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Week 39 Christmas Shoes and Smiles
Hosts: Randy Robison and Sheila Walsh
John Bevere #1

Randy: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm Randy Robison sitting in for my parents. And not alone, the woman with the lovely accent to my right is Miss Sheila Walsh.

Sheila: Do I have to say something with a lovely accent? I think I just did!

Randy: You just did! Well done! Well played. And we have a wonderful guest today. I know you like this book a lot.

Sheila: I love this book! Would you please welcome our guest John Bevere.

John: Hi Sheila! Hi Randy!

Randy: Good to have you here!

John: It's great to be here with you guys.

Sheila: I have to say I'm a book person; that's what I do for a hobby, I just read and read and read. But I'll tell you the first chapter of this book and it's called *Good or God?* -- interesting title -- first chapter shocked me. Would you set up as to how you came to write this book?

John: Well, what happened is a national leader actually approached me and he said, "John, you've written a lot of books but there is one you have to write. It's heaven's mandate on your life." I remember when he said that to me the presence of God came all over me. He said, "This book will influence the body of Christ more than anything you've written."

So a month later I got up and spoke on this to my team. The young people on our team went nuts. They said, "Please speak more about this." *But Good or God?* In our society today, if something is good we automatically assume it is God; right? So if good is so obvious why then does the book of Hebrews tell us that we have to have discernment to recognize the difference between good and evil? Why does King Solomon at the beginning of his reign cry out to God

and say, "God, give me your servant an understanding heart that I might discern between good and evil."

If you look at the rich young ruler, he came running up to Jesus. He said, "Good teacher, what did I do to get to eternal life?"

And Jesus corrects him and says, "Why do you call good? Nobody is good but God."

Now is Jesus not good? No, he is perfect good. What Jesus is saying is you have a different standard of good. Your reference point for good is different than God's. If you look at two families moving into a \$150,000 home. To one family it is bad move, to one family it is a good move. The family who it's a good move they came out of a one bedroom apartment. The family that it's a bad move, they came out of a \$2 million estate. What Jesus is saying is your reference point is off.

When God really got my attention on this message I was getting ready to speak to 6,000 leaders from all over the Middle East and Eastern Europe in Sweden. I'm in my hotel room and I'm actually having a couple hours of prayer with the Holy Spirit. I had judged something to be good and the Holy Spirit, in my hotel room said, "No, it's not." And actually gave me scripture.

Well, I got a little frustrated because what he was calling not good I was sure was good. And finally I just almost slammed my foot down on the floor and said, "But God, all the good..."

And the Holy Spirit said this to me, Sheila, he said, "It wasn't the evil side of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that Eve was drawn to, it was the good side."

And when he said that to me I was like oh, boy! And I flew over to Genesis in my Bible. And Randy, I saw the words, "When she saw the tree was good and it was desirable and pleasant she partook of it." All the sudden I realized... I look at Jesus. Jesus is constantly -- he warns about deception right before he returns. And there is only one problem with deception, it's deceiving. The person that's deceived believes with all their heart they're right when in reality they're wrong. That's scary.

Sheila: That's very scary actually because I think anybody watching in right now is going to say, "How do I know the difference then between good and God's good?"

John: That's true. And so Jesus said, "If even possible, the elect are going to be deceived." I always wondered. I was like how in the world can Christians be deceived? And all of the sudden I realized, Christians are not going to be deceived by drug-infested parties, by satanic

rock concerts. They're going to be deceived by the good side of evil. In other words, evil can put on good. So I realized that there is a good that will actually lead us away.

Proverbs says, chapter 14, verse 12 says: There is a way that seems right -- it seems good, it seems beneficial -- to a man but its end is the way of death. Now, the way of death means it is going to lead you to a place you don't want to find yourself. So I began to realize that what is really going to catch up us, as a body of Christ, the church, us as individuals, is not a blatant evil but a good.

See, if you just look at our society, it's very transient. If you look at 50 years ago...

Okay let me just do a little simple example. Now I'm not -- please, I hope our viewers understand I'm not picking on movies. But if you look at a movie today in our society, people go to PG-13 movie and think nothing of it when they hear God's name used in vain. They'll see two people in bed that aren't even married having sex together and aren't even married. You'll see people using witchcraft and all this other stuff. But these aren't the evil people in the movie, these are our heroes.

