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Week 40: Mission: Rescue Life

Sheila Walsh – "It's Okay Not to be Enough" #2

Sheila: I'm Sheila Walsh. Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I was at a church a few weeks ago and at the end a gentleman said to me, "How do you define a Christian?"

I said, "Well, for me it is pretty clear. It is somebody who is in relationship with Jesus Christ; who understands that they need him, that he is the only way that we can access to God our Father."

He said, "Well, I've just been thinking. Wouldn't it be enough if I just faithfully come to church? Because I've been coming to church all my life. I was brought up to come to church."

It took me a little while to help him understand that Jesus doesn't have this kind of notebook where he does perfect attendance. That's not what he wants for you and me. He wants relationship.

I want to be clear that when I wrote my book, *It's Okay Not to be Okay*, it's not a self-help, feel-good-about-ourself book. Those books might help for a moment but when the first storm hits every single word would vanish like the morning mist. What I want us to look at is this. What does God say about who we are? Does God expect us to have it altogether? And why do we always feel that there's something not quite right with everything.

I want to say something upfront that is really important to me. This book, it is not about feeling better about ourselves. It is not that at all. It is about understanding how much we are loved.

I love the way the message translates Mark chapter 8, verses 34 through 37. It says this: Calling the crowd to join his disciples, he said, "Anyone who intends to come with me has to let me lead.

You're not in the driver's seat; I am. Don't run from suffering; embrace it, follow me and I will show you how. Self-help is no help at all. Self-sacrifice is the way, my way, to saving yourself, your true self. What good would it do to get everything you want and lose you, the real you? What could you ever trade your soul for?"

The bottom line is that we were never designed to be everything to everyone. Life is hard and we all face problems. Those who say they don't have any problems are doing one of two things. Number one, hiding their problems. Number two, pretending they don't have any. I believe we actually have three choices. First we can stay in hiding; that's a very hopeless place to rest. It leads to feelings of despair, believing that nothing will ever get better. Despair can lead to depression or anger. It makes us close off from relationships and withdraw.

Have you ever been there? I know I have. Perhaps you're in a relationship right now that's not working and you don't know what to do. You've tried to make changes and the other person doesn't respond so you get frustrated and angry. Maybe you're in a job right now that you don't like and you see no way out. You feel trapped.

So the second thing is we pretend we don't have problems. I find -- this will sound harsh but I find a level of denial in the body of Christ deeply troubling. The church should be the best place on earth to show up as you really are and tell the truth. But so often it is the opposite. We smile and say we're fine as we drag our weary hearts and unbearable burdens to the church doors. And all too often we leave the same way.

Why do we pretend to be okay? Perhaps it's because we're ashamed of what's true. We don't want people to think less of us. We're afraid they'll reject us. We think we're supposed to have it altogether because everyone else seems to be okay.

Well, I did that for years. When you host a live Christian talk show as I did for five years on the 700 Club, but inside you're barely hanging on by a thread, what do you do? I smiled to cover up my pain even though I was literally dying a little more inside every day. You can be well-known but desperately alone. Pretending that we're okay when we're not leads to anxiety

and fear. We're afraid anyone will see who we really are.

But I discovered a third way. Have a gut level, honest, pour-your-heart-out conversation with God. I held it together until I couldn't anymore. I remember a night in my bedroom when I literally soaked the carpet with my tears. I was bone tired from pretending to have it altogether; from trying to be okay. So I basically let God have it. I told him I was afraid and I was angry and I was tired and I was sad and I was lonely and confused -- and everything else I could think of. I didn't edit myself. I just let it all out. I believe my final words in that prayer were, "I can't do this anymore." And rather than feeling rejected by my broken outburst I felt as if God bent down and said, "I know. I've been waiting. You don't have to be enough."

Well, if that sounds too good to be true, would you watch this?

