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Week 49: Fall Mission Feeding

Sheila Walsh

Keeping Your Character

Sheila: I'm Sheila Walsh. Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I hope you realize that one of our main things in our heart here is that we're able to really minister to you where you find yourself at this very moment. Some of you might be in some of the best days of your life and some of you might be in the most challenging days of your life. But I want you to know before we ever begin a program there's a whole team of us here and we pray for you. We ask God that he would speak directly to you. We all do our homework and we bring the best we have but we understand that it's the Holy Spirit who can touch you exactly where you need to hear his voice.

One of the things I've heard a lot of people asking about recently is what do you do when you have somebody who is going through something that is pretty devastating? A young girl wrote to me and she said, "My aunt had breast cancer. My uncle and my aunt have been so in love since the day they got married. Recently, my aunt lost her battle and I know she is home with Jesus and I celebrate that." But she said, "What I'm dreading is encountering my uncle at her memorial service because I don't know what to say. I don't feel as if I have the right words."

And honestly, I understand that. Sometimes when people are hurting and struggling you think, gosh, I really don't know what to say. So I spent some time really studying about that and I also included, actually, some of it in my book, *It's Okay Not to Be Okay*. We had a bunch of our very faithful supporters who came into the studio and that's one of the things I talked about. What do you say when you don't know what to say?

Begin video clip

Sheila: Sometimes if you know someone in your church or your family is going through a really difficult time, maybe facing cancer, or dealing with something, or maybe the loss of a child, something that seems unthinkable, sometimes we stay away because we think, I don't know what to say. There is no *right* thing to say. But what you can give is the gift of your presence -- just being there.

I remember Barbara Johnson used to say, "When the pain is the freshest, the words should be the fewest."

But just the gift... I was thinking, when we used to live in Nashville, one of our friends, a family that was in our small group from church, they went through the heartache of burying not just one baby, but two. They both were carriers of a particular gene. I thought the first funeral was hard but the second funeral was even harder. A darling little boy, lived only about six months. And in our small group we took turns. We would do the laundry or clean the house or make meals. One night it was my turn to just make dinner for the family. So I took it over and the husband and the son were in the kitchen. But I asked where the wife was and they said, "Oh, she is upstairs in the baby's room."

So I set up the meal for them and the husband and son sat down and started to eat but I went upstairs and knocked on the baby's room door. There was no answer so I just gently opened it and there was my friend sitting on the floor holding a little pair of baby shoes. You know what? All I did was sit beside her on the floor and we wept for an hour. I didn't say a single word. Because what do you say? What do you say when someone is walking through something unthinkable?

Sometimes we think, what would be the right scripture verse? And there are times when you just know God has given you a word for someone, a scripture that will just absolutely speak to where they are. But don't ever be afraid of just a gift of your presence to share -- I call it "the companionship of suffering"; of entering into something with someone so that they know that they're not alone. So when I face those kind of difficult situations, sometimes all I do is listen or hold someone or sometimes just weep with them.

But I've been thinking a lot recently, after I got several questions that came in the same vein on my Facebook page, and it was dealing with people saying, "I'm in a really challenging marriage. When I got married I thought things were going to be amazing and I thought my husband was a certain kind of person. When we dated it was really different. And it was almost like before the ink was dry on our papers everything seemed to change."

And the question was: How do I live in a situation like that that's not what I thought it was going to be and still honor God? I took that question really seriously and I began to study God's word. And the perfect person that speaks to that is a woman named Abigail. Abigail's story is one of the most remarkable stories in scripture. We find her story in First Samuel Chapter 25. I love the fact that her name means: My father is joy. What a beautiful name. I'm pretty sure that's where she found her strength because her husband, Nabal brought no joy -- no joy to her life. Actually, his name meant: Fool. And boy, did he live up to it! He was a very, very difficult man.

And Abigail shows this: How to stand strong when your dreams are deferred. Let me read you a couple of verses. First Samuel 25, one through three says this: Then David --

Because at the same time, David and Abigail's paths are going to cross. This is the time when Saul, the king of Israel has lost his mind. It's a terrible thing when a leader has lost the ability to hear the voice of God. He has turned away and the Lord has removed his spirit from him. And so Saul is hunting David trying to kill him. So David is on the run with about 600 men and he is hiding in a cave.

