

1/29/18
Week 5: *Water for LIFE*
Randy Robison and Sheila Walsh
Allison Allen

[In the studio]

Randy: Hello and welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm Randy Robison.

Sheila: And I'm Sheila Walsh. One of the things I love about being here is I get to introduce to our audience some guests that maybe we haven't had on the show before. And I'm really thrilled about tonight because this beautiful woman is a friend of mine. I remember the very first time I saw her perform a dramatic piece and I was so profoundly moved by the depth of what she shared. Her name is Allison Allen. Her book is *Shine*. Will you please welcome her to *LIFE Today*?

Allison: Thank you. Thanks Sheila. Thank you, Randy.

Randy: Wonderful to have you.

Sheila: It's such a joy. When I was reading through your book I thought this is quite a commitment because you write dramatic pieces, you do them beautifully but that's a big work to sit down and write a book. Why did you decide at this time it was time to write?

Allison: Because I really felt like the Lord said it was time. It's kind of a culmination of a 25-year journey. I've spent so much of my life as an actor and so much of my life performing and being in front of people, mostly in the theatrical sense. And I realized there were so many places in my life that I wasn't a Matthew 5:16 woman. I didn't let my light so shine before men that they could see my good works and I would glorify my Father who was in heaven because I was too busy acting my way through life.

As I get to talk around the country I just find that there are lots of women who are doing the same thing where we're hiding in the shadows, we're hiding in the wings and Jesus has this incredible place of realness and luminescence for us, that he's inviting us to, but we've got to be brave enough to take that first step and join him on the god stage.

So it was a bit of a memoir but it is also a manual of how Jesus has healed me and invited me to

shine in a way that I actually never knew was possible and that has nothing to do with performing.

Randy: You mentioned the acting. Not to toot your own horn or anything but give people an idea of some of what you've done. You've done quite a bit of significant stage work.

Allison: Well, I always just say Jesus opened the door and I said yes; that's kind of the upshot of my life. But in the '70s when the musical *Godspell* swept the culture I was just riveted by the story; so much so that I actually believed Jesus lived next door to me in the farm house in Katy, Texas.

When we moved to North Carolina I just found myself involved in incredible magnet arts programs and had a really significant teacher who said, "Allison, I think you ought to audition for Carnegie Mellon." And I thought, not Carnegie Mellon because it was a super competitive acting school. I auditioned and against the odds, I got in. Then shortly after C.M.U. I got the call to go to New York and audition for the first revival of *Grease* in the mid '90s on Broadway. I wound up doing a role there every night, one role in the ensemble and then I had three leads that I covered. So I did *Grease* for about 650 performances, two full years.

Randy: On Broadway. So that's where you've been.

Sheila: Very impressive.

Allison: Yeah, I always joke that the hand jive comes back to me in my nightmares. [Laughter]

The Lord just took me on another incredible journey. I wound up getting to do drama at *Women of Faith* for three years and now I just do a combination of teaching and dramatic pieces. Wherever the Lord opens the door, I just walk through.

Randy: You've got the street cred when it comes to being on stage, when it comes to playing a part. So why is this very important to you that you convey it that we not act our way through life?

Allison: I just think that there was so much of my life that I was hiding in the lights of the world and I wasn't finding my value in the light of the world. There was some brokenness; I have huge chapters of brokenness in my own life and some bullying that happened here and there as I moved around. I'm not uncommon in that story I don't think.

But I believe in many ways, Randy, I was hiding on the stage. I thought well, they won't pick on that character and it was a place where I could excel. So it really was a slow and long work of

grace where Jesus said, "You know what? You can take off the character shoes," which is a common tool that we use as actors, "and you can take off that false character name, and you can actually show up with your woundedness and your weakness and you can believe that my goodness will ignite that place with my glory."

That was a scary prospect for a woman who had acted her way through life. I just think I'm not alone in that sense of performing. It was so good to me when Jesus said, "You don't have to perform for something that you already have. You are already accepted in the beloved and you don't have to act and sing and dance your way through life, spiritually speaking."

Sheila: In your book you tell a very vulnerable transparent story right at the beginning of where you're expected to be on stage and something happens. Tell us about that experience.

