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Week 8: WFL
Wednesdays in the Word
Sheila Walsh: "God's in the Hallway"

[In the studio]

Sheila: I'm Sheila Walsh. Welcome to *Wednesdays in the Word*. I've been so touched by some of the mail that I received from you recently. Some of you saying, "I set my D.V.R.," whatever you call them nowadays, "and I never miss a show." I really love that. I even got a letter from someone who said, "We watch it together with all the females in prison in our faith group." So if you're watching today, I want to say hey, sisters! Love that you do that. Some of you have written and said, "I'm living by myself now." I got a sweet letter the other day from a lady in Canada. She said, "I'm 83 years old -- young, but I tune in to *Wednesdays in the Word* and I feel as if I learn." I thought what grace and humility. So just a huge thank you.

You see me sitting here but there is a whole crew around and we pray for you. We don't take this lightly that you allow us to come into your homes. Thank you for that. It is my prayer wherever you're watching this today that you'll be so aware of the love of God no matter what is going on around you.

It's kind of what I want to talk to you about today. I want to talk to you about how do you handle disappointment? How do you handle those moments when you were on board for something, feeling something great was going to happen and suddenly, it is as if a door is slammed in your face and you find yourself alone in a hallway?

I had a friend who she struggled with her own self image and no matter how many times I would tell her, "Listen, you are beautiful inside and out!" She never quite believed me until a day when she met Mr. Right -- or so she thought. And suddenly, having that ring on her left hand changed how she saw herself. It was as if a door had been thrown open to the future and everything about her was through that door. She suddenly believed the things I've been telling her for years and certainly, more than that, believe the things that her fiancé told her.

Then one day not very long before the wedding he called it off. Wow! I will never forget what that did to my friend. It cancelled everything she had believed about herself. I saw her almost physically shrinking, like a flower that had been taken out of water. She felt as if this door had been slammed in her face and she was left in the dark in the hallway.

I got a letter from a lady who didn't give me her name or her address so I couldn't respond and she said, "I watch your program." And if you're watching now, I hope you don't mind me referencing the things you shared with me. But you told me that she had tried for years to get pregnant -- that's all she wanted. She said, "Some other friends of mine, I went to college with, they had career paths and different things they wanted to do." She said, "All I wanted to do was be a mom."

So after she got married she and her husband tried and tried and tried and nothing happened. Then eventually, because it was everything she felt she was meant to do, they managed to save up enough money to go through an in-Vitro process. And I didn't realize that it was such an expensive and difficult and painful process but they were able to go through that. And then she discovered much to her delight that she was pregnant. At eight weeks -- eight weeks into that pregnancy she lost the baby. And her question to me was why would a God of love allow that to happen? Because that's how she felt; she felt as if suddenly, everything she had longed for, the door had been thrown wide open and now it had been slammed in her face and that was her question, why Lord?

Maybe you're in a situation like that. It seemed like something great was about to happen and a door slammed and you're left with I don't understand. I think it's even harder if you're by yourself. If you're by yourself when something bad happens, you just don't know what to do with it.

I personally think one of the hardest things for us to hold together as believers are these two truths. Number one: God is love. Not just that God is loving but God is the very essence of love. And number two: God is powerful. He is almighty. He spoke our planet and all the stars into existence. But sometimes when you place your circumstances in the middle of those two things you're left with this question, why would a God of love who is powerful allow bad things to happen when he could have stopped them?

I want to share with you something from my own story that I don't think I've ever shared before in public and it happened before I came here to *LIFE Today*. It was pretty devastating. It felt very much like a door slamming in my face.

I had been out grocery shopping and I came home and I turned to put something in the freezer and in that moment it suddenly felt like somebody had literally stabbed me in the back and it caught my breath. I stopped for a moment to see what was happening. I turned around very gingerly and it seemed fine. I didn't say anything to my husband, Barry because my son Christian and I, we've nicknamed Barry "Eeyore" because he always thinks of the worst thing that could possibly happen. So I thought, I'm sure it was -- maybe I nicked a nerve for a moment but I'm fine now.