"Then David moved to the wilderness of Mayon. There was a wealthy man from Mayon who owned property near the town of Carmel. He had 3,000 sheep and 1,000 goats and it was sheep-shearing time. This man's name was Nabal and his wife Abigail was a sensible and beautiful woman. But Nabal, a descendant of Caleb, was crude and mean in all his dealings.

In those days, women had very little say in who they were to marry. He probably seemed like a good catch for Abigail's father. He was a wealthy man. I'm sure her father thought this is someone who will be able to take care of my daughter. But I wonder how many days it took for Abigail to realize that what she was now married into was a devastating situation.

When he is described as crude and mean in all his dealings, I'm sure he was that way with her but I'm sure he was that way with all the people who worked for them too. It's really hard when you watch someone that you love being incredibly mean to everyone around them. You just want to say, "Could you just change?"

Marriage, we all know this, marriage is hard. We all face storms and seasons and most times the storms pass and we learn from it and then we're prepared when another one comes. We love each other more. We're more committed. But sometimes a storm is more like a tornado and you think, how am I going to survive this?

But what I want us to see in Abigail's story is everything she is as a woman would apply to you whether you are married, whether you are single, or whether you are divorced. She was a woman living in a desperately disappointing situation but she didn't allow it to change her. That's what is amazing to me about Abigail's story.

But there was one -- one life-altering day when everything came to a head and Abigail was the only hope between two men, one a foolish, arrogant man and one a powerful, angry man. David and his 600 men had taken refuge close to where Nabal and Abigail lived. Since they had settled there, since David and all his men settled there, all of Nabal's flocks had been kept safe. Up until that point thieves had been stealing his flocks. He was losing money, he was losing his property but ever since David and his men moved in they had kept all the robbers away.

So David sends a message to Nabal. First Samuel 25 says this. This is verse four: When

David heard that Nabal was shearing his sheep he sent ten of his young men to Carmel with this message for Nabal, "Peace and prosperity to you and your family and everything you own. I'm told that it is sheep-shearing time. While your shepherds stay stayed among us near Carmel, we never harmed them, and nothing was ever stolen from them. Ask your men and they will tell you this is true. So would you be kind to us, since we have come at a time of celebration? Please share any provisions you might have on hand with us and with your friend, David."

Now a reasonable man would have heard that. They would have been grateful for this man who has been watching out for all his interests. But Nabal is not a reasonable man. This is the response he sends back. This is verses 10 and 11 in First Samuel 25. This is what he says: "Who is this fellow, David?" Nabal sneered to the young men. "Who does this son of Jesse think he is? There are lots of servants these days who run away from their masters. Should I take my bread and my water and my meat that I've slaughtered for my shearers and give it to a band of outlaws who come from who knows where?"

So these ten young men have to go back to David and tell him exactly what Nabal said. And David is furious. He is so angry that he tells 400 of his men, "Get your swords. We're heading there immediately." He leaves 200 men behind to watch over their things but he determines that not one single male in Nabal's household will be alive come morning.

Now one of the servants who works in Nabal's house heard Nabal scream insults at David's men and he knows if he doesn't do something it's going to be a disaster. What I think is fascinating is he does not go to Nabal. He goes to Abigail and he talks to her. What she does next shows us the kind of woman she was.

Listen to her words. After she says, "I take full responsibility," she says, "Please listen to what I have to say. I know Nabal is a wicked and ill-tempered man. Please don't pay attention to him. He's a fool just as his name suggests."

But I never saw the young men that you sent. Now, my lord, as surely as the Lord lives and you yourself live, since the Lord has kept you so far from murdering and taking vengeance into your own hands, let all your enemies and those who try to harm you be as cursed as Nabal is. Here is a present that I, your servant have brought to you and your young men. Please forgive me if I have offended you in any way."

But then she goes on to say this which I think is so powerful. "The Lord will surely reward you with a lasting dynasty for you are fighting the Lord's battles. Don't get caught up in the wrong battles here, David. You are fighting the Lord's battles. And you have not done wrong throughout your entire life. Even when you are chased by those who seek to kill you, your life is safe in the care of the Lord your God, secure in his treasure pouch! But the lives of your enemies will disappear like stones from a sling.

