

10/4/17
Week 41: Transport LIFE
Wednesdays in the Word: Sheila Walsh
In the Middle of the Mess #1

Sheila: Hi! Welcome to *Wednesdays in the Word*. I'm Sheila Walsh and I'm so glad that you've stopped here for a moment and we get to spend a little time together.

I don't know what your 2016 was like, I found it a really tough year. It was a year of a lot of change and a lot of hard things that happened and I found myself really beginning to just struggle a little bit.

I've talked before about the fact that I struggle with clinical depression and I found myself spiraling a little. One of the things that has helped me is to begin to really journal and to make notes of passages of scripture that God uses and put a date beside them. Then to tuck God's word deep into my heart so in those moments, and I don't know if you have moments like that where you just feel like you don't even have the strength to go and physically pick up your Bible, you just feel so discouraged or down. But when you've got the word of God tucked right down inside of you, you find that it just comes to refresh you.

So I actually ended up writing a book and it talks about some things I've never talked about before. But I didn't want just to share my own personal experiences, I wanted to go a little deeper. I wanted to have a kind of well, okay, but what now?

So today I'm excited. I get to start this brand-new study. It's called *In the Middle of the Mess: Finding strength for this beautiful broken life*.

First of all, I wonder, what do you think when you hear that title, *In the Middle of the Mess*? Some of you might have given an automatic, "Amen, sister! That's right where I am right now." Perhaps others might have thought, I know somebody who really needs this. But either way here we are and I'm so grateful that we get to spend this time together.

I've written quite a few honest and vulnerable books over the years but this book from which the study is based is deeply and profoundly personal. I'll share with you some things I've never talked about before.

As you probably know, some struggles are easier to share than others, particularly in the church. I know however from my own life that struggles that are kept secret, they don't keep us safe, they keep us alone and vulnerable to the lies of the enemy.

As I said, in the past I've written about my struggle with depression and many of you have written and told me how much that helped you in your own life and I thank God for that. But this time, this time I want us to dive deeper to address the "what now" questions. It's not enough to admit that we're in the middle of a mess but what can we do as God's children to find strength, fresh strength right now right where you are right at this moment?

Not all struggles are monumental, of course. Some are as simple as please, Lord, show me one more way to cook a chicken. But big or small, we each face struggles every single day. That's why I want to dig into how do we find strength for our beautiful, yet honestly sometimes broken lives because both are true, life is beautiful and life is broken. But here is what I know to be true. No matter how hard life might get, we have this rock-solid promise and I am certain that God, who began the good work within you will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.

Well, that's our hope. No matter how far along in the journey you feel you are, or honestly, how far you feel you still have to go, God himself is at work in all of us to make us more like Christ even in the middle of our struggles and our brokenness.

So this teaching I want to be intentionally practical. I want to put real tools in your hands that will make a difference every single day. So together over the next six weeks we'll unpack these six truths: Brokenness is here. We begin by accepting what's true because Jesus said, "You'll know the truth and the truth will set you free."

Next, brokenness is hard. Grief is part of our journey but even in the darkest night we are never left alone. God is close to those whose hearts are broken. He saves those who are crushed in spirit.

Then, brokenness is loud. We live in such a noisy world but I'm learning -- I'm learning the beauty of stillness and quiet in God's presence.

Then brokenness is to be shared. You and I were not created to do this journey alone. We need each other. There is strength in confessing our sins to each other and praying for one another so that we may be healed.

Then this next step, brokenness is a path to healing. Understanding that God knows everything about us and loves us is life-changing. When we shift our focus from our failures and fix our

gaze on God who calls us "daughter" we begin to live a life of thanksgiving.

And finally, brokenness, well, honestly, brokenness is brief. The sun will come up tomorrow. What you are facing right now, no matter how hard it feels and how long the road looks, it will pass. And you and I live looking to the day when Christ returns and then all our brokenness is gone forever!

I love the picture we're given in the revelation given to John Chapter 21. Here's what it says. Verses one Through 4: *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. For the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared and the sea was also gone. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. I heard a loud shout from the throne saying, "Look! God's home is now among his people. He will live with them and they will be his people. God himself will be with them."*

This is so beautiful: *He will wipe every tear from their eyes and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things will be gone forever.*

Wow! That's our sure and certain future. But for now, for this moment, the passion of my heart is to help you remember who you are and whose you are. You're seen by God. He knows every line of your personal story and he loves you.

