

12/12/24

Week 50: Fall Mission Feeding

Intro: Randy Robison

Randy Robison and Tammy Trent

Chonda Pierce 5/1/24

Studio open:

RANDY: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm Randy Robison. Tammy Trent is not with me today because we have sent her overseas on a mission. We look forward to bringing that to you in the future.

But right now, I want to go back a little bit. A few months ago, Tammy and I sat down with Chonda Pierce. She has written a book called *Life is Funny Until It is Not*. When you talk to a comedian you think it is going to be all laughs. And certainly, we do laugh with Chonda often, but she reveals some very, very hard times. Why does she do that? Because she wants to give you hope.

So, I want to take you back a few months and let you sit down with Tammy and I as we talk to Chonda Pierce and find out what God has done in her life. Because no matter what you're going through, you'll find that God is right there, even in the hardest times, even when life is not funny, even when you don't see any joy ahead of you. So, enjoy Chonda as we reflect on this program that has blessed so many people.

Studio discussion:

TAMMY: We have the privilege of being with one of our favorites today, Chonda Pierce. I'm so happy you're back. I just wanted to say right off the top. I love you. I respect you. I honor you. I have laughed with you for so many years. We've shared the same stage on *Women of Faith* over the years. I would laugh with you there. I would laugh with you from afar.

But it wasn't until I read your new book, *Life is Funny Until It is Not*, that I finally just sat and cried with you, Chonda. You weren't even with me but I felt like you were. I walked through this journey with you as you took me from the beginning to the end of your life. I just kept thinking at the very end, God, thank you, thank you, thank you for not letting go at times when I'm sure Chonda let go herself or wanted to let go. I mean there has been abuse, loss, disappointment, all kinds of things that have come in and out of your life, and you kept fighting for life.

I can't help but think that there are people watching today that have been fighting for life. I have gone through loss, disappointment, and grief, and have wanted to give up, and have asked the same question, God, where are you in the middle of it all?

He is there. And I'm excited to talk to you about that. So together, we can all encourage people to be reminded that no matter what they're going through right now Jesus is in the middle of it with you.

Chonda, glad you're here. Tell me, let's start from the beginning, why this book and why now?

CHONDA: You know, because Tammy, I have lived 32 years—I mean I've done 32 years of stand-up comedy, and it's been fun and wonderful. And each night I will, as Randy says, he's so kind to me. And of course, his family is like my family. And his dad, I share the love for his daddy. He is like my daddy. I didn't want the end of my career to come that I didn't tell the truth, the solid truth about the dark times too. It is easy to stand on the stage and be funny, funny, funny, and then turn that corner really quick and have about 15 minutes left of good ministry and then you say good night.

People don't know the in-between. There is always that joke about your tombstone. There is the day you were born and the day you died, and those in between. People don't know in-between. They know the ups and look what I've survived but they don't know how poorly I did sometimes at surviving it. I think I just needed it to be a what to do and what not to do. And just an honest, honest look.

And the prayer is that people see the survival. People will see it. And that's what you do. Everybody always says, "God is good" and then the congregation says, "All the time." There have been times I've sat in the church and they say, "God is good" and I want to be the one that goes, "Really?" [Laughing]

And the truth of the matter is he is good because he is always there with you. I think about the two, Mary and Martha when Jesus came and their brother had died. They're like, if you'd just been here, he might not have died. They had that accusatory anger. They were so disappointed that he wasn't there on time. The sweet thing is when Mary and Martha ran to him and Martha—it says, Martha stayed inside. She's like, I've just had enough of that. I don't want to see him. He wasn't there for me. Blah-blah-blah.

And yet, Jesus was there. The first thing he wanted to do was go hug her too. I know you're angry. I know you wished I'd been here on time. Just wait, just wait! You're going to be surprised how this ends.

And I'm surprised I'm still here sometimes! [Laughing]

RANDY: Chonda, people know you as someone funny, a comic. Is comedy some mechanism of coping with a lot of the things you've been through?

CHONDA: Yes! Absolutely. You know what a grateful—that's what I'm so grateful for. I had a wonderful counselor tell me one time, have you ever just stopped and thanked God for your job? Because what a healthy outlet—for a while.

Now I remember jokes I used to tell and I knew the condition of my heart when I told them. I was hoping that when I told them, the person that was getting the punch line could hear me. So she would know what she said when I was a kid. And she said, "You're not very P-R-E-T-T-Y." I hope she hears this joke.

And then your healing comes, and then the laughter and the creativity starts kicking in of the

right words and the right space so people will laugh at the punch line. The mechanics of it kicks in and you become so grateful to the creator of the universe who even created comedy as a joy function and as a place for medicine. I love that. And I love that he's allowed me to survive a career so long without ruining myself. To continue my job—I love my job. Yeah!

