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Week 24: Spring Mission Feeding - Last week

Wednesdays in the Word

Sheila Walsh: How's Your Soul

Sheila: Welcome to *Wednesdays in the Word*. I'm Sheila Walsh and I just want to thank you so much for joining us here.

Have you ever found that it is very hard these days to really relax? I mean to actually just tune the noise out and be quiet for a while? Somebody in an email to me here at *LIFE* said, "I watch my children and they're either on their phones or it's like we never seem to just sit down and talk anymore."

I think that's just a cultural problem. We have got so used to noise. We get up in the morning and we switch on the news or we get into our car and we play music. And I think in that crazy busyness sometimes we've lost the beauty of being quiet before the Lord.

So I'm going to ask you to do something. I want you to take -- yes, you. Right now I want you to take three deep breaths like this. [Inhaling and exhaling] Blow it out. Come on. One more. [Inhaling and exhaling] And another. [Inhaling and exhaling] Then let me read this Psalm over you.

The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need. He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams. He renews my strength. He guides me along right paths bringing honor to his name. Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid because you are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me. You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies. You honor me by anointing my head with oil. My cup overflows with blessings. Surely your goodness unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will live in the house of the Lord forever.

I love that! "He renews my strength" is more commonly translated as "He restores my soul."

Let me ask you a question. What is a soul? Funny story the other day about a football coach and a team chaplain. The coach wanted to place a \$20 bet with the chaplain that when one of the players was asked that night to pray the Lord's Prayer, which was a recent addition to the team's pregame preparation that he wouldn't know it. The chaplain was conflicted but he finally

accepted the bet.

So when the player was chosen to pray the team stood in a circle and the player began: "Now I lay me down to sleep. I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take."

Well, the chaplain was a little disappointed but he was even more surprised when the coach pulled out a \$20, handed it to him and said, "I honestly didn't think he would know it."

We use the word *soul* a lot: Soul food, soul music. In fact, the international distress code is S.O.S. -- save our souls. But what is your soul? Our soul is basically who you are. It is the real you. Your personality; the things that make you laugh and cry. The challenge in honoring our soul is that our physical body is what people see and so often we pay way more attention to our exterior than our interior life. We neglect our souls. And we suffer for it. Anxiety, depression, suicides are at epidemic levels. I wonder how much of that is because we have neglected our souls.

Now don't get me wrong. If you've watched this program before you know that I believe that God uses medication to treat mental illness but I've learned you can't just pop a pill and hope for the best. We're way more complex than that.

Psalms 139 says that we are fearfully and wonderfully made -- body, soul, and spirit. The Psalmist King David walked through some very dark times in his life but he knew how important soul care was. He would actually talk to his soul. He would say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul and all that is within me bless his holy name."

You can almost hear him saying, "Come on soul! Bless God. I know life's hard. I know things don't look good at the moment but God is always good."

Well, I discovered on a recent trip to one of my favorite places, Laguna Beach in California that I still have a lot to learn about slowing down and resting in Christ. I had four days and I thought, Lord, this is going to be amazing. It is like the ocean which is my favorite thing and you and me -- just four days. So I woke up the first morning and I'm like, okay, what should I do now? Should I read my Bible first or should I pray first? Maybe I could go get coffee. Is it okay to go get coffee and then read my Bible and then pray? Honestly, I was like a chicken with my head cut off trying to work out what I should be doing to honor God most with those four days. I'd forgotten that sometimes what Christ is asking for is not our doing but who we are becoming in him.

So my question to you and to me today is simply this, how do we care for our souls? When I

think of someone who understood what that meant I think of Mary of Bethany. Remember her? Martha was her sister and Lazarus was her brother. There were two moments in time highlighted for us in the gospels that speak volumes about who Mary was and what mattered to her. The first is one you're probably familiar with. We find that story in Luke Chapter 10. This is what it says: As Jesus and the disciples continued on their way to Jerusalem, they came to a certain village where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. Her sister, Mary sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he taught. But Martha was distracted by the big dinner that she was preparing. She came to Jesus and said, "Lord, doesn't it seem unfair to you that my sister just sits here while I do all the work? Tell her to come and help me."