Now take that same movie show it 50 years ago, all of America would have been in an uproar. They would have protested, they would have said, how dare you put a man and a woman together in bed.

What happened? Our lines move; our society is transient, that's what the world is. And so the question we have to ask is is the church a subculture or are we a counterculture? You see, if you look at historians when they wrote about the early church, the Roman historians they said, "These Christian people, they live by our laws but they live above the law." They said, "They live under laws that we don't even understand."

So my question is has the church, have we kind of moved because the standard of good has changed with our society or have we stayed true to what God calls is good? And if Eve could be deceived in this perfect environment... Think about it! She's never been gossiped about. Nobody ever lied to her. She's never been abused by God. But yet the enemy can get her deceived? How much more today us, in this corrupt society?

Sheila: Can we do back to that because I think that's huge, John. I always thought that just like almost a presupposition that, Eve was kind of weak, that she just was easily was deceived. But what you say is, she is living in this world that is heavy with the presence of God. There is no evil. So how was the enemy able to distract her from that so that she stepped outside of that?

John: It's important that we answer that because if you look at Paul, Paul said to the entire

Corinthian church, he said, "I'm concerned that your pure and undivided devotion to Christ is going to be corrupted" -- listen to the word corrupted -- "just as the serpent deceived Eve." So he compares that.

And if you think, hey, she is in that perfect environment, how did he do it? Excellent question! Well, the first thing we have to realize is that when God put Adam in the garden the command was this: You may freely eat of every tree in the garden except one. So his generosity, his goodness emphasizes, you can eat from all of these trees. The fact that he wanted genuine relationship and not robot said, "except one."

Now everybody only thinks, but there are only two trees. No! Horticulturists tell us there is over 2500 different fruit-bearing trees in the whole world. So we have to believe that there is at least one of each of those represented in the garden. So let's do it that way. There is 2499 trees she can eat from and he gets her eyes on the one -- and God says, "except for one." So the enemy comes along; the first words out of his mouth to Eve is, "So you can't eat from every tree can you?"

So he gets her eyes off of the 2499 on to the one tree she can't eat. Now think about it; how much God has given us. Did you wake up this morning? Did you have clean water? Did you have shoes to put on your feet? Did you have a roof over your head? Did you have a blanket? Did you have sunshine on you today? I could go on the rest of the show and on into the middle of the night talking about all the good that God has given us. Right? But he gets her eyes off of everything that God has given them and gets her eyes on the one tree.

So now she is looking at this tree and the real key of his strategy, the next step is he negates the Word of God. She says, "Oh, we can't eat it or touch it unless we're going to die."

He says, "Oh, no, you won't die."

Now think about it. How often does this happen with us? Let's just use an example. Two Christians -- now we're talking Christians here -- they have fallen in love but they've got two different apartments; they have utilities to pay, they have all this and they go, "You know what? We're going to be married one day. Let's save money and move in together."

Well, we ignore the fact that God's Word says, "Don't let fornication once be named among you." We just completely throw that out. The Word of God has been negated because we see a good here -- it is going to save us money. We can give more to missions; and all of the sudden now we are choosing our wisdom over God's.

So the next thing the enemy does, she is looking at this tree and she judges it to be good because it is good. And he says, "For God knows." What he is saying is God's withholding something from you. There is something good for you and your husband in that tree that God is withholding from you. The moment he does that because she is going, wait a minute, God is withholding us; he perverts the character of God, makes him look like a taker instead of the giver he is and she turns on him. Now how often do people get upset, my daughter didn't get healed the day we prayed for her? We didn't receive that answered prayer. And so the enemy comes in, perverts the character of God in our eyes and now we choose our wisdom over his.

Randy: I dare say we're all there at some point in our lives where we feel like God, there's got to be more. Or that's not what I'm looking for. And so I think with good intentions we say, "I'm not getting from God what I need so I'm going to find something that's good."

John: I'm going to find it outside; that's the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and the tree of life. The tree of life is just living in God, trusting his wisdom is the best for my life because God never gives us any command that isn't good for us. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil is I know what's good for my life apart from God's wisdom; that's the two trees, that's why that's the focus. And that's why James comes along in the New Testament and says, "Don't be deceived." That's not a negative. What James is saying is you can be deceived-proof.