When the Lord has done all he promised and has made you leader of Israel, don't let this be a blemish on your record. Then your conscience won't have to bear the staggering burden of needless bloodshed and vengeance. And when the Lord has done these great things for you, please remember me, your servant."

Abigail has made it really clear she knows who her husband is but way more important than that, she reminds David who he is. She reminded him you are called to fight the Lord's battles, not those stirred up by a foolish man.

Have you ever noticed a fool can bring out the worst in us? Have you ever found yourself getting into an argument and you're like, why am I even bothering with this? There is so much we can learn here from Abigail's response. She is not pretending that her husband is not a fool but somehow in the midst of that she has remained a godly woman who knows that God is in control. And she reminds David, "Listen, don't let this man push you into something that you're going to live with for the rest of your life."

Do you know what David's response was? He's got 400 men behind him with swords. They're good to go. David says this, First Samuel 25: 33: "Thank God for your good

sense. Bless you for keeping me from murder and from carrying out vengeance with my own hands."

Can you imagine that? Here's what I love. You've got 400 men furious. Warriors have got their swords out and there you have one humble woman who doesn't just shoot off her mouth but uses the wisdom that God has given her and it turns everything around. David literally stops in his tracks, blesses her in the name of the Lord. Takes the provision that she has brought and they turn around and go away.

Now when Abigail gets back home you-know-who is drunk. So she decides she is not going to tell her husband while he is drunk what she has done so she waits 'til the morning. So the next morning when Abigail tells him what she did and it says his heart failed him. Scholars say he either had a stroke or a heart attack and ten days later he died.

When David heard that Nabal had died, he asked Abigail to marry him. I don't know how long she was married to that guy but I know there is something there for us about even when you are in a difficult situation you can still remain who you are.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: There's something about Abigail's story that even at my age, I'm 62, I gave my life to Christ when I was 11, so that's 51 years of the faithfulness of God, but just studying her story again was really challenging to me. Because you and I know, we're going to find ourselves in places where life is disappointing, where things are not the way we hoped they would be. But what her story shows me is it is possible to be the woman, to be the man that God has called us to be no matter what our circumstances are. And the only way that that is possible is when we find our strength and our hope and the love that will never fail in Jesus Christ alone.

One of the things that compels us here at *LIFE Today*, as you know, is the fact that there are children all around the world at this very moment. You might be sitting down to dinner but there are so many children who are literally starving at this moment. The very fact that we know that means that we want to say that on our watch we're going to change that.

Recently, Ralph, our missions director, and also Randy, had an opportunity to go to one of the places where we see more heartache than we would think is even possible. So I ask you, I know sometimes it is tempting when something is hard to look away, I ask you, in Jesus' name will you please prayerfully watch what you're about to see? And then ask the Lord, what can I do? One person can't change the world but you and I can change the world for one person. Would you watch this?

On the mission field

Randy: When you walk through the malnutrition clinic there are a lot of emotions. Obviously, heartbreak, the suffering that's here, the sorrow, the sadness. But it is easy to wonder, where is God in all this? These children are clinging to life, many of them. I know God sees the suffering in this place, I know he sees the affliction; he feels the heart cries of mothers who have lost children, and the little ones who are suffering.

She doesn't look like she is doing that great. Ralph, tell me what's going on here.

Ralph: Sometimes when they bring them in here, Randy, they're so weak and so lethargic they can't even eat. It is like too much labor for their body to even try to eat.

I think the formula is going to work on her if they can just get her to take some of it in. The intake will be important. I think she is going to make it. She is just looks really difficult right now.

[Four hours later.]

Randy: I don't know what's going to happen. I hope we can come back here in a year and see her running around playing. We've seen that kind of miracle before because it would be a miracle right now for this one.

It would have been better to reach this child before she got to this condition; that means more Mission Feeding, that means getting the nutritious soup mix to them before they get malnourished.

[Solanga died that evening.]

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: I don't even know what to say. You can think, well, that's just one more child in Africa. No! She was somebody's daughter. Her mother loved her. Can you imagine if you were in that position and you had to watch your child physically disappearing before you every single day? And sometimes tragedies happen in terms of a terminal illness and you do what you can but there is nothing else to do. The thing that breaks my heart about this is this did not need to happen. This child died simply because she didn't have anything to eat. And eventually, her little precious body began to shut down. So even when her mother was able to get her to a malnutrition clinic, that little child couldn't even find one ounce of strength to take in the nourishment she needed.

