

TV host to philanthropy

Helping the world one soul at a time

Simone Leslie, long-time face of Good Morning Australia, is now making a global difference

Layne Whitburn

SHE was the bright and beautiful face of Good Morning Australia more than 20 years ago. Simone Leslie was living in Sydney with the world at her feet, but behind the screen stood a suicidal young woman riddled with fear and doubt.

Now Simone, her husband David and their three children, Liam, 15, Isabella, 12, and Solomon, 9, are living along the calming shores of Maroochy River, where Simone fills her days as a master neuro strategist, speaker and author travelling the world teaching wealth creation, health, love, career success and, of course, happiness.

Together, Simone and David have three ministry arms – Soul Focus Ministries, Heavenly Whispers and Mission 58 – and through these organisations have founded several orphanages and early learning centres in third world countries including Cambodia, Zambia, Ethiopia and Kenya.

We caught up with the husband and wife duo to see what their next philanthropic project involves.

David, as the founder of Soul Focus Ministries, what's your goal behind this organisation?

D: To share the love of God and to make a practical difference. We run crusades and teaching seminars in Africa, sometimes having up to 60,000 people in attendance. As part of the ministry we also conduct economic summits.

Simone, how did your philanthropic project, Heavenly Whispers, come about?

S: Heavenly Whispers began in 2011 when I self-published my book, It's OK to be Beautiful – Heavenly Whispers to a Broken Heart. It is my giving back or paying it forward side.

Having learnt how to overcome crippling anxiety and suicidal depression, I just couldn't keep the keys and map out of that dark place to myself, and not everyone can afford to pay for the gift so Heavenly Whispers is the arm of my business where I teach and give to others who are financially less fortunate.

Be it speaking at conferences in developing countries or some need in our own neighbourhood, my message generally comes back to "the foundations of success", which is learning to love and accept ourselves right where we are now – warts and all, perfectly imperfect! I know as a woman we are prone to doubting our worth and value and I love being a part of that revelation and breakthrough.

How has David helped you achieve success with Heavenly Whispers?

S: The first conference Heavenly Whispers ran was under the banner of Soul Focus Ministries, David's African missions arm – talk about pushing you out of your comfort zone! He had been going to Africa for years whilst I was happy to stay at home with our young children. I just needed to physically be a part of it, to experience it first hand and be united with my husband on the mission field. So, miraculously, we were able to organise everything to make it happen and I was super excited to be a small part of the team.

Your latest not-for-profit vehicle, Mission 58, is still in the planning process. What is its mission?

S: Mission 58 will go into the rural slums and transform them by creating self-sustainable communities, addressing orphans,



▶ Simone spending some time in Ethiopia with Soul Focus Ministries in March 2014.

PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED.

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water supply, medical, education, vocational training/ placement, micro enterprise and agriculture developments.

Have you and David started visiting some of the locations and meeting the people Mission 58 will help?

S: Yes, David visited the town of Kiamichi in Kenya with our eldest son Liam in October 2016. This will be our first project.

What was the response from the people of Kiamichi?

S: These people have an extraordinary level of gratitude, even for what they have – every day is a gift. They have seen and experienced so much hardship and suffering. Way too many women you meet have lost a child for reasons that we would be outraged by in the western world. Words cannot describe the gift we receive from the people in these communities. Their generous and beautiful hearts bring overwhelming tears of love, gratitude and perspective.

Simone, as a successful neuro strategist, speaker, author, wife and mother, you are a very busy woman. What keeps you driven to inspire and help others?

I don't actually consider myself 'busy'. I build 'me time' and 'family time' into my schedule. That is super important for

sustainability. I am firstly a wife and a mother, then a neuro strategist, author and speaker. I have a simple yet profound vision that keeps me motivated through challenges, fears and doubts.

Since having David in your life, what has he taught you?

S: David has helped to grow me into the woman I want to become. He is my stability, strength, love, joy, laughter, adventure, freedom, truth, wisdom, fun and vision. David is an awesome husband and father, an incredible provider and nurturer. He is gifted with a phenomenal entrepreneurial mind and a pastoral heart.

I am still learning every day from him, but one of the greatest gifts he has taught me is to step out of my comfort zone. If we bow down to fear and doubt our whole life, we will never achieve what we were created to do. And that, for me, would come with a price tag too costly to bear.

David, what has Simone taught you?

D: She is an awesome wife and taught me so much. Many years ago we went through a tough time after the global financial crash. We struggled to hang on to what we had built. She was a great support to me. As the main provider in my family, she encouraged me in dark times.

How has becoming parents shaped the people you are today? What have your kids taught you?

S: Being a mum has expanded my heart, mind, spirit, soul...



▶ David and Simone Leslie established a not-for-profit childcare centre in Kenya.



PHOTOS: CONTRIBUTED



▶ Simone Leslie with her children Solomon and Isabella.

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