

1/31/18
Week Five: WFL
Wednesdays in the Word
Sheila Walsh
“Taking Shame's Power Away”

[In the studio]

Sheila: Hello! I'm Sheila Walsh. Welcome to *Wednesdays in the Word*. You may notice that my voice sounds a little more interesting at the moment. I have one of those kind of allergy things that we tend to get in Texas. But we will just press on through that and I hope that between that and my Scottish accent you're able to make out what I'm actually saying. I just want to say to you how grateful I am that you take time to stop by on a Wednesday and to spend a little time with me. I love when I've had the opportunity in 2017 to be on the road and to meet so many of you and I pray that in 2018 I get to do that even more.

One of the things I want to talk about today is a subject that I'm very aware of in my own journey with the Lord, but the more I spend time talking with other women and not just women but men too, I realize it is an issue that many of us struggle with but we try to keep it kind of hidden. And the issue is shame.

When I was thinking about that before I came in for this program I remembered an occasion when I felt that most intensely. In Scotland you don't have elementary, middle school and high school, you have primary school and then you have secondary school. When you graduate from primary school you're 12 years old and they have a big kind of dance. Because you're the oldest kids in school you feel very mature and very grown up. I was so looking forward to that particular dance.

But the only thing that was troubling to me was I knew that I knew that my mum didn't have very much discretionary income to be able to buy a dress. Now the fashion that year was for a very simple straight dress that kind of cut above the knee but very straight and very simple. I thought, maybe I won't be able to go. But one day I came home from school and my mum said, "Sheila! I was able to get you a dress." I was so excited. She said, "It is upstairs in your bedroom." So I ran upstairs and I threw open my bedroom door and there it was, the blue dress. It was everything that was wrong. It had layers and it was kind of full and it tied in a big bow at the back. I remember thinking, I can't wear that. But I also remember thinking there is no way that I'm going to say to my mum I can't wear that dress. She was so excited about it.

So here's the decision I made. On the night of the school dance I put on the blue dress and I came downstairs and my mum's eyes kind of filled with tears. She said, "Sheila, you look so beautiful!" I said, "Thank you so much, mum." I left the house and I walked toward the school but I actually took a little detour and I sat in the field just behind the school all night. I watched the other girls coming in and every single one of them had the right dress. They all had that little straight dress.

I remember sitting in the field and what I felt that night was shame. Shame is one of the things that makes you feel like you don't belong, that you won't fit in. And at the end of the dance when everybody else headed home I went home too and walked through the front door and basically told my mum I'd had an amazing time. But that feeling stayed with me for a long, long time.

I don't know whether the word *shame* resonates with you. I was reading something in a book the other day and they came up with what they said were five rules of survival in a world that tends to shame us. Here's the rules. The first rule is that you must not have anything wrong with you at all. The second rule is that if you do have something wrong, you must get over it as soon as possible. The third rule is that if you can't get over it you must pretend that you have. The fourth rule is that if you can't pretend that you have, you just shouldn't show up. And the fifth rule is that if you're going to insist on showing up you should at least have the decency to feel ashamed.

One of my favorite writers, a guy called Lewis Smedes wrote a beautiful book called *Shame and Grace*. Here's how he described shame. He says, "I lugged around inside of me a dead weight of not good enoughness."

I'm not sure that's technically a word but I certainly understood what he was saying. Have you ever felt that way? That you're just not good enough? I think the church should be the one place in the planet where you and I are the most transparent. If the very basis of the gospel is that Christ came to us, that he redeemed us then we should be able to show up as we really are. But so often it is the least transparent place that we ever show up.

Perhaps you've had some terrible argument with your husband or your wife on the way to church and you've called them things that are not in the New Testament. They may have been in the Old but they did not make it into the new. And then you get to church and the greeter at the door says, "Hey! How are you?" And you say, "Oh. If I was any closer to Jesus I'd be flying." Or so often all we do is we drag our baggage in and then we drag our baggage back home.

I remember when in 1997 I was hospitalized for a month for severe clinical depression. I remember going to a class in the hospital and the person that was leading the class said to me, "Do you think you struggle with shame?"

I said, "Nope. I don't think so." I honestly never thought of the word *shame*.

They said, "Well, let me just tell you a few things about people who struggle with shame. Here are a few of the issues. See if you relate to any of them." This is what they said. He said, "Shame includes an enduring negative self image." I have to say that kind of rang true a little bit. Then he said, "Shame is highly performance conscience. You always feel that you're on."

The third thing was shame makes you unaware of personal boundaries. You find it virtually impossible to stand up and say, "No." The other thing they said was shame is accompanied by a pervading tiredness. There is no place for joy in shame.

Then they carried on as I began to nod, "Shame tends toward addictive behavior." Now I've always thought addictive behavior was just like drugs or alcohol but they said, "No, no. That can manifest itself in over-involvement in either work or ministry." The person who always says yes to everything because they don't want to say no to anything.

