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Week 18: Spring Mission Feeding

Wednesdays in the Word

Sheila Walsh

Lynette Ezell, Christy Haag, Diane Strack, Stephanie White

Sheila: Hi, I'm Sheila Walsh. Welcome to *Wednesdays in the Word*. We're doing something a little bit different. A few months ago I was invited to go to something at the White House which is clearly a huge honor. But I was really, really busy and I thought, Lord, I don't think I can fit that into my schedule. But I kept feeling compelled to go. So I moved a couple of things around and I flew up. I knew I would be meeting with four other women and we agreed that we would maybe have a late breakfast before we went to the thing.

And honestly, when I got there and met these women I thought, oh that's why I was there. I mean the meeting at the White House was fantastic but for me, the reason I was there was to meet these four amazing women. So I invited them in the middle of their crazy busy schedule to fly in here and to spend a couple of *Wednesdays in the Word* with us.

So I'm going to introduce you to them. First of all, we have Diane Strack. Then we have Lynette Ezell. We have Stephanie White, and we have Christy, is it Hag or Haag?

Christi: I hear hag, hog, but it is Haag. I'm Miss Hog all the time.

[Laughter]

Talk to me about that. Did you guys all know each other before we met on that particular day? And if you did, how were you connected?

Diane: Well, you know, I just wanted because I invited them --

Sheila: Because you were kind of the catalyst.

Diane: Yeah. And kind of the cool thing was that I'd been told to invite 20 women to the White House so I got this list and prayed, and 20 women. And then two days later I got a call that said, "You can only bring four but plus yourself." So I was like, that's great! Just lost 18 friends or however -- 16 friends." So I began to pray; and to really pray about it and ask the Lord who should I bring? And these five were who the Lord gave me.

I didn't even realize it until you invited us out here and I started putting everybody's bios together, we all -- I guess I did but not at that moment, we all do the same thing. We're all passionate for children, for families, for trafficking victims, for feeding. So we all sort of join your heart. And they are amazing women and I can't wait for you to hear all of their stories.

Sheila: Okay, so let me just -- Stephanie, you're the baby.

Stephanie: I am the baby.

[Laughter]

Sheila: But impressive. You're an adoption attorney. Tell me a little bit about what you do.

Stephanie: I actually do several different things with adoption as an attorney. I help people who are looking to adopt a child who maybe have gone through miscarriages or not able to have a child or maybe just want to open their home to another child. And so I connect them with a woman or maybe a family who it's not the right time to have a child. It's a really neat wonderful way to connect two families or two people who have experienced some type of loss. Because there are some loss that a family cannot have a child and there is a loss of a woman who maybe it wasn't the right time; and she is grieving too because she has to either place her child for adoption which is a hard thing to do. So I help to connect those two people.

And I also represent kids in the foster care system; kids who have gone through really tough situations and really tough lives. I get to meet with them and talk to them and go to court and represent them.

Sheila: That's fantastic. Okay, there is a lot more I want to ask you but I want to give each one of the girls a chance.

Lynette, would you tell me, your husband, is he head of the North American Missions Board?

Lynette: He is.

Sheila: So tell me about what you guys do and what the main thing that God has laid on your heart, what you're supposed to be doing with your life.

Lynette: Well, the main thing that we do is just support churches; and we start 20 new churches a week in North America and Puerto Rica.

Sheila: Wow!

Lynette: Right! And if there is a disaster we're there. We're the yellow shirts, and so we're there. For instance for every ten meals the Red Cross serves we'd made eight of those. So we're kind of under the radar.

Sheila: Wow! So when people see a Red Cross thing on TV and I've done that and it's like text this to -- so that's actually you that's probably providing most of those?

Lynette: Right. We don't get their funds. We just help them and we cook the meals, we have big trucks, Send Relief trucks; Send Relief is a branch of what we do at the North American Mission Board, which also includes foster care, helping children in poverty, sex trafficking and anything to awaken the church to the needs around us and to encourage the church to get out of the pew and to put legs on our faith.

Sheila: So you don't get the money you just provide -- there's something a little wrong there, people!

Diane: They stay in the cots in the church while everybody else is in the hotels.

