

10/18/18
Week 43: Transport LIFE
Wednesdays in the Word
Sheila Walsh: In the Middle of the Mess #3

Sheila: Welcome to *Wednesdays in the Word*. I'm Sheila Walsh. I'm so glad that you took the time to pause here for a few moments. I've been talking for the last couple of weeks about my new book, *In the Middle of the Mess: Finding Strength for this Beautiful, Broken Life*. We know that both of those things are true. That there are moments in life that are absolutely beautiful. I'll never forget the first moment that I saw my son, when he was just freshly born at 5:30 in the morning thinking it was probably the most beautiful sight I'd ever seen. But like you, I also know there are many moments in life that are just broken. It can be a broken dream. I could be a broken marriage. One of the things that I wanted to do in this book was to address what is really true as opposed to what we wish were true.

Now it's not always the huge moments in life that break us. Perhaps like me you've noticed that often it's the little things in life that seem to push you right over the edge. You can cope with big things but when you're in a place of brokenness, when you're living in the middle of a mess, sometimes it feels like it takes one more thing to push you right over the edge.

Well, the enemy loves to use our brokenness to remind us how vulnerable we are. He loves to brag about how much damage he's done in our lives. He loves to make us believe that nothing has or ever will change.

One morning, during my Bible-reading time, I returned to a story I studied since I was a child. It's the story involving the testing of a man named Job. We read right at the beginning that Job was a righteous man, a man who followed hard after God. The Bible actually calls him "blameless," which if you think about it is about as high a compliment as a person can get. He loved God. He hated evil. He ordered his life beautifully. And yet even Job would not be spared the brokenness we all come to know in life.

There are only three times in scripture when we hear the actual voice of Satan. The first is in the Garden of Eden when he asks Eve to question God.

"Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?" Genesis 3:1 (NLT)

Basically, he's slandering God to man.

The third occasion is recorded in chapter four of Matthew and Luke's gospels when he asks Christ to fall down and worship him. Here he's slandering Christ, the God-Man.

But the second is in the story of Job when he slanders man to God.

Satan comes into God's presence one day and says this, "*Job has good reason to fear God. You've always put a wall of protection around him and his home and his family and his property and everything he has. You have made him prosper in everything he does. Look how rich he is! But reach out and take away everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face!*" Job 1:9-11 (NLT)

Satan was sure that the only reason Job was so faithful to God was that God had been so faithful to Job. "If you start taking away all the little perks Job is enjoying," Satan's theory went, then I bet you he'll turn and curse you to your face.

For reasons known only to God, he allowed Satan to do his worst to Job. The only thing he wasn't allowed to do was kill him. Honestly, I'm sure there were days when Job wished that that restriction had been lifted too.

Satan's work in Job's life was thorough. And it was devastating in every possible way. He took Job's children -- every one of them. He took Job's health. He took his home and his livestock pushing him right to that razor-sharp edge separating sanity from utter madness and complete despair.

Job grew so desperate in his brokenness that he actually prayed to God ... or *shouted at God*, more precisely ... "Obliterate the day I was born! Blank out the night I was conceived ... Erase it from the books! May the day of my birth be buried in deep darkness, shrouded by the fog, swallowed by the night!"

Job was done. He was in full-on agony of soul. And just as you and I experience, in those moments there's no good to be found.

What happens next might strike too close to home. Three of Job's "friends" stopped by to offer him some *advice* on dealing with his grief, getting through his pain, putting things back together again and on finding comfort when life falls apart. Well honestly, their advice is self-righteous and cruel.

The first friend assumes that since Job is suffering so deeply, he is clearly to blame. If God is good and we are bad, his theory went, then when bad things happen to us, it must be our fault. What a punishing theology that is.

Next up was Job's second friend, with his version of the twisted logic used by friend number one. This friend said that since Job's children were killed, *they* must have done something wrong. Can you imagine how Job must have felt? What a cruel thing to say to a grieving parent.

The third friend was no better, in essence telling Job that his *entire lineage* must have been cursed.

The chapters in the book of Job that deal with these interactions between Job and his friends are devastating. But I have to tell you, if you can weather all that ignorant and misplaced cruelty, the final chapters of Job's story are amazing. Job makes a decision that is at the same time simple and yet life-altering profound. It's a brave decision. It's a bold decision. It's the decision on which this entire season hinges that you and I are in, in fact, this decision that Job made in the depth of his brokenness will change us if we lean in and listen.

Job was human, just like you and me. He could have made all sorts of choices from the pit of his despair, and honestly, we would have understood each and every single one of them.

He could have sunk into shame and embarrassment, believing the lies that his friends had told him. I wonder if you've been there. He could have lived the rest of his life in self-pity. Honestly, that would be understandable. He could have turned his anger and rage toward his friends, and then lived in lonely isolation and I think we'd understand that choice too.

