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Week 17: Spring Mission Feeding

Sheila Walsh

Change the way you think

Sheila: Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm Sheila Walsh. I'm so glad you join us. Thank you too for all the little notes you write or you'll put something on Facebook. I wanted you to know, if you wanted to follow me on Facebook, it is just Sheila Walsh connect or you can follow us at *LIFE Today*, and on Instagram I'm Sheila Walsh 1 because somebody else got the Sheila Walsh without the one.

One of the things that a young girl wrote to me in an email the other day, she was saying, "I really want to be more like Jesus. I'm in college." She said she was a freshman. She said, "I've really tried to live a life that would be honoring to the Lord but one of the things I'm struggling with is I have so many negative tapes that play over and over in my head. Like I look at myself in the mirror and all I can think is I'm fat or I'm ugly. I don't know how to change how I feel about myself so that I can begin to believe what God says about me."

Well, honestly what I wrote back to her was this is such a common problem. In fact, Paul wrote to the church in Rome, way back then, "Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is -- his good, pleasing and perfect will."

Well, you might be tempted to say well, that sounds lovely but how do we do that? How do we change what we think when it is so deeply entrenched? Paul makes it very clear that the only way to be transformed is to have our minds renewed.

Well, as I meditated on this verse for some time I wonder, if in contemporary

Christianity, if in the church we place more emphasis on behavior than on right thinking; on what we do rather than understanding why we do it and then committing wholeheartedly to the process.

That sounds confusing. Let me explain what I mean. One of the things that our son Christian noticed in his first year of college was that some of his friends and other students he'd known at high school or church changed the way they behaved when they were suddenly living away from home for the first time.

Now I know a certain amount of that is to be expected when our children are first away from their home but this wasn't just spreading their wings, this was more than that. He said some of them lived like completely different people. Once they were away from their parents watching their own behavior they behaved however they wanted. But when I thought about that I thought if there's not a transformation internally, then when external forces are removed then we just do whatever pleases us.

I prayed with so many Christian parents who are devastated by the way their college-age kids have changed. If I've heard this once I've heard it a thousand times, "They never behaved like this before they left home."

But the hard question remains, why did they live differently at home? Did they make good choices previously to fit in with what their parents expected to avoid any kind of discipline or because there was a genuine heart and mind change? You'll notice, I certainly notice, you can do all the right things but if you don't know why you're doing them then you'll abandon them when they're no longer expected.

And it's not just our children. It is very easy for us to fall into the same trap. In our culture we're increasingly bombarded with messages about what to wear, what to think, who to believe, what the latest trend is. Paul's words to the church in Rome speak clearly to us today: "Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world." It's the most natural thing in the world to copy behavior and customs or Paul wouldn't have begun that way.

Think about it. This is before Instagram and Twitter and everything else where people are always looking at a photo and thinking well, I don't look like that. This is before all of that. So obviously, it is the human condition. We all want to belong. We want to fit in.

But when we give our lives to Christ it becomes clear that some behaviors and customs are no longer in line with the Word of God. So we may stop doing certain things but unless you and I are transformed, unless our minds are renewed not much has really changed internally. Some of us simply replace the world's list with a more acceptable one. We maybe swap drunkenness for gluttony. You know where two or three are gathered in his name there is a casserole in the midst. Or maybe we swap cursing for gossip.

Until we understand that we may live on this earth but we belong to another kingdom we'll tidy ourselves up a bit and wonder why we still feel so defeated. Giving our lives to Christ is not like joining a club, it's a call to a radical new way of thinking and living 24/7, not just on Sunday mornings or when we're at church.

The word *transformed* only occurs one time in all four gospels and it was a very dramatic transformation. Remember this? "Six days later, Jesus took Peter and the two brothers, James and John and led them up a high mountain to be alone. As the men watched Jesus' appearance was transformed so that his face shone like the sun and his clothes became as white as light."

Well, the word used here for *transformed* is the Greek word, *metamorphoo* and from that root we get our word, *metamorphosis*. You know when a beautiful butterfly emerges from a cocoon the change is total, absolute. As the disciples watched that day, Christ's face shone like the sun. His clothes white as light.

