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Week 49: Fall Mission Feeding

Randy Robison

James and Betty Robison

Susie Larson #1 modified from 9/6/23

Studio Open:

RANDY: Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I am Randy Robison, and I am here to encourage you. You might be watching right now because you're going through some difficulties, or you've been through some traumatic things. You might be wondering, where's God? Are you even there?

I need to tell you something, you're not alone and I mean that in two different ways. I mean that first of all, you're not alone because God is with you. You may not see it but I'm telling you he is. And I'm also saying that because you're not the only one to feel that way. A lot of people have felt that way, and a lot of people feel that way right now.

That's why I'm here to go back a few months to a program that my parents did with a woman named Susie Larson. Susie has experienced a lot of things physically and emotionally. There has been some abuse. There's just been a lot. There's been the kinds of things that you don't really want to live in, the kinds of things you'd rather forget, the kinds of things you want to get over and get healed from and move on from. But it was in those moments that she realized that God is not just with her but he's, as her book title says, *Closer Than Your Next Breath*.

So, here's my question for you. Are you having trouble just breathing right now? Do you wonder if God really is out there? Well, I want you to watch this and listen as God tells you, yeah, I'm closer than your next breath. Enjoy this encouragement with Susie Larson.

Studio discussion:

JAMES: Susie, we're glad to have you.

SUSIE: So honored to be back with you. Thank you for having me.

JAMES: Do you know how many years now you've been coming here?

SUSIE: I think the first time I came was 20 years ago. So yeah, thank you! It's amazing you keep inviting me back. So thank you.

JAMES: We'll never stop because you'll just continue to inspire us all. For 30 years, you have been under attack physically. Did the attacks start 30 years ago? Did it intensify or start with Lyme disease? Because I know you have Lyme disease which is just one of the most confusing, strange, dangerous, and deadly diseases that can come from a tick. Is that where most of it started?

SUSIE: I would have to say, I'd have to back up and I've told parts of this story maybe on past shows with you but I often say that the enemy sees your potential long before you ever do. And you can just go back to your childhood and you see this threat against you. It's so connected to your threat to him and he will go after you before you even know that you have a target on your back.

So I would say as a child raised in a denomination, I knew God was real but I didn't know Jesus was accessible. I didn't have the gospel preached to me or anything like that. And at nine years old, I suffered a sexual assault at the hands of teenage boys. I didn't tell anybody about that because my dad was the mayor of our city. I was so confused about whose fault that was. I just absorbed it and basically, insecurity, a spirit of fear, all those things, really were so big for me.

Ten years old, I was walking home from school and I was jumped by a different group of boys in our suburb and beaten terribly. They punched me, kicked me, and pulled fistfuls of hair out. And when I got up from that beating, I heard in my ear, not audibly but it might as well have been, I can get you anytime, anywhere, and God will never stop me.

So as a little girl, I knew God was real and at that moment I knew the devil was real. When I came to Christ in eighth or ninth grade, it would be even going into my young adult years as a young married woman, I knew I was saved, once I became a Christian, I didn't know I was loved. So that's probably true for a lot of believers, even seasoned believers may know they're saved but they don't know they're loved. If you don't have that resolved and you have a lot of trauma, and the enemy will go after every one of God's children, you won't always resolve those things in light of God's love, you'll be tempted to accuse God of things that the devil is guilty of.

And for me, as I was telling you before the show, during our third pregnancy, I was on bedrest for six months. Prior to that, I was serving on five committees at church because even though I was saved I didn't know I was loved. So what you do when that's the case is you use your time, treasure, and talents to prove something Jesus has already proven. So I was super Christian because I was so grateful. But I felt like I had things to pay back and I had things to earn. So to go to bedrest was a nightmare come true because everybody was doing favors for us. They were getting tired on my behalf, and it confronted all my insecurities.

So, when the doctor let me up for one day, I'd been in bed for three months, with a one and a three-year-old; and one was strong-willed so not everybody wanted to watch him when they offered to babysit my kids. But I was allowed up for one day because I hadn't contracted in a couple of days and the doctor said, "Let's just see how you do." And so, I met my old college roommates, it was a fall day, went for a walk, and had lunch. We were so careful. I was contracting by night and two weeks later my face went numb, and my memory started to go. It took a year to find out that that one day out I was bitten by the deer tick unknowingly.

And what happened in my heart, Lord -- I mean the enemy, "I can get you any time anywhere and God will never stop me." And so even as a serious Christian that lie was embedded in my soul, and something I had to wrestle through my whole life because this disease is wretched, as you say, James. So, I've been here since I had a massive relapse. I did pretty well for the last 20 years. I've been able to manage it, I'm a fighter, I want to live. I have things I want to do. And probably, a handful of times a year I can't get out of bed. But then I get out of bed and I start swinging again.

