

5/24/17
Week 22: Spring Mission Feeding
Wednesdays in the Word
Sheila Walsh
Kay Warren

Sheila: Hi, I'm Sheila Walsh. Thanks for joining me on *Wednesdays in the Word*. I've been reading through the book of Acts recently and I stopped at one of the verses that really is it like a life's passionate verse for me. Sometimes Paul will write something I think, that is exactly what I mean. And this is Acts 20:24. Paul says, "But my life is worth nothing to me unless I use it for finishing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus; the work of telling others the good news about the wonderful grace of God."

I grew up as a good Scottish Baptist. I thought that was just about evangelism. But sometimes we, as the body of Christ, need to be told the good news about the wonderful grace of God because sometimes we are the ones who are hurting, who are struggling, who are hiding, and we've lost touch of the truth that as you are right now God says, "Come to me just the way you are. I love you."

I'm thrilled today to be able to introduce you to a woman I know you're going to know but she has a fantastic new book out. It is called, *Sacred Privilege: Your life and ministry as a pastor's wife*. Kay Warren, thank you so much for being with us.

Kay: Well, Sheila, that's my life verse.

Sheila: I did not know that!

Kay: Yes. I was sitting over here wanting to go, yippee! Yeah, that's my life verse! I can't believe that you started with that.

Sheila: I love that verse because I think... we live in a world -- you live in California and I lived there for awhile where there is just a certain like this makes you popular -- and even within the church it's like you've had this many hits on this or that. But I think none of that matters a hill of beans compared to the good news about the wonderful grace of God.

Kay: Well, it does. And for me, when that verse... I know that's not even what we're talking about today but when that verse became so real to me was when I became an advocate for people living with H.I.V. and AIDS. I was putting myself in a lot of risk, not to become H.I.V. positive

but I was stepping outside of what was talked about at church. I was with people that the church wasn't very interested in.

And when I stumbled across that verse where Paul says, "My life is worth nothing to me if only I can do what God has asked me to do," that fortified me, that gave me strength, that gave me courage to step out and lead in ways that I thought, if Paul can say that my life is worth nothing -- but it doesn't matter because I'm going to do what God asks me to do. That gave me the courage to do what I felt like he was asking me to do. So love that verse.

Sheila: I think that's exactly what we're talking about today because when I read part of your book, I remembered that when I was a teenager our pastor's wife didn't fit the traditional mold. She didn't play the piano and she didn't want to lead the Monday evening women's auxiliary meeting. A lot of women in our church looked down on her. She and I were really good buddies. I said, "Listen, Morag, God has something just for you." And it was not long after that she discovered she has a heart for going out at 11:00, 12:00 at night taking coffee and sandwiches to the prostitutes on the streets.

Kay: I love that! Because one of the sad things I think about pastors' wives, there is no one model anymore. There is not, well, this is what it means to be a pastor's wife. The model is all over the place. But there aren't that many who have actually used their position to lead out into the world. It's like your pastor's wife, she was taking what God had done for her and took it outside the church walls. So I love that model of advocacy and using your influence for good and for God's kingdom in the world.

Sheila: And that's honestly, what you've done with this book, Kay. I'm an avid reader; that's one of my hobbies. It is one of the most gloriously transparent books that I've ever read. I thought, what a gift to young pastor's wives to be able to say here's what true.

But give us a little bit because you grew up a church kid, as church-ed as a church girl could be.

Kay: Yeah, I'm a church girl. I have the nursery roll certificate that I got at one week old to prove that I've been in church my whole life. My dad was a pastor of small Baptist churches in California. So I grew up in a ministry home. Then I married a man who was headed toward ministry and we've been in ministry 42 years. So it's really -- I don't even know what normal life is like. I only know a ministry home -- my dad's and my husband's. So I'm thoroughly and completely a church girl. It's my life.

Sheila: You tell a very interesting story about how you and Rick met. I loved the honesty of, you had to fight for this marriage. How did you -- you weren't immediately thinking, this is the man of my dreams.

