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Week 14: Mission: Rescue Life

Sheila Walsh

Redeemed by love

Sheila: Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm Sheila Walsh. I'm so glad you're joining us. One of the things I've noticed in recent conversations, mostly with women but occasionally with a guy as well, is how many times the subject of shame-filled past, of feeling like you weren't loved the way you wish you had been loved.

I read an article in a magazine about a girl who has gone on to be incredibly successful but she said the one thing she cannot shake is the fact that when she was growing up she felt she wasn't loved by her mother.

I think perhaps it's one of the reasons that Psalm 34 is one of my favorite psalms because it was written when David was really at his lowest. He was on the run from King Saul who had lost the ability to hear from God. David had gone into a temple. He had taken bread he shouldn't have taken. He had removed Goliath's sword which he shouldn't have taken, and then covered it up. He said he was on the king's business which he wasn't, and it ultimately led to the death of almost 80 priests.

And then at this point, David's life is just on such a downward spiral he ends up in another city pretending to be a mad man. Eventually the king kicks him out of the city. And it's at this desperately low place in his life that David writes Psalm 34.

But I wanted to just read you a verse from that because I don't know where you're at right now. Perhaps you're in a place where you feel like you weren't loved like you hoped you would be loved. Or you may even be in a place where you feel like you have messed up.

Well, listen to these words from our brother who wrote them at one of the lowest points in his life.

This is Psalm 34, verses four and five. It says: "I prayed to the Lord, and he answered me. He freed me from all my fears. Those who look to him for help will be radiant with joy; no shall shadow of shame will darken their faces."

That's my prayer for you today. That through this program you would have a deeper understanding of how loved you are. Now we all need feedback. Part of being well loved in a family is getting honest, shame-free feedback as we grow.

I remember I thought I was really mastering the violin when I was a child until my family made it quite clear that if I continued they were pretty sure the cat was leaving home. We laughed about it together because there was no harsh judgment, just honest feedback. So I put the violin back into its case and I apologized to the cat. Then my mum said to me, "But when you sing, Sheila, we all stop and listen."

A healthy family or friend can help us understand our strengths and our weaknesses. The message is not that everything will work out but never be afraid to try -- and never be afraid to fail. Every failure takes us one step closer to where we'll really shine.

I had the privilege some time ago of interviewing Scott Hamilton, one of America's most beloved Olympic skaters. He told me that in all his years of training he fell down over 30,000 times. But he got back up over 30,000 times. What a beautiful example of someone whose family taught him to persevere knowing where his strength lay and refusing to let his dream die.

But there are, however, other reasons why dreams are abandoned and we lose who we really are. I was flipping through channels in a hotel room one night looking for the local weather actually when a woman's face on the screen made me stop. The camera had come into a really tight shot of her face, and the pain in her eyes was overwhelming. It looked

to me as if she was trapped inside her own body, silently crying out for help. So I sat down and I watched the rest of the program.

She weighed, they said over 600 pounds and the show was following her weight loss journey. The camera moved from her face to pictures of her as a little girl. She was adorable. Curly blond hair and sparkling blue eyes. The person who was interviewing her asked how old she was in those photos. She said she was six. Well then the painful question came, "How did you get from that adorable little girl to the way you are today?"

Her story poured out through tears. It was a story about tremendous sexual abuse when she was just a little girl, seven years old, and the subsequent shame and self-loathing. So for her food had become the only friend that she could trust. It brought her comfort and quiet when she was eating. But she knew that she was slowly killing herself. For her it was a death sentence.

Well, I couldn't look away. I watched the program for the full two hours. Cheering her on when she succeeded and aching for her when she failed. She'd gone from a bright energetic child who loved to play soccer and ride her bike to a woman who hadn't been outside -- she hadn't been outside her home in over two years.

As the program came to a close she had lost more than 300 pounds and was able to get up and walk in her neighborhood. The last shot was of her watching a girl riding her bike. As I looked at this woman's face, I didn't any longer see the 300-pound woman. I saw that little girl with the blond curls and the big blue eyes. She wasn't gone. She had just been hiding for a very long time.

Abuse or trauma in childhood impacts how much of the real you that you allow the world to see. You become more careful, more contained because you've learned that life is not safe. Sexual abuse in particular brings with it an ocean of shame.