The other thing was, shame has no concept of normal. For example: if you grew up with someone yelling in your face when you were a child that became familiar to you so that becomes "normal." They said, "Shame makes it difficult to trust other people. Shame makes you possessive in relationships because you're so afraid of being abandoned."

Then finally, shame has a high need for control. Life is scary to a shame-based person. The only bearable way to survive is to maintain control.

I remember saying to the therapist that morning, "Well, if you put it that way, then yes."

Yet, as I've gone on in my relationship with Christ and I've begun to understand that my worst to Jesus will never be what I do, it's who I am. It's not because I have the privilege of sitting on television, it's not because I have the honor of writing books or speaking, that's not why Jesus loves me. Christ loves me because that's who he is. It's not just that God likes to love people. God's very essence is love.

Someone who struggled with shame for some part of his life was the Psalmist David. He knew that he had made some very not just serious errors but some determined, intentional sin. He took another man's wife and slept with her. And then we're told that he had that man sent into the very front lines of battle, basically writing his death sentence.

And David struggled, at times when he ran away from Saul there is a passage in scripture that talks about where he pretended to be insane and was on his knees allowing drool to come down his mouth. But here's what David wrote later: "I sought the Lord and he answered me. He

delivered me from all my fears."

This is what I love, this is Psalm 34: 4-5: Those who look to him are radiant. Their faces are never covered with shame.

When I thought of shame in the context of Christ our savior I thought, how did Jesus deal with the shaming world? When it came to crucifixion there was nothing in the culture of that day that was more shame-filled than a Roman execution, a crucifixion. They were held outside the city walls and it was literally the worst thing that could ever happen to someone. So how did Jesus endure that?

Well, the writer to Hebrews gives us a beautiful look into what that looked like for Christ. Hebrews Chapter 12, verses one through two, this is what they say: Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross despising the shame and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Sometimes I think our English language doesn't really do justice to the weight of the words in scripture. The word *endured*, endured the cross is a little Greek word, hupomeno and it means to stay in a place beyond an expected point of time.

Are you in a rough place right now? Are you in a place where you think, Lord, I thought you would have delivered me by now. Perhaps you're going through a serious illness and you've prayed for healing and you're still here. Perhaps you're struggling financially and you're thinking, Lord, I'm doing everything I know to do here and yet I'm still here. So often when I think of the example that Christ laid for us I love to turn to this passage because when it says he endured the cross it means he intentionally remained in a place beyond an expected point of time.

I don't know where you find yourself today but I pray that just as Christ, for the joy that was set before him, endured that you would be given the grace right now even in what you're in right at this moment to endure.

But then you come to how he related to the cross, the word *despising* the shame. The word despising in the Greek is kataphroneo and it really literally means to pay no attention to; to think little of. I love that! It is not that Christ denied that there is shame, he just didn't pay much attention to it because of the greater calling.

Shame is something that I used to struggle with a lot. Every time I would look in the mirror I would see what was wrong rather than what Christ had declared to be right. And that's been one

of the greatest gifts of grace in my life is understanding that when you and I look at the mess that we're in, we see ourselves from the middle of that mud we're sitting in, but when God our Father looks at us, he sees us through the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

I wonder how that verse, that Psalm relates to you: Those who look to him will be radiant with joy, no shadow of shame will touch their face. I think one of the greatest ways to be able to eliminate the power of shame in our lives is to tell God the whole truth, to speak it out loud. That can be scary because sometimes we think I just need to push all the things I don't like about myself as far down as possible.

So let me ask you a question. What if today, when you were flicking through channels and you saw oh *Wednesdays in the Word*, that there was a big notice that came across the screen and they said, "Instead of showing our regularly scheduled programming, there's been a change and today we're going to show a movie of your life." Yes, you! Not me. You! Everything. Everything you've ever done. Everything you've ever said. All the secrets that you have kept. The things that you think. Well, that's not really sin, Lord because I just thought about it, I didn't actually do it. But suddenly, this movie was going to be played on television screens all across the world for anyone to watch. How would you feel about that?

Here's what I want you to get. The good news of the gospel is this: God has seen your movie and he loves you. Isn't that amazing? God has seen your movie and he loves you. There is nothing that you've ever done, said or thought that God doesn't know. One of the greatest traps of the enemy is that he wants us to keep our secrets; almost as if our secrets keep us safe but they don't. Our secrets keep us isolated and alone.

So I would love for you to consider a little exercise. Perhaps you might find 30 minutes during the day or a place where you can go by yourself and maybe for the first time just between you and the Lord, just write down everything that you feel has some kind of hold on your life. It can be something that happened a long time ago that you've tried to keep pushing down. It could be something that happened last night. But I just want to ask you, would you be willing to bring all of who you are into the light and love of the presence of your Father? There is something about speaking out what is true in the presence of a God who loves us that literally takes shame's power away.

And then if you're able to and this might take some time, find what I call a "safe sister" or a "safe brother" and share what you've struggled with with them. I have two girls like that in my life who know everything there is to know about me. I love when James says, "We should share our lives with one another. We should confess our sins to each other and pray for each other so that we may be healed." That's not just a physical healing, sometimes it is a healing of who we see ourselves to be.

