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Week 28: Summer WFL

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"Disappointment with God's Timing"

Sheila: Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm Sheila Walsh. So glad you could join us.

Last week my husband and I were out on the West Coast and we got to spend a little time with a couple of families who were hosting us. And the little boy of one of the families was just adorable. He said, "Mrs. Walsh, can I ask you a question?"

I said, "Of course, you can, dear. You can ask me anything."

He said, "Well, I really want tickets to go to the L.A. Dodgers and I asked God last night. So, I was just wondering, do you know how long it will take for God to get back to me?"

I said, "That is an excellent question and I'm not sure whether God has any tickets for the Dodgers game."

And we talked a little bit more about the things we pray for. And sometimes we have to wait a little bit longer. And sometimes your father has to be involved in fulfilling the prayer.

But it made me think afterwards when I was flying home that often God's timing disappoints us. There's maybe something you've been praying about for a long time and you really -- you need an answer. Maybe you've been praying for something really specific and you needed God to show up within a particular timeframe. It was an urgent

need -- and he doesn't. When God doesn't answer when you need him to, I wonder what conclusions do you come to? Do you think to yourself, did I do something wrong? Did I ask the wrong way? Do you find yourself asking, does God even hear my prayers?

There is a story in John Chapter 11, it is an amazing story. It is the story of Lazarus being called back from the dead. I'm sure you've read it, John Chapter 11. And apart from the resurrection of Christ, the story of Lazarus is the most amazing miracle but it's only in one gospel. It's only in the gospel of John. If you take a miracle that was great but not as spectacular, like say the feeding of the 5,000, it's in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. So why is the story of a man who's been dead for four days coming back to life, why is it only in one gospel?

Well, we understand when we read John Chapter 12. In John 12 we read this: When all the people heard of Jesus' arrival, they flocked to see him, and also to see Lazarus the man Jesus had raised from the dead. Then the leading priests decided to kill Lazarus too, for it was because of him that many of the people had deserted them and believed in Jesus. Amazing!

The reason that John could include it was John wrote his gospel last so by the time that John wrote down the story, Lazarus was finally safely home with Jesus. But if you've ever been tempted to think this, and I know I have when I was younger, I used to think wouldn't it have been amazing to see some of those miracles? If you saw Jesus taking one little meal and feeding 9,000 people, if you count in the wives and children. You think then it would be easier to believe. We tend to think that miracles would change us. But what this story will show us is that it is obedience to Christ that changes us.

So, let's take a look at the story. It's found in John chapter 11, and I'm going to read verses 1-16: A man named Lazarus was sick. He lived in Bethany with his sisters, Mary and Martha. This is the Mary who later poured the expensive perfume on the Lord's feet and wiped them with her hair. Her brother, Lazarus was sick. So, the two sisters sent a message to Jesus telling him, "Lord, your dear friend is very sick."

But when Jesus heard about it he said, "Lazarus's sickness will not end in death. No, it happened for the glory of God so that the son of God will receive glory from this."

So, although Jesus loved Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, he stayed where he was for the next two days. Finally, he said to his disciples, "Let's go back to Judea."

But his disciples objected. Rabbi they said, "Only a few days ago the people in Judea were trying to stone you. Are you going there again?"

Jesus replied, "There are 12 hours of daylight every day. During the day people can walk safely. They can see because they have the light of this world. But at night there is danger of stumbling because they have no light." Then he said, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep but now I will go and wake him up."

The disciples said, "Lord, if he is sleeping, he will get better soon." They thought Jesus meant Lazarus was simply sleeping, but Jesus meant Lazarus had died.

So, he told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. And for your sakes, I'm glad I wasn't there, for now you will really believe. Come, let's go see him."

Thomas, nicknamed the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let's go, too -- and die with Jesus."

There is so many things in that story I find fascinating. Mary and Martha wanted to make sure that Jesus knew it was *their* Lazarus. Now to us Lazarus was a name that I don't think I've ever heard of other than in the Bible. But in those days, they would have Lazarus the baker, and Lazarus the carpenter. So, when they send a message they're saying, "Tell Jesus it is our Lazarus."