Can you imagine what that must have been like to see? But do you know this? That one day you and I will look like that? Christ told his disciples that when he has finally

defeated Satan and established a new kingdom and a new earth, it says this, "Then the righteous shall shine like the sun in the Father's kingdom."

A day is coming when our transformation will be complete. We will be changed externally and internally. But now, as followers of Christ on this earth, we're called to be transformed internally, which will impact our external behavior. Only an internal transformation will truly change external behavior. Every single battle begins in our minds not with our behavior. We can behave a certain way and remain unchanged but if we want to change how we act we've got to change how we think.

Now it might be -- somebody said to me, "Why did you call your new book, *It's Okay Not to Be Okay* if now you're telling me I have to change?" But it is not an issue of judgment; it is a matter of freedom. Christ wants you to be free. Free from condemning thoughts, free from compulsive behaviors, free to be who you really are. Free to live your own crazy beautiful life.

When Paul wrote to the church in Galatia he said this, "So Christ has truly set us free. Now make sure you stay free and don't get tied up again in slavery to the law."

Paul wanted to make sure that believers in Galatia didn't fall back into condemnation under the law. They were being told by someone that they had to be circumcised to be right with God. But Paul reminded them there is only one way to be right with God and that's through faith in Christ and his sacrifice on the cross once and for all, for those of us who trust in him.

You may have been touched by that kind of message in more contemporary ways. Perhaps you felt judged. Some churches, for example, place great emphasis on a particular style of dress or a particular way of worship. Some believers feel liberty to drink wine and some don't. Some churches invite women into the pulpit and others don't. And some of it is custom or a particular understanding of a certain passage of scripture. That's all great but if anyone ever tells you that you're not saved until you follow their

rules, run as fast as you can because that is not the gospel of Jesus Christ.

So how do we live in this freedom that Christ paid for? We lean into that wisdom from Romans 12. We pursue renewal through the transforming of our minds. You may be tempted to ask, what's wrong with my mind? Perhaps your smart, you're well educated, computer savvy, endless information. If you think about it, nowadays you can Google anything. You've got it all at your fingertips. Quite different than the audience that Paul wrote to.

But here's the thing. The problem is not a lack of information. It is a lack of renewal. We live in a fallen world, which mean our minds are fallen too. We were made to worship God but unless our minds have been renewed we don't worship God, we worship whatever gets most of our attention.

So the question remains, well then, come on, help me out here. How do I renew my mind? The word *renewal* found in Romans 12:2 occurs only one other place in the Greek New Testament, and it gives me great hope that this process is not something that you and I can do by ourselves. We can't! We need the help of the Holy Spirit.

This is what we read: "But when the kindness and love of God our savior appeared, he saved us not because of righteous things we had done but because of his mercy. He saved us," listen to this, "he saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit."

Renewing our minds is a beautiful joint work between our commitment to become more like Christ, and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit working in us. If you're asking what do I mean by that, what's my part? Someone asked me one day what I'm most committed to and I had, I can think of a few things: To Christ, to my family, to helping other women find freedom, working to help victims of sex trafficking or getting food to those who have no food or clean water or little shoes on feet that have never had shoes, and of course, my dogs.

Well, he said, "Look at where you spend most of your time and that will tell you what matters most to you."

So I began a kind of inventory of my life and asked the Holy Spirit to help me. Began to make little changes. Like for example, I began daily to ask the Holy Spirit to change my heart. I asked him to soften my heart and teach me true humility. Humility is not like thinking that you're worthless. It's really just actually not thinking about yourself at all. It's having a clear understanding of who you are in relationship to Christ.

But then I began to think about how I spend my regular day. As the Holy Spirit pointed out things I began to work with him. For example, I eliminated some of the TV programs I watched or the magazines I read that fed into a wrong way of thinking.

Now don't get me wrong. There are certain TV shows I love watching and I like relaxing or watching something with my husband. But I was careful because whatever we take into our life is going to produce a harvest in our life.

You know when David said, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O Lord."

I began to realize that whatever I meditate on that's going to come out of my mouth. So I try to be careful that I'm not watching things that are destructive or that just create a sense of unease. But the other thing is spending time with friends who bring us closer to Christ.