But here's the truth. He did none of these things. Job made a deliberate choice to embrace confession. When there was only brokenness to be found in his life, he confessed *that* to God. He made the decision *to bring everything to God*. He brought every ounce of his brokenness! Confession is telling the truth out loud to our Father God -- the one we can always, *always* confide in.

That's a choice that will change your life! I grew up believing that if your own dad could turn on you, as mine did, I reasoned so could your heavenly Father. This is a terrible assumption to make, and one that held me back from fully receiving the love of God for way, way too many years. So I would get up every day, stuff the pain down further in my soul, and I would just plow ahead serving God. It would take me many years to understand this simple truth: When you and I stop retreating into a place of pain and instead respond by taking those very wounds to God, we find the deliverance and the comfort that we so desperately long for.

This is precisely what Job did. And while it wasn't pretty, it was *honest*. Job shot *straight* from the heart with God.

I have to imagine that Job was trembling in anger as he approached the Almighty, He was raw – raw confusion and despair overtaking his normal thoughts. He came to God and essentially begged, “Please! Please help me understand this, God.”

In chapter 31 he asks God these questions, *“Have I lied to anyone? Have I deceived anyone? Let God weigh me on the scales of justice, for he knows my integrity. If I have strayed from his pathway, or if my heart has lusted for what my eyes have seen, or if I am guilty of any other sin, then let someone else eat the crops I have planted. Let all that I have planted be uprooted.”*

He goes on in verse 13. He says this, *“If I have been unfair to my male or female servants when they brought their complaints to me, how could I face God? What could I say when he questioned me? For God created both me and my servants. He created us both in the womb. “Have I refused to help the poor, or crushed the hopes of widows? Have I been stingy with my food and refused to share it with orphans? No, from childhood I have cared for orphans like a father, and all my life I have cared for widows. Whenever I saw the homeless without clothes and the needy with nothing to wear, did they not praise me for providing wool clothing to keep them warm?”*

You must understand, Job is at the end of himself. What else could God have asked from him? He cries out and he's desperate for an answer. He needs to understand why God has allowed this to happen to him. It makes no sense.

If I have done *anything* wrong here, God, *just tell me*. How on earth am I deserving of *this*?

Honestly, friends, I think this is one of the greatest challenges to our faith. Why does God allow devastating things to happen to us when He is powerful enough to stop them? If God is all powerful and if He is love why does he not intervene in the middle of our mess?

Let me ask you something. What do **you** do when you find yourself in a place like that? Does it make you doubt that God loves you? Does it make you doubt yourself? Does it make you ask why did he answer her prayer or his prayer and not mine?

Too often we keep those very questions buried because we don't want to sound “ungodly.” So we stuff our pain and our anger. I want you to know this. That is not what God wants for us. He is big enough to handle everything that's going on inside you.

I remember sitting in my yard one morning. It was not long after my mum's death. I was tired and confused. In the quietness I heard God say to me, "Sheila, tell me the truth."

So I did. I told him the cold, hard truth. I said, "There are so many things in my life that don't make sense. There's time when you opened a door and then you just slammed the door closed in my faith. And those times leave me just wrung out. On and on I went that day, just pouring everything out to God. Do you know what happened? He received every last bit of it.

He didn't shame me. He didn't scold me. He didn't tell me to be quiet; instead, I felt almost as if heaven *leaned in* and my Father said, "Keep going. Tell me every last thing."

So I did. I told him about my despair over losing Mum... over my dad's death ... over my decades-long pain.

I said to him, "Do you know how scared I am sometimes? Do you know how small I feel?"

I talked and talked and talked and poured every last thing out that morning. I talked until there was nothing left to say. I cried until it felt like every tear was gone.

And then I remembered that beautiful verse from Psalm 34, "*The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.*"

I felt that. I felt his nearness to me. I *needed* it so much. My shoulders dropped, and I took a deep breath. The Lord was lifting for me what I could not lift myself.

What started that morning in terms of my coming before the Lord with absolutely nothing held back has continued. I love to wake up every morning eager to get before my Father, wanting to connect to his heart. During those times, I'll confess my anger, any confusion, any disbelief, any fear, and every time that you and I risk being honest with our Father, I come to understand a confession creates inside of us a greater capacity to receive his grace.

I had been afraid of the quiet before. Not now. I love that space.

That verse, "*Be still and know that I am God*" often comes to mind as I'm sitting in the presence of the Lord, and I turn it over in my heart and mind as I meditate on its truth.

Do you know that "be still" in the Hebrew means "to let go; to release?" That's what the Lord says to each one of us. Don't hold on to everything that's causing you so much pain. Are you willing right now, because your struggles, your mess is different than mine but if you're afraid to

say to God what's really true in your life, I want you to know there is no safer place than coming before your Father and unloading everything. The trouble is if we don't unload on the Lord, we're going to unload on somebody. So often it's just those little things that will spark some kind of fire inside of us and we'll unload on someone we love.

But I've discovered when we let all fear, all frustration go, what you will hear God saying is, "I'm here. I'm near. I'm God and I love you right now – not just on your good days, not just on the days when you feel like worshipping, but on the days when you feel like burying your face in the carpet and there's nothing good left in you to save.