Sheila: Okay. We might be redirecting where we're giving at this point onward. Do you find that the churches are responsive to that message of getting out of the pews and doing something?

Lynette: Honestly, I'm seeing the church wake up to that. When I say to... when we say to churches, "There is half a million foster children in the United States, okay, the church is enough to fix that." Because if we put one foster child in every evangelical church in North America, we don't have orphans, we don't have any foster children left in the system.

Sheila: Do you mind repeating that just one more time?

Lynette: Right. So we have a half a million children in the foster care system in the United States -- a half million. If one church, one evangelical church in North America, every one church would take one foster child, support that foster family, raise up one foster family, support them, do wrap around care, we have solved the crisis. The church is enough.

Sheila: But what's fascinating about that is it is not finding ten families within the church, it is just if the church would take one child.

Lynette: It's not brain surgery.

Sheila: Gosh! You really, if you read scripture, it is really clear that we're supposed to be the answer for everything.

Lynette: That's right! Psalm 68:6: He's a Father to the fatherless and he places the lonely in families. That's God's plan.

Sheila: Wow! Now if people wanted to access your website as opposed to the other one which we love and support, where would they go for that?

Lynette: The best place to go for that to give to restoring dignity which helps our foster children or to Send Relief or to help disaster relief or sex trafficking is SendRelief.org.

Sheila: Okay. Wow! So Christy Haag, your husband is president of One More Child Foundation but you, I went online and you're all over the place. I mean you're everywhere. Tell us a little bit of what you're doing and your heartbeat because you're also... the thing that touched me most about you when we met and talked was your stance in prayer -- your face down on the floor stance on prayer. Talk to us a little bit of who you are.

Christi: I take prayer very seriously. Because it is the -- and I have such a deep respect -- we all are part of the big puzzle. It takes all of us. But we love what we get to do. This year we'll provide seven million meals to children all over the world. We work in 13 countries, all over the United States, Diane and I work very closely together.

Diane: I'm on the board there.

Christi: Yeah! We love her. She is awesome. We're crazy together -- crazy all over the world together. But a passion of ours is feeding children physically and spiritually. It is hard to beat someone over the head with the gospel when they're hungry. I can't... So we're big in feeding, we're very big in anti child sex trafficking. We were the first state licensed safe home in the state of Florida. God's just blowing up the ministry in that we have thousands of kids in foster care, in our Christian foster care homes. We're in total agreement, she and I are passionate about we can take care of every child, every child in the United States, we can absorb that so easily if pastors will get up, the lead pastor will get up in a church and say, "I need one family -- just give me one family."

Sheila: Okay, we're going to do a show on that. Show us just that one thing.

Christi: And our goal in Florida is to absorb all those children. And then we have a very large single mom's ministry who Diane has written amazing curriculum for.

Sheila: Yes! The curriculum is phenomenal.

Christi: I just used it in Romania. We have anti trafficking and we work in 13 countries so I just taught it in Romania, I've used it in Uganda, all over the world. It's powerful. I've seen God pluck children out of Satan's hand. That's the joy. I could write books; I've been in this 40 years, write books on the tragedy.

Sheila: 40 years?

Christi: My dad's worked at a children's home for 40 years. And my husband, actually, his Ph.D. is in finance. We were in the business world. We did very well financially in that world and then God said, "I think you're supposed to do this." So I'm the one who drug my feet because I was like, "You don't know what you're talking about. I grew up in the ministry. You don't know." But we love it.

Sheila: How did your adventure with understanding the power of prayer grow?

Christi: Well, I wasn't sure if I was going to tell this story. We were talking about it earlier. I grew up -- I come from a long line of Christ followers. I've had it modeled for me for years. But my precious grandmother, my Nanu, when she was 90 was brutally attacked by a 19-year old. I won't go into details just for my family but just the worst you can imagine.

I crawled up in bed with her at the hospital the morning after. I remember her asking me to pray for that young man. I was like, "I cannot pray for him right now." It took me a while. She begged us to pray for him. And she reached out to his mother. I think I just saw it modeled for so long. You know we say we believe in prayer but in the moment do you really believe in prayer? And she wanted us to truly pray for that young man.