Let me tell you this. This study is not a six more things to add to your list. No! You need that like you need another load of laundry. True transformation doesn't come from our own efforts but from the grace of God working in us. But you know, there's a mystery at work here. When we choose to say yes to God, yes to His grace, yes to being changed and bring ourselves, heart and soul to him, he takes us right where we are and he does what only he can do and we are changed. Now this is a process. It is not a "Pass go and collect \$200" kind of deal. It is an ongoing work until that day when we see Jesus face to face.

Let me take you back to the day when my understanding of the beauty that comes from brokenness began. On this specific day I was preparing to go on air before a national television audience. The show I hosted was called *Heart to Heart with Sheila Walsh*. I wanted *Heart to Heart* to be a place where we could tell the truth: The good, the bad, and yeah, sometimes the ugly. I wanted viewers to know they weren't alone in this great big world. I wanted to offer them hope regardless of where they were along their path.

But the honest truth is, my heart was broken -- had been shattered into a million pieces by loss, by disappointment, by my father's suicide, by pain, by grief, by questions that I just had no answer to.

Some of you have heard this part of my story before; this part that deals with my melt down, my own very personal mess. I've shared it before and always in the past tense. This is what happened to me back then and this is how I felt. And in many ways, it is a past tense story. That specific breakdown for example, happened like a quarter century ago. Yes, I have moved on since then. And yes, I've found a deeper level of intimacy with Jesus than I've ever known before. And yes, great beautiful healing has come my way, greater understanding of the love and mercy of God. But as I sat down to dream about all that I hoped to convey in this study, my life kind of fell apart again.

As I was writing, my mum died and the emotions I thought I had dealt with just resurrected, every bit as raw as they had been all those years before. I felt afraid. I felt alone. I felt scarily off balance, broken. Now my mum was ready to go. She was about to turn 87 but I wasn't ready to say good-bye. I don't think you're ever ready to say good-bye to your mum.

I had this overwhelming sense of a door slammed in my face and I was left alone on the other side. I was asking myself what are the things I should have asked her. What are the things that I didn't know that only she could tell me and now it was too late? I thought I was in a good place. But her death just a year ago rocked me to my core.

I almost stopped writing this book. But if I've learned anything in the past years is that you can't run from pain, you have to face it square on. Pain will deal with you until you deal with it. I didn't understand that years before when my life fell apart but now I can see traces of God's grace -- many traces, moments when he was calling me to come to him in all my brokenness.

I remember interviewing the late singer songwriter, the brilliant Rich Mullins. Rich was an honest, earthy wanderer of a man. He wrote so many amazing songs like "Awesome God" and "Sing Your Praise to the Lord." Remember those? He loved God and he also struggled to love God. He loved people and he struggled to fit in. He called himself a ragamuffin; one that is a little rough around the edges, a little too un-churchy for the church's taste perhaps.

I asked Rich, then 37 years old to imagine that he and I were sitting across from each other in a coffee shop enjoying a cup of coffee just chatting. I said, "Suppose I asked you, what is the most important thing you've learned in your life? How would you answer?"

He paused for just a minute and then he said, "I guess there could be nothing more important than becoming fully who you were made to be."

Sitting there on the set I listened to his words but honestly, the profound truth just kind of washed over me. Rich was talking about being authentic, being loved, being seen, being real. He talked about salvation being more than a onetime act but that Christ was committed to our

ongoing healing and salvation. Well, I listened back then but I didn't hear. I couldn't hear.

Throughout the following weeks I continued to tell my television audience how much God loved them and that regardless of the challenges they were facing, Christ was with them in the mess. I believed those things to be true, I just didn't know how to receive that for myself. They didn't have the level of darkness in them I saw in myself: The fear of never being enough, the failure to live the perfect Christian life.

Then my greatest secret of all, my ongoing life-long battle with suicidal thoughts. "Nobody struggled like I struggled." That was a lie I believed -- and no one could know. If only I could get rid of this horrible brokenness, I told myself. If only I could find my way out of this desperate sadness and just get fixed. I had been a Christ follower for decades by then and I knew all the right things to say: God is good. God loves you. God is powerful. He is on the throne. His strength is made perfect in our weakness. We overcome by the blood of the lamb. All true but the distance between what I knew in my head and what I was living in my heart had never felt greater.

