

7/25/18
Week 30: WFL
Wednesdays in the Word
Sheila Walsh: Lessons from My Mom

Sheila: Welcome to *Wednesdays in the Word*. I'm Sheila Walsh and I'm so glad that you take time to join me.

It was fun. A few months ago I was in South Africa and I spent some time one morning with a whole bunch of pastors, probably about 300, and I just candidly asked, "Does anybody watch *LIFE Today*?" And every single one of them said, "Yes, we do!" So hey, South Africa! And hey Australia! And hey U.K. and everybody else. It is really lovely that we get to spend this time together. I don't take it for granted.

But one of the things I've been doing recently is just thinking back on the legacy of godly women that I have the privilege of coming from. My great grandmother was -- my mom said that she never in her life heard my great grandmother say one negative thing about anybody. Her answer would always be, "Well, you don't know what they're dealing with." Then my grandmother was just an absolute delight. But I also have the privilege of having had a godly mom. I realized just recently that I was about to come up on the second anniversary of my mom going home to be with Jesus.

So I thought you might like a couple of photographs of my mom. That's my mom sitting in her favorite chair with Ollie the Owl beside her. I love seeing her and that's how I think of her. And this second picture is the last photograph I had taken with my mom. So I really treasure it.

What I thought I'd do today for the program is I thought I'd bring some things that my mom left for me, the kind of legacy, what they remind me of. When I think of the way that I was raised, the way my mom raised my brother and my sister and I, I think of this particular verse from Deuteronomy. It says this: Love God, your God with your whole heart; love him with all that's in you, love him with all you've got. Write these commandments that I've given you today on your hearts. Get them inside of you and then get them inside your children. Talk about them wherever you go, sitting at home or walking in the street; talk about them from the time you get up in the morning to when you fall in bed at night. [Deuteronomy 6:5-8 MSG]

I really love that because that honestly was the way my mom was. She talked about just the

goodness of God even in the most difficult of times. Now I wasn't sure that I was going to be able to be a mom. I was 38 when Barry and I got married and we tried to get pregnant and then I thought, it might be good for me to go and see my doctor and get a bit of a checkup just to see if I was healthy enough.

Well, first of all I had to see our doctor's nurse. Hard to describe what she is like. Let me put it this way. She's not what you'd call a happy woman. She said to me, "What are you here for?"

I said, "Well, Barry and I would really like to get pregnant."

She kind of looked me up and down and said, "How old are you?"

I said, "Thirty eight."

And she made a noise that personally I think only a horse should make, that kind of pbbblttt. Then she said this, "All your eggs will be hard boiled by now!"

Wow! Well, my doctor was a little kinder and she said she thought I would be okay. So I went to Costco and bought a gigantic box of pregnancy testing kits but month after month it was no and that can be really hard. But one day I was cleaning out and I saw one left. So I took that last little test and there it was, that little cross. I actually, I wondered if it was past its "sell-by date" so I actually went to the drug store and bought another one. Then it was there, that little plus sign.

Honestly, this will sound ridiculous. My first thought was, I can't have a baby. I drop things. When my sister gave birth she made me practice holding a watermelon because she said, "Sheila, you drop things all the time."

Well, on December 13th, 1996, our darling son Christian was born. That's a picture of him when he was just a little lamb. I know, isn't he cute? He is absolutely adorable! Well, this is a picture of him now. Now he is 21 and he's honestly, he's one of the kindest people I've ever known in my life. He is funny, and he is kind and he is smart.

But every time that I talk about Christian I kind of pause because I'm so aware of those of you who perhaps can't get pregnant or those of you who have maybe lost a child. Or perhaps those of you who have gone through a divorce and you don't have full access to your children; you don't get to say "good morning" every morning or tuck them in bed at night. Or even those who are estranged from your children or perhaps even from your mom. I just want to pause and honor that truth but remind you of a promise from the Psalms.

Psalm 147, verse three says this: He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds, (healing

their pain and comforting their sorrow).

Well, I told you I brought some things that speak to the legacy that my own mom left for me and it is my prayer that they will speak to you today. The first thing is really -- the first lesson that my mom taught me is the gift of grace, that you can't earn it. This is my mom's Bible. She was given it in 1942 when she was 12 years old. When I was looking through it the other day there is only one thing and she's written it in her own hand when she was a child on the back cover. It just says this: "Grace is undeserved favor. It is love stooping."

