

8/22/18

Week 34: Christmas Shoes & Smiles

Wednesdays in the Word

Sheila Walsh: God Sees Your Pain

Sheila: I'm Sheila Walsh. I just want to say welcome to *Wednesdays in the Word*. I really appreciate the fact that so many of you drop me little notes and you'll talk about things that have really touched you or share a story. I also love it when I'm out on the road and I get to meet some of you face to face and talk about your life. So often it is from those conversations that I think, Lord, I think it would be good to do a show to talk about these things.

One of the conversations that really stuck with me recently, I was talking to a young girl whose father had recently died. Her question was, "Where was God when that happened? My dad always told me A: That God loves us and B: That God answers prayer. So where was he? We were all around his bed praying."

I think that's something that if we're honest, many of us have asked from time to time when we're hurting. So I want us to look at that today.

I was even reading through some of your letters recently and I saw the same theme, where was God when this happened? It is so clear to me in our culture, there is so much pain, so much loneliness and if we're honest, many questions that we sometimes think, I can't even ask that; it doesn't sound very spiritual. There are some things I have learned so far in my journey. I gave my life to Christ when I was 11, I'm now 61. That's 50 years of the absolute glorious perfect faithfulness of God. So I wanted to share a couple of things I have learned that I would stake my life on. One of them is this: No matter how alone you feel, no matter how much you're struggling, I want you to know this, God sees your pain.

One of the memories from my childhood was a strange one. It was watching something terrible happen but through the key hole in a door. It was when my dad's mental illness reached its peak and he became very violent one day. In the days and weeks before, his outbursts of anger were much smaller things. He would pull my hair or he would spit in my face. He always did it when my mom was out of the room. I never told her because I loved my dad so much and I didn't understand why he was doing these things. As a five-year old girl I thought it's my fault. I just have to try harder. My dad had lost the ability to speak so I thought, I'm just making him mad. I have to try harder. But no matter how hard I tried it wasn't ever enough.

On that last day, I knew even as a child I was in a fight for my life. My mom was in the kitchen and when she heard my screams she came in and she grabbed my sister and my brother and me and she locked us in a room while she dialed 911. Well, she must have taken the key with her and put it in her pocket because I remember looking through the keyhole and all I could see was what was visible through that small space. I saw my dad banging my mom's head off one wall and off another and I could hear her crying and I felt so guilty.

My dad, as you probably remember ended up in a psych hospital where he would go on to take his own life. But do you know I blamed myself for that for almost 30 years?

When hard things happen to us as children we always think there was something we did to cause it or we weren't enough or we were a disappointment. I wonder what you have had to carry in your life. For some of you it's been an absolutely abhorrent evil against a child of sexual abuse or maybe it was physical abuse like me. Sometimes it can simply be unkind words that leave a scar on your soul.

If you, even now as you're watching this program, if you're in pain, if you feel alone, if you think that God has forgotten you, I want to read you some promises not from me but from the infallible stake-your-life-on-it Word of God. We read this: But now, O Jacob,

listen to the Lord who created you. O Israel, the one who formed you says, "Do not be afraid for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name; you are mine. When you go through" -- not if -- "When you go through deep waters, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown. When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you."

Now you might be tempted to think, well, come on Sheila, that's the Old Testament. Those were promises made just for Israel. Let me remind you of what Paul wrote in Second Corinthians Chapter One. He said this: For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "yes" in Christ.

So many promises, yes, were made in the Old Testament but when Christ came, God in human flesh, all of those promises were "yes" in him for you and for me.

If your heart is broken, the Psalmist David wrote these true, beautiful words, Psalm 34, one of my favorite verses said, "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted. He rescues those whose spirits are crushed."

God's not far away when you're hurting, he is right here. If you are in pain, if you are struggling, I would really encourage you to find a quiet place. We live in such a noisy world. We're so attached to our phones or to the television or all the stuff that we think we need to know. But there is something beautiful when you pull away from all of that and just sit in the Lord's presence; not just with a list of prayers although he welcomes those, but allow yourself time to sit and listen.

Remember what it says? Be still and know that I am God! Find a place where you can be still.

