAMMY: You had everything.

KATY: We had it all! We were so excited to move to Cleveland, Ohio. Both of us are from the south. He's originally from Texas. I'm from northwest Louisiana so he just tells me to say I'm from Texas because it's close.

So we moved to Cleveland, Ohio, and had everything in front of us. Got there, were there for about four months, and found out we were expecting our first child. So now we're newlyweds in a new city and our first year in the N.F.L. expecting our first child. We were so excited. That winter at that time the heaviest snowfall in Cleveland on record. Now remember, we're from Texas. Everything shuts down if there is a threat of snow. We learned how to drive in snow. We learned how to—honestly, I did not learn how to shovel my driveway. I didn't know you were supposed to do that so our neighbors did it for us. They were such kind people.

So I'm there in our house, I'm a newlywed and I had someone ask me my first memory of feeling alone and that was it. It was after I had just gotten married, which you wouldn't connect loneliness to getting married, but what happened was he was working long, long hours. So he would go in at six and work until six and then he'd come home and we'd eat dinner and it would be bedtime. I was in a new place and I was a new expecting mother so I wasn't always feeling great. I was just in this house by myself. He would travel on the weekends and I would think, well, what am I going to do? I probably watched more Price is Right than I ever had in my entire life.

So it was a brand-new experience. And really, I had to start to learn to make intentional decisions to pursue community because it wasn't just waiting there for me. So I did start to do that in Cleveland but fast-forward a few months and that particular season the head coach resigned in the middle of the year and it came to draft time again and they were rebuilding. We were traded on draft weekend. So we weren't there for a full year.

By this time, I'm eight months pregnant with our first child. And so it all sounds pretty awful except we were traded from Cleveland, Ohio to Tampa, Florida.

TAMMY: That's a blessing.

KATY: It wasn't a bad thing. It was a blizzard the day we were traded in Ohio, and then we flew into the palm trees. And I was like, I can get on board with this. I can get on board with this.

So we stayed in a hotel for a couple of weeks and then we had to find a hospital, a doctor, a grocery store, a gas station, right? We had to learn all those things quickly because we were having a baby. And our first child, by the way, which I learned after that first child was born, it only took me a day or two to realize, I had no idea what I was doing. I didn't read any of the books. I should have! I should have read the books but I didn't know that until after the baby was born and I was like I don't know what to do. I don't have a clue. People talk about instincts—didn't have any! Didn't have any of the instincts.

So now I'm in a new city again. He's working even longer hours because he has come in and they have already begun their training. He had to learn a new offense and it was a rigorous offense that he had to learn. So he is at work from the time he wakes up until the time he goes to bed. I am at the apartment now in a brand-new place with a newborn and haven't the slightest clue what is going on.

And honestly, I could tell you step by step the rest of the way. We have six children now. We had all of our six children during his N.F.L. career and we moved a dozen times. That

one year was just a cross-section of the next 13. So we have our six children; they were born in four different cities. And we only had one child that was born where we did not move either three months before they were born or three months after. So we were just always on the move.

I always say I was the new girl. I was always the new girl, the perennial new girl having to learn a new place if I chose to learn new people. And I would love to tell you that everywhere we went I had a great attitude and I was like this is going to be wonderful and God has plans for us here. But there were multiple times we would move and I was just done. I was tired and it felt like a lot of work to try to meet someone new.

After a while, it started to feel like well, who knows how long we're even going to be here so why make any effort to invest? It would be easier to just be here. I have these little ones and they required a lot at the ages that they were. So there were multiple times that we would go to a new city and I was just discouraged and tired and didn't really want to deal with all that it would take to try to find new community or even just a new person.

God was good not to leave me there. One particular move and this was well into Luke's career. It was probably one of our last moves. We moved to Atlanta and I had made up my mind on the way. By this time we had five of our six. We had two dogs now and we were towing a U-Haul. And I made up my mind on the drive, Luke was already there, so it was me and my mom and the kids and the U-Haul and the dogs, and I was not making a friend—I was not. I was going to stay in my house, I was going to take care of these kids and we were going to get through football season. That was kind of the way I felt going in. I was just—call it hardened or whatever, I was not trying.

