

11/13/17
Week 47: Fall Mission Feeding
James and Betty Robison
Sheila Walsh

James: We've got a crazy audience! We welcome you. I'm James Robison. My wife Betty and I welcome you to *LIFE Today*.

Sheila Walsh, who is a regular now with *LIFE Outreach* and of course, *Wednesdays in the Word*, but also co-host with our son Randy on occasion for which we're very grateful. *In the Middle of the Mess*; this is a book that has just come out. Strength for this beautiful, broken life. Would you welcome Sheila Walsh and we're going to talk.

Sheila, because we are staff and we work together, we have no problem sharing concerns whether it is personal or what we hear. I think it's quite evident that we care about what we hear. In other words, when someone brings us a concern it registers. I don't even take criticism very well because I take it very deeply to heart. When I say I don't take it well, it doesn't mean don't dare do it because people will anyway, and sometimes they don't mean it to be healing, they mean it to be hurtful. But all of it registers with me because I take it seriously. I actually love my enemies who speak ill of me because sometimes my enemies are actually the only ones who are telling me the whole truth, the plain truth and nothing but the truth. You know what? I take it to God. So I take it seriously.

But when I hear a concern with you, and we hear and remember, we pray with hundreds of people every day who have a heavy heart or broken heart because we care. So when we hear something it registers. And you were sharing with me how many people in the church are experiencing depression or some other kind of mental challenge and it seems like it's something that either the church doesn't talk about, refuses or doesn't know to talk about or doesn't know how to talk about it. And you think it is a pretty serious problem.

Sheila: I think it is a huge problem. Lifeway research, they really do their homework and they came out with a study where they said about 68% of churches never mention any kind of mental illness, depression, and yet so many of the congregation are struggling. And they said also, 25 percent of pastors are themselves struggling with depression.

My thing is, Lord, you are the light of the world. We find our identity in you. I'm not Sheila

Walsh the depressed, or Sheila Walsh the one who was committed to a psych hospital. I'm Sheila Walsh, daughter of the King of kings who also lives with depression. I don't want people to feel ashamed to feel like I can't tell somebody this or they'll think there is something wrong with my spiritual life or I don't love God enough. So I just think -- I'm so grateful to both of you to have a discussion, an honest discussion about what mental illness is and what it is not; and to tell people you're not alone and you don't have to be ashamed.

Betty: I think that is the real big problem. People, especially ministers in the church and stuff, they are ashamed of it themselves and then they think people would be disappointed because they're supposed to have victory over everything and it's not that way.

Sheila: Well, you wouldn't say to a pastor who had a high cholesterol level, "I'm so disappointed in you." Neither would you say to him, "I think if you just pray about that, you could fix it by the morning." But so often that's what we do with somebody who struggles with a mental illness. We'll say to them things like, "Well, you just don't have enough faith. There must be some sin in your life."

But when my son Christian was a little boy and he fell off a swing and broke his leg, I didn't say to him, "You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you." I took him to the hospital

[Laughter]

-- to get his leg fixed. That's what I'm longing for in the church.

James: So what would be your suggestion, let's say to church leaders or people listening to us today, what would be your suggestion to them? I know you really flesh it out pretty thoroughly here in the book and we're hoping people will get it and read it. We're praying we're making it available to you. Actually, we'll give it to you to help you if you would join us doing something. I think it is very important.

Bear in mind, with the hurricane damage and all the loss and all the impact and we're now trying to rebuild and we're all working together, but remember with *LIFE Outreach* we're reaching all over the world and we're reaching out to children who don't need to rebuild or restructure or refurbish, we're living right now reaching out with love for those who if they don't get that, they die. We're feeding the hungry, we're feeding those who without our support will not have a future to rebuild, they die. So we need to all be praying together.

But when you say to the viewer and you say to people, and if by the way you join us we'll send the book, but what would you say to the church or the people to get them started in this discussion? How do we get them started?

Sheila: That's a great question, James. Honestly, I've written over 50 books and this is the most difficult and the most personal book that I've written. Because there are some things... it's becoming a little more acceptable within the church to talk about depression, what we don't talk about is suicide. But here in Texas, we had a very loved pastor who took his own life. And the pastor who preached at his Memorial service, who had been in his church 20 years, he was 69, 4 years later, that man took his own life.

I think if there are so many of us hurting, just even opening the discussion within the church, having a place where people can come and talk openly because there is a difference between situational depression and clinical depression. Like if someone goes through a death or a divorce or something, a loss, you know this, you lost a daughter. Now if you walk through a season like that, there is a depression and a darkness that you have to fight through.

