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**From: 8/15/18**

**Week 8: WFL**

***Wednesdays in the Word***

**Sheila Walsh: She Can Laugh**

**Sheila:** I'm Sheila Walsh. Welcome to *Wednesdays in the Word*. I was recently with a group of women on the east coast and they were saying to me, "Do you ever read Proverbs 31?"

I said, "Yeah! Sure! Sometimes."

They were like, "We just think it is ridiculous. Who can live up to that standard?"

But in actual fact there is so much spiritual wisdom and depth in this if you just kind of take it verse by verse and ask the spirit to help you understand. One verse in particular I want us to look at today.

So recently after I got back from that trip I was reading through it again and I found myself parking on verse 25 and it says this: She is clothed with strength and dignity. She can laugh at the days to come. Another translation says it this way: She's clothed with strength and dignity and she laughs without fear of the future.

Well, there's all sorts of different ways that we laugh, different things that make us laugh. Think about it. It's hard to watch television these days and not want to laugh or cry. I saw a thing the other night when I couldn't sleep. I was jet lagged and it said, "Drink this juice and you'll lose 20 pounds in five days." I thought, yeah, if I cut my right leg off. Then

there was another one that was like, "This cream will take 20 years off your face." More like \$40 bucks out of your wallet.

Well, I found an article from a home economics book from 1950 that I just wanted to read. It's like tips to look after your husband. This is before he comes home from work: Take 15 minutes to rest so you'll be refreshed when he arrives. Touch up your makeup. Put a ribbon in your hair and be fresh looking. He has just been with a lot of work-weary people so be a little gay and a little more interesting. His boring day may need a lift.

But then when it comes to preparing your children before he comes home: Take a few minutes to wash the little darlings' faces and hands, if they're small. Comb their hair and if necessary, change their clothes. They are little treasures and he would like to see them playing the part.

Then this final one which I just thought, you must be kidding: Minimize all noise. At the time of his arrival eliminate all noise of washer, dryer, dishwasher or vacuum. Try to encourage the children to be quiet. Be happy to see him. Greet him with a warm smile and make sure the children are quietly smiling. [Laughing]

Some of it is great. You want to make your husband to think of your home as a place of peace but the bottom line for me is we're not going to find out what kind of woman that God wants us to be from a home economics book. Where we're going to find that is the infallible, unchangeable, trustworthy, rock-solid truth of God's word.

Our nation seems at the moment to be in a place of a lot of anger and division. Social media has given people an anonymous place to tear everyone apart who doesn't agree with their opinion. But as God's children we are called to live differently.

Remember what it says in Peter's first letter; First Peter 3:15 says this. One of my favorite verses. You'll probably know this: Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness

and respect.

Two things there: Live a life that demands an explanation. We should be living in such a way that people realize we're different. We don't get mad at the things that some people get mad about. We don't just shoot off our mouths at anything but there is something different about us. How we respond so that then people would want to know why is it that you're so different? And then with gentleness and respect we have an opportunity to share our faith. It is not a call to beat people up with the Bible but to really share in a very broken, hurting world the answer to what every single one of us is looking for. I think there is never been a better day to shine the light of Christ in a dark, dark place than right now.

But back to the verse, how do we become that woman or that man clothed with strength and dignity that we can laugh at the days to come without fear of the future? The text is marked by three specific things. It describes this woman as strong, has dignity, and is fearless.

I have to tell you growing up I was the absolute antithesis of every one of those things. I didn't feel strong, I felt weak. I didn't have dignity, I felt I was covered in shame. And I didn't live a fearless life, I was filled with fear. Even to the extent that when I was a teenager and the telephone would ring my heart would immediately start beating. I didn't know why. I hadn't done anything wrong. I wasn't waiting to be found out. But just everything that happened filled me with fear. I want you to know if God can change my life, he will change yours too.

So let's look at the first thing, she is clothed with strength; she is strong. What does it actually mean biblically as a believer to be strong? In our culture it is often equated with being loud or outspoken or self-reliant. But when I was a young girl I thought being strong meant I didn't need anybody else to survive.

After my dad's suicide when I was five we didn't ever talk about what had happened. We

just never mentioned it; we moved on as if life was normal. But one night I got up to use the restroom, I was 11 years old and I saw that my mom's light was on under her bedroom door and I was going to go in but something stopped me and I heard my mom sobbing into her pillow. I'd never seen my mom cry, and instinctively, I knew she didn't want me to come in. So I sat on the other side of her bedroom door and I cried too. So the lesson I took from that though my mother would never have meant for me to do this, the lesson I took was being strong means you cry alone. You hide your pain. You don't need anybody else.

What about you? Think about your life right now. What does being strong look like for you? Maybe you would say, "I'm the one that's holding the family together."