Begin video clip

Sheila: It's okay not to be enough because God doesn't ask us to be enough. He wants to move in -- move into our hearts, move into our homes, invade our lives. I saw a hashtag on I think it was on Twitter recently; and it was hashtag Jesus. I'm sure the person meant it as a good thing but it made me think, Jesus is not a hashtag. He's not something we add on to the end of our life, to the end of our statements. I mean we try sometimes in our own strength, if you're struggling with any kind of issue in your home you think, I'll do everything I can to fix it. And then it is like, Lord, help me!

Jesus is not a hashtag. Even Paul confessed that he struggled with this. There is an amazing passage in Second Corinthians 12, I don't know if you've read it recently but this is what it says. Paul actually talks about a miraculous experience he had with God where he was caught up into another world which he called "paradise." That word *paradise* comes from a Greek -- a Persian word, sorry, and it means a walled garden. When a Persian king wanted to convey a great honor on a man or a woman he would invite him to walk in the garden with him. It is a beautiful picture of a very intimate time that Paul had with God and he was not allowed to write about what he saw. But then Paul had to come right back down to earth.

A few verses later, right after that, he writes about a thorn in the flesh. Remember that? Second Corinthians 12, 8 through 9 Paul says this: Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away. Each time he said, "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness."

The word used for thorn in this passage, a Greek word, skolops: S-K-O-L-O-P-S. And it can be translated "thorn" but equally, it can be translated *stake*. The image is like a stake driven into your heart. I mean when you think about it, it is amazing that Paul would say this. Think about it. He had that incredible encounter with the risen Christ on the way to Damascus. And then he was taken to a place in a vision so beautiful he was not allowed to speak of it. But here he is saying, "God, please take this away. I'm not enough like this. I'm not okay."

Despite everything that Paul had experienced he was just like you and me. But God said, "My grace is enough. My strength works best in weakness."

It is interesting, grace is a gift unique to those of us in relationship with Christ. No other religion offers grace. I was in Cambodia on a recent trip and I just want to take a moment here to thank you for the way that you have invested into the life of the ministries here at *LIFE Today*. I've had a very glorious privilege of going to Angola, Africa and I've visited the malnutrition clinics where mothers bring in their little ones, usually when it is almost too late because they live in very remote villages. When we go there we have to camp in tents because there is no roads near. And so a mother, if she sees her child getting sick she'll do everything she can. And then the last thing she can do, is if she has a chicken, she can sell the chicken so she can get on the back of a bike and take her child to the clinic. And usually by the time she gets there it is too late.

But I've also gone the next day to the villages where we have our feeding program in place and what a difference! You see children the way they should be, smiling and laughing. Literally, that first bowl of food because it is not just -- I tasted it before I fed it to the children because I thought, I should at least be willing to taste it. It looks kind of like oatmeal but it is not. It is a very unique blend of food and vitamins that children in that area of Africa need. And literally, from the first bowl of food, it is as if they have turned the corner from death to life.

I've been in the villages where we've put water wells in but I've also walked with moms and their children, sometimes for two or three miles to the place where they're getting the water. I remember the first time I was horrified because there was animals in the water and the water was filthy! I watched this mom gathering it up in a bucket and pouring it into a glass for her child. And through an interpreter I asked her, "Don't you worry about this water?"

And this amazing mom said, "Listen. I've buried two children because of this water but this is all we've got. If I don't give her this, I've got nothing."

So to be able to come back and to share that with you guys and to see this awesome response and to go back to those villages and see a water well there for the first time, it's amazing.

But I think one of the things that's probably the closest to my heart is our Rescue Life where we go in and rescue young girls caught up in sex trafficking. That's why we were in Cambodia just a few months ago. We'd been filming that morning in the worst slum that I have ever seen in my life; you had to be so careful where you walked because it was just planks of wood over a garbage dump. And when the sun shines the stench is unbelievable.

So we did some filming, we talked to some moms and to their children and then I stepped out for a little bit because it was just -- sometimes it is just overwhelming when you see little ones like that. But when I stepped out the back where I hadn't been before, there was this huge temple. I mean just with golden domes. I mean it was magnificent and it looked new. So I called for our interpreter and I said, "Can you explain that to me? That's right beside the slum? Why don't the priests use some of the money to help the poor people here?"

