

EPISODE 08

Faith In Action VAL AND MARGIE WALTON – MALAYSIA

[BEGIN MUSIC]

THOMAS S. MONSON: I extol those who with loving care and compassionate concern, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and house the homeless. He who notes the sparrow's fall will not be unmindful of such service.

NARRATOR: The Mormon Channel now presents Faith In Action.

[MUSIC FADES]

INTERVIEWER: Welcome back to Faith In Action, a show about welfare, humanitarian aid and service around the world. We're so happy to be able to have Brother and Sister Walton here with us. Brother Val Walton, and Sister Margie Walton, who have just recently returned in February from an eighteen month mission to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Or KL as the people there call it, in Malaysia, Asia. And so thank you very much Brother and Sister Walton for sharing some time with us here to speak about your mission. Brother and Sister Walton, for some people, it may not be common knowledge that the Church has *humanitarian* missionaries. Now your mission you were humanitarian and *welfare* missionaries, but, how does this come about? Is it like a normal proselyting mission where you have a certain call, or did you, did you volunteer for it? How did it come about?

SISTER WALTON: Well the way it came about is we decided about two years ago that we wanted to go on a mission and so we just put our papers in. We filled out all the same forms that anyone would who would wanted to go on a mission and then just sent our papers in. We didn't specify in any way where we wanted to go or what we wanted to do. And so we were very thrilled when we received our call and we were able to go to Malaysia and to be able to do humanitarian welfare work there.

INTERVIEWER: Wow. So, you could have potentially been like a proselyting missionaries or any type of missionaries that the Church offers. You had no idea that it could have been humanitarian aid?

SISTER WALTON: No we didn't and in the back of my mind I was kind of hoping for that.

INTERVIEWER: So what happened then when you opened up your papers and both of you read that you were going to go to this, to KL Malaysia? What were your thoughts when you opened it up?

BROTHER WALTON: We had no idea where Malaysia was....

INTERVIEWER: [LAUGHS] Where is Malaysia? Just, for those who don't know.

BROTHER WALTON: Malaysia is at the tip of the Malaysian Peninsula below Thailand. Our mission was actually called the Singapore Mission, but that was our ecclesiastical arm that we were attached to, Singapore is right at the bottom of the Malaysian Peninsula so, we had that area. Malaysia is in two parts; the Peninsula, being where the bulk of the people live and where the more civilized part of the world is, if you will, and then East Malaysia is an island on Borneo, the Island of Borneo and so you have Malaysia and

Indonesia, and the little country of Brunei, consisting of that area. It's on the South China Sea.

INTERVIEWER: And now you have three children, and grandchildren as well. What were their responses to you two going to Malaysia?

SISTER WALTON: They were very excited as we were, and we opened up the envelope and saw Singapore Mission, Malaysia, I was really just kind of stunned and very excited. I don't know, I just really felt like the Lord really loved us to be sending us there to do humanitarian work. And our kids reaction, all of them were just thrilled for us.

INTERVIEWER: So what were some of the questions that you had after you opened it up? I mean you had mentioned that you didn't quite know where Malaysia was, but what kind of preparation and research did you do about the mission?

SISTER WALTON: Well any books that we could find, we went to the library, you know, and you look on the maps, you start asking people, and it's amazing how many people had connections to that area of the world, that we came in contact with. So it was really neat the way, you know, you just come in contact with people that have been there or know about it.

INTERVIEWER: [4.49.0] Did you have to learn a different language in order to be humanitarian missionaries there?

SISTER WALTON: No, we were fortunate in Malaysia, there are three different, well many different languages spoken there but the main language is Bajau-Malay and then they also speak Chinese and Tamil, but they also speak a lot of English, and English is taught in the schools, and so when we would encounter, most of the people that we dealt with wanted to speak English to us. And so we knew a little bit, just kind of to get by with and if we got into deep situations where, where we couldn't understand and we would have to get someone to help us translate but we really didn't run on to that too much.

BROTHER WALTON: In fact, one of the main things we did while we were there, we *taught* a lot of English in various capacities whether it was in somebody's home, in a community center, a church, in many, many applications and so that's what a lot of our mission was involved in was teaching a little bit of everything, and English was one.

