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Week 40: Christmas Shoes & Smiles
Wednesdays in the Word: Sheila Walsh
Jeremiah Johnston #2

Sheila: Welcome to *Wednesdays in the Word*. I'm Sheila Walsh. Often I'll sit here and I'll tell you of the different ministries that we're involved with and I'll ask you to help and you're amazing -- the way you respond is amazing. But I just wanted to remind you that we're here for you too. If you're going through a hard time, if you feel alone, if you feel isolated and cut off, you can call us here. We have an amazing team of prayer warriors who will agree with you and stand with you and remind you of who you are.

One of the things I'm really excited about is my guest today, Dr. Jeremiah Johnston who has written this book called, *UnAnswered: Lasting truth for trending questions*. I just want to welcome you back. I'm so glad you're able to come and do another show.

Jeremiah: Thank you, Sheila. It is an honor to be back.

Sheila: Now the six sections in your book, when I looked at it I was like there is no way we're ever going to get through this. So we've chosen a couple and what we're going to look at first here is body of proof. What does it mean for us to live a resurrection-centric life?

Jeremiah: Well, the resurrection gives life to every aspect of our Christian life when you think about it. When you read the New Testament there are over 300 passages in the New Testament that allude to the resurrection. Every sermon in the book of Acts, the central point: The resurrection of Jesus. The greatest promise that we're given, more than two dozen times is John 14:19 when Jesus said, "Because I live you will live also." More than two dozen times we're promised that our eventual resurrection in Jesus are linked. Yet, here's the issue: Most of us cannot give an articulate, informed, intelligent reason why we believe Jesus physically, bodily, came back from the dead.

Now I had the privilege to study in Oxford, to write an over 90,000-word thesis and David Hume, the atheist said, "Wise men choose probabilities." Now I want to encourage our audience with this. The greatest probability of what happened at that first Easter weekend was that Jesus physically, bodily rose from the dead. Christianity is unique, unlike any other religion in the world. Christianity actually interacts with history. It is based on an event and if this event happened it is a game changer.

Sheila: I want you to set the scene culturally for us because honestly, I was surprised when I read what it was like during those times, what the life expectancy was, what happened to dead bodies. Talk to that. That was fascinating.

Jeremiah: Thank you for saying that, Sheila. Especially coming from you; you're voracious reader. So thank you for that. We have to read the New Testament with first century eyes. It is not hard to do. Heresy, it is not hard to speak out of context; all we need is Jesus in no context or the Bible in no context. So it is important that we understand Judaism. Jesus, after all, was a Jew. He came to earth historically at a certain time. Paul says in the fullness of time he came.

Well, he came at a time of immense suffering and pain. It is fascinating to me, 30 times in the gospels we hear that large crowds traveled with Jesus. We have to ask ourselves why? He was just another rabbi; wasn't he? Well, not really. When you consider that life expectancy in the first century world of Jesus -- 20 years of age.

Sheila: That's mind-blowing!

Jeremiah: We read our modern understanding that we're living longer than ever. According to C.D.C. Americans live to age 79. Canadians into their 80s. We're actually living 11 years longer now than people did in the '70s. So we don't understand how potent, how resident Jesus' ministry was.

So he didn't just preach the kingdom of God, he actually authorized his disciples, who he sent out as apostles to proclaim the kingdom of heaven to do miracles and nekros gyro in Greek: Stand up to raise the dead. He didn't just proclaim it, he actually predicted it. We see that in Mark 8:31, Mark 9:31, Mark 10:33-34 he predicted his violent death and resurrection. And then he went a step further, he actually did resurrection himself. When we read about Jairus' daughter, when we read about the widow of Nain's son.

This is where your question is so excellent because when we don't understand Judaism, when Jesus walks up and touches the byre in the funeral processional, he is violating Jewish burial traditions, Jewish laws, he was unclean. Jesus transcended all of that religiosity. And he said, "Stand up" and the boy literally sat up. Can you see it in your mind?

And then the most probably stupendous miracle of all next to Jesus on resurrection, of course, you know Lazarus. He's dead four days. In the Jewish context he could not have been more dead. In Jewish burial traditions, they believed the spirit of the dead hovered over the body for three days, and then after three days, even the face changed and the spirit left. So when people see that Lazarus has been dead four days and Jesus says "Come forth," people are shocked. Is it any

wonder they are?