But the Lord said to her, "My dear Martha, you're worried and upset over all these details. There is only one thing worth being concerned about; Mary has discovered it and it will not be taken away from her."

Now from our cultural perspective it is easy to interpret this as simply one sister complaining that the other sister isn't helping. But the story is way bigger than that. What Mary actually did that night would have been seen as outrageous to religious people.

In the first century houses were divided into the male section and the female section. The kitchen and the outside courtyard area were the places where the women would gather. The main living area was looked on as the place where the men gathered and they were not supposed to mix. It was fine for the women to bring food to the men but that was all.

But Mary not only made her way into the large public men's area, she took it much further. She sat at Jesus' feet. Now sitting at someone's feet was the picture of a disciple and in this time of Christ, teachers only had male disciples. When Martha was offended and asked Jesus to tell her to move Jesus told her that it was only one thing in life that really matters and Mary had found it. It wasn't what she was doing, it was where she was sitting.

So often if you're like me we're tempted to put loving Christ into a spiritual to-do list: Have my quiet time, pray, go to Bible study. But Mary shows us what matters most is quieting our souls and listening to Jesus no matter what anybody else thinks we should be doing. It's spending time with him. It's about humility, about loving him, never allowing what we do for God to take the place of who we are in him and with him.

Well, the second incident I want to talk about with Mary happens on the eve of what we call Palm Sunday. A friend is throwing a dinner party to honor Christ, and Mary, Martha, and Lazarus are there.

We read this in John Chapter 12: Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany where

Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume. She poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

That nard, the pure nard she used would have been imported from Northern India and worth the equivalent of a whole year's wages; about \$15,000 at minimum wage. Scholars speculate that Mary probably received this perfume as a family heirloom. So really, it represented her future, her security. She wasn't married so this was her nest egg.

But Mary broke the jar and poured it over Jesus' head and his feet. But then she did something even more outrageous than sitting at Christ's feet. She wiped them with her hair. Jewish women did not let their hair down in public. People would have been shocked. She didn't care. In utter humility she gave everything she had to Christ.

It is interesting that Matthew, Mark and Luke, what we call the Synoptic Gospels tell us that all the disciples complained about what she did -- what a waste of money it was. But John gives us a different perspective. Now remember his gospel was written last and he tells us it was actually Judas who was outraged. He thought it was a waste of money. It was as if he was saying, "The Lord is not worth the price of this perfume."

Mary said nothing when he came against her but Jesus once more defends her. Christ says in effect, "She is preparing me for burial."

Did Mary know that? I don't think so. All she knew was at the feet of Christ her soul had been restored so she poured out everything she had for him.

There will be times in life when those around you won't understand where and why you're pouring out your life for Christ. They'll tell you you're wasting your life but don't listen to them for a moment. Listen to Jesus who receives your offering of love. It can be lonely sometimes to live a sold out life for Christ. That's why we need to find a place of quiet rest and allow Christ to restore our souls.

I love a sweet story I read from Dallas Willard. It was about a little child who couldn't sleep and so he crept into his parent's bedroom. It was dark so he couldn't see his father's face. So he whispered in the dark, "Father, is your face turned toward me?"

His father answered, "Yes, my child. My face is turned toward you."

I want you to remember that. Your Father's face is always turned toward you.

I love this old hymn that we used to sing years and years ago in our little church in the West Coast of Scotland: There is a place of quiet rest near to the heart of God. A place where sin cannot molest, near to the heart of God. Oh Jesus, blest redeemer, sent from the heart of God, hold us, who wait before thee, near to the heart of God.

I think it is significant too that Mary took what she had and broke it and it says that the fragrance filled the whole room. I know in my own life that sometimes it is from a place of brokenness when we get to pour out ourselves before Christ that other people's lives are changed. There wasn't a single person in the room that night who wasn't touched by that fragrance that Mary poured out.

