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 Week 28: WFL
Wednesdays in the Word
Sheila Walsh: When a Door Closes

Sheila: I'm Sheila Walsh. Welcome to *Wednesdays in the Word*. A few weeks ago I had a trip to Australia and had a really interesting conversation with a young girl after I had spoken at a service in the church there in Hillsong. She said to me, "Don't you think that if God loves me, that if God is with me, my life would have turned out differently?" And she began to share some of the most difficult things that had gone on in her life. She was having a hard time reconciling what she believed from God's word and yet what she was experiencing in her own life. And she wondered if it was because she had disappointed God in some way.

I understood where she was coming from and probably you can relate to that too. But what I shared with her that night is that sometimes God will use the very things that we think are going to destroy us to build character in us, to bring hope and to show that God is with us in every single circumstance.

One of the scriptures I shared with her is this one. I love this scripture. It says: We can rejoice too, when we run into problems and trials for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. And this hope will not lead to disappointment. Romans 5:35

There is another translation, I love how it translates this particular -- this is The Passion. Here's how it interprets that verse: But that's not all. Even in times of trouble we have a joyful confidence, knowing that our pressures will develop in us patient endurance. And patient endurance will refine our character and proven character leads us back to hope. And this hope is not a disappointing fantasy, because we can now experience the endless love of God cascading into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who lives in us!

But you know, when you're actually there in the middle of trials, it doesn't always feel that way. Sometimes it feels as if God has literally slammed a door in your face.

When I was thinking about that a couple days ago I remembered a wedding that I went to in Scotland in our little church that I've been in all my life. A gentleman had come back for the wedding and what he didn't realize is we'd done a little remodeling in the church. There is a door to the left of the pulpit that used to lead to a staircase all the way downstairs and you could go

out the back door. Well, that had been closed off so all it is really now is a hallway and there's no way -- you can go in and the door closes behind you but there is no way out.

So he's sitting behind me while the wedding service is going on and I hear him whisper to his wife, "I'm going to slip out and see if I can get a great picture when the bride comes out." Well, I assume he is going out the back door but he doesn't. Before I get a chance to even stop him he heads to the front, opens that door, and goes in and closes it. Now everybody in the church knows, he's now pretty well stuck in a broom cupboard. He can't get out. He has to just sit there. So I have to wait until the wedding is actually over and the bridal party are leaving and go up and open and there he is just sitting there in the hallway not getting any pictures at all.

But even as I thought of that kind of silly story I thought somebody's life is like that. You open what you think is a door to something better, something you believe that God has opened it but it leads nowhere. When you're stuck in that place you don't get the picture; do you? Sometimes you can know the master but you cannot see the master plan.

I wonder how many times in life you felt like that? You absolutely knew that God had promised you something and then it feels as if the door has been slammed in your face. Perhaps a relationship, and you just knew that this was the one and then it all fell apart. Or maybe you knew God had called you into particular ministry but the door keeps slamming in your face.

So I wanted us to look at where is God when nothing works out the way you believed it would? I've been there. I'm sure you have too. In fact, perhaps you're there right now. The first thing I want you to know is this. When you feel that the door has been slammed in your face, number one thing to remember is God's presence is with you. Sometimes that's hard to see.

So I want to show you this through the life of a teenage boy. You might know his story and maybe you can actually begin to see that his story is a little like yours. His name is Joseph, you'll probably remember that and we find his story in Genesis Chapter 37.

Now when we first meet him he is 17. His dad had him last by his favorite wife and that can be difficult. Basically, now they're a blended family. And the dad shows tremendous favoritism toward Joseph which is not wise. Favoritism can really sour a home. Now Joseph knew without a shadow of a doubt that he has a strong calling on his life but he was 17. He was foolish.

This is what he said to his brothers. "Listen to this dream," he said. "We were out in the field tying up bundles of grain and suddenly my bundle stood up and your bundles all gathered around me and bowed before mine."

Probably not a great idea to tell that to your bigger brothers who are already not very fond of

you. Here's what I believe. Calling has to be put through the fire to produce character. In the fire it's easy to believe that God has left you but that is not true. In fact, at some of the worst moments in Joseph's life we read that God was with him.

