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Week 31: WFL
Randy Robison and Sheila Walsh
Max Lucado

Sheila: Hi! I'm Sheila Walsh. Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm here with Randy Robison and we are very excited. One of my favorite authors on the planet is here with us. I've read every single thing, I think, that he's ever written. But his new book, *Unshakable Hope: Building our lives on the promises of God*, I think is one of his most profound. Would you help me welcome Max Lucado?

Max: Thank you.

Randy: Good to have you back.

Max: Thank you. It's good to see you.

Sheila: I want to ask you perhaps the most obvious question at first, Max. What made you write this particular book?

Max: Well, you know I'm a pastor and so all of my books emerge from lessons that I prepare for our church. And then all of the lessons I prepare for our church hopefully emerge from the leading of the Lord as I visit with people.

I began to sense more and more people battling a sense of despair; that coupled with a statistic that I came across that said that the rate of suicides has increased 24% in the last 18 years. I know that's a complex issue and I sure don't want to oversimplify it. But between just the conversations I had of people saying, "I don't have any -- I don't feel good. I don't feel any encouragement anymore." -- increasing number of people battling with bouts of depression or extended sense of feeling like I can't solve life. And then that statistic just came together and I said I think we just need to talk about hope because at the heart of it all is what people need. So that's really where this came from is how can I help people find hope?

Randy: You're a pastor and yet you're talking about the suicide rate increasing, a lack of hope; are you seeing this in the church as well?

Max: We do. We do. I wish I could say I never have to officiate a funeral of a suicide

victim but I've done more than my share. Again, that's a complex issue -- it is very complex. We do live in an era that I think is seeing the firstfruits of a secularistic generation, a generation in which we've publicly reduced the image or the presence of God, or the suggestion of God in the public forum making it more and more difficult.

And so what are the consequences of growing up in a society that demeans or dismisses the presence of God in the public circle? Could it be that we're sensing that one of the casualties of a secularistic society is a lack of hope? Because if you suck God out of the picture, out of the conversation then your fundamental answers to important questions are very difficult to answer: What's the meaning of life? What happens after we die? What's the purpose of life? And you know your job and your looks and your new car can only answer that so long. So maybe we're seeing that.

So my thinking is, in some ways, I want to just keep bringing back to the public conversation there is hope. There really is. There is legitimate hope. And not only is there hope, there is an *Unshakable Hope*. There is a hope you can build a life on; so that's where this all came from.

Sheila: You talk in your book about as being heirs of the promise. I'm imagining some of our listeners think how do I access those promises for myself?

Max: The big idea of this book is to build your life on promises that God gives us in the Bible. We can either build our life on problems or pain or we can build our lives on promises. That sounds like a good sermon outline; doesn't it?

[Laughter]

But we do. We either build a life, this is my problem. I'm going through a divorce or I've lost my job or pain, I was raised in a broken home, or I live in a difficult condition. So we define our lives by that. And I can see why people do that.

But there is a better option. The Bible has over 7,000 promises -- over 7,000 promises and I wrote a chapter for every one in that... No! I'm just kidding.

Sheila: It's a long book! It's an encyclopedia.

Max: It takes up a whole library. No, I just pick 14 of my favorite. But the big idea is to develop your own list of promises. Whenever there is a problem, find a promise to match it. Whenever there is a problem, rather than build your life upon it, find a promise to match it.

You talked about the promise in Romans Chapter 8 that we're heirs of God. That's a promise! That means I stand to inherit everything that my Lord Jesus Christ has. I'm seated at the very right hand of God. So whenever I feel deficient, which can be quite often, whenever I feel tired, whenever I feel like I don't have wisdom, rather than stand on that problem, I think what God would prefer we do is stand on a promise. Well, wait a second. Okay, I may feel deficient but God promises I'm an heir of God so I'm going to stand on that promise. It's a mental decision. It is moving it from head to heart and saying okay, I'm moving right here and I'm going to stand on that promise.

Sheila: I love the intentionality of that. I think that's probably what Paul meant in Ephesians when he talked about take out the sword of the spirit which is the Word of God. On my son's college campus, he is a student at Texas A&M and he said that one of his roommates was trying to make an appointment with a counselor, the waiting list was six months. Why do you think there is such despair among young people, Max?

