

5/19/16
Week 21: WFL
Randy Robison and Sheila Walsh
Luci Swindoll and Marilyn Meberg

Randy: I'm in trouble today! Welcome to *Life Today*. I'm Randy Robison and I am surrounded by women -- and not just any women, but some *Women of Faith*. Sheila?

Sheila: This is going to be a very good time, people! Yes! I have known and loved these women for over 20 years. Would you please help me welcome the one only Marilyn Meberg and Luci Swindoll?

Luci: Thank you! Thank you!

Sheila: I'm so grateful when you both said that you would come and do this show because one of the things I've learned from hanging with you for so many years is -- oh, now I'm going to get emotional!

Marilyn: Good! Go for it, baby!

Sheila: You're the real deal. You know? You love Jesus. You love each other. You love people. I just want to say -- I just want to honor you because honestly, though you've poured your lives into me and into the five million women who came to *Women of Faith*, it's changed us so I just want to say thank you. You are rock stars!

Luci: You are very easy to love -- very, very easy.

Sheila: So the two of you, oh, Lord. -- The things that are coming up. Take us back a bit. How long have you been friends and how did you meet?

Luci: We've been friends 43 years. We met in 1973; is that right? '74, '75, '76?

Sheila: Close enough.

Luci: Yeah, close enough without counting. And we've been very close the whole time. When I met Marilyn I thought she was maybe the funniest person I've ever known.

Marilyn: You want to talk about funny? What does that mean?

Luci: It's hard to describe.

Marilyn: You don't mean odd.

Sheila: Strange.

Marilyn: Strange! Strange yeah!

Sheila: What a strange person. I'd probably say that.

Luci: She said funny things. I had moved from Dallas to California and I'm not married, never wanted to get married, never wanted to have children. She was married and had this wonderful family.

I said, "You know Marilyn, you don't really know what loneliness is because you're married and everything."

She said, "Marriage doesn't preclude loneliness."

I thought, what does preclude mean?

[Laughter]

I was thinking, I said, "I'm sorry, Marilyn. I don't know what preclude means."

She said, "I don't either but Rachmaninoff wrote one."

[Laughter]

I thought I love her! That's great!

Marilyn: She's strange.

Randy: How many years were you guys on the road together with *Women of Faith*?

Marilyn: Twenty years.

Randy: That had to be... There's got to be some stories here.

Sheila: Oh, there are stories. Yes! We could do a whole week really just with the stories.

Randy: Give me something here.

Sheila: Okay. Tell the story of when you were speaking in L.A. and you wonder if Lucy would like to come. You don't know each other very well at this point but it became a bonding moment.

Marilyn: Yes, yes, yes! Well, you're talking about...

[Laughter]

I met Chuck, I mean I knew Chuck and Cynthia, Ken and I were good friends with them, and I met Luci.

Luci: My brother -- they need to know he's my brother. Just so you know, Chuck Swindoll is my brother. Okay, go ahead.

Marilyn: So he said, "Marilyn, you and my sister are really going to hit it off."

And we did when we met and she moved in from Texas to California.

So I said to her, "We don't know each other well and I don't know if you might do this but I've got a speaking gig in Los Angeles." (I live now in Dallas.) "Would you want to go?"

She said, 'Yeah!'

I said, "Oh!"

So we went. Got on the freeway heading for L.A. and she says, "Marilyn, what is it with the California streets and freeways? They're a mess. You see stuff strewn, pieces of furniture, clothing, shoes, socks, tennis rackets."

Luci: Food! Food!

Marilyn: Yeah, yeah. And she said, "Why doesn't anybody tidy up in California?"

I went, "Well, I don't know."

I had noticed it but I never thought about it. So I did the deal and we're driving home; talking, talking, talking and I see ahead on the freeway the 410, a couch. So I just slowly pulled off the road. We were talking nonstop. I didn't say anything to her; she didn't say anything to me. Pulled up by the couch, stopped the car. We didn't stop our conversation, got out of the car, and went over and sat on the couch and kept on talking.