I think it is a great question. We see a 25% of the Roman Empire sick, dying or need of immediate medical attention on any given day.

Sheila: It is fascinating. You talk about the fact that if you're going to start a movement, the least likely thing to build a movement on at that point is somebody who was dead and is alive. That's just not -- there is so many things against, and the way that the men who were afraid were transformed into these bold speakers.

But for people watching and a mother who lives somewhere in Iowa, how does a resurrection-centric faith impact her life today?

Jeremiah: Well, Romans eight says that the same power that raised Jesus from the dead indwells us. Only because of the resurrection Paul could say in the Colossians, "Christ in me, the hope of glory." It gives us a hope and energy that allows us to transcend all of life's momentary difficulties. I think until we understand that, we will really just be on the sideline of our faith. We get really motivated when we realize we're not just living for today, we're living for tomorrow as well, and eternity because of the resurrection.

I think it is so important in a time of hyper skepticism, we're living in a post Christian culture, Christians have to believe every follower of Jesus, not just Delta Force Christians like Sheila Walsh but all of us. We have to be able to give a reason for the hope that's in us. Jude three says that we are to contend for the faith; epagonizomai in Greek. It means to continue to attack. We have too many Christians on the retreat. Guess what? When you weigh the evidence, it is amazing when we see that the evidence, the scales of truth tip in our favor. By golly, Jesus did physically bodily raise from the dead.

Sheila: I love the way that it speaks to our culture right now, a resurrection-centric faith impacts how we view the handicapped, how we view a child who lives for five days. In those days they had no respect for -- if you were a dead body, you were just thrown out. But believing in the resurrection impacts how we view every other human soul.

Jeremiah: You're absolutely right. In Rome, body dumping was a huge problem. I mean 1500 bodies a year were just left. You would free your slave the day before your slave died. And literally, people would just sidestep dead bodies.

What stopped this evil practice and others? Well, a couple of things, Christians came along believing that everyone is made in the image of God; they have inherent value. A teacher or rabbi, Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me." What pushes back infanticide? What

pushes back racism? That really is introduced from the classical authors. What is it? It is Christianity and it is this resurrection-centric Christianity that we care about the body, we're going to honor it in birth all the way into death and burial. It's amazing. It is fascinating, actually. We see nearly a million Christians buried together in the city of Rome really before the Edict of Toleration in A.D. 313.

Sheila: You talk about even the word for cemetery. That was fascinating. Tell us the roots for that.

Jeremiah: Again, we don't know these things but when you look at the Greek word *koimeterion*, which means cemetery, we drive by cemeteries. We'll drive by cemeteries on the way home tonight and we don't realize that that is a Christian-centric term. There were other words in Latin that were used for burial: mausoleum, memoriam, sepulchre. Those were the three main words. But the Christians actually wanted to be buried together because after all it was just a temporary departure.

So they say, "We're going to actually come up with a new term, *koimeterion* which means dormitories, sleeping rooms because we will again arise with our savior. Isn't that fascinating? So every time you see a cemetery that has the stamp of resurrection.

Sheila: How does a belief in the resurrection impact somebody who is struggling right now? Like where are you, God? I'm really struggling. How does a profound understanding and place of the resurrection at the center of who we are speak to that?

Jeremiah: Sheila, we've seen this as we meet people when we speak. We hear people who have gone through profound tragedies. I was recently speaking in Santa Cruz and a sweet couple walked up to me. And they had just driven home from a Luis Palau Beach Fest. They were hit by a drunken driver. Their two daughters age 14, age 16 were instantly killed. The mom barely survived. The woman, not only drunk, also high; how do you survive something like that?

Not only did they survive, this happened just a few weeks after 9/11. They said, "Because of the resurrection, we found..." the woman's first name, "Lisa, after she served her prison sentence. We wrote the parole officer. We asked the parole officer, 'Can we come see Lisa when she is released?'" They said, "We've never had a request like this. After all, she killed your only children." They said, "We would like to forgive her." They met her. They embraced her.

I asked Dan and Lynn, "How were you able to do that? I'm a father of five. How did you even..." They said, "The resurrection of Jesus. It promises that it is just a temporary good-bye. And Jesus, because he's forgiven us we can forgive Lisa for even something this much of a tragedy."

