

1/16/17
Week 4: WFL
Randy Robison and Sheila Walsh
Holly Wagner

Randy: Welcome to *LIFE Today*. So good to have you. I'm Randy Robison.

Miss Sheila Walsh, it is always good to have you on the show.

Sheila: It's great to be here. I'm so excited about today's show. This woman, who is our guest today, I met her first of all at her conference, *God Chicks*. Something really great about that. I thought, I am a God Chick. But I've grown to love and respect her so much. Randy, you're going to love this.

Please, would you help us welcome Holly Wagner?

Holly: Thanks! Thanks for having me. We're trouble together. So Randy, you just get ready.

Randy: I'm the referee.

Sheila: May the Lord be with you is all I'm saying.

Holly: Maybe you'll get a word in. I'm not sure.

Randy: I want to hear from you because the last year has been very interesting for you. You document a lot of your struggles, frankly. And your new book, *Find Your Brave*, which is a great title by the way.

Holly: Thanks!

Sheila: Who knew it was going to be so relevant? Just some of the things you've gone through, Holly. Holly and her husband Phillip pastor this amazing church in L.A. but it seems like over the last year or more than that it's just been one thing after another after another.

Holly: Wouldn't it be great if life was mountaintop, mountaintop, mountaintop -- heaven! Wouldn't that be awesome?

Sheila: Let's suggest that!

Holly: Exactly! But it's not, is it? In-between those mountaintops it's just like [splcchh] -- valley!

Sheila: What were some of the more significant hits that you took?

Holly: Well, let's see. It started first with my father passing away. We all know that our parents ultimately go to heaven but it was just a sudden thing. He fell and that ended that. So that was just heartbreaking for me. I love my dad.

Then our identity gets stolen and they hack into our e-mails and bank accounts and so then our savings account gets taken; and the F.B.I. gets involved and nothing actually ever got recovered from that.

Then I have to walk my daughter through a heartbreaking situation.

And then my husband is diagnosed with cancer. Then right when we finished some of the cancer treatments then he gets shingles because his body was so weakened; and then he gets the worse case of shingles and he can't walk for months. Men are amazing! -- Except when they're sick.

[Laughter]

Sheila: Ain't that the truth! Yeah. I can't even imagine. Shingles is a horrible thing. But to have a severe case of it like that.

Holly: It was brutal. So then we pastor a church in L.A. so he's basically out of pastoring for awhile just taking some time to recover and deal with that. Then when he gets back and we're both back in there some people who should have had our back ended up stabbing us in the back. And so just dealing with betrayal of people that we had hoped to just help navigate some of this; anyway, just from a few different sides.

So I felt like it was one thing after another. Well, actually, I felt like it was all at once. So it was really brutal.

Randy: How many times do you say Lord, why? Right? And not to complain but you legitimately want to know, what do I need to learn? What do I need to adjust? Did you ask that question?

Holly: I think I might have at the beginning but then I realized that “why?” is really not the right question because it doesn't matter. Its how do I get through this? And what do you want me to do here? So those are some of the questions that I would have asked.

There's a verse in Proverbs 31, which is an annoying chapter in the Bible, really.

[Laughter]

Sheila: I've always thought so.

Randy: I think it is a wonderful chapter!

Holly: Well, of course, you do! Anyway, can you smack him? I just can't quite reach him.

Sheila: I got it! I got it!

[Laughter]

Holly: But it says that we're to be a people who rise while it is yet night. I remember reading that verse thinking, no, no, no! She sleeps really good while it is yet night. But when I began to study that verse I realized that it doesn't have as much to do with the time of day that you get up but rather when chaos and heartbreak and disaster is around we're supposed to be a people who rise.

So I had to make the decision in the midst of the heartbreak and just the onslaught coming against me. I could be the she that rises in the midst of this or I could be the she that blames and complains and finds fault other places and gets bitter and critical and I wasn't going to be that.

