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Week 39: Christmas Shoes and Smiles: Last week

Randy Robison and Sheila Walsh

Julia and Ryan Sadler

Randy: Thank you for joining today. I'm Randy Robison. This is Sheila Walsh. You know that show on T.L.C. "Rattled" -- I'm glad you're watching *LIFE Today* right now but there is a very popular show my wife loves. Have you ever watched the show?

Sheila: Of course, I do. I love the show. Yes!

Randy: It's a bit new to me. It's not exactly my genre. Anyway, we have the people right here on the set.

Sheila: Some of the very stars!

Randy: We do! Would you welcome Ryan and Julia Sadler?

Sheila: Welcome!

Randy: So we're not just going to talk about the show, although I'm sure a lot of people would listen to that all day long. But you have a book called *Pray Big Things* which ties in, I think, with the show. But give us a little background so that we'll understand the context of this *Pray Big Things* because it is not just three words, it is a big deal in your lives.

Julia: Yes. So the idea for *Pray Big Things* came three years ago. We didn't have anything really terrible going on, no incurable diagnosis or really even big problem. We

both have been Christians for quite a long time, but we just wanted more out of our life, out of our relationship with God, and we both felt this stirring in our spirit of the Holy Spirit saying what if? What if you really give all you have? What if those promises in scripture really are for you?

And so we both really felt that was something God told us. We made a list of 20 things, we sat down and we just said, you know what? We're not going to be embarrassed to ask God for anything. And so no one is watching, it's just us. Of course, God is watching, but we're like, let's just come down and agree on a list of 20 things we're going to pray until they happen or until God clearly says no. So on that list were multiples, because we're going to ask for anything...

Sheila: Multiple?

Julia: Multiple children. Yeah!

Sheila: It could have been multiple dogs.

Julia: No, no, no. I just assumed I probably couldn't do childbirth more than once. I've always wanted multiples. Used to dress up my sister like we're twins. I've always been drawn to that.

Randy: She had no idea what she was getting into.

Julia: No idea! We had been writing curriculum for our student ministry for years. We really wanted to get that published. So we had on there book deals, just anything. We had people we wanted to see get saved, people in our family struggling with different addictions. We were super specific, that was the rule -- specific and persistent.

So I believe when you start praying differently God takes notice and so does Satan. And so whenever we started praying multiple times a day, persistently, boldly becoming

before the throne really interesting things started happening. We got pregnant immediately and I remember thinking that was easy! Well, next! We lost that child and that miscarriage coincided with an event I had for teenaged girls where I had 100 girls in my backyard that I was teaching on how God has a purpose for their life for that season that is not contingent on anything in the future. That season has a spiritual purpose. So obviously that was so surreal losing our first child while having a hundred girls in my backyard to minister to. One of them is here today so that's pretty cool.

Then it was like that's sad, but a lot of people were like we've had miscarriages. So okay. When we get pregnant again and then we lose that child. When that happened, Ryan and I, it was just impossible not to feel like something was going on, especially because we were committed to praying such big prayers. So we just decided that even though this surprises us it doesn't surprise God. And just taking very practically what scripture says, about it's an honor to suffer.

So even though we were struggling with this personally, it was on the verge of the biggest evangelism campaign initiative our student ministry had ever seen. We had 12-year-olds that are witnessing to Muslims on the streets of downtown Dallas. We saw 130 people specifically share the gospel to people under 18. So it was incredible. It was just this neat evangelistic thing that took off in our student ministry. So even though we were struggling so much personally, it was one of the best seasons in ministry.

Then just to close with this. Then we get pregnant again and lose that baby on a weekend, I'm speaking in two different states, one at a woman's conference on anxiety and depression and the other on why God allows suffering.

Randy: Really?

Julia: So I really felt like it was two spiritual forces just waging war for our faith and our family.

Randy: Ryan, what is going through your head at this point?

Ryan: This whole time was obviously very taxing on us. We had heard that most people do suffer one miscarriage, a lot of women when they first start trying, but when they just kept happening, it started testing us quite a bit. Every time Julia would come in and say, "We lost this one," my heart would just sink. For me it was as a husband can't really do a whole lot, can't fix it, can't... Just be there for her and come alongside of her.

It was amazing because I had some men come alongside me as well and help me through that. But it was hard. I knew the best thing I could do for our marriage was to make sure that I would stay with her, prayed with her, supported her in everything that she was doing.

Randy: What questions were you asking God? Surely you had to be asking something.

Ryan: Well, I knew about three things in my life. I knew I was supposed to be a Christian, called to ministry. I knew I was supposed to be married, and specifically to Julia.

[Laughter]

And I knew I was supposed to be a father. I just somehow felt God had told me that when I was younger. I was wondering, why is this happening? Later on, I don't want to give away too much just yet, but it was all in God's timing. God's timing is perfect.

