

12/14/16
Week 51: Mission Feeding
Wednesdays in the Word
Sheila Walsh: "The Gift of Forgiveness"

Sheila: Hello! Welcome to Wednesdays in the Word. I'm Sheila Walsh and I'm so glad you could join us.

Some of the greatest lessons in life that I've learned have really come through being a mom. I was thinking today about the time when my son Christian was 10 years old and it was a particularly cold day here in Dallas, and they're fairly rare. We had just finished lunch and Christian asked me a question. He said, "Mom, would you make me a flask of hot chocolate?"

I said, "Sure, darling. Are you going out to play football?"

And he made this announcement. He said, "No, mom. Today, I'm running away from home."

I said, "Wow! That's huge news. Thank you so much for telling me." I said, "Do you mind if I ask you a couple of questions?"

He said, "No. Go ahead."

I said, "Did I do something, darling? Did dad do something? Did we hurt your feelings?"

He said, "No. It's nothing to do with that, Mom. But think about it. There's you, there's Dad, there's the dogs, nothing important ever happens here."

I said, "That's very true."

He said, "If I don't leave now I'll never have great stories to tell in the future."

So I started making his hot chocolate for him and I said, "Do you mind me asking where you're going?"

He said, "North. I believe I'll head north."

I said, "What are you going to do for money?"

He said, "Oh, don't worry, Mom. I intend to come home on weekends."

So that was a huge relief to me as his mother. So I made him his flask of hot chocolate. I gave it to him. We put it in his backpack with his soccer ball, with a dog's blanket, a book, a pint of ice cream, (interestingly enough) and he headed out the back door.

I said, "Traveling mercies! Do stay in touch."

So I ran upstairs to the balcony where I knew that I could keep an eye on him. He went all the way around the lake where we used to live and sat down by an old tree, unpacked his backpack and spread out the blanket, poured himself some hot chocolate and I imagine began contemplating life in the north. I thought, now what do I do when he moves on? I thought well, I'll take the dogs for a walk and hopefully, I can stay far enough back that he won't see me. And if he does I'll just have to say, "I'm so sorry. Didn't know this was north; directionally challenged mother."

But eventually I realized what he was doing was he'd packed up everything and he was actually coming home. So that night when he was in bed and we'd said our prayers. I said to him, "Christian, tell me about your adventure today. Did you have a good time?"

He said this. He said, "I did, Mom. But I think I would have enjoyed it more if my bag wasn't so heavy."

I thought about that for a long time. I wondered how many of us are dragging a lot of baggage through our lives.

Let me just ask you a question. Wherever you are right now watching this, you might be in your office watching on a computer or at home or a hotel room; what would it look like right now if all your baggage became visible? I don't mean your pillow or your snacks. I mean the stuff you're dragging through life? The stuff that you push down into the cellar of your soul because you don't know what to do with it? It might be unforgiveness, bitterness, disappointment, secrets, an abortion, an affair. Maybe you're hooked on online pornography. I don't know what it is but it's baggage that you drag through every day.

I want to ask you a question though. If you saw it would you want to keep it? Or would you want to take Christ up on what is a ridiculously glorious exchange. This is how it actually reads in The Message translation of the Bible. It's Matthew and you'll know it when I start the verse, you know where it is. It's Matthew 11:28-30. But this is how it reads in the message translation:

Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me. Watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.

I have to say in my own life in the last ten years the most important lessons that I have learned have all been on one thing: Forgiveness. I gave my life to Christ when I was 11 years old. Last July I turned 60. That's a long time of walking with Jesus; that's a long time of understanding his faithfulness. But I have to honestly say that every significant lesson that I've learned in the last ten years have been to do with forgiveness.

That caused me to go back to what we know as The Lord's Prayer found in Matthew. It really is not so much the Lord's Prayer, it's the prayer that the Lord gave his friends to teach them how to pray. So let me just read. I'm actually reading from the New Living. And this is Matthew 6, verses 9-13:

Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. May your kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today the food we need and forgive us our sins as we have forgiven those who sin against us. And don't let us yield to temptation but rescue us from the evil one.

Now only the New King James and the King James Version adds on that part that we know, "For yours is the kingdom, the glory, and the power forever and ever, amen."

But the interesting thing is at the end of that that's usually where we consider the prayer is done. We add our amen and we're done, but Jesus doesn't stop there. Verses 14 and 15 we read this:

If you forgive those who sin against you your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others your Father will not forgive your sins.