One of my dearest friends was sexually abused by someone in her church when she was just a little girl. That abuse triggered one of the most painful journeys I've ever seen. She became promiscuous as a teenager because I think in her mind sex equated love and acceptance. But as she got older, life became much more confusing. Particularly after she gave her life to Christ she was faced with this question, how could she love and trust God when her abuse was from someone who supposedly represented him?

It's taken a long time and intense counseling and friends who refused to give up on her, to bring her to a place of peace and acceptance of the beautiful woman she is. The beautiful woman she's always been. She had to fight hard to find herself again. She found herself in Christ.

I travel around the country most weekends. I've never once been in a room of women, whether it was 10 women or 10,000 where this issue has not been present. I've listened to those whose abuse drove them to meaningless sex with different partners, but also to those who are married and unable to have healthy relationship with their own husband because they equate it with something that was wrong in their past. In both situations, what should have been seen as a good gift from God has become a prison.

Whenever I have an opportunity to sit down one on one with a woman who is experienced this kind of trauma, I listen to her story for as long as it takes. Then I remind her of the description of Christ, first from the Prophet Isaiah; you might remember Isaiah 61 verses one and two. And then Christ repeated it, his own lips in a synagogue one morning: "The spirit of the Lord is upon me for he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free and that the time of the Lord's favor has come."

Christ was anointed to free those who are in prison and those who can barely lift their head from the weight of shame. It began as you know so long ago. Shame was introduced to the Garden of Eden. Then Christ, the second Adam, came to take our shame upon

himself. Every one of us is invited to begin that journey from the place where we were shamed to the place where we begin to experience the freedom that Christ offers.

I love what I read recently in a blog from Harvest Bible Church. It said this. There is nothing that robs the perpetrator of haunting our memories or possessing our soul like our identification with the passion of Christ. We are so much more than what has happened to us. We need to re-orientate our whole identity with his life in us. We have to finish the journey going from the garden, a place of shame, to the cross. From being overwhelmed by our shame to being victorious in Christ at the cross, defeating death and shame forever. Not that we would be rid of all of our pain, not necessarily, but that the pain would be redeemed pain. I love that. Redeemed pain. That is a powerful truth. As you know, we all experience pain. But when we bring it to Jesus he redeems it.

The enemy of your soul would love to keep you quiet and shame-filled but Jesus uses pain given to him to free us. Not only that, to see others set free as well. You are not what happened to you. You are a child of God. Allow the Word of God to flow over you into the deepest place where shame loves to hide.

I love this scripture: "The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save. He will rejoice over you with gladness. He will quiet you by his love. He will exalt over you with loud singing."

Can you imagine that? God singing over you because he loves you so much. If you feel that perhaps your childhood was battered and broken and you weren't loved the way that you hoped you would be loved, remember this scripture: "Can a mother forget her nursing child? Can she feel no love for the child she has born? But even if that were possible, I would not forget you."

I don't know today what labels you wear. I don't know if you feel that you are a single mother. You identify as an alcoholic, as a father who has not shown up in the life of his child. There are so many labels that we wear and that we think define us but really, no

label defines us when we are in Christ. If you are in Christ your true identity is a child of God.

I find myself wondering, maybe you flipped through the channels and you came across this and maybe you stopped because I've got a funny accent you're trying to work out whether I'm actually speaking in English or not. Maybe something made you stay. And even as you hear me talk you think, I don't think I really know this Jesus.

Do you know what scripture says? I don't know if you have a Bible but in the book of Romans it says, "Whosoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

It doesn't say "nice people." It doesn't say, "People who go to church and own a Bible." It doesn't say, "People who have never messed up." It said, "Whosoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. It doesn't say you might be, it says you will be.

If you've never prayed to receive Jesus I'd love to pray for you now. Wherever you are, whether you're at home, or you're watching this on computer in a hotel somewhere. You might be in another part of the world but here's the amazing thing, God is with us wherever you are. He is here with us in the studio with all our crew but he is with you too.

And all you have to do is pray a simple prayer. There is nothing special about these words. It's just I'd love to help you if you've never prayed before. You just pray a prayer as simple as this: Father God, thank you for loving me. Jesus Christ, thank you for dying for me. I know I'm a sinner and I want to be saved. So right now I invite you to take over my life. I want you to lead the way. Thank you that you'll wash me clean. Thank you that you've given me a new beginning; in Jesus' name amen.