Kay: No. I actually was in love with someone else. I didn't know -- it's a bit of a long story but the gist of it is within eight days of our first date he asked me to marry him. We were sitting in the dark. We'd gone to this revival where I was playing the piano. He had come with me.

Sheila: So you played the piano, you already were halfway there.

Kay: Well, pastor's kid -- I had no choice. I was made to play the piano. So I had played the piano at this church revival, a little church revival while we were in college and Rick, we had gone on one date and he came with me to this one. And then we're sitting there praying at the end of this date as all good Christian couples should -- no making out, we were praying. So in the dark he just said, "Will you marry me?" I said, "What did you say?" And he said, "Uh." Then he got a little like what have I just done? He said, "I love you. Would you marry me?"

I had this moment -- there's only been two times really that God, that I would say he spoke to me and that was the first. I'm coming to God saying, "I don't love him. I actually really am so crazy about his friend who just broke up with me. He's a nice guy, he's amazing but I'm not interested in him. What am I supposed to do?"

And I felt like God said to me, "Say yes and I'll bring the feelings." So I said yes to somebody that I barely knew, had been out on one date, and at 19, that was the way I understood God worked. So I said yes. So all our marriage problems, I blame on God.

Sheila: I think that's only fair, really. Yeah! It was his idea!

Kay: I was not looking for this. This is what God said to do. So yeah, so we got engaged. We didn't tell anybody because even in our little Christian college where it was good to be led by the spirit, I could tell that wasn't going to go over well. So we kept it a secret. We broke up a couple of times because I always thought there would be the bells and the whistles and the churning in your stomach of oh, this is my man! And I was just like, he's a nice guy but really? Am I going to spend my whole life together? So we broke up, got back together.

So when we got married, we were strangers. We really didn't know each other. We hadn't done any of the work that you're supposed to do of getting to know each other, working out potential areas of conflict -- nothing! We just jumped in because that's what God told us to do, we thought. So we have had to fight for a strong relationship. It's not been easy.

Sheila: What made you keep fighting? Why didn't you just say at some point, "You know what? This is not working."

Kay: Because we always told our kids that we would not get a divorce. We told our kids that we would always work it out. That no matter what happened, dad and I loved each other, we were going to work it out. We would work it through and they didn't need to worry about it.

So honestly, the two things were I'd made a commitment to God. I truly felt like that commitment we made to each other when we got married was before God and was sacred. And then I couldn't imagine sitting down with my children face to face and saying to them, "You know all those things I told you? You know how I told you that with God's help we would be able to work it out? You know those promises I made to you? Guess what? We can't keep them." I couldn't do it.

So the times when -- and we're so different, Rick and I. The Mars and Venus thing, we're galaxies apart. We're light years apart. It is not just planets away, we are so different in every single thing. We are committed to God, committed to each other, beyond that, we are not alike.

So all the opportunities to work through difficult times. It was that commitment to God and that not ever feeling like I could ever sit down with my kids and say, "We couldn't do it."

Sheila: I wanted to talk about -- what do you think are some of the greatest pressures on young pastors' wives because sometimes you get married and then you discover your husband has a calling. So you've almost got roped into a life that you didn't necessarily sign up for.

Kay: Sometimes that is true. For me, I did know. Rick was heading to the ministry so I did have that. But when I talk to some of our young staff wives and I ask how many of them knew when they married their husband that this is where they were going to end up, very few of them do. I think they're afraid of being caught in the expectations of other people. I hear that around the globe. No matter what country I visit, no matter where I visit in the United States, pastors' wives tell the same story of how do you live with the expectations of being perfect? They feel like they've got to be perfect or they've got to measure up. They've got to dress a certain way, talk a certain way, that they have to know the Bible, like Beth Moore. They've got to be able to recite it in all the original languages.