Max: I think one of phenomena of young people that the younger generation is facing today is social media and competition in the job market. They're graduating from the job market with unspeakable college debt. I mean just -- I'm getting so old, I'm telling those stories my dad used to, "Back when I was a kid..."

[Laughter]

It was, I think \$19 an hour, Sheila to go to college at a private school. And you could go to a public school like the University of Texas or Texas Tech for almost a sneeze. It was nothing. Now, as you know, it's --

Sheila: A sneeze has gotten bigger.

Max: A sneeze has gotten bigger! Yeah! So they come out of... many of them come out of college with just unbearable college debt. Add to that, though, this whole layer, this social media phenomena of being compared, keeping up with the number of posts, Facebook issues, it's not an easy time to be alive. But I do think the big thing is the secularization of society. I really do.

Randy: I tend to think that those things are almost symptomatic of the real disease because when you've got that foundation, well, you can even deal with debt; that God has promises on dealing with debt. When you've got maybe some insecurities, well, there's promises on that. I like you pointing back to the foundational things because they can carry us through anything.

I'm curious, and you'll appreciate this question I think based on some conversations we've had. When you look at the 7,000 promises, not all of them are necessarily for us specifically. Many of them were specific to specific people in the Bible. How do we look at the promises and say, "Okay, that's for me?" Or maybe that was for a set time; right?

Max: Exactly. For example, one of the promises we look at in this particular book is from the book of Acts where the apostle Paul says, "God has set a day in which you will judge the world." Okay, so that's a universal promise; that's a promise that applies to every human being who has ever lived. I think that allows me to have a deeper understanding of history on a timeline; that whenever I feel like the world is out of control, I can turn to a promise like that and say, "Okay, God has set a day in which he will judge the world."

There is a judgment coming and so when I see evil out of control and part of me wants to lash out I can say many of the promises kind of make me feel good but some of them are sobering. So that evil is going to be punished. There is a reckoning for that evil. And so I don't think for a second that God is twiddling his thumbs or sitting on his hands. God has set a day in which he will judge the world. So not... That's a great point, Randy. Not all the promises are focused on followers of Christ. They're universal and many of the promises don't necessarily make me feel good, they just help me to know God has everything under control.

Randy: My follow-up to that is while we're reading these promises in scripture and figuring out how they apply and understanding sort of the nature of God through all these promises, how important is it for us to hear that promise for ourselves from God through the Holy Spirit?

Max: I appreciate you asking that because while they're spoken for everybody haven't we all experienced those times in which a verse just penetrates us and the Holy Spirit takes that verse and touches our heart with it? I can remember almost where I was sitting when I came across the significance of Romans 8:1: There is now therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. I just stared at those two words, *no condemnation*. Are you serious? You mean even when I condemn myself there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus? So it penetrated me and it shaped my life. But I'm sure I'd heard that passage but it was just the mess I'd made of my life at that particular time that made it come alive.

Sheila: One of the things I love that you talk about in the book, and recently on a trip to Australia I read a story about a gentleman, a brilliant scientist. But he flew to

Switzerland where he could choose to end his life. You talk about being made in the image of God and how that impacts how we treat every other human being. How we treat life.

Max: A person might say that the first promise in the Bible is God's statement, "Let us create mankind in our image." That doesn't begin or end with a promise but it has embedded within it a promise that says every single human being is God's idea and that God doesn't have bad ideas. That every single human being bears, regardless of their view of God, God's view of that person is you bear the image of God.

Now I believe the purpose of life is to have that image fostered, allow it to flourish, to allow all of the varnish to get rubbed away so that image can come forth. But there are those people who spend their whole life telling God there is no God; even they though, still have the potential to be image bearers of God. They've denied it and they suppressed it.

So I think then that that is the greatest statement of the value of a human being right there and the value of a human life; and that is that we're created in the image of God, we're created in our mother's womb. Already as we're conceived, we're bearing the image of God, whether we're legal or illegal, we're bearing the image of God, whether we're rich or poor, we're bearing the image of God. So every day is an opportunity for us to live forth that image. So my life is in his hands.

