

10/31/17
Week 45: Transport LIFE
James and Betty Robison
Sheila Walsh

James: I tell you what. It is a thrill to share this time with you. I'm James Robison. Betty and I welcome you to *LIFE Today*.

Our wonderful co-host and oftentimes with our son, the host, Sheila Walsh is with us. It is amazing to me how well she is able to share what God is doing and desires to do in the midst of unbelievable challenges. This book that is just going to be in the stores in just a few days, *In the Middle of the Mess* -- the middle of the mess: Strength for this beautiful, broken life. That's life.

Boy, we know brokenness, we know heartache and we know failure and we know what it is to miss the mark. Sheila has been willing to talk about the challenges she's faced. And in the middle of this book -- the middle of the book about being in the middle of the mess something happened that brought up probably all the frightening things that Sheila had ever faced. I think you'll want to hear it and you're going to really want to read this book. Would you welcome Sheila Walsh to *LIFE Today*? Glad to have you.

[Applause]

I've gotten to pray with you in the midst of some of the challenges and messes that you've been in. But this recent one, which of course, we did pray for and with you, but I don't think we realized what was going on when you went back home and what happened and the encounter and then what it did. You were writing about dealing with challenges.

Sheila: It's funny. Sometimes you start into a book and don't actually realize that it is the Lord that wants you to understand what you're writing about; that actually, God has something very specific to say to you. Because I was thinking with the number of people who are hurting and broken and I wanted them to know right now *In the Middle of the Mess*, you can know the presence and peace of Christ.

Then a third of the way into writing the book I get this phone call in the middle of the night from my sister. Just three words, "She's gone Sheila." I realized that my mum had taken her last

breath on earth and her first breath in the presence of the Lord.

I remember flying over to Scotland for my mum's funeral and there was something about -- I asked two things. In Scotland we don't have viewings. Like when my husband's parents died in the south here there is a viewing, there is visitation. We don't do that in Scotland. You never see the person again. But I called the funeral home and I said, "Could I please come and see my mum?" They said, "We can arrange that."

I walked into this little room, a very plain pine box, we don't dress things up in Scotland. There was my mum in this lovely pink suit I sent her last Christmas and I knelt down beside her casket. And I knew she was at home with Jesus but I just wanted to say to her, "Well done, mum. Well done!"

My dad was 34 when he committed suicide. She was 33 with three young children. She never remarried. She stayed faithful to God. But there was something else that happened. Suddenly knowing she wasn't here, it shook me. I've been diagnosed with clinical depression years ago and I always think I'm doing pretty well. I love my life. Everything is going well. But I found myself spiraling again and sinking into this really dark place.

I think part of it was I knew -- because if I was on any of our *LIFE* trips, if I was in the middle of a jungle in Angola or in the worst of the worst in Southeast Asia, I knew one thing, my mum's praying for me. And suddenly, with her being gone, it really shook me. And I felt the Lord say to me, "Okay, Sheila. Are you ready?"

I'm like, "Ready for what, Lord?"

"Are you ready to speak this final thing, that you've kept as this big secret all your life?"

I was like, "Lord, I'm ready. If you're saying I'm ready I'm ready but I don't feel ready."

So I began, I thought I'm going to do something publically first. I was speaking at a conference in the Midwest, and maybe, I don't know, 5,000 women -- nice, typical women you see coming to a Christian conference, sisters, those who love the Lord but at the end of my message I shared the fact that for most of my life I have struggled with suicidal thoughts.

And so I simply said, "If you're like me, if you struggle, if you're a cutter, if you've ever attempted to take your life, would you join me at the front?"

Over 400 women joined me at the front, ages between 12 and 82. I thought, okay, Lord, that's it! It is time to shine the brightest light into the darkest corners of the church. Because I've always

thought, don't tell people, Sheila because it will make it seem like that is an acceptable thing to do or it will make it more real for you.

No, no, no. James said, "Confess your sins one to another and pray for each other that you might be healed."

So the first time in this book I talked about the fact that this has been a reality in my life and I want people to know you're not alone and you can make it through this. And some of the most power prayer in the world is one word, Jesus. The nights when I have -- 3 o'clock in the morning, can't sleep, walk in the kitchen, there is a knife sitting there on the cutting board and I hear this voice saying, "Just do it."

And the number of times I've fallen face down on the carpet and I've just called out, "Jesus! Jesus!"

And that's what I want people to know. Don't be ashamed. Tell the truth. Confess to someone. Get some help. And realize that he who is in us is greater than he who is in the world.