In my private moments, my kind of internal script probably sounded a little like this: You're not good enough. You're not lovable. You're alone, Sheila. If your own dad could hate you, there is something really wrong with you. If people knew the real you, no one would want to be with you.

My father committed suicide when he was just 34 years old. A massive brain injury effected his personality and when I was five he tried to end my life. I survived but he was taken off to a psych hospital where he escaped one night, walked to the river's edge and drowned himself. He went in knowing he would never come back. He took his own life that night and for years, I knew I was the reason why.

Three months after I interviewed Rich Mullins is when I finally fell apart on live television. My glass house came crashing down around me. And as far as I could see life was over. I left the set that day and drove to Virginia Beach. I stepped out of my car. I walked up to the edge of the ocean and I walked in 'til the waves were hip deep. "Keep walking," a silent voice urged me. "Just keep going, Sheila. The waves will cover your head and the sea will swallow you up and you can finally be done with all the pain."

I stood there with the waves crashing against me and I thought about my mum. I couldn't do this to her. I couldn't go through with my plan. I mean I couldn't have her get a phone call to say someone else you love has disappeared under the water. So instead I drove to the psych unit.

I'll never forget in the parking lot of the Northern Virginia Doctors Hospital, I sat and wept as I

checked myself in. It felt like the end and in many ways it was. It was the end of trying to be good enough for God, of trying to hide my brokenness. I was to discover that sometimes God will take you to a prison to set you free.

This brokenness that you and I both feel, at its core it's a spiritual pain. There's a dark evil hoping that we'll fall and never get back up again. But the darkness will never have the final word. Triumphant over our darkness and struggles is Christ's magnificent light. And you and I take baby steps towards that glorious brightness each time we come to God and offer him the broken pieces of our lives.

During my month long stay at the psych ward I couldn't deny my brokenness any longer. I couldn't push down the pain for the simple reason everyone in the hospital was in pain. That's why we were there. My very presence shouted, "I'm broken. I need help." While this might sound like a terrible situation, at times it was, there was beauty tucked into the brokenness.

Two gifts -- first of all because everyone already knew I was broken, I didn't have to hide anymore. I didn't have to pretend. It was such a huge relief. No more masks, no more pretending.

Second, because I'd exhausted every other option available to me, at last I turned to Christ, not parts of me, all of me -- fully, faithfully, turning to Christ.

So I don't know where this sits with you right now. I don't know how broken you feel you are but I just want you to know because of what Christ did you are not alone. You don't have to hide from God. You can tell him the whole truth about your life. Jesus said to the woman of Samaria by the well, "The time is coming when those who worship will worship in spirit and in truth." That little word for truth in Greek means "with nothing hidden." You can come to him. And when you begin to discover that depth of healing in your own life, somehow it changes how you see everybody else.

I saw that so clearly on a trip I took not so long ago to Southeast Asia where I saw so many broken boys and girls who desperately needed help. And I began to see one of the ways that you and I could do that. Would you watch this?

On the mission field

Announcer: For many years now, as part of our Rescue Life campaign, *LIFE Outreach* has partnered with a ministry in Southeast Asia called ZOE International. Together we have rescued many children from the dangers of human trafficking, and also have built a Life Center that provides a loving home for these children.

>> We are rescuing children from human trafficking giving them a fresh start at life. Each and

every weekday we are taking over 50 children to and from school in a vehicle that is over 14 years old, and it is on its last legs. It's been through the wringer. We are in desperate need of a vehicle that we can rely on to keep our children safe.

>> ZOE Children's Home is located in the mountains and the road to the schools is steep and winding. It is especially dangerous during the rainy season.

Announcer: In addition to caring for the children at the Life Center, our mission partners also minister in remote villages in the area. The goal is to educate the children and their families about human trafficking and how to avoid becoming a victim of a trafficker.

>> We travel to remote villages located in the mountains and jungles to bring them the good news of Jesus Christ. When necessary, we take all the equipment needed to hold a meeting including generators, sound, and video equipment, lighting, stages and tents.