Randy: Give it away, tell us what happened.

Ryan: I want Julia to take this because it was...

Sheila: Let me ask you one question before you... How did that kind of loss impact your prayer life? Because you've been a Christian, you've been in the church, your dad is very

well known, very well-loved pastor and that's been your life. But you go through this tremendous loss and suffering, how did that change the way you prayed?

Julia: So I became a Christian when I was four and I really, really have followed God most of my life, a little breaks here and there but that's not what this show is about.

[Laughter]

But I had to decide either God is who he says he is or he isn't and there's really no wiggle room.

So I think it is such a benefit. And we work with students, that's what our life is, in student ministry it is such a benefit to know the Word of God. And then what really, having a time where the rubber meets the road.

Okay, this is why you learn this verse in Bible drill. So starting to see it as an opportunity. I love, there is a quote my dad says often, that trials are God's vote of confidence in you; and it's F.B. Meyer, I think. But okay. Really picturing that God is out there like, "You can do this. I've got you." And just the opportunity to live that out.

Sheila: You have an interesting phrase in your book. You said that for some time you were living on "borrowed prayers." What did you mean by that?

Julia: Yeah. So I always thought prayer is really boring. I was like really, sometimes they can get so long. And like I'm on the front row so I'm kind of peeking around. I sat through a lot of prayers in my life as a pastor's daughter.

Randy: I hear you! I hear you. I get it.

Julia: I've grown up with that heritage. And "This person's prayed for you."

And I was like, "That's great!"

But really when you're a child, you can really take that for granted. When you're someone that's grown up in the church, it is like, "Well yeah! This is great. Thanks for praying for me."

But whenever you really have a time where you need to see God move, you need to see that, you need to feel that. And so I talk about "borrowed prayers" because I think if you've grown up surrounded by prayer it can kind of like oh big deal.

But a lot of us are benefitting from the prayer work, I say the "knee work" of other people. Other people have spent generations for praying for who would come after them.

Sheila: When you went through this tremendous loss and then you start to write *Pray Big Prayers*, how has that impacted your work with young people? Because you're very committed to student ministry, but they've seen you walk through tremendous suffering.

Julia: Yes. So we weren't broadcasting it right away, the miscarriages. The third miscarriage it was like, okay, we're facing something here for sure. So we started praying, even when we were watching Netflix, I'm like, "We've got to pray right now." It just became this whole -- it was our life, praying. So we prayed for three children, for multiples. But then, which was already on the list, and then we added Ephesians 3:20 for God to do more than anything we can hope or imagine.

Sheila: And boy, did he!

Julia: And so we find out from the fertility doctor, people always want to know that, but did you take medication to help not miscarry, that does not usually cull triplets, so we say, "God used the medication to fulfill our request."

But we got the news that we were having triplets and where I read accounts of other people being stunned, we were like, "Whoa!" We just felt like we had won the gold

medal. I just yelled, "I knew it!"

I just knew it because it didn't make sense to experience so much suffering and to have so many people accept Christ as their savior, like what is going on here? So in that it was just like, one for the home team!

But then at 22 weeks I'm put on bedrest and go into labor. The neonatologist comes in and says they're going to be born blind, deaf or with brain bleeds or not at all.

Sheila: But you didn't accept that, did you? That's the part in your book that was like yeah, girl!

Julia: No. I didn't. No. As soon as he came in it was like God screamed in my spirit, no! And then I nicely told the doctor, "Please leave." And Ryan went in the hall with him. And just to kind of...

Randy: What happened in the hallway? What happened out there?

Ryan: Well, he started to kind of get into what would happen if the babies were born right then that day we got checked in to the hospital. Julia could only hear a couple of sentences that he was saying about what would happen to them. They would be blind, or brain bleeds or heart problems and this and that and all this stuff. Julia said, "Get out."

Julia: I didn't say that. I said please...

[Laughter]

Randy: I don't think it is necessarily the wrong response, honestly because that can put fear in a woman which is not health for her body.

Ryan: You're so helpless when they're on hospital bed. But I went out there with him

and I listened to the rest of what we might expect. It was, I sat there and just listened and processed it. I think we both just knew when he was telling us these things, that's not going to happen. I know this isn't the end of this story, our babies' story. We had a whole church behind us. We had so many people praying. We just knew it.

And again, through all of that time we learned that you can have a thriving relationship with God in the midst of suffering. You really can. We had a choice. We could either run to God or we can run away. We decided that's not something we're going to do. We're going to stay close to God.

Randy: At that moment, for both of you, you in the hospital room, you outside with the doctor, that fear had to be real because you had already lost three. So it sounds nice when you say it now, after the fact, but how big of a battle was it? You had to just step up and say...