A few days after that I was sitting in the car and when I went to get out it was as if my back locked and I couldn't get out. I couldn't move. I was scared to do anything because I felt as if I was going to do some damage. So I actually lowered myself back into my seat and waited 'til Barry came home so that he could help me get out of car.

It really became apparent that no matter what I wanted it, I was going to have to go see my doctor. So I went to see my doctor and we talked through the whole thing. And he said, "Yeah. There might be some damage there but if you like, before I send you to a neurosurgeon I could send you to a pain specialist, somebody who could maybe give you some cortisone shots in your back to see if that will reduce the inflammation and maybe aid with the pain."

So he sent me to this doctor who was a pain specialist. You know what his name was? Jerry Lewis! I kid you not -- Jerry Lewis! What a name! But actually he was fantastic. But the procedure didn't work. By that point, I mean he tried one cortisone shot and then he tried another one and it didn't work. By that point I was in so much pain and I could hardly walk. I felt like an old woman. It felt to me like an absolute door slamming in my face because I looked at the months ahead and I had a full schedule of speaking engagements. As far as I could see there was absolutely no way that I could possibly even get to an airport.

It was one of those moments when my faith was really shaken but it was such a good shaking because sometimes when your faith is shaken it shakes off what you think you believe. Because part of my subconscious didn't even think my life is always going to look like *this* and God is always going to bless this. But it brought me back to Lord, what do we know?

And it also brought me to a place of being gut level honest with God. Are you able to do that? Like if you find yourself in a very devastating place, are you able to tell God what you actually feel or do you feel like you have to kind of edit yourself?

I'm going to remind you what some people in scripture said when they were in tremendously in pain. This is the prophet Jeremiah. He was tired of waiting for God to show up. So this is Jeremiah 15 and verse 18. This is what this godly prophet who once said, "Your word is like fire burning in my bones." But here's what he said, "Why does my suffering continue? Why is my wound so incurable? Your help seems as uncertain as a seasonal brook; like a spring that has gone dry."

His cry is clear, enough God! I am wore out. I'm tired of waiting for you to show up and answer this prayer. Scripture is full of them. Do you remember Job? The godliest man who was alive on the planet at that time and yet this is what he had to say. This is Job Chapter 3, verses three and four: Let the day of my birth be erased and the night I was conceived. Let that day be

turned to darkness. Let it be lost even to God on high and let no light shine on it."

You have to be pretty desperate not just to say, "I wish I'd never been born" but "Let who I even am be erased from God's memory."

One of the ones that I think really speaks to women perhaps in particular, in the book of Ruth, you remember we meet this woman named Naomi. Now she lost her husband and then she lost her two sons. And in desperation, she had been living in Moab but she decides to go back to Bethlehem where her people are. Now as she is coming back to the village her friends are kind of looking and thinking is that Naomi? She doesn't look like herself.

Well, here's what she says to them. This is found in Ruth Chapter 1 verses 20 and 21: "Don't call me Naomi," she responded, "Instead call me Mara, (which means bitter) for the Almighty has made my life very bitter for me. I went away full but the Lord has brought me home empty. Why call me Naomi, when the Lord, (she is blaming God,) when the Lord has caused me to suffer and the Almighty has sent such tragedy upon me?"

She was absolutely desperate. So as I began to say honestly, Lord, I don't know what my life is going to look like here. What if I'm never able to get rid of the pain? What if I have to spend a good part of the rest of my life just in bed? It really felt like this door has just been slammed in my face and I'm sitting there alone in the hallway.

I discovered that is not true. You know what I've discovered? God is in the hallway. So often we just think when life is going as we hope it will go that God has got his hand on us and we're blessed and everything is going great. When life falls apart God is there. What I discovered was the more I poured out my heart and said, "What if I can't walk? What if I never get rid of the pain?" What I kept hearing over and over and over again was "I will be there."

So my doctor referred me to a neurosurgeon and I went and met with him and he said, "Yeah, there is some significant damage." He did a CAT scan and also something injected into my spine. He said, "I can do surgery. It will take about seven hours."

So on that morning when I went to the hospital really early, my surgeon came in and he brought in another surgeon and said, "There is going to be two of us because we'll have to go through your back to take one disk out, and we'll have to go through your front to remove the other disk. So this other surgeon will be holding your organs while I go through the front."