TAMMY: What would be one of the greatest life lessons that you think you've learned that you could tell me? Tammy, don't do this. Avoid this. This is what I did. If I had changed this maybe I wouldn't have walked down that road.

CHONDA: I think if I had—if I had learned to trust quicker and faster. Because Tammy, you know even in my days at *Women of Faith*, when people pat you on the back, I didn't trust it. I'm like they're friendly to me but they're going to hurt me. To believe that not everybody is out to hurt you; I believe if I had believed that quicker.

It is like when James Robison calls me on my cellphone, I take it because I know he is never going to hurt me. There is a man that stood up and I can trust his integrity. When people like that came along in my life, it was a game changer. Because God knows I needed people with flesh on; not just the Holy Spirit but I needed people in the flesh that I could look in the eye and know I could trust them with my life.

I didn't have that for a long, long time. I had a wonderful loving husband and he had his ups and his downs and his demons, but I could trust him with my life. And then when he was gone, I just—I have a problem trusting men anyway, so I don't trust. You might get burned. You just might get burned. That little voice might have been right, they're going to hurt you. But it is still better to try; to try to find a friend, try to believe a friend. When Tammy Trent sits on the screen and says to you that she's proud of you and that she loves you, I fight to believe that. And I do. And it's taken a long time to believe it.

TAMMY: I'm so glad because that's part of the hurdle I think is just as you said, both of us believing. I have my own set of trust issues, girl when it comes to dating. I certainly have my own. I wonder where does that come from for you? Why do you think even now in this season of

your life, why are you having a struggle with trusting men?

CHONDA: Probably from childhood, watching a very unfaithful father. He would take me with him when he would go meet his friends. Called it "visitation." But that's a problem. I've worked through that a lot in therapy.

I think I was on the verge of really trying to enjoy the obstacle of dating and the online. I used to say it was going to be the best material of my career, and then it just turned a corner and got really, really sad. And then I had a horrible encounter back in 2016. I was sexually abused by a man. The police had to come, I had to do the rape kit. It was just so disgusting. That will turn you off from ever meeting a stranger online, ever, ever again. Do you know what I mean? And yet, that's been many years ago, and healing comes with a block of time. And at times, somebody will be nice and say, "Hey! Would you like to have lunch?" And I'll go, "No." And if they're persistent, I'll finally eat lunch with them. [Laughing]

But the truth of the matter is you finally get a certain age and you know this, I don't have to have a man. And I don't mean that in some feminist way. I am not at all a feminist. I don't have to have a man. I would like to have a man in my life, a companion, a leader. I long for a spiritual leader in my life but I don't have to have it. Now I've learned that the Heavenly Father can be a father and a husband and a friend and a companion. It is how much of him you want.

TAMMY: Yes!

CHONDA: And that's me. I decided I wanted all of that in Jesus. I wanted all of that but it took me a while. I had to begin to trust him as a daddy. I began to trust him as a pal. But then, to begin to trust God as your husband and your leader and your companion, that is a whole different level and I love it.

RANDY: I think that that's one of the most damaging things that men can do, especially to women. Because it's really easy, it is easy for everyone. There are people watching right now that struggle with this but we project our human experiences, especially with a father onto God

who refers to himself in the Bible as a father. Some of the things you talk about in your book are really hard. Your dad, what was his diagnosis?

CHONDA: He was diagnosed bipolar is the popular term. Back in the day, it was manic depressive, borderline schizophrenic. It is his high that would get outrageous where he would feel narcissistic and he wants what he wants.

In mental illness, what happens is there are these blockers that don't even allow you to reason. And so that's why it is important. Mental health is so important because you can call it sin, the world, a demon. You can call it a medical condition. But if this organ isn't operating right, then it is going to affect everything—your heart rate, how you feel about yourself. When this organ isn't functioning, you can't even hardly hear those words that you've got to be the leader of the family. It's hard. Yeah!

RANDY: The question is how did you get to the point where you could see God for who he is, and say he is a good God when you had such a dysfunctional father in your own life?

CHONDA: I think that's the beauty of it. I don't want to turn this into a James Robison love fest but it is what it is. I was well into my job for many years with this problem hanging in my head about the fatherhood of God. I was the breadwinner of my home. I was dragging my kids to church when my husband wouldn't, kind of woman.

It wasn't until the Lord allowed the scales to come off slowly and see what fatherhood is supposed to look like. Now I'm sure James Robison probably wasn't the greatest father on the whole planet but to me, I began to see it was the possibility. There was the possibility of what fatherhood is supposed to look like.

And being a public person, and Tammy can probably agree with this, all the sudden the Lord is placing you in places to make people laugh, or to sing, or to entertain, or to host, and all the sudden you get to rub elbows with people that are authentic. I met Max Lucado. I met Billy Graham. I met authentic men that were so—they had no idea what the real thing was going on

with me in getting to know them and meet them. And praise God that they—I always say praise God they didn't know the responsibility they had right then at the moment. Praise God they came through. They didn't disappoint. They didn't let me down. Billy Graham still is the dude. So I loved that.