Julia: It was. So I knew I needed to read the Bible. I mean I knew that. I thought I was going to be going home the next day. Ended up being 49 days of lying in a bed staring out the same window, seeing like -- I'm sorry. It's like I'm just seeing the seasons change and begging God, "Let us all live." So it was really terrifying.

And I was like I know I'm supposed read the Bible but I can't read Revelation or anything right now. I felt like God said, "It's okay, just read Psalms." And so Psalms just became my lifeline. It was so specific for the day. I just told God, this surprises us. I know it doesn't surprise you. Show us why we're here.

And we, through that, a lot of people heard our story. We got to witness to many of the nurses and medical staff, and that's how T.L.C. heard about our story and everything. But yeah, it's different looking back because you're like, oh well, didn't you know what was going to happen? But that's not the outcome for a lot of people.

Sheila: So when were these little wee ones born?

Julia: Yes! So the big prayer was for 34 weeks; 34 weeks is like the best chance of survival and everything like that. So that was the prayer request that went out. We had people all over the world, different countries praying. It was just incredible. And so it was like, week 34, week 34! And seriously, I mean I know so many of us it's not the same experience, the same emotions of just situations you never would have chosen but that when you look back you're like oh my gosh. That grew my faith so much. He just definitely showered us with protection.

But then one day I just cracked and was like I have to get out of this hospital. Like I haven't been outside in like months. I told God, I was crying in the shower and I said, "Holy Spirit, something is happening. I need you to pray on my behalf." And like I don't know what that meant. I fell asleep, woke up the next day just total peace and we went in. I got out of my hospital room twice a week, one for date nights with Ryan at the hospital, very romantic in the wheelchair. And then the other was the sonogram. I don't want to say it wrong, sonographer, I'm not sure, got real quiet and we're like, oh no! And he goes, okay, your little girl has stopped growing and we're just like. They're going to be born today. And we were just, I started praising God immediately.

Randy: How far along were you at that point?

Julia: Week 30, day four. So even in that, even in that God was like, "My ways are higher than your ways." You don't know what to expect. They probably won't cry. They probably won't be anything where you can hear them. There was a medical staff of 24 people in the room. And they all came out crying and screaming and surviving 63 days NICU and we're all home the night before our nine-year anniversary. So praise God.

Sheila: That's awesome!

Randy: So when you guys *Pray Big Things*, you got a really big thing. But I do have one serious question and that's a beautiful story and I know it is an ongoing thing. So it's

been about two years now.

Julia: Oh has it?

[Laughter]

I'm just kidding. Yes! Yes! 20 months. Yeah. So it's good. They're all healthy, they're all doing great.

Julia: Yes, they are.

Randy: What about people who *Pray Big Things* and the baby dies or the loved one doesn't get well or the job collapses or on and on and on; what do you tell them?

Julia: Yes. So that was... I very strongly felt like that was supposed to be the title of the book because of wanting to encourage people, in answer to what Sheila said, like so many, we find so many teenagers that fall away from the faith because "My big prayers didn't get answered." What do you do with that?

So not to be misleading, the book is not do these things and what you want to happen happens. It is to help, very much, process unanswered prayers and questions and anxiety and loss. The big prayers, what we talk about is not always the result, like it is not I want this to happen. Show me why this is happening and what your purpose is for me in this season. I just think life is too short to spend brokenhearted. So asking God to help you, like I have dreams that aren't from him, that aren't going to happen but to help you hold on with all strength and all passion the ones that are from him.

Sheila: I sometimes find in my own life when I've been praying passionately for something that might be way far down the line and I might not come to realize, what I've actually gained in that moment is more of the presence of God, more of the love of God, understanding more of who God is.

I would just say that to any of you who are watching at home and think, well, I'm so, so happy for them but I have a dream that hasn't come true. I just want you to know, God doesn't love you any less. It is not like you're not praying properly. As Julia said, God's ways are higher than our ways but he is with you in the process. Remember Psalm 34, the Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

Randy: You know Sheila, I think one of the ways that we can... eventually have our prayers answered is, as my father likes to say, "Be an answer to someone else's prayer." I want to show you an opportunity where you can be an answer to someone's prayer, and it is not as difficult as having triplets. It is very simple, but it is very effective. Would you watch this with us?

On the mission field:

[Child crying]

Janice: Is he saying something?

Open Captions:

>> He says, "It's paining."

Janice: I'm in a village in Angola and came upon this child. This little boy is Augusto and this breaks my heart. His little feet are in some of the worst shape I've ever seen. And there are many in this village with horrible conditions on their feet. But this little guy is just scratching; they itch so bad. They're completely infected. He said there's insects that have gotten into his feet. I'll be surprised if he doesn't lose his toe. Then the disease comes in through their feet and just goes throughout their body. It can actually kill them -- all from going barefoot in conditions that we're in right here.

