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Week 18: Spring Mission Feeding

Wednesdays in the Word

Sheila Walsh

Rebekah Lyons

Sheila: Hello! I'm Sheila Walsh. Welcome to *Wednesdays in the Word*. Thank you so much for being with me.

Today, I want us to look at what does it really mean to be free? As believers we think, yeah, we're free in Christ but how many of us if we're really honest think, I don't feel very free.

It's interesting to me in the book of Galatians Paul writes this; this is Galatians 5:1: *So Christ has truly set us free. Now make sure that you stay free and don't get tied up again in slavery to the law.*

He goes on to say this: *For you've been called to live in freedom, my brothers and sister, but don't use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature. Instead use your freedom to serve one another in love.*

I love that! *For the whole law can be summed up in this one command, love your neighbor as yourself.*

Well, I'm thrilled today to be able to introduce a guest on *Wednesdays in the Word*. I have to say that I have been personally impacted by my guest and by her book. So please, would welcome with me Rebekah Lyons?

Rebekah: Thank you, girl!

Sheila: Thank you so much for being with us. Your book, I love the subtitle. Your book is called *You Are Free: Be who you already are*. How did you come up with that subtitle?

Rebekah: A little antagonistic; isn't it?

Sheila: I love it! Nothing like a good bit of antagonism.

Rebekah: Well, the idea is obviously that Christ has done the work. It's already done. We're kind of sitting here in our metaphorical jail cells going like, "I don't know if I buy that." Because sometimes what our lives look like every day, the day-in and day-out feels very enslaved. Or we're not even aware of our captivity often. We're tired, we don't have energy, we can't wait for our kids to take a nap. We're like what will we get on the table? And we're kind of hobbling through life not really comprehending the freedom that's already available to us.

Sheila: When I write, I usually write not so much as an expert, I write about what I'm longing to understand. I wondered about you, has your journey to finding freedom, is that a very personal journey for you?

Rebekah: Absolutely. I was born Mother's Day, church by Wednesday, prayed the sinner's prayer at age five because I didn't want to burn. I'm not sure how many five-year olds would.

Sheila: Yeah, it's not a good option, really.

Rebekah: It's a very successful evangelistic strategy but I did believe that it was true. I believed that Jesus was the son of God. I loved Jesus. I grew up memorizing all the verses and going to Awanas and getting the patches, the cubbies, and whittled cars out of wood and had yellow casseroles. We did it all in church growing up.

So I wanted to please God but I also was an achiever, and I realized early on, being the oldest of three girls, I had an older brother adopted, but oldest of three girls I leaned into striving and perfectionism just naturally. I found that it gave me the attention or the approval that I wanted so I just did that, and that snuck into church too.

The reason why this message was so powerful for me, I began to write it thinking, Christ has done the work, let's just do this. And I had a lot of bravado, even with that idea, because really, when you claim it, that's a declaration. But I started to write about it and I was enslaved. I didn't even realize until I got into it like this is such a big topic and how do we even understand this idea of freedom? And what it took for me, one day in my journal I said, "Lord, I sense you want to set a lot of captives free."

At this point, I had written my first book and I'm talking to women about calling and purpose and I come out of a long season of panic disorder personally, and anxiety and depression, and I felt like some of the yoke of that had been broken so I'm like, "I'm free!" And I was about to get out the pom poms and immediately the Lord is just like, "How about we start with you?"

Sheila: Yikes!

Rebekah: What I learned in this three-year journey when Jesus was like, "If you're willing, I'd love to take you through all these areas that you're not living free. It doesn't mean that you're not free, you're not living free."

He has set us free but I didn't realize the places I was in bondage. In some ways you can say the outside of my life looked like it had had a rescue but the inner healing actually hadn't begun. And I realized early on I was operating from a broken heart and so I believed the lie that I wasn't worthy of love unless I earned it, and that translated to God. So I had -- like anything you write, you know this; right? You have to wrestle through it long before you're able to make sense of it on a page. You can't understand freedom until you even understand your captivity.

