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Week three: WFL

Sheila Walsh

Scars of Victory #1

Sheila: Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm Sheila Walsh. I got an interesting email the other day from a young girl; I think she was probably about 18 or 19. What she said to me was, "I just pray that one day I can be the strong, fearless, godly woman you are." Part of me wanted to get on a plane and fly to wherever she was and sit down with her and tell her the story of the journey that I've been on with the Lord, and his faithfulness, and the number of times I've fallen down when he's picked me up.

I find myself thinking, what tells our stories? Do photographs tell our stories? I have a photograph with my sister and I think she is probably about five and I'm about two. I've just got these big round cheeks. When I was born I was ten pounds. That's a turkey, people -- I was ten pounds! In that photograph I've just got big brown sparkling eyes, I'm ready to get into anything. But then if I showed you a photograph maybe about five years later it was a different look. Obviously I've still got brown eyes but there is a more guarded look.

But I can also show you a photograph of a really fun evening when I was invited to sing at a very special event where there would be a member of the royal family. I was actually invited to host the whole event. Now if you just saw that photograph, and you saw me back stage in the receiving line, I had on a beautiful, long black, sparkly dress and my makeup looked just perfect, someone else had done it for me, then you might think, gosh, she was in a great place in her life.

But photographs don't always tell the most accurate story. With social media now we can have that moment whether it is on Instagram or Twitter or whatever else you use, where

you kind of put a filter on it and it makes it look like life is just perfect. But sometimes behind the photograph, behind the smile more is going on. Let me take you to that night at the royal Albert Hall in London.

Begin video clip

Sheila: There's a beautiful venue in London called The Royal Albert Hall. There is one box, maybe in the second or third tier of the theater and it is called "The Royal Box" and that is open at any time if anyone in the royal family wants to come to something that's being held there, they can go. And I was invited to host an evening for Save the Children Fund some years ago.

I was told Princess Anne will be coming that evening so you have to meet with someone from the palace to know exactly how you're supposed to behave. So I was so excited. But then I met with these two guys from the palace which seemed really, really intense.

They said, "Okay. Here's some things you *have* to observe. You do not speak until you are spoken to."

I said, "Okay."

They said, "And the first time, if she speaks to you, then the first time you address her you call her 'Your Royal Highness.' And after that, if she continues to speak to you, you can call her 'Ma'am.'"

Then they showed me how to curtsy and I how to do all that stuff. So I went home and I practiced. I curtsied, I "Royal Highnessed," I "Ma'amed." I did the whole nine yards!

Then it came to the evening. It was amazing. It was 6,000 people and some amazing musicians. It was a fantastic evening. And then we were having the reception line so I'm back stage. And she is in this gorgeous gown and tiara, and diamonds. And as she is

getting right beside... suddenly my mind went a total blank. I thought, what do I call her? I thought, is it "Your majesty"? No! That's the queen! That's the queen! I couldn't think of anything! But unfortunately that did not stop my mouth from moving.

[Laughter]

She got in front of me and instead of remembering I'm not supposed to say anything, she stands there and I just said, "Hello!" She was so gracious. She said, "Hello yourself. You did a very good job!" So kind!

So I could show her a photograph from that evening. I'm in this beautiful outfit someone's made for me and it looks very glamorous, but the truth is, inside I was a broken girl. I could show her a photograph 10 years later, the night I was admitted to a psychiatric hospital. They took a Polaroid. That is not a moment you want to photograph. I don't see that as a Kodak moment. But they take a photograph and I have that Polaroid still and I look so gone. It's like I'm not there. It's like somebody turned the lights out.

I thought, maybe that would tell her a story. But then I wondered do scars tell your story more than pictures? I've got a little scar on my right knee when I fell off my bike when I was four. My mum said to me, "Now don't pick at that, Sheila, or it will get bigger!" So I picked at it so it would get bigger.

[Laughter]

So I still have it and I'm very proud of it.

