

12/9/24

Week 49: Fall Mission Feeding

Randy Robison

Ron and Hope Carpenter #1

Studio Discussion:

RANDY: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm Randy Robison. And Tammy is not with me today because she is actually overseas. You're going to see some very exciting opportunities in the future with her. But today, we have something special for you.

I don't know where you're at. I don't know what you're facing but I can tell you this, if you want victory today in your life, you're going to have to fight for it. And that's not bad news, that's good news. And we've got some encouragement for you today. My guests are Ron and Hope Carpenter. Hope has a new book out. It's called *If You Don't Fight Then You Don't Win*. There she is putting it right out there.

But they've got a story where they've had to fight. Fight for their church, fight for their marriage, fight for their very souls. So, you're going to be encouraged as you listen to them. I invite you to lean in and accept God's hope and Word for you today.

Ron and Hope, great to have you on the program!

HOPE: Yes! So good to be here, Randy. Thank you.

RON: Thank you for having us.

RANDY: Many people saw you a few months ago with Tammy. By the way, if you missed that program you can go to LifeToday.org and catch up on all the programs. But for people that don't really know some of the struggles you guys have faced, give us a brief version of that.

HOPE: Because we don't have all day, do we?

RON: It's like a mini-series.

HOPE: Have you ever felt like your whole life has been a struggle? I feel like for us it seems like everything that we have tried to do, endeavored to do for God, we get that John 10:10, the thief comes to steal, kill, and destroy wind in our face. But you know, once we have embraced that, that there are not just roses popping up all over your path when you say yes to Jesus, that you do have an adversary, that we have an enemy. Sometimes, the enemy is us in our dumb mistakes, and some of that has been our story. You just embrace it and say, I am on this journey and I'm going to win. Because the other option is to what? To fail, to just give up. We're not going to do that. We have had some journey, haven't we?

RANDY: We've seen a lot of failure, and we hear about them on the news on social media within churches. This whole thing almost completely fell apart.

HOPE: It did.

RANDY: Tell us what happened.

HOPE: Well, it started back honestly, if we had time I can go back. Had no idea -- had no idea, Randy, that the way I was raised would really affect who I was as an adult. I thought when I changed my last name, changed my address, and got that ring on my finger everything was going to be absolutely glorious. For a while it was. But I could feel the inferno kind of growing on the inside of me, the anxiety. The perfection, feeling like I had to be perfect at everything, smile at everything, never show any feelings.

In about 15 years, in about 2004, I woke up one day and really exploded. Just like I can't live like this anymore. Didn't know what that meant but just knew that what I was feeling on the inside was coming out, and it is going to come out sideways in an ugly way.

RON: Let me give some context to that. She had never spoken with me about the things, about the traumatic things that had happened to her. When she met me, I was already a preacher boy. I was already in Bible School. She didn't want me to know the downside, the dark side of the things that she had been raised in. So, I had no clue. I just knew I had this woman that was changing, and I didn't know what was wrong and I didn't know how to fix it.

The fact is we grew a very large church, God blessed us in a very small city. The city had 80,000 people and we had 22,000 members, so a quarter of the people went to our church. And so that only magnified -- I mean we lived in a glass house, and everybody had an opinion. And everywhere we went, everybody knew us. So, what was in her -- when you've got a cracked foundation and you start putting more weight on it, it just splits. So that was a little bit about what was happening, the pressure cooker in her life.

RANDY: What did that split look like?

HOPE: Well, it looked like that day I went and bought three secular CD's. Oooouh! That was taboo in my world. I bought a six pack of beer and a bikini, had never done that up until 35. It was my way of saying, I need to figure out life myself. I need to figure out what's right for Hope. I need to figure out what's wrong for Hope. Not what my mom says, my dad says, the church says, the denomination, my husband, all of that. Because I'd never been allowed, honestly, even in my teenage years to make any decisions.

RANDY: If it had stopped there, you probably would have had no problems.

HOPE: But you know sin doesn't stop there, does it?

RANDY: Is that what it was? It was acting out, rebellion in you?

HOPE: I think it was. I really do. I believe any time we want to do life our own way and not God's way we're on a slippery slope. So, I ended up in places I shouldn't have been with people I

shouldn't have been with. I was unfaithful to my husband. This was nine years back and forth of just trying --

And then imagine the pressure, Randy, of loving Jesus but doing that too. Because I really did love Jesus. I really was committed to him and wanted to serve him. But I was so confused with who I was as a human, as a person; and what was right and what was wrong. It was just a terrible time.

RANDY: What's funny, and I mean that more like odd, is that we do that kind of thing searching for some kind of happiness. But that distance that's inside is the most miserable place. Is it not?

HOPE: It was awful.

RON: What you run to to find the peace usually becomes a heavier weight than what you're running from. I think she found that to happen in her life. In this nine-year period -- you have to understand, I loved my wife. I'm not one of these guys, I love one person, I'm getting married one time and I adored this woman. But something was bad wrong. So, then I had to try to be a buffer because I'm trying to cover her while she heals or turns around or whatever it is that needed to happen. But I didn't want it to get out to the church public because our ministry, at least in that area at the time, was so massive.

