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Week five: *Water for LIFE*
Randy Robison and Sheila Walsh
Lee and Leslie Strobel

[In the Studio]

Randy: Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm Randy Robison. Sheila Walsh is with me and boy, we are excited today because we have Leslie and Lee Strobel. And for those of who you may not know, Lee was an award-winning journalist with the Chicago Tribune, and he was also an atheist, when his wife became a Christian. He, being the good journalist he was, decided he was going to do a little research on this guy Jesus Christ and prove the resurrection was false. And as a result he became a Christian. Would you welcome Les and Lee. Good to be here.

Lee: Thank you.

Randy: There is one other thing before we get into *The Case for Christ* and some other issues with that. You guys are what? You're friends or not friends?

Sheila: I refer to Lee on Twitter as the best friend I've never met. Because we've texted back and you've let me know when you had a book out and different things but we've never actually met.

Lee: You'd met Leslie but we'd never met. So we pray for each other and we had connected. So six years ago when I was very ill and almost died, I had to have an M.R.I. I was really nervous because I was very ill. So I tweeted directly to Sheila and I said, "Would you pray for me?" She said, "Yes." So they're putting me into this machine and it's very loud so they give you earphones and they switch it to some random radio station and then they slide you into this machine. And as soon as they slid me in the machine a song from Sheila Walsh came on. It was like God saying, "Sheila's got you covered." So any friend of Sheila's is a friend of mine.

[Laughter]

Sheila: That's so sweet.

Lee: Isn't that amazing?

Randy: It is amazing. What's funny is like there is a level of closeness spiritually in here and

you're just now today meeting her.

Lee: We just met for the first time today. And that was so important to me because here I am, I'm literally in there and it was as if God was saying, "I'm hearing the prayers for you and I just want this song to minister to you." He healed me of my illness and everything is fine.

Sheila: It kind of speaks to the next book you're actually writing, *The Case for Miracles* but we'll tell you about that at the end. But did you have any idea when this book, because I remember the first time I read *The Case for Christ*. It had such a huge impact. Not only that, I felt it gave me -- it was like an apologetic for ordinary people who wanted to share their faith. But did you have any idea it was going to become this phenomenal movie success?

Lee: No! Because it was published originally... we've updated it recently but it was published originally in 1998 and back then the wrap was that books on apologetics, which is evidence for the faith don't sell. I was shocked when the publisher said they wanted to publish it, honestly. In fact, one of the scholars I interviewed said to me privately, "Nobody is going to read your book."

I said, "Why not?"

He said, "Well, young people especially don't care about evidence for the faith."

I went home to Leslie and I said, "Nobody is going to read my book. I'm wasting my time!"

Randy: And how many has this sold today?

Lee: Over 10 million. But the interesting thing was it was young people 16-24 year olds who came to faith obviously through the book. Young people are interested. They want to know. Does this make sense? Is it credible? Does it add up? Is it rational? Fortunately for us it is.

Randy: He's such a strong voice for the faith but he wasn't always that way.

Sheila: Well, we have a clip from the movie if you haven't seen *The Case for Christ* then you really must. It is a phenomenal movie. This is one of the most pivotal moments in the film. Take a look at this.

[Movie Trailer]

>> So I went to church and I don't know exactly how it happened but I felt something. And so I

went again tonight. And I know this is going to be weird to hear because it is weird to say but I prayed.

>> So what are you telling me Les?

>> I'm saying that I talked to Jesus. I told him I want him in my life.

>> You what? Why?

>> Hey! Stay with me. Hon! This is a good thing!

>> What did this Alfie woman say to you?

>> It was my decision. Okay?

>> I can't accept it.

>> You don't get to accept it. I'm not asking. I'm telling you what happened. You're not hearing me.

>> Shh! Shh! Shh!

>> Okay. Listen. Hon! It's me. This is me talking to you. It's me. Honestly, this is something that I think I've been thinking for a long time and I just haven't been able to say anything because of who you are.

>> Are you kidding me, Les?

>> I know this is a lot.

>> A lot? A lot? You drop this on me. What does that even mean?

>> I don't know what it means but I know it is a good thing for me -- for us.

>> No! Okay. This is not us. Whatever this is, okay, it is not us.

[End of Trailer]

[In the studio]

Sheila: Wow! That's a pretty powerful moment in the film. But Leslie, what was that actually like for you in reality?

Leslie: Well, that portrays it really well. It was walking on eggshells in your own home all the time. Waking up not knowing what the mood would be for that day and just praying that God would give me the grace to get through it.

Sheila: Were there ever moments when you just thought, the cost is too great here because it is going to cost me my marriage?