Sheila: Every single chapter in the book spoke to me but there is so much material here. I wanted to focus in on just two or three. One of them is you have a chapter called "Free to Rest." Boy, did that just nail me to the wall. You talk about this interesting habit of morning pages. What is that?

Rebekah: So Julia Cameron, she is a literary professor in New York City, and she wrote a book called *The Artist's Way*. She says that the first 40 minutes after you wake you're most in tune with your subconscious and your natural ego defenses are down so that's the best time to write. So she created this practice called "morning pages" and it's really just journal -- it's a fancy word for journaling. You can journal three pages if you want, you can go longer but the idea was to not edit yourself; to almost when you wake up just make it -- so for me, journaling has always been a dialogue with God. So someone might not have faith and I don't know who they write to but to me, morning pages was my ongoing dialogue with God.

So it was a prayer, it was a written prayer of confession. It would get kind of ugly some days and it would be a lament some days, it would be gratitude some days but it was unbridled and I wasn't too worried about grandchildren in a 100 years digging it up. They will think I'm crazy, but that's okay. Because in those pages became confession, it became, Jesus started to say, through the writing and through your journal and your scripture and just a quiet house before dawn with a candle and coffee, that became the place where he started to show me some inner wounding and inner need for healing.

So some of those prayers even found -- some of those confessions are in the book that came directly from my journal.

Sheila: So I think about your lifestyle. You're out a lot. You're speaking, you're on the road. Do you ever get to a place where you think, okay, Lord, my lifestyle is actually making what I actually believe difficult to live out?

Rebekah: Yes! Yes! We had come from New York to Franklin and one of these things is not like the other. We were in Tribeca in downtown Manhattan and I felt like I was a Hebrews 12 runner. I'm like running the race, I'm on the road, I'm speaking and it was almost like the manifestation of a couple years prior of being quiet and still.

But then we moved to Franklin and everyone is like, "I sense you're entering a season of rest." I'm like, "I don't want to rest. I just got running. Aren't we supposed to run and lives to reach?" And the idea was that I felt like I had tripped in my lane or been benched or something.

Jesus wanted me, even in those first couple of years in Franklin to say, "You might need to get on a plane on Friday but Monday through Thursday, I want your full attention."

I would just -- I called it my pajama practice. I literally sat in my pajamas on that couch with Jesus because there was a lot of quiet that needed to happen to kind of fill me and preserve what I knew was true so that I could speak on a weekend with a sense of rooting and grounding.

Sheila: You kind of talk about that in your "Free to Wait" chapter. There is a Sara Groves song, there is a lyric in it that's so -- I felt it related to you. She said, "The future feels so hard and I want to go back. But the places that used to fit me can't hold the things I've learned."

I thought of New York felt like you, it felt like your pace, and suddenly you're in Tennessee. What do you mean by being "free to wait"?

Rebekah: Well, when I was in Tennessee for the first six weeks I had a pity party. I had this "fabulous life" in New York and then I'm back in carpool going to Publix in my minivan.

Sheila: Living the dream!

Rebekah: I know! In some ways it was so arrogant and it was also controlling. Like God, why are we here? Why did we land back here? I remember a friend early in those days, she's like, "Perhaps God's prepared something for you or called you to something but he is holding it off for a reason."

I think for me, I wrestled with him and I kind of had this dialogue and one day he just says, "You can't see the unknown until you have released the known."

That was the refrain. I sat in my minivan in the parking lot of Publix and sobbed. I realized for the first time that I was not letting go of New York. It was the place I found healing and my calling and my voice. I thought my identity was stuck there; that the city had done the work and not Jesus had done the work. And that he'd be staying up there in my little glass apartment in

the sky but he wouldn't actually be -- so he even taught me in that chapter that home is wherever God is. It's a person not a place. So partly it's just me realizing that he calls me to himself. And we're on this journey and we need to be nimble and follow him whatever that looks like. And we'll be home wherever we are.

Sheila: One of the chapters that I found, you're very vulnerable when you talk about "Free to be Weak" and you talk about your darling son Cade, who has Down syndrome, who has quite an independent streak and likes to go wandering.