Well, another thing I know for sure because he has done it for me is this: He removes our shame.

Lewis Smedes is a professor at Fuller Theological Seminary where I went and he defines shame this way: A vague, undefined heaviness that presses on our spirit, dampens our gratitude for the goodness of life, and slackens the free flow of joy. Shame seeps into and discolours all of our other feelings, primarily about ourselves, but about almost everyone and everything else in our life as well.

Shame has weight to it. It bows us down. It tells us you'll never be enough. Shame alienates you from God, from other people, and even from yourself, your true self. Now sometimes we carry shame because of things that we have done.

I read the following statement from a prisoner, an inmate who is still incarcerated. This is what she wrote about her shame: I could hide my sins from everyone but myself. No physical torment can match the torments of an accusing conscience. An accusing conscience means hell on earth. No earthly wealth, human love, music, fun or intoxication can dispel or comfort the agony of its gnawing teeth. My sins were finding me out. I was suffering for every sin I had ever committed. Sin was breeding a moral ulcer. A diseased character is worse than a diseased body. My character was suffering. I could not escape my sin.

I've always said because it has been my experience that guilt tells us we've done something wrong but shame tells us we are something wrong. But as I read some of these statements from these various incarcerated prisoners, no, sometimes shame is because of things that we have done that we can't undo. And if that is you, I want you to know when you come to Christ and you ask for forgiveness, when you own your sin, you're not trying to hide it, you're not brushing it under the carpet but you own it, scripture tells us not just that he forgives our sin, he removes it as far as the east is from the west and he remembers it no more.

But that's not always the case. Often the shame we carry isn't because of something we've done, it's because of who we think we are. In some ways I think that's worse because what can you do? If you've done something wrong and you're filled with shame and you

can try and rectify that but if you feel you are something wrong, where do you go?

So many of the careless words that are spoken to us leave deep wounds. If you were told as a child that you were stupid, that sticks and it becomes part of who you believe yourself to be. If you've been told, "You're a loser. You can never amount to anything." Or you weren't wanted -- those words cut deep. It's one of the things that I learned in the early years of my marriage because sometimes I can be a little quick. Back then I would be a little quick with things that I thought were funny or a little sarcastic. But my husband sat me down one day and he said, "You know, when you say things like that it really wounds me." I had to really ask my husband to forgive me and to be careful for every word that comes out of my mouth. Because when you think about everything that we do is either cursing or blessing. It doesn't have to be, "Oh I curse you!" It can be a roll of your eyes; just our attitude, our inner attitude. That's one of the things I'm really asking God and the Holy Spirit to work with me on so that everything that comes out of my mouth would be a blessing and not a curse.

And the church, when you think about it, the church should be the place where we get to show up as we really are and be loved back to life. But often, it is the place where we hide our true selves. I gave my life to Christ at 11, I went to seminary, I sang at Billy Graham crusades, I co-hosted the 700 Club for five years but inside, all that time, I was still the same shame-filled little girl who wouldn't let anyone get close to her in case you saw what my dad saw. My shame kept me safe but it kept me alone.

I remember one day in the psych hospital we had all sorts of different group sessions and I was sent to like an art session but it was with pottery. The teacher gave me a piece of clay and said, "Mold something that represents your life." I remember thinking that doesn't make any sense to me. I can't do that. I remember once in school I drew what I thought was a magnificent Arabian stallion and my teacher asked me why I put a saddle on a lizard. So it is not my gift.

But the teacher said to me, "Listen Sheila, you think too much. Just do it." But when I'd

finished I was horrified, honestly by what I'd done. What I'd done is I made a little circle with very high walls and inside there was a little stick figure with long arms so that she could reach over the wall and touch you but nobody got back into her.

But here's what I know now. Christ is in the shame-erasing business. Jesus is anti-shame. We see it all through scripture. We've talked about this before but remember the story of the woman at the well? She's absolutely shamed. She is full of shame. She goes out to get water at the hottest part of the day so she won't have to face those accusing eyes. Married five times, now living with a guy that's not even her husband. But then she has this encounter with Christ.