[Laughter]

Sheila: As one does.

Marilyn: As one does!

Luci: That's what a couch is for, to sit there and talk.

Marilyn: And the people going by, they thought it was weird. We got up -- you know we finished and got in the car. And all of this is wordless. We don't announce. We just nnnh -- time to start.

Sheila: That's one of the things I love about you, your wordlessness.

[Laughter]

Now many people will know your brother Chuck Swindoll as an international Bible teacher extraordinaire. Very few people know that you taught him to smoke.

[Laughter]

Luci: [Motioning she is crazy] Well, yes, I did.

Sheila: Do tell.

Luci: He was ten and I was twelve. We started young. We were sitting on the back porch; mother was in the kitchen. I called him "babe" because he was the baby of the family. We have an older brother and then I was born and then babe was born.

So I said, "Babe, I don't want you to tell this to mother but would you like me to teach you to smoke?"

And he said, "Why?"

I said, "Well, you never know when you might need it. I don't know. I don't smoke of course and you don't but I can teach you how."

He said, "Okay."

I said, "Swear to me you won't tell mother this."

He said, "No, I'm not going to tell mother."

I said, "Okay. See that post out there with the cedar bark on it?"

He said, "Yeah."

I said, "Go get the bark. Bring it to me and I'll go in and get a paper to wrap it in and I'll teach you to smoke a cigarette."

He said, "Okay."

"Swear to me you won't tell mother."

"No, I'm not going to tell mother."

So he goes out, gets the bark. I go in and the only paper I can find is an 8 1/2 by 11.

Sheila: That's a big cigarette. Yeah!

Luci: You've got to make a large cigarette. So I rolled the stuff up in it and it was about this long. He was holding it like that.

I said, "Baby, you can't hold it like that. You have to hold it like this. What I'm going to do is light the end and you just suck in and swallow."

He said, "Will it hurt me?"

I said, "No! No! I wouldn't do anything that would hurt me." I said, "Just swear to me."

He said, "No, I'm not going to tell mother. I'm not going to tell her."

So I lit the end and he just went... [sucks in] And it just went just like that -- just real fast. I didn't know. But I looked at his face and I thought, this is not good. His mouth was red. His teeth were red, the end of his nose was red and around this part of his cheeks were red. And he couldn't talk. I thought this is serious.

So about that time mother called us to dinner. We sat down and that night she had made his favorite meal which was chili. So when we got to the table, she said, "Look, honey. I've made your favorite food."

He said, "I don't care for any. I just don't care for any."

She said, "What do you mean?"

He said, "I'm just not hungry."

I thought if he tells her I'm going to have to hit him in the head.

She said, "Well, it is your favorite meal." So she dipped in, served him the chili and he didn't eat it.

Daddy looked at him and said, "Honey, this is your favorite food. Please eat it."

He said, "Sis taught me to smoke."

[Laughter]

I thought, well, my life is over. So I had not warned him about telling daddy. So daddy called the attention to himself and said, "Both of you please leave the table." We did. I got a spanking for teaching him to smoke and he got a spanking for telling it, and tattling, and that was the end of our smoking career. It lasted about eight minutes and that was it. Never smoked since. So that's it.

Then one day in church he's standing up to preach and he said, "By the way, my sister is here. Wave, sis!" So I waved. He said, "She taught me to smoke." Then he sat down.

[Laughter]

I still haven't heard the end of that.

Sheila: One of the things that we've had the joy for 20 years of standing on platforms around the country and really, it's amazing Randy, when you walk into an arena and it's filled with 15,000 women worshipping God. I remember the first time I walked in and I thought, this looks like they're expecting like Led Zeppelin or something. It's just us that are showing up with our purses.

I wonder what you think will be the lasting legacy of *Women of Faith*, Marilyn?

Marilyn: Wow! Well, here's what I would hope, Sheila. How many conversions did we -- there were 500,000?

Luci: There were about 429,000 women who accepted Christ, something like that.

