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Week 53: Fall Mission Feeding

Wednesdays in the Word

Sheila Walsh: "*Falling Forward In the Middle of the Mess*"

Sheila: Welcome to *Wednesdays in the Word*. My name is Sheila Walsh. I'm so glad you've stopped by. Some of you tell me that you actually kind of watch on your computer screens, so that's great too -- any way that we can connect and encourage each other. And I really pray that this show does encourage you. If there are things that you'd like us to address, maybe there is a passage of scripture that you think, you know what? I'd love to understand that more. Then just drop us a note, send us an email and we will do our best to grow together in Christ.

I have to say one of the ways I have grown as a believer is since becoming a mom, there is something about being a mom that has taught me so much about the Father's love. I lost my dad when I was little so I never really understood a father's love. But when I watch my husband with our son and I get to be a mom, there's just something that is indescribable about how you feel about this little, precious bundle that you would do anything for. I just love it. I love being a mom.

I often think when I get to heaven, after thanking Jesus for his amazing love for the first at least thousand years, I'll thank him for letting me be Christian's mom. Barry and I just have one boy and we've loved every stage of his life. Now we look at him and he's 21 years old and a junior at Texas A&M and I think back of all the stages of his life were marked so many times of ridiculous joy and happiness, times of sorrow, when he lost both grandparents, when he lost one of his first pets and had to face what that was like when he made me bury his frog in the backyard and sing all the verses of "Amazing Grace."

But I think of the times when he just as a little boy would fall down and get back up again. That's my story too. Falling down again and again and then the constant, there's God, always here picking us up to start again and again.

As a parent, I know that daily I have to relinquish our son to our Father knowing that he loves Christian much more than even I do. But sometimes that's a little scary. When he was a little boy and he started to go to school, the first time he was outside where you're always watching him, I would think, what if he falls down and nobody's there to pick him up? Well, now he's an adult and I know there will be moments when he falls but my prayer is that as the challenges in life

increase through trusting his Father that Christian will learn to fall forward into the arms that reach where I can't.

My darling friend, Sandy Patty told me that when she was a little girl she loved to climb up into this one particular little hut that was really high. But then when she would get up there it would scare her, but below would be her beloved dad saying, "Come on! Fall into my arms, Sandy! Fall forward." Something about that image I love. I love those words, "fall forward." I wanted you to hear them today as your heavenly Father saying to you, "Trust me, I'm right here. Fall forward and I'll catch you."

These words are a clear call to a life of surrender, trusting that God's arms are wide open waiting for us to fall into them. Why do you think that it is hard for us to do that? Why is it hard for you and I to pray as Christ did, "Not my will but your will." Do you ever find yourself in a situation where you say, "Lord, I know I should but I just can't quite let go of this yet."

There's a strong instinct in every human soul to want to understand everything and to want to know what we're saying yes to when we say yes to God's will. It's hard, particularly sometimes as women, I think to take our hands off of the things that we long to fix, and particularly when it is those we love and trust God to do what only he can do.

My mom had a little picture above her bed for as long as I can remember, just two words: "Yes, Lord!"

As a teenager, I remember saying to her at times, "Mom, you don't actually know what you're saying yes to."

And she would look at me with those warm brown eyes and she would say, "No, Sheila but I know who I am saying yes to."

This is the life of faith when we can pray with absolute submission, wholeheartedly, because letting God of what we're clinging onto is a catalyst for change, for transformation in our life.

I didn't used to be a fan of the word *relinquishment* mainly because when you look up the synonyms for this word you find: Give up, abandon, surrender, hand over. My struggle for so many years was because of a deep-rooted fear in my life. What would happen if I prayed to God and told him I was really letting go of everything that I thought I was in control of? What if he took away something that I loved?

I think some of that fear for me came from my relationship with my earthly dad who had a brain aneurism when I was five. He was hospitalized in a psych hospital and later drowned himself in

the river behind the hospital. That's a lot for any little girl.

So I wonder about you today. I wonder what things in your life have made it difficult to trust God, to trust your Father? Was there something in your childhood or maybe even in your present circumstances that taught you that life's not safe. So you really don't feel inclined to fall forward into his arms. You're not convinced that God will be there to catch you.

I think in my life I've come to realize my focus was in the wrong place and I was asking the wrong question. The right focus is on who God is, on the heart and character of God. And the right question is who are we being asked to relinquish our lives to? We've not just being asked to take our hands off the wheel and hope that somebody grabs it. No! We've been asked to relinquish it to a Father who loves us, who is watching over us every moment. I think that changes everything. And it changes us in ways that we might never experience until we've learned to fall forward.

Ask the apostle Peter. The prayer of relinquishment, of finally coming to understand that he was not in control reshaped his whole life. When you think about it, in many ways Peter was the spokesman for the 12 disciples. He is the most quoted of them in all four gospel narratives and he played a key role in three events that marked the transition from the Old Testament life to the New Testament revelation.

In Matthew 16, Peter was the first to openly declare Jesus was the Christ. You might remember it happened in Caesarea Philippi. Jesus asked the disciples what people were saying about him and who they said he was. Well, then he asked them, his closest friends, "But who do you say that I am?"