We pull into the driveway with the U-Haul and our garage door is open and the door into the house is open because we're unloading. And I kid you not, while we were unloading the boxes, the team chaplain's wife walked into my kitchen. She lived around the corner. And she said, "Hey! My name is Aisha. I'm the team chaplain's wife. I heard that you guys were moving in. I wanted to come say hi. How can we help?"

I was like, "Thank you! That's so nice."

Well, a few minutes later she is like, "Also, we're going to have the women's Bible study next door tomorrow, and here's the book." I was like, well, great! She knows where I live, she knows I have the book, and she knows I have childcare because she saw my mom here. I have no excuse. It was such a god thing to pursue us in those places.

I'd love to tell you that even right then I changed. I didn't. I was like I'll go tomorrow and then I won't go back again. So I went the next day but God in his goodness kept pulling me in and I did continue to go the rest of that year. I'll tell you, I can go back to that year and that Bible study and tell you I'm sitting here today because of some of what God did during that Bible study.

So I've seen over the years in God's grace how he continues to pull me in. And I've seen how he uses the body of Christ in my own life, not even just in the community, and not feeling lonely but just in the purposes that he has for us. And how he uses us to help move us forward in our individual purposes for his kingdom.

TAMMY: Why is it dangerous to isolate? In this situation where I think about there are people that seek out community and have a hard time finding it. I've been at different women's events where they come up, "I'm looking for friends. How do I make friends? What do I do?" So some people are really hungry to belong—they want to belong. And then others like you, Katy, I've got friends in my life too that have had multiple moves over the last ten years and are exhausted from that. So they find themselves just wanting to isolate. Why is that dangerous for people to kind of give up on community?

KATY: I think that—I don't know—it may even be like a popular thing to think now that we can belong to Jesus and not belong to his body. We somehow think that we can do the Christian life just as well and just as effectively on our own. God created us to belong in the body of Christ. They're not separate things. If you belong to Jesus, you belong to his

body. And so the Bible study, *She Belongs* starts Ephesians and it's all about our belonging in the body of Christ. We cannot be absent of the body of Christ when we belong to Jesus. It is one and the same. When you know Christ, you're a part of his body. You have a place in his body.

One of the stories that I write about is, that you learn a lot from your kids, and I had this really fun moment with one of my kiddos in the fourth grade. It was like field day and there was a tug-of-war championship. Every class was on their team and my daughter's class made it to the finals of the tug-of-war championship. As you can imagine, in the fourth grade the most important thing on the planet was winning the school tug-of-war contest.

It was so much fun to watch these fourth graders. Because when it was time to begin the tug-of-war championship they all knew where they were supposed to be. They knew whose class they belonged in, they knew what side of the rope they were supposed to be on, and they were all on that rope. They wait for the P.E. Teacher to drop the rope and the minute his hand leaves the rope, as one these fourth graders went shh-hoo. They all leaned at the exact same angle and their heels dug into the ground and they pulled and they pulled and they pulled. And in seconds they won. They all dropped the rope and they celebrated together. You would have thought they were all best friends for the whole year because of what they had just accomplished together.

I thought, look at those guys. It mirrored to me the greater image of the body of Christ because that's what we're doing. But we're all in it together pulling in the same direction. And it's all over the globe! It is not just in our country. It is not just in our city. It is a global church that when I get up in the morning and I have a sister in Christ on the other side of the planet, she is getting up fighting for Jesus too. She is living her life in the name of Christ for the purposes he has called her to and so am I. So if I will get up and surrender to his will for my life today and I will take my place in the body of Christ, it is like we all go grab that rope together, and we pull in unison for the purposes of Christ.

But if one of us doesn't take the rope because we've decided for whatever reason we don't feel like it or we don't need it, the rest of us are weakened. We need you—we need you on the rope. So it is not just a selfish thing, it is a communal thing that we all do for each other.