Randy: Or just stays in bed.

Holly: Or just stays in bed.

Sheila: I almost wonder whether the personal betrayal was one of the hardest things.

Holly: For me, yes.

Sheila: That would be very difficult to handle.

Holly: Because I'm the relational girl.

Sheila: And fiercely loyal.

Holly: Yeah, very loyal and fiercely relational, and so for me the people conflicts are always the harder to process.

Randy: You mentioned also the virtuous woman.

Holly: Of course, you had to go there; didn't you?

[Laughter]

Randy: Because you brought out some truth in the original language that I didn't know.

Holly: The word virtuous is a Hebrew, *chayil* which means: A force on the earth. So we're designed to be a force on the earth. So again, I had to make a decision in the midst of a challenging season to be that.

In writing the book it is not just me complaining about my stuff. I use the story of the Apostle Paul in Acts 27 when he's on a shipwreck. He is prisoner on a ship headed for Rome. He's appealed to Caesar; he's headed for Rome, and they encounter that storm. And they spend weeks, it says, "in a midnight storm." I think that's what I felt like; mine felt like months in a midnight storm. But he did this things, he made some decisions that helped everybody to get to shore safely. So for me, I looked at the decisions that Paul made and I thought, okay, holly, can you make these decisions in the midst of this storm so that you can get to shore safely?

One thing I've learned, I think even in pastoring a church for over three decades now is that people can make stupid decisions in the midst of a hard time. Not you, I know you're perfect but everybody else --

Sheila: Holly and I.

[Laughter]

Holly: Sheila and I, we can make.

Randy: I just don't admit to it. That's the difference there.

Holly: Well, good point! So people make some bad decisions and then they end up in a place they never wanted to be. So it is possible to make some great decisions and to make some right choices even in the midst of pain and heartbreak.

Sheila: What would you say to somebody who is watching and thinking, everything in my life is crashed right now! That moment it's almost too late to find fresh resources; isn't it? Do you feel like who you were going into the storm impacted how you handled the storm?

Holly: Absolutely! The seasons of not being in a storm is always a good time to decide who you are. But there is hope. In the middle of a storm, one of the things that the sailors did on the ship is that they -- it's a nautical term called frapping. They frapped the hull of the ship. They undergirded that hull to keep it from breaking apart. So they used ropes. Now some poor sailor had to jump off in the middle of a storm and tie ropes around the hull of a ship but they did that to hold it together.

So I took it like what I can do, how can I brace up my life even in the midst of a storm? Because the storm is raging. So one of the ways that you brace up your life is just believing the truth about who God is. Because the facts are not always the truth.

Ten years ago I was diagnosed with cancer and navigated that battle and the fact is I had cancer. There was a tumor in my body; right? But the truth is that Jesus paid the price for me to be healed and whole. So I could focus on the fact or I could trust what I knew about the truth about who God is. I don't live in fantasyland. I know there are real situations that people face but we all have a decision about where we put our thoughts, about where they dwell.

So for me, one of the things that you can do in a storm is find out the truth about what God says about your situation, whether it is finances or marriage. And if you've been married longer than ten minutes you've had a storm in your marriage and so figure out the truth about what God says about marriage and do the best that you can to focus your mind on that.

Randy: That term, I thought was interesting. You touched on this, "frapping." To me, a frap is what I get in the summer at Starbucks; right?

[Laughter]

But it's the guy that during the storm takes the rope, dives over the edge of the ship, goes under the ship and comes back up and ties it together. To me, that's very intentional because you have to decide in the middle of your storm, am I going to hide? Am I going to cower? Or am I going to dive in and take control of this thing? That's what I've seen you do in these situations. You've said, "You know what? I'm not going to sit by. I'm going to do something proactive according to the Word of God. I'm going to dive into the middle of this storm in order to brace."

What are some of those braces that hold your ship together in the storm?

Holly: One of them would have been the truth; just hanging on to the truth of what God says. And the other is relationships. We're designed to do life together, which is challenging because people are weird; right?