So I've been around it all my life. And then -- I brought my sign, ten years ago, my husband started asking us to pray big. He basically said, "Let's don't put any boundaries on Jesus. Let's just pray big. Give us the world for children." And so that's what we all do. But we just started just literally, I mean praying big and saying, "We're not going to box you in, because we all have our little definition of what we think child care and rescuing children and God has just been blowing us away. We sent story after story of truly children plucked out of Satan's hand.

Sheila: I want you all to feel free to kick in at any point here because I'm thinking of viewers at home and I've had letters recently saying, "I'm just not good at prayer." Or "I've prayed sometimes and God doesn't answer so why bother?" What would you say to that, any of you?

Diane: I think if we only look at prayer as I need an answer that maybe that's where we get

stuck because it becomes this wonderful adventure. I love it when Christy says, "I prayed for you last night." I feel encouraged and I feel excited. I love it when I have a lonely morning and I'm in the word and the Lord says, "Pray for so-and-so and call her." And he just gives me that direct. And it is just this beautiful relationship with Christ.

So when we're focused on I need an answer, I think sometimes we're focusing on I want that answer and we get into the whole wrong place. So when we focus on just this wonderful time of worship and loving him and really praying for other people, I mean how am I connected to these ladies? We pray for each other and we love each other. Really, praying for other people changes your whole prayer life and you begin to realize, maybe I didn't need that. Or maybe I didn't even want that. Or maybe the Lord has something so much bigger.

All last year I signed every letter Ephesians 3:20 and said, "Never settle. Never settle in your life but continually say 'God is able to do exceedingly, abundantly above what I need and what I ask.'" So people who focus prayers only on God's not answering are really missing perhaps his answer is so much bigger and so much more wonderful and so much more amazing. You may have to wait for it. We're not a culture that is accustomed to waiting. So you may have to wait for it. But prayer is a wonderful journey and I know each of them has amazing stories like that.

Sheila: Let me just tell you one thing which is so sweet last night because I was supposed to be having dinner with these girls and at the last minute my sweet little Yorkie, Maggie was having trouble breathing. So I had to quickly text Marissa who books all our guests and she is just adorable. Then I get this note from you saying, "I'm praying for you, and I'm praying for your dog."

But the part you don't know was Marissa had to call the restaurant and say, "I'm sorry we're going to cancel this reservation."

And the guy at Mr. G's at the Hyatt in DFW Airport said, "Why?"

So the guy that answered the phone at Mr. G's said, "Can I pray for them?" And he stopped and prayed for us!

I thought, I think we don't realize the impact it has on the lives of other people when we say, "We're praying for you."

Diane: And if you say it, do it when you say to someone, "Oh, I'll be praying for you." So I've really begun to be, I don't care if I'm in the airport, I don't care wherever I am, a restaurant, when I sense someone has a need I say, "Stop, let's pray right now."

Christi: You're the queen of that. If I call you, you say, "Let's pray right now" and that means the world. I've tried to model that. You've been so good for me with that.

Sheila: How about you Lynette? What is your -- what would you throw into that whole discussion of people who just feel like they almost treat prayer like a last resort, like "I'll try and do this and if that doesn't work then I'll just pray about it." How has your own adventure with prayer impacted your life?

Lynette: I grew up very simply and I remember getting up for the school bus. My parents were new believers, and my mom was praying by the sofa. So she wasn't opening the word and teaching me to memorize scripture but she prayed. So I carried that all through my life. Then when the Lord began to move in our heart to open our home, expand our boundaries, as the Lord tells us in the Old Testament, to take in children...

Sheila: You have three adopted children; don't you?

Lynette: I do. We have six total; we have three adopted. And I have two adopted grandchildren as well; our older kids brought into it. I know. So it's become generational. So it's just what we do; right?

But praying through that is the only way I could live outside of my comfort zone. So when I have women say to me, "Oh, bless your heart! You have six children." I get that. I know what they mean about that. They're "Oh, I could never do that." Or "I could never take in a foster child." But when you're in prayer with the Lord, when you're in prayer, he just takes you beyond that boundary that you set for yourself and he enables you to do things you could have never -- back to Diane's verse, that you could have never deemed possible. Ephesians five: Live in line with the spirit. And in prayer is when we do that.

