

3/7/18
Week 10: WFL
Wednesdays in the Word
Sheila Walsh: God Thinks You're Beautiful

[In the studio]

Sheila: I'm Sheila Walsh. Thank you so much for joining me today on *Wednesdays in the Word*. Thank you too for connecting with me. Some of you do it through Facebook; my Facebook name is Sheila Walsh Connect -- a no brainer there. But you'll tell me some of your own story and ask questions or share something with me. I just want you to know that some of you have really blessed me. You have put little encouraging things, and I want you to know I read them all and thank you. It's really, really kind. We don't take your support for our ministry here at *LIFE* lightly. It really means a lot and we're so grateful.

But one of the things that I've noticed recently, a bit of a pattern, is that some of you -- and I think it's mostly women because I speak to women but maybe some guys too, I don't know, really seem to be weighed down by the way you see yourself, by maybe some of the labels that you have in your head. If you've ever been told -- in fact my brother wrote to me the other day and he said, "Do you remember when we were little and we used to go to my aunt's house for Christmas?" And my aunt's mother-in-law who was Irish, she was a lovely lady, she would be there every Christmas day and every Christmas day she would say the same thing to me. She would say, "Sheila, you look like you've put on a little bit of weight." Every Christmas! -- Right before my Christmas dinner.

You know sometimes those labels stick and we think, that's who I am. And one of the things today on this program that I want us to look at is do you judge what you see in the mirror by some old tapes in your head or by some silly magazines on a stand? Or when you look at your image in the mirror, do you see a woman, a man that God loves? That's my prayer by the end of this program.

I'll be honest, sometimes I'll look in the mirror, particularly in hotel bathrooms, I don't know what it is about the lighting in hotel bathrooms but it is just those fluorescent lights and I'll think, whoa! This is not going to work.

My friend, darling, much loved Lucy Swindoll, she used to say that when she got on her bathroom scale it would say to her, "Come back when you're alone!"

But there are times in life where we just don't feel good about ourselves. We look at all those magazines lined up as we wait to check out and we know that we're nothing like the models we see. But as God's women we want to live differently; we want to live what we believe and that is that God loves us based on his heart not on what we're wearing, not on our dress size.

But some days it is a struggle. So let me tell you about an experience I had and God really used it to teach me a beautiful lesson.

So I was flying in to speak at a conference and everything didn't go quite as planned. I remember looking out the window as our plane began its descent and it was in the evening and the sky was a glorious collage of pink and gold as the sun began to set. I knew that I had a two-hour drive ahead of me to the small town where the conference was being held, so it would be dark by the time I got to my hotel.

As I made my way to baggage claim I checked the information sheet I'd been given for the following morning's event to remind myself of the names of a couple who are kind enough to drive the two hours to pick me up. I'll call them Jean and Stan, in case you're watching and you think, don't include me in your story, lady! Well, they were waiting by carousel two with big smiles and a sign with my name on it.

I said to them, "It is so kind of you to do this -- to drive two hours there and then two hours back!"

Stan said, "It is our pleasure. We love to drive and we love to make new friends." They were just adorable.

Well, the baggage carousel began to move and I watched for my bag and one by one the other passengers picked up their suitcases as I waited and waited. Well, if you fly a lot you know that horrible feeling when the pile of suitcases gets smaller and smaller and you just know that your bag is probably in Bangladesh by now. Finally, all that was left on the carousel was a lone sneaker, just one going round and round and round. So I did what you do, I took my baggage tag to the agent and asked her if she could locate my bag to see where it had gone. She did and she came back and she said, "I'm so sorry. I'm afraid it is still in Dallas and we don't have another flight due in tonight. But we can get it to you by midmorning."

Well, I now had a problem. The following morning I was speaking -- the conference I was speaking at was a very conservative church conference and all I had were the jeans I had traveled in. I knew all the other ladies would be in dresses and suits and frankly, I didn't want to look like I'd just climbed off a horse.