What do you say to that? Thank you? Please put them back where you found them? I'm making light of it because what I really want you to know is, as I was on that bed, because of the goodness of God and because of how much of the grace of God you allow in when you get all

the stuff that's inside of you out, see so often we hold on to what we're feeling and it takes up space that grace can be. And as I poured out my heart to God, I was absolutely able as they wheeled me into surgery to say, "Father, I surrender all." And not just like we say things sometimes but mean it -- absolutely, to the core of my being.

Second Corinthians is one of my favorite letters that Paul wrote because he talks about something. Let me read this to you. This is Second Corinthians, chapter 4 and I'm reading from seven to ten. Here's what he says: We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. This makes it clear that our great power is from God not from ourselves. We are pressed on every side by trouble but we are not crushed. We're perplexed by we're not driven to despair. We're hunted down but we are not abandoned by God. We get knocked down but we're not destroyed. Through suffering, our bodies continue to share in the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be seen in our bodies.

I don't know what you are facing right now. I don't know what the disappointment might be. Perhaps you're disappointed in your marriage; maybe it is not what you hoped it would be and you just don't know what to do. You feel stuck. You feel like you're in the hallway. Or maybe you look at other people and you think, Lord, why is their life working out so well and mine is the way it is? Maybe it is health issues.

I have a very dear friend, her name is Erin and she is confined to a wheelchair. And because she has no family where she lives she is dependent on health workers coming in helping her. Some days they forget to come and she is left alone. But one of the things that Erin and I have both discovered in our different circumstances is that God is a God of the hallway. He is present with us when life is going as we hoped it would and when it feels as if a door has been slammed in our face.

One of the greatest promises we have from Christ, he said, "Never will I leave you. Never will I abandon you." Even if at the moment you feel you're in the greatest challenge of your life, maybe you're facing some upcoming health issue and you don't know how things are going to go. I just want to remind you, you're not alone. You're not alone. Maybe things are not going well in your family. I want you to know, even if you feel like you have been stuck in a hallway through no choice of your own, God is with you.

A dear friend of mine is going through a divorce that she did not want. She did not seek out. She said, "After all these years I feel like I've just been abandoned."

Although I understand some of the depth of her pain and her pain is real and she should get to cry that out to God, the other thing I want to remind her, as I would remind you, is you're not abandoned -- you have never been abandoned. When you have placed your faith in Christ, you

are never alone.

See we have our plans, we have the way we think our life should go but I also just want to remind you, this life we live down here is just a moment. There is a day coming when Christ will take us to be with him and all suffering and tears and pain will be gone and then we'll begin to live our real lives. The door will be flung open for eternity and we will walk with him.

Until that day, you and I have the incredible privilege of reaching out in the name of Christ to moms who feel as if a door has been closed on their faces and left them alone in the hallway with their children. But you and I can let them know, no, you're not alone. Would you watch this?

[Mission video]

Announcer: Water is pure. Water is natural. Water is healthy. Water can help all. These are lines from a poem that few people would ever take exception to. But on a recent mission trip to Africa in search of stories about villagers and their water sources, Jeanne Rogers shared a different perspective.

Jeanne: As beautiful as this setting looks, it is so deceiving because this water is killing the children of this village. Every mother that our team visited in the village of Gawazi and in the surrounding villages told us heart-rending stories of the deaths of their children. Those children died due to waterborne illnesses caused by contaminated water. As a grandmother I was touched by the story of another grandmother. Her name was Casalita.

Jeanne: So how has this water affected your family?

Open Captions: I am a widow of three children. My granddaughter got very sick from the water. Her belly got inflated and her legs too. She was four years old. I took her to the clinic but she kept vomiting and having diarrhea. She died in bad condition.

Jeanne: My heart just broke for Casalita and for all the other mothers who had suffered loss. But I could not leave Casalita without assuring her that there is hope. There is hope for her and for the other villagers.

I ask in agreement with her, faith that you change the situation in her family, that you protect the lives of her children and her grandchildren, and of all the people of this village. Lord, give them good water. Clean water; in Jesus' name. Amen.

