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Week 46: Shoes and Smiles, last week
James and Betty Robison
Ann Voskamp and Sheila Walsh

Betty: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! Thank you so much for joining us. I'm Betty and this is James.

James: Yeah! I'm sitting here with three of the most beautiful women in the world, starting with Betty -- most beautiful! We've got to settle that; and Sheila Walsh and Ann Voskamp. Would you welcome Ann and Sheila to *LIFE Today*?

[Applause]

Ann, let me just tell you this. This is good. You don't want to leave! Here it is, *The Broken Way*. Sound like a fun way to go? -- A daring path into the abundant life. The -- not like choose your abundant life but the abundant life, from the source of life, from the way, the truth, and the life. *The Broken Way*? What in the world does that mean?

She actually talks about bad brokenness and good and great brokenness. Sheila Walsh says she understands brokenness. I've got to tell you, I do. I don't know, Betty, I guess you lose a daughter, you see suffering all over the world that you try to put healing, loving hands on. You've had to live with me. That's challenging enough to break anybody. But we understand a little bit about it. But Ann has got an insight. So let's talk about it.

Sheila, you already, because you respect this woman's incredible giftedness and the effect she has and the love she has for God and for people and her insight, but you got really excited about what she is sharing here. Kind of intro why you're excited about what she is sharing.

Sheila: First of all, I just love Ann. I just love her. There is something so profound about the gift of this woman's life. Her first book, *One Thousand Gifts* was this huge New York Times bestseller. It just broke all sorts of records. And there's a lot of pressure to write your next book and its like, gosh! The minute I read the title of this book I thought, Ann, you heard from God.

Because honestly, James, I've read the book, this is a revolution. If every believer began to understand that the very thing that you think disqualifies you from being loved and accepted by God is the very thing that is the Gateway into his presence, it would change the way we all live.

You have a great quote at the beginning of your book. You say, "The very thing we're afraid of, our brokenness is a door to our Father's heart." That's just fantastic right there.

James: Sheila, I know because I watched you walk out broken, devastated, to a padded cell. That's not stretching it, trying to keep you alive and I was there when you walked out. But you also know because you've watched my journey from all these huge crowds, coliseums, stadiums, incredible influence, even on the nation and yet I despaired of life. But when I went through that brokenness and yielded this broken vessel to the hands that heal and shape, I became a new person. It was like a shot heard around the world.

When Robert Schuller calls you and says, "You were the scariest person I ever knew in my life. You absolutely scared me." Now think about this. This is the next thing he said, "You're the greatest miracle I've ever seen outside the Bible. I have never seen a man go from such passion and fire and anger to such compassion and love." He said, "It is a miracle of God that I've ever seen."

That's what God did. God took a totally devastated, defeated, broken vessel and when I opened up and said, "Heal this broken vessel, heal this person that despaired. I can't do it myself." Then when I opened up and would bare my soul, people were set free all over the world coming out of the willingness like she said to become vulnerable in that brokenness. We went from having two million people saved in 20 years to having two to five million people come to Christ in a year because of a broken vessel. So people need to understand this brokenness can be the beginning of something great.

Sheila: But there is a depth to your vulnerability in this one, Ann because you paint this very poignant scene at the beginning of when you were a young girl and you dropped some glass and you took it and you began to cut yourself. But then you switched to a moment when you're in the kitchen with your oldest daughter and she begins to tell you a story that is very familiar. What did that do to you?

Ann: I think sometimes we think about our own failures; our worst nightmare is that my own failure becomes contagious; that somebody else that we love could be broken the way we are broken. Have I somehow passed on my brokenness? Especially as a mother, you'd do anything not to pass on your own brokenness.

In sitting with my own daughter and thinking through how do I go ahead and process my own brokenness so that I realize that the only words that I need to hear, all there is to hear is "beloved." That's my real identity. That's who I really am. Writing that cross on my wrist where

I used to have scars from where I cut, that's my real name, that's who I really am. I'm seen through Jesus and the way he calls me "beloved."

I think in the midst of our own failures, if we can see that my name is not failure. I am broken but I am beloved. That is a journey and a process and a way to step into. But we can't have deep intimacy with Christ until we know that our identity is in Christ. I think that's a way of having our minds transformed, a constant who am I really? And listen for how he calls our name constantly, "You are beloved! You are beloved! You are beloved" -- even though you are broken.

Sheila: I remember my very first day in the psychiatric hospital when the psychiatrist said to me, "Who are you?"

I said, "Sheila Walsh."

He said, "No, Sheila, I didn't ask your name? Who are you?"

I said, "I'm the co-host of the 700 Club." How pathetic is that?

