

5/9/18

Week 19: Spring Mission Feeding

Wednesdays in the Word

Sheila Walsh

Diane Strack, Lynette Ezell, Christi Haag, Stephanie White

Sheila: Hi! I'm Sheila Walsh. Welcome to *Wednesdays in the Word*. I graduated from seminary when I was 21. I decided that before going into ministry I would take a year and I wanted some practical hands on so I volunteered. I took a job as a house mother in a home for emotionally disturbed teenage boys and here was my mind-set. I'm going to go in there and I'm going to love these boys with the love of Jesus. Probably take a couple of nights before they repent but they're all going to become Christians in no time.

First morning -- no exaggeration, first morning at breakfast the house father put his hand on the table and one of the boys took his knife and stuck his hand to the table. I began to realize, okay, the gospel looks a little different than I thought. That's why these amazing women are here. We met in Washington, D.C. and I immediately thought okay, I want to know these women because my life will be richer and your life will too.

So let me introduce you, this is Diane Strack. And over here we have Lynette Ezell. Here we have Stephanie White. And there we have Christi Haag. I'm going with Haag -- I like Haag.

We met up at breakfast in Washington and honestly, here's the reality. I found myself praying that morning as I was flying up by myself. I'm usually with my husband Barry who is my best friend on the planet but I found myself praying that morning, Lord, I'm kind of lonely for other women in my life. There's been so much traveling and sometimes I just want a -- my sister lives in Scotland. And then I sat there at breakfast and it was like, oh! There they are! It just felt like that. It felt like a God moment to me because there is something about each one of you involved in different areas but with the same passionate heart to live out the gospel and to not just talk about it but...

You shared -- we had a program where you shared a statistic that if every church in America took in one foster child there would be no more problem. But I heard another statistic that is troubling. What happens when a child has outlived that system? How many of those happen?

Lynette: About 52 kids age out of the system every day. That's 19,000 a year, roughly. And

they just need someone to come along and say, "Here's how you do life. Let me share with you about Jesus who loves you and has a plan for your life. And though you may come from a past of trauma, you may come from not ever having a home, let us do Christmas with you. Let us be grandparents to your future children. Let us show you how to have a relationship." Just back up to here's how you have a godly relationship.

Sheila: I know you all have different websites but if somebody was to go to your website, would they get an idea how to do that? What that would look like? Do you provide that kind of information?

Lynette: We do: SendRelief.org.

Sheila: SendRelief.org.

Lynette: Has that kind of information. But let me just give you another challenge. If you're in a small county or in a small area and you're like I want to take a step toward foster care. I don't know that God's called me to be a foster parent. That scares me to death because we all have these ideas that foster kids are scary. They're precious. They just want to be loved. They just want to be safe at night and know that they're going to get a meal and that someone is in the stands for them; right? They just want to know that.

So just go to your local department of family and children services. Just walk in and say hello and say, "How can I help you? How can I support you as a social worker?"

I have a dear friend who is a social worker. She has four children at home; she is a single mother, she has 87 cases. That's not even 87 children, that's cases so some may be three children for that one case. They need support. That's another way you can get involved in foster care. But just take one step toward obedience to getting out of your pew and serving.

Sheila: Wow! Wow! Okay, let me ask. Christi, your work, you do a lot of work in this country but you also work overseas. I kind of have a thing that I think every single person who claims to be a believer, there should be something that we're doing apart from just living our own lives. Did that journey begin the minute you became a Christian or is it something that has grown as you've seen the need?

Christi: So many people ask us, they say, "So many kids are here. We need to help here." Our answer is always it's not either/or it is both/and. God's a big God. We're a large ministry and we can do both. I think growing up the international part wasn't as big a part of my life but then my brother became a missionary in Serbia; my niece. People started going out and we started traveling with them and all the sudden the world, you go, I can do that. You take your first

trip -- I have friends that go, "I could never!" We work in the bush in Africa. We work -- I'm telling you. I just got stitches in Tanzania by a midwife. She charged me a \$1.50.

Diane: Did you tip her?

Christi: I tipped her \$20.

Sheila: You okay?

Christi: Yeah! She pulled out a big hook. I passed out and my husband did. Yeah!