Also, I didn't want to offend them. I knew that would not be acceptable to be up on a platform in front of all these pastor's wives in jeans. So I asked Jean if we passed a mall on the way to the hotel. She said, "No, but we pass a large..." How do I put it -- well-known chain store. Yeah! She said, "If you want to give that a try."

I said, "Let's do it, Jean."

Well, we got there and apparently there had been several school proms, two weddings and a big sale at the store the previous week so there was nothing -- literally zero left in my size. The only dress I could find was two sizes too big -- better than too small -- and made for a much taller woman but I had no other choice so I bought it. [Laughing]

The following morning I got up and before I stepped out of bed, I do this every single morning, I remind myself of my favorite verse to begin each day. You might want to write it down because it is just a beautiful way to start your day. But here's what it says: *Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love for I have placed my trust in you. Show me the way I should go for to you I trust my life.*

I love that verse. The Psalmist speaks of God's unfailing love, not ours. For if you are anything like me we will fail and we'll fail but God never will. So I showered, and it was time to get dressed. I put my dress on and surveyed myself in the full length mirror. It is hard to describe. I should have taken a picture. I looked like an extra from *Little House on the Prairie*. The dress just hung on me and it was so long I was worried I would trip over it getting up to speak. So I took the belt off my jeans and tied it around my waist to see if it looked any better. No! Not so much. [Sighing]

So I said, "Well, Lord." Yep, I said it out loud. "What do you think?" And what I heard in my spirit was a gentle voice of my Father saying, "Beautiful." It just made me stop. It felt like a holy moment. I stopped and I remembered whose I am and the awesome privilege of being a child of the king, someone who every moment gets to receive His grace and his mercy.

Well, the pastor's wife who introduced me that morning had heard about my missing luggage and the shopping trip and that I hadn't wanted to offend anyone by wearing jeans on the platform. She told the women in her mind she thought I'd never looked better. It was very unusual to get a standing ovation before you've ever said a word. It was so sweet.

Well, clearly, I didn't hit a fashion home run that day but it was so good for me. I had a deeper sense of the value our Father places on us, on the days we like what we see in the mirror and on the days that we don't. I actually think it was a gift to have some of the things that I normally rely on stripped away, to lean on Christ and on Christ alone.

I don't know what you see when you look in the mirror and I don't know what you depend on to feel okay about yourself. I don't know what labels you wear. Maybe you wear the label of: Divorced. Maybe you wear the label of: Single mom. Maybe you wear the label of: Recovering alcoholic. Maybe you wear the label of: The child that was never wanted or never loved. So often those labels stick to us for life and we define our whole lives by those labels.

I was speaking at a conference in Los Angeles and I recognized a gentleman in the back of the crowd because he is a very successful businessman. I'm sure he is actually a billionaire. And at the end of my message, I stayed and I spoke to lots of people but I realized he was still hanging around. He came up to me and introduced himself.

I said, "Yes, sir, I know who you are."

He said, "You know it's interesting. If you asked most people about my life they would tell you what a success I am. How well my business has grown, and of the beautifully cut suit I'm wearing. But let me tell you something. When I lay my head on the pillow at night, do you know what I hear? I hear the voice of my mother saying, 'I wish you would never have been born. Having you ruined my health.'"

So often we look at other people and we think, well, they've just got it altogether. We don't know what the story is that they're hearing inside their lives. But what I was able to say to that very successful businessman was that's not how God sees you. I know this. God loves you not for what you've done or what you've accomplished or what you wear but because he is love.

When my son Christian was just a little boy, after he had his bath and he was tucked up in bed and we said our prayers and read our devotional, I would walk to the door and I would stop and turn around and I would say to him, "Which boy does mommy love?"

He would always put his little hand on his face and say, "This boy!"

