

4/4/18

Week 14: Mission: Rescue Life

Wednesdays in the Word

Sheila Walsh: What do we do with our pain?

Sheila: Hello! I'm Sheila Walsh. Welcome to *Wednesdays in the Word*. I cannot tell you how much it means to me over the last few weeks and months as I've traveled around the country, whether it's been up in Winnipeg in Canada or no matter where it's been that I've met so many of you who say, "I never miss a show" or "I set my D.V.R." And that really means the world to me. I love the fact that we have can have this time together and talk about real honest life.

I think that's one of the things that I'm so moved by when I read through the gospels, the way Christ talked to his closest friends about what really mattered. So one of the things I wanted us to look at today is what do we do with our pain? Because sometimes when we go through something hard and we don't know what to do, we hold ourselves back a little bit sometimes from telling God exactly how we feel and I don't believe that's what God wants. I believe that God invites us to be transparent in our worst days just as much as in our good days when we want to worship.

I really saw that with my own son Christian when he was little. He was very, very close to William, his papa, that's Barry's dad. He lived with us for the last two years of his life and when he died, Christian was absolutely overwhelmed with sadness. He did what I expected him to do at first, he cried for days. But then I watched him one day as he did something that was completely out of character. We had this humongous cat called Lillie that we had adopted from the Humane Society and Christian walked past Lilly and he pushed her off the sofa. So I said to him a little bit later, how about you and I go for a little walk? So we walked together down to the lake where we used to live in Tennessee.

After a while we just sat down. I asked my darling boy a question. I asked him, "Christian, are you angry?"

He said, "Yes."

I asked him, "Why are you angry?"

He said, "Mom, you told me that God answers prayers. And that night when you and I followed

the ambulance with papa to the hospital, I prayed, God please don't take my papa but he did. So I'm not talking to him anymore."

[Sighs] I totally got that. It was then that I told my son what I wished someone had told me when I was a child, it's okay to be angry. It's right to be angry. There are situations God is big enough and he loves you enough to handle everything you're feeling. I told my son he could tell God everything and God would never ever leave him.

I also did something practical which might be a good idea if you've got boys. I bought Christian boxing gloves and a punching bag. I told him whenever something happens in life where he is so angry and he doesn't know what to do with it, he could hit that thing until there was nothing left in him.

But I got something from his room. He had this almost life-size stuffed lion what we bought for him when he was just a little boy. I told him, "Christian, when you have poured out everything that's inside of you, when you've told God you're angry and you don't understand and you're disappointed, then you can bury your face in the mane of the lion of Judah."

Well, it might have been great advice to my son, but I have to tell you it took me a long, long time to know how to do that myself. I could think of many times when I've stood on a platform and encouraged other people, maybe you to be brave and to be true, to pour out the contents of your heart to your Father, and yet honestly, inside I've struggled with my own feelings.

But I can't tell you how often I've turned to the Psalmist David for help. I love the way David wrote. The authentic cries, the praise, the questions of a shepherd boy and then a king, have honestly helped give me words to what's been locked inside -- even one of the most simple ones. Psalm 30 verse ten says this: Hear me, Lord, and have mercy on me. Help me, O Lord.

Something that I love about that, it is so intimate. But David's words "Help me, Lord." Those three little words can become a powerful prayer: Help me, Lord.

Whatever you're facing right now you can borrow those words from David. Your need, your honest prayers, they will not leave you alone. I believe it will actually draw you closer to the Father's heart.

Confession has become a daily practice for me. Each morning I begin with one of my favorite verses. It is Psalm 143 verse eight and it says this -- this is the N.I.V. I think: Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love for I've placed my trust in you. Show me the way I should go for to you I entrust my life.

So I begin with thanking God, gratitude -- thanking him for his love that welcomes me, that welcomes you to come as we honestly are. And then I confess what I know to be true no matter what might feel true. Honestly, I don't always feel loved by God but I know that I am loved by God. I don't always feel God's presence close but I know that he is with me. So that's what I do every day. I'll confess my weakness and my fear, I bring everything I know to be true about me into the open arms of my Father God.

This journey that I've been on for the last couple of years to really learn what it means to live an honest transparent life, but not just that, one where the spiritual disciplines of confession and prayer are buried deep into my heart, it's given me such a hunger to return to the stories I've known since I was a little girl growing up in Scotland. I read them again but this time I think I read them with fresh eyes unstopped ears, if you will.

If you're in a place right now of loss or suffering you might want to sit with a man named Job for awhile. You probably know the basics of his story. Job was a hero of the faith. Think about it. He is the kind of man you would want your daughter to marry. We read that he was blameless, a man of complete integrity. He feared God and stayed away from evil. You cannot get a higher commendation than that from God.