[Laughter]

Where was I going with that?

I think different people started and we started going on these trips going, I can do that. And you see what you can do internationally and I love what y'all are doing. Thank you!

Let me tell you, ten years ago -- ten years ago we had launched our international ministry. It used to be called orphans -- now we're OneMoreChild.org. We're working in Guatemala. We have this malnutrition center for babies. They come in -- I was a biology major. You could teach the bones off these babies -- emaciated. We got one little boy named Benito. He was seven years old and he weighed 26 pounds. I don't know if you know but if you're a mama you know seven years old. And he was in my care; I was caring for him and long story short the child died. I will never forget him screaming. It was -- I went outside. I threw up for two hours -- just threw up. I just threw my hands up in the air and said, "I'm in." I kept telling the Lord and I'm sure people thought I was nuts. I kept saying, "I'm in. Yes! Whatever, I'm in." That's all I kept saying.

And from that we launched our international and we'll take thousands of people with us this year; we have 100 trips. And we work with children.

Sheila: One More Child?

Christi: OneMoreChild.org. We're children, families -- we build clinics, schools. We're building 100 homes in the Dominican Republic right now for single moms. We're working with the government. We built a church in the middle and we built 100 homes; we just got back from that.

If you can rock a baby, if you can change a diaper, if you can feed a meal, if you can -- I'm not a master of anything but if you're obedient and willing there is a place for you. Just take your first

trip. Do what you just did, see those children and you'll be in.

Sheila: I have to tell you. James and Betty, I'm kind of sorry they're not here today because this is so their heart. They're amazing.

You, lovely young woman, you work in a slightly different field. You're working as an attorney. But I'm wondering, when you see the kind of needs for fostering, and you see families being split up, how do you see the church being able to play a role in shifting what's happening and making what you do a lot easier?

Stephanie: I see it just like Lynette said if one family can really -- and one church can just have one foster family, I mean become one foster family. I have these sweet precious clients and there's three of them. They had to be moved six hours away from us and split up. When I went in and I told my client who is 12 years old; I went and saw him in his school and right before court. And I said his name and I said, "Listen." We met in his guidance counselor's office. I said, "Listen. Do you know where you're going tomorrow?"

He said, "Yes. I'm going to Jacksonville."

I said, "Now you know that your sister, one of your sisters won't be with you."

He literally, this just happened on Valentine's Day. He sat down next to me and he just started crying and weeping. And he put his head on my shoulder and the guidance counselor just started crying. I said, "Listen, we're going to do everything we can to get you back in Pensacola," where I live, "and get y'all back together."

He said, "I've tried to be really good."

Of course he's going to have issues. He's in foster care for a reason: His parents' behavior. So I said, "We're going to do our best to get you back here with your sisters."

So just like Lynette says I just went home to my kids and we're so blessed. If we could just have one family from each church and just do the wrap around services. We're not all called to be a foster family. We're not all called to foster but we are all called to help and serve and be there in some way; whether it is cook a meal for the foster family that's doing that at your church or being a baby-sitter one night. We're all called to do something.

Sheila: Is that how you unpack wrap around service? Tell me exactly what you mean by that.

Lynette: Well, you take a family that's taking in a foster child and then the church, we try to

get five families around that one family. And so when they bring that child in they have no idea what age they're going to get or they're probably going to request what Stephanie, two kids, they're probably going to get three.

Christi: Right. That day.

Lynette: And you have very little time. So we just try to get their freezer full of food. I talked my husband's nonprofit, a friend of mine did, into renting a storage unit for us. So I have all these organized brand-new clothing; and so when a child comes into foster care I want to get rid of the trash bag. I want to give them a piece of luggage. So we put a week's worth of brand-new clothing in there.

We usually get a call from a lawyer or a DCFS worker saying we've got this placement. So we want them to be able to go back to their high school or their school with dignity, with new clothing on. And we also tuck in a copy of the word that is age appropriate. So they get a Bible, they get a whole week of new clothing. All of that is donated by the body of Christ.

Sheila: The thing I love about that is to me, you've earned the right to put a Bible in there because it is not just you're going up to a child that is hurting and said, "Here is a Bible" when the needs are so real and so practical.