I know *Shoes and Smiles* is a campaign that we get really excited about and it's fun but

this is why it's fun, because it saves lives. You would think just a pair of shoes is not life-saving, but in areas like this, in conditions like this, it is. We can change it for Augusto. We can help him. We're going to clean these up and get him a pair of shoes and help him.

Please do what you can. Help bring shoes to little children like Augusto all over the world. You can be a part of something big -- and something even fun! But this is the reason we do it. Please!

End of video

In the studio:

Randy: Do you know what it takes to give that young boy shoes? A pair of shoes like this -- \$3.60! That is so little to make such a huge, huge difference.

Sheila, this is the last week that we're doing the Christmas Shoes and Smiles. I know we're early as far as the year goes but it's so important that people understand that this is not just simply a gift, it is a lifesaver.

Sheila: Yeah, I was in Angola with Janice, that you saw there in that film piece and when you walk with some of these moms and their children down to where they get water, and these children have no shoes on, and they have cuts on their feet, and then they put their feet into dirty water and often, it is hookworm, which can actually go to a child's brain and take away their life. And all they're asking for is a pair of shoes for their child.

Now we're a little early as Randy said for Christmas but we have to know, it's been our goal to get 150,000 children shoes for Christmas. This is our last week. We can all do something. Very reasonable. For \$36 you can give ten children a pair of shoes. You can't buy shoes for that price over here. For \$180 you can put shoes on the feet of 50 children.

To me, it's one of those things that when Christmas comes around, it gets kind of crazy,

the mall gets busy, everything gets kind of nuts. Wouldn't it be a phenomenal thing to do as a family to say, you know what? This year we're not going to do that. Sure, we're going to have fun together but we're going to make Christmas about giving because Christmas is about giving. If God hadn't given us Christ where would any of us be?

Randy: You mentioned the mall. Do you still go to the mall?

Sheila: I don't, actually.

Randy: I don't either. I go online, I click a little bit and boom! A gift arrives. That's what you can do! You can send that gift halfway around the world. Just go online to LifeToday.org, make the best gift you can and this wonderful gift will arrive this Christmas for children who will appreciate it so, so much.

We call it Christmas Shoes and Smiles because there is another part of this. We provide shoes but we also provide smiles, literally giving children the ability to smile as we go in and we work with these surgeons who have so graciously given of their time to fix a cleft lip, a cleft palate, which in third world countries is not a simple thing. It is a very complex thing and it can really put a child at a disadvantage from a health standpoint, from all sorts of stand points. So we can fix that.

That's a \$500 item, a big-ticket item to me but I think there are quite a few of you out there that have the means that can say, you know what? I want to put that smile on a child's face. \$500 will do that for one. \$1,000 for two. Whatever you can do, I think it is that sense of giving, that sense of you know what? We are the expression of the one we celebrate at Christmas -- of Christ.

Will you go online or pick up the phone and give the best gift you can? Give some shoes and give some smiles.

Begin video clip

Announcer: Poverty is a killer and because of it children needlessly suffer, not only from a lack a food and clean water but also from a lack of things we often take for granted like a simple pair of shoes.

Far too many children living in extreme poverty have never owned a new pair of shoes. And while that may seem minor in light of all their needs, walking with bare feet puts them at risk of life-threatening infections and disease that could lead to crippling consequences and even death.

By responding today you can help immediately secure and begin shipping Christmas shoes to 150,000 children around the world just in time for the holidays. Your gift of \$36 will help provide ten pairs of shoes. A gift of \$72 will provide 20-pair and a gift of \$180 will help provide 50 pairs of Christmas shoes for children in need.

As a thank you for your gift of support, be sure to request this beautifully crafted green crystal shoe ornament, a treasure to display at each Christmas. With your gift of \$100 or more you may also request this keepsake boxed set of *LIFE's* Christmas shoe ornaments. Finally, please consider a gift of \$1,000 or more to help provide over 275 pairs of shoes or two children with corrective cleft palate surgeries. And you may request the beautiful "Safe in the Shepherd's Arms" bronze sculpture.

This is the last week! Please call, write, or make your gift online today!

End of video**In the studio:**

Randy: We sure appreciate all that you are doing. Please give the best gift you can so we can give some shoes and some smiles. And if you'd like some more information on our guests, you guys have a website. What is that website?

Julia: Yes! JuliaJSapler.com.

Randy: And we can find out about the book, about the show, "Rattled" and the ministry, all those wonderful things?

Julia: Yes!

Randy: We sure appreciate you guys being here. Sheila?

Sheila: Yeah! Thank you so much for *Pray Big Things*. It is a great book. It is an amazing story and three darling children! Please will you thank our guests?

Randy: And thank you. Sheila, we're here, we're glad you're here. We hope to see you again.

Sheila: See you next time.