Well, despite that, God allowed Satan to ruin Job's life. We don't understand why but we know it is true. His suffering was absolutely devastating. Basically, he lost everything. He lost every one of his children. They were altogether having a meal in one of their homes, tornado out of nowhere and every single one of his children gone in a moment. He lost his livelihood. He lost all of his stock. Everything! He was a wealthy man. He lost it all. And finally, he lost his own health. That kind of acute suffering took him to the very edge of sanity.

His depression was so dark that this is how he prayed. Now remember, this is the man that we read was a man of complete integrity, who feared God, but once this suffering had assaulted his life this was his prayer: *"Obliterate the day I was born. Blank out the night I was conceived! Let it be a black hole in space. May God above forget it ever happened. Erase it from the books. May the day of my birth be buried in deep darkness, shrouded by the fog, swallowed by the night."*

That is the darkest depression that you can ever imagine, to actually wish that God forgot that you were ever born.

Well, as his story gets worse and worse, I find myself even though I knew the story, I found myself praying, God, please send this poor man some help. Let his friends gather around him and carry him because he can't even stand anymore. And then you meet his friends and they might remind you of some of the comments you read these days on Facebook, not really helpful.

Eliphaz, the Temanite, he's his first friend who shows up and this is what he says to Job, "Stop and think. Do the innocent die? When are the upright being destroyed?"

In other words, he is saying, "Listen. You brought this on yourself, Job." Eliphaz's logic reads something like this: God's good, you're suffering, therefore you must have done something wrong. That kind of theology is a theology that leaves no room for mystery. It said this kind of theology is punishing.

Well, next comes Job's friend number two, Bildad the Shuhite. Knowing that Job's children have all been killed in a tragic accident he brings this attempt at comfort. "Does God twist justice? Does the Almighty twist what is right? Your children must have sinned against him so their punishment was well deserved."

It's breathtaking. These words are the ancient equivalent of telling parents who have just lost their children in a car wreck, "Well, they shouldn't have been drinking." Well, maybe they shouldn't but what kind of comfort is that? That is the most cruel kind of thing to say to a parent who just lost their children.

Well, the words from Job's third friend are no kinder. His name is Zophar. He said, "Don't you realize that from the very beginning of time, ever since people were first placed on the earth, the triumph of the wicked has been short lived?" The implication is clear, Job's family and Job himself must have been wicked.

As I read through his story I mean it is hard not to get furious with these self-righteous friends whose words were many and whose comfort was nonexistent.

My friend, Barbara Johnson used to say, "When pain is the freshest words should be the fewest."

But these friends felt compelled to explain God and suffering and pain and tie everything up with a nice little faith bow. And even as I read the story, even as the anger inside of me rose, I wondered how many times in the past -- I wonder how many times I've done the same thing? How many times have I just tried to slap a scriptural Band-Aid on an open wound?

Job's friends determine that if he's suffering it must have been caused by something he's done, something his children have done, some hidden sin in his past. And back and forth they go, and they argue with this devastated man. But Job, he cries out against God *"For he attacked me with a storm and repeatedly wounds me without cause. He will not let me catch my breath but fills me instead with bitter sorrows."*

The last few chapters of the book of Job are staggering. Job is gut level honest with God. He expresses rage and terror, peppered by just the briefest moments of faith and hope. Many people quote Job as saying, "I know that my redeemer lives." And that is in there but the vast majority of the text was Job crying out in pain.

How did God respond to that level of authentic confession? You know what he did? He responded by giving Job his very presence. God reveals himself to Job. He doesn't actually answer any of Job's questions but instead he gives him a gift that's far more precious than answers. He gives Job himself. It's like he pulls back the curtain and shows Job, there is a lot more going on than he could even begin to wrap his mind or his broken heart around. God reveals himself in greater depth and gives this broken man his very presence.

Was God offended by the raw outpouring of a broken heart? Far from it. The only ones God was angry with were the friends who tried to shut him up. This is what scripture says: *"After the Lord had finished speaking to Job, he said to Eliphaz the Temanite, 'I'm angry with you and your two friends for you have not spoken accurately about me as my servant Job has.'"*

Wow! That's a game changer right there! For you have not spoken accurately about me as my servant Job has? I mean think of it. Job was furious! He was bitter. He was broken. He hated his life. He prayed to die. And the raw authentic bile that poured out of his soul invited the very presence of God. Job spoke truth. Is not all human life a struggle? In fact, every time Job spoke up his friends tried to silence him, but he cried out even louder. And it was that truth that invited the love and presence of a tender God.

There is something so important here. Raw, honest pain offered to God brings us closer to his heart. God received everything Job said. He welcomed the brutal, real agony of one who believed God was big enough to hear him out and not silence him into shame and hiding. The truth, speaking our honest and raw pain draws God's presence.