Leslie: No. Because what I was feeling was beyond anything I'd ever experienced. My relationship with Jesus Christ was so life-changing. How do you describe it? I wanted to share it with Lee and I wanted him to have that. It was just figuring out how to make him understand that he needed it.

Randy: I think it is interesting that you said, "No, this was not cost you your marriage." That's not what you were thinking; is it?

Lee: Well, when this happened in this scene as she says it is pretty accurate, the first word that went through my mind was divorce. I was a not just an atheist, I was a narcissist, I was a drunk, I was an immoral-living, self-absorbed atheist. I didn't want Leslie changing. I wanted the old Leslie back. This was bait and switch. I didn't sign up for this. The first word that went through my mind was divorce.

In fact, I went outside, you saw me leave at the end of that scene and I was going to mow the lawn and she had just planted this beautiful flower garden and I mowed it down. **[Laughter]** Passive aggressive.

Sheila: So what shifted from that to okay, I'm going to prove to you that this is not true.

Lee: There were a lot of things that Leslie did that were attractive and winsome in this. She made some mistakes which she admits, putting tracts in my socks.

Leslie: Writing on the mirror.

Lee: But she also did a lot right. She loved me even though I was obnoxious. She prayed for me every day even though I didn't know it at the time but that made a huge difference. So I found that attractive but at the same time I wanted to rescue her from this cult that she had gotten involved in. So I was kind of in a push and pull sort of thing.

When finally she invited me to church and I said I'm going to go because my hope was to get her out of this cult. And I went and I heard the gospel for the first time. That's when I said okay, I don't believe it but if it is true it has huge implications for my life. So that's when I decided to take my journalism training and legal training and systematically investigate the resurrection because that's a linchpin in the Christian faith.

Randy: That is again, while we've got *The Case for Christ*, which is really one of those Hallmark books, if you're looking for something to build your own faith, if you're looking for something to share your faith, *The Case for Christ* is definitely one you need to read.

But this dynamic of what's going on between the two of you when she has accepted Christ, you are full out rejecting him. Not only is the topic of a book you've written called *Spiritual Mismatch* but it is a dynamic that unfortunately, we see in marriages and parents and children, other family members, friends, even coworkers. Help us get through the situation where we want to share our faith. Someone is maybe not receptive or even hostile. How is the best way, from your experience, how is the best way to go about that?

Lee: I think especially in a mismatched marriage where you have a husband and wife or one's a skeptic or maybe sort of a spiritual neutral and the other one is growing spiritually or whatever, you have this disparity; there is so much conflict that comes into it. The turmoil in a marriage is so deep and the reasons are, I can speak from the atheist and the non-believer's perspective, I was jealous of Jesus because now, all of the sudden who is this man who she is looking up to and worshipping? I thought I was the man in her life.

Randy: You didn't believe he was real but yet there was a jealousy. That's very interesting.

Lee: And then there's something subtle that happens. The more she pursued a life of holiness, the more she pursued a life of following Christ and biblical values, the more it was like she was holding up a mirror. I was seeing my life in contrast to hers and it was highlighting the corrosion of sin in my soul. So she wasn't being judgmental toward me, I was just seeing this in contrast and it made me mad because I thought of myself as a great guy. And yet the truth was I was corrupted and corroded by sin. So those kind of emotions.

And then I was afraid she was going to spill secrets about me in her prayer groups. Pray for my husband! He was drunk again last night. I didn't know; what if she turned the kids against me? What if it became mom and the kids against dad? Are they not going to respect me as their father because poor dad is not a Christian? So there are all these things that go on.

And then she of course, is experiencing her own emotions. But I think the key from my

perspective, what you did, you built on three relationships and that's what made all the difference to me.

Leslie: Well, for me personally, it was building my relationship with God because I needed him every day in the guiding of the spirit just to help me navigate my life with him. He'd come home from work, I had no idea what it was going to be like. So Christ would just help me, calm my spirit and pursue loving him in a way that would keep things calm and happy in the home.

The other thing I would do is just build my relationship with him because we got married for a reason, we loved each other. I wanted the marriage to work. I wanted us to still be able to have a life together. So I tried to not allow the spiritual side to break everything apart but build on the things we like to do which is to go out and have good weekend trips. And even though it meant not going to church, I knew that this was more important to him so I would just let that go.

Building a relationship with my mentor, in the movie her name is Alfie, in real life her name was Linda. She was there to help me see that the tracts in the socks was not the way to go but prayer was probably more important and loving Lee, even though he wasn't particularly lovable. But she always reminded me, Leslie, now you have the Holy Spirit in you. You have a greater vision of what is going on and Lee is only looking through a very narrow window here. He doesn't understand the big picture, you do. So that helped me to see that that's right. I understand that there is a whole spiritual realm here he doesn't understand. And so God's given me that ability to love him despite myself because the old Leslie would have just dug in her heels and gotten into a fight with him. Now I knew how to calm the waters and God would just help me through those things.