Shame was first introduced the Garden of Eden. Do you remember that? The first thing that Adam and Eve did after they had sinned was they hid from God. And honestly, we've been doing that ever since. And when God came into the garden and said, "Adam and Eve, where are you?" Do you think he didn't know? Of course, he knew. He just wanted them to show themselves and I think that invitation is still there for you and I today. If we're going to be able to be the ones who look unto him and are radiant and not let shame touch our faces it's because perhaps for the first time in your life you're willing to be known by your Father, to let the light of his love and His grace sink into the deepest places in your heart and let him tell you, "I see you and I love you."

I think one of the greatest gifts of having your eyes washed again is that suddenly not only do you see yourself and see our Father perhaps more clearly for the first time, I think we see other people and when we see them we want to change their lives too. Watch this.

[On the mission field]

Translator: I feel so bad. I don't know how to explain the pain I'm feeling.

Jeanne: What has made you so sad?

Translator: I've lost two kids.

Open Captions: There are always many deaths caused by this cholera. Every day we bury kids who have died because of this virus. My two children died the same death. The first was my ten-year old boy. Then I lost my daughter, Francine. She was six years old.

Jeanne: I can't imagine losing two children and then to watch a village every day have to bury children because they get so sick on this water.

You can't tell but she is pregnant with her third child. We want this one to have a chance to live. It's a very simple thing we can do that will bring clean water to this village. Clean water to this mama. Clean water to this baby. So this baby lives. And the whole village is going to explode with gratitude, with life.

[End of clip]

[In the studio]

Sheila: Can you imagine? Can you imagine living in a place, living in a village where every single day the constant is a child is buried?

When I was watching that piece I was thinking, the things that are daily to us are so different. They're just simple things and occasionally sure, occasionally we'll face a difficult thing, a sickness or a challenge. But I cannot even for a moment, even though I have walked there and I've watched these moms and I've walked beside these moms and I've seen their tears, I've been to the place where they've buried their children, I still cannot wrap my heart around what it would be like to open my eyes every day knowing that today someone else's child is going to be buried simply because we don't have clean water.

That just seems outrageous to me. As long as the body of Christ is still on this planet, that should not be happening. I think it is easy to point our fingers at governments and say what more they should do but honestly, I think, I don't want to point my finger at a government. I don't know all the intricacies of governments. What I do know is the mandate that Jesus Christ left for his servants, for you and I who love him, that we're to be his hands and feet, that when we offer a cup of water in Jesus' name it is as if we literally give it to him.

This situation at the moment is drastic but here's the amazing thing. We can do something to change it. For \$48 we can provide ten people with clean water for the rest of their lives; \$72, 15 people; \$144, 30 people; and for \$4800 you can put in a new well that will provide water for 1,000 people for a lifetime. That's why we call it Water for LIFE because these wells will last for about 70 years.

Yes, this situation is heartbreaking but we can do something. We can't all put in a well but if every single one of us decide we're going to do something and make sure that when that darling woman gives birth to her baby, when all these women in villages give birth to their children that they're born into a place where the daily thing is, I can go to a well, I can get clean water and I can watch my child thrive. Please go to your phone. Please dial the number on your screen. Make the best gift possible. Do it in Jesus' name.

[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]

[On the Mission Field]

James: Let me show you a water source that these kids are drinking from. It's literally with no exaggeration contaminated water. They let this bucket down and they get the water but it is not sealed and controlled and capped.

Betty: They're making do with what they have but it is not good enough. It's not going to help them to be healthy. They've got this dirty, filthy contaminated water to work with. They have to drink it to even survive a day. I know that there couldn't be a greater joy from the parents of these children, James than to be able to watch their children grow up. Well, they won't be able to

do that if they don't have some fresh water because after a while, the disease is going to kill them.

James: And we're the answer to that problem, all of us working together, each person doing what they can because we know the need is very real. We want you to see it up close and personal. But the thing we really want you to hear and know, you're really the answer. You're the way to provide hope and help to people who deserve it. And drilling freshwater wells, that's love indeed. Help us do it. Dial that telephone number and make the very best gift you can. Please do it and do it now. Please make the gift or you can go to LifeToday.org and make that gift online.

[In the studio]

Sheila: Thank you so much. If the numbers busy please keep trying. Call that number on your screen. Go online and make the best gift possible. I remember when my son was just a little boy saying, "I wish we could give God something for his birthday." But you know this is something we actually get to do. Jesus made it so clear; whatever we do for the least of these we do it for him.

Can you imagine how glorious it will be the next time we're able to bring back some footage and we show you that clean water has gone in to 400 new villages? And the women and the children, and fathers and the grandfathers are celebrating because suddenly, where there was death now there is life. And we're doing it in Jesus' name.

So thank you so much. Remember, if you need us, we're here for you too. I'm Sheila Walsh. I'll see you next time on *Wednesdays in the Word*.