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Week 50: Fall Mission Feeding

Randy Robison

Ron and Hope Carpenter

Studio Discussion:

RANDY: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm Randy Robison. Solo because Tammy is overseas on a mission outreach. We look forward to some wonderful reports from her when she gets back.

But today, we're here to offer you some hope and encouragement with Hope and Ron. My guests, Ron and Hope Carpenter. Listen. If you missed the last program with them where they really got into some tough stories, some heartbreaking difficulties that they've been through, go to LifeToday.org and watch that program.

Today, we're going to get to a little bit more of the good stuff. The things they learned through the hardship in the way that God has gloriously brought them back together, restored them. It is a wonderful story.

Ron does have a book that he talks about *The Necessity of an Enemy* because I think a lot of times, we face these situations and go, God, why do I have to go through that? Why suffering? Nobody likes suffering. But yet, it is a path to some beautiful things. So, hang on. You're going to learn some things today. You're going to grow spiritually.

Ron, Hope, welcome back. Great to have you.

RON: Great to be here. Thank you!

RANDY: Let me just say thank you for sharing so openly and honestly. I know when you're a pastor you've got a congregation, you have an image to uphold. You're on Christian television. Sometimes, we can want to protect "the ministry" when God is like, I'm more interested in you

guys.

I don't want to rehash the whole program, but you guys were at a point where your marriage was basically done and it was affecting your church and your family, your children. To go through the hard work, the sacrificial hard work on your part, and honesty on your part, what were some of the lessons you learned in fighting for your message and standing up to this enemy of trauma, of pain, of betrayal, and unfaithfulness?

HOPE: I think for me, it was really eye-opening. And this sounds so silly because we know why Jesus had to come. He had to come because we were sinful and broken people. But the eye-opening revelation that we're all broken, and we really do need a savior. For some reason, when we get saved, we feel like nothing is supposed to be wrong in our lives. Or we're not supposed to fight anything.

So, I think when that starts hitting our lives, we feel like second-class citizens, second-class Christians. We're not good enough. We're not holy enough. We don't read our Bible enough. So, we have a tendency to stuff it, and we have a tendency to not talk about it or admit it or get help for it.

So, for me, it was just like the weight was lifted off of me to realize, we're on a journey to become more like Jesus. That doesn't happen overnight when we say yes to Jesus and get saved. And it is okay that we stumble. But the goal is to get back up.

So, I think for me personally, it was just the weight lifted off. That yes, there is going to be an adversary; you have an adversary. You have your own issues. You have your own past. You have your own unrenewed mind that you're having to renew on a daily basis. And it is a journey, but you can't stop. It's a journey till you get to the finish line. And the finish line is when you're six feet under, unfortunately.

RANDY: I think there are certain -- you guys are experiencing some things that you had to journey toward that are good. That is an interesting parallel because when the Israelites were

slaves in Egypt, God miraculously delivered them and had for them a Promised Land of milk and honey. It is a place of abundance, a place of security. But in-between, there is this desert, and they had to fight. The interesting thing is the reason that a whole generation wandered in the desert was because they didn't believe the report that if they fought, they would win. They believed the 12 spies, two of them said, "They're giants but we can beat them." Ten of them say, "No, we can't win. It's too much." They went with the odds on that.

And here's what I see. A lot of people in the church are stuck between their deliverance and their destiny, and it is a desert. So, Ron, for you, what made you realize that yeah, I can fight? I have to fight, and I can win.

RON: You know Egypt is full of external enemies so God fought those enemies because you can't fight them. The wilderness, you have to fight the internal enemies and God don't fight them for you. You have to fight them yourself. That's why a whole generation didn't make it.

I wrote that book in the middle of all this, not really knowing what was going on. I wrote that book. That was during the recession. Pastored in the Bible belt, a very blue-collar area. During the recession, I lost 42% of my operating income in one year. I remember one day I had to lay off 17 single mothers. I came home and laid in my lap and cried. I felt like I wasn't even saved. Our oldest son was gone on drugs somewhere. I didn't know where he was. My marriage was -- I didn't know what was going on, but it was crumbling, and the church was in bankruptcy, and I was under an F.B.I. investigation.

RANDY: Oh!

RON: Because our church did a lot of community efforts, a lot of partnerships with the state and local governments. We were building a subdivision for single moms. Had a lot of success of people who never had a chance of ever owning property and we were putting them in property. We did a lot of things like that. This is just one. We had a lot of things we did like that.

But I had a company I worked with where the president of that company was doing some

unethical things with investments. And so, the 250 some people involved took out a class action lawsuit on me for hiring him because that's where the lawyers told them to go after, go after the preacher. Then the FBI got involved.