So imagine a society that would take that promise seriously. I would view every human being differently; right? And especially the human beings with whom I differ. Even though I had legitimate differences from them I would still respect them and enter into honest, civil discourse which is something we need today because I think, okay, that's still a human being. He may be completely wrong but I still see that person as a human being. And that, I think, would also allow us to see every day in a different way. We would see every day as an opportunity to live out that image.

Sheila: When I think of the way that social media has become over the last year or so where people are so angry and even within the body of Christ, tearing each other apart and it seems as if we've lost that kind of ground zero of understanding that each person is made in the image of God and has value. We seemed to have lost the sense of holiness and tear into each other. But honestly, Max, I'm praying that people will get a hold of this book and kind of reawaken to here's what we know to be true. Here's what we can stake our life on. I loved the fact that scripture says, "God is not man that he should lie." You can stake your life on the promises of God.

Max: And there are so many promises. Again, there are over 7,000.

Sheila: How did you choose the ones that you chose?

Max: I chose these because they've either meant a lot to me personally or I found myself returning to them over and over in conversations with people.

Psalm 30 and verse five is one: Weeping may come in the night but joy comes with the morning.

That's a go-to passage for me. When I do speak at funerals or when I sit down and talk to someone who is burying someone they love, there is no need at all to tell somebody you shouldn't weep. Just the opposite; weeping comes with life -- it does! Weeping comes. But the promise is joy is coming. What people need to hear in difficult times is it's okay to weep but don't despair. Night may be here but night will not win the day.

Now, if I just say that, who -- yeah, that's a nice thought, Max. But if God's word says that and the power -- like you pointed out, the Holy Spirit, the Word of God is the sword of the spirit. So putting the Word of God, depositing the Word of God in someone's heart is like putting a vitamin in a body. I don't know exactly how it works but I just know there is something good that's going to happen because of the power -- there is power in that word.

So when I speak a promise into someone's life, that's admonition. It's high octane encouragement. I'm putting something in their life that's maybe on a time capsule, and at the right time it is going to be released and the Holy Spirit will release that in their life.

Randy: What do you think one of the barriers is to believing God's promises? It is almost like we choose hopelessness over hope by not fully believing or understanding this. Why do we do that?

Max: The devil.

[Laughter]

I just think the devil, he doesn't want us to. I know it may come couched in more of an intellectual answer than that but I think it all comes back to Satan doesn't want us to. To those people, I just say, "Why don't you just try it? Just try building your life on a few promises and see what happens."

This weekend my wife came home with a new trash can and you just wave your hand over the top of it and the lid opens. I don't know where this world is coming to when we can't open a trash can! But you just wave your hand over it and it's got a little sensor and the lid opens.

I said, "Honey, that's not going to work."

She said, "Go in there and try it."

I tried it and it opened! Maybe that's what we need to do with promises. Just try one on -- try on "All things work together for the good of those who love him and are called according to his purpose."

So next time the world feels chaotic, get on your knees, and pray this promise. Say, "Lord, you said all things are going to work together. I'm going to stand on this promise. And Lord, I'm going to trust you."

And then ten minutes later when you forget just recite it, write it on an index card, tape it on your mirror, put it in your purse, put it in your pocket. Read it 150 times a day until it becomes a part of your life.

Jesus said, "This is like the man who built his house upon the rock." The storms came but he wasn't washed away. Most people are like those who build their houses on sand, and those are people whose lives are built on problems, whose lives are built on pain. They're building their lives on circumstances. But there is a quorum of people, and the Lord knows our society could use this quorum of people who are building their lives on a rock, on something solid.

We're not saying no problems are going to come. Just the opposite; I think the devil puts us in his cross hairs when we try to follow. But I do believe that we can build our lives on these promises and we'll still be standing.

Randy: I think one of the ways that we are able to demonstrate the hope that we have is by being hope for other people. I know you've seen this.

Sheila: Oh absolutely, Randy! One of the things I love so much about being involved in what we do here is to be able to take the kind of hope that Max talks about and see it applied in situations where people literally are hopeless. There are people around the world right at this very moment praying simply for one glass of clean water for their children. But the amazing thing is that you and I can get to be an answer to that prayer.

Would you watch this?

