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Week 37: Christmas Shoes and Smiles

Wednesdays in the Word

Sheila Walsh: "It's Okay Not to be Okay"

Sheila: Welcome! I'm Sheila Walsh. Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I have kind of a new project I want to introduce to you that I'm really excited about. Sometimes I get letters and some from you saying, "You've written books about your struggles with depression or you've written about things that you've gone through in your life and I've enjoyed your books but occasionally, they've left me with a sense of what now? What do I do now?" So I took that really seriously and spent about six months really praying and asking God what my next project should be.

So for the first time I get to introduce my new book. It's called, *It's Okay Not to be Okay: Moving forward one step at a time*. The title might sound a little like pop culture but let me just say this at the top. This is not about self-help, this is 100% about God help. We're going to take this journey step by step together.

But it started me thinking, what would it be like if I was able to sit down with a much younger Sheila Walsh? What would I say to her? I wish I could take my 21-year old recovering from teenage acne marked face in my hands and tell her, "It's okay not to be okay. I promise." Would she believe me? I don't think so. She was determined to get everything right.

It started with a photograph. I was cleaning out drawers the other day and found an old photograph under a roll of Christmas paper. I sat down on the sofa and I studied the picture. I'm in a white dress and a graduation gown, 21 years old, graduating from seminary. My hair is short and dark. It had taken about three years to recover from my experiment with a perm that left me

looking like a pack of dogs had assumed my hair was lunch. In the photograph I'm smiling, confident, ready to take on the world for Jesus.

Honestly, my heart aches when I look at it. There is so much I'd like to tell her, "Moisturize your neck! You'll thank me later!" No. But seriously. If I only had ten minutes I'd cut right to the chase. I'd tell her this won't be a life she imagined. I'd tell her that she will disappoint people and they will disappoint her but she will learn from it. I'd let her know that she'll fall down over and over again but rather than understanding the love of God less, she'll get it more. I'd let her know that your heart is going to break but you will survive and it will change how she sees people, not as causes to be saved but as people to be loved. I'd let her know that sometimes the night will get very dark but she will never be alone even when she is absolutely convinced she is. I'd let her know she is loved. I'd tell her to get rid of that punishing list of things she thinks she needs to get right.

I don't know about you but I lived so much of my life with a list of things to change, to do better at. If not on paper, then certainly in my mind and heart. I think most of us do and the message is always, you could do better. We'll not only join the gym, we'll actually go. This new diet plan will work and by summer we'll be bikini ready! Note to self: Don't you dare ever buy a bikini. Even if you're thinner, things are not where they used to be and no one but your loving, supporting, caring husband really needs to know that.

Or we'll start that ready-through-the-Bible-in-a-year plan again. Last year I got to May the 7th and I got distracted and by the time I realized I was a whole Leviticus, 53 Psalms and Romans behind. Or we'll recover from the overspending and be financially responsible. We'll cook wholesome nutritious meals for our family and sit down at least five nights a week together at the table. We'll reduce our television watching and read more books.

Sometimes that is a message, the message that we have inside our hearts carry much more weight. Maybe you've thought this time this marriage will work. Or we will get out of debt. Perhaps one of the most heartbreaking, our children will come back to Christ. We'll eat better to save our lives not our waistlines.

I don't know what your internal list looks like but if it is anything like mine, it usually serves to let us know where we failed, where we've fallen down. Lists are written when the kids are asleep or you've had a good night's sleep and a cup of coffee. The trouble is kids wake up and that impossible woman you work with gets louder and more obnoxious, by the minute and no amount of coffee in the world is going to help.

What about our spiritual lives? That can be the most judgmental list of all. When we assume that God's love is based on our behavior then you and I have set ourselves up for a devastating fall. I'll pray more. I'll share my faith at work. I'll read my Bible from Genesis to the maps!

So why did I title this book, *It's Okay Not to be Okay*? These words might sound a little bit like a bumper sticker to you but not to me. I want you to know that these words were fought for. They could sound like the waving of a white flag, surrender, six words of surrender but they're absolutely not. For me, they are words of victory. I let go of beating myself up trying to live a life that Jesus never asked me to live. The life my fresh out of seminary determined to save the world, to love the unlovely, get nine hours of sleep at night and never let God down self try to live for so, so long.

I don't know where you're at in life as you listen to this but if I could sit down with you for a little while, first of all I would say, "Take a deep breath in, hold it for a second and then let it out. Do it again and again." But then I'd tell you it really is okay not to be okay. That's why Jesus came.

I gave my life to Christ when I was 11 years old. As I sit here today with you, I'm 62; that's 51 years of falling down and getting back up; 51 years of trying to be worth loving; 51 years of doing the same things over and over hoping it will turn out differently this time. And yes, I do know that that's the definition of insanity. But hey, here's the great news. It's also 51 years of the faithfulness of God and this beautiful invitation from Christ to you and to me.

Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and

you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me. Watch how I do it. Learn -- and I love this -- the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything ill-fitting or heavy on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly: Matthew Chapter 11, the last two verses.

What a lovely place to start side by side with Jesus learning. It doesn't say you'll get it right the first time; learning to live freely and lightly.

I read an old Chinese proverb that said, "The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. Second best time is now." I like that. These are hope-filled words. They say that we get to start again and again and again. No matter what is true in your life right at this moment, I want to remind you that God loves you right now no matter what is going on around or indeed inside you. Life is a process. The beautiful news is that God is in it with us all the way. See he doesn't look for perfection in you and me, he sees that in Christ. You don't need to be okay because Jesus has made you right. He's paid the bill in full. He's covered our not okay-ness. "Okay" doesn't live here but a loving savior does, and all he looks for in us is a willingness to take the next step. We can do that together with him.

I've been asked so many times how I made it through the darkest moments in my life and honestly, as I said, that's why I wrote this book. I'm going to say it again -- this is not self-help. Self-help is no use at all. It is God help. So together in the next few shows we're going to look at eight simple steps to move forward one day at a time.

When I finally made peace with the fact that I'm not enough and that that's okay, everything -- everything in my life started to change. I want us to take a journey together that's practical, that's doable, something we can do every day and it starts with taking just one step, then the next, then the next.

I join with the Apostle Paul in this beautiful prayer for you right now: I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into

God's love and keep you strong. And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. May you experience the love of Christ though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God. Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen.

Now I don't know even as you're listening to that and you're saying, "You want me to start again? Do you know how many times I've started again?" No, I don't. But I do know this. I've met so many of you on the road or you leave me little notes on Facebook or different places where you've connected with me and I see this strand going through so many of our lives, and I include myself where we think that on our best days God loves us more. And we think that on our worst days God loves us less. But the truth is that when God looks at us he sees us through the shed blood of Christ. It's never ever been about you and I getting it right. We sit in the mud or the mess that we're in and that's what we see. It's not what God sees. When God looks down at you right now he sees the finished work of Christ. That's what Jesus said on the cross, "It is finished! It is accomplished. I've done everything I came to do."

How do you think it would change the church, how would it change your marriage, how would it change raising your children, how would it change our nation if every single man, woman and child who say they believe in Christ lived fully loved. How do you think that would shift us? Because so often we find it hard to extend grace to other people because we've never fully received the grace of Jesus Christ ourselves.

I would really encourage you in the next few days to start to carve out a little time where it's just you and the Lord. God speaks to us all in different ways and that's why it's beautiful. Some people enjoy the church service where we all raise our hands, others prefer a quieter, more liturgical style of worship -- that's just the beauty of how God has made us. But find a place that really speaks deep to your soul.

For me, I love being by water. I love being by the ocean. And for you, maybe it is taking a walk

somewhere in the forest. But don't you think it would be great if every single day we just began with this simple step of taking as much time as you got. If you're a busy mom, I understand that life is crazy. But just alone time with the Lord. And I don't mean your time where you're studying God's word or when you're praying faithfully, I mean time where you just sit with your Father.

Jesus called him our Papa, a very intimate relationship. And maybe you've not been told very kind things through your life. People talk about sticks and stones may break your bones but words will never hurt you. It's so untrue. Words can leave scars in our hearts. And maybe it is hard for you to believe that you get to come as you are.

I remember at a Women of Faith conference some time ago, I'd slipped out the back because the arena was packed, like 15,000 women and I just wanted a breath of fresh air. So I slipped out one of the back exits of the arena and there was a lady sitting and she had her Women of Faith bag beside her but she was sitting on the side walk and she was smoking a cigarette. So I just went over and sat down beside her. She immediately tried to hide the fact that she was smoking a cigarette.

I said, "You know what? You don't have to do that for me, and you don't have to do that for the Lord either. You get to bring all of who you are. Now, if you want to quit smoking and I think that's a good idea because it is not good for your health but it doesn't affect the heart of the Father toward you."

See I don't know, sometimes my heart aches for how little we understand the perfect, beautiful love of our father. Right now if you had a terrible argument with your husband or your wife or you said things to your children that you wish you could take back, and you have a list, an internal list of things you wish you could change and you've fallen down one more time, I want to remind you, that does not impact the heart of the Father toward you.

Do yourself a favor. Go read Romans Chapter 7 and then read on into the very beginning of Romans Chapter 8 and you'll realize we're all in the same boat and that's why Christ came to

captain us all the way home.

One of the things I love most about being at *LIFE Today* is the outreaches that we have. Many of you have told me that that's your favorite thing. Well, we get to do something pretty special every year and it might seem like I'm coming a little early talking about Christmas but I think once you maybe watch this piece we have to show you you'll understand why, and that you and I get to make a big difference for children. Watch this.