So, I've got a son on drugs, a marriage falling apart, a church on the verge of bankruptcy, and the FBI breathing down my neck every day going on at the same time. I'm a country boy from Possum Kingdom, South Carolina. [Laughing]

HOPE: We just wanted to get some people saved.

RON: I just wanted to help some people get saved. I'm like, what am I doing here? What in the world? That was really a revelation to me because the Bible says First Corinthians 16:9, "There is a great and effective door open for me but there are many adversaries." Adversaries and doors go together. Opportunities always come with adversaries.

God gave me that book. That book was the cry of my heart, really trying to understand an enemy is a lot less lethal if you know what you're fighting. But man, when you don't know what you're fighting, they're lethal.

And so, I began to go through the Bible, really, for my own survival. I didn't say man, this will be a good book. I was going through the Bible to try to figure out how to make it and keep my sanity. I realized that you would have never even heard of a David if it wasn't for Goliath. Wouldn't have even heard of him. You wouldn't never know about Moses if there wasn't a Pharaoh.

The fact is, I realized the hope the enemy gave me because the enemy arising in my life is a sign that there is a door arising in my life. And you've got to take the enemy to be able to access the door. So, usually the next seasons are introduced with an enemy. There is a great and effective door but there is an adversary. So, I just learned that all these battles I'm fighting must be an entrance to something greater in my life. It, Randy, gave me the fuel like I said, to stand up to these battles because they were draining financially, they were draining emotionally, and in

every which way, being hit from every side. I really think it was that small timespan of about 2010 to 2013, I think the enemy wanted to take Ron Carpenter out. I don't think he wanted to hurt him or inhibit him; I think he wanted to take him out. Because honestly, any one of these three would take a lot of people out – any one of them. The FBI thing went on for three years. That was horrible because you're fighting someone with unlimited resources. I was declared totally clean. It was ridiculous what was going but the fact is you still have got to fight it.

RANDY: Let me ask you this tough question though because it is easy to go, oh, I'm a victim. Or the enemy is out to get me! Was there any self-reflection and self-examination required during that time?

RON: Totally. I'm not the same man I was then because when -- when you're succeeding, you tend to be oblivious to things. But when everything starts falling apart around you, you start assessing everything. I think that was me. I don't know if I could answer for her during that time, but yeah, I was doing a lot of how did I get here? What decisions did I make? Who was influencing me when I made these decisions? I started asking questions about everything. Probably from 2010 to 2020, I probably went through my own personal revolution with just assessing the kind of father I was and the kind of husband I was and the kind of pastor I was. Let's go back to the kind of man I wanted to be. So yeah, there was a lot of self-reflection and a lot of what I found out about myself I didn't like.

RANDY: I get that. You know what's interesting though? Because we think, okay, we need to save the church! Or we need to save our marriage. Both good things. But when you look at scripture it tells you that God's desire is to conform us to the image of Christ.

We like things like hope and faithfulness and perseverance, but scripture tells us that starts with suffering. We don't like suffering. We call it the enemy -- the enemy component there. Or we pray against it. Or we think, well that person is suffering, they must have done something wrong. What have you learned through your suffering?

RON: What I've learned is to press through. We say that tongue-in-cheek, but I'm concerned that

we are raising up a generation now that has not learned to press through. Because there are a whole lot of quick quitters in the younger generation. What we learned was -- there is an old saying, it is not an original with me. I don't know who said it first. My mom and dad's generation, their mom and dad's generation, when something was broken, you don't throw it away, you fix it.

We took the road less traveled, and it was not an easy road. But now, on the other side of it, and we're skipping a whole lot of time and a whole lot of trials, on the other side of it, I wouldn't trade places with anybody in the world. Because one of the things I'm so glad I didn't do is she go off and get her healing and somebody else get to enjoy it. And I dealt with the one that was painful but never dealt with the one who God had restored. If I'm going to walk with the Hope that was broken, I want to hang around and wait for the Hope that gets restored. And I'm so glad that I did.

RANDY: That required sacrifice on your side.

RON: Yes, it did. Can I tell you one thing that helped me? Counseling, counseling, counseling -- I'm not doing away with it, I'm so grateful for it but we went through so much. We had friends, "Y'all need to go here for a week." And we'd go there for a week. "Y'all need to stay here." She had been here at this place seven months and it was just go and regurgitate it again and go and regurgitate it again.

This was now about six months into us trying to patch it together. We went to another place that at that time was in Colorado, called Blessings Ranch. Wonderful people. Very intelligent. And we started it all again. Because we're just trying, whatever it is, to get it out and help us put things back together. I'm sitting there, and it was the second day, and I just looked at that therapist and I said, "I can't do this no more. I just can't just sit here and keep talking about this."