When they don't know how to do that and they receive no preparation, they feel very inadequate, and feel... I think I've also discovered both from my own growing up and talking to a lot of other pastor's wives, there is this sense of almost this game that's played. The parishioners think the pastor and his family are perfect and so the pastor and his family, it feels good a little bit to have people think you're that great. Let's be honest, it strokes the ego to have people think you've got it altogether. So, without meaning to, they perpetuate that fallacy, that lie. And so then the pastor and his family are under the pressure to act perfect so they try to act perfect and the church over here thinks, oh, they never have problems like we do, Mabel. They don't fight.

They don't wake up and think, what have I done? Or their kids are always well-behaved. So then there is this distance and there is no intimacy.

First John 1:9 says that if we walk in the light as he is in the light then we will have fellowship with each other.

God's intent is that the pastor and his family and the people in the church have this rich fellowship. It can only happen when the pastor and his family say, "We're getting off the pedestal. We can't walk on water. We can't live on this teetering little pedestal and we can't exist in this pretend box of perfectionism."

When the pastor and his family stop doing that then the congregation has to adjust their own expectations. So I always tell young pastors' wives, "Get off the pedestal, get out of the box, stop trying to walk on water."

Sheila: I remember when I was in seminary in London, I wasn't in a pastoral track but some of my friends were. They were basically told, "Don't make friends with anybody in the church" because you're not supposed -- it's led to so many lonely people in the pulpit. What do you say to that?

Kay: I saw that lived out in my parent's home; the generation that heard that in seminary, they were told that in Bible college. They were very warm and caring people but they kept this little bit of reserve around themselves of they didn't want to make anybody in the church unhappy if they had friends. So they looked for their friends maybe in former churches but not in the current church.

I remember as a teenager looking at my parents, looking at my friends' parents who were going out on Friday nights, who had people over and looking at my parents who didn't have that and deciding if I go into ministry I'm not going to live that way. I need friends. I need people.

I think that's the antidote to that walk-on-water syndrome is to know and to be known and to build relationships. You don't have to know everybody in the church on an intimate basis, that's probably not a good thing to do. But you just need a few people that you can really be yourself, really share your soul, share your struggles, and it is in that knowing and being known that I think we have what it takes sometimes to make it through the harder times, to be able to share where you're struggling, to share where you're hurting, to share where you need Jesus like everybody else does.

Sheila: How do you handle criticism? Like it has to be really hard. People write and criticize me and I'm cool with that. But if they criticize my husband or my son, it is like a part of me

comes out that's definitely not been saved yet because I just want to punch their lights out. But I think if you're a pastor's wife, that has got to be so much more difficult.

Kay: It is difficult. People say cruel things. I wish -- giving Christians the benefit of the doubt that they were going to at least act mature if they're unhappy about something. No, no, no. I'm sorry. Some of the meanest cusses in the word are people in our churches; maybe their body's been saved but their emotions and their mouths haven't.

So terrible things have been said, terrible things have been done to people in the ministry. It's almost -- and it can sometimes tear a church apart, very much the way that a divorce can tear a family apart. When a pastor and his family are experiencing criticism and wounds, it is like the church itself, there is a divorce and it is so painful.

Bottom line, there is only two options and one of them is to run your race for Jesus because you can't please everybody. It is not my job to please everybody in the church. It is my job to please Jesus. So if I run my race for him and I practice radical forgiveness, I don't know what else. There is no other magic pill, there is no other magic formula. Criticism will come.

Some terrible things have been said to us, even when our son died. People said -- there were so many wonderful things, there were cruel things that were said to us about Matthew and the way that he died. Nothing is more personal to me than that. Part of me wants to just camp on that and be really bitter and angry. And I know for the good of my soul I have to keep my eyes on Jesus and I have to forgive and not let that bitterness become a part of who I am and taint everything about me.

