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Week 31: WFL

Wednesdays in the Word: Sheila Walsh

The Storm Inside: Insignificance to Courage

Sheila: Hi! I'm Sheila Walsh. Welcome to *Wednesdays in the Word*. I'm so grateful that you take time to stop by and spend some time with us. You see me, one person out here but there is a whole bunch of us and our prayer is that you would understand perhaps a depth you've never understood before, how much you're loved by God.

We live in a world where there is so many confusing things being said all the time. It seems like there is a new level of hatred and vitriol, whether it's on the news or just on social media. But in the midst of all that, I want you to remember there is never a moment when God doesn't love you, when God doesn't see you, and that he is for you.

It is one of the reasons that in the next few shows we're going to talk about some of the issues that face us every single day. In fact, it is why I wrote *The Storm Inside* to look at some of the issues that as women we deal with, things like shame, fear, insecurity or feeling as if you're insignificant, with disappointment, with regret, heartache. One of the biggest things that I think can cripple the church: Unforgiveness, despair. And something we don't talk about much but rage; just when you have anger inside. And just as physical storms throw out trash on the shoreline, emotional and spiritual storms that we walk through, as women, also throw out trash on the shoreline of our hearts. I think they show us what we actually believe as opposed to what we wish we believed or maybe even what we thought we believed.

I don't know what the issues are that you are battling with right now but when you combine those very human emotions with the fact that our enemy, Satan is a liar and an accuser of God's children, if we don't stop, if we don't pause and remember, who and whose we are, then when those emotional waves hit us, it is so easy to just to get pulled under.

Well, one of the most powerful stories in God's word that illustrates the thing I want to talk about today and that's moving from insignificance, feeling like there is nothing you can do, that God doesn't see you, I want to talk about how we move from insignificance to courage. I don't think there is any story in God's word that illustrates that better than the story of Esther.

I'm sure many of you know the basics of her story so I'll spend just a few moments giving a brief overview, then spend most of our time together on three powerful truths that run through Esther's story. If you like to take notes you might want to write these down. Truth number one: We have

an enemy who is hell bent on destroying us. Truth number two: When a seemingly insignificant woman surrenders to God, she is transformed from a helpless victim to a courageous overcomer. And three, the greatest of all: We have a savior who chose to become earthbound to deliver us.

So let's quickly refresh our memories on the basics of Esther's story. She was a young Jewish orphan who after the death of her parents had been taken in by her older cousin, Mordecai and he raised her as if she was his very own daughter. They lived in Persia, which is modern day Iran. You may remember that almost 600 years before the birth of Christ, the Jewish people had been carried off to Babylon. Many of them had been allowed and chose to return to Jerusalem but like Mordecai and Esther some decided to stay.

Well, when we meet Esther King Xerxes was in power. It is hard for me to actually adequately put into words just how powerful this man was. He ruled over 127 provinces from India to Ethiopia. It was the largest empire in human history up to that point. It took in part of India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, and Israel, which will be hugely significant.

Well, we read in Chapter 1 that this king invited all of the governors of his provinces, his army, anyone who was anyone to a party that lasted six months. That's not a party, that's spring and summer!

Well, at the end of that he threw a seven-day bash for everyone in the capital city. And it was on the seventh day that he made a very stupid drunken decision. Having displayed everything he owned there was only one thing left, his wife, Queen Vashti. So he sent his attendants to ask the queen to appear before this drunken crowd so all the men might see how beautiful she was. Well, that sounds humiliating enough to you and me, but to a Persian queen it was unspeakable affront. See, no commoner was supposed to be able to look at the women of the royal court. They even traveled in closed carriages. No one but the king and the queen's attendants were supposed to ever have been able to look at her face.

Now he's asking her to appear in front of a brawling horde of drunks at a party for the entire city -- complete humiliation. And bravely, she says no. Now that had to take courage. To refuse the command of not only her husband, but also the most powerful king the world has ever known, and not only that, when he is drunk. As you can imagine, he is furious that she defied him and of course, humiliated in front of his guests so he turns to seven advisors and asks them what he should do. Wise advisors would have helped him simmer down and sober up but those he confided in only escalated the situation.

Let me ask you a question. When you've been hurt, deeply wounded or offended, who do you talk to? Do you talk to those who will get mad with you and fan the flame? Or do you talk to

those who will help you remember who you are in Christ? In those moments, girls we need to choose wisely.