Rebekah: I wonder, where does he get that from? He likes to wander. Let's just put it mildly, he likes to wander. And from his earliest days, I think the first story I tell in the book is when he, I think at four or five, he goes out in our neighborhood in a diaper and leaves all the doors open. And nothing -- it's 23 degrees in December, and a neighbor brought him home about 45 minutes later, but you can imagine the panic.

Then we go to New York and he runs off in Central Park the first two weeks we're there and all these students from Boston College are helping us find him. Then he ran off in Queens. Yes, guys. I almost was like, I don't know if I should be writing all this down in a book because he's never lost in his mind. He's just like, in Queens he was looking for a coke and he wound up at like a corner market and came out with a coke. He just said, "Coke," and they gave it to him. They didn't even make him pay. They're like, "Give the boy what he wants."

[Laughter]

But the anxiety in those moments where I got used to having to always be on if he were to wander off and he's not very verbal. He's a little verbal. He's 16 now but it was important that we would know where he is, especially in New York, obviously; right?

Sheila: What have you learned through Cade?

Rebekah: Oh my goodness. I talk about Cade's birth in "Free to Grieve" and how we got the diagnosis when he was five days old and I was in the shower and I collapsed on the floor. I learned what lament or travailing prayer really was. The spirit grieved with me in that day. I felt even him lifting the grief off of me while I was shedding it in buckets. Like I couldn't get it out fast enough. I understood if you cannot grieve, you cannot be comforted. For the first time there, in that moment, that that's what Jesus did on the cross. He took all our -- everything upon himself so that we could be free; right? But we carry it thinking we have to hold it. He's like, no.

So with him that day I entered a new world at 26. It was a false negative, even. So the chances, I had no idea. What I can tell you now is I remember telling a friend early that first year, we're

praying for Cade to be whole. And my friend, said, "Well, perhaps your version of wholeness and God's look different."

I didn't really like her at that point when she said that but here we are 16 years later and I can tell anyone and everyone that I feel the most at home with Cade, the most peace with Cade, the most accepted by Cade -- and that's a treasure, obviously. He's radically changed my life.

Sheila: You have in your chapter "Free to Ask," you have this D.L. Moody quote I love. You quote him saying: "Some people think God does not like to be troubled with our constant coming and asking. The way to trouble to God is not to come at all." Wow!

Rebekah: The conviction for me on the "Free to Ask" chapter and if you read it you know, it gets a little dicey because it is not an easy topic to approach. But when I said, "Rescue me, deliver me, I cannot do this without you." With panic disorder years prior my body stopped in the middle of a panic attack and they were done. So I didn't have language for that.

I just didn't grow up having those kind of conversations. I didn't even use the healing word for a couple of years. And then I thought of Revelation 12:11 where the enemy is bound by two things: It's Christ's blood and your story. I thought, Jesus is like, "Well, I did my part.

[Laughter]

It's all you; the mikes to you." And I started inviting that narrative into these talks I would give on anxiety and depression because I thought, do we believe, A, that there is a God? And if so, do we believe that he cares and that he sees? And then finally, if we do, are we willing to invite him into this?

And I found so many like myself just running to other means for resolution in the conflict but not actually inviting God in the middle of the mess.

Sheila: How did you feel prompted to ask for the gift of healing? That's a big scary ask.

Rebekah: I know! That's hard to write about because the spirit is wacky; right? I don't know how else to say it. I grew up Fundamental Baptist so I don't even have the right language for all this. I remember that day very vividly. I was praying to God, it was kind of morning pages gone rogue. Everyone had left for the day and I'm just praying in my pajamas because pajama practice and I was just talking to the Lord and just lifting my voice to him. And all of the sudden I said, "I sense you want me to -- like press into this topic of healing." And the minute I said that, I started weeping like uncontrollably in these travailing sobs that I recognized as a little kookie pants. Like I just didn't know.