About eight years ago, I had a pretty terrible relapse. I was in my bathroom getting ready, I work in radio as a talk radio host. My arms went numb, my face and my neck went numb. The room started to spin. A high pitch ringing in my ears. And I'm going, no, God! No, God! Please no, God! And I hear him whisper, "The storms reveal the lies we believe and the truths we need." I'm like what? "The storms reveal the lies we believe and truths we need." What is the lie that I believe? And at this point, my neck is going numb and my esophagus is spasming so bad I can't swallow. It was like the enemy had me by the throat up against the wall. And he says, "I can get to you anytime, anywhere." And there was the lie.

So, I wrote a lot about that in previous books. This book is about moving from bracing for impact to anticipating God's goodness. Because when you've had a lot of trauma and loss, it is easy to live that way. And I really thought my locked elbows—like I still worshipped God, I was in the word. I serve him as best as I can. I thought this bracing kind of posture was just a natural result of some years of hardship. But it was a mistrust of God. When I started to understand in the silent seasons, in the active seasons, he's the same God and he is for us. Even if you can't sense his presence, it is for our good.

So, this book is all about understanding that you are tethered to a good God whether you feel him or not. So, it's all about his presence. But I have to tell you, when I got the book back, when it was time to read for the audiobook, it was a healing balm to my soul. Because I'd already been through other battles with this health challenge and it was just a reminder that he is who he says he is and he's going to do what he says he'll do. It doesn't mean we're exempt from really hard, hard stuff but he's with us in the battle and that means a lot.

BETTY: I feel like listening to you, you said, it is a reminder. We need those reminders, don't we, in our life of how close he is to us? Because as far as church life, I had a similar deal. I was active in church, did all the right things. Thought I had to prove my loyalty and my dedication until I met someone that hadn't been in church at all that had a real relationship with Jesus. And through him, I came to know Him. It made such a difference in my life.

but there is more. Accepting him, yes, that's the first step. But there's more to knowing how to live for him and with him in our hearts.

SUSIE: He has so much more for us. And one of the things I explore in the book is what is the presence? And is feeling good the same as feeling God? And what I've noticed in scripture and people I've interviewed in my own life, when you have a manifest present moment, and I would guess this would be the same for you, when you point back to real God encounters, where you're like, that was God, I encountered him, I often see that it is so often about lordship or it is about identity or it is about calling or an upgrade in faith. When God breaks through into the natural circumstances, he's trying to bring a greater revelation of your identity or his lordship or the calling and purposes of your life.

But when you encounter God, and it is so life-changing, you get a little panicky when you go through a silent season. Again, that's one of the reasons I wrote the book too, what do you do when you can't hear him, can't sense him? Is he the same God?

JAMES: I want us to dwell on that in just a few minutes. Let me ask you a question. From the time I was conscious as a toddler even, I was under attack. I was a hated being. I do believe that the more you're aware that some force is coming at you, the more clearly you should understand God has a kingdom purpose for you; that you are divinely enabled, supernaturally enabled to accomplish that actually frightens the enemy. Because he loses ground, he loses people, he loses territory. He hates that so he hates any of us that have been especially gifted and chosen. He attacked you when he is attacking everybody out there.

But the enemy had hit me and hit me, and I said something to him after he delivered a pretty severe blow. I really did flip that on him. And I used it for the glory of God to see people set free in areas the enemy never would have believed he would watch happen. Here's what I said to him, and I just want to see if you bear witness with this. I said, listen to me. And I'm talking to the devil! Whatever you hit me with, whatever you hit my family with, you will regret it because I will use it as a club on you to make you regret the day that you delivered that blow. Does that make sense?

SUSIE: One hundred percent! Amen! One hundred percent! I will tell you, a lot of times they say when you have a passage that you keep defaulting to it is like a life script, you're just talking right now about Psalm 18 because that's a passage that speaks of going from victim to victor. I didn't have a Christian context. So all the stuff that was happening to me, it was like I had the word. But I remember God saying, "Are you a believer only because you've secured your eternity? Or do you believe this stuff? When are you going to shift your weight onto the promises to see if they hold?"

And when I found Psalm 18, the enemy confronted me on a day I was weakest. He does that. He goes and hits us when we're down, and he fights personal, and goes after those we love. But my cry reached his ears and the Lord got so angry. This is the thing. He treats his children differently than those who don't fear and revere him. He does. Our cry reaches his ears. And it says, he veiled his approach in darkness. So, we don't see him coming but neither does the enemy. He rescues us from on high because he delights in us. He puts us in a spacious place. And I would say in that place is where he heals us. But then he trains our hands for battle. He allows us to walk on high places. And then the rest of the Psalm, you chase the enemy down. You put your foot on his neck.

