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Week 2: Living Your Destiny
Host: Sheila Walsh
Sarah Jakes Roberts

Sheila: Hello! Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm Sheila Walsh sitting in today for James and Betty Robison.

I have to tell you, we have a phenomenal studio audience. And I think probably some of them are here because of my guest.

One of the things I'm really excited about at the moment is that we have a product that we're going to make available to you, really for any gift you give us in helping feed children in Africa. But it is called *Living Your Destiny*. Have you ever thought wouldn't it be great if I could sit down with five or six women who have really walked a long way with the Lord and learnt some hard lessons and some powerful lessons along the way? We decided we would just do it for you.

So we have a series called *Living Your Destiny*. It is teaching from Beth Moore, from Lisa Bevere, from Christine Caine, myself and my guest today who has such a powerful story. I'm going to tell you in a little bit how you can get a hold of this.

But please, will you welcome my lovely guest, Sarah Jakes Roberts?

[Applause]

Welcome!

Sarah: Thank you!

Sheila: I remember the first time that I ever heard you speak. You came to be a guest at Women of Faith, I think probably in our last year. When I saw you, I thought you were just this young, very pretty, beautifully dressed girl. You seemed quite quiet and shy. And you walked up on that platform and the way that you delivered the message that God had deposited in your heart really shook us all.

So it made me wonder before we go back, was it a point? Do you remember the first time you thought, you know what? No matter what the past has been God has given me a message to share and I'm going to share it.

Sarah: To be honest, I think that every single day. Because no matter how many obstacles you overcome there's always a new giant in front of you. We're constantly challenging ourselves with the reality that the present will eventually become the past. So we have to constantly strive to make this moment our best moment no matter what's going on with the kids or our husband or whatever is going on in our personal lives, that we have an opportunity to really share Jesus in a fresh new way. So I take that seriously every chance I get.

Sheila: Well, in 2001 your dad, Bishop T.D. Jakes was on the cover of Time Magazine. I remember that edition. The minute I saw it I bought it because I thought, wow! This is a landmark, really in what God is doing in our nation. How old were you at the time?

Sarah: I was 12 years old.

Sheila: Tell us what the next year looked like for you. Because just peeking through your window it would look like everything was perfect. But you were going through some tough stuff.

Sarah: I was. I was struggling significantly with my self-esteem trying to determine where I fit in a family that often seemed bigger than myself. And at 13 years old I got pregnant, I had my son at 14 years old and from there just the shame, the fear of not being able to really have a destiny that lived up to the last name that I carry taunted and haunted me for many, many years.

But what I think is unique, if you will, about my story is also what should give some level of peace to other people because there's this misconception that if you had all the right things, if I would have had my parents, if I would have had T.D. Jakes as my father, if I wouldn't have these daddy issues or these scars then maybe life would have been different for me. But the reality is that life doesn't spare its ride on any of us. That you can be T.D. Jakes' daughter or Joe Black's daughter and you've have a cross to carry. What matters isn't what you've gone through but what you're willing to do with the results of the broken pieces that life often gives us.

Sheila: What messages did you hear in your head knowing that you were pregnant, you were about to give birth and you're 14 years old. Sarah, you're just a little girl! What did that do to you inside?

Sarah: Man, I think just to give you insight, the mindset of someone that age when they get pregnant is that I'm going to get in trouble. Without any real reality of recognizing that it's

bigger than just time out or being grounded; that you're bringing a life into the world before you've even discovered what life is about yourself.

I felt so much shame. I felt dirty. I felt embarrassed. We all go through something. I think it's a little bit more challenging when you are responsible for your own issues. I think oftentimes people can be victimizing and people can make decisions that end them up in places that they never expected.

For me, I felt like because I had the power to stop this and I didn't then there must be something wrong with me. So I spent many, many years thinking less than what God says about me. I think that that's some of the things that we do when we're experiencing shame is we punish ourselves. And we think, if I beat myself up in my head -- I used to call myself all the names in the book. You're a ho! Nobody wants you. Just all of these things and I lived that until it became my reality and then I hated who I became.