I felt, wow! What an observation for a 12-year old girl. Then I found that in Psalm 18, verse 35 it says this, "You give me your shield of victory and your right hand sustains me. You stoop down to make me great."

There is something so powerful about that image, the picture of God stooping down to raise us up. But it reminded me of one of my favorite scriptures of all found in Isaiah, Handel used it in his Messiah so you probably know it, "He will feed his flock like a shepherd. He will carry the lambs in his arms holding them close to his heart. He will gently lead the mother sheep with her young."

When I thought about that and then I thought about that verse in the Psalm, how could a shepherd pick up a lamb unless he stoops? What a beautiful, beautiful picture that God stoops down to pick the lamb up and what makes us great is that we're gathered in God's arms and carried close to his heart.

In my own life, I have to say I think we understand grace the most when we think we deserve it the least. I've probably told you this before, but when I spent that month in a psychiatric hospital diagnosed with severe clinical depression I had an encounter in the middle of the night one night with an angel who gave me a gift, a little stuffed lamb, and simply told me this message, "The shepherd knows where to find you."

That reminded me of one of my favorite things that I remembered from growing up in Scotland. My mom was an accountant and so she would do the accounts of the farmers and the shepherds and that meant I got access to watching all the spring lambs being born. There is something that happens in that lambing community when a mother sheep will reject a lamb. I think I've told you that, they're called "bummer lambs." What the shepherd will do is he will take that little lamb into his home and he will feed it with a bottle and he will keep it warm by the fire. And just as Isaiah describes, at some point during the day, that shepherd will hold the lamb close to his heart. And when the lamb is strong enough to go back to the sheep he will be put back with the flock. But in the morning, in Scotland anyway, when the shepherd stands at the edge of the field and calls, "Sheep, sheep, sheep!" -- the very first ones to run to him are the bummer lambs because

they know his voice.

I think it is the same with our shepherd. I definitely know I will be a bummer lamb until I see Jesus face to face. Does he love his bummer lambs more than everybody else? No! But we have just discovered His grace at a point when we felt so broken. I guess that's a gift that I would love for you to receive today. The gift of grace -- you can't earn it but the shepherd stoops down with it in his hand.

Another thing that I saw through my mom's life and it doesn't sound like a gift but I think it perhaps is one of the most profound of all is the gift of tough times. They teach us that with Christ we can make it through. These are the pearls that my mom wore on her wedding day. I have a beautiful picture of her standing at the bottom of the stairs in our little church with my dad; with her arms through my dad's arm and these pearls on. And there is something profound about pearls.

A pearl, you probably know is formed when an oyster gets a grain of sand trapped in the soft flesh inside its shell. This piece of sand irritates the oyster and it responds by coating the grain with layer upon layer of saliva and calcium. It can take three years for a perfect pearl to form. So when you think about it really, a pearl is the product of suffering and it is a hidden work. You don't see it until it's been completely formed. A pearl is simply a victory over tribulation.

Life, I don't need to tell you this, but life is full of irritations and we can either see them as punishing us or polishing us. I saw that in my mom's life. She was only 33 when dad died and I watched the struggles. I watched her struggling to make ends meet financially. But here's the thing that I also saw through her life, every time a grain of sand, a grain of irritation came into her life she covered it layer over layer with faith and prayer until it became a pearl.

I remember one day mom saying to my sister and I, "Now your brother needs new long pants for school but we don't have the money. So we're just going to ask God." And we sat down to pray and I remember as a child thinking, does God keep long pants in heaven? But we prayed and not very long after that one of my mom's friends showed up at the doorstep. When she left she left behind a parcel and inside were three pairs of long pants exactly my brother's size. I remember saying to my mom, "Did you tell her you needed them?" I've always been a woman of faith.

And she said, "No, no, Sheila. Don't you remember? We told Jesus."

Billy Graham's grandson Will and his wife Kendra have a daughter who was diagnosed with dyslexia. Kendra, she is a great writer, and in a blog she shared a story about trying to help her daughter one night with her homework. She writes that as a family they've been talking about

how pearls are formed. They'd watched a movie about undersea life and afterwards they talked about oysters and the process it takes for pearls to be formed. She didn't pay too much attention to that discussion but God was preparing them to think differently about the personal challenges and struggles that every single one of us has to deal with. Well, one night she watched her daughter taking a long, long time to finish her homework.