Sometimes the devil believes God's promises over our life more than we do. And it is time for us to stop that and say, "You know what? Enough! You're a defeated enemy and I just say to you, no devil, not today."

Betty: And because we live --

[Applause]

Because we live in such an imperfect world we're going to have lots of messes in life. God didn't say that we would avoid that when we came to know him. "There will be trials," he said, "but I will be with you in the trials."

Just like you speaking the name of Jesus. I remember when one of our grandsons was very small, I was talking to our daughter, his mom, and I wasn't feeling well that day. She said, "Christopher, would you pray for Mimi?"

And he got on the phone, this little toddler and all he said was, "Jesus." I thought, that was enough because that's all it is, about Jesus and you're so right. We don't have to have these big formal prayers. Our heart just needs to cry out to him. He will be in the midst of those messes. The messes will come but he is also there if we allow him to speak to our hearts and to bring us out of that darkness.

Sheila: One of the things I feel passionately about is that mental illness is something that we shy away from in the church. Because people want to think, well, it must be a spiritual problem. But if you struggle with severe clinical depression, anxiety, that's your brain chemistry. It's not your spiritual life. Mental illness is not curable but it is treatable. There is great help available. We don't need to be ashamed. That's why I want to speak out about it because I want to say, look, I'm your sister. I'm on this journey with you. Me too! You are not alone.

James: Boy, that's great. Listen to some of the chapter titles: "Burying Our Secrets," "The Walls We Build," "You Don't Have to Hide," "No More Bumper Sticker Faith," "Let's Go," "Beautifully Broken," and so many more. I just want you to touch on that.

Look at the two: "Burying Our Secrets" and "The Walls We Build" and just expand on that. Just give a little insight to what you're touching on in those two chapters.

Sheila: Well, if you think about it, James, you think back to my own history, co-host of the 700 Club at that time but one of the loneliest people in the planet. I discovered it was possible to be very well-known and desperately alone because I carried such a sense of shame. To me, it is like guilt tells me I've done something wrong, shame tells me I am something wrong. So we hide our pain. Sometimes we hide in alcohol or drugs or spending or a job. I found the perfect place to hide, Christian ministry. Who is going to say to me, "Put that Bible down or we're going to have a intervention! No more Second Kings for you, Mr.!" But God is the only one who knows if we're serving out of pain or passion.

So I had built so many walls because I thought if my own dad -- because my dad tried to kill me before he killed himself. I thought if your own dad could hate you then God could turn away too. So I determined I'm going to be the perfect Christian if it kills me. And it almost did.

But in a psych hospital at the same age as my dad, I discovered you don't have to hide anymore and it is okay not to be okay. I think we think well, I'm a believer now so I have to have all my ducks in a row. I lost my ducks several years ago. I have no idea where they flew!

[Laughter]

But it's not about us getting it all right, it is about Christ who has made us right. When God looks at James, when God looks at Betty, he sees the righteousness of Christ. Yet we spend so much of our time trying to get it right rather than standing beside each other and saying, "You know what? You can tell me the truth."

The one thing I would say, be careful. Don't just spill your life out on anyone. Find one or two safe sisters or safe brothers that you can tell the story to and that they will pray for you and love

you. There is a safety in that. You know who one of mine is -- Lisa Bevere. If I'm having a dark day, I can text Lisa and she'll be, "John and I are on our knees on your behalf right now." We need each other.

James: You know she considers me a father so she talks to me and I just think -- I just love her. She is such a gift. She and John are both just fabulous, and the openness and honesty are so very, very important. You talk about "Beautifully Broken." What are you saying there?

Sheila: I'm saying that you can spend so much of your life trying to be the good news and when you finally get it that Christ is the good news, that our brokenness can become a much greater bridge to other people than pretend wholeness ever is. We can pretend to have it altogether and I don't think anyone really relates to you. But when you can share your story in such a way that Christ is the hero, it tells other people that there is hope for them. You are comforting one another the way you have done.

I cannot comfort somebody who has lost a child. But the way that you have both been beautifully broken, not a story you would have ever chosen to write, but the way that you are able at the depth to empathize and comfort someone else who has walked that walk, that's the way that I feel too about I'm very big on speaking on mental illness.

I remember when Rick and Kate Warren asked me to speak at their... I think it was the first national symposium on the church and mental health. My opening line was this, "I'm profoundly grateful for the gift of mental illness because it means I can look into the eyes of somebody else who is suffering and say, 'me too.'" Now I would never have said that 20 years ago because you if think about it, mental illness has the stigma of boiled cabbage. It is not something that people are like proud of.