Allison: I was in Southern Cal and I was supposed to do a ministry piece and there were 1500 pastors and leaders that were gathered. I had written it, I had rehearsed it, I had done all the things I knew to do to be as ready as I could be. I don't know. It was probably about 20 minutes before the sound check I found myself in the parking lot hiding under a little scrubby bush talking to someone on the phone and going, "I can't do it. I simply cannot do it." My heart felt like it was about to explode in my chest and I just kept saying, "I can't do it. I can't do it." It was like it was on loop.

The voice on the other end said, "It's okay. You don't have to do this. This is a panic attack."

I had never experienced that. I had spent a lifetime on stage and here it was the marriage of ministry and craft that I love so much. People have asked me, Sheila, like, "What was that panic attack about?" I think in many ways there was a vulnerability to not having all the props and the masks. It was a much more real type of piece and I was doing it for people, that body of Christ folks and I think my body was telling the truth on me. Something I wasn't even aware of yet that I couldn't even articulate. That I was terrified of not being perfect, I was terrified of not executing, and I was really terrified that if I stepped out for some reason my weakness would be the biggest presence in the room.

I've come to treasure that Jesus says, "I'll make more use of your consecrated weaknesses than I will make of your so called perfected strengths." That's really my heart message and the message of *Shine*.

Sheila: You talk about something in the book that I think most women identify with. You say that even though you would say, "Hi, my name is Allison," inside your own heart and mind that is not what you called yourself.

Allison: Not at all. Not at all. I think because of the brokenness and what I experienced, the only way that my young heart could make sense of all that was to assume that the problem was with me. And looking back on it, what I realized I had done is I'd given myself this false character name. And though I would have introduced myself as Allison, even at pinnacle experiences of Broadway, *Women of Faith*, Carnegie Mellon, I would have said, "Hey, I'm Allison Allen or I'm Allison Metcalf Allen." What I believed of myself on any given day at any given moment was that I was rejected. I lived my life -- and this is what I'm so passionate about because I know I'm not alone in this. I've talked to too many women who feel this way -- even as a believer who had walked with Jesus the Christ for 30 years I still believed that I was rejected and rejectable. So I lived life either trying to disprove being rejectable, which meant achievement; right? And checking off the list and doing all the things and performing. Or oddly, it meant affirming the false name which was look, I'll reject you before you reject me. I'll disappear before you have a chance to reject me.

And one of the sweetest things, one of the sweetest healings in my life is that Jesus began to knock on the door of my heart and he began to say, "Can we please deal with that name that's on that spiritual lapel? That you're not rejected, you're accepted in the beloved."

I do this little exercise on the road with women where I have them write down kind of false names and we exchange them for the biblical names that reflect God's nature and his character in his word. I'm always astounded that about 80% - 90% of all women, regardless of age or length of time walking with Christ respond. It seems like many of us carry these false names.

I did this event at a Texas church and as I was getting ready to fly one of the event planners came up to me and they said, "Allison, this gentleman would love to speak with you just for a second."

So I walked over to him and his lips were quivering and his eyes were filled with tears and I tried to engage him in conversation and he couldn't seem to speak. I happened to glance down -- it gets me -- I happened to glance down and clasped in his hand was a name tag and he had secretly taken place in that exchange, the great exchange that I usually lead women in. And he was holding on to that name tag and somehow I understood, I think by the Holy Spirit that that false name had become such a part of him that he simply could not let go of it.

I looked at him and I said, "Sir, can I have it? Do you trust me with it?"

And he opened his hand and scrawled in pencil were two words: "Convicted felon."

I said, "Hold on right there." I grabbed a blank name tag. I got a Sharpie and I wrote, "Forgiven."

Truncating the story, I have since spoken to that man. He works at a church and he said to me,

"Share my story anonymously anywhere you can." He said, "But every day that I get dressed, I have that 'forgiven' on my closet door and I realize that I'm not the convicted felon, I'm forgiven."

I think that, to me, that is what Jesus wants to do and it's what he has done for me.

Sheila: That's huge! Wow!

Randy: Two questions. Why do you think, especially believers because you mentioned you were a believer for a long time, why do you think we hold on to these names that we know up here aren't true but have a hard time down here believing. And what is it that breaks it finally?

Allison: Well, for me, healing, I always joke or say that healing is like the most beautiful layers of an onion. My healing journey with Jesus, he never chopped the whole thing in half because I think I would have died. There were so many things that were hidden so deeply within me.