[End of video]

[In the studio]

Sheila: They're not asking for a lot. There are some situations in life that we face and there's really not much we can do. Somebody is given a really harsh medical report and you'll do what you can to help but know that the outcome really is in God's hands. But this situation is different. The only reason that that darling grandmother lost that four-year-old granddaughter was simply because there was no clean water to drink.

People keep saying to me, Sheila, if you enjoy being a mom wait until you're a grandmother. They're the best days of your life! They should be the best days of your life. But for so many moms and grandmothers in Africa they're not. But we have made a commitment here at *LIFE* that we are going to change that.

See, Jeanne and I and the rest of the team, we don't just go to Angola or to Burundi or to all those places and make promises and then come home and forget these women. No! We make commitments because we know -- we know that you care.

So what our goal is to be able to put 400 wells in more than 15 nations. Here's how you can help. Let's break it down because it is doable. Do you know that if you support us with \$48 that will give ten people clean water for their entire life? When we put a well in a village, it lasts for over 70 years. That's the lifetime of someone. So for just \$48 you can give ten people Water for LIFE. \$72 will give clean water for 15 people. \$144 gives clean water to 30 people! Can you imagine that? Think of 30 people you know and realize if you just gave \$144 that would give those people clean water -- not just clean water, it will give them life. That's why we call it Water for LIFE.

So please, will you join me? Will you give the best gift you could possibly give? It is a joy! We get to do this! It is not something that God says, "Do this!" We get to do this. We get to do it in Jesus' name. So would you go to your phone -- would you go to your phone, you can go online but would you call the number on your screen right now and say, "Yes, I am in!" Maybe you want to say, "I'm a grandmother and so I'm doing this for another grandmother that I might not ever meet until we're finally all standing around the throne worshipping Jesus."

We're here on the earth at this time for a purpose. Not just to make our lives feel comfortable but to reach out in the name of Jesus. So often we think, can't the government fix it? No. We're the

body of Christ. We are the body of Christ. We have the privilege of being the ones who say, "Not on our watch." Please go to your phone. Give the best gift possible.

[Begin video clip]

Announcer: Every day children living in extreme poverty are forced to make a dreadful choice, drink dirty polluted water filled with deadly disease or die from thirst. No child should ever be faced with this decision.

The good news is there is a solution -- Mission: Water for LIFE is one of the most proven and viable demonstrations of God's love in the world today. You can help end the suffering because clean water changes everything.

With your gift today, you can help drill 400 water wells in remote villages in over 15 nations. Your gift of \$24 will help provide clean water for five people, a gift of \$48 will help provide for ten, \$72 will provide for 15 people and \$144 will help provide fresh, life-giving water for 30 people for a lifetime!

With your gift we'll send you *The Riches of Christ*, what true prosperity looks like filled with wisdom, prayers and scripture. James Robison adds insight from what God has shown him about finding contentment in the Father's provision for your life.

With your gift of \$100 or more please request the *Children of the World Storybook Bible*. This easy to read Bible features colorful art by children from nearly 50 countries around the world.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1200 to help provide water for 250 people or a gift of \$4800 to help sponsor a complete well. And you may request the "Bridge of Faith" framed canvas print by Thomas Kinkade.

Please call, write, or make your gift online.

[End of clip]

[Mission video]

Tammy: This source of water is their only choice and they have to continually give this water to their children every single day. I can't imagine that feeling of giving my child water that I know

is literally killing them and making them sick every single day.

The beauty of also taking a trip like this is to know that there is something that we can do together to change the life for this young mom and her children and hundreds of thousands of mothers and children, and fathers and families all over the world. We can come into these places and drill a well and bring them water that is life-giving.

So why don't you join with me? Go to the phone or go online and do the best that you can to help us make a difference in the lives of hundreds of thousands of people.

[End of Video]

[In the studio]

Sheila: Thank you so much! If the lines are busy, please, please persevere. Push through here and keep calling until you get through. Any minute now we're out of here, we're home with Jesus. But I want to know that while I was on this earth I fulfilled the command of Christ. He said, "When you give a cup of water in my name you give it to me." What a joy.

Thank you so much for your support. We'll see you next time on *Wednesdays in the Word*.