Now they don't have a single doubt that Jesus will come. They've watched Jesus heal

total strangers in a crowd. And Lazarus and Mary and Martha and Jesus were close friends. So, the messenger was sent off and Jesus was about 20 miles away, a good day's walk. So, you work it out. One day for the messenger to get there and a day for him to come back with Jesus. I imagine sweet Mary kneeling by her brother's bed. Obviously, the three of them were not married. They took care of each other. I imagine Mary saying, "He'll be here soon. Hold on, Lazarus. He'll be here soon."

Well, Jesus doesn't come. We just read that in verses five and six. Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus yet when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days. Why? Why would Jesus wait?

And if you're tempted to think, well, the thing is Jesus knows that he is going to go, and he is going to do this great miracle. But why would he put them through that? Why would he allow them to go through the pain of actually watching their brother die in front of them, of going through the terrible ceremony of having to bury their brother?

Have you ever been in that kind of place where you just need God to move now? I saw that with my mother-in-law Eleanor when she was diagnosed with liver cancer. I had just... I think our son Christian was maybe about three years old at the time. She did not want to die. The doctors told her she had 12-18 months. And she begged God to heal her. In fact, she asked me to take her to anyone who had any kind of healing ministry anywhere. We went to some interesting meetings because she was so desperate for God to heal her.

And in the end one of the saddest things was Eleanor said to me, "If it was you, God would have answered your prayer. He would have healed you."

So often we think, when God doesn't answer in our way or in our time it is because he doesn't love us. I told her, just as I would tell you, "God loves you! He doesn't love anybody else one grain of sand more than he loves you."

Well, when the disciples hear that Jesus is not going to go back to Judea, they are relieved because just a few days prior they had tried to stone Jesus and he had managed to escape.

But now Jesus says, "We're going back."

Not only that, have you ever thought... excuse me if this sounds a little irreligious. But have you ever thought if I was walking with Jesus and he said this, I wouldn't have clue what he meant? Because here's what he said. This was his answer to why are you going back now? He said, "Are there not 12 hours of daylight? A man who walks by day will not stumble for he sees by this world's light. It is when he walks by night that he stumbles for he has no light."

What? I don't think any of the disciples understood what Jesus was trying to say to them. But what I think is fascinating is it is Thomas, you know the one that we call "Doubting Thomas" who says, "Let's go. If we die, we die with him."

I sometimes think Thomas gets a really bad rap because that's the thing we remember about in the upper room because he wasn't there when Christ appeared to the rest of the disciples. But I often think of that. That when Jesus said I'm going back to the place where they had almost stoned him, he said, "If Jesus is going, I'm going with him. If Jesus dies, I'm going to die with him." Basically, what Thomas was saying what I believe absolutely to be true, the safest place to be is where Jesus is.

Now the fact that Lazarus had been dead for four days was very significant to the Jewish people. It changed everything. Earlier in John's gospel you read accounts of two other people being brought back to life, but they had only been dead for hours. You probably know it is Jewish custom to coat the body in spices. But they don't embalm bodies and the body has to be buried by sundown of the same day when the person died.

Now they had a custom of watching the grave 24 hours for the first three days. There

would always be somebody outside the tomb 24 hours for the first three days for two reasons. Number one: If someone had accidentally slipped into a coma. Perhaps somebody had gone into a coma and they thought the person was dead then someone would be outside in case the person suddenly came to and was like, "Hello out there!" So, they could be rescued.

But the second one was an interesting one. Jewish people in those days believed that once you had died your spirit could visit your body again for three more days and decide if you'd like to give the rest of this life a chance or not. But once the fourth day came there was no possibility. So, no one -- no one had ever come back to life on the fourth day.

Let's read on in John 11: When Jesus arrived at Bethany, he was told that Lazarus had already been in his grave for four days. Bethany was only a few miles down the road from Jerusalem, and many of the people had come to console Martha and Mary in their loss. When Martha got word that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him. But Mary stayed in the house.

Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask."

Jesus told her, "Your brother will rise again."

"Yes," Martha said, "He will rise when everyone else rises, at the last day."

Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying. Everyone who lives in me and believes in me will never ever die. Do you believe this, Martha?"

"Yes, Lord," she told him. "I have always believed you are the Messiah, the son of God, the one who has come into the world from God."