Lynette: Because we're still there. We're still on their team.

Sheila: One of the things I love about what you do and that resource you have for single moms is that part of what you all care about too is the kind of inner healing of those moms.

Diane: Exactly. And also, about keeping those kids from going into foster care because some of them, although there is abuse that we don't want to even talk about, some of them the mom just can't make it. She just cannot make it as a single mom. So we have to also give her the power to forgive herself to get through the pain of the past and to break the cycle with her kids.

So what we do is try to find a mentor. And what she was talking about with wrap around care is exactly what you have to do with a single mom. She is on her own. She has nobody to even listen to her. If she is a bad day who is she going to tell? And she usually -- not usually, that's a wrong word to use -- often will make the wrong choice with bringing a man into the house out of pure loneliness.

Sheila: It's the only solution she knows.

Diane: The only solution that she knows or that is available. So we're trying to prevent them

having to go to foster care but if they do, what I love about what they do and all of them do, all of the things, they actually have these amazing stories, you're going to have them come back because there are so many.

Sheila: Oh I totally will! Totally!

Diane: But they have these amazing stories of foster parents who have led the biological parent to Christ and helped the healing to take place and helped those families, bring the parent, inviting them to church. You were telling me the other day they invited a dad, an abusive dad to church and he wanted to know could he bring a friend? And he brought two people with him and they came to Christ, and that family is working on being restored and bringing the child back to his father.

So the Holy Spirit does what the Holy Spirit is going to do. We get to just be in there and say, "Here am I, Lord, send me. Use me. Here are my arms to wrap around a child. Here are some gift cards." You can just about pick anything and make an impact in a life.

I need people to come up alongside my single moms and help them make it. It's not that hard. It's not that hard!

Sheila: Your whole mentoring thing because you mentor single -- I think that is huge! Because we used to live in small communities where we grew up with aunts and uncles and now people are so scattered and so lonely that mentoring, to me should be one of the main things that we as the body of Christ are doing.

Diane: Absolutely! And we talk about discipleship which is a very big part of mentoring but it is just going beyond that. I had one of my mentors take a girl to the grocery store and teach her how to shop and save money because she didn't know exactly how to do that. We teach them how to pray for their children. How do you process the anger in your child because their father was abusive or because their father left? So we teach them that.

Everything that we represent is simply the hands of Jesus being put out. We don't actually plan this is what I'm going to do with that woman. We plan to love her. We plan to care for her and to let the Lord use our lives. Thanks so much for letting us share that.

Sheila: It's awesome! This is the gospel. This is Christ living through us in a broken world. It is not yelling at each other on Facebook. It is getting down on our face praying. Because I was in Phnom Penh not so long ago and there was so much I saw there that was so evil and I came back to my hotel room, the first night and I got down on the carpet and sobbed. At one point I felt the Lord saying, "Okay, get up and dry your face because we've got work to do."

I just want to give an opportunity -- and if you have a story you want to tell of something that you've seen God do that you think, yeah, we just took one little step and here's what God did.

Christi: I do. Two weeks ago we're walking up in our state office to my husband's office and there was a precious little Muslim family there. We're a Christian organization. We take care of tons of Muslim children but we don't normally see -- it was just different.

So my husband walked over and said, "Is someone helping you? Can we help you with something?"

They just had this blank stare on their face. I'll never forget just this -- they looked numb. That's the word I was looking for. They just looked numb. Long story short, they had -- their daughter had been online, 15-year old. This man had convinced her, of course, that he loved her; had driven this wedge between the parents and her, had gotten her social security number out of her, her address, all these things, this 15-year old. He loves her; he's never met her but has convinced her all this stuff. It was interesting to hear her tell her story.

So he sent her a one way ticket. She was at the airport -- at the airport about to board a plane when someone figured out, got ICE involved, F.B.I. and Homeland Security, Border Security. They called us, long story short. And you should have seen -- you talk about plucked out of Satan's hand. She was headed out. And most of our girls, we work with a ton of trafficked girls, domestically and internationally and most of them are right here. They've just been moved -- every two weeks they're being moved. They can't even tell you where they are living right now. But this young lady --

Diane: They don't remember half of the trauma. They just kind of put it away.