The reality is we have an enemy as the body of Christ. Jesus talks about it in John 17 right before he goes to the cross. He talks about the enemy of his disciples. We all share a common enemy and that enemy is out to get us individually but he's out to get the people of God as a community. And what he wants us to believe is that we're not safe together. He wants us to believe that there is risk in moving toward the body of Christ. And we've felt it. We've all felt the pain that comes from relationships, from disappointments, from hurtful words.

When I talk about this I always want to say, there is a difference between abusive behavior. That's not what I'm talking about right now. That is a completely different conversation with different actions because of that. But what we're talking about is just those typical bumps that come from doing relationships with other sinners. We say hurtful things or we let each other down or we have expectations that aren't met. And so our enemy wants us to believe that it is dangerous to remain there and he makes us think that we're safer when we're separated. But what he knows is that the absolute most dangerous place we can be is separated from the body. So he lures us into thinking we're safer when we're separated. But what he knows is we're the most vulnerable when we are.

JAMES: Boy, that's good! You will get stepped on in a herd. You will. You'll get stepped on but it is a lot worse by yourself.

Look, if you're feeling separated, if you're feeling isolated, if you're feeling lonely, you need someone locally where you're at, I understand that. But if you need someone to talk to right now, you can pick up your phone and give us a call. We want to pray with you. Pray that God will find you a community where you're at. It is probably going to be in a church, that's the way we tend to be structured. But we can pray with you and start you on

that path to connectivity.

Katy, if someone came up to me and said, "What do you do?"

And I said, "I'm a professional football player."

And they said, "What team do you play for?"

And I said, "I'm not on a team. I'm a professional football player though." They would think I was out of my mind. But we do that. We're like I'm a Christian. But that means you're a part of the body of Christ and we have to plug in. We all have things to do.

Tammy, that's what I love about how we come together, our viewers join us to say we're going to do the body thing. We're going to do what Christ would have us do and reach out and help others. We have that opportunity right now.

TAMMY: We do, Randy. Community was huge in my life. When I went through losing my husband, I was smart enough to know I couldn't do it on my own. I realized immediately I needed a community and I started pulling in different relationships and people I didn't know to come into my home once a month to begin a community of healing around my life. When I had nothing to give, when I felt empty, I knew enough that these people would be able to pour into my life until I became stronger and stronger.

Community is so important. You don't have to be alone. You don't have to do this alone. You don't have to be isolated. You do belong number one, to the body of Christ. So there is a belonging. Your identity is in that. You belong today. There are people as Randy said, you're right, that are craving community. They're struggling, they feel hopeless, and we today get to be a part of their community. Watch this.

On the mission field

ISAK: Tammy, this is one of the villages our teams have come to. Our emergency teams are doing some advanced work here to understand what is going on. Because what we've been told is that there are over 190,000 people in this area that are suffering, literally are in crisis—a food crisis.

The drought in this area means that they haven't actually had a harvest for eight years, seven to eight years. So we wanted to come and actually see and understand. This is the first time I've ever been to this village. You see how the community just comes out in mass. I'm thinking they've brought some of what they're eating to be able to show us, and to just share some of their story.

I can't help but looking at the little kids sitting around us and these kids capture exactly what we've just been talking about. These two little ones, they're so lethargic actually. You see how the little girl's hair is starting to change color. You can just see. This child is not in good condition. You look at the other kids around them and you look how their hair is on these little girls, and just the overall condition of these children.

TAMMY: I look at this little guy here, who we have just learned that he has lost his grandfather. See for me, I understand deep pain. I understand loss. For me that happened later in life, my early 30s. You know I understood how to find hope in the middle of my pain. And this little guy, to me, should never have to feel the pain that he feels, the struggle that he feels.

They have no food, it's an emergency, and so we have to respond today. That is the hope that I want to extend to these precious people is the gift of life.

End of video

In the studio

TAMMY: Just as Isak said, I love the community that I experienced in Ethiopia when I went into these little villages and they would just all be there. They were carrying the

weight together.

But I remember sitting with that little guy. I felt privileged to walk into this community being an outsider coming in and just sitting with these children. I saw this little boy just weeping and weeping and weeping. I asked, can I just go and hold him for just a second? Can I comfort him? Can I try to comfort him?