But I think, you know what? While we're on this earth, while there is brokenness, we can either hide from each other or we can show up and be there for each other and hold one another's hands and say, "We're going to make it through this together, with Jesus, but we're going to be seen."

James: We encourage our viewers to understand the importance of being able to lean on someone, have a shoulder to lean on, how we all need it. But I've also tried to say to everybody who watches, why don't you pray God will make you a shoulder to lean on? The same thing I say that seems to resonate with people, "If you want your prayers answered, seek to be an answer to someone else's prayers." In Isaiah 58 pretty well fleshes that out what that looks like to see God move quickly is when we respond in certain ways to what is out there that God sees and others don't seem to notice and suddenly we do.

One of the things that I found because of my own brokenness and my own defeat to where I

despaired of life myself, because I was just sick and tired of getting beat up and really I was too busy to pray. I could preach. I went to the Bible to get sermons. I didn't go to the Bible anymore to get life -- just sermons for you. And I was drying up and burning out and I was very vulnerable. I was so desperate that I cried out for help and miraculously God sent it. He sent it through some of the people who are sitting here in this studio right now listening to me; that they wanted me to have help, they wanted me to find freedom.

In that freedom, something that happened to me was that I began to share my journey and I began to share the care that I had for others who might be there. And very highly visible leaders from all over the church world, they came to me and they spilled their guts. They took all the stuff they wanted nobody to know, and they dumped it in front of me. And I said, "Why are you doing this?"

They said, "Because we believe you love us. And you will cover us."

And if people could only get as precisely what God does, he doesn't shame you. He doesn't heap guilt on you. Conviction reveals that every mouth has stopped and all the world is guilty, we'll all missed the mark and Jesus took the load, paid the price, covered us and he is our only sufficient covering. And we offer that covering as believers -- that we offer it for others. And because I was able to freely offer it, they found a comfort in being able to confess our sins, one to another that we might be healed because most of the time you think if you tell somebody your weakness you're going to be stoned. You're going to be just like those people caught in the act.

Jesus knew that this was a problem. But the bigger problem is what you're about to heap on them. The fact that we don't respond like a community of love, we don't respond like a family, and your father didn't respond like a family; that was a big load. The Father has had to help lift you through that but that reality, that hurt is there. The enemy will try to dig it up. You have to lay it back before the Lord and you've been willing to take us on the journey through the mess and the challenges and invite people to find the same joy.

I've known you a long time. Now you've been with us -- how long have you been with *LIFE*, would you say a couple of years?

Sheila: Coming up two years. Yeah.

James: And you've just been an awesome gift from the Lord to bless us and lighten our load in an amazing way for which we're -- aren't you glad Sheila is helping us on *LIFE Today* and helping us with all the mission outreaches? It's just amazing what you've done.

So you are actually right now with this book, in my opinion, trying to help people feel

comfortable and feel covered coming into the presence of God and dealing with the situation. One of the things I find myself praying for, I've got to feel like you are too, you're praying that people who find the Lord in the middle of the mess suddenly become someone who assists others in the mess. Would you say even when you came with us at some challenging times in your life, when you came with us, didn't it feel good to come with a family that made you know you are family and we're together? Did that lighten your load?

Sheila: Of course it does! And that's what scripture talks about. It's interesting. Most people, if you ask them, who wrote Amazing Grace? They would say, "Well, John Newton." But John Newton didn't write it by himself. It is really pretty amazing. He was a pastor in a little town called Oldham, just outside of Oxford. And one night he knew there was a guy in his church who had been a lawyer, had lost his job, had been hospitalized three times at that point in what was called a lunatic asylum. And John went to his home one night, New Year's Eve, and said to him, "Listen Brother. I know you've had some struggles but I also know you're gifted as a writer. Why don't you and I write together?"

So this guy who had been diagnosed, mentally ill, spent time in an insane asylum, and John Newton sat down and wrote "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound." So something about that, as the church we don't just acknowledge people with mental illness, we don't just make a place, we come alongside them as members of the body of Christ and say, "We're going to walk this journey out together."

James: Wow! Lord, thank you. I just hope -- I hope you feel like you've kind of been invited into a room with the family and that if you were sitting right here with us you'd be loved because you really would be.

You say, "Not if you really knew me." Yes! Yes. We don't, any of us, like or appreciate the things that are distasteful or wrong or damaging but we can love the person that is damaged or even trapped by those things; and that's where you are, you're loved.