How can you be deceived-proof? He said, "Just know that every good and perfect gift comes from above." What he is saying is, there is nothing good for you outside of God. I don't care how good it looks, how much you think it's going to make you, what it's going to do for your life. If it's not from God, if it is contrary to his wisdom don't mess with it because it will ultimately -- we're talking long run -- be detrimental. It might be really nice in the short run but it will ultimately be detrimental.

Sheila: I think one of the greatest challenges for believers and I know I encountered this in my own life and with women that I talk to is how can God be both loving and sovereign? Because I talked to a woman last week who said, "I buried two sons. So you have to pick one: God is either good but I buried two sons so he is not powerful or he is powerful but I buried two sons so he is not loving." How do we line up our understanding of the character of God with what God's Word says and the life we're living?

John: Those sons never would have died had Adam and Eve not disobeyed God. So we have to realize when God put Adam and Eve on the earth he gave the earth to them. But when Adam and Eve turned the earth, the world, over to the enemy, because remember, Satan said to Jesus, "All this..." He showed him all the kingdoms of the world and said, "This has been delivered to me. It was given to me." Who was it given to him by? By Adam.

So we have to realize when mankind -- there was no sickness in the garden, there was no poverty, there was no disease, there was no pestilence, there was no hurricanes, none of that was there. The result of that came from Adam and Eve disobeying God. That's "the end is the way of death."

However Jesus came to redeem it. We weren't utterly lost and separated from God for eternity, Jesus came; and if we would look at things through 70 -- and not 70, in 80 years, but we look at things through the eternal perspective, he has redeemed us out of all death and all pain and all sorrow. We just have to endure this time because it is more important for us to be here to represent him to people who don't know him than it is for us to go to heaven and be comfortable with him. That's what Paul was trying to figure out, "I would rather go be with him. It's far better. But if I stay here, I get to do more for Jesus." That's should be all of our attitudes.

Sheila: I think one of the most merciful things that God ever did was to put Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden because if they had remained in the Garden of Eden they would have eaten of the tree of life and lived forever -- broken.

John: They would have been in that broken state forever.

Sheila: So that's grace, really. Isn't it? It is almost the first act of incredible ridiculous grace that God would move us out until he could provide the ultimate sacrifice of Christ.

John: To me the dividing line of what is good and what is not good as far as circumstances like you just mentioned, Jesus said, "The thief comes to kill, to steal, to destroy. I have come that you might have abundant life." Thank God that he sent his son because now our family, we will be united forever and ever and ever because of what Jesus has done.

When you look at eternity compared to 70-80 years, James says it is a vapor but in reality it is zero because any finite number divided by infinity is zero. We know that in simple mathematics. So basically, we're living in a zero time right now. Eternity is the real thing we should all be focused in on.

And my Bible says, Jesus said this -- he said it so clearly -- "I've given you power over all the power of the enemy and nothing will be able to hurt you. No one can pluck you out of my hands."

So you know what? When we firmly root ourselves in him, I have a dad in heaven. My dad went to heaven this year. I have a sister that went to heaven when she was 14. You know what? I have complete joy and complete joy because I know I'm going to spend eternity with my dad and my sister. But now I'm doing work here. So I kind of look at it as my son, my son is in

Australia right now. He is going to Hillsong Leadership Bible School. So I'm not real happy about being separated from him for a year but I'm real, real happy because he's getting imparted into him the ability to do the work of the kingdom. When we seek first the kingdom all the sudden our perspectives become right and we really understand what really is good and what really is masked as good that is trying to pull us away from God -- is a good way of saying it.

Randy: Why do you think we don't get this? Why don't we live with the passion that you have for finding the God and why do we settle for the good?

John: I believe with all my heart it's one reason, because we don't receive Jesus Christ as our Lord, we receive him as savior. So when you look at Jesus "I want you as my savior," it is all about me. Save me out of what I'm lost in.

Now don't get me wrong, he came to seek and save that which is lost, but you see, Jesus never said, "Follow me and I'll give you peace, I'll give you health, I'll give you this." He looked at them and said, "Follow me and I'll make you a fisher of men."

If you look at Peter and James and John, all these guys he called to follow him, he didn't promise them anything. He just said, "Follow me." You want to know why they followed him? Because of who he was, not because of what he could give them. When we understand he is life -- I mean the angels that are around the throne, they don't want to be anywhere else in creation. What comes out of them is "Holy!" And they're shaking the doorposts of a building that seats about a billion people in heaven. And they're not saying, "We've been doing this for 10 trillion years. Can we have a break and see some other parts of creation?" They don't want to be anywhere else because there is nothing in creation more beautiful than the creator himself.