We currently transport our equipment in three old pickup trucks, each of which has been driven nearly 250,000 miles on rough terrain. A heavy-duty six wheel truck would help us to more effectively bring the gospel to many who are hungry for God's touch.

>> Please ask God what he would have you do to not only help ZOE but life's other partners around the world who are in need of dependable transportation. God bless you!

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: I was reading in the book of Romans -- this is Romans Chapter 10. This is what it says: *Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they've never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them? And how will anyone go and tell them without being sent?*

Our goal this year at *LIFE* is to raise \$1.12 million for 71 vehicles. Now I've had the great privilege of being in the situation and seeing how drastic the need is. In Africa, for example, where we're doing our mission feeding projects, some of the roads are unbelievable. I'm sure that several of my internal organs were rearranged on that trip. The roads are just terrible. And if a vehicle breaks down -- here's the reality. We have a school 150 miles over there and we have a line of children that are waiting for the one meal they'll get. Now if our van breaks down on the way then those children don't get the help they need.

I've seen it in India too. Like in India, what we actually need there are motorcycles. They do these motorcycles with little side things where they can take the Jesus film and they go to the most remote places, set up in a field and because Indian people love movies, the whole village comes and they show them the movie of the life of Christ; and people come and get saved every single night.

Here's the thing. You guys honestly are amazing. I'm always blown away when I hear how much you contribute to all our projects. We want to put in water wells in, we want to feed children, we want to rescue those who are being trafficked. There are so many things that we want to do but unless we can get to the people, unless we can take the help that you've given and actually get it to the people we're really in trouble.

Some of the vehicles honestly are only still surviving on prayer because I mean I looked at one van and I thought, there's no way this will even start. But often that's what they do. They stop and they say, "Lord Jesus, we need to get here. Will you help us?"

I said to them, "I'm going to go home and I'm going to get you some help." We need 71 vehicles for our work around the world. Now we can't all do a ton but we can do something. So if you would offer a gift of \$40 or \$80 -- some of you could do \$120 or some of you would be able to do \$1,000.

Now for any gift at all, we're going to send you this beautiful hymns CD. I love to listen to hymns in the car. And for a gift of \$120 we have a great super-giant print reference Bible. If you're able to give \$1,000 then we'll send you this beautiful bronze.

But let's determine we will all do something and get the good news to where it needs to get to; in Jesus' name. Please go to your phone and call now.

On the mission field

Announcer: It's a missionary's nightmare, having lifesaving relief supplies in your hand and no way to get it to those who are suffering. Some of the vehicles so vital to our outreaches are completely worn out and must be replaced. And in some critical areas no transportation is available at all. *Life's* mission partners have immediate and urgent needs to transport lifesaving supplies to children and families in remote locations. An additional 1.1 million dollars is needed to purchase 71 vehicles, large and small. Your gift of \$40, \$80, \$120, or \$1000 will help purchase these vehicles and provide lifesaving food, clean water, medicine, and the good news of Jesus to people in need.

With your gift of any amount, be sure to request *The Sweetest Name* classic hymns CD with a booklet containing the history behind the hymns for all twelve songs.

With your gift of \$120 or more, please request the NIV Super Giant Print Reference Bible, ideal for anyone looking for a Bible that's gentle on the eyes.

Finally, please prayerfully consider a gift of \$1000 or more to help transport life. And you may request our beautiful Determined Eagle bronze sculpture.

Please call, write, or make your gift online!

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: Thank you so much. Do you see the need? There is such a need to get help. We want to do it this year. We want to be able to get 71 new vehicles. Some of them are trucks, some of them are cars, some are motorbikes. We ask our partners, what do you need? And they're always really honest. They're like, "Here's what we need." It's never for themselves, it is always, always with a heart to get help where it's needed. I love the scripture that says, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." It is an ongoing promise for us too. You find yourself in a bad place, you call on the name of Jesus.

But I think of the many around the world who are calling on the Lord right now and need help and you and I have the great privilege of being an answer to that prayer. Whatever you can do, we're grateful for. What a joy it is going to be for me to go back to all these different countries and tell them, "This happened because of some people who care about you in Jesus' name."

God bless you! See you next time.