Do you see the phone number there? Do you think Betty and I can call for all those 800-calls? Not a chance because we're going to pray with a 1000-1500 people every day. And they're calling in because you know what? Love invites them; covering, forgiveness, freedom. So you want someone to pray with you? You may find someone to pray with you that's been in the exact place you are because we have broken people here who have been pulled together by the love of God and would be glad to pray for you.

I really want you to get this book. Now it will be out in just a few days and I'll say something very exciting to you, we're going to ask all of you who are viewing right now, not only if you need prayer to call and most of the calls are always going to be to get help. But if you'll help

the missionaries today get some vehicles and some transportation -- and this is the last week. I've got to be honest with you, we need a miracle. We need a miracle outpouring of love. We need to provide 71 vehicles, trucks, modes of transportation, vans, great big rigs, motorcycles. You say really? They're the only things that will go some places where the missionaries need to go.

And they told us, this is them coming to us, "James, we can tell you because you care and you'll tell the people who care." Well, if you'll help us provide that transportation by making the best gift you can, we'll send you this book just to say thank you along with some other gifts that will bless you. I want you to kind of look in right now and see what the missionaries really want us to hear and then you do what God leads you to do.

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

James: Well, you know I've got to have a big smile on my face. You don't know the man, the missionary, David Heady. He was saved in Owensboro, Kentucky in a crusade that we started the services at 7:00; the building was filled before 6:00 and the people were standing outside the building every night. We had to extend the crusade. David was one of the biggest electrical contractors in the area. He got saved, he and his wife. He spent over 30 years now in Haiti. Last year he nearly died. When I saw that clip, because I talked to him after he had been amazingly restored, I couldn't believe he was back in Haiti. He just did that; over 30 years there. When he left after being saved he never came back to his business; just lived there helping the people. And now he nearly died last year and now he is right back there. And he is saying to you, "We need trucks." I couldn't believe the junkie stuff that were his trucks and this is a guy that knows what quality is. But love is what is flowing through that missionary.

So let me just say this to you. God may not be calling you to go over there. If he was, surely you would go. But I believe he is calling all of us to help the ones God's sent because the sender of the gospel is the bottom line. How are they going to preach the gospel unless they're sent? The bottom line is the one that sends the messenger.

So I'm asking you right now, let's support them, let's give them trucks that run. Let's give them the equipment that they need. They've said specifically 71 vehicles. We know exactly what they are. It's well over a million dollars. We didn't expect that. It is not something we expected anymore than we expect disasters but they said, "Would you help us?" So I'm asking you to.

I want you to go right now online or dial that number; take your bankcard and make the best gift you can. Please! We have some gifts to send you to say thank you. This is the last week. Please, please ask God what do you want me to do? Go to the website, dial the number, take that card, use it like a check. If you make a check, make it to *LIFE*, because that's what you're sharing but call us please. We only have a few days left. We need to know we've got this. We need to tell the missionaries, "Trucks are there. We've got them."

Please make the gift God puts on your heart. Would you do it right now? Thank you so much! Thanks for calling. Thanks for going online.

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.

This is the last week! Please call, write, or make your gift online today!

End of clip

On the mission field

James: We are driving in sand. Look at this. This particular area, if you did not have four-wheel drive vehicles you couldn't go 50 yards. And so we need you to know that what we have is essential to saving lives. It is absolutely critical. Like Betty said one time, we're talking about a truck, "No, we're not talking about transportation merely." She said, "We're talking about saving lives -- we're talking about lives." So when we ask you to give a truck, provide transportation, whether it is small trucks for the missionaries that make daily runs or whether it is the big transport trucks, it is critical to saving lives and maintaining health.

And from the depth of my heart for those of you who understand, I want to say thank you.

End of clip

In the studio

James: I am praying that we're going to reach the goal. I'm praying many of you will get this giant print Bible. Is that not awesome?

Betty: It's very nice!

James: And is this a magnificently, beautiful leather cover? We want to send it to you; \$120 we're asking for. And of course, the beautiful eagle, the "Determined Eagle" bronze. I think it is

one of the most beautiful art pieces we've ever offered.

And if you help get that transportation, you will be sent this book to say thanks because Sheila is so much a part of our mission outreach. And boy, has she not been wonderful on the mission field? Don't you appreciate Sheila Walsh and what she shares and all she does? Sheila, we love you and thank you for being a part of this family here at *LIFE*.

Sheila: It's a privilege.

James: Thank you for watching. Let's get those trucks. Would you help us buy one? Would you help us buy the vehicles? God bless you for doing it. God bless you. Thank all of you!