One of our children that we brought home, we just really struggled. She struggled in school and she was starving, literally swollen belly and stick arms. So we had a long journey of healing. I remember the Lord just impressed upon me, do like your mom. And I just every night got beside that child's bed, dug a hole in the carpet and stuck my nose in it and it was just face down and asked the Lord, "Would you just heal her mind? Would you heal her body? Would you just heal her, Lord?" -- Because I didn't have those tools. We had all professionals helping us, great teachers but we needed a total healing. It is incredible to see how far the Lord has brought her.

Sheila: That's powerful. And for her to see that too. I know that in my own life, that when I was growing up, I walked in my sleep every night. I would hide in the toy box. But my mum, she would lay her hands on me at night and pray, and say, "For this least likely, Lord." I think the Lord loves to do that. But you spent a lot of your time in the court room. How has prayer

impacted what you do as an attorney?

Stephanie: I grew up with a really godly father and I always could hear him talk to himself. I was like... what is he doing? Seriously! Like what in the world is he doing? And he was praying. He was like, Lord, forgive me... It embarrassed me at times. I was like, oh my goodness, dad. Stop! Stop! Just stop! Because he would talk to himself. But he was talking to God the whole time.

That's how I get through court, how I get through my life. As we all know, life is tough and there is ups and downs and we're doing God's will. Sometimes that's when the toughest stuff happens is we're opening up saying, "Use us, Lord." And then Satan just attacks us. So we have to be continually in prayer. I try not to talk out loud but when I'm in court, I just pray for my clients. I pray for the kid –

The child I saw yesterday, who was nine years old whose sister just got murdered in front of her eyes. I pray for those kids, and be with those kids. But it is just continual... and prayer throughout the day.

But I think what I have gained so much in this past couple of years is the peace that comes from praying all the time. We don't know what is happening tomorrow. We don't know what's going to happen especially in a year, what's going to happen but we do know that God is going with us and that's the only thing that keeps me going.

Sheila: It's interesting; I had the privilege as well as Diane's husband of being at Dr. Billy Graham's funeral. Someone had asked Billy some time ago, "Who is the next Billy Graham?" He said, "We all are -- the church." I see that in you girls, that we are all going to raise up and begin to actually live out what we say we believe.

So one of the things that I love to do and it is very much the heart of all these girls is that the heartbeat of *LIFE Today* is that because God has touched our lives we want to touch the lives of other people and other children. So I want to show you a story that I believe you'll want to do something about. Would you watch this with me?

Begin video clip

Open Captions:

Angola drought continues to affect an estimated 1.42 million people.

>> What you're seeing here is a result of the terrible drought. They have not seen enough rains,

their crops have failed and this village is in desperate need. They have about two weeks worth of supplies if they're lucky. This is just the example of many villages in this area. It really breaks God's heart to see these people suffering like this.

Sheila: This is Maria. Maria is a mother of six children but only three of them are still on this earth. You might be able to tell all around me that the crops this year have completely failed so she's not able to feed them with anything she has. She literally has to dig around to see if she can find some roots -- anything to be able to feed her children.

I can't imagine what it must be like for a mom to have to bury three children. And not only that but to have to watch three children die because of malnutrition.

This is her boy. She only has one boy left. He is 12 years old and she said to me, "I'm so worry about him because he is getting so thin and he has a cough and I see the signs." That's the hard thing. She said when she went to bed at night her prayer is: God, will you please show me what to do? Or would you send somebody to help me?

I was able to tell her, "God heard your prayer and that's why we're here."

That's what this is all about. Mission Feeding is all about an urgent need right now for families who go to sleep hungry at night but still believing in a God who answers prayer. We can be the answer to that prayer for this young mom.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: I really... In my heart, I just feel it is time for us to get real about why we're on this earth. You and I are here at this point in human history and it is not an accident. We have been called to be the hands and feet of Jesus Christ. We've been called to be those who reach out. We've been called to go beyond our comfort zone. How can you look at Christ on the cross and then settle for a comfort zone? Everything about his life he chose -- intentionally chose a path of suffering so that you and I could be reunited with the Father.