On the mission field

[Rooster crowing]

Announcer: Life -- carefree, nurturing, loving, secure. Universal needs for children and parents alike, yet in many places of the world such qualities are threatened every day by a simple and basic need -- water!

Open Captions:

>> During the dry season, water is very hard to find. But our water source, year round is dirty and diseased. Sometimes our whole family gets sick. As a mother, it is so painful to be unable to provide for your kids. When my daughter was three years old, I gave her the water. It caused her to start vomiting. She became very, very sick. She had diarrhea and her stomach was bloated. I didn't know what to do.

Announcer: At that point, nothing could be done. Her daughter fell unconscious and never again awoke. Nown knew the cause.

Open Captions:

>> No words can express the regret I feel for giving her that water...
But what choice did I have? Now, I'm so afraid the water will also take my son. If I lose my son I will have nothing to live for.

Announcer: The lifesaving solution of clean water is so incredibly simple. However, it is one we can only deliver with your help today.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: I can't imagine the agony of a mom like that who feels guilty because she gave her child water. But the alternative was to give the child no water and to die from that kind of death is very, very painful.

I've been there. I've walked with these moms. I remember one morning when I walked with one mom and her two daughters and followed them for like a mile to where they were to get their water and I couldn't believe. It looked to me like a place where just the animals would be. In fact, just slightly further down there were some pigs in the water

and that's where she was gathering water to give to her children. When I looked in, I put my hands in it and it was filthy. It's not just dirt, it is disease ridden as well.

I think, as long as the body of Christ is on this planet, there should be absolutely no reason why any mother should have to get on her knees on a dirt road and beg God for clean water. If this wasn't fixable, we wouldn't even bother showing it to you. But I have been there. This is so fixable. All we have to do is put a clean water well in that village. Do you know that that will serve 1,000 people for 70 years! That's why we call it Water for LIFE. This is so doable. You know, Randy, we can put a whole water well in for \$4800.

Randy: Sure! And some of you could actually do that right now and we would ask you to prayerfully consider it. Call the number on the screen, go to the website. Others of you could partner with people and we'll combine that. It doesn't take much; \$48, in fact will provide enough water for ten people for like you say 70 years which is virtually a lifetime.

So there is something you can do and we would just ask you to pause for a moment and say, "Lord, what would you have me do?" Because we really can change lives. Sheila, we've been doing this for awhile. My parents started doing this many, many years ago. We are going to cross our threshold with your help of 6,000 wells around the world. Our goal for this year alone is to drill another 400 wells in over 15 nations. You want to talk about having a huge impact in the name of Jesus Christ; this is not just talking the gospel which we do, proudly, boldly, this is demonstrating the gospel which we also do.

We invite you to be a part of that demonstration of the gospel around the world. We can change lives. We can restore health, we can save lives.

Sheila: Not only that, Randy, we'll go there. We'll go there like in the next few months and we'll film it and we'll bring it back and we'll show you -- we'll show you that mom with hope in her eyes instead of despair because you cared. So please, go to your phone right now. Make the best gift possible. Go online and together let's change the world in Jesus' name.

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

On the mission field

James: These are beautiful children, beautiful families that have come here to contaminated water sources where people are dying of diseases from contaminated water.

Well, we need every person watching to do your part in helping provide families like this and children like this water sources, non-contaminated water, clean water and every time we do it, we inspire others to join us. If you would help drill one well. Maybe you could drill a well or join one or two other people to drill one.

So would you be that source of inspiration and help by making the best gift you can today?

End of clip

In the studio

Randy: Do go to the phones or go online, give the best gift you can. We really can make such a huge difference with your help. Sheila, I think we should do something extra special for those that respond today.

Sheila: Absolutely! If you go to your phone and make a gift, for any gift we're going to make Max's book available to you, *Unshakable Hope*. Get one for yourself, get one for your kid who's in college, and get one for your neighbor.

Max, I just want to say thank you so much, not just for being here but for writing this, for giving us hope based on the Word of God. Thank you!

Randy: Absolutely! Will you thank Max for being on *LIFE Today*?

Max: Thank you! It's a great honor.

Randy: It's always a pleasure to have you. Always so good to have you. It's always good to have you join us here on *LIFE Today*. Join us every day. And if you need to you can catch us online at LifeToday.org.

Sheila: See you next time!