Now when we understand that we want relationship over blessing. See Moses was passionate about knowing God. He left the most comfortable lifestyle in the whole world and he never once said, "I want to go back to Egypt; it was better for me."

Israel was abused by Egypt, they're constantly saying, "We want to go back." Why? Because Moses wanted God's presence more than he wanted his promises; Israel wanted the promises more than his presence.

So when we come to Jesus, if we would introduce the church -- if we would introduce Jesus as Lord. See Lord is found over 7800 times in the Bible, savior is found 36. Where do you think God puts the emphasis? Lord speaks of supreme authority. It speaks of he's my king.

So if you look at the Bible, it never said, "Thou shalt confess to the savior Jesus." It says, "If thou shalt confess to the Lord Jesus." So what happens is when we lose our life and we give our

life completely to him, Jesus said that's the only way you can follow me; deny yourself, pick up your cross and follow me. When we do that, that's when we find real life because we gain his life.

So here I am, I've been a Christian 36 years. Why do I still have this fire? Why do I still have this passion? Why do I still have this zeal? I'm not jaded. I'm not cynical. I love God's people because I always revert back to the lordship of Jesus.

But if I see him just as my savior, then if I'm not getting what I want, then all the sudden I'm going to be like [grumbling] and I'm going to get an attitude. But when I realize oh, my gosh! Anything he gives me -- anything he gives me! He's already given me his presence. He's already given me a promise of heaven. What more could I ask for?

But yet he says, "Oh, I'm going to load you down and I'm going to bless you in this life." So when we understand that, we look at life so much different. Hey, God knows what's best for me. He's my king. I'm not questioning his wisdom. That's why James says, this is how you become deception-free. You realize there is nothing good for you outside of God. If people just really get a hold of that then all of the sudden they're free from deception and being misled.

Sheila: Christianity is not an all skate.

Randy: That is good!

Sheila: That is profound! That's life changing, people!

Randy: I would encourage you to get John's book and I would further encourage you to get John's book when you do something good that is of God as we reach out and help people around the world this Christmas. John's book will make a great Christmas gift. You can read it for yourself and then give it to someone for Christmas. But right now you can give children some shoes and some smiles. Take a look at this.

On the mission field

Announcer: From your family to our family, your generosity has empowered *LIFE*'s mission efforts around the world -- and the look on these children's faces makes the impact obvious. It's in the smile of Mateo as he receives a bowl of food made possible by your giving or of Gabriella as she quenches her thirst from a clean water well that you helped drill. You could even say you make it your business to give children smiles.

Well, this Christmas we'd like to give a smile to someone who might not easily be able to smile otherwise. You see, all over the world there are children who have trouble smiling because they were born with a cleft lip or palate. But a simple surgery by loving doctors can radically transform the appearance of children like these and greatly improve their quality of life.

But they won't be the only ones smiling this Christmas because with your help we also want to give a brand-new pair of shoes to children who have never had them.

Tammy: You can see all of the little ones, honestly, the smiles on their faces, it's so exciting to be a part of it. You can look around at all of the children in this village and most of them are without shoes. They can lose their very lives because of an infection that they could get on their feet.

Announcer: Help make this Christmas special for a child like this. Help us provide Christmas shoes and smiles.

End of clip

In the studio

Randy: Good stuff! We've got some gifts for you. This is a Christmas ornament; you can hang it on your tree so you can remember what you did for children. They will never forget what you do for them. I encourage you to go to the phones, go online and let's give some shoes to some kids. What do you think about this whole thing?

Sheila: I think it's beautiful. One of the things my husband Barry and I have been talking about this. And before our son Chris was born we were told that there was something really wrong with him. We were told he was not compatible with life. We were told to end his life. We said, "No, we..." I remember saying to Christian, even though I was only 20 weeks pregnant, "I will fight for every breath that you get to take." And the wrong results had been put in my chart and we have this beautiful healthy boy who is about to go off to college.

But as Barry and I talked about this, we want to do two -- we want to provide for two of those surgeries. When you look into the faces of those little ones, as they grow up, not to be able to eat well, not to be able to look in someone else's face and smile because you're ashamed of how you look. So if you feel that's something you could do, \$1,000 will provide for two of these surgeries and literally change the life and the future for some children. Maybe you can only do one -- that would be wonderful! But some of the stories we'll not get to hear the end results down here but when we get home and we see the difference that we made in the life of even one child, that's the best Christmas gift of all.

