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Week 41: Mission: Rescue Life

Sheila Walsh

"Admit You're Stuck and Struggling"

Sheila: Hi! I'm Sheila Walsh. Welcome to *LIFE Today*. So I have a question for you. How are you? Like how do you normally respond to that question? Maybe you're driving to church on a Sunday morning and you just have this horrible argument with your husband or your wife or your children, and you walk through those doors and there's somebody there to greet you and they ask you, "How are you?" And so often we don't tell the truth. We say what we think people expect. We know that sometimes it just a kind of polite thing people say and they expect you to move on. But I wonder if right now, if Christ himself was sitting, looking at you, seeing you and asking you this question, how are you? What would you say?

One of the reasons that I wrote this new book, *It's Okay Not to Be Okay* was that I got a lot of people writing me for saying, "Thank you for sharing your struggle with depression. Thank you for talking about the darker side of things you've been through. It made me feel less alone." But then the question that kept coming was, "What now? What do I do now? If I feel stuck."

So that really was kind of what was behind two years of looking at my own life and looking back through my entries in my journals, looking at the things I'd written in my Bible of how God had, by his Holy Spirit, walked me through places where I felt like I was stuck. So I wanted to provide something that would give you like eight simple steps for moving forward. I wanted several things.

I spent a lot of time asking the Holy Spirit what I should do because I don't take it for granted when you choose to get a book of mine, I don't take that for granted, and that's a huge privilege. So I wanted to make sure it was daily, it was doable, and that rather than me sitting on a TV

screen or on a platform that it would be me holding out my hand and saying, "Come on! We can do this together. *It's Okay Not to Be Okay because Jesus has made us all right.*" How would that shift your life right now if you understood that? That as you are at this moment with the things you don't like about yourself, that God looks down on you and says, "He's mine -- she's mine!"

We had the privilege a little while ago to invite a bunch of people who have been very faithful supporters of the ministry here at *LIFE* for some time. We thought it would be kind of fun to have them come into the studio and me to do something a little different but to actually teach the eight steps and kind of walk an audience through. So I want to share that with you. So take a look at this.

Begin video clip

Sheila: I think the next step is admit where you're stuck and struggling -- admit where you're stuck and struggling. I read a great quote by Shauna Niequist that I love. Here's what she said, "When things fall apart the broken pieces allow all sorts of things to enter, and one of them is the presence of God."

It doesn't always feel that way, does it?

Traffic is bad in most cities at five o'clock, and Dallas, certainly, is no exception. I just left here one day, left *LIFE Today* studios, and I was sitting at a red light mentally going through everything I needed to do. Christian at that point was a junior in high school and he'd just hit another growth spurt so he needed new long pants. I needed to get my nails done because I was speaking somewhere that weekend, which reminded me I needed to pick up my dry cleaning for that weekend. And then I looked at the gas tank and I had no gas. I remember thinking, I'll do it all tomorrow! My tomorrow list was getting very long.

So I got home and I was unpacking some things and I turned to get something out of the freezer

and in that moment I felt as if somebody had stabbed me in the back. I stopped for a bit and held on and then it seemed to ease. So I thought, I must have pinched a nerve or something but it seemed to be okay so I didn't think about it. I was fine for a few days and then one morning as I was getting out of the car it was as if my back locked and I couldn't move. I couldn't get out of the car and I just didn't know what to do. So I sat there for a while and I just asked the Lord to help me. The pain eventually moved but it was getting worse and worse. I was having it every single day; pain shooting down my legs. This was about five years ago.

When it came to the stage that I was having trouble actually walking, Barry, my husband said, "Babe, you need to go and see a doctor." Well, my doctor referred me to a neurosurgeon. So over the next few weeks I had all the stuff; I had X-rays, I had an M.R.I. Then the doctor ordered a CAT scan with colored dye injected into the spine. So when he had all the results he called us back and he said, "Yeah, I'm really sorry here but you've got two disks that are almost gone and the nerves are being pinched between bone." He was suggesting that I would have back surgery.

I've heard -- I don't know about you but I've heard all sorts of horror stories about back surgery. A couple of friends of ours had gone through back surgeries and instead of them being more mobile they'd actually ended up much, much worse. So I said to him, "Is there anything else we could try first?"

He said, "Well, I can send you to a pain specialist and we could try cortisone shots." But it did nothing. Absolutely nothing.

The thing that was overwhelming to me was I was in a place in life where it seemed like lots of things were lining up. I had so many opportunities to go and speak. I was just so excited at the path that God had spread out before me and it felt suddenly like a door slammed in my face and I was left in the hallway.

Have you ever been there? It's just everything is going along well and things are progressing the way you hoped and suddenly, out of nowhere a door is slammed in your face and you're left

in the hallway.

I saw that in one of my dearest friends no so long ago. She has always struggled with her image and she is beautiful. I mean I think she is just amazing but she doesn't see herself that way. Then she met Mr. Right and they began dating for a while. It was so interesting, the minute he placed that ring on her finger it was as if it changed how she saw herself. It kind of erased all the messages she'd had for years. But then he broke it off. And I watched my beautiful friend wither like a flower that had been taken out of the water. Everything she had started to believe about herself was gone.