One of the things that I always thought was interesting about this story is Jesus shares all this good news with her, that "I'm going to give you water and you'll never thirst again" and then he asks that question, "Go and get your husband." You know? And it was just like the other shoe fell. Because in the first century, there was no limit to the number of times that you could marry after a divorce. However, the rabbis regarded three marriages to be the maximum for a woman. So she had gone too far. I wonder about you. Have you ever felt you've just gone too far?

Well, Jesus talked to her and after he told her that there was water that he can give that she'll never be thirsty again and then he goes on to ask her this question, "Go get your husband." What's she going to do? Have you ever asked yourself why did Jesus do that? Is he trying to add to her shame? No! Think of whatever is going on in your life right now, the things that maybe you've never told anybody else. Maybe you have these secrets or maybe you had an affair or maybe something, you had an abortion and nobody else knows. If Christ sat down with you and told you exactly that, what would that do to you?

But see it's actually the most glorious news because unless we understand that Jesus knows the worst there is to know we'll never believe the best he has for us. What are you holding back from Jesus? What are the things that make you feel that you are unlovable? Where does your shame lie? Jesus wants to take it from you just as he did for that

woman at the well.

The immediate evidence that Christ had removed her shame is that she ran back to the village to the very people she's been hiding from and said, "Come and meet the man who told me everything I've ever done." When Christ removed her shame she became the first evangelist to her village. That's what it does. When Christ removes your shame you are transformed and you want everyone else to know.

One of my favorite verses in the Psalms is this, Psalm 34:5. It says, "Those who look to him for help will be radiant with joy; no shadow of shame will darken their faces.

The Passion translation puts it this way. I think it is beautiful: Gaze upon him, join your life with his, and joy will come. Your faces will glisten with glory. You'll never wear that shame-face again.

How beautiful is that? Do you ever find that you've known a scripture for years and you never really understood it until you desperately needed it? Well, I remember that when I read Matthew Chapter 11, the last couple of verses where Jesus says, "Come unto me, all who are weary and heavy-laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me because my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

I really encourage you whether you're 14 or 84, find a place, a quiet place where you can tell God the whole truth. That's what Jesus told this woman worship was, "in spirit and in truth" meaning with nothing hidden. You don't have to hide anymore. You get to actually show up because you're loved as you are. Not as you wish you were, not as you wish your childhood had been but right now you are loved.

We're going to get to share that love with some people who are looking for something that you and I take for granted but have never had in their lives. Watch this.

On the mission field

Janice: Is he saying something?

Open Captions: He says, "It's paining."

Janice: Oh my gosh. I'm in a village in Angola and I came upon this child. This little boy is Augusto and this breaks my heart. His little feet are in some of the worst shape I've ever seen and there were many in this village with horrible conditions on their feet. But this little guy is just scratching. They itch so bad. They're completely infected. He said there is insects that have gotten into his feet. I'd be surprised if he doesn't lose his toe. And then the disease comes in through their feet and just goes throughout their body. It can actually kill them; all from going barefoot in conditions that we're in right here.

I know Shoes and Smiles is a campaign that we get really excited about and it's fun. But this is why it is fun -- because it saves lives. You would think just a pair of shoes is not lifesaving but in areas like this, in conditions like this it is and we can change it for Augusto. We can help him. We're going to clean these up and get him a pair of shoes and help him.

Please, do what you can. Help bring shoes to little children like Augusto all over the world. You can be a part of something big and something even fun. But this is the reason we do it. Please!

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: I think this is one of my favorite campaigns that we do throughout the year. It is a joy, it's easy to do, but in so many circumstances we also see it's not just a pair of shoes, sometimes it is literally the difference between life and death. So many of these children, because they've never worn shoes in their life and they're not walking on nice sidewalks, they're walking on rough ground where their feet get cut. When they get cuts in their feet

or they're in this dirty water and they end up with hook worm that can go to the brain and do damage there, so many of these children, their very lives are threatened simply for the lack of a pair of shoes.