Well, after that Martha went back to the house to tell Mary her sister that Jesus has come, "He's here." And Mary ran out and she fell at Jesus' feet, sobbing and said basically the same thing. "Lord, if you'd been here, my brother would not have died."

You probably know this that John 11:35 is the shortest verse in scripture. It is two words: Jesus wept. Just two words but so heavy with meaning. Don't ever imagine for a moment that Christ does not weep with you when you weep. Sometimes when you go through a tragedy and friends and family gather around initially but then life moves on for them as it does. And you think nobody understands the weight of my grief. I want you to know that you have a savior who understands. Remember what Psalm 56:11 -- Psalm 56:10 says? That God collects all your tears in his bottle?

So, Jesus prays. Then he asks them to roll the heavy stone away from the graveside. Well, Martha obviously panics because her brother is in there. The bodies are not embalmed, and he's been dead for four days.

Well, Jesus turns, and he looks her in the eyes and he says this: Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" I almost hear Jesus saying, "Martha, trust me here."

Have you ever been in a place of panic? In those darkest moments of life, I want you to hear Jesus looking right through your fear and saying to you, "Trust me. I'm right here."

Well then Jesus approached the entrance to the tomb and basically, the more literal translation is that he says, "Lazarus! It's this way out."

Can you imagine the silence that fell over the crowd? And then suddenly Lazarus comes walking out. I don't know what it must have been like in that cave but suddenly as his spirit reentered his body and he is alive, and he hears the voice of his friend Jesus calling him to come out.

Here's what's fascinating. Do you know that that actually split the crowd? We read that many of the people who were with Mary believed in Jesus when they saw this happen. But some went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.

And then we read in the verse 53 of John 11: From that time on the Jewish leaders began to plot Jesus' death.

I was thinking about sometimes when Jesus calls us back to life, it demands a response. Maybe you were a nominal church-goer. You went sometimes, and maybe just went because you used to go as a family. But then one time you went in and it was like the Lord grabbed a hold of you and you finally got it that he is alive, and he is real, and it is changing your life! Don't be surprised if everyone around you doesn't quite understand what's going on. When you decide to be sold out for Jesus it makes other people uncomfortable sometimes.

And that's what happened that day as Lazarus came back to life. Some people fell at Jesus' feet in worship and others said, "We need to get rid of this man before anything else happens. Too many people are following him."

We're living in interesting days in our nation, around the world, wherever you're watching this program from. I believe that the opposition to our faith is going to get greater. And there's never been a better time in human history to say to the Lord, "I am all in."

Every morning when I wake up, I remind myself that I'm on mission 24/7; not just on a Friday night when I have the privilege of standing up and leading a Bible study or when I'm worshipping in church on a Sunday morning. But no matter where I am, if I'm in line at the grocery store, if I'm on an airplane, if I'm walking through a mall, I'm on mission for Jesus and I want my life to make people know that they've got to choose one way or the another.

I pray that for you too. God's timing might not have been everything you hoped for in your life, but I hope you understand that you can trust the one who keeps the time clock.

One of the things that we're very excited about at the moment here at *LIFE* is that we have been given an opportunity to make a very significant impact in the lives of some people who perhaps have wondered God, do you hear my prayer? We can be the answer to that and say, yeah, he did. Here's what we're going to do about it. Would you watch this?

On the mission field:

>> How do you fight an enemy that you can't escape? One that you're forced to rely on knowing that at any moment it can strike those you love the most? This is the story of a young mother named Vivian and others in her village.

Open Captions:

>> I thought my kids were doing well, but all of a sudden, I started seeing the life go out of them. Their legs and cheeks became swollen and their hair turned gray. The dirty water made them very sick... Within a week, two of my children died.

>> The sorrow is truly almost too much to bear! But Vivian must stay strong for the sake of her remaining children. She knows that the contaminated water in their village, the only water source they have, was draining the life from her family. But she has no choice. With every bout of illness in her home Vivian's fear grows.

Open Captions:

>> After the death of my children, my husband got sick as well. One of my other children just got sick yesterday with the same symptoms as the two that died.