You probably remember that he was betrayed by his brothers. They basically threw him into a well. They were going to kill him but he eventually they sold him to slave traders who were going into Egypt. And at the worst possible moment in his life here's what we read: The Lord was with Joseph, so he succeeded in everything he did as he served in the home of his Egyptian master.

Not only was God with him, here's what we read as well: Potiphar, his boss noticed this and realized that the Lord was with Joseph.

The enemy will tell you you're all alone, that God has left you but he is a liar. But I think it is interesting too that others are watching how you live when your dreams are frustrated. If you're in a place like that right now, perhaps it was a relationship or a job or you thought maybe your finances were about to turn around and that door slammed. I know it is hard to stay strong in those moments but I want you to remember, God is with you. And when you lean on him, in that place where you feel, you can lean on the very door that feels like it's been slammed in your face, you just need to know that other people are watching your life. And when you still live as someone who knows where your hope is, it makes a difference.

But things get a lot worse in Joseph's story. You might remember he did all the right things and it all went wrong. His boss's wife tried to seduce him and he says absolutely no. He says, "Not only am I not going to do anything to hurt the person who's hired me, who's been so kind to me, I'm not going to do anything to dishonor my Lord." So he says no and she lied about him. And Joseph ends up in prison.

Have you ever been there? Have you ever been in the place where you did the absolute right thing and it seemed like everything went wrong? Perhaps you told the truth in a situation and nobody believed you. It is such a test of our commitment to Christ. Because here's the question that I wrote down in the back of one of my Bibles a long time ago: Will we do the right thing to be rewarded, or because Christ is worth it? Will we do the right thing hoping we'll be rewarded or simply because Christ is worth it?

We go on to read that even though he is now in prison, we read this: But the Lord was with Joseph in the prison and showed him his faithful love. And the Lord made Joseph a favorite with the prison warden.

God's timing is perfect. It is hard for Joseph to imagine that ending up in prison is going to be a

place that God is going to use. It is tempting to try and find your way out. When you're in a bad place, when you find yourself stuck in a hallway, it's tempting to try and make your own way out. That's what Joseph does.

Two of Pharaoh's main guys that served him were thrown into the prison where Joseph was and Joseph was put in charge of both of them. But one night both had dreams that they don't understand; they can't interpret them. Well, Joseph interprets them but then he asks one of them this: "And please remember me and do me a favor when things go well for you. Mention me to Pharaoh so he might let me out of this place. For I was kidnapped from my home land, the land of the Hebrews and now I'm here in prison but I did nothing to deserve it."

You can understand why Joseph wouldn't look for a way to get out but it doesn't work. It says in Genesis 40:23, Pharaoh's chief cup-bearer, however, forgot all about Joseph, never giving him another thought.

I thought about that for a long time because Joseph actually goes on to spend two more years in prison. I wonder if he would have gotten out of prison earlier if he hadn't turned to somebody else to try and get him out. Don't go after something when God has closed the door. Don't go after someone when God has closed the door.

I had a letter from a woman and she said, "I'm so confused. I want to live in the way that honors God." She said, "I haven't slept with anybody. I've been waiting for God to show me the right man and I'm now 32." And she said, "I'm tired of waiting. I'm just going to and go find somebody myself."

It is so tempting. But when you absolutely believe that God is in control, that God is good, that God has a plan then we don't try and run ahead of God's plan because when we do, usually that backfires. If God has placed you in the hallway for a season don't look to somebody else to open the door.

One of the things that Joseph discovered in his own life is when God says "now" God's deliverance is total. Well, its two whole years later when no one can interpret Pharaoh's dream and suddenly, the cup bearer remembered. This is what we read in Genesis: Pharaoh sent for Joseph at once and he was quickly brought from the prison. Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I hear by put you in charge of the entire land of Egypt." Genesis 41:14