INTERVIEWER: For proselyting missionaries, they would usually go the Missionary Training Center to help them get prepared for teaching the gospel or living the life of a missionary, I would assume, did the both of you have to go to a Missionary Training Center or where did you get your training about what kind of humanitarian and welfare needs that you would be doing?

BROTHER WALTON: We went to Provo, like everybody else did. We just had an extra week of specifically humanitarian welfare training.

INTERVIEWER: What kind of training did they give you then?

BROTHER WALTON: They gave us the directions as to what we would be doing and *how* would we be doing it. We would go out and find people and service projects to do. Service projects, they call them "area initiatives", and so we would go *find* those while we were at the MTC they taught us some of the paperwork that would be required. Unlike many missionaries, we had two people that we communicated with on a regular basis. The humanitarian welfare was out of Hong Kong, and we spoke and dealt with what would they call....area managers?

SISTER WALTON: Yeah, area.

BROTHER WALTON: Yeah, they were area. And then our ecclesiastic leader was our Mission President, President Skelton out of Singapore. We just had a combination, our mission, ended up being a, we did *both* jobs. Halfway through our mission we were called to help in the proselyting part of the Church and help develop a new branch over there.

INTERVIEWER: So, again, for those who, for those who are just joining us we are speaking with Brother and Sister Walton, who served in Malaysia on a humanitarian welfare mission. Now you had, after you had finished your time in Provo at the Missionary Training Center, you of course went on a flight there to Malaysia. What was it like and what was your first impression when you got off the plane and, and were in Malaysia now?

BROTHER WALTON: Well, we had a long ride, unfortunately, but we first went to Singapore, again Singapore is just, there is a bridge that connects Singapore and Malaysia and that's where the Church's office is at, and that's where the Mission President was. And we spent a couple of days there getting our instructions from him and getting information as to what was expected of *us* based upon *his* needs and then also explaining our, what we call visa runs. We, were on a 90 day visitors visa so we would have to leave the country every 90 days.

INTERVIEWER: What was, what was it like?

SISTER WALTON: The weather, it was quite humid. More so than we were used to. We were used to a dry climate. And, but the people were wonderful. Very friendly, and we just, you know, would talk to anyone we could along the way and well, where we, when we went to our apartment, first of all we got into a taxi and loaded all our stuff into a taxi and we told him the address. [BEGINS LAUGHING] The taxi driver wasn't even sure where it was at either. So, but we finally found our apartment and I was very pleasantly surprised, it was much nicer than I ever expected.

INTERVIEWER: For those who don't know, this was where you would stay for the *entire* eighteen months. You were not transferred around, is that correct?

SISTER WALTON: No, we *were* transferred around. [THE SIGNAL IS POOR HERE, THERE IS SOME SKIPPING] We were transferred up, [A BREAK OR A PAUSE IN THE SIGNAL]...in the middle of our mission.

BROTHER WALTON: That's where the proselyting [A BREAK IN THE SIGNAL] side of it came into be a, when we talked about President Skelton asking us if we would, shall we say, extend ourselves a little bit, and so we, transferred [STATIC] up to a, the, state of Penang to a little, I shouldn't say a little town, it was a million plus, but it was a place called Butterworth.

INTERVIEWER: Were the living conditions about the same in the two different areas?

BROTHER WALTON: Living conditions were the same, but the cities were altogether different.

INTERVIEWER: Really? What was different about them?

BROTHER WALTON: Oh, to give you an idea, we were all of four kilometers away from those big twin towers that you see on television and so it's very very modern. Kuala Lumpur is the equivalent of

Washington DC in fact it's not a state within Malaysia it's a federation, if you will, and so that's where all the embassies were located and just very, very *modern* city so yet at the same time you could look around the corner you'd find what they'd call "compones" which were very very *primitive* in our standards.

INTERVIEWER: And, so when you, when you got to your place in, KL or Kuala Lumpur, how soon then did you start to get to work? What was it, how or how soon were you getting to work then?