Now the consequence of that is that then we see everybody differently. We're not just waiting for Christ to come and get us out of here we are here to make a difference. It's such a privilege on behalf of you to be able to go to these countries and we're going to going back soon. But when you see and you go with a mom and you literally with her get down on your hands and knees and scrape through the dry dirt looking for anything that she could possibly cook up that night for her children -- but there is no protein.

And as a mom, to have buried three children, we went to that massive grave side where all the little graves are filled. And every mom has left some little thing. Some have left a little plastic bottle, some have left one little something to say, "My child lived." And that's where they are.

But we want to stop that now in Jesus' name. The thing is we can do it if you will help us, if you will stand with us. We've tried to make it doable for everyone, whether you're a teenager or whether you're retired. So \$30 will provide meals for three children for months! -- \$30 for three children. \$50, five children. \$100, ten children for months!

Our prayer and our commitment to our partners who are boots on the ground there in Africa day in and day out, 24/7, is that we will continue to feed 400,000 children. That's what we want to do this year. And we can do it! It is not difficult if we will all make a commitment to do something.

When I go back, I want to be able to tell the people who work for and with us, "Listen, we will never ever let the line of children lining up for food be longer than what we have to give." But we can do it together.

So would you go to your phone? Would you dial that number on your screen? You can go online. But just if we all commit together to do the best we possibly can, and maybe you think, what I can give, it's not that much. Remember what Jesus said to the woman who dropped that coin in? What she gave was more than anybody that day because it cost her. So let's make a decision it's going to cost us all a little bit. What a privilege! In Jesus' name.

Begin video clip

Announcer: In impoverished and drought-stricken areas of Africa children are suffering. The need is great and without food they face severe malnutrition -- even death.

With your support LIFE's Mission Feeding outreach can save lives by feeding and caring for children in the hardest hit areas of Angola, Mozambique, and South Sudan. With previous reserves gone and Mission Feeding helping in areas with severe crop failure we urgently need to replenish our food supplies to reach 400,000 children who are counting on us.

Your lifesaving gift of \$30, \$50, or \$100 will help feed and care for three, five or ten children for three full months. And with your gift of any amount, we'll send you *Proverbs Power: Successful Communication*. This powerful CD series, along with study guide featuring Steven K.

Scott unveils the secrets to incredible wisdom found only in the book of Proverbs. This series will give you the tools to transform your relationships in life.

With your gift of \$100 or more, request the complete *Proverbs Power* library featuring five power-packed sessions that include: The Power of Vision, Breaking through Mediocrity, and much more.

Finally, with your gift of \$1,000 or more to help feed and care for 100 children, be sure to request the "Bridge of Faith" framed canvas print by Thomas Kinkade.

Please call, write, or make your secure gift online today.

End of clip

On the mission field

Isak: Just look at this little child's arms. Look at how at two years old his arms are hardly any thicker than what my thumb is, a child that weighs nothing -- a child that is wasting away. If you look into his eyes, there is a lifelessness there.

You say, "How do we change that? What do I do?" I'll tell you what you can do. You can give a gift right now that is literally a gift of life. But more importantly even than just one child, you can reach out and you can give that gift to multiple children, to children out in the villages where there isn't enough food, children that haven't gotten to malnutrition clinics yet but will be here very soon if we don't do something about it.

Act now because if we get to them in those villages, if we meet them before they're in this condition, we know we can save them. We do it time and time and time again. We can guarantee that we save their lives. Please do your very best today because that gift is a gift of life.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: Thank you so much! I really appreciate it. I'm so grateful you girls came down! Dallas is brighter today because you're here.

Diane: Thank you for having us.

Sheila: I loved what you shared. That if every church in America took one foster child and did, what did you call it?

Lynette: Wrap around care.

Sheila: Wrap around care -- I love that -- that there would be no problem. We're going to show you the websites of all these women and the amazing things they're doing. I think the thing that I get from everyone is we can all do this no matter where you are today, every single one of us. When we begin to pray big things change.

So God bless you girls! I'm going to try and talk them into staying for one more show. And I'll see you next time on *Wednesdays in the Word*. God bless you!