Marilyn: 429,000 women are now assured of a place in heaven because they've come to know Jesus as their savior. That's the lasting legacy.

Then because there is so much depth taught or was so much depth of how to live the life and what is normal and natural to us is just to be human and to accept the fact that we are not perfect. We're perfect in God's eyes which is mind-boggling; that happened because of Jesus. He made us perfect. And to have women begin to grasp the transformation that is possible when you recognize I am perfect. I know I'm not but in God's eyes, I'm perfect because of Jesus. That is an amazing truth, of course, based on scripture. We were very true to scripture for those 20 years. No, not now, of course!

Sheila: Of course, not now! No!

[Laughter]

Marilyn: You can't go on forever.

Sheila: She's joking people! She's joking!

Randy: I have a question for all of you guys actually. Why -- there's a lot of great women speakers out there. There's several, and there's women's conferences all over, and they're all doing really good stuff. What made y'all's kind of blow up and become the big thing that it was? Why did so many women want to show up? I know but...

Marilyn: You know the answer to that?

Randy: I know women want to show up and hear you guys, I get that; that's not what I'm trying to say. I'm just saying there was something special. Something was different. It was kind of a movement, if you will. What was that about?

Luci: I'll give my answer to that. I think for one thing, all of us loved to laugh, and we loved to tell stories. And stories are very winsome when you have what's going on and then people can identify with that story in some way perhaps.

But we had so much fun. And people just kept coming and they would just show up and there wouldn't be a place for them to sit so they'd have to put them in a joint room, 500 over here and 2,000. Like the second time we did it, there were 8,000 people there and I thought what are they doing here? They just laughed. We had a lot of fun. If anybody had to leave the stage they would leave and come back just like we were in someone's living room. It was so sweet and casual and sort of tender. So that worked. And then we would do it the next weekend and then the following weekend. Each time we did it more and more people came.

I think it was because they felt very at home and loved and received. They didn't have to dress differently or do anything differently; they could just come and then they started bringing their friends. And in 20 years we spoke to five million people, five million women.

And Sheila was there. It was so fun when she came. She had the same mindset we did. And we sat on what they called "the porch." And Marilyn named it the porch because she said it looked like somebody's back porch. And we would sit out there and talk and then people would come and see us from the audience and they said, "We want you to meet our porch." And they would bring friends of theirs.

So I think it was the universality of the kindness throughout the whole thing.

Marilyn: I also think it was the wackiness. We didn't -- we were nutty. The couch story is stupid but it was true and so that's how we are. And then when Sheila came on board, oh, my gosh. She brought a level of incredible fun and wack! And great talent and music. Oh, my word! We just fit. We just fit. I do think that's translatable.

Sheila: I think so too. I also think it was the message of grace. I think so many people who had felt judged, encountered legalism suddenly felt that they were welcome to come as they were. I think that is what we all want -- to know you just get to show up as you are and God loves you.

Marilyn: That was the theme; wasn't it?

Sheila: Always. We changed our official theme every year but the strand that went through every year was the theme of grace. Now Luci, that's a huge important thing to you, grace.

Luci: Oh, yeah. I think the worst thing that could happen to Christianity is legalism. To make a set of rules and you have to follow these rules and if you don't follow these rules you're not going to heaven. Christ was born under the law, he lived under the law, he died under the law, he went and seated at the right hand of the Father and everything changed because of grace.

And now all we have to do is know him, trust him, see what he does with our lives and love people into the kingdom. I don't think it is our place to tell people how to live, what to clean up, what to do; that's God's grace.

We can't make people believe but if they see in the believer love and fun and joy and just the thrill of being alive, they think, what is it they have that I don't? I want it. I think it is a lot of that.

Marilyn: When you know Christ, who is the Son of God, who made it possible for me to be perfect, sin forgiven and forgotten, then if you really get it, it is revolutionizing. And somehow, with this band of crazy women, we showed it, I guess, and talked about it for 20 years and it caught on.