Here's what he said. He said, "The poor should not be helped because it is their fault they're poor. If poor people will take the little they have and give it to the temple priests then they might be reincarnated in a better situation next time."

They call it karma. No mercy. No grace. No hope.

When I was a seminary in London, England I used to visit a church called All Souls and listen to the marvelous John Stott preach. This is how he described grace. He said, "Grace is love that cares and stoops and rescues. Grace is the opposite of karma. We get what we do not deserve."

That's the grace of God: Love, mercy, and forgiveness. In fact, Hebrews 4:16 says this: Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in time of need.

Paul goes on to say not only is God's grace enough for us, he says God said, "My strength is made perfect in weakness."

It doesn't say if you're a little short of your own strength some days, Paul, I can make up the difference. No! It makes it clear that we're never supposed to be strong on our own. It is when we acknowledge our absolute weakness that God's strength shines through. That's hard. We don't want to be weak and I think particularly, and I don't mean this unkindly, but I think particularly men struggle with that. There's something in men where they want to take care of things and they want to fix things. Like sometimes I'm talking to my husband about something, I'm telling him something I'm concerned about and he is already walking out the door to fix it. I'm like, "No! I just want to talk about it. I don't want you to fix it. I just want to talk about it."

I think that's a beautiful thing that they want to care for their wives and their families. But sometimes, for each one of us, we have to come to the understanding that we're weak without Christ. And actually, when we understand that, his strength is made perfect.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: I believe the first step in moving forward is simply to tell God the whole truth.

Whatever it is, God knows already and invites you to take a walk with him in the garden and tell

him the whole truth.

I love this scripture: O my people, trust in him at all times. Pour out your heart to him, for God is our refuge.

I love the way that Psalm begins. David writes at the beginning of the Psalm, "I wait quietly before God for my victory comes from him. He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress where I will never be shaken."

We live in such a noisy world it is hard to be quiet. It's become a discipline of mine to intentionally quiet myself before God and remind my soul who he is. Starting anything new in life is hard. The first step is usually the toughest. It is a choice, a commitment to change. And even if that first step is just a baby step you'll be further along than where you began. Ask God to help you. Invite the Holy Spirit to guide you.

Have you ever thought about writing God a letter? Now you might be surprised by what pours out when you do. Don't edit yourself, just start. Tell God everything. There is something about the practice of writing that engages a different part of your brain and if it helps, read it out loud or read it silently, yet in his presence. You might want to find a quiet place to take a walk. Meditate on a scripture and let the truth sink deep into your soul.

One that I love to meditate on is Psalm 61, verse two: From the ends of the earth I call to you. I call as my heart grows faint. Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.

Even when David was exhausted, soul-weary, he called out to God. I don't know where you are right now. You may have given up on God and yourself but he has not given up on you. You may be afraid to hope again but hope begins like a tiny drop of rain.

My prayer for you right now, as you keep moving forward with the Lord, even if it feels as if every step is so small that you'll find yourself soaked to the skin in the grace and beauty of Christ.

I remember that grace is unmerited favor. We can't earn it. We don't deserve it. We simply receive it. Having been soaked to the skin myself in the grace of God, it made me want so much to be able to reach out to young girls who are in trouble right now. It will seem a little overwhelming but you and I can change everything. Watch this.

On the mission field

Open Captions: Over 4.5 million women, girls and boys are currently victims of sex trafficking.

Sheila: It's really easy to get overwhelmed here. You just see the tremendous need, the numbers of girls who need help and sometimes allowing yourself, allowing myself to be overwhelmed, it kind of shuts you down. But then as I read the way that Christ was with people, Jesus is a people person and Jesus said the Son of Man has come to seek and to save those who are lost. That word *lost* in the Greek means ruined, devastated, broken beyond repair.