And Peter was the one who answered. Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the son of the living God."

This declaration by Peter was a prayer of confession and adoration, although I'm not sure Peter quite understood what he was saying at that time. But after this declaration by Peter there was a shift in Christ's teaching from concentrating on the kingdom to centering on the cross.

Peter played a role in other key moments too. His sermon on the day of Pentecost led to the formation of the early church. As he spoke, he revealed his new understanding of how Christ had taught him to pray during what we call the Lord's Prayer, the Sermon on the Mount. He declared the kingdom of God. He gave glory to God and invited the listeners to confess their sins, to repent, to be baptized, to be saved.

You might remember in Acts his visit with the Roman Centurion Cornelius was a huge shift in

the spread of the gospel worldwide. It was the first time that the doors of the church were opened to us, to those outside the Jewish faith. This one act was a true falling forward in faith and prayer. God asked Peter to step outside of what he understood to be true and trust him that this was a bigger message than Peter understood.

Well, the Jewish believers who embraced Christ knew their Messiah had come but now Peter was being asked to step off this somewhat narrow ledge and trust that God had a wider platform for him to stand on.

This radical faith in leadership, it didn't happen overnight. Peter's growth and maturity was bathed as it is for most of us, in tears and failure, falling down and rising up again. If you remember he began as a simple fisherman. He then became a disciple, a follower of Christ. He became a preacher and finally a missionary. But before he was able to do any of this, before Peter was able to stand and speak out his love and devotion for Christ, Peter fell. But I don't think he fell forward.

You might remember the story in Matthew Chapter 14. Matthew is the only gospel writer who records it. I think it must have been quite an impact on him because Matthew was there with the disciples and Peter in the boat and he saw it firsthand. Remember the story? It is nighttime, they're all in the boat and Jesus wasn't with them. He had stayed on the other side of the shore to dismiss the crowd after that miracle of feeding 5,000 men -- and then as many women and children. Then Jesus had gone up the mountain to be alone with his Father. I can only imagine that Christ was exhausted and drained.

Well, back to the disciples, they're having some difficulty in their boat. They were about three miles out into the Sea of Galilee and they were fighting a strong wind. Then at the fourth watch of the night, which would have been about between three and six o'clock in the morning the disciples saw a strange figure approach the boat. The Greek word used here is *phantasma*, which is where we get our word *phantom* or *apparition* from. The disciples were terrified by this apparition, which appeared to be walking on top of the water. They thought it was a ghost. But the figure called out to them and told them not to be afraid.

They listened to the voice and then they realized is this Jesus? Peter called out and said, "Lord, if it really is you, ask me to come to you."

Jesus said, "Come."

So Peter stepped -- can you imagine? Peter stepped over the side of the boat and placed his foot on top of one of the waves that they had been battling all night. Well, at that point his faith was high. After all he had just witnessed Jesus take a boy's lunch and feed thousands and thousands

of people. But now, he was doing it -- he was walking across the waves. And he could see Jesus' arms outstretched. He took one step and then another. But then a wave splashed and then for a moment Peter took his eyes off Jesus and looked to the waves around him and he began to panic and he began to sink. He called out for Jesus to save him and the Lord of the waves reached out and caught his friend. The moment Jesus stepped in the boat the storm settled in submission to the one who rules over the waves.

Again, Peter learned that the only true catalyst for change was actually to fall into the arms of the one who calms all the storms. Little by little, experience by experience with Jesus, Peter was becoming the amazing leader we understand him to be through scripture. It didn't happen overnight.

Sanctification -- big word -- simply means the process of becoming more like Christ. It is a process for all of us. Do you relate to that like I do? One moment an amazing church service and your faith is high; then struggles and messes come and you take your eyes off Jesus. And like Peter, you feel yourself begin to sink. But the good news is that when you and I fall forward into his arms full of trust in our savior, everything changes and we get to take the next step in growing to be more like Jesus.

Finally, you know that Peter faced another very difficult time. Mark 14 records Peter's dark struggle that night. You remember when he denied knowing Christ at all? I can't even imagine what it must have been like as he heard the rooster crow and remember Jesus' words, "Truly I tell you, today," Jesus answered, "Yes, tonight, before the rooster crows twice you yourself will disown me three times." [Sighs]

I wonder if you feel as if you failed God. Maybe you feel like Peter, there's no way back. I want you to remember the message that angel gave the women who came to anoint Christ's body on that resurrection morning.

Pay attention to these words, "Don't be alarmed," he said. "You're looking for Jesus the Nazarene who was crucified. He has risen. He is not here. See the place where they laid him but go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He's going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him just as he told you.'"

Do you hear that? "Go and tell the disciples and Peter." Would Peter have been too ashamed to go unless he heard those words? I can imagine if it had just been this invitation, "Go tell the disciples."

I can imagine Peter thinking, there is no way I can go. Jesus told me I would do this and I told him, "There is no way I would ever deny you" -- and then I did. I don't belong anymore.