[Laughter]

Sheila: I've met many of them. Yes!

Holly: But we're designed for community, together, team; family is a big deal to God. So one of the best ways to frap your life, if you will, to brace your life is to do it with people; that's an intentional decision because oftentimes in the midst of challenge we want to isolate. It is the one that's isolated that gets taken out. So you have to do the work of choosing community, whether it is in a church or with a family or hanging out with good people who are going to tell you, "Don't quit."

Sheila: I've been studying that a lot recently. Particularly in James, I think it is James chapter five where it says, "Confess your sins one to another and pray for each other so that you may be healed." And that word that is used in the Greek is: Made whole. I think what you say is so profound, Holly.

One of the things I remember you saying some time ago that really impacted me was sometimes God will place you in a situation where you don't want to be there. I remember when you used to have to go for your treatments and you're like, "I do not want to be here." 'Til God gave you eyes to see that sometimes the place you're placed for ministry is not where you thought you'd be but it is amazing.

Holly: Yes, trusting God with the whole journey. Just thinking about the people, I'm sure there are people watching today who are in the midst of a storm and if they're not then -- if you're not in the midst of a storm then your turn is next week because that's how life is.

But one of the things I would say is don't quit. It's not the end of the story. Sometimes when you're so overwhelmed with challenge and circumstance we feel like, "I don't know what to do!" Just don't quit! Don't quit making one right decision after the other. Just don't quit. It isn't the end of the story.

For me, just using that illustration that you just gave, for me, one of the things that got me through it was knowing that ultimately I would be able to help somebody else navigate this too. So with the cancer, when I was in that treatment center and getting those treatments and my eyes were opened, I didn't want to know these people in here but I felt, like you said, I opened

my eyes and went, wait. These people actually need the presence of God! And God is trusting me with this waiting room right now. So I made decisions during those seven weeks that I would get phone numbers and pray with people and bring gifts and connect with them.

Sheila: That's huge! So often when you're in a storm it is very easy to just focus on what you're in. I think one of the things that's profound in your book is the way that when you offer those things, when you learn to worship in the midst of the storm rather than thinking, once I get through it I'll thank God. But when you learn to worship God when there is not a beam of light on the horizon it shifts things inside you.

Holly: I guess sometimes we think that life should be easy but earth is not our home. Earth is our assignment. Heaven is our home. So we're here on assignment. We have an assignment from God to actually fulfill his plan on planet earth to bring light. So we're in a battle. So to think that we're not going to encounter storms and go through challenges is really naive of us. But in the midst of them we're supposed to be declaring his name and finding joy in him because that's what sets us apart. That's what makes us different. We don't give in to it and get overwhelmed with it, we actually can trust him in the midst of it.

Sheila: The thing I love about that is in Peter where it says "always be prepared to give a reason for the hope that's within you." To me, that says you have to live in a way that will raise questions so people would say, "Hang on a minute. You've just gone through hell and back. Why are you experiencing peace?"

Holly: I had more of those conversations, "Can you explain that to me?" "Why is it?" Or people would say at the end, "I had no idea you were going through all of that. Can you talk to me about why you have a smile on your face and your family is together?" And "You've done the work."

I also think our world is a mess. From refugee crisis to water crisis to famine and heartbreak, I think God in the midst of pain and suffering on the planet God always has a people. In Judges when the children of Israel were vacillating in their worship of God and darkness was on the earth, God had a people; he had Gideon and he had Deborah. Today, God has a people that need to find their brave and not give in and yield, but find their brave and stand up strong in the midst of it.

Randy: You mentioned strength. In your book, you quote a lot of great people and you quote the Bible, of course, C.S. Lewis, our favorite, Helen Keller. But then you quote that early church father, Bob Marley.

[Laughter]

Sheila: Oh, yes! I've read all his writings.