God is not a distant, distant god. He's a very close Father. Maybe you're watching this and you think, I don't even go to church because I'm not a religious person. That's great news because neither am I! God is not interested in religion. What he's interested in is relationship. God wants to know you and that means all of you. Here's what I love, what I've discovered. When you are known, when you are loved, you're able to reach out to others who are desperate. Let me show you something and then I'll tell you a little bit more of what I mean. Would you watch this?

On the mission field

[Vehicle engine trying to start]

Announcer: It's difficult to get anywhere without reliable transportation and it's never more important than when the hearts, lives, and souls of so many are depending on it.

LIFE Outreach's mission is to go and share the transforming truth of God's love in word and deed to a hurting world. Whether our missionary partners are leading someone in prayer to receive Christ, helping rescue children from human trafficking, delivering relief goods, providing medical help or drilling water wells they're all part of sharing the gospel and they all depend on some form of transportation to successfully complete their mission. And when their vehicles can no longer meet the challenge because they are simply worn out and in constant need of repair, the missionaries work will suffer but more importantly is knowing that the people will suffer.

David: These precious children that are seated around me today, they've never had anything but water out of the rivers and canals. So today we have a great opportunity to provide them with clean water. But we need transportation. We need to upgrade our vehicles. We need other vehicles so that we may continue to drill wells throughout this country. Thank you so much!

Announcer: Without the proper transportation all of our efforts to help those in need can be severely hampered if not completely shut down. Transport LIFE is our way of keeping the pipeline open for the love of Jesus to flow forth in word and deed.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: If you're a partner with us or you've watched our program for some time, you'll be really aware of several things that are passionate commitments of our heart: Feeding children who are hungry, being able to bring food to them on a daily basis is huge for us; drilling water wells, Water for LIFE; going in and rescuing those who have been trafficked in all sorts of parts of the world.

But the one thread through which every single thing that we care about is we need to get to those people. It is not enough to be able to raise money for Christmas shoes or for food or to be able to raise the money to drill a well, if we can't get to the places that we need to get to. I have had the privilege on some of our trips of seeing just how desperate the need really is.

When we were in certain parts of Africa the roads are desperate! There were times when I thought we're not going to make it. A: Because the roads are so bad. But B: Because the vehicles are so old.

So what our goal is, we want to be able to reach 1.1 million to provide 71 vehicles. They need them and they need them now. They need all sorts of vehicles. They need buses to get those children who have been rescued to school where they can begin to learn again the value God has placed in their lives. We need vehicles; we need trucks to get to where feeding programs are. We need to be able to get the drilling rig right to the place where it needs to be. In India, believe it or not, we need motorbikes because that's the only way they can reach some of the most remote villages to show the awesome movie about the life of Christ.

The one constant in every single appeal we will ever bring to you is this: We need to get to the people. The only way we can do that is would you stand with us now and make it possible? Some of our partners have come on trips and have said, "Gosh, that wouldn't even survive on an American road."

But I have been there in Africa and looked at lines of children, absolutely lined up,

standing in the hot sun for a long time because they've been told that today they're going to get a hot bowl of nutritious food. How hard or heartbreaking would it be if we had the food here and we had the children here and we cannot connect the two? And the way we do that is by providing transport. It is needed now.

We can all do something. You can give a gift of \$40, of \$80, of \$120 -- some of you, some of you are able to give \$1,000. We so want to be able to meet the needs. So would you go to your phone, would you call that number on your screen, would you give the absolute best gift of your life so we can be able to bring life to those who really need it the most?

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

On the mission field

Dwyane: Of over 20 years in India we've seen a lot of good things happen. We've seen

a lot of lives saved. I remember one time hearing you, Betty say, you were in Africa and you saw this truck go by with lifesaving food on it. And you didn't see a truck, you said you saw children being saved. You saw lives being fed and that's exactly what I see when I see transportation.

But I have to tell you, my heart still sees a lot of children that are dying on a daily basis and the only thing that stands between us and them and is transportation. We need your help in Operation: Transport LIFE. If you'll simply go to the phone, make a gift today, what you'll do is you'll help me and you'll help missionaries like me all over the world to reach out and go the distance to where these suffering children are.

You are a vital part of this solution. You are a vital part of the plan and we need your help today. Please support Operation: Transport LIFE.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: Thank you so much. If the lines are busy, if the phones are busy please keep trying. Everything else we do at LIFE doesn't make a difference if we can't get to the people. Transportation is vital. It might seem like well, that's a strange thing for you to be asking for but it's really not. If you'll look at it -- here are the people with their needs, here we are and the thing that links us together is transportation.

So please go to your phone, make the best gift you can possible and we're going to get the help and the hope that these people so desperately need.

Remember, we're here for you too. If you have a need, if you feel alone, we're here for you.

I'm Sheila Walsh saying thank you so much for being with me on *Wednesdays in the Word* and I'll see you next time.