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Week 21: Spring Mission Feeding

Wednesdays in the Word

Sheila Walsh: The Grace Filled Whisper

Sheila: Hi! I'm Sheila Walsh. Welcome to *Wednesdays in the Word*. Thank you so much for those of you who drop me little notes or maybe leave a little message on Facebook and say that you always tune in. It's fun for me when I'm actually out on the road to get to meet some of you face to face. All the things that you write to me and things that you ask, would you talk about this? It is my honor and privilege. You get to see me sitting here but there is a whole team of us here who care about you, who pray for you, who are grateful for you.

One of the things that I've been reading a lot of recently and so wanted to respond to is times in life where you don't understand God's hand. You think you know what he is going to do and somehow things seem to go wrong. So that's kind of what I want us to look at today.

When I grew up in a small Baptist church on the West Coast of Scotland, in the morning service we always used the Baptist hymnal but on the Sunday evenings we broke this out. This is the Redemption Hymnal and I loved it! It was a hymn book published by the Pentecostal church so it was a wee bit livelier.

My grandmother's favorite hymn of all was "Rock of Ages." You might not know it but it was a big hit back then: Rock of Ages cleft for me, let me hide myself in thee; let the water and the blood, from thy wounded side which flowed, be of sin the double cure, save from wrath and make me pure. Nothing in my hand I bring, simple to thy cross I cling; naked, come to thee for dress; helpless look to thee for grace; foul, I to the fountain fly; wash me, Savior or I die."

Well, as a ten-year old girl there was one line in that hymn that concerned me: Naked, come to thee for dress. I remember sitting in church in the evening service and whispering to my big sister Francis, "Do you know that we have to come to Jesus buck naked?" She told me to be quiet.

I had no idea then how God would use the words of that hymn, sing them back to me when I was broken and lost, when I prayed to God asking him to take my life. In that dark place these words came back to me and I think I understood them for the very first time.

If you've ever found yourself in a dark place it is tempting to think that God is not there. But often it's those very places that God uses to take you and I deeper into a relationship with him.

Well, long, long, long before I ever prayed that prayer asking God to take my life someone else did and the amazing thing is it was right after he saw God perform one of the most spectacular miracles ever recorded in scripture.

So we find the story in First Kings Chapter 19 and I'm going to read verses 1-13: When Ahab got home, he told Jezebel everything Elijah had done, including the way he had killed all the prophets of Baal.

So Jezebel sent this message to Elijah: "May the gods strike me and even kill me if by this time tomorrow I have not killed you just as you killed them."

Elijah was afraid and fled for his life. He went to Beersheba, a town in Judah, and he left his servant there. Then he went on alone into the wilderness traveling all day. He sat down under a solitary broom tree and prayed that he might die. "I've had enough, Lord," he said. "Take my life for I am no better than my ancestors who have already died."

Then he lay down and slept under the broom tree. But as he was sleeping an angel touched him and told him, "Get up and eat." He looked around and there beside his head was stone baked bread on hot stones and a jar of water. So he ate and drank and lay down again.

Then the angel of the Lord came again and touched him and said, "Get up and eat some more for the journey ahead will be too much for you."

So he got up and ate and drank, and the food gave him enough strength to travel 40 days and 40 nights to Mount Sinai, the mountain of God. There he came to a cave where he spent the night.

But the Lord said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" Elijah replied, "I have zealously served the Lord God Almighty but the people of Israel have broken their covenant with you, torn down your altars, and killed every one of your prophets. I'm the only one left and now they're trying to kill me too."

"Go out and stand before me on the mountain," the Lord told him. And as Elijah stood there the Lord passed by and a mighty wind storm hit the mountain. It was such a terrible blast that the rocks were torn loose, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake there was a fire but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire there was the sound of a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave.

And a voice said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

Let me give you just a little bit of the back story if this is not familiar to you. Israel is in the worst place it has ever been spiritually. King Ahab and his wife, Queen Jezebel are on the throne and they have made the worship of Baal and other false gods the religion of the land. Can you think after King David and Solomon, the thought that the king of Israel would bow the knee to Baal is almost inconceivable.