Well, Xerxes' advisors made the situation much worse. They suggested that he just get rid of his wife, which he did. I wonder what he thought when he sobered up. His wife had shown more character than he had but it was too late. He made a decree and he could not go back on it because the king's edict in that day is irrevocable. You can read about that in Daniel. It says: In the evening the men went together to the king and said, "Your majesty, you know that according to law of the Medes and the Persians, no law that the king signs can be changed." Gosh! What a foolish man to have so much power and so little wisdom.

Well, that's when his advisors set the stage for us to meet Esther. So the king is now lonely so they suggest the officers in all 127 provinces are appointed to find the most beautiful, young virgins and have them sent to the palace. So young Esther, just a teenage girl is rounded up like a stray dog. How terrifying! There is nothing Mordecai can do but he advises Esther to hide the fact she is a Jew.

For a year before the girls are sent in one by one to sleep with this king, they go through the most ridiculously lavish beauty treatments, six months soaking in oil of myrrh, six months in other spices. You'd be truly well-baked by that point. When you think about it, it is almost like Esther was caught up in the very first recorded episode of "The Bachelor" and she got the only rose because Esther is the one he chose to become queen.

But there is one little incident to note before we move on. Look at Esther, Chapter 2. This is what it says: One day as Mordecai was on duty at the king's gate, two of the king's eunuchs, Bigthana and Teresh who were guards at the door of the king's private quarters became angry at king Xerxes and plotted to assassinate him. But Mordecai heard about the plot and gave the information to Queen Esther. She then told the king about it and gave Mordecai credit for the report. When an investigation was made and Mordecai's story was found to be true, the two men were impaled on a sharpened pole. And this was all recorded in the book of the history of King Xerxes reign. Now that might seem like a bizarre side story but it will have huge significance later on.

Have you ever stepped up and you did the right thing and it's as if nobody cares, no one understands what a huge deal it was? Life may seem to go on as normal but let me tell you something, God misses nothing.

Well, at this point in the story we meet Haman, a man who embodies evil. He has a pathological, demonic hatred of the Jews. He has wormed his way in with king Xerxes and has been promoted to the number two position in the land. Haman did not wear his power lightly. He basically

demanded worship. He had the king issue an edict that everyone had to bow down when he passed by. Evil always demands worship. Well, Mordecai refuses. When Haman discovers that Mordecai is a Jew, he decides it's not enough to just have Mordecai killed, what he wants is the annihilation of every single living Jew on the planet.

As I said, three powerful truths that run through this story and can change our story. First is this: Yes, we have an enemy who is hell bent on destroying us.

Remember how much territory the king rules, including Israel. Think about this. If Haman gets his way, virtually every Jew on earth would be annihilated. Do you see why I said that Haman is not just evil, but evil incarnate? This is one more attempt to destroy the line of the promise, the line from which the Christ child will be born.

So Haman went to the king, told him that there was a rebellious group among his people, which it was actually just one man, and he asked permission to have them all killed. He thought of every detail. In case the king might miss the tax revenue from this group of people, Haman offered to pay the king millions of dollars in silver. Interesting how evil always has access to this world's currency. We read the king agreed. Wow! -- On the word of one man. He took off his signet ring and gave it to Haman. Dispatchers were sent by swift messengers into all the provinces of the empire giving the order that all Jews, young and old, including women and children must be killed, slaughtered and annihilated on one single day and a date was set for the following year.

When Mordecai heard about the decree he went into profound mourning. He sent a message to Esther asking her to intervene with the king. To her, that was an impossible request. You see, the king hadn't sent for Esther in a month and if anyone appeared in front of the king without being summoned, they were likely to be executed. So Esther sends back a message saying, "I can't do that."

Have you ever been in a position where God is asking you to do something and you look at your circumstance and you're like, Lord, I can't do that. Not me. I can't!

Well, this is the turning point of the story. At this point Mordecai stops addressing Esther as his adopted daughter and speaks to her as a woman standing on the edge of her God-given destiny. This is what he says, "Don't think for a moment that because you're in the palace you'll escape when all of the Jews are killed. If you keep quiet at a time like this, deliverance and relief for the Jews will arise from some other place but you and your relatives will die." Then that well-known verse, "But who knows, perhaps you were made queen for just such a time as this."

When we first meet Esther she appears to be nothing more than a pawn, a victim who is at the

mercy of a powerful king. But with God that's never, never the whole picture. This brings us to point two when a seemingly insignificant woman surrenders to God, she is transformed from a helpless victim to a courageous overcomer.