I just had to make a decision that ultimately you can continue to listen to these voices of shame in your head or you can decide I'm just going to try and live on the faith that I am who God says I am; that I am fearfully and wonderfully made. In spite of what I've gone through, in spite of what my past looks like on paper, I want to believe that I'm better than the mistakes that I've made.

And the moment I lived in that consciousness I started noticing things change for me and begin to turn around.

I think what I'm most proud of, though I have book deals and I've been so blessed to be on these tours, what I'm most proud of is that I look in the mirror and I love the girl I am. The ugly truth and the beautiful things, and I'm no longer ashamed of who I am.

[Applause]

Sheila: Yes! I love that! I love that. One of the things that kind of blew me away about you, I know that you went into a marriage that was very abusive, that just tore at you further, gave you more negative messages. But when that was finally over, instead of doing what people of my generation tended to do, which was to try and crawl under the carpet and hope nobody noticed us because we've done the big unforgivable sin, you began to write. You began to blog. What led you to be so open and transparent in the midst of what was painful?

Sarah: I'm a church girl. I grew up in church and I know that it's not often very easy to vocalize why we come to church. A lot of people are faithful but they don't necessarily explain

the journey that led them back to God. I wanted to save someone from going through what I went through.

I think that our symptoms are all different. Mine may have been a teen pregnancy, mine may have been low self-esteem but the reality is that we all have something. I just refused to be handcuffed by my something. If there was an opportunity to break free from it that I wouldn't let embarrassment dictate what I told other people anymore. So I made the very conscious decision to share the incredible, I called them ratchet on the women of faith tour.

[Laughter]

-- Moments of my life that you would never associate with T.D. Jakes' daughter.

But I needed people to know that this happened to me. It may have happened to someone else but that doesn't make us less than. I really wanted to empower that 13 year old girl who's rubbing her swollen belly or the 27 year old woman who is wondering if she is ever going to fully embrace who she is as a woman. I wanted to encourage them that you're not alone. Pain isolates us. When pain isolates us it creates infection. When we have infection we have these actions that demonstrate that we're hurting on the inside.

I wanted them to know that what you're experiencing is simply a symptom. If we can get rid of the disease, if we can pull that thing up from the root that you can have the life that you always dreamed of.

Sheila: That's beautiful! When I was reading that part of your story in your book it reminded me of your situation was different; mine was I ended up in a psych hospital diagnosed with clinical depression, but that doesn't have much curb appeal in the church to have mental illness.

[Laughter]

-- Curb appeal of cabbage, basically.

But the thing that I learned during that journey is that I'm not the good news, Jesus is. What a blooming relief that is! Because so often I grew up thinking I have to be good enough for God. And sometimes, it's at the worst moments that you find the greatest freedom.

Sarah: Absolutely! His strength is made perfect in our weakness but no one is willing to admit that they're weak. I think especially when you find yourself in church and you're serving on the usher board or you're there every week -- that we think once we start going to church we've arrived and we no longer have issues or struggles. It's going to take leadership and

vulnerability to constantly remove the mess that church often makes us place on and say, "I'm here because I need a savior not because I am one."

[Laughter]

Sheila: That's great! I love that. It makes me wonder, your wonderful husband and you... I mean your husband is just adorable and he just adores you. It's very clear, very sweet to watch. But I wonder how your story and your journey has impacted how you pastor?

Sarah: I think that it has made us more effective as pastors. We both have very different stories, very different backgrounds but we've lived such full lives that when people walk into our congregation at One Church in Los Angeles that we're not expecting them to be the expected end that is promised to us. We recognize that they are a work in progress. And our job as pastors is to inspire them to live up to God's potential for their lives but to also let them know that it's going to take work and it's going to take sacrifice. But there is nothing that you lose in Christ that he doesn't give back a hundredfold.

Sheila: I'm thinking of somebody watching right now and maybe they're in a situation like you were and they feel like they'll never be able to live out their destiny, will always be second best, what would you say to someone like that?