Maybe you've longed to be a mom. I had a really sad letter delivered to me here the other day and it was a young woman. She didn't give me her name and address and I think it is because she wanted to say what she really thought rather than what she thought was the right thing to say. She said, "I've tried for so many years, my husband and I have tried to get pregnant and couldn't. Then suddenly we discovered the amazing news that we were pregnant." And she said, "We got through my pregnancy and everything was great, and the baby lived for six weeks." I actually found myself on my knees reading her letter. You could hear the pain etched into every word because her theme was, "Why? Why would God do that? Why would God allow me to get pregnant only to snatch that little one away?"

There are so many things you may have faced, maybe you're facing them right now: The end of a friendship that you really valued, the loss of a job, maybe a divorce that you didn't see coming, or maybe, one of the hardest things of all, a child kind of cutting you out of their life, devastating health issues that just showed up out of nowhere.

One of the hardest things about those times is when it is as if a door slammed in our face is when we feel alone. If you have loved ones around, they can empathize for a while but people go on with their lives and you're left with the reality of what's no longer working.

So let me finish my back story as I'm obviously still walking. In the weeks that followed the cortisone shots not working, I found myself really pouring my heart -- I really learned that God is

big enough to handle what I really feel. I don't edit myself with God, I just pour my heart out. I had so many questions. What if I lose the ability to walk? What if I'll never be pain free again? What if my life that used to look like a wide open door is now going to be confined to the four walls of my own home? So I brought every real gut level honest question to the Lord. The answer was the same every time, "I'll be there. I'll be there. I'll be there."

I remember it was still dark when Barry and I arrived at the hospital that morning. You know how it is. They take you back and you get into your gown. You get your I.V. all set up. Barry was right beside me. But I have to tell you, Christ's presence was so palpable I felt as if I could take his hand. I know it sounds easy to say that now because obviously my surgery was successful. And I know it is easy to make great faith statements when we come to the end of the struggle or the end of the trial but here's what I want you to know and I give you my word, I had his peace in the not knowing -- when I didn't know. As I'm being wheeled into surgery that morning -- and I don't know -- I experienced the peace of Christ in the not knowing.

Now the outcome for you may have been different. Maybe you've gone through something and you're like, "Well, I'm happy for you but that's not the way things worked for me." Again, I look to the Apostle Paul. Here's what he said in Second Corinthians 4:17-18: For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen but on what is unseen. Because what is seen is temporary but what is unseen is eternal.

So how can we call what you're dealing with right now "light and momentary"? Two ways: We look around and we look up. I believe that God redeems every drop of our suffering. I believe that in God nothing is wasted. I believe that it is a beautiful thing that God can do with a broken life if you give him all the pieces.

Some of you have been through things I've never been. I can't help someone who has lost a child. I've not been there but if you have, you can speak words of comfort and peace that I can't. If you lost a job and it was your livelihood, I can't speak to that. If you've been there, and you see somebody else who is struggling, you can speak to that. If a spouse has walked out on you and

you thought, what on earth am I going to do? How am I going to get through this? I can't speak to that, but have you been through that? And God has met you in the middle of the mess? Then you absolutely can. Now if you struggle with depression or suicidal thoughts, I'm your woman.

See the thing is, nothing is wasted with God. When we offer up our brokenness to him, he meets us there. And then, as Second Corinthians said, we are able to comfort others with the same comfort with which we've been comforted.

Paul goes on to write, that's why we never give up. This is Second Corinthians 4:16-18. That's why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day. For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that far outweighs them all and will last forever! So we don't look at the troubles we can see now, rather we fix our gaze on what we cannot see. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.

So, acknowledge your struggle. Tell God how it feels to have a door slammed in your face. If you're in a place right now and you think, where are you? Tell him. And then hear God say to you, "I'm here. I'm here. I'm here." Jesus is the redeemer in the hallway.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: That's the truth. Wherever you find yourself right now, maybe you feel like you're stuck in that hallway and you've heard the slamming of the door and you think, God where are you? What I know in my own life, what I've walked through in my own life is the moments that seemed like the darkest, like the least hope-filled were some of the places where I encountered Christ in the most incredible way.

That was a little bit of that teaching but in this book, *It's Okay Not to Be Okay*: "Moving

forward one day at a time," I'll walk you through all these eight steps so that together we can be the men and women that God has called us to be.

There's something about the way we are as a nation at the moment that often I find myself really grieved because we hear so much anger, so much discussion, so much rhetoric that's really negative and polarizing. The one thing that should be a constant is the body of Christ in this nation -- in any nation. We should be the ones who are a city set on a hill, a light shining that's not covered up. No matter who is in office, no matter who is in the White House, no matter what's going on in the nation, no matter what you hear on the news, we do not take who we are from any of that. We take who we are from the Word of God which lets us know God is in control. Even when it seems like he's not, God is in control. He is sovereign. He's got your back! He knows your story and he will never ever leave you.