Sheila: Radical forgiveness is a very intentional act. I love how you -- because you've geared this book to pastors' wives but honestly, Kay, this is a book for everybody because we're all going to face criticism, we're all going to face disappointment, we're all going to face times when people are looking at our kids and judging our kids. I think that absolute commitment to radical forgiveness is to me God's gift to us to live in a world where things are so broken.

Kay: Well, the world doesn't know what to do with that. The world doesn't know what to do with the kind of forgiveness that truly lets people off the hook; that lets people not live with rubbing their nose over and over and over into what they've done or said that was wrong or that was hurtful to us. And yet, the Bible is also so clear when it tells us that the world -- what Jesus said, "The world will know you're mine when you have love for each other."

So when we forgive, it actually is such a testimony to the world of the power of Jesus and his grace and his mercy in our lives. We have the opportunity through the pains and the heartaches and the sorrows of our lives, the misunderstandings, the disappointments that when people hurt

us to practice that same kind of forgiveness that he's given to us.

Sheila: I remember telling my son when he was little and somebody had really hurt him because he wanted life to be fair. I was like, "Babe, fair doesn't live here but Jesus does."

Kay: That's good. Can I put that in my next book? Because I really like that line.

[Laughter]

Sheila: But there's a truth to that. And to me, it is not like God wants you to forgive because you are a good Christian woman. To me it is a gift to us to live in a world that is not fair.

Kay: Well, I was born with the word *why* imprinted on my forehead because I wanted to know why it's not fair. I'm always looking on that search for fairness. And you're so right. It's not there, and that's a pointless search. I like your answer much better.

Sheila: I want to ask just how did you protect your kids as they grew up from allowing them to be themselves and make mistakes and not think, I'm the pastor's son or daughter so I better get it all right.

Kay: I tried to have an alliance with Sunday school teachers and youth workers. You can so much of everything is how you approach it. I could have gone in with a chip on my shoulder and said, "Now look. You need to treat my kids right. You need to treat them like you would treat anybody else." I could go in with that kind of defensive stance and put people off.

I chose to go in with a much softer stance; to kind of go in and enlist them as an ally, if you will to my kids. To be able to say, "You know what? I want you to treat my kids just like all the other kids. So if they're messing up and they're causing trouble, please let me know. You don't have to protect me from that. But on the other hand, they do kind of live with a lot of scrutiny so maybe let them pass a little like you would the next kid and try to get them to be an ally rather than an adversary."

But if there were lines that were crossed and there were people that said things to my kids that weren't kind, that put them in those boxes of expectation, I did try to have conversations, I sheathed the claws, sheathed the grizzly bear claws that you were talking about. But I did confront it directly and honestly. And I always told my kids, "Kids, we don't do what we do because daddy's the pastor. We do what we do because this is what we think Christ asks for everybody who is a believer and a follower."

Sheila: And that's why I really believe this book is really for all of us. I'm going to tell you in a

few minutes how you can get a hold of *Sacred Privilege*. One of the things I loved so much about Kay is that she has eyes to see beyond her own four walls and the walls of our nation to those who are hurting in the world. We've become so aware recently of a desperate famine in South Sudan. So I want to show you how you and I can actually make a profound difference there right now. So please, would you watch this?

On the mission field

Peter: I mean they have just flocked here. The need here is incredibly great.

Announcer: At the moment, the famine in South Sudan is contained to the northern region but the U.N. Food and Agricultural Organization has predicted that over a million families uprooted because of civil conflict are at risk of starvation.

Peter: So these are returnees that have returned back to their home area. The problem is they came here with nothing. They didn't have cattle, they didn't have goods, they didn't have money. They lost all that in the war. Now they've got to try and reestablish. But it takes six months, at least, to get a crop to give them the food they need. What do they do in the meantime?

Announcer: People who have fled to areas near rivers are eating water lilies. Mothers like Awok must rely on leaves from trees to give to their young children like Myaku. The Alufyang family are among the fortunate ones because they have located trees yielding fruit like this. But as soon as these sources are exhausted there will be nowhere else to turn for something to eat for thousands of families.