Randy: It is interesting that he felt threatened; right -- - threatened to the exposed, to lose his wife, kids, whatever. Did you ever have any idea that you were a threat to him in a sense?

Leslie: No. No.

Randy: Because I would never think that naturally. That my Christian witness to whether it is spouse, which fortunately, I don't have to deal with that or children but to someone that I know, neighbor, friend, coworker, I would never have thought that I'm a threat to them potentially. But that's how you felt. I get it now.

Lee: I did. Absolutely. The turmoil that can happen in a marriage relationship but also in a father/child relationship, parents with parents who are not believers. The thing that people know my story generally, that I did all this investigative work, I looked at the evidence for the resurrection, for the execution of Jesus, the empty tomb, the early accounts, the eyewitnesses and so forth. But what they don't know is the other side of the story which is I think the key to

everything which was Leslie praying. The verse that her mentor gave her...

Leslie: Is Ezekiel 36:26 that says, "Moreover I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you. I will take your stony heart of sin and give you a heart of flesh." I just prayed that every day once I heard that verse. And I had my prayer group praying it. I just believe God used that.

Sheila: That's powerful, Leslie. I know the number of women in our audience and the number of women I talk to every weekend who feel very hopeless. But I think when we remember that the power of prayer and that you're aligning yourself with God's will.

Leslie: That's right. And his word and how powerful his word is. Lee did that investigation but I believe that maybe what was real?

Lee: What was real and what was possible? Was it prayer or was it the apologetics? Yeah. I'm going with Leslie.

Randy: Well, he obviously had a hand in both of it. Here's one thing I want to ask you because you talk about women that -- and it can apply to men as well who may be looking for that loved one to have that salvation experience and that massive life change and they just can't see it now. It's just too hard to see. When he was describing himself as narcissistic, a drunk, all these things, I'm thinking, I just can't see that. What difference do you see in him, have you seen in him since that day?

Leslie: Oh my goodness! Well, he doesn't kick holes in the walls anymore. There's a lot of changes and of course, they weren't immediate, they were over time. But when we got married we were both of the same mind-set. We were both living a little rougher than we are now, obviously. So once I became a believer the way he was living was also kind of making me feel bad for how I had been living. So it caused me to pray even more for him. I just didn't want him to stay in that kind of situation.

Lee: One of the things that happened after I came to faith and she had prayed that prayer for two years and how God answered that prayer, because I remember it was November the 8th of 1981 at 2:00 in the afternoon when I came to faith, and over time, as I was baptized, as I became part of a vibrant church, as I learned to read the Bible with fresh eyes, I learned to pray, as I learned to worship, God began to answer her prayers and my values and character and morality and worldview all began to change.

So much so that our daughter, Allison, who was five years old when I came to faith, who had only known a dad who was absent and angry and kicking holes in walls because I was full of

rage, that's all she knew for the first five years of her life. But she started to watch, starting on that day that I came to faith. Something's different with dad, something's changing with dad, something's new with dad. And she watched for about four or five months and then one day she came up to Leslie and said, "I want God to do for me what he's done for daddy." So she saw the difference and she came to faith and now she is married to a seminary graduate and she is a novelist who writes and has published fiction that all have the gospel in them. And then our son saw the difference in his sister then and his mom and his dad and he is now a professor of theology. So God's rescued our family. I hate to think where we would have ended up otherwise.

Sheila: What I love about everything you write is it actually takes me back to the very tenets of our faith, that prayer works, that things like that make a difference. I'm thinking some parents who like my son is a junior at Texas A&M and some of his friends who came from Christian homes, went to private Christian schools are coming home and saying, "You know what? I'm not interested in faith anymore." What do you say to parents?

Lee: I get that a lot as well. A couple of things I say, "First of all don't panic." The reason is because kids are coming back from school saying, "I'm now an atheist." And parents freak out. Well, when I was an atheist it was an embarrassing thing. Nobody talked about it because... nowadays it's socially not only acceptable but laudable to be an atheist. It is a pride thing. I'm too smart for all that stuff. So people who call themselves atheists are probably not really, they're probably just spiritually confused. So I say don't panic, number one. Number two, keep praying for them. Keep praying for opportunities to talk to them about spiritual matters and so forth.