Why do you think Jesus went on to unpack that? If you read through the prayer again yourself everything else is something we're asking God to do: May your will be done, will you provide for us?

The only thing that you and I are asked to do is forgive. But then Jesus goes on to unpack the importance of it. This is obviously a game changer. I really believe that the church of Jesus

Christ can be crippled by unforgiveness because we think there is some things that have been done to us that are unforgivable. And honestly, if it wasn't for the cross of Jesus Christ that's true but because of the way that you and I have been forgiven he's made it possible for us to forgive.

I need to confess to you here. This is not just a kind of exercise in biblical truth for me. It is deeply personal. When my husband Barry and I were first married, or before actually, during our marital counseling the marriage counselor asked me, "What are some of the things that are really important to you within your marriage?"

I said, "Really, just a couple of things. Number one is that we always tell each other the truth." I think you can get through almost anything if you just tell the truth to each other because the enemy loves to wreak havoc in darkness and lies.

And the other thing was I don't ever want to get into debt. After my father committed suicide when I was five years old it really impacted our family in so many ways. But one of the more obvious ways to other people was that we lost our home, we lost our car. We moved into government housing. My brother and my sister and I were the only ones who had free school meals and free school uniforms. So we were kind of recognized as the poor kids. I think that left a bit of a scar, a bit of a stigma inside of me.

So I said to my husband, "I don't ever want us to be in a place where we would ever be in debt."

Well, I don't know if you were affected by this but probably in the year 2006 maybe, round about there, the housing market, particularly here in Texas, kind of plummeted. Well, we were caught right in the plummet. We had one home and I didn't really like the area we were in because it was right next to a high school and our son was little at the time and twice he was knocked off his bike by teenaged kids come tearing through the neighborhood in their cars.

I said to Barry, "We need to be in a quieter neighborhood that's more safe."

So we found what would have been really the perfect house but then we got an offer on our old house. They weren't quite matching up by a couple of days. We would have to sign on the new house before our other house sold. That made me a little nervous but the realtor was like, "No, it's all good. It looks all good."

Well, I'm sure you can anticipate the rest of the story. We signed on this new house and literally before the ink was dry the bottom fell out of the housing market and the people who had put an offer on our house withdrew. We ended up owning two homes for five years. It was devastating.

Not only that, I felt so ashamed. I felt like we were wasting the resources that God had given us, but it began to get a little worse. Because I think every family has their own kind of love language, how they express love to each other. Well, my husband's mom and dad, he was an only child and they found it hard to say, "I love you," they would just give him things. That was the way they expressed their love. They would buy things. And I noticed in our new home that I would come home from speaking somewhere and there would be like different light fixtures or different carpet. And I would say, "Why has this changed?" He would say, "Oh, don't worry about it. It was a deal we did with the builder. It's all fine!"

Well, further on I discovered that that was not quite the case. Let me just say to you right now. I share this not just with my husband's blessing, but with his encouragement. You know when you've made big mistakes and you've received grace, boy, you want to share that with other people. So just in case you're a guy and you're getting a little uncomfortable here about the woman over-sharing, it's absolutely with his blessing.

I discovered that we were tremendously in debt in ways that I couldn't even have anticipated; Christian's college fund was gone, all sorts of things were gone. And then, not very long ago, just a couple of years ago I discovered that we were actually going to have to file for bankruptcy and lose our home. I was so -- it's hard to say how I felt. I was angry and I was disappointed and I felt as if there had been such a break in what we had agreed to as a couple.

I remember one night thinking, I want to talk to Christian not about what his dad did, I want to know, how are you doing inside? Because I'm not the kind of woman that yells and screams, I'm kind of worse than that. I'm more like a quiet terrorist. It's more of a covert operation, if you know what I mean. So I just wanted to know how my son was doing in his spirit, in his heart?

So one night when he was in bed and Barry was already asleep, I said to my son, "Christian, what could dad or I do to make your life better?"

He looked at me and he said, "It's you, mom."

I said, "What do you mean, darling?"

He said, "I don't want to do anything that will hurt your feelings."

I said, "Christian Walsh, you have complete permission to hurt my feelings."

And this beautiful boy with big brown eyes looked at me and said, "Mom, you have to forgive him."