Or I could hear about in school in Scotland when they vaccinate children against certain diseases it's called the "birds nest" because it is a gun -- it is like a lethal weapon with six little points that they just inject you with the whole thing. So I've still got my little "bird's nest" scar.

But none of those, none of the photos, none of the scars, could communicate to that young, darling girl on Facebook the profound moment when finally the scars of Christ met the brokenness in me. I remember that very first night in the hospital thinking, I'm done -- I'm just done. I remember after I'd been there for two or three weeks, I began to realize something. Do you know that sometimes God will take you to prison to set you free? God is so passionate about touching our brokenness. But encouraging us, welcoming us to bring our brokenness, our scars and our wounds to him so that he can heal us.

I actually have a new scar now that I really treasure. I had to have back surgery but the way they did it, on my back I have a horizontal scar -- is that horizontal? No, that is vertical. I have a vertical scar and a horizontal scar so I'm actually marked by the cross on my back. I love it! Because God tells his story in scars.

Do you remember this scripture? It seems a little obscure but I want to explain it to you. Isaiah 49:15 and 16, we read this: Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget yet I will not forget you. Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are continually before me.

The Hebrew word here for engraved is the word *chaqqaq*: C-H-A-Q-A-Q. It means to cut into or to cut open. For you and I to listen to that image... I remember hearing that as a child in Sunday school and thinking, how big must God's hands must be if all of our names are on them?

But to the Jewish people who heard this, they knew exactly what that meant. There's a practice called -- it's called: The end signs of Jerusalem. And this is what Jewish men would do. They would engrave pictures of the temple or pictures of Jerusalem; they would engrave them on the palms of their hands. And it meant for a devout Jew that these images would always be before them.

This is what they did. They would choose an image and then have it cut into a block of wood. Then they would dip the image into powder or charcoal and they would apply it to the palms of their hands. Next, they would tie two needles tightly together and dip them in ink then gently pierce along the image. When the image was complete, it was washed in wine. It was engraved in the palms of her hands. It reminded them of the temple but not of the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. They still had to follow the laws given to Moses.

But the prophet Isaiah spoke of the one who was to come, who would step into our place and once and for all take our punishment on himself. Remember this, Isaiah 53, surely, he has born our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace; and with his wounds we are healed.

I think every time God the Father sees the pierced hands of Christ, he sees you and me. There is no image that displays the love of God more perfectly than the scars of Christ.

But before that resurrection there was a betrayal and a crucifixion and Christ's friends thought that everything had gone terribly, terribly wrong. You have to remember just a few days before when Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey and the crowds went wild shouting, "Hosanna!" If you think about what the disciples knew up until that point, they knew every Sabbath when they went to the temple and they heard, read from the prophet Isaiah what Messiah was going to look like, and they kept wondering, why is Jesus not taking control?

So on that Sunday when Jesus came into Jerusalem and everyone began to shout out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." They thought finally, it is starting! He is about to take over and we're going to be set free. Not the way they thought.

Then John records much of that final conversation that Jesus had with his closest friends.

He tried to prepare them that what they were about to see was not going to look like what they thought they were supposed to see. He said things like, "In a little while you won't see me and then you will see me." He said, "I'm going to the Father." But the disciples wondered, what do you mean in a little while? We don't understand.

Have you ever been there when everything seems to fall apart? You thought God was doing one thing and it was like, what happened here?

I often think of Peter in the garden. Remember when Jesus said to Peter, "Peter, before the cock crows tomorrow morning, three times you're going to say you didn't even know me."

I have compassion for Peter in the garden that night because remember, whenever they saw the soldiers come toward to arrest Jesus, do you remember Peter pulled out his sword and chopped off a guy's ear? Jesus said, "No." Can you think how confusing that must have been for a man? I'm sure Peter thought, hey listen! I'm willing to die for you here but I'm not just going to lay down like a lamb. He just didn't know he had been following a lamb all along. It's not what he thought it was supposed to be.

So finally after a mockery of a trial and a Roman flogging, all of their dreams were nailed to a piece of wood. And as Christ died, remember, the earth literally shook beneath his feet. Mark tells us that some of the women went to the tomb on that resurrection morning and an angel told them, "Jesus is not here. He's risen from the dead."