So I just got down on my knees and I just said, "God, if I don't..." Because I had prayed the same thing when Cade was five weeks old on an airplane. I said, "I don't want to say no to anything you want to pour out. And if you want whatever -- the gifts of the spirit are, I don't want to resist any of those. And I don't say I understand them all but I certainly don't want to say you're not capable."

So I just opened up even then and I remember receiving a prayer language when Cade was five weeks old on an airplane. So even then it was kind of like I didn't know what to do with that. I was like, "Lord, it's all yours." And so that day it was the same thing. It was just like, okay, here we go. You're prompting me to just press into that idea. And even with people, I approach it very slowly and just like, "If you want prayer, I'm not promising anything but I'd love to pray with you."

We're not responsible for the healing, we're responsible for the asking. If anything, I just want to encourage more people to invite him in.

Sheila: You said "confession is the gateway to freedom." What do you mean by that?

Rebekah: Well, you know, in the "Free to Confess" chapter it's early in the book, it's early in this journey. It is when the Lord said, "Hey Rebekah, how about we start with you?" It is where he revealed to me for the first time, because I needed the approval of man so much when I started speaking and writing. I never had needed that to that degree but then all of the sudden you take on a little bit of a public voice and then you're just making sure everyone likes you and did you say it right? Will that get tweeted wrong? Will I be misunderstood?

Sheila: Death by Twitter!

Rebekah: Right! I know! And it never mattered to me. Then all of the sudden I heard blessed Ann Voskamp say, "Those who keep score in life just want to know that they count. And when you do what you do for an audience of one you always know that you count."

I was eating a cheeseburger in a dark hotel room, it was not a pretty moment and I was so convicted by those words. I said, "God, why do I want to know what I count?"

He's like, "You matter to me. Is that enough?"

And I said, "No." And the confession of that -- the reason I say "confession is the gateway to freedom" is the confession of that is when I broke and I said, "Heal my broken heart and set me free." And I invited him from then on into all these other places.

Sheila: There is so much more in Rebekah's book and I'm going to let you know in a couple of minutes how to get hold of it. Literally, chapter by chapter it is a life-changing read.

But I had a pretty life-changing experience recently, where I got to go to those who are hungry for more than just a good conversation or a good book but literally hungry for the very thing they need to survive. It was an experience that impacted me greatly. Watch this with me and you'll see what I mean.

On the mission field

Sheila: I woke up this morning in this village, this is my first time in Angola and I honestly don't know what I expected but I didn't expect what I experienced. I didn't expect to see a child who is a year and five months old and weighs six pounds. How does a child like that even survive?

I think one of the things that surprised me most was the profound affinity I felt with the moms. If you're a mom, all you want is for your child to be healthy. You want to be able to put a meal on the table at night and know that your children go to bed with a full tummy. But here I've seen what the ravages of malnutrition do.

This morning, I'm sitting in my tent and I open my Bible. I'm just doing one of those going-through-the-Bible-in-a-year and here's what I read. Isaiah 58: Share your food with the hungry, give shelter to the homeless, give clothes to those who need them. Then your salvation will come like the dawn and your wounds will quickly heal, your godliness will lead you forward and the glory of the Lord will protect you from behind. Then when you call the Lord will answer, "Yes, I'm here." He will quickly reply, "Feed the hungry, help those in trouble; then your light will shine out from the darkness and the darkness around you will be bright as noon."

Mission Feeding is not some great idea we came up with. It's simply living out the gospel of Christ. And when we put one simple bowl of food into the hands of these children in Africa, it changes their lives forever -- thousands and thousands and thousands of lives, one life at a time.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: That night, the first time I was in the malnutrition clinic and we went back to where we were staying and I literally laid in my bed and sobbed. As I watched a mom bring in a baby that just struggled to just take a breath. Somebody said to me, "Well, don't you think women in Africa almost get used to that?"

There is not a mother on this planet who will ever get used to watching their child suffer and starve to death. I held that woman as she sobbed in my arms. She was my sister. I just happen to be born in Scotland, she just happened to be born in Angola.