I got a note from a woman last night saying, "My marriage is a sham but I'm putting on a brave face for those around me. I want to be strong."

Someone else wrote, "I struggle with depression, anxiety, but I don't want to tell anyone because you don't want to seem weak."

What does God's word say about strength? These beautiful verses from Isaiah Chapter 40:28-31, I learned these as a little girl. This is one translation: Have you never heard? Have you never understood? The Lord is the everlasting God, the creator of all the earth. He never grows weak or weary. No one can measure the depth of his understanding. He gives power to the weak and strength to the powerless. Even youths will become weak and tired and young men will fall in exhaustion. But those who trust in the Lord will find their strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.

I love how the English Standard Version translates verse 31: Those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles; they will run and not be weary; they will walk and not faint.

I love that idea of those who wait on the Lord. I was doing a conference not so long ago with my darling friend, Darlene Zschech from Australia and she was teaching on this passage and she said, "There are two different ways of waiting. You can wait kind of with your arms folded like tapping your fingers like come on, Lord, come on, Lord!" But she said, "Another way is like leaning in. It is like waiting in anticipation and trust. Just waiting to see what God's going to do."

Well, as we dig deeper into God's word we get an even clearer picture of what that kind of strength looks like. Do you remember Paul talking about his thorn in the flesh? This is what he said. He said: "Three different times I begged" -- and it is a strong word used there in the Greek -- "I begged the Lord to take it away and each time he said, 'My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness.' So now I'm glad to be boasting about my weaknesses so that the power of Christ can work through me."

The apostle describes this thorn in the flesh as a messenger of Satan to buffet him. In one sense it represented an effort on Satan's part to hinder Paul in the work of the Lord.

Have you ever wondered what's your thorn in the flesh? I have a very dear friend who is clearly gifted and anointed by God for leadership but struggles with a stutter. We've talked about this. It's like, "I can't do this. I can't go on and speak publically." But asked to do things it's like, "I can't because I'm going to stutter. It is going to be terrible. It's going to be embarrassing." But I've watched as that person who I love dearly has waited on the Lord and gained strength from understanding that it's in our weakness that we discover the strength of Christ. They've gone on to discover the very thing that Paul discovered, "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness."

So let me ask you this. What if the very thing that you believe disqualifies you is the very thing that God will use to uniquely qualify you in his service? There is something beautiful when we offer what we perceive as our brokenness to Christ and see him pour his love and grace through it. I know this, that weakness in God's hands becomes strength.

Well, the writer goes on to say that she is clothed in strength and dignity. What is dignity? Dignity is a deep internal sense of worth. It doesn't come from external things. It doesn't come from having a great job and a nice house and a nice car. Dignity comes internally when we know who we are in Christ.

I came across a book I wrote in 1996 and I looked at the cover and I'm like what was I thinking? Look at my hair! But what was interesting to me was I'd forgotten that Joni Eareckson Tada actually wrote the forward. I read it again the other night. She said, kind of paraphrasing, she said, "The first time I met Sheila Walsh we were both at a festival in Holland. We looked a little different." She said, "I was in a skirt and a blouse and she was in leather pants with spiky hair. But what I saw in her was strength. She was strong. She had a clear voice and she was strong." And then she wrote, "And then I heard like many of you that Sheila had been admitted to a psychiatric hospital."

Sometime after that Joni actually invited me to come and speak to her staff. It was such an honor. I love Joni. She is just one of the most godly people I've ever met in my life. But what she went on to write in the forward was, "When I saw Sheila again, strong, it wasn't a word that I would use. Now I would use the word *gentle* and *broken*."

I actually like that. *Broken* is a good word when it is offered to Jesus. You can't walk in the dignity and grace that Christ wants for every one of his daughters if we're covered in shame. The wounds of childhood are potent. I don't know what you've walked through. It could have been physical abuse, sexual abuse or verbal abuse. In his incredible books, one of the best I've read on shame, it is called *Shame and Grace*, Lewis Smedes describes shame this way: "I lugged around inside me a dead weight of not good enough-ness."

Ever felt that way? I'm just never going to be enough. I'm not going to be good enough. There is no dignity in shame. You probably remember the first time the word is ever used is Genesis 3:7. You know with Adam and Eve when they take the fruit they're not supposed to take? And in that moment their eyes were opened and they suddenly felt

shame. And they tried to cover themselves. Remember? They hid and we've been doing it ever since.

One of my friends years ago and she is kind of a spiritual mentor to me. She said, "Okay, Sheila, let me ask you this. Imagine that a movie was made of your life. Nothing was left out. Everything you've ever said, everything you've ever done. The things you think, well, that's technically not a sin because I didn't do it, I just thought about it. But imagine that it was put out for anyone to see. I didn't feel very good. Then she said, "But here's the great news" -- and I want you to hear this too -- "God has seen your movie and he loves you."