There's something kind of beautiful about that. One of the things that I think would be awesome if you could begin to do is every time that you catch your reflection in the morning mirror or in a puddle or in a store window, you could actually ask yourself, maybe not out loud, like my son, but ask yourself, "Which girl, which boy does Jesus love?"

And then be able to say, "This girl -- this boy."

Let me read you something about the love of God. If you've been with me for any length of time you're going to know this for sure. I am a huge fan of the book of Romans. I love the book of

Romans. And I particularly love Romans Chapter 8. It begins with "no condemnation" and ends with "no separation." I love the fact that in Christ there is no condemnation no matter how much your own heart or your mind or your mirror condemns you, Christ does not.

Here's how it ends. It ends with this beautiful picture of the love of God that nothing can separate us from. This is Romans 8:35-39. When Paul says in 38, "I'm convinced," I want you to know the Greek word that he uses there for *convinced* it's -- convinced doesn't do it justice. It is the kind of evidence that you would have in the Supreme Court to say this is irrefutable.

So here's what he says: *Can anything separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity or persecuted or hungry or destitute or in danger or threatened with death? (As the scriptures say, "For your sake we're killed every day. We're being slaughtered like sheep." No, despite all these things overwhelming victory is ours through Christ who loved us.*

Sometimes when bad things happen you think, I don't think God loves me. I don't think he's hearing my prayers. I've been praying and praying and things are not changing. So I don't think God loves me. Or maybe you think God loves somebody else more than you. Maybe you look at some of the other women around you or the other men that you work with and you see such success and you equate that with the love of God. That if God loved you more you would be in a better place.

Paul is saying no, despite everything that might be true in your life at this moment overwhelming victory, not like a little bit, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ who loved us. And here he goes on with his Supreme Court evidence: *I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow --*

What are you facing tomorrow? Is there something coming up that you're absolutely dreading? And you think, I don't know what's going to happen. I want to remind you Christ is in your tomorrow.

Not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below. Indeed, nothing -- nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

I love that Paul adds that "nothing else" because so often we'll listen to somebody speaking and you'll think, yeah, but you don't know about this. You don't know that I'm in this place. Paul is saying you know what? It doesn't matter. Not that it is insignificant to God. If you're in pain right now, if you're struggling, if you're suffering, God is close to you.

Remember what the Psalmist David said in Psalm 34? *The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.*

But what Paul is saying is that that is not going to separate you from the love of God. Wouldn't it be sad to get to heaven to finally see Jesus face to face and realize that the enemy believed God's promises over your life more than you did? He knows Christ will never abandon you. He knows that you are loved with an overwhelming love. He knows that God listens to every prayer you pray. But sometimes we forget.

I just want as your sister, your big sister, and to some of you, maybe your mother, I just want to remind you that no matter what has been spoken over you, don't allow that to be louder than the resounding "yes" that God spoke over you. You are loved so much. But I love that line from beautiful name where it says, "You didn't want heaven without us." That's the truth. God didn't want to live without us so he sent Christ.

If you have never received Christ in your life, you can simply call on the name of the Lord, scripture says and you will be saved. You don't have to come up with fancy language. You just have to say, "Jesus, I know I'm a sinner. I ask you to forgive me for my sin. Thank you for dying on the cross. I accept your finished work on the cross for me. I believe that you're the son of God. I believe you died and I believe you rose again and I want to live for you."

That's as simple as it is. You move from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light and your name gets written in the Lamb's Book of Life. Don't allow anything today or tomorrow to rob you of the beautiful truth that you're loved by God. And when you realize how much you're loved, you really want some other people to know about that too. Would you watch this?

[Mission Video]

Announcer: Children, they are gifts of hope, of dreams. They are the future. It seems this would be a universal reality. But in places like this, all that they are, their very future wavers in uncertainty.

The very substance needed to sustain their lives is the very thing trying to take it, their water filled with bacteria, viruses, and parasites. Whereas many adults might have the immune system to fight off these attacks, young children do not. It's not an issue of awareness. The people in this village know their water is the cause.