And God took me to Psalms 126, where it said, "When we came out of captivity, we were like those who dreamed again." I told the therapist, I said, "With all due respect, y'all are amazing. But I'm not going to be coming back." I said, "I've got to get my wife, I've got to get out of here,

and I've got to go dream again. I've got to put my mind somewhere else."

HOPE: We've got to quit talking about the past.

RON: Other than what I've been through. I said, "I've got to dream again." Why? Because a lot of our dreams were broken. But a lot of our dreams were not broken, we let them go. We went out that day, another landmark day, this is one of those God encounters, we went out to someplace in the middle of nowhere Colorado. It was freezing. It was cold! And I remember we started talking about things we wanted to do that we hadn't done. We started talking about trips we wanted to take and places we wanted to go and things we wanted to accomplish, and books that we wanted to write.

HOPE: And how could God use this to help other people?

RON: That's another one of those days that helped save my life because your mind does two things, it remembers, and it imagines. It is programmed that if you don't give it anything to imagine, it retreats to memory. I was tired of having all of my focus -- just pain having all of my focus. And if God can do above and beyond of what I could ask or imagine, let me begin to imagine a tomorrow that is so great that it will pull me out of the pain of my yesterday.

And we went out that day in some nowhere place in Colorado, and I just know it was cold, and we dreamed all day. And that was a turning point.

HOPE: It was!

RANDY: Now, that came after you'd done a lot of work. So, what I hear, and tell me if this is what you're saying, is that yeah, you need to get honest. You've got to sacrifice. You've got to push through the pain, which is the suffering part of it. But if you endure, you can get to a place where you don't live in the past, but you hope and dream again.

HOPE: The wonderful scripture in Hebrews 12 that tells us to run our race but do it with

endurance. So, it is happening at the same time. You're running forward towards your future but you're doing it with endurance. That means you're having to run against something. But you keep running. And that pain is what makes you stronger to go faster.

RANDY: It is interesting because it also talks about a race where it says, to lay aside the sin that so easily entangles us. Not only don't do the thing that is easier to do, right? That's easier, but at some point, you laid aside all the sin in your past and you just ran that race. How are you guys now?

RON: The Bible says --

HOPE: He is more in love with me than he's ever been. And I'm more in love with him!

RON: And that's true. We are in some of the bliss stages. You know after you come out of the hell stage you need to have some bliss stage. The Bible says, "Forgetting those things that are behind, I press for the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." That "forget" doesn't mean selective amnesia. You can't unknow what you know. So, I really honed in on that. Because this, you know, was no longer a sermon. This was me surviving. This is not preaching, this is life. God how? It's in there.

And I looked at that. In the Greek, that word *forgetting* don't mean that you forget it. It means to willfully unnotice. So, in other words, you look on the timeline of your life and when you get to those painful moments, you get to it and you -- in other words, it's there but it does not retain your focus. I can't stop every random thought that the enemy wants to throw through my head, but I am in charge of my focus and my meditations. And my pain does not get my meditations, my victories get me my meditations.

RANDY: So, all these things that you talk about, we would call "enemies," is that why you can say that the enemy can be an opportunity, and we have to have those in life?

RON: Everything. The Bible says that he makes his enemies his footstool. I just end with this

thought. My grandm, we were raised on a farm. All my family were farmers. And my grandma was a tiny woman, just a tiny little -- she might have been five-foot tall, I don't know. But she would can all these vegetables. She had a high rack she'd can them on. She would always tell me, "Ron Junior, hand me that stool." And so, I knew she was wanting to get something high. So, I had this little stool that I would bring into the pantry where she would can all those vegetables. And I remember back to her stepping up and I am like, what is a footstool? A footstool is to help you reach a level that without it you would never have been able to reach. God said, "I'll make your enemies cause you to reach levels that had that enemy not been there, you never would have reached it."

RANDY: Aah! You just opened up the eyes of some viewers today. Some of you heard that and you went, I can see it now. That in me that I've been fighting, it's going to be a footstool.

Do you want somebody to pray with you and agree with you on that? Just pick up the phone. We've got people that are waiting to pray with you. We just love to hear from you guys. The viewers of this program have meant so much to us through the years. We want to lift you up. We want to believe for that victory and encourage you to fight. Go through the hard things. You may be suffering but it will produce perseverance if you just abide in Christ through that.

Look, there are a lot of people right now who are facing an enemy that we call malnutrition and hunger. We want to make that a footstool. We want to invite you to help us defeat that enemy today. Watch and you'll see how.