We can't allow this to keep going on. If you think of the wealth that we have, even those of us who consider ourselves lower income, who struggle. We don't struggle watching our children die because they don't have enough to eat. And these mothers, so many of them, they place their trust in God. They're praying for their children.

So here's the thing. This is the 30th anniversary of you faithfully standing with us doing

Mission Feeding but we need to keep up the work. If we give \$30, do you know you feed three children for three months? What can you actually do with \$30 that will make an impact on a life? \$50 feeds five children, \$100, 10.

I want us to be the answer to the prayers of these mothers. Jesus said, "Whatever you do for the least of these you do it for me." So not only are we meeting the needs of these children, answering the prayers of these mothers and fathers, and grandmothers, and brothers and sisters, but we're actually doing this for Jesus.

So please, would you give your best gift possible? And for any gift at all, we're going to send you one of the best books I've read in a very long time, *Death Defying Faith*. Peter Pretorius was our partner in Africa for years. He is finally home in glory but he has left us with a mission to complete.

So please, would you go to your phone? Would you call that number? Would you go online and make the best pledge? And if you're going online, would you just call us? If you're sending a check, call us and say, "This is what I'm sending today." Let us say in Jesus' name we want this to stop and we're prepared to be the answer. Thank you!

Begin video clip

Announcer: In impoverished and drought-stricken areas of Africa, children are suffering. The need is great and without food they face severe malnutrition -- even death.

Through *LIFE's* Mission Feeding outreach you can save lives by feeding and caring for children currently suffering in parts of Angola, Mozambique, and South Sudan. With previous reserves gone and Mission Feeding helping in areas with severe crop failure, we urgently need your support to replenish food supplies to reach the 400,000 children who are counting on us.

Your lifesaving gift of \$30, \$50, or \$100 will help feed and care for three, five or ten children for three full months. With your gift of any amount we'll send you *Death-Defying Faith*, the extraordinary life of miracle man, Peter Pretorius. This autobiography, completed just days before his unexpected death, chronicles the thrill-seeking adventures of missionary, Peter Pretorius. You will love reading how God took this ordinary man and performed extraordinary miracles throughout all of Africa.

With your gift of \$100 or more, request the beautiful "Faith and Hope" pen set; two beautifully crafted pens featuring the key words of Hebrews 11:1; a key verse for every believer especially when facing adversity, trials and challenges.

Finally, with your gift of \$1,000 or more to help feed and care for 100 children, be sure to request the "Bridge of Faith" framed canvas print by Thomas Kinkade.

Please call, write, or make your gift online today!

End of clip

On the mission field

Isak: My heart is just broken sitting here in this cemetery surrounded by graves that are, each and every one of them, graves for children; little lives that have been stolen by malnutrition. Children who have starved to death because they didn't have enough food. It truly breaks my heart. But you know what breaks my heart even more? The fact that we could have avoided this. We could have changed this. We could have stopped these graves from being filled with these little lives. We could have saved these children if we'd just been able to act in time. If we'd just been able to get to their village, take Mission Feeding and give them a bowl of food a day.

I need your help today. I need you to help me to insure that the next grave doesn't get filled with another child who died for no good reason. Please, give a gift of life today. Give the gift of Mission Feeding. If you can give, \$30, \$50, or \$100 you can save three,

five or ten children. Ten children's lives that are relying on you -- ten mothers that are saying please! Please give that gift today.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: Thank you so much! Isn't it great that we get to do this? It's not some kind of guilt trip if we want to enjoy our life we have to help other people. It is a glorious privilege that you and I have the honor of being the answer to the prayers of so many.

So if the lines were busy, please keep calling. Let's determine that we are going to be the ones who hear that glorious mandate from heaven to take care of the least of these and gladly, gladly step up.

And remember, for any gift at all, we will send you Peter's amazing book, *Death Defying Faith*. I'd love to send you mine, too, *It's Okay Not to Be Okay*: Moving forward one day at a time. Remember, if you need us we're here for you too. God bless you! See you next time.