Well, Elijah who is a prophet of God told King Ahab, "Until I say the word again, there will not be one drop of rain until God tells me to give the word."

Well, it is now three years into the drought and Ahab has put a price on Elijah's head. Well, one day Elijah, instructed by God, shows up and challenges Ahab to a show of power on top of a mountain. He asked the king to meet him on top of Mt. Carmel with all the people of Israel and the 400 prophets of Baal and Jezebel's 400 prophets of Asherah. You can read the rest of the story in First Kings 18. But the bottom line is the 850 prophets cry out to their gods to consume the bull on the altar and nothing happens. Then it is Elijah's turn.

Elijah stood alone calling out to God, "O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, prove today that you are God in Israel." Well, immediately fire fell from heaven, consumed the offering, the wood, the very stones of the altar and even burned the ground.

Well, the people immediately fell to their knees and called out, "The Lord, he is God!"

Elijah told the people to kill every single one of the false prophets. Can you imagine a day like that? What a phenomenal show of spiritual victory of God proving "I am the only God." Elijah had stepped out in faith and God had shown up big time. The people had fallen to their knees.

Surely, Elijah thought, this is the beginning of revival. And just a few verses later we read this: "I've had enough, Lord. Take my life."

How did he get to that place? How can you go from having it altogether and understanding God and seeing God move in power and suddenly, it all falls apart? I remember what my prayer was. It was slightly different from Elijah's but similar. It was God, if there is one ounce of mercy left in your heart for me, would you please take me home? I can't do this anymore.

I imagine like Elijah I didn't start that way. I started determined to get it all right. And I remember the night when I made that promise. I told God that no matter what I would be the perfect Christian. I was 11 years old. It was very important for me to get my relationship with

God right because I knew there was something very wrong with me. I won't go into details here. I shared my story before but enough to say that when I was five my dad had a massive brain injury that changed him from a loving daddy into a confused and violent stranger. And he took his anger out on me before he ended his own life in a psych hospital.

Now I don't know what pain or abuse you've sustained as a child but it changes us. It changes how we see ourselves. Whether the abuse is sexual or physical or verbal it leaves like a smudge on our souls. After five years of co-hosting the 700 Club my shame caught up with me and I fell apart. I remember driving out of the grounds at C.B.N., driving away from ministry. I felt like such a failure. I was done.

Here's what I've learned. When you think it is all over, with God it's just beginning.

So let's go back to Elijah. What happened to him? Why after watching God perform such an amazing miracle was he now in the wilderness wanting to die? The last two verses in First Kings 18 give us a bit of a clue. The rain is beginning to come. The sky was black with clouds, a heavy wind brought a terrific rain storm and Ahab left quickly for Jezreel. Then the Lord gave special strength to Elijah. He tucked his cloak into his belt and ran ahead of Ahab's chariot all the way to the entrance of Jezreel.

Why would he run straight for the capital where Ahab and Jezebel lived? Only for one possible reason. Because he absolutely knew that now revival was going to break out. Either God would change the hearts of Ahab and Jezebel or the people who had all witnessed this miracle would throw them out and Israel would once more worship God.

Instead of that, nobody seemed to care. They all went home. Not only that, Jezebel sends a message to Elijah, "By tomorrow I'm going to kill you." So he runs for his life because he just doesn't understand God anymore.

Have you ever been there? Perhaps you've been praying for someone and God really shows up but they don't change. Or you had faith for something that God was going to do and it all backfired on you. You're done. You feel like an absolute failure or you feel that God has failed you. You just don't understand anything about the ways of God anymore.

We read that before he went into the wilderness Elijah let his servant go. You need to remember he didn't have a servant because he was a wealthy man, he had a servant because he was a prophet. Letting him go was saying in effect, I'm done. I'm out of ministry. He traveled all day into the wilderness and worn out he falls asleep.