If you prayed that prayer with me I just want to say welcome to the family! I also want to say there's a big party going on in heaven and your name is on every one of the balloons. I would really encourage you to do this. If you don't have a Bible, you can go online, go

to Amazon, Christian Booksellers, whatever, and get one in a translation that you can kind of understand. Then just find a good church. Don't look for the perfect church -- it doesn't exist. It is full of people like me who mess up. But that's why you'd be welcome if you mess up too. Just find a church. Maybe tell someone.

Or you can call the number on your screen and tell one of our prayer counselors, "Hey, I prayed with that woman on the television, which was kind of weird. But now I think I'm a Christian."

And I want to just say to you, if you've grown up all your life just pushing all that stuff into the cellar of your soul because you think you'll never be good enough, I want you to know I wrote a book called, *It's Okay Not to Be Okay*. Basically, the message of that book says you don't have to be perfect because Jesus is.

I spent so many years of my life trying to pursue perfection, trying to get it all right. And it really, it was so hard. I kept falling down and I kept messing up until I began to understand, I don't have to get it all right. Okay doesn't live here but Jesus does. And you get to come as you are.

A new project that I've been working on with my husband Barry for about a year and a half, we're working on a book on prayer -- on the power of prayer. Isn't that amazing to think that wherever you're watching from that you can simply... and there are no fancy words. So often we think we have to kneel down and close our eyes or find the right spot or wait 'til we go to church. Do you know that God, we can talk to the Lord anytime, anywhere, anyplace, any person and you don't need fancy words you just need to talk to him.

I feel like there's maybe somebody watching and you used to be really close to God. You're really involved in everything and you felt God's presence. And then I don't know what happened but something, just life intruded and now you just feel lost. You stopped going to church, and you stopped reading your Bible, and you stopped talking to God. I

just want you to know he never stopped talking to you. He never stopped looking for you.

I don't know what might have hurt you or caused you to walk away but I just want to remind you of the kind of Father that you and I have in our heavenly Father who stands, remember the story in Luke 15? The prodigal son and the father, just stands there every day thinking, today might be the day when he'll come home, when she'll come home. So I just want to say to you, you don't have to wait to get all your ducks in a row. You don't have to clean your act up. One of the most amazing things about God is that you get to come as you are.

You remember when the prodigal son was coming home and he was trying to think of all the things he could say to somehow find a way back in? And he didn't get a word out. He tried but then his father just threw a robe around him and threw a party.

So I think that's for maybe one of you today, the message is simply this, come to the party. You've been missed. God loves you and you're welcomed home. One of the greatest joys for my life is that I get to have the privilege of being very involved in our missions here at *LIFE Outreach*. We, as you know, we feed children in Africa. We put water wells in where there is no clean water. We put little shoes on children's feet who have never had shoes. There are so many things.

But I think one of the things that's closest to my heart is what I'm about to show you. We get to be a voice for those who are crying out in the darkness wondering, does anybody hear me? Well yeah. We did. I want to show you this.

On the mission field

Open Captions: The way of the wicked is like darkness. Proverbs 4:19.

Announcer: There are battles raging in dark places like this. An ongoing struggle of

good versus evil. Young girls, many of them children are at this very moment exploited and controlled by depraved sex traffickers.

Sheila: This sex trafficking, this is evil from the pit of hell. And it's well financed.

They're just little broken girls who have been captured from their villages, fooled into we have a great job for you and suddenly, they find themselves drugged and in a tiny room and waking up beside some older man.

I was in Southeast Asia two years ago. It is so much worse. It is so much darker now. The need is urgent. So we need your help right now. On behalf of the children, to do a battle in Jesus' name against the darkness and to say, "No, we will not allow this to go ahead." Those who walk in darkness have seen a great light. On them has the light shown.

We can say to those who think they have no hope, "There is a hope. His name is Jesus and we're coming in his name."

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: Unbelievable! It is so hard to even describe what it was like. We just got back from our latest trip to Southeast Asia. And the darkness -- you can feel it in the air. There is so much anger. Even when we were out in the streets trying to just pray over the streets, everywhere we went we were so aware of people watching us and people suspicious and people moving us on.

It's heartbreaking. The thing that really breaks my heart as a mom is that they're just little children. We're not talking about people in their 20s and 30s who have made a decision to live a particular kind of life, even though honestly, with those when you understand how they got there, you would understand there was no choice involved. But I'm talking about

seeing them right at the beginning of that ghastly nightmare.