I was watching something on TV the other day and they said if you don't have close friends in terms of just your life expectancy, if you're very isolated from people, it is the same as smoking a pack of cigarettes a day. That just kind of blew me away. But you know what it said to me? It said that God has made us for community. We need one another.

A young girl wrote to me and said, "Listen. I know that that's true but I really struggle with clinical depression and sometimes I just want to stay in bed and pull the covers over my head."

I wrote back and I said, "Trust me! If there is anything I understand it's that." I was hospitalized years ago for clinical depression and I know those feelings of just wanting, one of the first things, first signs for me is wanting to withdraw from people. But God has designed you and me for community. We need each other.

I'm pretty sure, maybe Sunday morning comes and you're like, I just can't make it today. I'll watch it online. But it is not the same. There is something about being in the house of God with the people of God. It's okay if you sit in the very back row if you haven't been for a while and don't feel obliged that you have to do all the right things. Just sit there and listen and let the worship wash over you. And you might be surprised how quickly you find yourself caught up in remembering what's always true, no matter what might be true for a moment.

The other thing that I've committed to in a new way in my own life is to prayer. To pray, to pray, to pray; to talk to God about everything. In a few weeks I'm going to share with you a whole new thing that's happening.

There is a group of maybe 14 or 15 of us, women who love God and we've been gathering together. And it is our prayer and our commitment that by 2020 we would have a million women committed to praying. Can you imagine the difference that would make?

We live in a world that is so noisy, that is so angry and sometimes women's voices in our culture is just seen as shrill and angry. But if God's daughters, if we got on our knees and began to do battle in prayer, what a difference we could make in this world. So as that moves further along I'll tell you about what's going to happen and what will be happening in your particular area. We're going to start a new thing called, "12 at 12." So no matter

where you are in the world, at noon just stop and commit to pray. You might not be able to do 12 minutes. If you could do two minutes. But can you imagine? If all around the world, it will be a different time in Australia, a different time in China, a different time in Russia, a different time in Scotland, a different time in Texas, but if all of God's daughters are praying together for God to move in this world, what a difference that will make.

Another thing that I find really helps to renew my mind is to read good books by godly men and women. But more than that, my best friend, the Word of God. This is not just words on a page. This is alive. I discovered that when I began to work with the Holy Spirit rather than thinking, oh, I want to change and have to do it all by myself, when I find strength in the Word of God I find myself wanting to do the things that brought me closer to Jesus and brought glory to his name.

If you're like me, I know we want to be more like Christ but you don't have to do it by yourself. That's when you begin to see that your mind is being renewed when the things you think you should do become the very things that you simply love to do.

One of the things the scripture is really clear on is that you and I have this mysterious privilege of being able to sit down and offer Christ a meal simply by doing that for somebody else. Have you ever thought oh gosh, I wish I could do something for Jesus? Let me show you how. Watch this.

On the mission field

Announcer: It is hard to imagine the reality that thousands of children are dying on the continent of Africa each year simply because their families do not have enough food.

Isak: It's absolutely devastating to just walk through this cemetery here and to see how they're digging graves. They're preparing graves for young children; more than ten graves

that have been dug here. These graves don't have a name yet. They haven't been allocated to a child but they've dug them because they know that children will die in the next week.

Announcer: Our mission teams have seen firsthand mothers emotionally devastated, having lost children because they literally starved to death.

Isak: This child is lying here dying because we didn't do enough, because we didn't get to their village in time, because we weren't able to take a bowl of food a day, something that costs so little. And yet does so much. It heals the heart of a mother. It saves the life of a child. It wins the battle against malnutrition and death. Unfortunately, I think it is too late for this precious child. God, I pray it's not but I think it is. But it is not too late for tens of thousands of others that so desperately need your help.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: It's almost unthinkable to me that in this day and age there is still such a crisis around the world, particularly in Africa. When you walk into these malnutrition clinics it is almost unbearable. The first thing that hits you is just the heat, the unbearable heat. But then the despair that's almost palpable, that you can feel in the air, for mothers that have brought their children there are praying and begging God to spare their lives. But by this point, the children are so weak.