It's quite something when your child sees the log in your eye and you see the speck but only you see the speck in your husband's. It began a journey for me, a real journey of learning the gift that forgiveness is in a world where we will all make mistakes.

That night after Christian had gone to sleep I went for a long walk. I probably walked until like 3:00 in the morning way out into the countryside. And part of me was saying all these things that as a human I wanted to say. Lord, this isn't fair. I didn't do any of this. I made it really clear. About 3:00 I almost felt as if I came to a place in the road where there was a wall. I felt Jesus saying, "Sheila, you can't go one step further carrying this weight."

I had this image; I've never actually seen an actual vision but this image of Christ hanging on the cross. I thought how could I kneel at the foot of the cross pointing a finger at anybody else? And I found myself praying that God would teach me what it looks like to forgive.

Sometime later Barry said to me, "I think it would be good if you and I went for some marriage counseling."

I said to him, "Okay. But let's take separate cars."

He said, "Why would we take separate cars?"

I said, "In case we're angry with each other afterwards."

He said, 'Are you anticipating that?"

I said, "It's a possibility."

So he said, "Okay, I'll meet you there."

So driving there here was my prayer: Holy Spirit, please override me. If I walk in there with what I want, with what I think I deserve, this will be a mess. There is nothing about it that will bring glory to your name. So Holy Spirit, please override me.

So I get in and I sit down and the counselor looks at my husband and says, "How are you doing?"

Barry said, "Honestly, not great." He said, "That's one of the hardest things in life when you've done some things that hurt your family and you can't undo them." He said, "I grieve for it every day."

And the counselor said to me, "Sheila, how are you doing?"

I said, "Honestly, I don't really know."

He said, "Let me tell you something. I asked a friend of mine a few weeks ago, who is your favorite person on this earth? My friend replied, 'My tailor.' I said, 'Your tailor? Why would your tailor be your favorite friend?' He said, 'Because every time I go to him he takes fresh measurements.'"

I'm never what I was last week, last month, last year, and this godly man looked at me and said, "Sheila, can you take fresh measurements?"

I said, "Absolutely!"

And I've got to tell you how that has changed our family. See, that's why Jesus came because we're all going to mess up. Some of us mess up in ways that are more obvious but we all mess up. We're all broken. We're not fixed. That's why Christ gave his own life.

When he was on the cross he was saying, "Father, punish me for everything that Sheila Walsh will ever do."

I wonder how much of your life you have spent thinking that you don't measure up? You think of what it means to be a godly husband or a godly wife or wherever you are in your workplace and you think I just don't measure up. I want to remind you of the difference between condemnation and conviction. Remember what it says in Romans chapter eight, verse one? Paul talks about how hard it is to get it right. But then he moves on and he talks about Jesus and he says, "There is, therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus."

Conviction is a different thing. Conviction draws you closer to Christ. Condemnation pushes you further away. So whenever you have felt judged and condemned, I want you to know that has never been from your Father God, that's always from the enemy. Conviction will pull you closer.

But I just want to ask you in your own life today, perhaps you're struggling in your marriage, do you think you could take fresh measurements? Obviously, there are some circumstances I'm not speaking to. If you've gone ahead and you're divorced, God's grace covers you and it would be our prayer here at this ministry that he would bless you and keep you. Perhaps you felt obliged to get out of a situation because it's dangerous. We absolutely understand there are

circumstances where you should not be.

But if you're simply struggling with your humanity and your spouse's humanity, could you take fresh measurements? Could you get on your knees before the cross and ask for fresh revelation of how much it cost Christ to buy our forgiveness?

I have to tell you, my husband and I have been married for 22 years and I thought I loved him a lot when we got married. I love him more today and I have more respect for him.

My son and I had a trip to Australia a couple of years ago and coming back Christian said to me, he said, "I have to tell you, mom, I love and respect my dad so much."

And I found that sometimes as men we think if we're seen as vulnerable or weak with your children or our spouses that we lose their respect; I think that's far from the truth. There's nothing more beautiful than a man or a woman who admits the fact that they have fallen and failed and been redeemed by a gracious God.

Here's the truth that Barry and I and Christian know, when you have been redeemed, when you have tasted grace you want to make a difference in the lives of other people. I'm going to show you one way that you can do that right now.

On the mission field

Announcer: Even in the best of times the journey of life is rarely easy. This has been especially true for Paulina who as a mother of five children became a widow when her husband passed away in 2011. As a single mother living in poverty she provided for her children the best she could. But sadly, it wasn't enough.