Song:

Come to me
I'll be your refuge
Hide under my wing
Rest your head
And don't you worry
Don't you worry, dear

Sheila: I believe with everything in me that Christ is able to reach the most lost, the most devastated. Do you remember what it says in Romans eight? Paul says, "I'm convinced that nothing, not death, nor life, not heaven, not hell can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Song:

Come to me
I'll be your refuge
Hide under my wing
And don't you worry
Don't you worry, dear

Sheila: Jesus' message has not changed. He hears every voice in the middle of a noisy crowd

and he says, "Bring them to me." That's what we're doing. We want to bring them one by one to Jesus and together, you and I can do that.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: These trips have changed me. So many parts of Southeast Asia, I had no idea what's really going on. I think somewhere in the back of my mind I thought that some of the girls involved in the sex industry over there, it was almost like a choice they had made. Absolutely not! What we discovered on our last trip were girls that were 10, 11, 12, 13 who have been kidnapped from their families and literally, they're prisoners. And if they don't do what they're supposed to do, if they don't smile while they're with these older men, they are beaten and they're just little girls!

This is so close to my heart. Our whole strategy here because we need to strategize. The people who run the sex industry, sex trafficking, they are very organized and they have a lot of money. So in Jesus name we'd better be just as organized and as well funded.

So what we want to do is this. It is a three-pronged thing. It is reach, to go into the villages and teach children when some guy shows up in your village and tells you, "Oh come and see this. Come and see that." Don't do it! Scream as loudly as you can. So we want to reach them before they're ever trafficked.

Then rescue; for those who have already fallen into that trap, we want to go in and literally get them out from the pit of hell.

And then restore. We saw some children walking up stairs there at a school. That is our House of Destiny where we take these children and allow them to discover you're not a number tattooed to your thigh. You're a daughter, you're a son of the King of kings.

So we shared that with some of our partners. And at the moment we have a \$320,000 matching

gift. That is amazing! Because really, to get one child out rescued and restored, it costs us about \$128. But if you're able to even give \$64 that will be matched by one of our partners. So you will have, together with them, reached, rescued and restored one child. If you're able to do a whole \$128, that will now be matched to rescue two children. \$1280 will be matched to rescue 20 children.

It's overwhelming, I know. But I have heard the cries of these children. I've held them as they've wept. I've listened to their questions. In fact, we've had the privilege while we're in there and talking with them and loving on them to say, "Do you know there is a God in heaven who loves you?" We've had the privilege of praying with some of these children as they give their lives to Christ.

So this is not -- it's not just combating an evil somewhere far off in the world. It is bringing children from the kingdom of darkness, rescuing them, and bringing them in to the kingdom of light where they have a chance to find a relationship with Jesus and to be free.

So please will you join me? Will you go online, will you call that number on your screen? Will you give the very best gift possible and it will be matched and together, we will rescue these children who are dying to be rescued.

[Begin video clip]

Announcer: Behind the bright lights there is a darkness where a world of violence and sexual abuse runs rampant scarring the souls of millions of young children. With their bodies broken and hopes crushed, these children are trapped in a never-ending nightmare.

With your help, *Mission: Rescue Life* can shine the light of God's love in this dark world to reach, rescue and restore children and young people to the beauty God designed for them to enjoy. With a generous opportunity of a \$320,000 matching gift, your gift of \$128 to help rescue a child will be matched to help two children. Your \$64 gift will be matched to help rescue one child from the horrors of human trafficking. And a \$32 rescue gift will be doubled to \$64! With your gift of any amount today, we will send you the *Names of God* prayer journal. From Adonai to Yahweh, this journal is filled with beautiful photographs to help you reflect on 31 different names of God found throughout scripture. With your gift of \$128 or more, you'll receive the

Names of God Bible. This special edition NIV large print Bible is engraved with the many names of God; a beautiful reminder that the God we serve is infinitely good.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1,280 which will now help rescue 20 children 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

Sheila: Thank you so much! And for any gift at all, we will give you this beautiful prayer journal, *The Names of God*. If you're having a hard day, you remind yourself of who God is. And I also, for any gift, would love to send you my new book. I hope that it will be a blessing to you. But this is something we cannot allow this to happen on our watch. As long as we're the body of Christ on this planet, we cannot allow innocent children to be held captive. Let's be better than the bad guys. Let's do something in Jesus' name.

See you next time!