I would say, "Hey, I was watching TV the other day and there was a guy on there and he was an atheist and full of skepticism but you know what? He spent two years of his life checking out the evidence and became convinced that it's true. Would you be interested in reading that book?" And see if they will read it.

Or there are debates that have taken place that are on YouTube between Christians and atheists that they can watch and that might be an easy thing to invite a young person to watch together.

Sheila: We're running out of time. You have a new book and I just want to get that out because I want them to know of something to look forward to. It's amazing. *The Case for Miracles*.

Lee: *The Case for Miracles*. God's involvement, his divine intervention in life today; that our God is still active, he is still in the miracle business, he is still not only changing lives, he is changing circumstances, healing people. I spent two years of my life researching this book. There are stories in there of God's amazing miracles that he's documented medically. So I'm thrilled with that.

Randy: Knowing your writing style, I will definitely look forward to that, enjoy that. But right now there is a way that you can be a miracle. You can document yourself as you're a miracle. You can truly make a difference in someone's life. Watch this.

[On the mission field]

[Crying]

Jeanne: Give him hope. Give him hope in his heart, Lord. Restore his hope.

Announcer: These families may live on opposite sides of the world but they share a common pain, the pain of losing a child because they had no other choice but to drink from contaminated water sources.

Open Captions: The first child I lost was my son that died on my back when I was taking him to the clinic. And my second child died here because I could not get her to the clinic. Their symptoms were so bad their skin was peeling and their hair was falling out.

Announcer: As long as mothers like Fedez have no other choice but to collect water from contaminated sources, this common pain, this death cycle will continue.

Open Captions: My other children are scared about the dirty water, but they have no other choice. They pray they will have clean water soon and not die like their brother and sister did.

Announcer: But there is a solution that *LIFE Outreach* has provided to nearly 6,000 villages where there is no longer death but life. It is pure, clean drinking water flowing from a well that love has drilled. This is what we want to do for Fedez, her children, and mothers like her around the world.

[End of clip]

[In the studio]

Sheila: There's so much in that that I don't even know what to say about. As a mother, carrying your child on your back to try and get her to a clinic in time. Notice there is no car, there is no transportation; literally, a mom, weak herself and probably some kind of disease carrying her child on her back. But by the time she gets to the clinic that child is dead. And with the second child, she didn't even get the chance to even try and start out to the clinic because that child died

so quickly.

I've been in their clinics and watched children with literally their skin peeling off. At one point I asked, "Why is their hair red?" And it was like because there's no protein in their system. It was just heartbreaking.

As a mom, I can't even imagine what that's like. How do you even go to sleep at night when you don't know what tomorrow is going to bring for your child?

But the amazing thing and why I'm so grateful, so profoundly grateful to be part of this ministry is that we work with people in these countries and we've worked out this system of how we can go into a village, we can for \$4800, we can drill a well; that well will last 70 years. It literally is Water for LIFE. You saw the difference. When you see their faces the first time that clean water shoots up in the air, they've never seen clean water in their lives. This is a desperate situation but it can be changed if you and I decide we're on the earth at this point; it is not an accident! And it is our privilege -- it is not something we have to do, because we're believers -- it's a holy privilege that we get to reach out and say, "You know what? We're going to change this."

Really, it doesn't take that much, Randy. Even \$48 will give clean water.

Randy: Yeah, for ten people for life! It's almost ridiculous how simple it is to solve this problem. I've got to tell you, if we didn't have a solution for this, it would be very hard to cope with because Sheila, you've been there, I've been there, I have stood over graves of children because they had one water source and it was polluted. It's tough stuff. It's rough out there.

But the good news is it is a very easy problem to fix and you're the solution. That's why we want to invite you to join us in giving Water for LIFE -- for a lifetime in most cases and definitely for a better life in all cases -- a healthier life. And we always give it in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; so you're not just giving water that they'll drink and they'll be well but you're helping to share that living water who can make them well for eternity. So go to the phones, go online, give the best gift you can and join us as we share Water for LIFE around 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]

[In the studio]

Sheila: Thank you so much. If the phones are busy keep calling. It makes a difference.

If you haven't seen the movie, *The Case for Christ* you need to. If you have a friend who is struggling with her faith or maybe antagonistic, *The Case for Christ* is brilliant.

Randy: One of the best! And if you are struggling today with someone close to you who is a *Spiritual Mismatch*, when you support the outreach today, the water wells, just request Les and Lee's book, *Spiritual Mismatch*; we'd love to send it to you as you support the outreaches of life. Would you thank Les and Lee Strobel for being here?

[Applause]

Sheila: Thank you so much for being with us. Remember, if you need help, we're here for you too. God bless you. We'll see you next time on *LIFE Today*.