Christi: And wrapping around that family -- and it is a long road. I'm not going to tell you it's all great. But we've been able to first of all minister to that precious Muslim family that need to know that we love them. Christians love you. We don't hate you. We love you. We're going to love you through this. And I hate to get emotional; we're going to love you through this and we're going to help your daughter be restored. Part of that wrap around is their relationship. And she wants to be with them, the parents have forgiven but...

Sheila: Life is messy.

Christi: Ministry is messy. That is our mantra. We say it all the time. All of us, ministry -- but it is so worth it. Can you imagine doing anything else? Praise God!

Lynette: I have a tea towel in my kitchen that says, "A life well lived is usually messy."

Christi: And well behaved women really make history.

[Laughter]

Sheila: I'm thinking of getting that as a tattoo but my husband isn't convinced yet.

[Laughter]

But really, I'm just thinking of all our viewers who are very faithful. We have amazing viewers who tune in and watch. If there was one thing you could say whether you're 15 or 95 today that you could do, what would that be? Any of you?

Diane: I would say be spiritually healthy so that the Holy Spirit can lead you. All of us, we've been called. There is a passion, there's a call on us. It is not anything anybody asked us to do -- and you feel the same way about what you do. So I would say ask God to forgive your sins. Dream big. Be right with God. Study the Word of God and say, Lord, how many times do you go to bed at night like this? Here Lord. Here's me. Use me in whatever. That would be the one thing I that I could say.

Stephanie: I read just last night in Joshua where it says, "Consecrate yourself for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you." I think that's just a great verse I would tell someone who is young and even myself.

[Laughter]

Even myself, every day, is to consecrate yourself and the Lord will do wonders among you.

Sheila: Wow! I just want to say thank you, girls. It's amazing. I can't wait to have you back. I know that you have been blessed too. One of the great joys of the Christian life is that when you've been blessed and touched by God, he moves your heart and he washes your eyes and you see people differently and then you want to make a difference. Would you watch this piece with me?

On the mission field

Isak: It really just breaks my heart how the children in this village know what it means to have an empty bowl because empty bowls mean empty stomachs and empty stomachs mean going to

be a night after night suffering from the pain of hunger, starvation, malnutrition and ultimately death.

The graves are full -- full of children; precious little lives, children who have a name, children who mean so much to their family, children whose lives are stolen simply because they didn't have enough food.

Open Captions:

>> Sometimes we pick leaves so we can eat for one day. I am so tired of this life. I don't know how long we can last. I have nothing. What are we going to do to survive?

[Crying]

Isak: We can end that pain. We can end the suffering of children going to bed at night with the pain of hunger. We can end the cycle of death, of mother burying child because she wasn't able to give them enough food. It is so easy to change it.

Please, give the gift of life to these children and fill the empty bowls.

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

James: Just remember we are able to feed, the missionaries are able to be here because of the love of God, not just in their hearts but in your heart, those of you who support *LIFE Outreach* and respond to *LIFE Today*.

Why don't you go right now to the phone or go online and make the best gift you can. Help us feed three, five or ten of these children? If you can help feed 100, well, do that. I don't know at what level you're led to participate but for the three children or the five or the ten children, it's important what you do today.

We are feeding kids because of the love of God expressed through people; really, a lot of them -- nothing wrong with you going and doing what you enjoy. We just don't need to forget the others. It's very important that you pray that everyone who can will respond. Don't just pray, be the answer to a prayer. Respond and make the best gift you can.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: Thank you so much. If the phones are busy, be patient. Call back. Be persistent. Be intentional in helping. Now this May is National Fostering Awareness month. There is a podcast they can listen to. What is that? What's it called?

Lynette: It's called "The Adopting and Fostering Home podcast." We have plenty of information there for you. And if you are a foster family or you're an adoptive family or you're even considering to put your toe in the Nile as Pharaoh's daughter did, you're even considering it, join us and we'll help you get started.

Sheila: Well, I want to say in behalf of our viewers, we will pray for you. We thank -- each one of you is strategically placed but the thing I love is that you said, "Okay, I'm all in." I think that's what the Lord looks for in every one of us. We're all in until it's all over. Thanks for being with us. See you next time on *Wednesdays in the Word*.