That is a different thing than my diagnosis. I have clinical depression. It is a diagnosis where my brain simply does not produce enough serotonin to be able to be the woman that God has called me to be. So I think even from the pulpit acknowledging, we know that within church that's meeting on any Sunday, any Wednesday night, any other time you meet, there are people in your congregation who are suffering and who are struggling.

Now that I've started talking about it, pastors, pastors' wives write to me and say, "This is the first time I've heard anybody talk about this because we're so afraid it will hurt our ministry."

But really, the key to ministry is Jesus is the good news, I'm not. If I'm the good news, we're all in trouble. But Jesus is the good news and he came to redeem us. This is a broken world. So whether it is like you need glasses for your eyesight, or you need hearing aids or you need to work on your cholesterol level, we all experience brokenness in some place. And those who experience brokenness through mental illness, it is no different.

James: You make it sound like it is easy to talk about but for some it seems it isn't.

Betty: Also, how important is it to have someone that you feel safe enough with to pour out your heart to them because you're hurting inside when you've got this problem.

Sheila: One of the things I talk about in the book to have -- for me as a girl, I have two safe sisters and that's girls that I love and I trust them and I can tell them all my stuff and they won't judge me. One of them is Lisa Bevere. One of our dear friends here. And if I'm having a bad day I'll text Lisa and she will say, "John and I are on our knees right now on your behalf."

And men need that too. Men have a much harder time admitting the fact that they struggle with

depression or anxiety or any of those things because it doesn't seem manly. But that's why the rate of men committing suicide is much higher for men than it is for women because they think -- they don't want to die; they want the pain to stop. But because they don't feel they can reach out to someone and say, "I'm not doing well," They become isolated.

And that's when spiritual warfare enters into a clinical diagnosis because we have an enemy who is a liar. Scripture tells us he prowls around like a roaring lion seeking whom he can devour. If somebody is isolated by depression or by mental illness that's when the enemy loves to come along and just say, "Why don't you just end it all? You can't tell anybody. You'll lose your ministry."

Betty: I know when we lost our daughter, I had a few close friends that I felt like I could call. I could call them on the days when I felt like I was really down and all I could do was weep. But I could call them and you know what they would do? They wept with me. I think Jesus does that. He weeps with us. But I felt like they were holding my hurting heart. I think that's so very important. It was part of my healing process.

James: Betty and I have a really amazing relationship. People would think anybody that could live with you is an amazing person. I'm just saying. But the point is that even in the last couple of weeks I said to Betty, "I feel dry. I feel empty." But I needed to be able to feel safe telling her that. "I need to be refreshed."

It wasn't but maybe four or 5 days later Betty just opens up and says, "I feel dry." Well, I don't know that it was because I had suddenly gotten so full of blossoms but what happened was we were both sharing and it was in the sharing that even in that it seemed as though a healing process started. It was a comfort that we could share.

I was on my way to do a men's retreat and I was talking to Dudley Hall about men and about talking to them. He said, "James, one of the things that I learned as I've ministered to men a lot is that men are afraid to be known. That if they're really known for who they are, known for their weaknesses, they won't be loved. So they live oftentimes facade, with a cover."

I really grasp, Sheila, what he was talking about because I think that's kind of where preachers are pushed. They don't want to disappoint people who love them if they happen to have a flaw or a weakness or of all things a failure. So we're not able to open up. And yet the Bible opened everybody up as though the opening up and the acknowledging that I'm flawed or weak or needy was the thing that actually began the process of healing.

Isn't that what you're trying to show people where they get the strength for this broken life is by trusting God first but even being able to trust others and trust God with the ability to handle

others that you need? And you're saying why don't we all be, something I've said many times, we need a shoulder to lean on. Why don't you pray God will make you a shoulder for someone to lean on? Because we all need it and we're all looking for it.

It seems to me that when you're showing us the strength and you have such a beautiful way to communicate in writing, it's a gift from God, that you're trying to show people how to reach out for help, admit the need, but also be ready to offer it freely.

Sheila: Absolutely! But I would say to men, there is nothing more beautiful, I think, in the eyes of a woman than an honest man who's able to share his struggles. I think our brokenness is a far greater bridge to each other than pretend wholeness ever is. If you look at the way Christ modeled his life. In the garden he chose -- as the son of God, he chose to reveal to his three closest friends the anguish that he was in. He didn't pretend to be, "I'm just so ready to do this." He didn't put a brave face on for the disciples. He shared the anguish of his soul.

I think if every time a pastor stepped up into the pulpit and honestly opened up his heart and said, "Here's what I've been dealing with." Because then it becomes clear that we're just the earthen vessels that contain this great treasure who is Christ. But I think rather than alienate men, I think they would find a tremendous connection with their congregations, with their wives, with their children.