Let's look at Esther's turning point. We're all going to face these moments, girls. They will rarely appear to have the significance of the decision that Esther has to make but they are the moments that transform us. So how did Esther find the courage to make a decision that as far as she knew would probably cost her her life? Let's take a look. It's found in Esther four and I'm reading at verse 15.

It says this: Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai, go and gather together all the Jews of Susa and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will do the same. And then, though it is against the law, I will go in and see the king. If I must die, I must die."

Three days and nights -- sound familiar? There is always a death before a resurrection. There is outrageous freedom in obedience. Do you get it? There is no more issues to face, only instructions to be obeyed. Christ led by one rule, obeying his Father and leaving the consequences to him. If we really embrace living like this, it would set us free. Think about it, no more, why does she get asked to lead the group? Why was her child chosen and mine overlooked? Why did she get to share her story on stage when mine is clearly far more powerful? Until we are willing to leave all the consequences to God, we may celebrate the resurrection but we are not living in its power.

Esther didn't rush in foolishly. She fasted and prayed for three days and nights. Esther basically died to herself before she ever saw the king. It's kind of hard to scare a dead woman. So all looked very bleak. The king had given Haman his ring and that gave him total power. No decree issued by the king can be revoked. All the powers of hell are coming down on the children of God. So we come to point three: We have a savior who became earth bound to deliver us. No matter how dastardly the enemy's plan is, God is always a few moves ahead.

Before we even meet Haman, two events have lined up with the purposes of God. Number one: Esther is in position. Did God want an innocent young teenage girl thrust into the palace and the bed of an egotistical king? Absolutely not! Did God want some of the devastating things that have happened to you to happen? No. But even when our circumstances are evil, God is bigger than our circumstances.

Do you remember the event we noted in Esther two that seemed insignificant when Mordecai saved the life of the king? It is going to be a game changer. Here's why. Have you ever done something that really mattered and no one gave you credit at the time? As if nobody noticed.

Well, trust God. He misses nothing. That very selfless, passed-over act will play a role in your deliverance.

So let's set the stage. Esther, a woman dead to herself, alive to God approaches the king and he extends his scepter welcoming her in. So we read in Esther five, it says the king asked her, "What do you want, Queen Esther? What's your request? I'll give it to you. Do you want half the kingdom? It's yours!"

And Esther said this, "If it please the king, let the king and Haman come today for a banquet I've prepared."

The king turn to his attendants and said, "Tell Haman come quickly to a banquet as Esther has requested."

So the king and Haman went to Esther's banquet. Haman has no idea he has been set up. Evil always oversteps the mark. After the meal, Haman went home and boasted about the queen's favor and not only that, he had been invited back tomorrow for round two. But as evil is burning with more intensity, he asked his wife, "How can I even enjoy a meal knowing that that Jew is still alive?"

So his wife said to him, "Why don't you build a gallows? Get to the king early tomorrow morning, have Mordecai hung before dinner, then you can enjoy your meal."

Sometimes God calls on us to have courage and some days we don't even know the evil that's been plotted behind our backs. But God does. Esther has no way of knowing that before she is able to hold her second meal where she intends to reveal to the king how evil Haman is, her beloved and godly father will be dead. At this point, at least for Mordecai, all is lost -- but for God.

We read in Esther six, that night the king had trouble sleeping. So he ordered an attendant to bring the book of the history of his reign so it could be read to him. In those records he discovered an account of how Mordecai had exposed the plot of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the eunuchs who guarded the door to the king's private quarters. They had plotted to assassinate King Xerxes. What reward or recognition did we ever give Mordecai for this? Nothing has been done for him.

Well, at that point, there are two things only God could have orchestrated, the king couldn't sleep, he gave orders for the book to be read to him. And at that moment, he hears Haman outside the door and so invites him in and says, "What should be done for a man that's done so much for me?"

And Haman says, "You should give him everything! Give him your horse, give him a carriage, ride him through the city!" Because he thinks the king is talking about him.

And the king said, "Great! Let's do that!" And so he has to.

And that night at the second dinner Esther is able to reveal, "The reason I'm here is because Haman wants all the Jews killed and I'm one of them."

When the king realizes how evil this man is, he has him hung on the very gallows that Haman had built for Mordecai.

Amazing story of deliverance. That's the God that we serve. The God that we serve is working on our behalf. He wants us to know that in his eyes, we have great significance. But even when we don't know what's been plotted behind our back, God does. Even when he seems hidden, he is at work. God is at work for you right now to deliver his people.