He said, "No, I didn't ask what your job was. I asked who are you?"

And I said, "I have no idea."

He said, "I know that and that's why you're here."

But by the time I left, after a month, he called out the window and he said to me, "Sheila! Who are you?"

I said, "I'm Sheila Walsh, daughter of the king of kings and nobody can touch that!"

Because you're right. If you put your identity in anything else it can change in a moment.

Ann: Identity means who you are stable, unwavering, the same day in and day out regardless of circumstances. The essence of who you are doesn't change. And for me, penning that cross on my wrist every day saying I want to be cruciformed, that says it -- that's my identity. That's the thing about me that doesn't change. I am "beloved" no matter what else happens.

James: I want you to turn your wrist toward the camera. Turn it up here. Hold it up where they can see it. It is fading. Turn it toward the camera. Can y'all zoom in on that? Let's let her work on it. Hold it real still for just a moment.

You've been pointing at it so many times its red now. And it's fading, your cross is fading.

[Laughter]

But there again, tell our viewers why do you put that there? It's right where Christ took, he actually took the spike right in that place.

Ann: It's also where I used to cut myself. I think we need to recognize that over the top of our own scars Christ meets us with his scars; there's healing, his wounds healing our wounds. I like to think that vertical beam that comes down, that's the grace he gives and my gratitude rises up.

But then there's the crossbeam. I want to be broken and given out into the world. I think the essence of Christianity comes down to that eucharist and that koinonia. Eucharist, our gratitude, which *One Thousand Gifts* explored but then also the givenness that we experience in the broken and giving out into communion. For me that word *givenness* has really come to mean how do I live a surrendered life? -- A constant givenness out into the world? -- A givenness of my own self to him? I think the art of great living is givenness in terms of giving my life to him, giving my life out into the world.

But not just the best parts of me, but giving the broken parts of me out into the world; and that requires humility and vulnerability and deep trust in my own identity as belovedness. I think if we can go ahead and trust that we're beloved and we share our brokenness, there's deep healing and communion in the broken places where we can tear off the masks and be real with one another.

Betty: And don't you think that through that brokenness, if we reveal it, it shines through us, that it brings hope to others because it's possible. It's possible!

Sheila: The church should be the most transparent place on the planet. It should be the place where you get to show up but so often it is the least transparent.

I think one of the greatest lessons I learned in the psych hospital was at the very end I went to a church and just the presence of Christ in this little church with the sun coming through the stained glass windows and feeling lost; thinking, Lord, I don't know what to do. And I suddenly had this incredible just this presence of my grandmother singing over me as a child. It was "Rock of Ages." It was these two lines: Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to thy cross I cling.

And I finally got it. I am not the good news. That is a huge relief right there!

[Laughter]

Seriously! So often we live like we want to be gods. We want to get it all right. Christ came because we got it all wrong and we are beloved.

Ann: We are beloved in the midst of the brokenness and to that cross I cling. And then let that cross go ahead and shape my life into abundance.

Sheila: So what do you say to your daughter when she is in a broken place? How do you help because you're not just her mom, you're her sister.

Ann: Again, I have a painting on the wall at home and it is Thomas, doubting Thomas. Jesus takes his hand. Jesus is all the movement; Jesus takes his hand and presses it into his wounds.

I think going ahead and taking our own brokenness to the cross, being really real and transparent about our brokenness, we don't have to hide it. We can lay out all those broken pieces and go ahead and say name who you really are, name who you really are in Christ.

I think one of the things we need to go ahead and do is preach gospel back to ourselves about who we really are.

Sheila: Say that one more time, Ann because that actually we all need to hear that.

Ann: We do. We need to go ahead and preach gospel, not yes, our lives will incarnate Christ and that will preach the gospel out into the world, but we need to preach gospel back to ourselves about who we really are in Christ. Because the enemy is loud all of the time; lies in our head about who we are. Sometimes we've got to realize that thing in our hand, it is a lie. You have to break the lie. You have to shake off the snake, break the snake and listen to the truth of who you really are in Christ. That identity allows you to rise up and be an Esther in this generation for this time to be broken and given to those outside the gates who need to know who they are in Christ.

Sheila: I think we should all get a pen and do a wee cross. Nobody in your church is going to - a pen -- hello? Just a wee cross so you're constantly look at that and allow the truth of that to be louder than the lies of the enemy.

Ann: All of the time! It means your identity. It means -- it formed, that cruciformed cross forms who you are. It forms the shape of your days. I want to live broken and given in the midst of my own brokenness but there can be abundance in the world.