I think that that is emblematic of what I talk about in the book, is that it will give you faith to transcend the most difficult circumstance, a resurrection-centric life.

Sheila: Why do you think there are so few sermons on the resurrection? Other than Easter Sunday and maybe at a funeral, you very rarely hear about the resurrection from the pulpit.

Jeremiah: It's really sad. I think that unfortunately, we're living in times where I'm very concerned for what passes for a sermon today. That's why I so appreciate your Bible teaching. We have to preach the entire counsel of God's word and when we see how prevalent the resurrection was, it was always on the tip of every tongue. If you try to pull out the resurrection passages in really all 27 books, it would not be coherent; you would not be able to truly understand. This is how unique it was. Truly every Sunday was a resurrection Sunday. Actually, that's why the church began worshipping on Sunday, not an off day, in the first century. They said, "That's the day our Lord rose from the dead, the Lord's day, Sunday. We're going to celebrate the resurrection every Sunday." So I think we need to get past just the formality of Easter and when we unlock that we go to new heights in our spiritual life.

Sheila: I've got to touch on one more area. And honestly, when I first read this I thought, wow, that's kind of weird: Paranormalcy. You talk about the fact that we live in a culture that is fascinated with the paranormal. Why do you think that is so?

Jeremiah: Well, when you think about the fact that the paranormal has become the new normal, and I'm talking about when I say paranormal, that's the trendy term; I'm talking about the spirit world, the demonic; 71% of Americans claim to have personally had a paranormal experience. Nearly 40% of Americans believe in ghosts. Unfortunately, when we don't have a biblical centrism, we forget that Jesus, when it comes to exorcism, this was no side bar issue. When Jesus proclaimed the kingdom of heaven two things happened: There were miracles and there were exorcism. And what's amazing is Jesus said in Matthew 28, "All authority has been given to me, I give it to you."

So unfortunately, some people get freaked out when we talk about paranormal and we don't understand the authority we have. But there is such an allure to it. I buried as a pastor, I officiated the funeral of my next door neighbor's 14-year old son. I will never forget when this sweet couple met with me -- and living to our left. "Jeremiah, we have to talk to our son again. Would it be okay if we saw a psychic?" So we ridicule people but then we realize that they're grieving. I was able to open the word of God, Second Corinthians 5:8, "Absent with the body, your son is present with the Lord right now."

And yet, we need to understand again Jewish burial traditions, we need to understand what Jesus,

the great exorcist that he was, and then we actually see the authority that we have in Christ.

Sheila: You said a statement in your book that I thought was kind of funny but true. You said we have the most educated yet the dumbest church. I resemble that remark. Yes! But it's true. We have access to so much that we have so much learning and understanding. Why do you say that in some ways we're least educated?

Jeremiah: It's an exciting time to be a Christian, Sheila; 70,000 people a day are coming to faith in Jesus Christ. The church is growing rapidly and expanding rapidly. Unfortunately, that is happening in non-western countries. The church is regressing in the west. And it is regressing because unfortunately, we don't have a thinking faith. The church is seen as irrelevant, passé, not into what I'm dealing with in my life today. It is just so irrelevant.

Unfortunately, we have lost the spirit of the early church fathers, if you will, who simply they outthought everybody around them. They were the thinkers. They were the thought leaders of the day. Again, after all, we talked about apologetics in our last program. All apologetics is, and that doesn't mean we're apologizing for the faith by the way; it means we're giving a hope, an apologia, a reason for our faith.

Apologetics, the point of it, is to make sure our faith connects up well with the questions our culture is asking today. In the second century, they questioned, they thought Christians were atheists. They thought Christians were cannibals. Atheists because they didn't worship the Roman emperor; cannibals because they didn't understand the communion, the Lord's Supper.

Well, we have different questions today like what we've been discussing in these programs. As Christians, it is up to every single one of us to be able to give an answer for the hope that is in us. When we do that, that's when things get really exciting.

Sheila: It's interesting because you talk about the fact that we used to talk about Satanism, but that word has been kind of pushed to the background and paranormal, it's a lot prettier. What would you say to somebody who says, "I'm not really involved in the spirit world, I just read my horoscope. I just dabble with a few things."