SISTER WALTON: Well, first off we called after we reached our apartment and we started to just get settled a little bit. We called the District President and we met with him soon after we had arrived there. We went to lunch with him, and got acquainted with him and also with a Branch President as well. But, it took us about the better, about a week, I guess, we took time and organized things the way we wanted them and found where the grocery store was and all those different types of things and then we were really ready and exited to go to work, after a week we were ready to get....

INTERVIEWER: Was there any certain type of fear? When you were coming here? Or did you just trust everything would be all right.

SISTER WALTON: No, we really didn't have a lot of fear and people have asked us that question many times, well, "weren't you nervous over there?" And, we really didn't feel that way. We looked at it in a lot of ways it was just kind of an exiting adventure, and, I don't know, the people there were so kind and good and *interesting* just so many different cultures, it was fun.

INTERVIEWER: This is Faith In Action on the Mormon Channel and we are speaking with Brother Val Walton and Sister Margie Walton who served in Malaysia as missionaries for eighteen months a humanitarian welfare mission. Brother and Sister Walton, What kind of things and projects did you do while you were there in Malaysia?

BROTHER WALTON: That was one of the most difficult things for us to get going, in our own mind. We didn't get a lot of specifics as to what we *should* be doing, it was up to us to find it. We worked with, with what is called an NGO and we had no idea what that was. That's a non-governmental organization, they're volunteer organizations. So we had to try and find out what to do. Now the Church, they have major initiatives, wheelchairs, you've heard of wheelchairs and we were involved with that, the Church helps with the Neonatal Resuscitation Training where doctors and nurses would come to countries and we were following up with that, there was a major one of those done, these are some of the things, we had seven *major* initiatives, a lot of people say, "well what about water projects?" Well, in west Malaysia where there was no need, so we didn't do that. So our major *challenge*, if I can put it that way, was to try and find the area initiatives that Hong Kong and Salt Lake would allow us to do and after a lot of, of stumbling and frustration and prayer to try to find out what we were to do, some of the main things that we started doing was this was where the welfare came into play. We got together with the branches, there's no stakes in Malaysia. We got together with the local district actually and the branches and says, "would you help us put together some tables and chairs?" Physically put together some tables and chairs and, and finish them and then give them to the needy schools." In this case the needy schools happened to be the, the Indian population and that was one of our first major product, projects we got involved. The *key* to the whole thing was, of course, finding the need which is always easy, but what the Church was trying and is still trying to do is to teach the principle of, of welfare, the, the provident living, you know the Church has a major website on that. And to teach not only the recipients, but the *givers* and so this is what was one of the major projects that we did.

INTERVIEWER: Brother Walton, for those who may not be members of the Church, could you explain the principle of "provident living", or the principle of welfare as you've mentioned?

BROTHER WALTON: [15.47.9] Well, the simplest way would be to use the old phrase, is to teach people how to fish rather than give them a fish. And so we would use our donations that members and non-members would give to the Church to be able to supply, in this case tables and chairs but in so much of the place in the world food and clothing and etc, etc is given through the Welfare Program of the Church.

INTERVIEWER: [16.20.8] Now, Sister Walton, I assume you were a part of this as well, getting all the tables and chairs set up and helping, helping get a, this area initiative going. What kind of work was needed to build these tables? Who was involved in doing that?

SISTER WALTON: That was the fun part. We were able to involve the branch members, the youth, our first project involved the youth and their leaders and some parents of the children that attended the school. And then we were also able to involve the principal of the school, they call them "headmasters" and also some of the PTA members came out, and we had a great group of people and we just got together. The tables were already in pieces and so we had to assemble them and then put a coat of clear varnish on them to protect them. And the youth really enjoyed that. They really got into the project. Many of them had never done anything like that before in their lives and so they thought it was really fun. I remember asking some of the young women about it and they said, "Oh! We've got three chairs put together!" They were really excited.

INTERVIEWER: How many chairs and tables were there?

SISTER WALTON: There were about forty tables and, enough, I can't remember how many chairs....

BROTHER WALTON: A hundred and twenty chairs.

SISTER WALTON: A hundred and twenty chairs that went with that first project.