One of the things that I love about my husband is when he will say to our son, "I'm struggling here." Barry gets panic attacks. I have clinical depression, Barry gets panic attacks. We were in Australia and Christian was wondering why we couldn't go do something. Barry for the first time sat down and said, "Listen, Christian, here's the deal. I struggle with panic attacks and agoraphobia and sometimes if I'm in a big wide open space, I have a hard time." He was ashamed.

And Christian put his arms around his dad and Christian is 6'1" and said, "Dad, thank you so much for telling me." It made them so much closer.

We don't have to -- if we believe what we say we believe we don't have to be afraid any more.

James: While you were talking you were ministering to me in the sense that even your reference a moment ago to Jesus and being willing to share his moment of anguish, when he said, "Lord, if there's another way? Because see, I really do know what I'm about to go through. Nobody in the world knows. You know what I'm about to go through for everybody he loved and it's going to be very painful. If there is another way, I'd really like you to show me another way because this is really going to be heavy. But not my will or my desire but thy will be done."

And he shared with these guys that he was heavy and he wanted them to pray. And they go to sleep and they weren't even there. This just a moment ago moved me when you brought that up. That he gave these fellas, you know the Bible says the angels are ministering spirits. And he calls us messengers of truth, angelic in our mission to deliver truth as ministers, angelic ministers of truth ourselves. These men had a chance, God sent angels to strengthen him. He had men there who could have strengthened Jesus but they went to sleep.

I think you're saying to us, don't miss the opportunity to be that messenger of God to somebody with a burden, to lift their spirit, lift their heart and to say to all of you, go ahead and share it. You see the phone number there? You call that number. You're going to talk to somebody who may have gone through or be going through the very thing you're experiencing. And they're going to bear witness with where you are and they are going to love you. You know that. Many of you who have called, you know you're going to find somebody who loves you and someone who cares.

So if we could all hear this, this is what I think I hear you saying and even delivering in this incredible book, if you've got a need, whatever it is, mental, whatever it is you're afraid of, share it. Trust God with it. Trust God to raise others up to help. You ask God to make you one who ministers as Jesus needed that at that time. You be that angelic presence, so to speak, in the power of his spirit to help someone. And if the church right now with this broken world that you referred to, this broken nation, if the church would rise up and put the arms of God around all of the people that are suffering, within their congregation and everywhere, we would see a miraculous healing.

Father, I pray that you do that. I pray, God that you raise up your children to become the arms that embrace the suffering, the comforting words, the caring as Betty said a moment ago, to weep with you. Weep with those who weep. Rejoice with those who rejoice. Don't be jealous or covetous of those who have something. Rejoice with them and pray that those things will not take their eyes off of you. God, help us to love each other that way; in Jesus' name.

If you need someone to pray with you, that number is there as a prayer line for you. I ask you to call. We'll do anything we can to be a help to you. It's why we're here.

Sheila, you have gone to the mission fields with us. You know what love does to these missionaries. It is indescribable. You know what we've gone through here in this nation from Puerto Rico to the east coast, to all of Florida, to what happened in Texas and Louisiana, on the gulf coast, all the flooding. Man, we've been hit hard -- and we're going to rebuild together.

But here's what I need you to remember. We're impacted by all of that. We're impacted because

we depend upon the people who are digging their way out. And the people -- listen to me -- the people we reach out to -- don't miss this -- they're not looking to rebuild a house. They're looking for another day. They're looking for another year for a child. They're looking for their child to have a chance. So people that you who watch *LIFE Today*, who make the missionaries comfortable saying, "We need help so we can help," you're the ones that give children who face death a chance at life.

Now listen to me. I want you to look in right now. I want you to hear the heart of a mother and I'm going to promise you something. You hear the mother's heart; you're going to express the Father's heart. I'm talking about the Father's heart. Let me tell you this. You're going to find indescribable joy doing it. Watch very prayerfully.

On the mission field

Open Captions:

>> I saw the problem coming. I knew my daughter might die. But with no food or money, I could do nothing. I buried her yesterday. She got sick and weak, and felt extreme stomach pain. My 11-year old son also died. He was crying, "Mom, I'm so hungry!" Then his younger brother died seven days later. I had five children, now I am left with only two.

Announcer: In the relentless conditions of Southern Africa, Julia's story is not unique. In fact, Julia represents countless mothers who are fighting a near impossible battle to simply keep their children alive.

Open Captions:

>> We usually only eat three times a week because we can't find enough food. I feel horrible as a mother that I had to bury three of my children in the same year.

Announcer: Julia has endured the worst pain a mother can experience, burying not one but three of her children in the span of one year. But her story does not end here.

Open Captions:

>> I can see the symptoms of starvation in the remaining two, but I am praying they will grow up and live long lives.