Open Captions:

>> Unclean water is killing the people of our village.

>> The children say they are concerned about the dirty water. But they have no choice.

>> Families are dying because of this unclean water. People are disappearing. Many homes are closing.

Announcer: With no choice of clean water, no ability to change the situation, helplessness sets in and begins to drain all hope. But the reality is there is hope, for this isn't a problem without a solution. The power and simplicity of clean water lying beneath their feet changes everything. That water is out of *their* reach but it is not out of yours. For when you join hands with ours you become the solution.

[End of video]

[In the studio]

Sheila: I literally cannot imagine what that must be like and I've been there. I've sat with those moms. I've actually asked one of the moms if I could follow her and her two children down to the place where they got water. What I saw where they were beginning to scoop out in their buckets I was horrified because just a few yards down there were animals in the water and the water was clearly filthy. But not just filthy, we knew that that's where so much yellow fever came from.

I watched the mom gather and I said to her, "Do you boil the water?"

She said, "No, no. We just wait for the dirt to go to the bottom."

And the dirt is not what is killing them. It is the water itself. But can you imagine as a mom that you've got no choice. I don't know if you ever saw movie, "Sophie's Choice." It was kind of set in Nazi Germany and a mom has to choose between which of her two children she is going to save. It is horrible! But that's reality. That's not a movie for some people. That is reality -- that their choices are giving their children no water, and to die from thirst is one of the most agonizing ways to die, or to put a cup of water in your child's hand knowing there is a very good chance, maybe a 50/50 chance that the child will not survive.

These villages we've gone to are so remote. In fact, in one of the villages when we went in, the elder of the village kind of stepped back when he saw me. I asked our translator and he said, "He has never been out -- he has never seen a white woman or a woman with your color of hair."

It is not like they can just drive somewhere and get clean water. They're absolutely remote, which is why our commitment here at *LIFE* is to put 400 new wells in more than 15 nations, to go into these places which are so remote and their only choice is that mud, disease-filled, small piece of water and drill a well.

Here's how you can help. Together we can do this. Do you know that for just \$48 you can provide ten people with clean water for the rest of their lives? \$72, 15 people; some of you can afford \$144 and when you do that, you give 30 people clean Water for LIFE.

Maybe God has blessed you this year. Do you know that for \$4800 you can now put a well into a village by yourself and that will give water for 1,000 people for life! That's why we call it Water for *LIFE*. It comes from us here at *LIFE* but it literally gives life to those children for the rest of their lives.

So would you join hands with us? Will you help us today? Would you go to your phone? Would you call that number on your screen and just do what you can? Give the best gift possible and let's bring Water for LIFE.

[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.

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

[End of clip]

[On the Mission Field]

Randy: Many of these precious children behind me have lost siblings, playmates to waterborne illnesses. We can stop that cycle of death. It's as simple as giving them a cup of clean drinking water. Do you know each water well will serve about an average of 1,000 people. Look at all of these kids behind me. We can reach into areas – this area and so many more just like it and save thousands of lives just by giving them clean drinking water. I pray you'll do what you can right now. Go to the phone. Go online. Make the best gift you can. And when you do, know that you'll be saving precious lives all around the world with water for life!

[End of video]

[In the studio]

Sheila: Here's why I feel so urgent about it. This is our last week. I'm going to be going back to Burundi and I want to be able to let these people know, we heard your cry. We heard your prayer and we're able to answer that. We can only do that if you'll join with us.

So if the phones were busy, please persist. Please keep calling. Go online. Give the very best gift you can possibly give. They're not asking for much. They're not asking for a new iPhone or for a car, they just want to be able to give their children, their grandchildren a cup of clean water. Jesus said, "Whenever you do it for the least of these you do it for me."

Thank you! I'll see you next time on *Wednesdays in the Word*.