Randy: Very cool! Thank you for doing that. You're literally going to enable a child to smile. How does that make you feel?

Sheila: Amazing because my son said to me, because he's only got 13 days before he goes to college, "Mom, stop staring at me." And I'm trying but it's hard not to because I adore this boy.

John: Well, you have a handsome son!

Sheila: Thank you. But to be able to put a smile on the face of another child and what that will mean for the mom and the dad? To be able to do it is a privilege. So it's an honor to be able to change another child's life.

Randy: I can't thank everyone who helps because it does take a lot of people who do this but I can thank you. So thank you for engaging with us in the Shoes and Smiles campaign. The shoes are actually very critical. You don't think of shoes as something that may be a life or death situation but in many cases it actually is because of the infection that can get in. So it's really, astonishingly simple -- \$3.60 provides a pair of shoes for a child; \$36, you'll put shoes on 10 children. You'll change their lives, and it's a Christmas gift -- it's a great time of year to remind people around the world of Christ but it's also a Christmas gift that will give and give and give. So go to the phones, go online, give the best gift you can. You can be like Sheila and put a smile on a child's face.

John: You know what? Can we help on the feet? We'd love to do 100 kids. So we'll do 100 kids for the shoes.

[Applause]

And I say that. I was just wondering should I say it? But I want to say it here because I want to inspire others to do it. That's the only reason I'm saying it right now publicly.

Randy: Good stuff! Join John, join Lisa, go to the phones, go online. Put some shoes on some kids and smiles on their faces.

Begin video clip

Announcer: Poverty is a killer and because of it, children needlessly suffer not only from a lack of food and clean water but also from a lack of things we take for granted such as a healthy smile or a simple pair of shoes. For most of these children, they've never owned a new pair of shoes. And while that may seem minor in the light of all their needs, walking with bare feet puts them at risk of life-threatening infections that could lead to crippling consequences, disease, and even death.

By responding today you can help *LIFE* immediately secure and begin shipping Christmas shoes to 200,000 children around the world just in time for the holidays. Your gift of \$36 will help provide ten pairs of shoes. A gift of \$72 will help provide 20 pairs. And a gift of \$144 will help provide 40 pairs of Christmas shoes for children in need.

With your gift of any amount be sure to request this beautifully crafted green antique shoe ornament, a treasure to place on your tree each holiday season. With your gift of \$100 or more you may also request a special boxed set of *LIFE*'s Christmas shoe ornaments from past years.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1,000 or more to help provide over 275 pairs of shoes or two children with corrective cleft palate surgeries. And you may request our beautifully framed canvas print of "The Forest Chapel."

This is the last week. Please call, write, or make your gift online today!

End of clip

On the mission field

James: Betty what do you think about all these beautiful feet and these beautiful children?

Betty: I think they deserve some pretty little shoes on their feet: Don't you? It's not just to give them shoes -- it is to bless them, we want to bless them! But the shoes have a real important use too, James. They can protect their feet from getting cuts and bruises and also from disease.

James: We found out that hookworms actually get in the skin of their feet just sometimes walking in dirt or sand and then it actually ends up in their intestines and it can be deadly. Let's put shoes on all these beautiful children's beautiful feet! It would just be such a wonderful gift to make at this time. I hope you'll do all you can. Just give as many pairs as you can to bless as many children and their families as you can.

In the studio

Randy: I hope you will join us. I think John, something --

John: I think everybody could give at least 10 -- \$36! Think about it! One Christmas gift under a tree that maybe we might not even use six months later -- \$36, ten kids, that's amazing!

Randy: It is!

Sheila: And even to do it as a family. Wouldn't it be great to get your kids to kick in a couple of bucks to make them all a part of something? To make them realize people are not just praying for a new iPhone, they'd just love a pair of shoes.

Randy: Good stuff! I hope you'll do that. I hope you'll do it now. When you call, ask for John's book, *Good or God?* We want to send it to you. It will bless your life. You know what? There is more. In fact, I want you to come back on Thursday and we're going to talk to John about more of this, what this looks like in our lives, what holiness is. Is it something we can truly attain? So John, thank you for being here today but come back on Thursday.

Randy: Absolute pleasure.

Sheila: Wasn't he awesome?