Do you remember what the angel said? "Go tell the disciples, and Peter" -- what grace and compassion! I wonder if it being just "Go tell the disciples," if Peter would have thought, I can't come. Jesus told me I would betray him and I did. But a message on resurrection morning -- don't you think God sees every little detail of your life, every doubt, every question? That when you've come to announce the resurrection of Christ, "Go tell the disciples, and Peter" -- tell him he is included. [Sighs]

So that Sunday evening Jesus appears and says, "Peace be with you." And as he spoke he showed them the wounds in his hands and his side. Have you ever wondered why Christ kept the scars? He didn't have to. When he rose from the dead, he could have left the scars behind but he chose to keep them. Maybe one of the reasons was he wanted his friends to know it was him. But Christ's scars, his wounds were no longer marks of death; they were shouts of victory that death was overcome by the blood of the lamb.

You know the interesting thing? The only wound from this earth in eternity will be the scars of Christ. Every other scar that you and I have carried, every other wound, everything you have suffered will all be left behind. But there, for all to see, will be the scars of Christ, "This is how much I love you."

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: That was life-changing for me. Think about it. How often do you think that we hide who we really are, even at church? Perhaps, especially in church. But when you think about it, you and I, if we love Jesus, if we're part of his family, we should be the most transparent people on the planet. But so often we worry about what will you think about me if I tell you this part of my journey? But for me, the knowledge -- not just the knowledge because you can have the head knowledge but unless it sinks into your heart, into your spirit, into your soul it doesn't really change you that God knows every scar, every wound, and he loves you.

It says in First Corinthians chapter 1, there's this beautiful redemptive thing that God does with our scars that we are comforted by God and in return we get to comfort others with the same comfort with which we've been comforted. Sometimes it just takes one brave person being willing to say, "Hey, you know what? My life has not been perfect. Let me share just a little bit." And sometimes that's the key, that's all it takes to unlock the story in someone else's life.

I found that when the scars of Christ met the woundedness in me I was changed forever. I get to follow a savior who chose to keep the marks of crucifixion eternally. I think that's a beautiful thing. God tells his story in scars and so we can celebrate our scars because they're not open wounds anymore. Scars are proof that God heals.

We've had the amazing privilege here at *LIFE Outreach* to be able to bring that same healing to people all around the world. Sometimes it's a spiritual healing of introducing people to Jesus but what we're thinking about at this particular time is the number of families around the world who simply cannot provide their child one cup of clean water. And so many families have lost children. That should not happen on our watch. I'm going to show you how you and I together can make a difference.

On the mission field

Tammy: The first time we came to Burundi we brought you a story from what used to be a tiny little church right here in this village.

Open Captions:

>> All of us in Gatabo share the same fear. Every time we drink the water, we risk a death like my husband's. I fear this will be my children's fate.

Tammy: Forced to rely solely on unclean water for survival, this community suffered a severe cholera outbreak that took the lives of many, nearly destroying their legacy. Since then, your support has allowed us to drill them a well. And with every new drop of clean, healthy water life began to return, hope began to bloom.

Open Captions:

>> Before we got the well, many were going to the hospital. There were many beds for those suffering from cholera. But now the hospital is almost empty.

Tammy: It is astonishing what transpires when new life is breathed into a community. Not only are the existing families healthier, stronger, and able to focus on more than just survival, clean water attracts new people. And as a village grows, so do the available resources.

Today, this community is full of hope and flourishing in ways they never thought possible. And this is their church now, just two short years later.

[Singing]

I'm so grateful to come into a place like this and see the impact of our giving and how it has changed everything! Something so simple! Water! Water that has given them life.

Open Captions:

>> We praise you today, God, for the things we have here. It's you who blessed us with what we have today!

Tammy: And thank you to you, the ones who have given to make this possible.