Sarah: As long as you think you're never going to get out of it, you won't. That God is in the business of transforming our minds. So you have to change the thoughts that you think of yourself.

The message that I share in the collection is called "Searching for Gold" and how we often have these times in our lives where we're still searching for gold. And I talk about the California gold rush and how by the time the last people got there that the gold had been embedded in the rocks so they had to be willing to break the rock to get to the gold.

My message is ultimately that life hardens us. It makes us feel like we are worthless sometimes, that we have no purpose. But that God has placed gold inside of us, and as long as we're willing to break away at that rock then we can discover the many treasures he's placed inside of us.

Sheila: Wow! This is powerful stuff! Is God the one that chips away or do we have to be participants in that as well?

Sarah: We must be participants in that. Faith without works is dead. I think one of the things that I can say that I struggled with in my relationship with God is vocalizing that pain, vocalizing those fears and that's what God wants. He doesn't want this image of perfection that we put on for other people. He wants our brokenness. It is attractive to him. He loves us in our most vulnerable moments. And there, when he is in that moment, that's where the power of his spirit can really transform our lives. So yeah, we've got to open up. We've got to be honest and we have to be willing to allow his work to really take hold of our lives.

Sheila: Can you imagine what the church would be like if we all actually believed that and lived like that? Because sometimes I think church is one of the least honest places. It's where you feel obliged to put on a mask.

Honestly, I discovered that when you're hiding your pain, sometimes we hide behind food or clothes or alcohol or relationships, I found the perfect place to hide which was Christian ministry because who is going to say to you, "Put that Bible down or we're going to have an intervention!" It's probably not going to happen.

[Laughter]

But God is the only one who actually knows whether we're serving out of pain or passion.

I think that you are exhibiting a new kind of leadership, Sarah, a place where people are allowed to tell the truth. I think sometimes people are afraid of that because they think then you're just giving liberty to people to just act any way at all. Is that your experience?

Sarah: Not at all. I think we have to meet people where they are. Time and time again we see Jesus in the Bible meeting people right where they are. If we rob people from their ability to be honest and to share that truth, then the power of the word loses its power because we're not able to really be honest with them. Whether it was a prostitute in the Bible or a leper, "the untouchables," that's who Jesus came for.

So I don't mind touching the untouchables. Then hopefully I can be a bridge until they're strong in Christ and then ready to go out and catch another. But each one must teach one and that's how we will change the kingdom.

Sheila: If you could go back, would you change your story?

Sarah: I wouldn't.

Sheila: I love that!

Sarah: I wouldn't. It taught me so much about myself. I think that if I went back and changed that story that I would have a different one that may be just as challenging and may have its own set of obstacles to overcome. But I love my son; he's everything to me.

Sheila: How old is your son now?

Sarah: He's 13. He's taller than me. So can you all pray that he stops growing?

[Laughter]

Sheila: I know what that's like! My son just came home from college and he was just this little boy and now he is like 6'1".

Sarah: What happened to them?

Sheila: I have no idea. I'm almost sure when he was two I made him sign something to say this would not happen but he's clearly gone against the deal.

Sarah: You should spank him!

[Laughter]

Sheila: I'm wondering how the experience of what happened to you at 13 and then becoming a mom, how has that -- because I know you have a brand new baby girl. How old is she?

Sarah: She is three months old. She is the boss of me too. I'm very tired.

Sheila: Well, you look great! But I'm wondering how your experience will change how you mother this little girl?

Sarah: Oh, goodness! It's taught me to be more sensitive. It's taught me not to put my own insecurities on her because it could be very easy as a teenaged mom to build this parenting paradigm around you not being pregnant at the age of 13. But the reality is that that would then desensitize me to the other issues she may face. So it's really made me accountable to God so that I can really guide and nurture her the way he desires, not the way I'm afraid of.