If I could only ever share one thing in these programs it would be this, God knows you, all of you and loves you. When you go on to this, "She has no fear of the future," that's kind of a challenging part. So many of us, our anxiety and fear and stress, they're kind of at epidemic levels in our nation.

A couple of years ago my life changed a little bit. I was coming home one day and I went to open the refrigerator and suddenly I felt like literally something stabbed me in the back. I could hardly move. I felt, well, that's a temporary thing. But it got worse and it got worse until eventually I was having a hard time walking. I went to see a neurosurgeon and he said, "Yeah, what we're going to have to do is we're going to have to do surgery. It's not going to be an easy surgery. I can't make absolute guarantees." And I knew of other people who had gone through surgery at that particular place in their spine and they had struggled for years afterwards.

But here's the deal, after 50 years of walking with Christ I've learned this: He is trustworthy. So I'll never forget that day. I was all ready for surgery and the doctor came in and he said, "I'm going to use another surgeon today."

I was like, "Wow! Why's that?"

He said, "Well, we're going to go in through the back and remove one disk and then we're going to in through the front and remove another. So this surgeon is going to hold your organs."

I'm like, "Wow! Please make a mental note of where they were."

But as I'm being wheeled in one of the nurses who was wheeling me said to me, "What are you singing?"

I said, "Oh! Just something I love. I surrender all."

And honestly, because of the faithfulness of God, I was able to walk in there, well, wheel in there absolutely confident. She laughs at the future not because she's confident of who she is but because she knows who God is. Whatever happens -- whatever happens we win. The greatest adventure in life is an open, all-in, passionate relationship with Christ. Give him your weakness, drop that overcoat of shame, and trust God who loves you so much he didn't want to live without you.

And I'm going to ask you to help some people who need some help right now. 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 do it every day and I don't even think about it -- I pour myself a glass of water. I don't know how many times a day I do it and I don't even think this is great. I just think, this is what we do -- this is life. To think that so many mothers, fathers, grandparents in other countries around the world cannot simply give their children a glass of clean water.

I've walked with these moms, I've been in so many of the countries that we're working in and I've walked sometimes for a mile with a mom and her little ones. And when I found what their water source is I was horrified! There were animals in the same water. The water was filthy! And yet, so many mothers say, "What choice do I have? I give them this water or I give them no water."

It used to be, a long time ago, these things would go on and we had no idea but life has changed, now we know and I believe, as a Christian that we are accountable for what we know. Once you've seen something, once you've seen a need you cannot look away. If you can send \$48, do you know that that will give ten people not a glass of water, it will give them water for the rest of their life? Some of you can do a little bit more. If you can do like \$144 that would give 30 people water for the rest of their life. That's why we call it Water for LIFE because when we put a well in a village it will last like 70 years.

Now some of you would be able to do more. God has blessed you. And do you know what? If you could give \$4800 that would do a complete well! I want to go back to these villages and instead of seeing a mother's tears of grief see a mother's tears of absolute joy that God has answered her prayers.

So please, would you stand with us? Will you go to your phone and make the best gift

possible? If you don't have a lot, give what you have. If you have a lot, give out of your abundance. But if you and I will do something we can change the world. And then those mothers will not have to bury one more child because they couldn't give them clean water. Let's change that! Let's change that 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 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:** This mother has four children. Last summer a year ago, they had an outbreak of intestinal disease from contaminated water. Two of her children got very, very sick.

Now she's got a little baby just a few months old and this baby is living on her mother's milk, this baby is nursing. Betty, pretty soon this little baby is going to be drinking that water and oftentimes it takes their lives.

**Betty:** It really does, James. And they can't do anything about it because it's all the water they have. I can't even imagine! This little baby is so precious, so beautiful! Do you know that there is 10,000 people a day that die from the waterborne diseases, and most of them are children five and under? We can stop that. We can make the difference by doing the water wells and giving them a fresh cup of water.

**James:** I'd like you to be one of the hands to reach out and dial the telephone number and take your bankcard and use it like a check or write a check and make it to *LIFE* and say "I want to give life to children like this and keep them healthy."

**End of clip**

### **In the studio**

**Sheila:** So we can do this. We can do this if we all do it together.

And for any gift at all, we're going to send you this great little book. I think it will really build you up in your own faith. Somehow when we see what God is doing and what he is continuing to do, something in us says, "You know what, Lord? I want to join in that."

And we do that when we reach out with the love of Christ to those who need our help.

So I'm Sheila Walsh and I just want to say thank you so much for joining me on *Wednesdays in the Word*.