During the middle of all this, we went on TBN, we started going on international TV. So, the intensity just got worse. While she was spiraling in a downward spiral, we were exploding. So, you've got this best of times but worst of times happening at the same time.

HOPE: Such a plan of the enemy. He's so strategic.

RON: But I knew something was wrong. I didn't know what was wrong, but I knew something was wrong. She would be asleep at night, and I would lay my hands, I wouldn't touch her, just over her head and like, "God bring her back to me. I don't know what's going on. I don't know where she is, I don't know what she's thinking but bring my wife back to me."

HOPE: I have such a good husband. Yeah! One day I want to be like Ron when I grow up. I really do.

RANDY: Scripture says to love your wife as Christ loved the church. The church's story is one of waywardness and unfaithfulness. What a picture of love right there. Without going through all the details, what was the book where you do go into the details.

HOPE: *The Most Beautiful Disaster*.

RANDY: *The Most Beautiful Disaster*. So, if someone wants to read through it just to try to get some help -- but at what point did the love of your husband, of Christ, and this idea of okay, we're not going to let this thing just be destroyed. We're going to fight to restore, fight to heal, fight to win. Was there a specific turning point or was it a process?

HOPE: Well, I was just totally miserable. I had reached a place of just utter desperation. Just sick of myself, sick of the places I'd been, the choices I'd made, sick of hurting my husband, my family. Didn't want to do it but didn't know why I did it. If I could have explained it, it wouldn't have been as maddening. But I didn't know why I was doing what I was doing.

So, in 2013, I came to him. It just was crumbling. I came to him and thought, he's such a great man he's going to help me. I'm going to come clean and I'm going to tell him everything, and he's going to fix this for me. And I told him, and he said, "You've got 30 minutes. Get your stuff and get out."

But Randy, that's why I wrote that book, *The Most Beautiful Disaster*. To the world it was the most horrible thing that could happen but to me it was where I hit rock bottom and where I ran right into the face of the unconditional love of Jesus that I had never known. I had only known conditional love. And I didn't understand God's unconditional love. That he loved me for who I was, not for what I did or didn't do right. It radically changed my life in 2013. We struggled. We were going to get a divorce.

RON: It was a whole different story then.

HOPE: Yeah, Ron's not doing well. I'm doing good, Ron's not doing well.

RON: You have to understand that nine years is a long time. This wasn't a summer. This was almost a decade. The toll -- the toll of covering, the toll of being the buffer, the toll of suspecting but not knowing.

HOPE: The betrayal -- all of it.

RON: Yes. And then when you finally get the knowledge of what you've been suspecting and all the collateral damage, the bomb goes off: The humiliation, half the church walks out, and social media blows you up. Your kids won't speak, and they go into school and get heckled. They run up and slam the doors when they get home and won't talk. It was awful with a capital A. It was awful.

And I loved her so much, that's why it hurt so bad that I found a place for her to receive ministry. But as far as -- I had no more energy. The thought of climbing that mountain of rebuilding trust after the nine years that we had already been through, I couldn't see it. So didn't want anybody else, didn't desire anybody else but I just like I can't do this.

HOPE: Wanted to be done.

RON: In other words, here where I was. Loving you hurts too bad. Loving you is painful. And so, I want you to be better. I know something is wrong. She was emotionally in a terrible place. I put her somewhere. I paid for that, but I let her know as far as our marriage I no longer seek to reconcile.

RANDY: I completely understand that, I'm sure she does too. But I also know that there are times when you've got to turn somebody over to God.

RON: I was there.

RANDY: I get it. So, when we talk about *If You Don't Fight Then You Don't Win*, what happened in-between to get you back to where you're willing to even -- you even have the strength and the desire to fight for a marriage?

HOPE: Well, I got my mojo back. When I was just overwhelmed by the love of the Lord, it just rejuvenated me. It restored all the brokenness in almost a day. Really. And then it was a journey of recovery and changing my mind and getting strength and learning new patterns of doing things.

RON: Stayed there what seven months?

HOPE: I stayed there nine months. I stayed at living waters ministry in North Carolina for nine months. I just really was determined. I said I'm not going to allow the enemy to win. Because I know that's the plot and plan of the enemy is to destroy our home and destroy our witness and our testimony and people's lives and our children. I said if God's doing this supernatural work in me, I'm believing for a supernatural work in our marriage. So, I did. I hunkered down and believed for it. I began to pray and fast and have people pray and fast with me. I would write to my children, we have three children, I would write them letters individual letters every single day and mail them at the end of the week. And in every one I would tell them, "We're believing God for a miracle. Don't you listen to your daddy! We're believing God for a miracle." And we did.