Sheila: I remember in the Dallas Women of Faith conference your mom was there and some of your sisters or aunts you had? But I remember halfway through your message looking over at

your mom and watching the wonder in her eyes as she saw this strong, beautiful, godly woman on stage. We all kind of commented to each other, "Look at Sarah's mom! Look at First Lady Jakes. She's clearly been so impacted." I wondered, did it harm your relationship with your parents when things went so wrong?

Sarah: I don't think anyone imagines that their daughter will be pregnant at the age of 13 or drop out of college or waitress at a strip club or get married and divorced. Ultimately, I don't think --

Sheila: You just kind of threw a lot of that in there.

Sarah: If you just keep talking people move past it.

[Laughter]

Sheila: But that's what I love about your story, about your honesty -- that's part of your story.

Sarah: Yeah, that's me. That's my journey.

Sheila: But that's not who you are. That was never who you were.

Sarah: I think that's what my parents knew all along. So I think if you're a parent out there and you're experiencing some issues with your children, you have to remember, if you place good seed in them, regardless of what dirt is thrown on top of it, that that seed is still in there. And with the proper amount of watering and nurturing that everything you placed in them you're going to see again. I'm literally evidence. If you could have never told my parents I'd be on *LIFE Today*. I'm fancy!

[Laughter]

Sheila: You're so fancy! It's interesting, I think there is a correlation between brokenness, yielded to Christ, and a powerful anointing because you can have somebody who has had it all together and honor the Lord and it's beautiful. But when you have someone who has been to very dark places and found Christ in the midst of that, there is an extra anointing that's on your life that is beautiful to behold!

Sarah: Thank you.

Sheila: Sarah mentioned that she is part of the series with us which we're so thrilled about; it's called *Living Your Destiny*. Maybe, even if you're listening to what Sarah shared, you think,

I've always thought I've blown it. I'm going to always have to settle for second best. I'll never be what I might have been. I've discovered if you still have a pulse and there is not a white chalk mark around your body, it's not too late to be the woman that God has called you to be.

We're going to offer this to you. And here's what we'd like to ask you to do. We have this phenomenal opportunity every month – you might not even know about it. But every month we have the opportunity to support getting a film into villages in India, teaching them for the very first time about Jesus Christ. It's amazing! Watch this.

On the mission field

Announcer: The culture and history of India is filled with numerous false gods and idolatry, Muslim and Hindu traditions are prominent among the one billion people in this rapidly developing country.

But over the past several decades, the Christian church in India has experienced a miraculous revival. Thousands of people are turning away from false gods and are being transformed by the love of Jesus Christ.

John: The Lord gave me a vision to take the gospel on the big screen into the villages of India and most of the people in this village are day laborers, they're very poor but they are precious in God's sight and their children, moms and dads and uncles and aunts were here watching this beautiful movie, Dayasagar. A number of the people in the crowd responded yes! I want to follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

Announcer: Film evangelism has proven to be very effective in communicating the gospel to those unable to read. After seeing the sacrifice and love of Jesus for the first time in their lives, hearts and souls are changed forever.

Open Captions:

>> Actually, when they see this film they can visualize the reality and the saving power of Jesus Christ.

>> Jesus is no longer a foreign god to them because of this film.

>> I had to raise my hand when the invitation was given. What else I could do when He died in my place?

John: We today have the opportunity to share the gospel with these who worship idols and see them realize that Jesus, the son of God is their savior and they will turn their eyes from idols and serve the true and living God. Will you do all that you can right now? There are many

thousands of villages waiting for someone to sponsor our teams to enter that village and change their lives forever.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: Isn't that amazing? I love what he said! I had to raise my hand. What else could I do when I heard that God died for me? You see, a billion people who have been told, "There's all sorts of gods out there who all want you to do something for them." We get the opportunity to bring the truth of the one true God who did everything for us. The first time that they see this movie they are so overwhelmed by the beauty of such a sacrifice that literally there's a beginning of a revival happening in India.