As with any disaster, it is the young ones who are the most vulnerable. The U.N.'s children organization has discovered more than 250,000 children who are severely malnourished and if they do not receive nourishing food immediately thousands of them will die.

Peter: There is a desperate need here for months to come and we've got to try and do something to help them. They are totally desperate. There are families here with malnourished children. We have to make a difference.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: I'll never forget what it was like my first time walking into one of those malnutrition clinics and seeing babies that could literally, hardly take a breath. Every single breath cost them energy that they didn't have. Their skin literally peeling off their arms and their legs. Their hair

turned orangish red because there's no protein in their system.

Once you see something like that, you can't forget about that. You become responsible -- and to sit in some of these clinics and pray with some of these moms.

Somebody said the most bizarre thing to me when I got back. She said, "Don't you think that in countries like that where there is desperate poverty and desperate malnutrition, don't you think these mothers almost get used to it?"

There is not a mother on the planet who would ever get used to having to bury their child or having to hold their child as they take their last breath simply because they cannot give their children any food.

The situation at the moment is really desperate but the amazing thing is we can do something. We have come up with this fantastic cereal. I took some of it myself before I fed it to the children. It looked like oatmeal but it is full of vitamins and minerals.

One of the doctors that we were working with said, "Sheila, literally, from the first bowl of this, it reverses the cycle from death to life."

So many people are counting on us. I often think, how ridiculous when I think of the number of diets I've been on in my life and then I think of these mothers who are desperately scraping the dirt trying to get some food for their children. We can do something. I've been there. I've seen with my own eyes the difference it makes. I've prayed with these moms.

Here's what we want to do. At the moment we have a program in place where we're feeding 400,000 children and with your help we need to continue doing that. We never want the lines to be longer than the food we have. So when I left there last time I promised these people, "Listen. I promise you. We will keep help coming." So for \$30 you can feed three children for three months. That's like going -- that's like two movie tickets and there is nothing decent out there. \$50 feeds five. \$100 will feed ten children for three months.

There is such a crisis and you and I have been given so much. Maybe you think, well, I don't have a lot. Jesus only ever asks what do you have? That's what he said when they looked at this huge crowd that needed to be fed on the mountain. Jesus didn't say, "Okay, feed everybody." He said to them, "What do you have?" If we all bring what we have Jesus will bless it and break it and he will feed his people. But we need your help now.

Would you go to your phone? Would you dial the number on your screen? Would you go online to LifeToday.org and let's be an answer to the prayers of these mothers and fathers and

these desperate children. Who knows the young men and women that God wants to raise up in these nations to change these nations for Jesus? So let's do it. Would you help us? Would you help us now? Thank you.

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

Sheila: Can you hear them coughing? Can you hear that deep chest cough? Because their resistance is so low that the least little thing becomes a serious life or death issue for these children.

I don't know if you realize, every time that you pick up the phone and you call or every time you go online, these are the people whose lives you are changing. Our prayer is that we can save this little one. But my prayer is that we can save hundreds of other children before they get to this stage. No child should ever get to this stage. No mom should ever have to watch this. So if we do something now, we can stop this from happening.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: Thank you so much! If the phones are busy, persist!

Kay, thank you so much for being with us. You've got so much wisdom to share. For any gift that people send in, we're going to send Kay's book, *Sacred Privilege*, your life in ministry as a pastor's wife -- or as a woman. Trust me, there is something in there for every single one of us.

Thank you for your vulnerability.

Kay: Thank you, Sheila. Thank you for the opportunity. Can we just stay all day? I just want to stay. There is so much I want to talk about.

Sheila: Yeah sure! Just hang out with these people.

Kay: Okay, let's do it.

Sheila: I'm going to ask and see if Kay can stay on with us and maybe we can do another show another time. But for now, I'm Sheila Walsh saying thanks for being with us on *Wednesdays in the Word*.