So for me, Randy, it's just been progressive. What's odd about the rejected, which Sheila knew me at *Women of Faith* and I would get up there and do my stuff, but really, I was constantly struggling with this false name and kind of walking alongside myself. I was playing the role of the Holy Spirit trying to go, "Execute. Do it perfectly. Be funny. Now be serious." Right? So for me, I don't know that I have a one, two, three answer but what I know Jesus is asking me to do is to keep bringing those very broken places and going, "Emmanuel, God, you are with me in this place. Can you take the next layer off?"

And the reason I do the name tag exchange is I think there is something powerful, maybe you've found this, in being physical, writing something out. Marilyn Meberg used to talk about that who is a wonderful Christian psychologist, a speaker. Love her! Love, love me some Marilyn!

Sheila: She'd give therapy on the road or we'd be a lot worse.

Allison: That's right! We'd get in the bus and say, "Help me! Help me, Marilyn!" But she would talk about the power of doing something that was action. So that's when the Lord had me share, "Hey, can you just share to this group of women that you actually believe yourself to be rejected. And write it down and make the exchange."

When we're invited into those things, I don't know how God does it but somehow with each successive time the enemy loses his power and healing comes. So for me it's just been layer after layer after layer.

Sheila: I want to encourage wherever you're watching this from, if you're sitting at home or

you're watching this online or if you're in a hotel room, why don't you grab a piece of paper and write down the label of what you believe you are? And then my last question to Allison would be some of the names you can write as to who you actually are.

You tell this beautifully moving, powerfully poignant story about your mom when you discover that your mom has cancer and the kind of legacy that she left you, which was an unusual gift.

Allison: It was an unusual gift. As you said we got the news that Mama had pancreatic cancer and it was Stage 4 and so there wasn't a whole lot of hope for longevity. We prayed our guts out. We fasted. We called every prayer line and it became pretty quickly apparent that the Lord and His grace and his sovereignty was saying no to that healing on this side of the veil. He was going to heal her on the other side of the veil. So when that became apparent we just put her to bed and we tried to make time crawl. When someone has terminal cancer you just want time to slow down.

One of the things she loved was Josh Groban. She loved his music so I put on the V.H.S. tape just trying to help her with some of the pain that was racking her body. She didn't seem to be fully there, Sheila. She was kind of already singing with the angels, is the way I put it. It was like one foot was already in eternity. She asked me to turn it down. She took my hand and she said some words that I'll never forget. She said, "I could have done so much more with my life for Christ." I leapt in that moment to defend herself against herself. I was like, "No, Mom! No one was more generous. No one was more good. No one was more sacrificial for my brother and I."

But she seemed to be really relentless in giving me a gift that only mortality can deliver and that was she seemed to feel there were so many ways and places where she didn't step out and shine. That she stayed in the spiritual wings; that she hid. And then she through tears asked me to use my life for the healing of other people. So I think she was giving me an antidote to the lie that many of us as Christian women can believe, like it doesn't really matter...

Sheila: If I show up or not. Someone will do it.

Allison: Because when there are 10,000 people waiting in line... and Mama's words to me that day, I carry that like tattooed on my heart, like it matters. And when Jesus calls you to a role, when he calls you to shine, he knows there is something uniquely crafted about you and Christ in you, the hope of glory that is specifically suited to the glow of the moment.

So whenever I get, whenever I let fear win the day or whenever I feel like there is 100 women that can do it better, I go, "But if he has called, that's all that matters. I'm stepping out, weakness and all" believing that he will do something incredible with it.

Sheila: I discovered that is really irrelevant. There will always be people who can do things better than me. But if God says you, then you show up. What are some of the things that people could write that would be positive things to hold on to?

Allison: I always say that for every lie we believe there is a truth to be received. God's word has the antidote for the poison. So spit the poison out like you've encouraged people, get a piece of paper and often we will find people that fill it until there is no white space left. There are so many false names. But names like: Appointed, chosen, beloved, the head and not the tail, more than a conqueror, the apple of the eye, accepted in the beloved, on and on it goes. Just sit with that, maybe get a name tag and throw that old name tag in the trash can and maybe do like my friend and put that new name up on your closet so that when the enemy hits you or when life circumstances hit you because we're human and we wake up to another day where we're getting knocked down. We can go, you know what? God is healing me in that place. I'm not rejected. I'm accepted and I'm going to live out of the fact that God does not ever call me to the adventure of faith by calling me by that false name. He calls me by my true name.