[Laughter]

Randy: You say, "You never know how strong you are until being strong is the only choice you have." I love that quote! What did you find out about yourself?

Holly: You have such a great sense of humor. It's very dry; it's like my husband.

[Laughter]

Awesome! I love it!

Randy: What did you find out about yourself in the strength that maybe you didn't know was there when you were going through these things?

Holly: I do think that in the midst of the horrible seasons that you do find out who you are. I think I discovered that my relationship with Jesus is real and that he sustained me. So I got a confidence in who he is in me. I did learn some things, some weaknesses. I sensed myself starting to get bitter just because of the betrayals from people. I'm a massive extrovert. I'm the party-in-a-bottle, fast-talking, confetti-throwing, let's-all-hang-out-together person. And then at the end of this, with just people hurting, I just wanted to sit on my couch and Net Flix binge; I didn't want to talk to people -- which is not who I am.

So I had to be honest about that and realize that one of the things that came up for me was that just this little seed of bitterness started to grow. So I had to do the work to not let it stay there because I wasn't going to finish my life this bitter old person.

So I had to daily forgive people -- well, hourly forgive people. I have a black belt in karate. I wanted to punch people. Let's just be clear. But instead daily forgiving them and trusting God with the situation.

Randy: Did you find that that made a difference? Did God honor that in your life?

Holly: Yes. But to be honest, I never feel like forgiving anybody. No, I want to hurt people. So it is entirely a decision; it was a choice to forgive until the sting is no longer there. And that took awhile.

I know here in Texas you're perfectly good Christians but in L.A. it takes us a little bit more work to forgive people.

[Laughter]

Randy: But it is worth it.

Holly: Oh, yeah! Listen. I'm not going to end my life this angry bitter person. I'm going to choose to love and choose to forgive and trust God with the next season, next step.

Sheila: One of the phrases that Holly uses a lot, and I love, is "Do the work." Because sometimes we think well, I love God so it is just going to be easy. But it is doing the work.

You also mentioned crises around the world and I want to show you something because I recently had an opportunity to go to Angola. I knew there was a famine but I had no idea the extent of the drought, and how the fact that some moms, just like Holly and just like me were having to give their children the worst looking water I've ever seen in my life knowing it might kill them but if they have no water they're going to die anyway. That's a terrible -- terrible choice! But we can make a difference. Will you watch this?

On the mission field

Sheila: Does the water ever make the children sick?

[Man translates to woman]

Woman: [Answers affirmatively]

Man: Yes.

Sheila: Would you ask her if any of the children in this village have died from drinking the water?

[Man translates to woman]

Sheila: So she is going to take us and we'll get to see with our own eyes the kind of water that is her only choice to give her children.

Oh, my gosh! This is what she comes to. I mean this water is filthy.

I notice the mom, she kind of tried to clear it as if somehow that would get rid of the germs or would get rid of the disease. But you can see this water is absolutely filthy! Look at what she is pouring in here. This is all they have.

I asked them, "Do you drink this?"

And she said, "Yeah. We just wait 'til the mud settles and then we drink it."

So that's why so many children in these villages are dying because there is so much disease in this water. And that's why *Water for Life* literally means that. When we put up a well in a village we give life to the whole village for their whole life.

And the need is urgent and the need is now. Will you please stand with us? Will you help us to give life to children who otherwise are drinking this and dying?

End of clip

In the studio

Randy: Sheila, I'm thrilled that you got to go but yet I know how difficult it is. When you're standing there and watching these children drink that water, do you feel almost a sense of stop! You have to stop!

Sheila: It was honestly heartbreaking. There was this sense of no! Don't drink this because yellow fever is so rampant at the moment there. It is terrible. Plus the kids have no shoes on, so they have cuts on their feet, all sorts of diseases can come into their body.

But the fact that this mom thought well, if I let the mud settle to the bottom, I'll just let them drink the clear stuff at the top, but that's where the disease lives.