BROTHER WALTON: This material was bought locally this is the thing that the Church is trying to do is rather than ship this stuff around the world from Salt Lake, we would get it, get our funds ,of course, from the humanitarian part of the Church's donations and we'd, that would come from Salt Lake to Hong Kong and to us. And so we would have to find suppliers locally and that served multiple purposes. Number one it helped their economy. Rather than the cost of shipping.

INTERVIEWER: These schools, they had no idea that, that this was going to be coming? Is that correct?

BROTHER WALTON: No, we got together, the way we would do this, we would get together with the, either the NGOs or *in this case* we happened to get together with a previous district and branch President, he was an Indian man that lived in the area and we asked him, who could be recipients of this? And he says, "I've got schools all the place." He was involved with it very heavily. And so with his help we identified...how many schools did we do? We did one, this particular one, but we did three within the Kuala Lumpur area. Throughout the period... [THE SIGNAL CUTS OUT]...over a year it took us to put it all together.

INTERVIEWER: Was there any feeling from the recipients of, or any attitude of, "why would you, why would you do this? Why would you come all the way from America to come and help us out?"

SISTER WALTON: We were asked that a lot. People just couldn't quite understand why we would donate our time and come over from our country to, we were, you know many people were very fascinated by that. And we stood out quite a bit over there and so we had a lot of questions about things like that. And we gained a lot of respect with many people because of the fact that we had volunteered our time.

INTERVIEWER: How would, how would you answer them, Sister Walton? When they ask, “why are you, why are you giving of your time to come and do this?”

SISTER WALTON: Well, it was easy. I just got so I loved the people so much [SISTER WALTON BECOMES A LITTLE EMOTIONAL, HER VOICE IS SHAKY] I started to just tell them I like to help others and I like to serve and, you know, we automatically became very good friends that way.

BROTHER WALTON: Just one thing that we have made clear I guess, *Malaysia* is a Muslim country. And fifty percent of the population is Muslim. And so, and so we were dealing with...the government is Muslim and that's who we would deal with, and then you have Chinese, which are Buddhist, the Indian are Hindu, and then whatever else. You know then you've got some Christian organizations in there, too. So as, this is another thing that was quite remarkable in that regards, they couldn't understand why some white, *Christian* people were coming into a *Muslim* country wanting to help out Muslims.

INTERVIEWER: That's amazing! That's absolutely amazing. I can only *imagine* what their feelings were when you were giving them of this service. Now this table and chair project, for these schools that you were doing, was this the *only* project that you did while you were there? Or how many projects did you end up doing?

BROTHER WALTON: Not enough.

SISTER WALTON: We did another project that was really fun, with some single, struggling mothers. We worked with an NGO, his name was Henry he was a very large Indian man, a very solid good man and he tried to help our group of Indian single mothers that were struggling and we were able to get some sewing machines and go in and do a sewing machine project where we were able to teach them how to learn to sew. And then they were able in turn, to be able to look for employment and be able to find a way to better themselves with their lives. And that was a very rewarding project. It was done in a few different states, in fact I think it's still going on today over there with the next couple.

INTERVIEWER: That's incredible. Do you know, by any chance, how long humanitarian missionaries have been serving there?

BROTHER WALTON: If I'm not mistaken, we were the second ones going in.

INTERVIEWER: So this was very new, new to the mission and new to the area.

BROTHER WALTON: Yes, there's been lots of proselyting couples in the past. But as far as the humanitarian couples coming in it was a, we replaced a, I'm almost sure it was the first couple that went in there.

INTERVIEWER: Brother Walton, of all the projects that you did, did you have a *favorite* project? I know that's difficult, that's like asking which of your children are your favorite, but was there one that you particularly enjoyed more than the others?