We can actually see this in the life of Jesus too. Mark's gospel, if you read it you can tell there is a definite rhythm to it. If you read it straight through you can feel the pace picking up as Christ finally sets his face toward Jerusalem and the cross. It almost feels like there is a clock ticking.

Well, on the way to Calvary Jesus tries once more to prepare his closest friends for what is just ahead. Listen to what he says: *"We're going up to Jerusalem where the son of man will be betrayed to the leading priests and the teachers of religious law. They will sentence him to die and hand him over to the Romans."*

Jesus is focused, bracing for the betrayal and the agony that lies ahead. But suddenly, in the midst of this huge crowd following him, Christ hears a cry that rises from a blind beggar named

Bartimaeus, "Jesus son of David, have mercy on me!"

Well, the crowd was furious. They kept saying, "Be quiet!"

But he yelled even louder, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Jesus heard him and he said -- ignoring those who told the beggar to be quiet, he instructs them, "Bring Bartimaeus to me." Then he asks this blind man, "What do you want me to do for you?"

Bartimaeus responds, "I want to see."

And Jesus responds by healing Bartimaeus. I love the way that my friend Lisa Harper expresses the truth of this story: Jesus paused Easter to listen to one man. He was on his way to the cross, to the grave, to the resurrection but he stopped for one. Bartimaeus followed Jesus after that. He was at the cross. He was there after the resurrection and church history tells us that Bartimaeus became part of the early church.

Here's the deal. His relationship began by crying out his need even when everyone around him told him to be quiet. I don't know what you're facing right now but I do know this. Tell God the whole truth, pour it out. It will not alienate you from God rather it will bring you closer. And he hears our pain.

I had the privilege recently of taking a trip to Southeast Asia. I don't think I have seen in a long, long time such raw grief, such incredible pain residing in such little ones. I made a commitment to the children that I met there that I would bring their story back and I would let you see and then give you an opportunity to respond to the cries of those people saying, "Lord, help me!" Would you watch this?

On the mission field

Announcer: Trafficking -- it is an industry run by the most evil of opportunists; all just waiting for their chance to snatch up another weak and defenseless victim like Meech.

Open Captions: At night, I would sift through street trash to find things to sell. I could earn about \$1.50. If I didn't earn enough, my father wouldn't let me sleep inside.

One night, some gangsters attacked and raped me. I was left unconscious in a pile of garbage. Two men offered help, but they too raped me, and then sold me to a brothel. I screamed for help but no one came. I always cried so much it angered the customers. They would hit me and force themselves on me. If I didn't sleep with the customers the owner threatened to sell and traffic me

to another country. The room I was in was like a prison.

When I was 14 and a half I decided to try to escape. It was around 3:00 a.m. the brothel owner was away and the guard was asleep. My room was on the second floor so I tied clothes together as a rope and climbed out the window. When I got to the ground I climbed a fence and ran to a motor taxi to find my way home.

Announcer: The story of Meech's abduction and abuse is common. Her escape was not. Countless girls just like Meech remain enslaved and desperate for rescue.

End of clip

In the studio

James: And Jesus made it clear in his first real public announcement of the fulfillment of prophecy that was shared in Isaiah that he did come to bind up the brokenhearted but he made it very clear he came to set captives free.

She escaped but here's the thing you need to understand, she escaped, Betty to a place where she could be rescued and restored. That place, this is what I want you to hear now. I want you to take it as personal as you can. The place for girls like that to go to be restored is a place of love and it is provided by people like you. Destiny House, houses of love, we have a place called Joshua House, a place of love, all of these places, most of them, have been developed over the years by support from people like you to where we can take care of them. And we're still renting facilities where we have to because these missionaries and rescue workers have planted their life to literally set captives free and restore them and give them a future. So it's just a continuous outpouring of the love of God.

I want us to rescue far more. We've already with the missionaries request targeted 2500 in areas we know but here's what's happened. Viewers like you said, "We will match what's given." That means we can reach 5,000 with your help.

The average cost to reach, to rescue and to restore one person, one child, one person like that, is \$128 a year. Will you give that? It will be matched and you will have rescued two. Go get your bankcard, go get a check, make it to *LIFE* or take that bankcard and use it now. Dial the number there or go online, please do it right now because I mean the missionaries are waiting and we're right near the very end of this outreach for this time, this year.

Please make the gift God puts on your heart. If you could give \$1280 that rescues ten, I'm asking you to do that if you can. Betty and I have joyfully. And thank God, we've asked him to let us do

that and we find people everywhere praying, we can drill a water well, we can rescue ten. If you can do it, it will be doubled to 20 because of the love of God through others like you.

Please go get your card or your check, call the number or go online. We have some gifts to send you to say thank you but you're giving the greatest gift, you're giving life and freedom because of the love of God poured out through you. Thank you for doing it. Please don't be distracted. The opportunity too great, the need too great -- don't miss it.