But here's the thing, I've seen the difference that we can make. This is not hopeless. Now at the moment the situation in Angola is terrible. The situation in Sudan is desperate. There is a famine going on there at the moment. And here's what's nuts to me: Half of us here in the western world are on diets because we eat too much. And just across the water are women who love Jesus, who love their children and all they want to be able to do is to give their son or their daughter one meal a day. And we can do it.

What we're doing at the moment is we're feeding 400,000 children in different villages in Africa. But at every village I went to, and I got the privilege of pouring out this beautiful nutritious meal; it looks kind of like oatmeal but it is full of vitamins and minerals. One bowl begins the process of going from death to life for these kids.

But here's what the people we work within Africa said, "Please don't stop! Please don't stop!" Because the lines are long and we never want the line to be longer than the food we have. So we need to keep this up. They're literally, they're counting on us -- and it is so doable. Just \$30 you're going to feed three children; \$50 feeds five; \$100 feeds ten children.

The famine around the world is horrible but we, as the body of Christ, we're not supposed to be sitting here until Jesus gets us out of here. We're here at this time for a purpose. We're here for such a time as this. We are the answer to their prayers.

It's one thing to sit with a mom in a malnutrition clinic and pray with her but now I have the responsibility to come home and say, "Let's you and I be the answer to her prayer." So please do something. If we all do something we can change it.

So would you go to your phone? Call that number on your screen or you can go to LifeToday.org. But even \$30, that's nothing, we can do that. Cut one thing out of your week and we can change a life; \$30 feeds three children! So please would you go to your phone now and do something in Jesus' name?

Begin video clip

Announcer: In impoverished and even now famine-stricken areas of Africa, children are suffering. The need is great and without food they face death by starvation.

LIFE's Mission Feeding program is ready. With your support, we're able to feed and care for

children in famine areas of Sudan, as well as Angola and Mozambique. With all of our previous reserves gone and Mission Feeding facing the worst drought and food shortage in years, we urgently need to replenish our food supplies to reach 400,000 children counting on us.

Your lifesaving gift of \$30, \$50, or \$100 will help feed and care for three, five or ten children for the next three months. Please also consider a special gift of \$1400 to help sponsor a school and help feed 140 children for three full months.

With your gift of any amount we'll send you My Daily Word Devotional. This boxed set of four seasonal devotionals will help you read, reflect, and renew yourself through God's word with space to journal your thoughts and reflect each day.

With your gift of \$100 or more, you'll also receive Kari Jobe's newest music project, *The Garden*, along with the story behind *The Garden* companion DVD.

And finally, with your gift of \$1,000 or more, please be sure to request "Determined Eagle," our 2017 commemorative bronze sculpture.

Please call, write, or go online today and make your gift of *LIFE* to help feed and care for hungry children.

End of clip

On the mission field

James: Why don't you help give these children a future? Why don't every one of you -- and some of you on fixed income. You know what? You'll likely be the first one to respond. I want it to be where every single person watching me coming to you from Southern Africa, a place in Mozambique that was absolutely hopeless during the war but we were here all through the war feeding, beginning 20 years ago. Now they're in school, they need a future.

I'm asking that every person in every country around the world, you're watching today to give children like this a future, not just save them from death, because we're going to do that in crisis areas, but we're going to give them the nutrition to learn. They want to learn, they're here at school; we're going to give them the support so they've got a bright future.

Would you right now go to the phone or go online and respond and make the best gift you can possibly make? Please do it! Don't turn away. Do what you can to help.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: Thank you, thank you, thank you! We can do this! We can do this! For any gift at all we will send you Rebekah's book, *You Are Free*. Honestly, it is brilliant. It really, really impacted me.

For a gift of \$100 we will send you this awesome new CD and DVD by Kari Jobe. I've been listening to it in my car, it's phenomenal!

Rebekah, thank you so much for who you are, for how you write. I'm so grateful that you've been with us.

Rebekah: Thank you so much for having me. It was a joy!

Sheila: We love you! You're a beautiful girl. Thanks so much for being with us. We'll see you next time on *Wednesdays in the Word*.