Announcer: This faithful mother, along with a multitude of African mothers need our help. Let them say: "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat."

End of clip

In the studio

James: Betty, you can identify so well with the heart of a mother, grandmother, and now great grandmother -- unbearable! We lost a daughter. Don't want anybody to experience that. That mother lost three children in a year. What do you want our viewers to feel and sense in their heart right now when you hear the heart of those mothers?

Betty: As I listen to this one mother and she said she lost three children, I thought how does she bear it? How does her heart hold up under the weight of that loss? I know what it's like to lose one child, I can't imagine three and four and some of them even more than that. It breaks my heart as it must break your heart. Maybe you've experienced that and you know so well what it's like.

Please won't you help us help these mothers that love their children as much as we ever loved every one of our children? Please help us to help these mothers save the lives of their children. They don't know where their next meal is coming from. You can be a part of that, sharing and giving life to these families.

James: I don't think there is one of you who watch who have known Betty or me for a little period of time that wouldn't have said, "James, if we would have known what would have saved your Robin, your daughter, we would have rushed it to you." I believe that. I don't think there is any question about it. We didn't find that cure and the miracle didn't come until she was in the presence of the Lord.

But here's the thing. We have a perfect cure. It's not wishful thinking, it is not unrealistic. All we have to do is get the food to them. We have 400,000 right now that wonderful love-filled missionaries have found and planted themselves in the midst of the pain from place to place to place and organized so that we can feed these children, 400,000 of them. But we have to have the resources to do it. And the missionaries have made it very clear, we must refurbish our main food processing plant. We've got to upgrade it. When we upgrade it we'll actually be able to even produce more food rapidly. So we need a \$216,000, let's say commitment.

I've just started praying today, "God, just give us 216 people that will give \$1,000 to refurbish that food production center that literally makes the food possible, that packages it and gets it ready to take it out where we can distribute it."

Then the gifts of \$30, \$50, or \$100. Did you hear what I said? \$30, \$50, \$100 feeds three, five or ten children for the next months. So we're asking you right now to go online to the web, to the site you see, or dial that number. It's a prayer line but now it becomes a life line and you take your bankcard and you just make the best gift you can. Will you? If there's any way you it feed

ten children do it, please!

We have some special gifts to send you. You're going to love a coffee cup that when you put the coffee in it or whatever heated beverage, it's going to change right before your eyes, "Arise and shine." Which is what we're asking and God is asking every one of us to do as lights in this dark world. You're going to appreciate this. We're sending Sheila Walsh's book to everyone who makes any gift to say thank you. This is for a gift, those of you who will help feed ten or more. Then we have the beautiful eagle bronze to say thank you to those of you who help us toward that refurbishing of the food factory, and make a very special gift.

Would you right now go online? Would you dial the number? Would you become an answer to the heart cry of those mothers and the only hope they've got to stop this death cycle? You're the hope. You are the cure. Love never fails. Thank you so much for sharing it.

Begin video clip

Announcer: In impoverished and famine-stricken areas of Africa, children are suffering. The need is great. And without food, they face death by starvation. With your support, you will help feed and care for children in crisis areas of Sudan, Angola, and Mozambique.

With Africa facing ongoing food shortages and drought, we urgently need to replenish supplies and come to the aid of 400,000 children counting on us. Your lifesaving gift of \$30, \$50, or \$100 will help feed and care for three, five or ten children for the next three months. Please also consider an additional gift to help provide critically needed upgrades to our food factory that will increase overall production by a staggering 50%. This is a \$216,000 challenge above our normal feeding budget that could help save even more lives.

With your gift of any amount we'll send you *In the Middle of the Mess*. In her new book, Sheila Walsh brings insight to knowing the peace and presence of Christ in the midst of life's inevitable messes.

With your gift of \$100 or more to help feed and care for ten children, we will send you Sheila's book, plus the "Arise" coffee mug. This heat-activated mug reveals Isaiah 61 each time you fill it with a warm beverage; a wonderful way to begin your day.

And finally, with your gift of \$1,000 or more to help feed and care for 100 children, be sure to request our "Determined Eagle" bronze sculpture. Please call, write, or make your gift online.

End of clip

In the studio

James: I really believe you've heard the Father's heart and I think you are extending his hands of love and I want to thank you for that.

For those of you who will just help with any gift to give the gift of life, we're sending Sheila's book, *In the Middle of the Mess*; strength for this beautiful, broken life. And this not only ministers to you, it's going to enable you to effectively minister to others who are in some kind of a challenge situation.

Would you join Betty and me in saying thanks to Sheila Walsh for being with us? Thank you, Sheila. Thank all of you for watching and thank you again for being an answer to those mother's prayers. Thank you so much!