One of the things that I think is the greatest privilege we have as his people is realize that not only does Christ give us significance but his eyes see all around the world and he sees those who right now are longing to know that there is somebody who cares for them, somebody who knows that they exist, somebody who hears their cry. The great thing is, you and I get the opportunity, not just to hear their cry but to be the answer to their prayer. Would you watch this with me?

On the mission field

Sheila: So she's 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. 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 -- it is absolutely filthy! Look at what she is pouring in here. And this is all they have. I asked them, "Do you drink this?"

And she said, "Yeah. We wait until 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 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

Sheila: I've known for years about our *Water for LIFE* projects but honestly, it is something so different when you actually step off that plane and you get in a Jeep and you drive to where these people are. That mom was really kind. I'd asked her that morning when she came out early in the morning, we camped in their village. And I asked, "Could I come with you? Can I come with you on your trip and see where you go to get the water?"

I was horrified by a couple of things. The children had no shoes on and they're walking over really rough terrain. But then we get to that waterhole and what I began to see and just slightly further down the river part, there are pigs in the water, there are all sorts of wild animals there in the water as well. She thought that somehow, if she lets the silt sink to the bottom that then the water is clean. But it is not -- there is so much disease in the water: Yellow fever, all sorts of things are absolutely overwhelming. We didn't get to speak to one mother in that village who hadn't lost at least one child through waterborne illness.

I was thinking about it last night. When my son comes home from college, one of the first things I do, which is kind of goofy but it's just because I'm his mum, I always put his favorite kind of water in the fridge, you know like what comes out of the tap isn't good enough. But it is just a thing I do because I know this is the kind of water he thinks is cool. As I was doing that, I thought, my mind went back to that woman because I have a picture of her on my computer top at home. And I thought, I cannot forget about these women.

The thing is we can do something right now. We promised these people that we're going to come home and we're going to tell our friends and they care. They're not people that just love Jesus in words, but they love Jesus in deed.

So I want you to know that for \$48 we can provide clean water for ten people. It's amazing! For \$144 we can provide clean water for 30 people! In fact, if we put \$4800 will actually provide a whole well and that will be enough water for 1,000 people! \$4800 helps 1,000 people. It literally is Water for LIFE. The well lasts for like 70 years. So it's like you break that cycle of disease and these children get to grow up and be strong and go to school and build a better future, but only if you and I hear their cry and respond.

If you're able to give an additional \$100 gift we have this fantastic *LIFE Filter Kit* because some of the villages are so remote we can't get our well drilling in there because it is just really rough terrain. But what we can do is we can give them these wonderful filter kits and that provides water for three families for an additional \$100. So please would you hear their cry? They're not asking for a lot. They're not asking for vacation, they're simply asking for a glass of clean water, in Jesus' name. Would you go to your phone? Would you do that now?

Begin video clip

Announcer: Every day children living in extreme poverty are forced to make a dreadful choice: Drink polluted water filled with deadly disease or perhaps die of thirst. No child should ever be faced with this decision.

The good news is there is a solution. **Mission:** Water for Life is one of the most proven and viable demonstrations of God's love in the world today. Suffering can end because clean water changes everything!

With your gift today you can help drill 400 water wells in remote villages in 15 nations. A gift of \$48 will provide disease-free water for ten people, \$72 will provide for 15 people, and \$144 will help provide clean water straight from the ground for 30 people.

Please also consider an additional gift of \$100 to help provide three families with water filtration kits in emergency areas where our drilling rigs are unable to reach. As our thank you, we'll send you the books, *Words of Jesus* and *Words of Healing*. One contains only the words of Jesus and the other scriptures for healing in your body, mind, and soul. With your \$100 gift you can receive both hardbound and softbound editions of these scripture promise books.

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 hand sculpted "Determined Eagle" bronze. Please call, write, or make your gift online.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: Thank you so much! If the lines are busy, please persevere. Jot the number down and keep trying again because if we all do something, we can literally change the face of Africa. That's our commitment; we want to see so many new water wells built this year. And for any gift that you send in we'll be happy to send you *The Storm Inside* with some of the teaching, we have some other wonderful gifts to give you as well. I know you don't do it for that but it is our joy to be able to put something in your hand and just remind you of how grateful we are.

So together, you and I cannot only bring physical water but so often that opens the door to be able to bring the water of life who we know is Jesus Christ. Thanks so much for being with us on *Wednesdays in the Word*. I'm Sheila Walsh. See you next time.

Begin video clip

>> I wish I could do more for *Life Outreach International*, but I'm saving for retirement.

Announcer: We have a plan that can help you do both. Contact *Life Planning Services* today.

End of clip