Here was my question as I studied this passage. How does God respond when we're in that place,

when we're just done? Let's look again at how God responded to Elijah. He sent an angel to touch Elijah and wake him up. What did the angel say? Did he say, "Fear not for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy!" Did he say to him, "repent!" Did he say, "What are you doing here?" No. He made him dinner. No judgment. A gentle touch and a home cooked meal.

So Elijah ate and drank and fell asleep again. And once more the angel of the Lord and when scripture talks about the angel of the Lord often it is the actual person of Christ, woke him up and said, "Get up and eat some more or the journey will be too much for you."

God meets us where we are. He knows we're frail. He sees our tears. Now that Elijah had eaten and rested he was heading to the only place where he thought he might get an answer. He headed to, some translations call it Mount Horeb but we know it better as Mount Sinai; the mountain where Moses met God.

When he got there he rested in a cave or a cleft cut into the rock. Many commentators believe it is quite possibly the very cave where Moses hid. Do you remember that? Exodus 33, God says to Moses, "As my glorious presence passes by, I will hide you in the crevice of the rock and cover you with my hand until I've passed by."

But then God asks Elijah a question, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" When God asks a question it's not because he doesn't know the answer, it's for us to take a look at ourselves. It was not like God was saying, "Whoa, Elijah! Dude, what are you doing here?" No. He was asking, what's going on inside of you, Elijah?

God tells Elijah to go out and stand before him on the mountain. There was a wind storm that tore the rocks but God wasn't there; an earthquake, God wasn't there; then there was a fire, God wasn't in the fire. Then the sound of some translations say, "A still small voice." Some say, "A gentle whisper." That's when Elijah covered his face and went out.

See the rock had sheltered him from the wind, the earthquake and the fire just as it sheltered Moses. Wind, earthquake and fire were often signs of judgment but the rock sheltered him. God told Elijah they'd always had a plan in place it just wasn't the one that made sense to him. Elijah thought he was the only good guy left but God told him, there are 7,000 others who didn't bow the knee.

It is tempting. You and I want to put God in a box. He won't live in a box.

Let me move to another mountain. We read about it in Luke Chapter 9, verses 28-31: About eight days later Jesus took Peter, John and James up to a mountain to pray and as he was praying the appearance of his face was transformed and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly,

two men Moses and Elijah appeared and began talking with Jesus. They were glorious to see and they were speaking about his Exodus from this world which was about to be fulfilled in Jerusalem.

Moses and Elijah finally came face to face with Christ, the rock who had always been their shelter. Sometimes we feel that we deserve the wind and the fire and the earthquake of God's judgment but Christ took all of that on himself so that you and I could hear the grace filled whisper of God. I love you. I love you. I love you! Just like that hymn my grandmother used to love -- Rock of Ages cleft for me; let me hide myself in thee.

I don't know what you're facing right now. I don't know what's going on in your life when you say, "Lord, I don't understand. I thought you told me to do this and I stepped out in faith. And nothing that I thought was going to happen happened."

I just want to remind you, God is in control. God is sovereign. He is not messing with your life. He is calling you deeper. And sometimes it is only in retrospect that we can see wow, there is no way I knew that that's what God was doing. I thought it was going to be this.

But I just want to encourage you to hide yourself in Christ when you don't understand what's going on, he is our shelter. He is the rock that took the punishment on himself so that you and I could hear that grace filled whisper.

One of the things that I so treasure about the ministry here at *LIFE* is that just as we try together to learn together, to grow closer to God together, to grow together, out of that springs something else and that is a desire to hear the cries of those who think nobody is listening, to be able to be the hands and feet of Christ to those who do not know there is a shelter and his name is Jesus Christ.

I want to show you something of what's going on in Africa and what our response is; and even more than that, how we want to increase that response and let those who feel exposed know there is a shelter in Christ. Would you watch this with me?

On the mission field

Open Captions:

>> We're asking this lady here if she can talk about... She lost, I think she had three children, four children. Was there a sickness or was it hunger?

>> Yes, it was hunger.

>> I had four children who died. I took them to the hospital, but they couldn't help. They died because of hunger.