She writes this, "When I see her struggling through something that should take ten minutes but takes her an hour it breaks my heart. And one day as we worked and worked and worked on the school assignment I decided to just do it for her. She had already done most of it and I said, "Let me finish it for you."

This is what she said. She yelled back, "No, don't, mom! I'm making pearls in here."

Isn't that a beautiful illustration? That when we face hard things we can either see them as things that are just irritating or we can coat them in prayer and faith and watch God make a pearl.

I read a story about a little girl, her name was Jenny and she had saved up all her allowance until she had \$2 and she bought this strand of plastic pearls and she loved them. She wore them every single day. One night her dad said to her, "Jenny, do you love me?"

She said, "Of course, I love you, dad."

He said, "Would you give me your pearls?"

She was like, "No, dad. I'll give you my doll. I'll give you my pony I have, my toy pony. I'll give you anything but please not the pearls!"

Well, a couple weeks later Jenny's dad said after he'd read her a story, "Jenny, would you give me your pearls?"

She said, "No, dad. Not that! You can have Francis, you can have my princess doll. You can have any of that stuff but not that!"

The dad said, "That's okay, honey. Good night!"

Well, about a week later after story time Jenny's dad said to her, "Any chance that I could have those pearls?"

She said, "Dad, you can ask me for anything I have, just don't ask me for that."

Well, one night a week later her dad came in to read her a story and she was sitting in bed very quiet holding something in her hand. As he came close he noticed her chin was trembling and one little tear rolled down her cheek.

He said, "What is it, Jenny? What's the matter?"

She didn't say anything but she lifted her hand up to let her dad see. When she opened it there was the little pearl necklace.

"Dad, I love you. It's for you."

Well, I've got tears in these own eyes. Jenny's dad reached out one hand to take the little dime store necklace and with the other he reached into his pocket and pulled out a blue velvet case with a strand of genuine pearls and gave them to Jenny. He'd had them all the time. He was just waiting for her to give up the dime store stuff so he could give her genuine treasure.

God is making something beautiful with your life even when it doesn't feel like it. Sometimes we just have to let go of the junk we're clinging onto that really have no value. I don't know what tough times you're walking through right now but would you invite Christ into the process? Would you allow Christ to polish you until you shine?

When John talks about when we're finally home in heaven in Revelation 21, one of the things that we'll see is that there are 12 gates. And do you know that each gate is made with a single pearl as if to say God is not unfamiliar with suffering?

Well, the third gift that my mom left was helping me understand the gift of saying yes. When my sister and I went through all of my mom's things after she passed and Francis asked me, "What do you want?" She said, "Now really, you're supposed to have mom's engagement ring but we can't quite find it."

I said, "You know, Francis, here's what I want. I want this little picture." That's all it says, "Yes, Lord." My mom's had it since she was a little girl and every single night when I would say goodnight to my mom or when I would come in in the morning and I would see this little picture over her bed. I used to tease my mom. I used to say, "You don't know what you're saying yes to."

My mom would smile and say, "No, but I know who I'm saying yes to." I loved that. I love that.

I don't know where you are in your life right now. I don't know what struggles you're going

through but I want you to remember that there is grace available. You don't have to earn it. As my mom wrote in her Bible when she was 12, it is love stooping. Maybe you're going through really, really tough times right now. I know that God wants to polish you so you shine. You know when you have faced trials just like the oyster with a little grain of sand, you can find it just pure irritation or even in the middle of it you can pause and say, "Lord, I want to coat this irritation with faith and prayer and praise" -- trusting he is making something really beautiful deep inside of you.

And I, every single day when I get up now, before I do anything else, that's what I say to the Lord. I say, "Yes, Lord." Not because I know what I'm saying yes to, but because I know who I am saying yes to. Friends, you can trust him. He is with you. He loves you so much. I think that love transforms how you see other people too. When you've experienced that grace, when you know you didn't deserve it, when you find Christ polishing your life and making something beautiful, you want to reach out and do that for somebody else. I'm about to show you how we can do that in the most amazing, doable, practical way. Would you watch this?