On the mission field

Ralph: One of the things I've noticed is 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 know the solution to these hardships is a simple pair of shoes.

Tammy: You think it is just a pair of shoes but it is so much more than that. What this represents is so much more. It could save and spare his very life. Think about it. Even a little cut that he could get on his foot, stepping then into a bad source of water and infect it.

And so what do we do about it? A simple pair of shoes that really costs very, very little can change a life one child at a time. These little ones are in desperate need. They were so excited walking into this room thinking I get a new pair of shoes.

Ralph: You can be a blessing today by giving a child like Jahdu his very first pair of shoes. So please partner with us 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: Can you imagine that? Can you imagine your child never having had a pair of shoes? I was cleaning out my son's closet the other day because he is at college now and there's a lot of things he doesn't need. And I looked at all the different shoes that he had over the years that now don't fit him but I never had to think, I can't afford to get a pair of shoes.

And I've been in those countries where children are walking over rough, rough terrain, they're cutting their feet and then they go into this dirty water. That's where they get so many diseases. It literally can save a child's life. I don't know about you but sometimes I think that at Christmastime the amount of spending can be kind of overwhelming.

Wouldn't it be amazing to shift the dynamic in all of our families? If we decided that some of the money that we were going to spend on things that we don't really need and probably won't really use or wear and decided to change the life of a child. And we do it -- it's very, very economical. For \$3.60, that's all it takes to make one pair of shoes. So if you could spare \$36 that's ten pairs of shoes. Maybe you can do \$72, 20 pairs of shoes. Or \$180 is 50 pairs of shoes. Can you imagine that? Can you imagine the look on the faces of these children on Christmas morning and you're saying, "Hey, we're not at Christmas yet."

But no, we want to be able to get them all in and get them shipped. I can't imagine the joy in the mother's eyes as they're able to put the very first pair of shoes on a child. I had the privilege of doing it and it is amazing to watch the children dance around.

Even as believers I think sometimes Christmas has become so kind of corrupt and self-indulgent. We run up debt and we do all sorts of stuff. We overeat. I want to change that and I really invite you to join me in this. Think how that would impact your own children if you're saying, "Hey, we're just going to take some of our Christmas budget and here's what we're going to do."

Now if you're able to give a larger gift, this is something my husband and I are going to do this Christmas. If you're able to give \$1,000 then that's 275 pairs shoes -- that's like a whole village!

Don't you think it will feel great to sit around with your family on Christmas morning thinking, there's a whole village of children who have shoes for the very first time?

So please, please join me. Would you give the very best gift possible? You can call now, you can go online. Ten pairs of shoes, \$36, you can't buy a pair of shoes for that but we can change the life of children all around the world. It is going to be an exciting Christmas. Would you join me? Would you do it now? Thank you!

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

Tammy: It's a great day when you can give "unto the least of these." I have hung out in this village all afternoon and I could not wait for this moment to be honest with you. But I've had a chance to play with the children. We've hung out and I've played at their playground with them. But you would not imagine what playground they play on. It was filled with broken glass, broken tin cans, all kinds of debris, trash, animals everywhere, fecal matter everywhere. And I'm watching the kids play in this stuff. It was just awful. We would never allow our children to play in an atmosphere like that. But that's all they have in this village and they were the happiest children I've ever seen.

Yet even in that moment we witnessed before our very own eyes a little boy stepping into something and cutting his foot. The reason why is because you'll look around and you see that most of these kids don't even have shoes -- not hardly one of them. If they do, they're broken apart and falling apart. It's just not a good scene.

So let's do something special this time of year. It's not just about a pretty pair of shoes, it's so much more than that. It is really about the quality of life and something so simple as putting on a brand-new pair of shoes on their feet that will protect their feet whether it is infection, cuts, hook worm, whatever it is, it is going to protect their life. It is so simple. Let's do it. Let's make a difference one child at a time. They're a perfect fit!

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: Thank you so much. If the line's busy please call back. For any gift at all, this is our little shoe for Christmas this year. Also, I would love to send you a copy of my new book, *It's Okay Not to be Okay*. So feel free to ask for that.

And also, for that \$1,000 gift, do you know that that will provide two children with life-altering surgery, cleft/lip and palate. We can do that, \$500 for a child. So thank you. Let's make this a Christmas where the people of God are impacting where there is the most need.

I'm so grateful for you joining us on *LIFE Today*. I look forward to being with you next time. God bless you!

Begin video clip

Announcer: Are you concerned about your family being ill-equipped to manage resources when you pass away? Do you want to leave a legacy gift that impacts the lives of others? As a free service to our friends and partners, *LIFE Planning Services*, a ministry of *LIFE Outreach International*, is here to help with your estate planning needs and chart your financial future. Do not put off this important step to protect your loved ones and leave a lasting legacy! Contact *LIFE Planning Services* today!

End of clip