Open Captions:

>> Thank you so much for giving us clean water. And I would like to ask you to keep bringing clean water to those around us who don't have this blessing.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: Wow! That is amazing! Look at the contrast! It used to be the church was empty and the hospital beds were full. Now the hospital beds are almost empty and the church is full. I wish I could have been there on a Sunday and seen that place just packed out.

And the difference is simply clean water. These people, they're not even asking for a lot. They're not asking for you to rebuild their village. Simply one water well in that village changed the whole village. And the beautiful thing is, I mean the people there are clearly grateful to those of us who are able to give but don't you love the fact that their ultimate praise goes to God? Because so many of the women I met, in the worst of times, before the water well arrived would say, "We're asking God to send someone to help us." We were able to go to that village and put a water well in and change the face of that whole village.

So here's what we want to do. We want to see that happen in so many different villages. So for the first part of this year, we want to put 200 new wells into 15 different nations. Can you imagine what we just saw there happening 200 times? That the hospitals are getting emptied out and the churches are getting filled up? And it is very doable if we do it together. \$48 will provide clean water for ten people for a lifetime. These water wells last on an average about 70 years. Some of you can give a little bit more. If you can give \$144 that will provide 30 people with water not for a year, not for five years -- for life! \$144, 30 people for life!

Some of you may have been particularly blessed by God and you're in a good place right now and you're looking, Lord, how can I serve you? What can I do? Do you know that if you have \$4800 you can put, by yourself, you and your family, you could put a whole well in a village and that will provide clean water for 1000 people?

Now for any gift at all we have this fantastic devotional. It is called *Praying Grace*; 55-day devotional on that. Flip through it. It is fantastic. That's for any gift. Now if you can give \$100 we have this really cool tumbler. I love these! My son loves these. It says, "I'm *Praying Grace*" and gives a scripture from Acts 20, verse 32. Now I know you don't do it for the gifts. It is honestly simply our way of saying thank you. And also praying that when you pick that up and you head out the door you'll remember to pray for these people.

So let's do this together. Let's make sure we get the first 200 wells in and then we'll bring you the stories from those churches. Please go to your phone. Give the best gift possible.

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 way for parents to save the lives of their children, to offer them a bright future free from the fear of death. With your gift today, you can help drill and establish the first 200 water wells of the year. Your gift of \$24 will help provide clean water for five children, a gift of \$48 will help provide for 10, \$72 will provide for 15, and \$144 will help provide life-giving water for 30 people for a lifetime.

With your gift, we'll send you the *Praying Grace* 55-day devotional. This new devotional will help you renew your mind to the realities of God's grace and help you pray powerful grace-based prayers for each day.

With your gift of \$100 or more, request the "Praying Grace" tumbler. This reusable 16-ounce container is constructed with insulated stainless steel, perfect for hot or cold beverages.

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, new commemorative bronze sculpture, "Safe in the Shepherd's Arms."

Please call, write, or make your gift online.

End of clip

On the mission field

James: Just as we're giving water here in Southern Africa, we need to give water, like this, a cup of water where there are contaminated water sources that are killing not only children, but their entire families. Many children lose a parent because of some intestinal disease from contaminated water. It may be that you can give a well. You can provide the entire cost or you could say, "I'll join another person or a couple of other people but I'm going to help."

I'm standing by the answer. I'm standing by the solution. A well I can operate very easily with one hand. Any child can do it. You've got clean water coming here and this is life -- this is life! That's what you're providing when you help us drill water wells and give these simple pumps that any child can work. Thank you for helping.

End of clip**In the studio**

Sheila: Thank you. Honestly, that is one of the most exciting pieces I've ever seen. When you see that significant of a difference in a village, it just lets you see what's possible. So together, this year, we're going to do that in Jesus' name.

And for any gift at all, you can request *Praying Grace*, the devotional or I would love to send you my book, *It's Okay Not to Be Okay*. You don't have to hide your scars anymore. You can celebrate them as tattoos of triumph because God has brought you from a difficult place to a healed place.

So I just want to thank you so much for being with us. Thanks for tuning in. I'm Sheila Walsh and we'll see you next time.