I remember looking at one of the first severely malnourished children that I'd ever been able to hold and I didn't know why her hair was kind of a coppery color. They explained it's because there is no protein in her system. And why her skin was literally peeling off her hands simply because she didn't have food.

There is something that just -- it's insane to me that so many of us spend most of our life on a diet where just across the world people are dying because they don't have one bowl

of food a day. And yet the other side of it is I see what can be done. You probably saw a photo there of where I'm handing out these bowls of food to children; and you know what's amazing to me? If that was kids here in the states lined up, you know how kids are. They get kind of frustrated and it's like, "Come on! Is it my turn?" These children stood for, it must have been two hours, in the blazing African heat waiting simply in turn. Sometimes, if it was a little one, they would let the little one go ahead of them just to get one bowl of food.

So here's what we've made as our commitment here at *LIFE*. We've committed that this year we will feed 400,000 children. Now that might seem like, oh gosh, what an impossible task! It's not. Do you know that \$30 will feed three children for three whole months -- \$30! Cut out some horrible movie you were going to go see and you've fed three children for three months. \$50 feeds five children for three months. \$100 will feed ten children for three months. And if you've been really blessed, if things are going well in your life and you've got this, \$1,000 feeds -- that's like a whole village of children for three whole months!

I remember hearing Betty's prayer saying, "We pray that the line will never be longer than the bowls of food that we have to give out." Our partners are on the ground. I get to see with my own eyes this works. When I go from a malnutrition clinic to a village where we're feeding the children, the children are like normal children. They're happy and they're running around and they've got energy and they've got a future and they've got hope. Christ died for these children. We can't let them die because they don't have a bowl of food to eat.

So please! Would you go to your phone? Just do the best you can. That's all Jesus asks of any of us. Do the best you can and change the world for these children.

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 from starvation in parts of Angola, Mozambique and South Sudan.

With previous reserves gone and mission feeding helping in areas of great famine, we urgently need your support to replenish food supplies to reach the 400,000 children who are counting on us. Your life saving gift of \$30, \$50, or \$100 will help feed and care for three, five or ten children.

With your gift we'll send you *The James Code* by O.S. Hawkins, an outstanding devotional to help you go from knowing about God to living for God, and putting your faith into action. You will also enjoy this beautifully grafted leather bookmark.

With your gift of \$100 or more please request *The Passion* translation Bible. This New Testament edition including Psalms and Proverbs ignites *The Passion* of the Bible to modern readers by merging *The Passion* of God's heart for his children with the life-changing truth of his word.

Finally, with your gift of \$1,000 or more to help feed and care for 100 children, be sure to request our commemorative bronze sculpture, "Safe in the Shepherd's Arms."

Please call write or make your gift online today.

End of clip

On the mission field

James: Just remember we are able to feed, the missionaries are able to be here because of the love of God, not just in their hearts but in your heart, those of you who support *LIFE Outreach* and respond to *LIFE Today*.

Why don't you go right now to the phone or go online and make the best gift you can. Help us feed three, five or ten of these children? If you can help feed 100, well, do that. I

don't know at what level you're led to participate but for the three children or the five or the ten children, it's important what you do today.

We are feeding kids because of the love of God expressed through people; really, a lot of them -- nothing wrong with you going and doing what you enjoy. We just don't need to forget the others. It's very important that you pray that everyone who can will respond. Don't just pray, be the answer to a prayer. Respond and make the best gift you can.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: Thank you so much. And for any gift at all we'll send you this book by my friend, O.S. Hawkins, *The James Code*: 52 scripture principles for putting your faith in action. Then we have *The Passion* New Testament, Psalms and Proverbs; a beautiful interpretation of God's heart toward every single one of us.

If the line was busy write the number down. Please keep calling. We want to honor our commitment to feed 400,000 children. I'm pretty sure we will sit down and enjoy a meal as a family together more knowing that we have reached out and done what we can in Jesus' name.

So for James and for Betty, I'm Sheila Walsh saying thank you so much for being with us and we'll see you next time on *LIFE Today*.