>> I lost three children. They died from hunger and a lack of medicine.

Sheila: I know when I've seen pictures of malnourished children -- severely malnourished children before, I thought it is too late, there is nothing I can do. But what I discovered while I was here is that with the first bowl of food you reverse the process. The minute nutrition begins to enter the body of a child it is as if death turns a corner and life marches in.

It is amazing what every single one of us can do! So you might look at these pictures and think like I did, this is overwhelming. It might seem that way but that's just a lie of the enemy. This is fixable. We can do this. We can turn from death to life in a moment.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: Doesn't it seem inconceivable to you that in this day and age children are dying simply because they don't have enough to eat? When you think of where we are, you think of where we are as a nation that so many people are trying to curb what they are eating because they're almost killing themselves with eating too much. And then you go to a place like Angola and so many of the places where we have set up Mission Feeding and you watch mothers bringing these desperately sick children and often it is because they have so little money. They have very little resources. And so sometimes by the time they actually get their little one to hospital it is too late.

But it doesn't have to be. That's what I saw. I saw the worst of the worst and then I saw hope march in like an army. It is something you and I can do together. If it was impossible we wouldn't ask you to help us. But we've seen with our eyes and we heard with our ears the difference between the wails in a malnutrition clinic and the laughter in a village where we have set up a feeding program.

So here's our goal. Here's what I want you to join us with. We want to feed 400,000 children this year. So please, would you sense with me the urgency. It is really, it is very doable for anyone. \$30 will feed three children for three whole months. What can you do these days with \$30 bucks? But \$30 will feed three children for three months. \$50 will feed five -- five children! That one mama alone had lost four children. \$100 will feed ten children for three months.

It's easy if you're a big family to go to a movie theater, go out to dinner and you've blown \$100 bucks. Can you imagine the difference if you decided just to skip that for one weekend? And get your whole family around the table and say, "Okay, here's what we're going to do this weekend. Instead of it all being about us, we're going to send this off."

And do you know that ten children will go to bed every night with a full tummy for three whole months? So if some of you can afford \$30, some of you can afford \$1,000 which would feed 100 children! The thing is we don't just break the cycle of poverty, we give these children a future and a hope. Who knows the young men and women that God wants to raise up to be ambassadors for him in their nation? But it is hard to tell them about the love of Christ when they're hungry.

We need to give them a bowl of food first and then we've earned the right to say, "Hey, by the way, do you know where this food comes from? It comes from a God who loves you." Please go to your phone. Go online, give the best gift possible.

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: My heart is just broken sitting here in this cemetery surrounded by graves that are each and every one of them, graves for children -- little lives that have been stolen by malnutrition, children who have starved to death because they didn't have enough food. It truly breaks my heart.

You know what breaks my heart even more is the fact that we could have avoided this. We could have changed this. We could have stopped these graves from being filled with these little lives. We could have saved these children if we'd just been able to act in time, if we would have been able to get to their village, take Mission Feeding and give them a bowl of food a day.

So please, do whatever you can do today because \$30 will feed three children, \$50 will feed five and if you can find it in your heart to give that special gift of \$100, you can feed ten children today. That's ten children's lives that will be saved. Please give a gift of life today. Give the gift of Mission Feeding. Give life!

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: Thank you. And if the lines were busy and I hope they were -- I hope they were ringing off the hook, would you write the number down and call back? Be determined that you're going to keep calling until you get through. Or go online and for any gift at all, we have amazing tools. This is called *Proverbs Power*. Do you ever struggle in relationships? Like maybe with your husband or wife or with your kids or at work and you think, uh! What am I going to do? This is phenomenal.

We have lots more gifts we'd love to send you. I know -- I know your heart, I know that's not the point for you. The point is that we get to reach out and touch the lives of moms who this very evening will go to bed praying, God, will you please, please send someone to help my child? And as we respond, then here at *LIFE* we want to pour back into your life and give you some resources that will help you live your life.

So again, thanks so much for being here in *Wednesdays in the Word*. I'm Sheila Walsh and I look forward to seeing you next week.