Sheila: The great thing about that is sometimes you think I'm so broken. I'll wait 'til Jesus heals me and then I'll reach out to others.

Ann: No! But in the midst of the brokenness if you will reach out, if you will live cruciformed and stretched out, you will meet Christ in that place and that deep communion will heal you in a way that is so unexpected and upside down and transformational.

Sheila: Now do you get why I was excited about this woman? Hello?

James: Is anybody here in this studio, does anybody understand why before we ever came on the air I made them turn their chairs toward each other? I said because it's going to be this incredible conversation. I feel absolutely privileged to be sitting here. And I'm not listening to two women, I'm listening to God talk through two women. Now women can talk but God can talk through women. Isn't this incredible?

Betty: I've been trying to tell you that for a long time!

[Laughter]

James: Oh, boy! I tell you what. Just go for it, honey! Get in the mix here.

Sheila: In a world that is trying to anesthetize -- think about it -- how many times we're trying to stop the pain, we try to medicate the pain, we try to anesthetize the pain, bury the pain, suppress the pain, deny the pain. The revolution is -- in fact, you have another thing I wrote down that I thought was so brilliant. You said... oh, gosh I can't find it. Oh, yeah! "Freedom can be found not only beyond fear and pain but within it."

Ann: Within it. I think I realized if I can say I don't need to be afraid of broken things. Christ is redeeming everything. As soon as I'm not afraid of broken things, the peace, the abundance, the openhandedness and givenness and surrender that I can't live with, and he loves abundance to fill those hands.

Sheila: And don't you think in a world that is broken and hurting they're going to want to come running to people who are broken and outstretched?

Ann: And not afraid of their brokenness.

Sheila: No! And if that's our savior's stance, if that's all the time --

Ann: Like this -- cruciformed, like that.

James: I love you this much.

Ann: All the time in the midst of the brokenness.

James: I've said recently that I felt like the Lord just impressed this on my heart and that is that he has never made me feel like that he's disappointed in me. He has let me know he's disappointed for me, not in me. There's really a lot to be discovered in that reality.

God is not trying to shame anybody. We've got enough of it. He took the shame, he took the blame off of you and he is the value, he is the one worthy of praise and worthy of worship. We're not. We just get off the throne, let him be on when we're broken, let him pick up the pieces.

There is something about putting clay, yielded clay in the potter's hand. There still is a shaping process which requires pressure and squeezing. Now if we're the clay, he is the potter and there is squeezing. It's still not the most comfortable process necessarily and sometimes it feels like devastating brokenness but he is actually shaping us into a vessel of honor if we'll just realize that if we put our life there in his hands, go to the cross like you've said and literally lay it all before him and recognize him for who he is and then let him do what he does, what only he can do, we experience a miracle.

Sheila: One of the things that when I was reading Ann's book, *The Broken Way*, to me it is almost like an unpacking of Romans eight verse one: There is now therefore no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus. As Jen Hatmaker says, "You might want some condemnation. Sorry, there is none left!"

[Laughter]

There's none! And when you get that, then you're not afraid to be open.

James: Religious people will give you the condemnation. Once you start dumping that on people you have removed the possibility of conviction in many instances. Don't dump that on one another. Be that witness, that person that can be with somebody in a storm or the brokenness or the pain.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if people would read this book and suddenly allow God to do such a miraculous work of grace that they would in fact through *The Broken Way* find the pathway to the abundant life that Christ says he came to give us?

Now remember this. He didn't say I came to give you abundance of stuff. He said, "I came to give you such abundant life" that you're going to have abundant life. Like Paul said, "I know what it is to have and have not. I know what it is to abound and be abased. But I am absolutely content in Christ." He is my adequacy, my sufficiency, and if you have him you have all you need. He is able to supply all your need. Not necessarily your wishes, your desires, or your appetites but all you need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus that you're talking about.

This is a phenomenal book. Do you appreciate these women unpacking a whole lot of truth, talking about Ann's incredible gift to understand brokenness? Now it is in the bookstores. There is also, if they go to TheBrokenWay.com they can find out about the teaching curriculum that has DVD's, a study syllabus. It would be great for you to do in your study groups, men and women, home groups let's say in your neighborhood. This would be a great way to start a Bible study where you say, "I don't think I can unload and deal with all the questions that might come." Well, Ann will help you and it can be right there, DVD, with your big screen TV and all your neighbors, or it can be at the church.

You were actually, and I believe it's a gift of God through you, not only giving this little girl from China that you went and got, what a story that is and that's in the last part of the book about that grace, a little brokenhearted girl that had half a heart. But go over there, six kids and go get another one like this? Read the love story. This is *The Broken Way*. I really encourage you to get it.