I remember picking him up and holding him. And together, we just wept. We cried together for the longest time. I don't know what it was about that moment but I hated that he had to live without his grandfather. I hated that he was carrying that pain with him; trying to understand it and navigate through it at such a young age.

But he also had fear. He had so much fear inside of him. The struggle for food on top of the loss was also like how are we going to eat? I lost my grandfather because he was elderly but also, we had no food. Did that contribute to grandfather's death? All these things that these children are carrying with them every single day. It just rips me up. And I want to help relieve that from them. I'm always asking God, what can I do to help these children, Jesus, to make it easier for them that they're not worried and scared and anxious for nothing. But they are. It is the reality that they don't have food. They're struggling right now today.

So I sat there in that embrace, and as I prayed over these children I felt like when I come back and I get to share this story with you, I want to be able to tell you about the story and then give you an opportunity to give. To help me help them relieve the fear, the anxiety, the worry that they have. Randy, it is possible. We have a solution. We've been doing it for a very long time. We are feeding 350,000 children right now but as you saw in that piece there are so many more that need it today.

RANDY: I love the imagery there of you holding and weeping with that child. That's what my parents have been doing for so many years. That's what so many of us here at *LIFE Outreach* have been doing. That's what many of you have been doing. You've been

reaching out to comfort those who mourn. That is the very heart of God.

But that fear, that uncertainty, you can address that question as well. This is the last week we'll be on the air in this campaign but we're going to keep doing this. We don't stop. 350,000 children as you said every day and that's a lot of children, that's a lot of need! But as we saw in that new area in Ethiopia, there is a need right now today and it is urgent.

That's why we're asking you to go online, go to the phone, and make the best gift you can. Your gift of \$30 will help take away that uncertainty for three children for the next three months, which is an amazing, beautiful thing. A gift of \$50 will do that for five children. Some of you can give \$1,000 and do that for 100 children. Some of you even more. I'm asking you to put your arms around as many children as you can. Take away the fear, take away the uncertainty.

Our people on the ground, we let them know why you do what you do—it is the love of God in word and deed. Let's do it. Give the best gift you can 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." This is the last week! Please call, write, or make your gift online.

End of video

In the studio

RANDY: This is the last week we'll be on the air with this but every day—every day we're taking care of the needs of children that are in desperate need and that's only possible because of you. I really do hope you will go online, go to the phone, and make the best gift you can.

And if you're interested, by the way, we would love to send you Katy's study, *She Belongs*. This will encourage you. You can do this as a group. This may be a great way for you to reach out and build that community where you're at and connect with others.

Katy, I appreciate you being here sharing from your crazy experiences at times. But we have to do this together as a body.

KATY: I love your idea about that being an opportunity. And it actually reminds me of something you said, Tammy, that I loved so much. You were saying how you had people that you didn't even know coming into your house during a crucial time. You said, "I was smart enough to know I needed that." I think that's something that when we think about belonging in the body of Christ we don't always think just because we don't know them

doesn't mean that we don't have something in common with them. Because we all have Jesus in common in the body. So I know that was important to even the people you didn't know.

TAMMY: Exactly! You said it. We all have a place in the body of Christ so I knew that even if I didn't know that person there is a place they have and it's probably going to pour into my life. When I have nothing to give let them pour into my life as I become stronger.

And I pray, I pray—first of all, Katy, I love you. Thank you so much for being here. And I pray that today there was something that we were able to pour into your life that would help get you up and move you a little bit closer to belonging in the body of Christ. That's who you are. That's who he made you to be. You do belong! And we love you. Thanks for watching. We'll see you next time.

JAMES: This is the last week. This is Mission Feeding. Lives depend upon it. That is not an exaggeration. Eternity will be changed for all those we get food to because we're going to give them the bread of life—not just food for life but life in Christ. Please, this last week, make the largest gift you can and know that it is going to change everything for someone, many people even, in very hard-hit parts of this world. Thank you so much.