>> My child was coming home from school and she started feeling of some fever. Then the next morning my child died. The second one also came home from school with a fever. Then we went to the hospital. We were given two tablets but nothing helped. So we started digging roots and boiling them for him to drink. It did not do anything. At last he died. I lost another child the same way six months later.

Sheila: We've sat with these little ones for quite some time today and they haven't moved. Even the food that she is able to provide, it's all starch, nothing that will help her children get strong which is why -- one of them, literally came home from school one day sick and by the next morning they were gone because these little ones have no reserves.

This little mother has told us that if there was a stairway right now that she could just walk up and go home to be with the Lord and take her little ones with her, she would go because she's already at three deposits in heaven.

If you've ever asked yourself, "Lord, I'd love to do something for you this year, what can I do?" Here's what we can do. We can take care of widows. We can take care of their children. Mission feeding is so important because what we provide is protein, it is vitamins, it is everything that these little ones need to give them some resistance. And then we can honor the fact that we don't love God only in what we say, we love God in what we do and how we obey his Word.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: I'll never forget that woman. There was such a longing in her eyes for this life to be over because it is just so hard. These wee ones, they're so vulnerable to anything. They have no reserves, they have no stamina. So if any kind of sickness comes they can't fight. They just simply die.

But here's the thing I love; to see a picture like that and to think well, how horrible that is. If we left you there that would be terrible. Here's the great news. We can change that and it is so easy. I was able to sit in one of the villages and feed all the children and I thought well, if I'm going to feed it to them I'm going to taste it. I want to see what it is like because it looked kind of like oatmeal but it's not. It is amazing. It is full of protein and vitamins and it makes these children so strong.

You and I can do this with really a little. Even if you're a teenager watching this you can join in. For just \$30 a month you can feed three children for three whole months. That's unheard of! That's like \$10 a child for three months. When could you ever do that? It cost more than that just to get a pizza. If you can give us \$50 we can feed five children for three months. If you are able to do \$100 that feeds ten children for three whole months.

But the great news is we have some friends who have said, "Listen. We know the situation there is very desperate at the moment so we want to give you a matching gift." So there is \$400,000; so that if you give \$30 it becomes \$60 and you feed six children. If you're able to give \$100 it immediately becomes \$200 and you feed 20 children for three months!

You and I have been gifted with so much. We're in this beautiful country and honestly, in our worst days... when I think of when I felt Barry and Christian and I were all in a really rough

place, it was nothing -- nothing compared to what these mothers go through. So let's decide that you and I this year we're going to change the lives -- if the body of Christ, if we step up we can change this and we can do it in Jesus' name. So many of these women already love the Lord but some of them don't even know there is a God. When you put a bowl of food in the hand of their child and say this comes from friends you'll maybe never meet down here but they're giving it in the name of Jesus Christ, it changes.

Would you go to your phone? Go to your phone and make the best gift you can. If you want to give online: LifeToday.org. But let's change the lives of these children. Let's answer the prayers of these mothers. Let's let that woman see her two children growing up strong and healthy and let's do it in Jesus' name.

On the mission field

Betty: I looked at this line of children here and I thought how can you not be touched? God's touched. He cares about them.

I just visualized some of my grandchildren's faces on these children and I think, what if that was one of them? I would want somebody to come in and give them a bowl of soup. I would want somebody to care about them.

Well, these children matter. They matter to God a whole lot. I know that your heart must be touched as you look at these lines of children, look at their little innocent faces. They don't have a choice. They depend on someone. Can that someone be us? I want it to be me.

Thank you so much for caring and sharing and having a heart to reach out to those that are needy because that's God's heart and that's good.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: Well, thanks so much for doing that. So grateful and so happy that we can make a difference. I feel like you and I know each other now. We've shared a lot.

Thanks for being with us and please remember what a joy it is to change the lives of moms and children with so little. If you think of how we tend to overspend and what a great thing it is to do for our families. If you have children, I encourage them, if you are going to send in \$30 say to them, "Would you like to contribute a dollar, 50 cents, whatever? Let's do it as a family."

Let's change this nation. I love being with you in *Wednesdays in the Word*. Bye! I'm Sheila Walsh.

Announcer: *Ambassadors for LIFE* are people like you who see need in the world and want to do something about it. Contact us to start a fundraiser today and change someone's future.