If we as God's children begin to live like that -- I love when Peter in his letter says, "Always be ready to give an answer for the reason of the hope that's within you." That implies that we have to live differently as God's children. That people would want to know, what is it about you when everything else in society is falling apart, you're different?

I'm going to tell you in a little bit how to get a hold of this book. I want to send it to every single one of you. But before that, I want to tell you about something that is so dear to my heart and to all of us here as a team at *LIFE*. We've had the opportunity, we call it *Rescue Life* to go to places where young girls, young guys are being held captive. And if we, as the body of Christ on this planet, at this time don't do something, then who will? It is our heart that we want to go to the darkest places and reach those young people. And then we want to rescue them and then we want to see them restored so that they know who they are as a child of God. So it's very moving, it's very exciting; so I want you to watch this.

On the mission field

Open Captions:

>> We were left homeless and in debt. When the people we owed money to started demanding payment, my mom asked me to go find work. My friend told me I could go work as a waitress. She took me to the owners of a bar. They gave me something to eat. After eating, I fell unconscious. When I awoke, I was being raped. My friend was gone. I felt so betrayed. I was so scared. I didn't understand what had happened. Then they began forcing me to sleep with three to four men every night. If I resisted, they beat me with electrical wire. And if I still refused, they said they would kill me.

Sheila: It is clear to me today more than it's ever been that I know nothing -- nothing of suffering compared to this beautiful girl and thousands and thousands like her. It's really overwhelming. It's overwhelming because in Southeast Asia she is not alone. There are thousands of girls like this and the only hope is not the government stepping in, the only hope is the body of Christ.

In Luke Chapter 19, verse ten, Jesus said the son of man came to seek and to save those who are lost. That's why Jesus came and that's why you and I are on this earth. We can't wait for somebody else to move in and help. It's our job. It's our responsibility. The sex traffickers are not sitting back thinking we'll take a day off. They're there. They're relentless. If we as the body of Christ don't care more than they care then God have mercy on us.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: That trip literally changed my life. I couldn't get the images of those girls out of my mind and I thank the Lord for that. God forgive me if I ever forget about them.

When you sit with these young girls, there is something -- it is getting the sense of a bigger picture of the evil that is going on. This is like a billion dollar business. It is huge! And the people behind it are very organized and they're very clever. But there is something else going on

here.

Let me remind you what Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus. Ephesians Chapter 6 says this: A final word; be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. For we are not fighting against flesh and blood enemies but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.

It was so clear to me as we walked those streets and sat with so many of those girls, and put our arms around them and prayed for them. We asked some of them, "Do you know that there is a God in heaven who loves you?" And then being able to pray with some of these girls and lead them into relationship with Christ.

But it made me realize that you and I, we have to do two things. We have to reach out and do something and do something now. And then we have to commit to be praying people; to get on our knees and pray that some of the evil strongholds in these nations would be broken. But it starts with you and I doing something.

Our heart is that we wanted -- we thought we would be able to reach 2500 children this year. But then some of our friends said, "No. We care about this." So a \$320,000 matching gift came in. So that means that you and I in this season, we can rescue 5000 children -- 5000! It used to be that if you gave \$128 you would rescue one child but now there's going to be a matching gift so if you can give \$128, you're going to rescue two children who are literally right now begging God to help. If you can only do \$64, now with a matching gift, together with a brother or sister in Christ, you've rescued a child.

Let me read you what I read in Psalm Chapter 10, just today. Lord, you know the hopes -- you know the hopes of the helpless. Surely you will hear their cries and comfort them.

That's why we are here. We are not here to sit and wait to get rescued. We are to be those who reach, we are to be those who rescue, and we are to be those who restore. And we come in the

name of Jesus.

If you and I decide together we're going to do something now, we have the possibility of rescuing 5000 children. Please go to your phone. Make the best gift you possibly can.

[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]

On the mission field

Kirie: I'm standing in the middle of a slum area where the homes are actually built on top of floating garbage. I've been told that people will come here and offer the mothers hope for their children in the way of a job, giving them some type of work trade so that they can send money here and help their family. But in reality, they're sold into trafficking. They become slaves somewhere.

We're asking you to consider helping us to educate these families so they know how to say no. We're asking you to help us rescue those children that have already been sold into trafficking. Please go to the phone or go online and make the very best gift that you can.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: Did you catch the urgency of this? I pray you do. This is happening right now. In this day, so many young girls are struggling and they need us to help.

If you give \$128, we're going to send you the "Names of God" Bible and this journal. For any gift at all, I get to send you my own book, *It is Okay Not to Be Okay*: "Moving forward one step at a time."

Together you and I can change this world. It's not too great for God. And when you and I join together and say, "Yes, we're going to do this. We're going to let people who don't even though there is a God in heaven know because we come and we help them first." We reach them, and we rescue, and we restore them in Jesus' name.

Thanks so much for being with me on *LIFE Today*. I'm Sheila Walsh. God bless you!