I think that's what Christ is calling you and I to be in these days where people are angry and broken. It seems unprecedented the level of fear and anxiety and anger in our culture. But don't you think the calling on you and I as God's sons and daughters is to bring our whole lives to him? And even when we are broken, to pour ourselves out so that the fragrance of Christ can be sensed by those all around us.

Sometimes we're tempted to hide our brokenness because we think, people will think less of me if they knew what I'd been through. I remember I used to think that all the time. I'm not going to tell anybody that struggle with depression and I'm certainly not going to tell anyone I spent a month in a psych ward because they're all going to look at me funny and wonder whether I can still see imaginary dogs, which by the way, I can't. But I have discovered it is a beautiful thing that God will do with a broken life if you give him all the pieces.

I don't know what your life is like, I don't know what your schedule is like but I really encourage you rather than just having this quiet time where it is something like I brushed my teeth, I had my quiet time, you'd find a place, a place that you like, maybe in your yard or maybe some place near you, a lake or a forest, or a place where you could go and not do things for God, just be with God. Listening.

The last two days of my Laguna Beach trip were wonderful because I finally got how ridiculous it was running around trying to get it all right when I was simply invited to sit at the feet of Christ and pour my life out before him. And not only that, when you and I take the time to be alone and quiet with God then that's so often when we hear him speak back to us. I think as moms and dads in our culture we have a unique challenge to model for our family what it looks like to have found a place of rest with him.

I love the fact that Jesus said every time that this story is told for however long it's told until he returns, people remember Mary and it will become a point of discussion. I was still thinking

about that for a while, why would it be a point of discussion? I think it is because some people would say as Judas said, "Hey, if she had taken that and sold it, we could have given all that money to the poor," which he had no intentions of doing. Scripture and history tells us instead that he was one that used to steal money from the disciples. So that was all really about him.

But maybe you've been called to make some kind of sacrifice to the Lord and those around you don't understand. I think it doesn't matter but you need to have a strong individual relationship with Christ. It is not enough just to go to church. You can't just know the building you need to know the builder. It's not something that you just come as a group. Christ wants intimacy with you. Maybe you think, you know what? I don't think Christ would be interested. I know he would. He longs to know you. He longs to pour his life back into you to let you know as you are right now not if you stop smoking and go to church next Sunday. No, but right now wherever you are, that he invites you to come and sit in his presence. You know when you do that, when you sit in his presence suddenly your eyes get washed again and you see things you didn't see before and you think, you know what? I think I could make a difference right there.

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.

This is the last week! Please call, write, or make your gift online.

End of clip

On the mission field

Isak: I've always said that to me the greatest tragedy that could ever happen to any human being is to bury your own children. And yet for this mother and many others in her village that is a reality year after year after year. Please! Do what you can do. Be a part of helping a mother like this to ensure that she doesn't bury the last of her two children that are left.

You say, "Well, what can I do? How do I change that? My heart's broken too. But what do I do about changing this mother's? How can I change this?"

You can bring Mission Feeding to this village. You can bring life to this village if you will just get up right now, dial the number that's on your screen, and just give the best gift that you can give. Give the gift of love and the gift of life. Give Mission Feeding to this mother and her children and her entire village.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: Thank you so much! If the phones are busy, please, please, please keep calling. This is our last week. There are so many children out there waiting to have their life saved by a simple bowl of food.

When you do that we have lots of great gifts to send to you. Steve Scott is the teacher on these and he is phenomenal! If you want to get to know Christ better then these are wonderful tools. But please, last week, let's make sure that 400,000 children in Africa will receive life. They'll have Mission Feeding, they'll get food, they'll be able to go to sleep at night and wake up and think, there is a God in heaven who saw me and made a difference.

So thank you so, so much. I'm Sheila Walsh. I'll see you next time in *Wednesdays in the Word*.