Wow! From the pit to the palace in a moment. Not only was his situation transformed, what I think is almost the main point of this story was his character was refined. Remember the 17-year old boy who said to his brothers, "There is a day coming when you all are going to bow down." Well, now toward the end of that story Joseph's brothers come to Egypt because there is no food

in their land and they're all starving. And when they suddenly realize that the person standing in front of them, the one who is in charge of everything in Egypt, when they realize this is the brother that they threw into a well, intended to kill him, and eventually sold him, that this is the person who now has the authority to have them killed. But here's how Joseph was transformed. This is what he said: "You intended to harm me but God intended it all for good. He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people." Genesis 50:20

I think that's one of the most profound lessons; when you believe that God is in control you no longer hold others responsible for your circumstances. See it is easy to point the finger. It is so easy to say, "Well, the reason I lost my job was because of that." Or "The reason this worked out was her fault." But when you believe that God is in control, then you don't hold other people responsible.

It is easy at times as believers to feel like we are victims of other people. But if you honestly believed everything that God's word says from the first word of Genesis to the final amen of Revelation, this is a love story of God's interaction with his people. Of times when the sky got dark and there was no -- not even a glimmer of daylight on the horizon.

But one of the greatest lessons that God has taught me in my own life is to worship when it is still dark. It used to be when I was younger I would say, "Okay, Lord, this is a really difficult place and when you get me out of here I will worship you and praise you." But God has moved me further along, closer into his presence. The more I dive deep into his word the more time I spend in his presence, the more I learn how good he is. I know we all live busy lives these days but if there is only one thing you ever took from me in *Wednesdays in the Word* it would be to encourage you to dive deep into God's word for yourself. Everything that you're struggling with, the answer is in here. Everything you question, the answer is in here.

I believe that God's presence is always with you. I believe that God's timing is perfect. And I also believe that God's deliverance is total. It doesn't mean that life is easy. We were never promised that. Remember Jesus said, "In this world you will have trouble." Not you might or some of you might have a bit of trouble. No! He said, "In this world you will have trouble but take heart because I have overcome the world."

May I pray for you? Would you pray with me? Father God, I pray right now for all my brothers and sisters who are walking through a hard season, who feel as if the door has been slammed in their face. Lord, I pray that you will give them the courage to remember that you are with them, that your timing is perfect, that we are not victims, that you are watching over us. Where there is despair, I pray that you will bring hope. Where there is sorrow, I pray you will bring joy; in Jesus' name. Amen.

Remember, I love to hear from you. If something has touched you or if you want to say, "Hey Sheila, would you address this on a *Wednesdays in the Word*?" You can always Instagram me. I'm Sheila Walsh-1 on Instagram because somebody got there before me. Or on Facebook, I'm just SheilaWalshConnects. So if you have a question, a prayer request, or you think, you know what? I don't really understand this passage in the Bible. Would you maybe spend a little time going through that with me? I'd love to do that. It is my favorite thing in the world.

One of the things that is also a great passion of mine is the privilege that you and I have of changing the lives of people we might never meet until we are finally home with Jesus. There are so many moms and dads at the moment living in countries where they cannot find clean water for their children. Can you imagine that? Having to give your child a glass of water that you know is filthy, that you know might contain some diseases? I've had the privilege, the painful privilege of walking beside some of these parents who have lost children and have said, "Please help us! I don't want to bury one more child." But you and I can make a difference. Would you watch this?

On the mission field

Announcer: For generations now not much has changed in remote villages like these all across Southeast Asia. Hard-working families do their best to get by with very little resources. And mothers like Touch raise their children the best they know how. They love their children as much as any other mother around the world. All mothers have hopes and dreams for their children and they want them to grow up happy and healthy but unfortunately, statistics show that many children in these villages won't live to see their fifth birthday. Mothers like Touch are plagued by a constant fear that their children could die any day because their only option for drinking water is dirty and diseased.

Open Captions:

>> Everyone who lives in this village has gotten sick from the water. We have never had an option for clean drinking water.

I had three children but my daughter died. She had severe diarrhea after drinking this water. And just yesterday, I had to take my son to the clinic. I'm scared that he will die also. I loved to hug my daughter every day. But now I can't and my heart is broken. [Child crying] I would be happy if our village could get clean drinking water.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: Can you imagine what that must be like? That that is the only water source you have for your children? I have often thought, if that woman and her children lived next door to you and when she turned on the faucet what came out was filthy water, you would say, "Come to my house. Get as much water as you need!" But that's the amazing thing we get to do here at *LIFE Today*. We can put this woman right next door to you because you and I can make a difference.