What a loving message for the angel to say, "Tell the disciples and Peter."

There is always a way home into the loving arms of the Father even after being right in the middle of a huge mess. Even if it is one you created yourself.

I believe after that experience Peter knew that the only way to live was to lean on God. He was ready to face his fears and battles with God holding him on the path ahead that led to you and me. What a legacy we have.

So my question for you in today's program is, are you ready to trust him? Are you ready to fall forward? Are you ready to trust God fully in the middle of whatever you're going through right now?

I think being able to trust is sometimes like holding a mirror in front of us giving us an opportunity to see what is true about ourselves. When we face the things that make it difficult for us to trust, we're invited to fall forward in prayer into the arms of the one who is waiting to catch us and to strengthen us.

I love the words to this simple hymn. I remember being at a Billy Graham crusade in London and the much loved George Beverly Shea got up and he must have been in his late 70s, early 80s and with that beautiful baritone voice he sang, "All to Jesus I surrender. All to him I freely give. I will ever love and trust him; in his presence daily live. I surrender all."

You know what? Jesus is offering to you and to me what our Father longs for, is that we would learn how good he is, how trustworthy he is, that he will never let us fall. That he is always there to catch us. I don't know if like me if you've been a Christian for a long time. I don't know if you're relatively new to the faith. I don't know if maybe you're watching this program right now and you're thinking, well, I've gone to church before but I don't think I really know this Jesus. Do you know that he is always waiting? Do you know what scripture says? "They that call upon the name of the Lord will be saved."

If you don't know Jesus today, you simply have to call on his name, fall into his arms and begin a whole new life. And if you're someone who loves Jesus, but been finding it hard to trust, I encourage you to go read John's gospel again. John really got it that we are loved by Jesus. When you're loved by Jesus you want to extend that love to those around us.

I want you to show you a mom right now who really needs us to respond in Jesus' name. Would you watch this?

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

Sheila: I cannot even begin -- I can't begin to imagine what it is like as a mom to bury three children -- to bury three children in a year! To have a seven-year-old who his last words almost were, "Mom, I'm hungry."

Let me ask you a question. If I told you that this family had moved in next door to you and that three of the children had died because they didn't have enough to eat and the other two were starting to show those signs of malnutrition, what would you do? I know what you would do. You would get together as much as you could and you would go next door and you would feed

these children.

See, that's what *LIFE Today* makes possible. We make it possible for us to be next door to these people. I know that they're in a different part of the world but we have brought them close. We've brought them right into the street where we live, right next door to us. We can make such a difference.

This is our last week of Mission Feeding. So I need every one of you to respond. This is also a great time to give your year-end gifts, those tax deductible gifts. But I want to ask even if you're a teenager watching this or if you're perhaps a retired person on a limited budget, if each of us does something we can make sure that the prayers of a mom like that are answered.

You can begin with just \$30 a month will feed three children for three months! And the food that we provide for them, it is wonderful. It is very nutritious food. It looks kind of like oatmeal or kind of like a soup but it has vitamins and minerals; everything they need to be able to move from death to life. \$100 will feed ten children for three months! If those children lived down the street from you, you would do it in a heartbeat. We've moved them right beside you.

The other thing that we want to do is some of you can give an additional gift to so that we can do a very much needed upgrade on our food factory in Africa. It's getting a little old and it is not as efficient. If we can do this upgrade it will actually produce 50% more food so we can get more to people who really need it. So we need an additional \$216,000. Barry and I are going to do one of those thousand, so we just need 215 of you to join us.

But please, let's do something this time of year. Let's reach out and show that we care. Let's teach our children how to give. Let them contribute some of their allowance and do something so that that mom does not have to bury one more child. I can't imagine her pain but I've also seen the joy that comes in these villages when we are able to provide Mission Feeding and they see those telltale signs of malnutrition disappear as their children's eyes begin to shine.

Would you go to your phone? Will you make the very best gift possible? Thank you!

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

End of clip

On the mission field

Betty: I looked at this line of children here and I thought how can you not be touched? God's touched. He cares about them.

I just visualized some of my grandchildren's faces on these children and I think, what if that was one of them? I would want somebody to come in and give them a bowl of soup. I would want somebody to care about them.

Well, these children matter. They matter to God a whole lot. I know that your heart must be touched as you look at these lines of children, look at their little innocent faces. They don't have a choice. They depend on someone. Can that someone be us? I want it to be me.

Thank you so much for caring and sharing and having a heart to reach out to those that are needy because that's God's heart and that's good.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: Thank you so much! I know this time of year is crazy with the family in and family out. It is easy to be distracted. But this is our last week of Mission Feeding. We need to be able to make sure the line of children lining up for food is never longer than the food that we have. So please, would you give your end-of-year gift? Would you give the best gift possible? For any gift at all we will send you my book, *In the Middle of the Mess*. But let's answer the prayers of thousands of moms across Africa who are praying that somehow even in the busyness of the season that God's children will hear his voice and reach out with love.

Thank you so much. I'm Sheila Walsh and I'll see you next time on *Wednesdays in the Word*.
God bless you!