RANDY: It would be one thing if his posture was you go get yourself well, we'll bring you back. But you had to have God do a work in your heart.

RON: I was done. I was really done. She knows me. I'm the kind of guy, my lines don't move. When I make a decision, it doesn't change. So, she knew what she was dealing with. I had a divine encounter. I try not to be super-spiritual about things, but the fact is I believe in the power

of the Holy Spirit, and I believe in divine encounters. It's probably the only thing that I respected enough that could have changed me.

I had a night -- I had a Jacob experience where I just wrestled with God. The next morning you'd have thought I had been in ten fights and come off a ten-day drunk. I called my secretary, cancelled all my appointments. I was miserable. I had been up all night. I was screaming at the ceiling. Literally, one of these made-for-movie things. I had this all-night misery encounter with God. And finally, screaming at the ceiling, I was like, "What do you want me to do?" He said, "I want you to call her." You've got to understand, we weren't speaking.

HOPE: And if we were, we were fighting.

RON: The few times we had to communicate, it wasn't good. He said, "I want you to call her and tell her you will not abandon her." I'm going to tell you, that's something I did by faith because none of the feelings were there to say that. I did not want to do that. And tell them what was going on when you got that call.

HOPE: Well, that had been about two months into the separation. I was losing some hope at that point because he was not wavering. I had lost 23 pounds, was I just getting very desperate; that was from fasting and getting desperate. That day, I went on a walk, and it was a little country road. It was in November, and I said, "Lord, would you send a chicken truck" because that's what was out there, "around the corner and just kill me? Could you just take me out? I'm causing these people too much pain. Nothing is working. Could you just take me out?" And immediately, I saw a flower that had popped out of the concrete. I saw this beautiful bird that had flown out of this old hay pasture. And he spoke to me and said, "If I care for them, don't you know that I care for you? And that I'm working when you don't know that I'm working?" And immediately, hope sprang back up in me.

I turned around, started walking back to the house and the pastor came and said, "I've been looking for you. Ron's called." I was like, oh, no! I just got my hopes up. Now he's calling. It's bad. What are you doing, God?

So, I went inside, tried to dry my face and the Lord took me to the scriptures. God, you've got to give me a word. And he took me to the scripture in Samuel where David was going to buy a field. And the guy was like, you don't have to pay anything, you're the king. And he said, "I will not offer anything to the Lord that does not cost me." I said, "God, what are you saying to me?" He said, "You've done everything but sow a seed." I said, "God, I don't have anything. All I have is a \$1,000 to my name. I have \$1,000 I put aside." I had no credit cards, I had no insurance, I had nothing. He told me to give it to the people that I was staying with.

So, I went down there, and I took the \$1,000 and I told them the story, slid it across the table. I said, "I'm believing for a miracle." Ron calls five minutes later and he said -- told me the whole night. And he said, "And I've called to tell you that I will not abandon you." And I just -- I remember leaning over onto the desk and that ugly cry. Aah! Ugly cry! And Ron said, "Oh, no, no, no! I don't know what this means." [Laughing] He said, "I really don't know what this looks like or means." I said, "But I do! That's all I needed." God gave me my miracle. And it was that day that we started our restoration.

RANDY: Wow! Okay, there is so much more to this. I want you to know God has not abandoned you. I don't know where you're at. I don't know where you failed. I don't know who has failed you, but you feel like you're done. Or you feel like you're useless, that you just want to die. What a word from a husband to a wife! A husband who doesn't have it within himself saying, "I'm not going to abandon you."

That's God. God's saying that to some of you right now. If you want to pick up that phone and have someone just pray with you, it doesn't matter where you're at, it doesn't matter what you've been through. You may not even know what the future holds, but somebody will pray with you right now. Just pick that phone up, call that number for some encouragement. Because God will give you that ability to fight because he's already won the fight. You're going to learn more about that on another program with Ron and Hope. But right now, you might just need that encouragement that Hope got on that day out of nowhere -- God's with you.

We have another opportunity that we're going to show you because many of you have supported this outreach over the years, of giving hope to people that have no hope or it seems like they have no hope. Maybe you just need to reach beyond yourself today and be that lifeline for someone else. Watch this and we'll tell you how you can give hope to another person today.

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: So many of you have fought with us over the years to save people's lives. If you'd like to join us, go online, go to your phone, make the best gift you can. You can be a part of this beautiful, glorious fight to give life and hope to so many people around the world.

And listen, if you want your own copy of Hope's book, *If You Don't Fight Then You Don't Win*, just request it with any gift that you make today. We'd love to send it to you.

I appreciate you guys being so open and honest. I know that you've learned so much and come so far since all of that stuff came out. Would you guys join us for another program where we can really talk about unpacking some of the lessons you've learned?

HOPE: Absolutely!

RON: We'll be honored.

RANDY: Great! I look forward to it. I hope you will look forward to it. Come back! And if you're watching these online you can go to LifeToday.org and see all the programs. But we'll see you again next time here on *Life Today*.