>> The water that they're getting from this, it is so contaminated! It is filled with waterborne illness. It is literally killing people. I got to sit down and talk with a mother

yesterday who has lost two children in the same week because of this very water right here. But they don't have any other option. I'm asking you to believe with me that together we can give them fresh water every day.

End of video

In the studio:

Sheila: When I think of how hopeless some of these moms must feel it's overwhelming! Because if you think about it, it's not like their children have an allergy to a particular kind of food so they can avoid that. We all need water to live.

But in these villages... and some of these villages we have to drive a long, long way to get there. And there is no other water source. If there was, they would use it. This is literally all they have. And as a mom, could you imagine burying two children in one week? The thing is, it is unnecessary. It doesn't have to happen because God has placed you and I in a situation where we can hear their cries and be an answer to their prayers.

We've made a commitment to our partners on the ground that we're going to help them this year to put 400 new water wells in 15 nations. That may seem like a very adventurous goal but we believe with God this is possible. And we believe it is possible when you will say "yes" with us.

We've broken it down to make it doable, literally for everybody. If you were able to contribute \$48 that will give ten people Water for LIFE. See, to put a new well in one of those villages it costs \$4800. I think that's amazing that they've been able to make it as efficient as that. And the steel drums that those are in make it so that that well will last for about 70 years, like a lifetime of a villager.

So, if you were able to put a well in by yourself, do you know that that would give like a whole village, like 1,000 people, water for their whole life! Now some of you could maybe do \$144. If you could do that that would give 30 people Water for LIFE.

When I look at some of the things that I casually spend money on and don't think about it, and I think of mothers like that darling mother that Tammy showed us there, praying for her children, watching as her husband gets sick and weak, and watching over her other children, what must that be like to give your child a cup of water knowing potentially you're handing your child a death warrant? But having absolutely no other choice.

The great news is that you and I are boots on the ground in Jesus' name. We are the family of God and we get to do this. We get to make a difference! I can't wait. We're going back over to Africa to be able to see the difference that your help has made but we need it now. It's really urgent.

So, would you go to your phone? Would you give the very best gift possible? Give something up for a week that you're not even going to miss that will give life to people who are desperately praying. Would you go to your phone? Would you make the very best gift possible? Thank you!

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 else can she 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 400 water wells this year. Your gift of \$24 will help provide clean water for five children. A gift of \$48 will help provide for ten. \$72 will provided for 15. And \$144 will help provide life-giving water for 30 people

for a lifetime!

With your gift, we'll send you the "New Mercies Each Day" desk calendar. This 17-month calendar will not only help you keep track of important dates but also remind you of the Father's love and goodness with scripture quotes and encouragement from all the hosts on *LIFE Today*.

With your gift of \$100 or more, request the "Fruit of the Spirit" bowl. This beautiful and decorative ceramic bowl features scripture revealing the "Fruit of the Spirit," a lovely addition to your table or home.

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 our "Safe in the Shepherd's Arms" bronze sculpture.

Please call, write, or make your gift online.

End of video

On the mission field:

Ralph: We're standing here today at a water source in a village in Cambodia. It appears to be three boys having a great time just drinking, playing in the water. And that's a great thing. But what we've discovered is the water is so filthy. So, when they're drinking this water, what should be a life-sustaining source for them and their families, it's actually bringing danger and disease and sickness to their lives. We've heard stories already where children have died from drinking this water.

The good news is this. This doesn't have to be their daily reality. We can make a difference. We have the ability to give and do the work that's necessary to bring clean water to this village; that will bring life to these little boys and not death.

So please go to your phone, go online, whichever is easiest for you and give that generous gift today that we can make a true difference for children in the world today.

End of video

In the studio:

Sheila: The need is so urgent! But this is something very doable. You and I together can change this. For any gift at all I would love to send you this calendar. It is a desk calendar, 17 months and it's got these great things in it like here's one from Betty: "God adores you because he created you for a great purpose!"

If you can give a little bit more, if you can give \$100, we can give you this gorgeous fruit bowl and it's got the "Fruit of the Spirit" around it. I love this thing!

I know you don't do it for the gifts but it is just our way of saying you are going to be a blessing to so many people and we want to just be a blessing to you.

So, thanks for being with us. If you couldn't get through. Keep calling! Let's do this in Jesus' name. I'll see you next time!