Randy: It is. And if you get that it also makes it real hard to see lost people as bad people that need to become good. But you see them as dead people that need to become alive. And we know how to get there.

Sheila: I think one of the other things that I loved was that Christ was the hero of every story. When I joined *Women of Faith*, I was maybe a year out of a psych hospital having been diagnosed with severe --

Randy: You fit right in!

[Laughter]

Sheila: I know! I found my people. But I think that was -- I thought, I can't join a woman's movement. But when I discovered your story, and your story, Marilyn; Marilyn went through loss. She lost a child, she lost her husband. Patsy Clairmont agoraphobic. It was Christ who was the hero of every story. We just showed up and let his light shine.

Marilyn: And talked it. We really didn't hold much of anything back. When you do that, as a scatter shot, it goes everywhere. Somebody's life has been touched by that. That's God's style.

Luci: I think that was the answer, really.

Sheila: Quick final question. There are a lot of younger women watching. You both have lived a lot of life and you're far from over. Who knows what they'll do next. Who knows! What would you say to a young, a 20-30 year old Christian woman who is trying so hard to get it right?

Marilyn: Quit trying! Oh, the striving and the -- that's where you get into legalism. If you can receive the truth that God has set you free through Jesus Christ; I don't mean to sound super preachy but that's the answer. So for those of you who are just babies and I'm 76 years old! Obviously, not a baby, but how liberating to recognize I am just like I'm supposed to be. I'm not talking about we can't grow and be better in terms of externals but internally, sit down, have a cigarette. Enjoy! Never mind! I didn't say that.

Sheila: The views expressed by our guests are not necessarily the views of *LIFE Outreach International*.

[Laughter]

Marilyn: It is the freedom. It is the freedom.

Luci: I would agree with that and I would only add this. I think the secret is in three words, just be you. Don't try to be anybody else. I used to try to be Chuck and I was worn out. I couldn't pronounce exegete or something in the scripture.

[Laughter]

But I thought, everybody loves him and so if I'm him I'll be loved like that. I was worn out.

One day the Lord said to me, "I have Chuck. I just want you to be you."

I said, "But who is going to come hear me?"

"Leave that up to me. You just be you. You just go on in life and I will do the rest."

I thought, that's what I often would tell people who would join our group. I'd say, "Don't try to be anybody but you."

And then you're not driven or tired or thinking I'm just worn out. But if you're just you you're having fun you're talking with other people about your problems, you're praying together, you're searching together, you're loving the Lord together and it makes an enormous difference if you don't try to be somebody else.

Marilyn: Can I add one thing? -- Just being you. When Sheila joined the team there was a tremendous kinship I felt with her. She's got what we call a hoot laugh. And if something happens that's funny and I hear her do the hoot laugh, it's over for me. I'm all done. Of course, I'm hooting on the floor. But it is so wonderfully real and natural.

Sheila: It's sort of a spiritual gift.

Marilyn: I figure that. I've been blessed by it.

Sheila: Amen!

Randy: That must be that Scottish version of the Bible I haven't read. Do you appreciate what a blessing these women have been?

[Applause]

I'll tell you what, it's just awesome that you can be yourselves and bless people with the love of God. You know what? I've got news for you because you can too. There are a lot of people that need that touch from God. They need an answer to their prayer. They need you to be a blessing in their lives.

Take a journey with me. I want you to see an opportunity and then I'm going to talk to you about how you can be an answer to someone's prayer today. Watch this.

On the mission field

Announcer: How can she forget the loss of a child? Then another? A third? And a fourth?

Open Captions:

>> When my kids were born, they were healthy. But then our bad water caused vomiting, weakness, and diarrhea. And even though we took them to the hospital, my children died. Our village gets water from here, but it's making us all sick. Because of this water, my children died.

I have felt so bad over the loss of my children, I have at times spent a month without eating. Can you imagine losing one child, then another, then another, and another...

Announcer: Day after day, she is haunted by her loss. Her time with her four children was cut tragically short. Reflections of them is all she has left.