But I love this team! I've worked with them before. I've known them for years. We need to get behind them. We do this all the time at *LIFE Today* – every month! But we don't always bring you news about it. That's why this is really special because while God is moving in India, let's join in. It's so simple to do: \$40 will allow 400 people to see the movie -- \$40! \$120 you will let 1,200 people see this movie. Or perhaps you think I want to do more. \$4400 sets up a whole team to go into a village to set up.

The amazing thing about the Indian people is they are movie fans. If you tell these people in a remote village, "Hey tonight we're showing a movie," they will all come out. But honestly, it's amazing! When they see this story for the first time, when they understand that here is a god who died for them, they are coming to Christ in the droves. You and I can help. We can do so much.

So what I'd like to ask you to do is would you go to your phone and make a pledge right now? \$40 – 400 people will see the movie. \$80 – 800 people! It's amazing! If you think you could do more, \$4400 would set up a team and they get there however they can. They crawl over stones, they take their bikes, they do whatever they have to do to let these people see for the first time the true story of a God who loves them.

We want to join hands with these people and say, "We want to make sure that this keeps going until all one billion people in India have heard the good news of Jesus Christ." What an amazing privilege!

For any gift at all we will send you *Living Your Destiny*, this amazing CD teaching series so you can discover who you are in Christ.

For a gift of \$120 or more we will send you my book, *The Longing in Me*, how everything you crave leads to the heart of God; and my dear friend, Christine Caine's book, *Unashamed*.

Thank you so much! So please, would you join with us? Just go to your phone, dial that number on your screen, give the best gift you possibly can.

Or if you like to go online that's great! Go online to LifeToday.org. If you're sending a check would you just give us a call and say hey! This is what I'm doing, so we know when we get back to our teams in India and say, "Help is on the way!"

The good news of Jesus Christ is like a fire – it's like catching fire all over India. So let's do something. Let's do something in Jesus' name to let people who think there is no god who sees them know yes, He doesn't just see you, he died for you!

Begin video clip

Announcer: Go into all the world and preach the gospel. In a nation filled with so much poverty and spiritual darkness, *LIFE Outreach* has partnered with John Gilman to present a powerful motion picture on the life of Christ that displays his miracles and demonstrates his love to the people of India.

With your support, 2.4 million souls who are looking for our savior's love will be reached with this unique outreach. While the number is great, the cost to present the gospel message is only 10 cents per person. That means your gift of \$40 will share the light of God's love with 400 people! \$80 will help share the film with 800 people. \$120 will share the film with 1200 people. And \$1200 will help reach 10,000 people with the life-changing message of the gospel.

With your gift of any amount, we'll send you the exclusive audio CD series, *Living Your Destiny*. Hear five outstanding Bible teachers and women of faith share how to live the life God destined for you.

With your gift of \$120 or more to help reach 1200 people with the gospel through film evangelism, you may also request two outstanding books, *The Longing in Me* by Sheila Walsh and *Unashamed* by Christine Caine.

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

End of clip

On the mission field

John: Dear friends of *LOI*, James and Betty, I don't know how to say thank you. We've been partners now for years and your investments in India and our film teams have helped to reach millions of people. On behalf of the hundreds and hundreds of young men and women that are going out nightly and showing this powerful movie, *Dayasagar*, thank you! Thank you! God bless you! A great harvest of souls is being won.

We have over 515 teams going out nightly and I just met 400 or more new recruits who have said with passion, we want to go into the villages of India. Thank you for what you have done all these years. It's your investment that's helping make this possible, your prayers. Thank you friends and partners of *LIFE Outreach International*.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: Thank you so much. Thank you so much! I have to say it's been such a joy to have you. I'm one of your biggest fans. You can go to -- what's your church's web site? One church L.A.?

Sarah: OneChurchLA.org.

Sheila: And hear Sarah and her husband preach; they are both amazing. When you hear them both preach you'll understand why they stare at each other lovingly.

[Laughter]

And really love each other. Thank you so much for being with us. Will you please help me thanks Sarah Jakes Roberts?

[Cheers & Applause]

We love you! Thanks for being with us. We'll see you again on *LIFE Today*! God bless you!