Jeremiah: That's a great point because there is such an allure to the paranormal world. But here's what I would say and not just research but in experience and speaking as you've met so many different people, it is a slippery slope. And the minute you open the door to the demonic world it is very difficult to close it. So we should get rid of all the demonic paraphernalia in our house. We should not entertain that. I want to know what God's will is for my life. I don't need to read a horoscope. I need to read the word of God. I need to pray. I need to allow God's Holy Spirit to speak to me and show me what his will is. I don't need any kind of charms or

anything else to tell me that.

God has promised to reveal that to us. James 1:7, "If we lack wisdom let us ask of God and he will give it to us."

Sheila: So what would you say to somebody watching this program, and maybe they're a little shocked. They're like, "Wow! I didn't realize this was a big deal. What do I do?"

Jeremiah: Well, the first thing I would say is first we need to realize the authority that we have in Jesus Christ. The New Testament addresses the issue of the paranormal again and again and again. Satan has no power over you if you're a follower of Jesus Christ. That's very important that we remember that. When you realize that the sons of Sceva in Acts Chapter 19, it is that cryptic passage where the demon actually says to the Jewish exorcist, "Jesus I know, Paul I know; who are you?" They went in there and they tried to do it in their own power.

A lot of us, we try to attack the demonic or we try to combat it rather in our own power. What did Jesus do? Jesus exorcises a demon. He doesn't need any phylacteries or interesting uniforms. It's fascinating in Acts 19, it says the Jewish exorcism, Greek it was two of them even though there were seven sons, they ran out naked. We read that and we think that's a little odd. Well, these were -- Jewish exorcism was a big business in the first century. Almost like a Dallas Cowboy or Houston Texans, you would wear uniforms, helmets, you would wear all of these phylacteries, things that would ward off evil spirits. You would have a magic book. You would cast out demons in the name of Solomon. Jesus comes on the scene and he casts out a demon effortlessly. He says that same authority has been given to you. He is not afraid and we don't need to be either.

Sheila: I love what it says in 1 John four, "Beloved do not believe every spirit but test the spirits to see whether they're from God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world." The thing that you mentioned in your writing that is so true is that we think the enemy is going to show up in some ugly -- but we forget he is called an angel of light.

Well, there is so much in your book and not just that, in your Bible study in Christian Thinkers, and we're going to give our viewers an opportunity to access all of this stuff because you've done so much work and we're so so grateful.

As we're starting to move a little bit -- I know it's a little early, a little toward the season when we remember the birth of Christ, one of the things that my husband Barry and my son Christian and I do is every year we ask the Lord, what can we do this Christmas that would be reaching out as opposed to gathering in? Who can we invite into our home? Who is on their own this Christmas?

But I have the privilege of, with *LIFE*, of traveling to some of our projects and traveling to Africa and traveling to the Dominican Republic or Southeast Asia and seeing some very real present needs. I'm thinking, when their needs are so easily met, why don't you and I meet them? Would you watch this?

On the mission field

Clint: We're approaching a time of the year when *LIFE Outreach* does its Christmas Shoes & Smiles campaign. The smiles are for corrective surgery. But what we're doing today is we're getting these young boys and girls shoes for the very first time. You can actually see the importance of what we're doing because look at this little girl, Veronica, she's got these sores on her feet already. She's obviously never owned a pair of shoes. She's been walking around bare feet.

James: Betty, they just tough it out and they play. But we found out that right here in this area that hookworms get in the skin, get in the bloodstream, ultimately into the intestines and cause very serious disease and sometimes death. We can turn it around by simply giving them shoes.

Sheila: Something as simple as a pair of shoes can really change a child's life. This is a happy place today. [Laughing] Look at this face! Who wouldn't want to give her a gift at Christmas? So thank you so much on behalf of her family, those who love her. I think you've put the biggest smile on her face that we've seen all day. So thank you. Thank you for the gift of shoes. Thank you for the gift of life!

[Children yelling]

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: I loved that trip! I loved every moment of being able to see the joy that a simple gift of a pair of shoes put on to the face of a child. It is not just shoes so they don't cut themselves. It is shoes so that, as James talked about, so that hookworm doesn't get into their system and it depletes them of protein, impacts their brain. It really makes a difference between life and death for some of these children.