Open Captions:

>> It's hard to cope with this life.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: I cannot imagine what that is like. I only have one son and we went through a thing with Christian at one point when he was three years old and we thought we were going to lose him. And honestly, I thought I was going to lose my mind.

I cannot imagine what it's like as a mom to bury not just one child but two children, three children, four children -- all for something as simple as you can't give them clean water.

The thing I love about being part of this family here is we can change that. Some of you can do a lot and that's awesome! And some of you can do a little, and that's fantastic! But the truth is, every one of us can do something. I don't care if it is going to find that jar of coins that you've kept and take it and get some money to help. But to be able to say to a mom like that... we met these moms and their prayer is: Will someone in this world hear my prayer?

God has made it possible for you and I to be the answer to this prayer. That's all she wants. She is not asking for something fancy. She just wants to be able to give her children clean water. And we can do it, Randy.

Randy: There are mothers, for some obviously, it is too late and that's tragic but there are so many more that are right on the edge. We need to get there. We need to get there with our drilling rigs. We do the heavy duty wells. These things last like over 70 years. They give water on an average of 1,000 people in a village. These are big time heavy duty rigs and wells that we're putting in. But it does cost some money: \$4800 is the average price for these. We want to do 500 wells this year alone around the world, over 15 countries. We can only do it with you -- with your help.

Some of you can drill a whole well. Somebody might be able to drill two or three and I would say do it! Do it now! But all of us can do something.

You know, Sheila, the story of the widow's mite I think is so critical in a situation like this because I don't know if somebody is out there going, "Man, I wish I could drill a whole well!" But you can't. But you can do something. It is your heart that God looks at; it is not the amount. Yes, \$48 will provide water to ten people for a lifetime. But it's not the \$48 I think God's pressing on you, it is the obedience. It is the heart for giving. It is the heart for reaching out to a hurting world and making a difference, in Jesus' name.

You can do it. You can do it with us. I'm inviting you to go to the phones, to go to the web site right now and participate. You can have that impact. You can change a life. Join us today. Go to the phones.

Begin video clip

Announcer: Every day children living in extreme poverty are forced to make a dreadful choice, drink filthy polluted water filled with deadly disease or die from thirst. No child should ever be faced with this decision.

The good news is there is a solution. Mission: Water for Life is one of the most proven and viable demonstrations of God's love in the world today. Suffering can end because clean water changes everything.

With your gift today you can help establish and drill 500 water wells in remote villages in over 15 different nations. Your gift of \$24 will help provide clean water for five people. A gift of \$48 will help provide for ten. \$72 will provide for 15 people. And \$144 will help provide fresh water for 30 people for a lifetime!

With your gift we would like to send you Pastor Robert Morris's new book, *Frequency*. As you read you'll discover how to hear God's voice, receive direction for your life and experience a deeper connection with God. With your gift of \$100 or more you'll also receive the Hearing God Daily Journal and scripture pen. A wonderful way to record what God is impressing on your heart and a beautiful keepsake for your daily prayer time.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1200 to help provide water for 250 people or a gift of \$4800 to help sponsor a complete well. And you may request our beautiful "Majesty" bronze sculpture.

Please call, write, or make your gift online today!

End of clip

On the mission field

Betty: I'm standing here with these children and they're just a small example of children all over the world that deserve to be considered and loved and cared for. We have an opportunity to do that right now among these children and those around the world; to give them some clean water, and give them a chance in life.

I ask you to help us do that. It's just a simple request but a very urgent and important one. Please join with us. You'll get such great joy out of it – I know you will! God bless you and thank you!

End of clip

In the studio

Randy: Do call. Do go to the web site. We're counting on you to make a difference in people's lives.

Sheila, you guys have been a hoot!

Sheila: Well, I look forward to the next adventures of the Thelma and Louise of the Christian world!

[Laughter]

You guys are amazing! Thank you so much.

Luci: Thank you! You're so sweet!

Randy: Well, thank you. We appreciate you being here and we hope to see you again next time. Watch us on *LIFE Today* every day.