Transition Roll-in:

TAMMY: In my travels to the mission field, I'm always torn between happiness and sorrow. Happy when I get to be part of our Mission Feeding program that is saving children's lives and providing hope for their mothers.

And then there is sorrow. Sorrow when I'm with mothers in total despair because they have no food for their families. Sorrow as I watch children fighting for their lives because of severe

malnutrition. For me, at times like these, I must speak up for the voiceless and say that providing them with life-saving food can be the difference between life and death.

I do believe in hope. I do believe that God will provide. I do believe that that provision will come from God's people. Because truly, at the end of the day, we are all family. We are all family and I believe that God asks us to step up when we see a need and do whatever we can to stand in the gap for these families, for these children, to save their very lives.

We can't wait another day. We cannot wait for tomorrow. They may not have tomorrow. Tomorrow may never come for them. But we have today. And today – today, I will speak for them. Please send help.

Studio Appeal:

RANDY: I've been there outside the clinics when it was just too late. I've prayed for a child that died that very day. And to hear the heartbreak of a mother, it just rips your heart out.

I've got to be honest with you, those are the days where I've gone, God, I know you care. Lord, you say you do in your word, I believe it. Why don't you do something about this? You know what? He has. We're all the help. We're a part of that body. Some the hands, some the hearts, some the head. I don't know how it all works but I know that when we all work together, we do great things. In fact, right now we feed 350,000 children every single day -- 350,000! That's a lot of need but the need is greater than that. But we need to keep doing what we're doing. It is giving people a hope. It is giving people the future. And it is giving them an expression of God's love that they can't deny.

Will you be that today? That's my question for you. It is not just a plea. Yes, it is. I'll never apologize for asking for help for people in such desperate circumstances. But it is also an invitation to step in to what God has designed for us, which is to remember the poor, to care for the poor, to express his love in action. We do that right now. It is simple, a gift of \$30 will help feed three children for the next three months. Yeah, it's because we've been through a long time

doing it. We have maximized every dollar. A gift of \$50 will help feed five children. A gift of \$100 will help feed ten. Some of you can feed, I don't know, a hundred children for the next few months with a gift of \$1,000. Maybe you can feed 1,000 children with a gift of \$10,000. I don't know. All I know is that God has called us to express his love to people and to do it by meeting the very practical needs. And here's a need.

So, will you join us in this Mission Feeding outreach? Will you join us comforting those who have lost? Will you join us in saving those who can be saved? Go to the phone, go online right now. The situation is urgent. We need to hear from you right now. Make the best gift you can.

Cause spot:

ANNOUNCER: Right now across the continent of Africa, children are suffering, facing severe malnutrition and even death. Extreme drought and famine putting at risk thousands of lives means we must replenish food supplies immediately to keep feeding the 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 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 the Daily LIFE devotional calendar. This perpetual calendar has 365 days' worth of scriptures and inspirational thoughts to remind you of the rest you can find in God's loving arms.

With your gift of \$100 or more, you may request the "The Light of Life" desk lamp. Find comfort and encouragement from Jesus' words in John 8:12 displayed on this stand-alone acrylic gas lamp, perfect for home or office décor as a reminder that Jesus is the light of the world.

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

Field appeal:

TAMMY: Here I am in Southern Africa. Probably one of the most heartbreaking scenes. It's so hard for me to sit here and watch these tiny little babies fight for their life. They don't belong here. They should never be here. This little baby should not be here.

Together we can make a change. Together we can make a difference. That's why I'm asking you to partner with us today. Go online or call the number on the bottom of the screen and make a difference today. Help me, help us to provide for these children, thousands of children, with a bowl of food. Just one bowl of food every day will make the difference.

Studio goodbye:

RANDY: I do hope you're going online or going to the phone. Make the best gift you can. Let's defeat this enemy of malnutrition, hunger and death. You can do it.

If you want Ron's book, *The Necessity of an Enemy*, he is going to challenge you a little bit but he's going to give you encouragement and hope through the process. Request that with any gift today and we'd love to send it to you just to lift you up.

Ron, Hope, thank you so much.

HOPE: Thank you.

RON: It's been a blessing. Thank you.

RANDY: You just keep giving hope and being that example. It is really neat that you're just a

witness. You're not worried about what people think or your reputation or the past, you're just a witness.

HOPE: Trying to help people.

RANDY: Yeah! You really are. I appreciate you guys helping people today. Appreciate all of you guys watching. Don't miss an episode. If you miss any, go to LifeToday.org. You can watch them all there. We'll see you next time.