I don't even think twice, when my son needs new shoes because his feet keep growing, I don't think anything about it, we get him a new pair of shoes. But for some moms, they're not able to do that. They've never had shoes. But we have come up with this amazing solution. These darling little shoes, do you know we're able to send one pair for \$3.60. What can you get for \$3.60? You can't even get one of those fancy coffee drinks. But this could bring life to a child. If you could spare \$36, we can send ten pairs. We call them Christmas Shoes & Smiles and you're like, "It is a wee bit early for Christmas" but that's very intentional because we want to get these shoes to these children in time. We need to know how many we can order and then get them overseas.

Can you imagine the joy on the faces of these children and their moms? Some days we will see children that are almost too far gone, the damage is there. That's why I think I feel so urgent about this. Even though we look on it as a fun campaign, it is way, way more than that. It is a lifesaving campaign.

So if you could do \$72 that will provide 20 pairs of shoes. Can you imagine for \$180, 50 pairs of shoes? And we call it Shoes and Smiles because we want to go a little further. Some children are born with just terrible cleft lip and palate. That's a very expensive surgery normally but we work with some doctors who have said, "Listen, we will do this on a child for \$500."

So some of you could do that. Could you give \$500 to give a child their smile back? \$1,000 would give 275 pairs of shoes or two surgeries. That's what my husband Barry and I are doing for each other this Christmas. Instead of buying things that we don't need and we have no room for, we want to make a difference in the lives of so many children who are desperately needing our help. So let's do this together.

So would you go to your phone and make the very best gift possible? Go online, and let's change the lives of these little ones in Jesus' name.

Begin video clip

Announcer: Poverty is a killer and because of it children needlessly suffer, not only from a lack of food and clean water but also from a lack of things we often take for granted like a simple pair of shoes. Far too many children living in extreme poverty have never owned a new pair of shoes and while that may seem minor in light of all their needs, walking with bare feet puts them at risk of life-threatening infections and disease that can lead to crippling consequences and even death.

By responding today you can help immediately secure and begin shipping Christmas Shoes to 150,000 children around the world and for many, just in time for the holidays! Your gift of \$36 will help provide 10 pairs of shoes, a gift of \$72 will help provide 20 pair and a gift of \$180 will help provide 50 pairs of Christmas Shoes for children in need.

As a thank you for your gift of support, be sure to request this beautifully crafted red crystal shoe ornament, a treasure to display at each Christmas. With your gift of \$100 or more you may request "The Light Shines in Darkness" frosted glass candle featuring a beautiful golden design that's scripture from John 1:5.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1,000 or more to help provide 275 pairs of shoes or two children with corrective cleft palate surgeries and you may request the "Bridge of Faith" canvas print by Thomas Kinkade. Please call, write, or make your gift online today.

End of clip

On the mission field

Ralph: We've been in Burundi here for about a week and I've just seen so much poverty, so much sadness. One of the things I've noticed is that there are no kids wearing shoes

hardly. Almost all of them have no shoes. The terrain here can be really tough even walking in shoes but much less barefooted.

Jahdu was brought to me here. I saw his feet and you can see the toll that it's taken with him not wearing shoes, probably most of his life if not all of his life. You can be a blessing today by giving a child like Jahdu his very first pair of shoes. It'll change his life forever. It will change his walk. In fact, I believe one day he is going to be a little champion for Christ and it will help him even walk with God.

So please, go to your phones, go online, whatever is most convenient and give that generous gift today to provide Jahdu and children just like him all around the world with a brand-new pair of shoes this Christmas season.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: Thank you so much for responding. For any gift at all we're going to send you this darling little red shoe. If you're like me, I've got all my past Christmas Shoes on my tree and we did have a red one before, remember that? But it is kind of pewter; it is metal looking but this one is crystal. It is absolutely beautiful! And when you hang that on your tree it will be a reminder of the love of God that compels us to reach out. I think it will be so glorious if we reclaimed Christmas for Christ and it was not just about giving and giving and getting for ourselves but rather it was giving to those who genuinely have a need. Can you imagine the eyes of those children, the very first morning, Christmas morning they get a pair of shoes and you and I can do it.

Thank you so much for being with me. I'll see you next time in *Wednesdays in the Word*.