And so often we think, that's Africa. That happens. No, no, no! She was my sister. I talked to that woman. She loves Jesus. When she goes to bed at night she prays for her children. She's had to bury a child. I pray for Christian at night. I don't have to pray for clean water. I pray that he'll make good choices in life. I pray that he'll be able to study well. I don't have to worry that the very next drink of water that he takes is going to cost him his life.

But the thing that I saw, Randy is that we can make a difference. When we put a well into a village, it changes everything!

Randy: Night and day! We have a lot of places in Africa where we have drilled the wells, thanks to you and the help you've provided. It is amazing the difference it makes.

There are some situations right now, they've experienced a pretty severe drought recently in Africa and it is desperate. So we're focusing right now just on Africa because of the desperate need. So we really need you to do something right now, do something today to help us put clean water into those situations and save the lives.

Sheila: 188 villages, that's our goal. I got to see some of the villages where one of the villages had a well, it gave them life. That well lasts for 70 years; can you imagine that? And one well, it lasts for the entire life span of the people in that village.

So we want you to partner with us. We can do this, people. We can do this! For \$48 you provide clean water for 10 people! You take a couple of people and go to the movies and that's gone; \$48, clean water for 10 people; \$72 will help 15; \$144, clean water for 30 people!

Randy: For a lifetime! For a lifetime! \$4800 will drill a well. Some of you can do that and I would ask you to do that right now. Others of you, you can give part of that; join with others.

It is just critical that we do something, and that we do something right now. There are children's lives hanging in the balance and yet we have the power to do something good. So will you do that? Will you go to the phone right now? Go online, give the best gift you can. Let's reach out and save lives as we drill wells in Africa during this critical time of need. I hope you'll go to the phone right now.

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.

Our teams have recently located remote villages in southern Africa where children are dying from contaminated, disease ridden water. The situation is desperate. They need clean disease-free water immediately.

With your gift today you can help drill 188 water wells in remote villages across seven African 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 disease-free water for 30 people for a lifetime!

With your gift we'll send you Sheila Walsh's devotional, *5 Minutes with Jesus*, a fresh infusion of joy to help you find perspective in the midst of daily life and experience a deeper connection with God.

With your gift of \$100 or more you'll also receive our No Greater Name canvas, a beautiful artistic expression of our savior's name and a daily reminder of his presence in your life.

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 new hand-painted "Determined Eagle" bronze sculpture.

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

End of clip

In the studio

James: Betty, we've seen the effect of the cholera because we've gotten the reports in this area here, from just these water sources. And then we went and saw a well. Their teacher told us that they're not sick anymore and the kids can come to school. It's a simple solution but it is only simple if people will help us.

Betty: That's right, James. And the water is such a need -- a life and death situation, James. I saw a mother actually drinking the water awhile ago and it broke my heart.

But you know, we have to give them a choice. They don't have a choice right now in so many places all over the world. Because they don't have that choice, their bodies are being contaminated with this bad water and their families are dying. We can give them the choice of fresh clean water. I hope you will help us.

Sheila: Thank you so much! We can do this together, people. This is not a difficult job. We can do this.

And for any gift at all that you send in, we're going to send you Holly's book, *Find Your Brave*. It is so good! You'll probably want to get a couple of them. Get one for yourself and one for a friend who is hurting.

Randy: And we've also got another good book available if you'd like it. It is called, *5 Minutes with Jesus* by Miss Sheila Walsh. So we've got a lot of good gifts. Really, the point is we want

to bless you in your life and we want you to help us bless others. So do it. Go to the phone right now.

Would you thank Miss Holly Wagner for being here with us? We so much appreciate you! Thank you so much!

Holly: Thank you! Bye!

Randy: Thank you for being with us. We hope you'll join us again next time right here on *LIFE Today*.

Announcer: In his new book, *Living Amazed* James Robison shares how divine encounters can change your life. *Living Amazed* -- coming soon to online and retail bookstores.