BROTHER WALTON: The first one was most satisfying because it was difficult to put together and that was the tables and chairs. But what I gained, what I had so much fun with was seeing the people that we would work with, *step up* and take hold of what we were trying to teach them. One of the, in fact one of the, one of the, one of the *last* things that we finally ended up delivering to a school, we put together a small, what would you call that? School kit! And they put, you know, your ward and stakes have done school kits and

taken them up to the Humanitarian Center you know for years. We've done that. Well, in KL again the economy is quite interesting you have very very wealthy people, unbelievably wealthy and then you have the unbelievably poor. And one of the things that are going to get them out of poverty of course is the education. And so through the help again, with, we primarily worked with the youth. We had two districts that we worked with, worked with the youth to put together school kits and put them together in bags. Pencils, papers erasers, you know this type of thing like you do here locally, we bought it there locally and put it together based upon the needs that was necessary for *that* area, in that part of the world. And we did three of those, you know the first ones we started to do, we did much of the work except for the labor side of it. Putting together. And then the very last one about the only thing that we were involved with was making sure we had the *money* and that was by the help of the Church. The sisters and brothers that we had working organized the committees, they gathered the material, and delivered the items to the various, needy schoolkids throughout the area.

INTERVIEWER: That's amazing. Were there, you had mentioned other helpers. Were there other missionaries? Other humanitarian and welfare missionaries there that were, that were there to assist you?

BROTHER WALTON: No we were there by ourselves. You know, there was, a couple in East Malaysia, we never did get to meet them, other than by phone. Indonesia is just right ...[SIGNAL CUTS OUT]...you know, and there there's a, *two* humanitarian couples in Indonesia because of the tsunami and everything that took place and they did a lot of humanitarian work there, the Church spent, you know, millions of dollars there because of that tsunami back in the middle, you know, what, 2004? Is that what it was? Well, we were just there by ourselves but at the same time we weren't because we had a *lot* of real good Church members there.

INTERVIEWER: And they would come out and help just at the drop of a hat, I would assume.

BROTHER WALTON: Pretty much. I mean it was new to them, and sometimes we didn't know whether or not the first go around, how many would come, but the more they got involved in it, the more they got excited and they were always asking, "when's the next one? When's the next one?"

INTERVIEWER: Now as it, as it was getting closer to the end, you had mentioned about halfway through you ended up going and becoming proselyting missionaries.

BROTHER WALTON: Well we never did stop being humanitarian we just did both. *Unlike* the proselyting missionaries there we rented a car while we were there, and there was kind of what you would call a freeway system a toll system that we could go up and down the peninsula. And so when we moved up north we would still do our humanitarian, we'd go back and forth throughout the countryside. We put over, about 45,000. kilometers on our car within the year and a half we were there.

INTERVIEWER: Were there any other projects that had significant meaning to you? Much like the, much like the tables and chairs?

BROTHER WALTON: You know I'm going to twist it just a little but for you, again, we, we were asked by our Mission President to go up and help start up a new branch. And that was quite a challenge and a lot of people didn't like the idea and we got to know a lot of people and some people *really* liked the idea and so, but it was a big challenge. About three weeks ago, we got an email from the couple that replaced us, and that now is a full-fledged *branch* and so our satisfaction was something of seeing the Church grow temporally as well as spiritually.

INTERVIEWER: Brother Walton, would you mind sharing your testimony with us? And then Sister Walton

would you share yours as well, please?

BROTHER WALTON: I had a great testimony when I left, I had no question about the gospel and about its truthfulness, and during the time I was there, that *we* were there, serving, our testimonies, and I'll let Margie speak of her own, but my testimony grew, as far as the gospel is concerned but the main thing that, that the gospel that I'd learned, I'm having a hard time with this. [BROTHER WALTON IS VERY MOVED AT THIS POINT] Where my testimony grew, was in people. Knowing that people, no matter what the circumstances are, are always willing to help one another. The Lord definitely loves me, and during the time that we were there He protected me, I love the gospel for what it's done for me and my family and the relationship that Margie and I have for each other. Our Father in Heaven, He definitely knows who I am, and I'm so grateful for our Savior.

SISTER WALTON: I know the Church is true, and I am so grateful for the opportunity that we have had to serve in Malaysia. When we first got our calling I knew *then* how much the Lord loved me, and when we opened up the envelope, I just could feel tingles all through my body about what we were doing and what was going to be ahead of us. [BEGIN MUSIC] And we had such a wonderful experience and I knew as well that the Lord loves me and that I was one of his children and He was looking after us constantly.

[MUSIC CONTINUES]

NARRATOR: You have been listening to, Faith In Action on the Mormon Channel.

[MUSIC ENDS]