Our prayer for this year is to drill 400 new wells in 15 nations where the need is absolutely desperate. Some of you can do a lot. Some of you could even... \$4800 actually completes a whole well and that will give enough clean water for 1,000 people -- the whole village for life! These wells last for like 70 years.

Some of you think, well, I couldn't possibly do that. Do you think you could do \$48? Do you know that would give ten people clean water for life?

When you look into the eyes of that darling woman, I can't imagine losing your daughter. I can't imagine what it's like to have had one little girl and you can't hug her anymore -- and then to suddenly see that your little boy is starting to get sick too.

We've been in so many of these villages and we've watched, we have walked where every single grave is from a child. If there is nothing we could do, we wouldn't bring this to you but I've seen the difference it makes. I've seen the villages where we've put a well in. Do you know that this year, *LIFE Outreach International* will have put the six thousandth well in? And this year, we just want to do 400 more. I want to go back to the village where that woman is and stand and see her face as clean water suddenly bursts forth and she knows she is not going to lose another child simply because she has to give her children water that she knows killed her daughter.

You and I, if each one of us does something because Christ said, "When you give a cup of water in my name you give it to me." What a joy to be able to think that you and I can do something for moms, for children, in countries all around the world and actual fact, we're doing something for Jesus.

So would you go to your phone? Would you call that number on the screen and give the best gift you possibly can. Even if you decide, you know what? Hey, for this month, we're not going to go and see a movie and get popcorn. Do you know if you do that just for one week a month, if you're used to going, that \$48 you would have spent on a movie would give ten children clean water for life. Go to your phone. Dial the number on your screen, give the best gift you can.

Begin video clip

Announcer: Today a mother living in extreme poverty will do the unthinkable: give her children dirty, diseased-filled water that she knows could kill them. With no other choice, what's a mother to do?

With your help, clean water is on the way. Mission: Water for Life provides a new beginning for thousands of children and their families; a bright future with better health.

With your gift today you can help drill 400 water wells in remote villages in 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 life-giving water for 30 people for a lifetime.

With your gift we'll send you *The Miracles of Christ; What Living Beyond Impossible Looks Like*. Filled with scriptures, prayers, and stories of Jesus' miraculous power, James Robison adds insight about how to walk in faith and live beyond the impossible.

With your gift of \$100 or more, request the Morning and Evening coffee mug set. Each mug features beautiful artwork and scripture from Psalm 92:2, a wonderful reminder of God's faithfulness each day.

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 beautiful *Bridge of Faith* framed canvas print by Thomas Kinkade.

Please call, write or make your gift online!

End of clip

On the mission field

James: I'm kneeling down here by what is a common water source for little village areas. This river meanders through this part of Central America. And it's the water source. It's contaminated with animal waste. It is contaminated with human waste because they don't have any sewage. They have no running water so they go to the bathroom out here in the bush, in the brush and then it washes here.

People get all kinds of intestinal diseases. And clean water, fresh water, that's the answer. This is what they have now, making them sick; killing a lot of them very young. But we can give them a fresh water well. You may be able to give one or give toward it or give a cup of water that adds up and becomes a well of water. But we need everyone's help. You make a life-giving call today, please.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: Thank you so much! And if the lines are busy, please keep calling. You are such faithful partners and we're so grateful. And for any gift at all, we're going to send you this book called *The Miracles of Christ*. And maybe that's where you find yourself in your own life. Maybe you need a miracle. I think this book will really help you.

And for a gift of \$100 or more, we're going to send you these very cool mugs that says "It is good to proclaim your unfailing love in the morning" and then for your evening hot chocolate it says, "It is good to proclaim your faithfulness in the evening." I know they will be a blessing to you.

And I know that's not why you give. But because you give, we want to give you something back to just remind you of the faithfulness and goodness of God. So I want just want to say thank you. Please, please remember that if you go online you can give that way or you can call that number on your screen. If it is hard to get through, persevere in Jesus' name and let's make a difference.

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