Now both of you ladies know that we've got a missionary heart because once you've been to the mission field, it is like our grandson said, well, all of our grandchildren that have been said, "It changed our lives forever because we saw real need that could be met with love."

I want you to look right now. Christmas is coming up. I know it is a little way off but we want to get ahead of time because we want to give some smiles and some shoes for Christmas to little children who never imagined they would see such an expression of love. Watch closely.

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

James: Boy, you know I don't ever want to come across like a beggar but if I ever beg I want it to be in behalf of those who really need someone to plead their cause. I look at all of those pretty little children, Betty and think how much we've loved them, loved holding them. And you've enabled us to hold them. You sent us to the mission field. You support the missionaries. Several thousand missionaries right now in Africa that you make possible -- several thousand! And then you don't leave them empty-handed.

Right now all over the world, 150,000 little feet we want to put shoes on because the missionaries got our attention to their area. They said, "We've got some real issues here."

So I don't want to sound like a beggar but here's what I want to ask you to do. I just want you to give the greatest gift you can give right now. First you pray. But if you could give 10 children a pair of shoes, that's \$36. They're \$3.60 a pair and they're all-weather. They're like Crocs, very much the same. You pay a lot of money for them here. But they're very similar and they do

expand to fit different sizes as they grow; they can grow into them a little bit. And they're very good protection and they don't wear out, not easily at all. So just give all you can.

If you can give 50 kids a pair of shoes, that's \$180. We're going to send you a beautiful Christmas gift with six little shoes over the six years that we've been doing this, a different one made every year and then a special one this year. The little blue one that is the new addition and it is like this. It comes in a beautiful little felt package. But it's also one of the six because it is the sixth one. If you can give us some smiles at \$500 a smile, for some of the most beautiful faces that they don't look pretty.

Betty: James, that's what I want to encourage them to do, the smiles. It's heartbreaking when we hear a child crying because they're hurting but it is heartwarming when we see a child smile. I want to see a lot of smiles on these children's faces because they deserve to be able to smile because they can. So I hope you will reach into your heart and ask God what you can do to put some smiles on these children's faces.

James: I promise you, when you put a smile on these little children's faces you put a smile on a mom and those parents and that family.

This is the last week that you're going to have an opportunity to help us this year with the Christmas Smiles and Christmas Shoes. So let's do it together. Like Betty said, let's do it. Just go to LifeToday.org and use your bankcard. If you could give \$1,000 for two smiles, would you do it? I know that may be a real stretch. And then again I know I'm talking to someone who could give several thousand dollars.

Can I just say this? Thank you! Many of you overwhelm us. A lot of people are leaving LIFE Outreach in their estate. There are many people right now thinking, you know what? I've got pretty big insurance policies. When I leave here I'd like that. Or I've accumulated some things and I want that to go on forever in impacting lives. And you can do that. There is information on how you can contact... You know what we'll do? Show how to save your family a lot of money. And bless you and enable you to give. But don't forget that.

There's a level at which every one of you watching can give. LifeToday.org or dial the number, take your bankcard, use it like a check. If you write a check, make it to LIFE but we need you to call us and tell us you're sending it because we've got to let the missionaries know the shoes are on the way. They're paid for. And Betty and I can't pay for all of them. But we do our part. You do your part sharing God's heart. Will you do that? LifeToday.org or dial the number.

Thank you so much for the gift. We have some gifts to bless you but boy, you are blessing people with the gift of love and it never fails.

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 150,000 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 \$180 will help provide 50 pairs of Christmas shoes for children in need.

With your gift of any amount be sure to request this beautifully crafted blue metal shoe ornament, a treasure to place on your tree each holiday season. With your gift of \$180 or more you may also request this keepsake boxed set of *LIFE*'s Christmas shoe ornaments.

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 "Majesty" bronze sculpture.

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

End of clip

In the studio

James: I'm praying that you will give at least 50 children, I think all of you are going to give 10 kids a pair of shoes but could you give 50? We want to send you all of the shoes. This is the last week that you're going to have an opportunity to help us this year with the Christmas smiles and Christmas shoes.

Let me just say this. You make a gift. We want to send you Ann's book, *The Broken Way* because I think it will be a real blessing. Sheila, what do you think this will do for folks if they get it and apply it?

Sheila: I think one of the greatest gifts of this book is that you will realize that you don't have to be afraid anymore of anything.

James: That's great! Would you say thanks to Ann and to Sheila? What a blessing they've been. Thank you both! Great guests! Thank you for giving us this time with you to share *LIFE Today*. Thanks for helping us share Shoes and Smiles. Thank all of you for being with us.