And I'm telling you, when that enemy had me by the throat it was terrifying. For months, every time I looked down my esophagus would spasm. One time when I came to be on your show, I'd lost eight pounds in eight days. I was living on bites of food because every time I ate the spasms were so bad and I didn't think I was going to make it. I almost canceled the flight. When I think of the ways that he has hit. But that neck thing was so personal to me. And when I read that in the Psalms that your foot will be on his neck, I said almost the exact same thing, James. I'm like I'm going to make you sorry you ever messed with me. Because everywhere you come against me, God wants to bless me. And overwhelming victory belongs to me because I belong to him. So, let's do this.

And I feel that way. I never say, bring it on, I don't. I fear God and I've seen enough. I'm not asking, I'm not picking a fight but I'm not backing down either.

JAMES: Yeah, you're not going to back down or bow down to him. You need to understand—I want all of you to know this. This program and the next program, you don't need to miss. This is for you. God is wanting to show you—how is it that we don't see how deeply he loves us in the gift of his Son Jesus who took all of our sin, all of our shame, all of our failures, all of our guilt and he died for us to cover it? And deliver us as far as the east is from the west from the eternal effects of that sin and that failure. He gave us life. It is the love of God that gave it. But it is so hard sometimes for you to believe how much he loves you.

You're going to come to see how much God loves you and the very fact that you may have been attacked. And you may be confused and puzzled about why things happen. Because the enemy hates God's purpose in you. You've got to let the enemy know God is going to succeed in my life and I'm going to live and make an impact for his kingdom purpose. God's will can be done on his earth. And the church has got to believe that. That's the only way we're going to have a future.

I want you to kind of wrap this show with some sort of invitation to the viewer to move into a place and we're going to talk very much about the accuser and how a lot of times when he says -- we know we failed. A person who has ever met God, has ever known grace, regrets the fact that we do fail. They don't realize that the whole Bible was written by failed people, and failing people -- not perfect people!

I was praying the other day. I said Lord, what's the deal with all these people that you use so mightily and they fail so much? He said, “You know I have a real problem with people who are self-righteous. All these failures don't have a self-righteous attitude. They know exactly where righteousness is and who righteousness is.”

I said, “Well, that's for sure. I don't have a problem with self-righteousness. I know where it is and I know my failure.”

So please, please, please give us a chance to help you understand that you can not only lean on God's shoulder, you can be in his arms. He is the shelter from every storm. But he also has a

purpose of life and love and meaning to flow through you. Share with our viewers what you hope they're hearing even in this program.

SUSIE: Well, it's not that we love God, it is that he loved us. We have to know he loved us first and he loves us first every time. I will tell you, one of the revelations that came to me was in Psalm 106, it is the amplified version. Because I want to learn from the Israelites' mistakes. Because I've been so curious, feeling like we're an exiled people. I'm like how did they get it wrong because I want to get it right. One of the things is they stopped listening to God's voice. And when you listen to any other voice but God's, your heart will automatically harden.

But Psalm 106 in the Amplified version, there's a little nugget of wisdom for us. Three things that they did wrong that I think that we can do that will change things for us. One, they forgot to marvel and remember the significance of God's miracles. I say to you that if you are waiting for your miracle, pull the miracles from the scriptures of old and bring them to the forefront because those are your miracles. I would dare say you've got some of your own testimonies from your history, bring those to the forefront, and say this is the same God. Because it broke God's heart that they didn't remember or appreciate the significance of his miracles.

Second, is they no longer marveled at his mercies, the abundance of his mercies. And just as you were saying, James, all the things that he's forgiven in us. And the fact that he sends new mercies to our door every morning before we even have a chance to blow it, shows you how he's gone ahead of us. That should keep us perpetually in awe.

And the third mistake they made is they didn't imprint God's loving kindness on their hearts. So I say stay in awe by remembering his miracles, marvel at his mercies, and keep rehearsing the fact that God is good. It will change your physiology, it will change your brain, it will change your faith perspective.

Studio close:

RANDY: I love Susie's insight. Oh, my goodness! For someone who has been through so much,

she just has a depth and a hope that's just -- I love it. I love it!

Okay, one more observation I will say on that, when she talked about the Israelites there. They did not, many of them did not reach that Promised Land because they believed the report of the majority. Twelve spies were sent into that land, two came back and said, yeah, we can win. Ten came back and said, nope, no chance! I don't know what the report has been on your life but I'm here to tell you, if you listen to the word from God, and it may be in the minority, if you fight you will win.

If you want someone to fight alongside you, and it will be a fight, by the way, you've got to fight to win, if you want somebody to fight with you, pick up that phone. We have people, prayer warriors, people that will just listen, will pray with you, will plead your case before God with you and help remind you that you're not alone. I don't know what your victory looks like, but God does, and he's already secured it. But you've got to get up. You've got to get up and fight and win.