Begin video clip

Announcer: Innocent children and young people longing to be loved and cared for are being abducted and sold at the hands of violent predators; their spirit and bodies broken under horrific emotional and physical abuse. Through Mission: Rescue Life you can reach out to warn children vulnerable to sex traffickers. You can help rescue those already enslaved. And you can help restore young lives and give them a future.

And now a generous opportunity of a \$320,000 matching gift means your gift of \$128 to help rescue a child will be matched to help two children. Your \$64 gift will be matched to help rescue one child from the horrors of human trafficking. And a \$32 Rescue gift will be doubled to \$64.

With your gift we'll send you *The Age of Promise*, Randy Robison reveals ten promises woven through all of scripture that will transform the way you view God, yourself, and others. With your gift of \$128 or more you'll receive "The Prayer is Powerful" wood plaque. This unique scripture art piece is printed on premium Birchwood, a beautiful reminder of the power of prayer.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1280, which will now help rescue 20 children and you may request the beautiful "Bridge of Faith" framed canvas print by Thomas Kinkade. Please call, write, or make your secure gift online today.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: I'll never forget that girl. The scene that you saw right at the beginning of that piece where -- that's where they're living. It's so hard. But her little house was destroyed by some flooding recently. So when she gets back from sleeping with three or four men a night, she literally has to just find a doorstep where she can try and catch some rest. [Sighs]

Did you see what was written on her shirt? "What is right?" Clearly what is happening to her is not right. I talked to so many girls and the thing that was horrifying to me was I did not talk to one girl who was over 14. Some of the girls we talked to were nine and ten and eleven.

And the thought of a young girl going out trying to make enough money to help her family; and thinking the kindness of someone, "Come in and have a meal. You look hungry." And then realizing the meal is drugged and waking up and being in a room with some stranger being forced to have sex. Then as she refuses, being beaten with electrical wire -- it is heartbreaking!

But the thing is that you and I can do something to stop this. I'm going to go back there soon and I cannot go back without doing something. The first night I got back to my hotel room and I literally lay on the hotel room floor and I just sobbed. I was so overwhelmed. At one point I felt the Lord say, "Sheila, dry your eyes and get up because we have work to do."

So that's why I want to invite you to join with me in that. Our whole program is to reach; we have to get to where these kids are before they're ever trafficked. To rescue -- to rescue those who are in trafficking situations, and to restore them. To bring them to a place where they can hear about the love of God, where they can heal, where they can be given a chance to discover they're more than a number, they're a child that's beloved by God.

Our prayer is we want to reach 5,000 children. We have some amazing partners and you may be watching who have said, "Listen. We want to put up a matching gift." So if you put up \$64 that will be matched to rescue one child. If you can put up \$128 that will be matched and you'll have the privilege of seeing two children rescued from trafficking. \$1280, high for some of you, but some of you can do that, that will be a matched to rescue 20 children.

I promised these children I will go back and tell their stories. But I'm asking, would you join with me? Sometimes it is hard for people to wrap their hearts and minds around this. It just seems like another world. It is but we're on this planet at this time for this purpose. You set the captives free.

So please, will you go to your phone? Will you call that number? Will you make the best gift possible? Skip a movie next weekend. There's nothing good on any way. Let's make a difference in the name of Jesus. Please, make your best gift possible. Thank you!

Begin video clip

Announcer: Innocent children and young people longing to be loved and cared for are being abducted and sold at the hands of violent predators; their spirit and bodies broken under horrific

emotional and physical abuse. Through Mission: Rescue Life you can reach out to warn children vulnerable to sex traffickers. You can help rescue those already enslaved. And you can help restore young lives and give them a future.

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End of clip

On the mission field:

Sheila: What I've seen here is the abject poverty that people are living in. So many young girls are forced into prostitution; they are trafficked because they are desperate. There is no money in the family. So often the father is a drunk. There is debt, and the only job they can get is at the mercy of a sex trafficker.

Will you go to your phone? Will you go online? Will you call that number and make the best gift possible so that we can reach, we can rescue, we can restore? Would you do it now?

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: Thank you so much. If the phones are busy, please continue to call. I was reading Isaiah 61 and this is what it says, talking about the sovereign Lord to come: *He has sent me to comfort the brokenhearted, to proclaim that captives will be released and prisoners will be freed.* That's Isaiah 61 verse two.

We have the privilege, the joy, the honor of partnering with Christ in this, to go to some of these -- I had the privilege of praying with two of those young girls as they accepted Christ as their savior. I told them, "Sometimes the most powerful prayer in the world is one word, the

name of Jesus." But let's get them out of there. Let's get their feet on solid ground, a future and a hope.

I'm Sheila Walsh. Thank you so much for joining me on *Wednesdays in the Word*.