I hate that it's—I'm not a shrink, I'm a comedian, so I don't know why it took so long but I know that that's what helped.

TAMMY: I love it! I love it. And I absolutely can relate to that. My parents, I come from a broken home, and then my stepfather wasn't—it wasn't the greatest situation. So I definitely was one of those too that I longed for a daddy in my life every single day, that was faithful, and that was consistent, that told me I was a princess, that I could be anything.

So what a gift to both of us that God would bring us different fatherly figures that loved us well and continue to love us well. My dad is a big part of my life today. Praise God for that and loves me well. So I'm blessed and I'm so grateful that you've had it too.

Chonda, there is a quote that is in your book. Maybe faith isn't about what you get. Maybe it is about who you become. Maybe it is not about believing your circumstances will change, maybe it is about believing in God even if they never do. God is a faithful God.

CHONDA: He is a faithful God. People always ask me, "How did you do it?" I don't really know. I can't tell you step by step how to get through each and every one of these things. Somehow, I am blessed with this unapologetic courage to hope. That was kind of what I said in the very last of the book. I just refuse to let the devil take me down. He's tried. He's gotten hold of me way too many times but I refuse to go away into the dark without loving God.

I relate a little bit to Job, but I love Job because he never stopped loving God. I will never stop loving him. I'll never stop believing that it's true that Jesus was the son of God. I will never stop believing! It is in that courage to never stop, all of a sudden, the days pass and you get through that and the days are good and life is funny again. And then sometimes, it might not be but I'll

start again.

Studio pre-appeal:

RANDY: The things that she has been through, it's heartbreaking. It really -- it's tough. I know some of you are in a very tough situation right now. You need to know that God is faithful. He has not abandoned you. He will not ever abandon you. He is with you. Maybe that's why you're watching this program today because God just wanted to remind you that wherever you're at, even in the darkest times, he's there with you.

If you need to hear someone, just say it and pray with you, just encourage you, to hear another human voice, we have a prayer line just to encourage you. Pick up the phone whenever, wherever you're at. Pick up the phone and call. Someone will just agree with you in prayer. They'll listen to you. And most of all, they will remind you, in an audible voice that you can hear on the other end of that line, that God is with you. He truly is.

If you need some encouragement through Chonda's book *Life is Funny* until it is not, you can get the book when you support and outreach today because we want to remind people around the world that God is with them. We do it by meeting their very practical needs.

Just as you might have had the need to be encouraged today, there are people right now that have the need just for something to eat. That's why this Mission Feeding program that we've been doing for decades now is so important. It is so close to my heart, close to my parents' hearts. It is because people have a hunger, a physical hunger and they can't meet that need.

But we are in a position, you and I are in a position to help meet that need. You think, okay, I can't do all that. We're feeding 350,000 children every day. You can't do that alone, I can't do that alone. That's the beauty of us coming together as the body of Christ. Not the individual, not the isolated, not part of a community. Coming together as a community and saying, you know what? We're going to be the hands and feet of Jesus. We're going to reach out to those in need. We're going to remember the poor, as scripture tells us to do, and we're going to do something.

Your something may seem like the widow's mite but when it is given in obedience God sees it. Maybe your something is to feed a lot of children today. Whatever it is, we want to invite you to be a part of this beautiful outreach saving lives and encouraging people with the love of Christ. Watch this and then pray about how you can be apart.

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:

RANDY: This is the Mission Feeding program in action. We are giving nourishment to children who have come to school. So we're giving them an education. We're getting them in the schools. When we come into an area like this, we take them from a state of malnourishment, listlessness, hopelessness, and we give them a future and we give them life through a simple bowl of soup.

The only question is, is there enough soup in this pot for this line? We're confident that there is today. But beyond the end of this line, there are other villages, there are other children who need a bowl of soup just like this. Will you extend this line? Will you give food to a child today? I hope you'll join us. You really can make a difference. Go to the phone, go online, give the best gift you can because Mission Feeding saves lives.

End of video

Studio goodbye:

RANDY: I hope you will go to the phone or go online right now. Make the best gift you can. Do you know what the best gift is? It is the one God puts on your heart. When we all act in obedience, amazing things happen.

I hope you've been encouraged today through this program. We have a lot of encouragement for you. We put it all on LifeToday.org. So if you want to watch this program again, you want to watch any program you may have missed, maybe you're just looking for a topic of encouragement or instruction, maybe a specific testimony, go to our website at LifeToday.org because we exist to encourage you, to bring you closer to Christ, and to meet those practical needs of people around the world.

Request Chonda's book, *Life is Funny*. With any gift today, we'd love to send it to you just as a resource to bring you that hope. And come back. We'll be here for you. Please join us again next time on *Life Today*.