That's true all across life. We fight for our relationships, for our marriage, we fight for our health. Sometimes we fight for our sanity. We fight an enemy unseen. We fight an enemy seen. It is a fight, fight, fight. But again, with God on our side, we win. That's the promise. We know the back of the book.

Speaking of books, if you want *Closer Than Your Next Breath* by Susie Larson, we would love to send it to you just to encourage you, to encourage you in your fight. We ask you to join us in another fight and that is the fight against malnutrition, the fight against hunger, oftentimes, the fight against death.

We have partners in place right now around the world to help us in this fight, but we need you to join us. Watch this as we go to one of our mission partners fighting the fighting in what we call Mission Feeding.

Transition roll-in:

ANNOUNCER: In rural Africa, when families don't have enough food to eat, it is the children who suffer the most. Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest mortality rate than any place in the world in children under five due to the effects of malnutrition. But in the midst of suffering, there are moments to celebrate.

ISAK: I want you to meet Tereza. This young girl just a month ago was one in this malnutrition clinic literally fighting for her life. One of those children where it is just skin and bone, where it is a child that has no life in their eyes, that literally, we are doing everything we can to try and save their life. And we knew with Tereza like so many, that the chances are not always there that we can actually rescue their life. And yet, because of Mission Feeding, because of being there in this clinic, because of reaching Tereza in time, here she stands today, a young girl that is recovering, that is getting her strength back and is able to now continue living life.

There are so many in this country right now that we're not reaching. Children out in the villages. Mothers who are telling us that they can't get to clinics. That they don't have food to feed their children. Children that look like severe cases in malnutrition clinics that are right out there in the villages. If we're not able to reach them today, their story is not going to end like Tereza's.

We need you to do everything you can do. We need the friends of *LIFE* to open their hearts today and give the very best gift they can give because we have to reach more children here in Angola and save their lives.

Studio Appeal:

RANDY: I love seeing the stories of children that have benefited from the Mission Feeding outreach. I don't know if you noticed but in a lot of the pictures you'll see a little building behind the line of children. That's because education -- those are school buildings -- education is a foundational part of the Mission Feeding outreach. Typically, we feed in the schools. The children go to school, they get something to eat.

Why do we do that? Because Mission Feeding is not just about meeting the immediate need, it does that, but it is also about building for a future. A future with a hope. And so, what we're doing here is a program with vision. Over 350,000 children every single day on average receive that bowl of nutritious soup, and that is just to get them through the day. Oftentimes, it is in areas where there has been a crisis, perhaps a famine, perhaps a flood, perhaps displacement from civil unrest. Whatever the situation, we go in and hold them over until they can get back on their feet and can continue to build for their future.

Now that's a great thing, I think. A lot of organizations will do this. But let me tell you a key difference. We do it in the name of Jesus Christ. Now, we don't have requirements. If you're hungry, that's really the only requirement to receive that bowl of food. But when you're around people, when you're saving people's lives, they know. Sometimes they'll ask. And sometimes we have opportunities to go in and preach just outright preach the gospel to people. But we can always demonstrate it through those works.

That's what we're inviting you to be a part of, to be the hands and feet of Jesus, to be the gospel in word and deed. Not just to tell people about Christ or tell them about his love but to show it to the people in need. That's why we want you to be a part of it. The more people participate, the more people are able to give, the more that we can reach. And believe me, the need is there. But I believe the solution is there and I believe the solution is you.

Right now, the situation is critical. Children are dying in clinics, and they don't need to. We need to reach them before they get to that point, before they get to the clinic. We do it through your participation. We do it through \$30 that helps feed three children for the next three months. A gift of \$50 feeds five. \$100 will help feed ten. Maybe you can give \$1,000 and help feed 100 children just for the next few months.

Whatever God has enabled you to do, whatever he's put on your heart to do, I pray you'll do it right now. Pick up the phone or go online, however you prefer. Make the best gift you can towards Mission Feeding. Know that it will save lives. It will give them hope. It will give them a future. And it will be done in the name of Jesus Christ.

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**Studio goodbye:**

RANDY: I do hope you're going online or going to the phone. Make the best gift you can. Look, this is a fight we can win. We've been winning it for decades. I know you're going, why are you still fighting it? Well, it is because needs arise, situations change. But you know what? The consistency of helping the poor never changes in God's eyes. We're blessed when we reach out.

So, make the best gift you can.

If you want the encouragement that Susie Larson has put into her book, just ask for *Closer Than Your Next Breath* when you make the best gift you can. We would love to send it to you.

Remember, we've always got people on the other end of the phone to pray with you. We really do care about you as a viewer, as we care about those around the world with physical needs. Encouragement, hope, healing, that's what God offers. That's what we want to bring to you every day. So, join us again next time here on *Life Today*.