On the mission field

Announcer: Here at *LIFE Outreach*, we constantly encounter heartbreaking need around the world. But there are times when we meet someone experiencing a depth of pain which stops us in our tracks. That's exactly what happened when we entered the home of Ington, a mother who couldn't hold back her grief as she showed us the photo of her daughter who was recently taken by contaminated water.

Open Captions:

>> My baby, my baby, I miss you so much. I want you back. I hurt so much. I wish you could come back to me.

Announcer: The heart-wrenching cries of this mother overwhelmed us. Eventually, she explained their tragic situation.

Open Captions:

>> I had to give my baby water from the river. It's all we have. When it made her sick, she got a high fever and cried so much. I'd do anything to have her back. I get so scared every time my son now gets sick. I'm afraid our water will kill him too, and then I will have no children. Clean water would change everything and bring so much joy.

Announcer: Clean water, that's all it would take for this community to not only survive but begin to thrive. Thanks to you, we were able to provide exactly that.

[Cheers and laughing]

Open Captions:

>> Thank you so much. I can hardly express what this means to us. I'm so overwhelmed.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: You've turned my mourning into dancing. Those are the only cries we should be hearing in those villages. Cries of joy and delight, not the cries of a mother who misses her daughter so much and was afraid she would lose her son as well. She won't because we've been able to put a well in that village. But there are so many villages that we've gone to that they don't have a well yet. And that literally, the kind of water that you saw her dipping her bucket into, that's all they have.

I've had the privilege of walking with moms and their children down to the only place where they can get water and when I looked at the water in the bucket I was horrified! But literally, there is nothing else. Can you imagine the guilt a mom feels? In some of the situations too and this is desperately sad, sometimes the dads walk away because they just can't bear it. So many of the women I meet are alone now with their children because the fathers just can't take their children's cries, they can't take their wife's cries, they just can't handle it.

You and I have the ability to change this! And it doesn't take a lot. Literally, \$48, do you know that that gives clean water to ten people for the rest of their lives? Think how easily we spend \$48. We look up something on the internet and we begin to say, "Oh good, we've got prime. We can get that by tomorrow night." If instead of doing that, ordering one more thing that we could definitely do without and I'm talking to myself as much as I'm talking to you, what a difference it would make.

Some of you could do a little bit more. Do you know that a \$144 would give 30 people Water for LIFE? And if you've been financially blessed by God or if you just feel like, this is a sacrifice I want to make, \$4800 puts one of those wells in a village. Do you know that that will give water for 1,000 people for the rest of their lives?

Maybe you've got a birthday coming up or an anniversary. Instead of getting gifts that we

probably don't really need, what a gift it would be to invest that into the lives of someone else. We want to put 400 new wells in 15 nations this year and we can do it but we can't do it without you. If you and I do something now we can change the world for so many people.

Would you go to your phone right now and dial the number on your screen? Or you can go online but give the best gift you possibly can and give life to people who are literally on their knees right now saying, "Lord, please would you touch the heart of somebody? Will somebody help us?" Would you do it?

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

In the studio

Randy: The water behind me has already taken the lives of two children that we know of. I know because I just left their parents and their younger remaining sister in the graveyard. It is not right that children should die. It is not right that they should die with a waterborne disease that we can so easily stop. Let's give them fresh water. Let's give them water that will not kill them. Let's give them water that will bring them life. Let's give these children a hope and a future by giving them clean drinking water.

Go to the phone, go online, do it right now. Make the best gift you can. Help us bring this village and so many other villages like it a source of fresh clean water. Let's give them Water for LIFE. Let's give them a hope and a future. We can do it with your help.

End of clip**In the studio**

Sheila: Thank you! Thank you so much. If the lines are busy, please keep calling. And for any gift at all, we would love to send you this great book. It's called *The Miracles of Christ*. What living beyond the impossible looks like. If your life feels impossible, this book will help you.

So for any gift of \$100 or more, we're going to send you these great mugs which talk about morning and evening, it is good to proclaim your unfailing love in the morning, it's good to proclaim your faithfulness in the evening. What a great way to start and end your day. We'll be happy to send those.

I know you don't give because you get these gifts but on behalf of James and Betty we just want to bless you as you bless other people. Thank you for being with us on *Wednesdays in the Word*. I'm Sheila Walsh. I'll see you next time!