Sheila: The thing that I think is amazing about your book is even though you've had this tremendous background in acting and wonderful opportunities, this really is a book for everybody because every single woman, every man thinks somebody could do this better. But if every single member, can you imagine if every single member of the body of Christ showed up every day, just showed up 100% believing.

Sammy Rodriguez is a friend of our ministry and said, "When a believer walks into the room the atmosphere should shift because of who lives in us." I love that! To me that's the message of your book.

Allison: I think as I get to talk to people around the country, it is like there's an invisible army. If we could just begin to dare to believe what God actually says, that he doesn't ask us to polish up our strengths and curate our strengths. He uses our strengths like he uses every bit of us but I found uniquely his power pressing on my life when I step out in weakness like Paul, and go, "This is what I have. If you can do something with this, come and do something with this." If we would start to believe that, I think not only the kingdom would exchange and the church would change I think the world would change because I think folks that are looking would look at broken people rising up and strength being pressed down into those broken places and go, "Look, there's got to be a present redeemer. There's got to be a real savior."

Sheila: Christ the hero of every story.

Allison: Absolutely! Amen! He is the hero, he is the dramatist, he is all of it.

Randy: Absolutely! And there is a chance for you to step out right now. You can shine. You can make a difference in someone's life for the sake of the gospel today. We want to show you how. Take a look at 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 what it is like to bury your ten-year old son? And then to have to bury your six-year-old daughter? And then to be carrying a third child? I remember when I was pregnant with Christian, the things I was concerned about weren't is he going to live because the only water we have is going to give him a disease.

I've walked with these moms and these children down to these waterholes and the water is filthy,

disease-ridden. But what's their choice? They have no choice -- except they do. If we get into their village and if we drill a water well and fresh water comes to that village, it literally changes. The whole village goes from death to life.

And they're not asking for a lot. All they're asking for is clean drinking water for their children. As long as the body of Christ is on this planet, this should not be happening because you and I can do something. If it was nothing we could do then we would fall on our knees in despair. But there is so much we can do and that's why I'm so honored to be part of this ministry because I've seen the difference, Randy it makes when we go into that village and we dig a water well and suddenly, for the first time in their lives fresh living water.

Randy: Oh what a beautiful sight! And you know, Sheila, I've got four children. If any of my children faced anything like that, I would give anything. I would give everything to save them from the waterborne diseases, just to give them some clean water.

We're not asking you for everything. We're asking you for a little bit, just partner with us. There's great things we can do. Did you know that \$48 will provide clean water to ten people for a lifetime? The number is almost hard to believe but when you get into the program that we've been there for years doing this and we've drilled many, many wells around the world so we've done this, we've got things in place. So your gift today goes a long, long way.

Our goal for this New Year, for 2018 is to drill 400 wells in 15 countries. Do you know how many lives that will not just change but save? You can be a part of something huge this year.

Will you go to the phone? Will you go online? Will you join us? Many of you can give far more than \$48, \$72, \$144 perhaps. Some of you can give the \$4800 that it takes to drill an entire well. If you can do that, just pray, Lord, is that what you want me to do? And just do it. Step out. Do something big. We can make a big, big difference. Sheila, we can change the world.

Sheila: And it's why we call it Water for LIFE because you know when we put one of those wells in, it lasts for 70 years. So literally, for the life of everybody in that village, you've given them life. So please, go to your phone, make the best gift possible. If we do it together, it could change the world.

[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]

Ralph: We don't want any more children to die so unnecessarily because the solution to contaminated water is a cup of clean water. How do we give these children a cup of clean water? By coming in here in this village and drilling a deep well that will give them beautiful clean water that will last a lifetime.

And then also, they will eventually learn the beautiful story of the water of life. So thank you for giving. Your gift will not only help their lives today but help them for a lifetime and through all eternity.

Group of Children: Thank you for clean water!

[Cheers & Applause]

[End of segment]

[In the studio]

Sheila: Thank you so much. If the lines are busy, please keep trying. For any gift at all you give, we will be honored to send you my friend Allison Allen's book, *Shine: Stepping into the role you were made for*.

Thank you, friend! It's been awesome having you here.

Allison: Thank you so much, guys. It's been a joy.

Randy: Such a blessing! Thank you for watching. Join us every day for *LIFE Today*. And do what you can. We want to drill lots of wells. Thank you for being with us.