I think you and I have so much, we're really blessed and this is our last week of Christmas shoes. So whatever we get in this week is what we will have to send overseas. Our goal has been

150,000 pairs of shoes. Now if that was just one church trying to do it, it would be like wow! That's a lot. But it's not, it's us, one body and together we can do that. And it's really -- it doesn't matter if you're a teenager or whether you've retired. No matter what your financial circumstances are, we can all do something because these little shoes cost \$3.60. So to send ten pairs would be \$36; \$72 would send 20 pairs of shoes.

And not only that but the corrective surgery. We got to visit with a little one who just was so badly -- it went right all the way up the face. There was no joy in the eyes at all. They knew what their future would look like. Then our team was able to go back and film after that little one had had the surgery and it was as if somebody reached inside and turned a light on.

Really, that's what we're doing when we reach out in Jesus' name, it is as if we're just reaching up and turning the light of Christ on. And not only do we get to put shoes on their feet but sometimes when you feed someone or when somebody's thirsty and you give them clean water for the first time, or you put a little pair of shoes on their feet, somehow you've kind of won the right to sit in the sand with them for awhile and talk about the one who has put a light on inside of each one of us. We've been able to share the life of Christ with so many of these families because of a simple gift of shoes.

So for any gift you send in at all, this is our new one this year, it is our little crystal shoe, but if you do send in \$180 we're going to send the whole set of shoes. I look forward to putting those up on my tree this year. But we can all do something. So would you go to your phone? Would you maybe make a decision as a family, the best gift possible that you can give? I think there is just something profound. Jesus said, "When you give clothes you've clothed me." And they were like, "Lord, when did we ever clothe you?" He said, "Whenever you did it to the least of these you did it for me."

So please, go to your phone. Give the best gift possible and make someone's Christmas the beginning of something really amazing.

Begin video clip

Announcer: Poverty is a killer and because of it children needlessly suffer; not only from a lack of food and clean water but also from a lack of things we take for granted such as a healthy smile or a simple pair of shoes.

Far too many children living in poverty have never owned a new pair of shoes. And while that may seem minor in light of all their needs, walking with bare feet puts them at risk of

life-threatening infections and disease that could lead to crippling consequences -- and even death.

By responding today you can help immediately secure and begin shipping Christmas shoes to 150,000 children around the world just in time for the holidays. Your gift of \$36 will help provide ten pairs of shoes. A gift of \$72 will help provide 20 pairs. And the gift of \$180 will help provide 50 pairs of Christmas shoes for children in need.

With your gift of any amount, be sure to request this beautifully crafted crystal shoe ornament, a treasure to place on your tree each holiday season. With your gift of \$180 or more you may also request this keepsake boxed set of LIFE's Christmas shoe ornaments.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1,000 or more to help provide over 275 pairs of shoes or two children with corrective cleft palate surgeries and you may request our determined eagle bronze sculpture. This is the last week. Please call, write, or make your gift online today.

End of clip

In the studio

Randy: There you go, buddy! Look at that, brand-new shoes! New shoes on dirty feet. You know what? Not all of you can come here and have the privilege I have of actually putting the shoes on the feet of these beautiful children but you can still be a big part because really, we can't do it without you. This is not just something fun to them. They love it, we're also improving their health. This is a significant outreach.

These children are all smiling because we've given them new shoes but there are others that need a little extra support to correct that cleft palate so they can have a smile too. I hope you make an additional gift today as we take the Shoes and Smiles to as many children as we can. Go to the phone, go online, do the best that you can and you can give Shoes and Smiles to children all over the world.

Sheila: Thank you so much! If the phone's busy, write the number down and keep calling.

Jeremiah, thank you so much for being with us. You know for any gift you send at all today I'd love to send you this book *UnAnswered*. There is also, as you see on your screen a Bible study and you'll also find out where Jeremiah is taking his *UnAnswered* tour on the road. We hope that you and Audrey and your five little gifts have the best Christmas possible!

Jeremiah: Thank you, Sheila! Thanks for having me on.

Sheila: I loved it! We'll see you again next time on the *Wednesdays in the Word*. Thanks for being with us. God bless you.