Innocent beautiful precious children that have been promised a place to work, a place to rest their heads, in devastatingly poor areas. The minute that they trust someone suddenly they find themselves trapped.

Those who run these rings in Southeast Asia are very well organized. They make a ton of money, literally billions of dollars. And so that's why, here at *LIFE* we're determined to be as organized; that we will pray, but not only that we will move. We have a three-pronged ministry: Reach, which is where we go into the villages and get these children before a trafficker ever reaches them, and tell them, "This is what to watch out for. This is what you do if someone comes up. You scream and you travel in twos." So we don't want them to ever to be trafficked.

So reach but then rescue. For those girls who have been trafficked. It was amazing to hear the stories from our SWAT team that we work with, going in the middle of the night and literally grabbing these children from the pit of hell.

And then restore; putting them in a place where they can recover. Not only that, where they can learn a life skill. It is literally snatching someone from the gates of hell and delivering them to the foot of the cross.

So I need you to work with me please because we're going to go back and I want every time we go back to be able to do more. We have an incredible gift at the moment. Some of our friends, and you may even be watching, they have offered a matching gift of \$320,000. It used to be that if you were able to contribute \$128 you would be able to say I have reached, rescued, and restored one girl. And some of you couldn't do that but now if you can do \$64 that will be matched by our partners, and together you will have reached, rescued, and restored a girl. If you can do \$1280 that now will rescue 20 girls.

So please, go to your phone, make the best gift possible. Go online. Let's do it today; in

Jesus' name.

Begin video clip

Announcer: Behind the bright lights there is a darkness where a world of innocence is lost and abuse runs rampant scarring the souls of children with no one and nowhere to turn for help. With bodies broken and hopes crushed, these young victims are trapped in a never-ending nightmare.

Today, you can shine the light of God's love in this dark world to reach, rescue, and restore these young ones to the life God designed for them to live. With a generous \$320,000 matching gift, now your gift of \$128 to help rescue a child can be doubled to help two children. Your \$64 gift will be matched to help rescue one child from the horrors of human trafficking. And a \$32 mission rescue gift will be doubled to \$64.

And with your donation of any amount, we'll send you *The Promises of Christ* gift book filled with beautiful photographs, scriptures, stories, and commentary from James Robison.

With your gift of \$128 or more you'll receive "The Names of Jesus" throw. This beautifully woven blanket features the names of Jesus in many languages. It will make a lovely addition to your home and serve as a beautiful reminder and spiritual comfort to the Lordship of our savior.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1280 which will now help rescue 20 children. And you may request our beautiful new bronze sculpture, "Safe in the Shepherd's Arms."

Please call, write, or make your gift online.

End of clip

On the mission field

Ralph: I'm standing here today at a border crossing near India and Nepal. Multiple thousands of people cross through this border every day. But caught in the middle of all this flow, young ladies, even little girls are being caught up in this darkness called "human trafficking." They're going to be caught on the other side of this border: No passport, no legal documents, and no identification. Most of them never to be seen again.

It's like these young girls are like in the jaws of death and those jaws can either close in on them and take their life away or those jaws can stay open. And they stay open by mission partners who are on these borders right now as we speak. They're intercepting these girls from being taken across that border where they will disappear. If they do, they're going to end up with diseases like AIDS. Many of them end up committing suicide. But our mission partners can rescue them so they can have a life. They get them in school. They give them training so they can move on with their life and really thrive.

I want to ask you today, right now, if you would go to your phone, call that number on the screen, go online, whatever gives you the greatest opportunity to give the most generous gift you can give to help our mission partners intercept these girls and get them out of the jaws of death into a beautiful life. God bless you and thank you for giving today.

End of clip**In the studio**

Sheila: Thank you so much. If the lines are busy please keep calling. We looked into the face of so many of these little girls and told them the help is going to keep coming. Because some of them told us about sisters and friends who are still in bondage. Our partners on the ground are amazing. It is our joy to be able to be missionaries from our own sofas in the name of Jesus. So please call.

Remember for any gift at all, we will send you this beautiful book, *The Promises of Christ*. And for \$128 we will send you this lovely throw. I know you don't do it for the gifts. It's simply our way of saying thank you so much.

So for *LIFE Today*, I'm Sheila Walsh saying thank you, God bless you, and we'll see you next time!