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Week 39: Christmas Shoes and Smiles, last week

Sheila Walsh

Stormie Omartian #1

Sheila: I'm Sheila Walsh. Welcome to *LIFE Today*! One of the things that you probably know that's been on my heart so much for the last few weeks and months is the subject of prayer. I'm really praying for an outbreak, a revival in our nation and around the world.

The more I thought about it, the more I thought, if I could have one person on this program to talk about prayer it was so clear to me who I would invite. I'm so grateful that she said yes. Her books have now sold around the world something like 37 million in about 40 languages. You're going to know exactly who I'm talking about. Please welcome Stormie Omartian. It's so great to have you.

Stormie: Oh Sheila, it is so good to be here and so good to see you again.

Sheila: You too! We go back – way, way back to the music days.

Stormie: Yes! Right.

Sheila: But knowing that you were coming to be a guest, I wanted to refresh myself on your story because I remembered some of it. I just didn't remember how devastating your story was. I think for people to understand how remarkable God's anointing on your life is now, it might be good to go back and let people know who maybe don't know what your childhood was like.

Stormie: It was rough. I was raised by a mentally ill mother and we were isolated on a ranch in Wyoming. So we were like 20 miles from the nearest little town, and miles from the nearest neighbor. And my mother used to lock me in the closet. I think that's just the way she... I never was quite sure why I was put there. It was not like I did something wrong and knew I was being punished. She would just put me there and then forget about it, I think because I was afraid to come out.

I couldn't let myself out. And I could hear her walking up and down the stairs; it was a closet underneath the stairway. She was verbally and physically abusive too, but I think what affected me most was being locked in that closet.

Sheila: That must have been terrifying as a little girl.

Stormie: It was because where we lived there was no electricity, no plumbing, no nothing.

Sheila: No electricity?

Stormie: Nothing -- gas lanterns, wood-burning potbelly stove. But the worse of it was there was rattlesnakes and black widow spiders everywhere and they would even come into the house. So I was always afraid that they would come into the closet because the door, I could see light under there, and they could squeeze under. So I would crawl up in the dirty laundry basket that was in there and that's where I would stay and just hope that nothing came crawling up the basket. So it was terrifying.

Sheila: Was your mom's mental illness treated? Was she diagnosed?

Stormie: Well, she was diagnosed because she went into the hospital to have her gallbladder out and that's when doctors came in; my dad had doctors come in and diagnose it. She was multi-phobic, multi- personality person that could change in an instant and she would become violent and scary. She was frightening. She was really

frightening. I'm not talking about just normal mental illness. I'm talking about really violent. So it was scary. So I grew up with all these fears. I don't think I've really lost my fear of rattlesnakes and...

Sheila: Me either! I'm right with you. Yes! In fact, they said that there was an outbreak of tarantulas in Dallas. I was like, I'm going back to Scotland!

Stormie: Yes! I'm going with you. It's too close to Nashville for me.

Sheila: So how old were you when you finally got out of that ranch?

Stormie: About six years old by the time I got out. We moved out and into this little tiny apartment in town above the barber shop. So there was no closet to put me in; let me put it that way. But she never let up being strange and weird and violent. She used to haul off and slap me across the face for no reason that I knew of. It was so startling when that happens. It's just -- there was a long time getting over all this.

When I grew up, and got out of the house, I was still depressed and anxious and fearful. Fear was like my life, which is the way I am, fearful of everything. So it wasn't until I started working in Hollywood and doing dancing and singing and all of that.

Sheila: You were with some really big names too.

Stormie: Yeah! They were wonderful. I really enjoyed that but I was always afraid that all these horrible fears and anxieties and phobias were going to come out and show themselves to other people and so I did everything I could to cover it up. And it wasn't until I received the Lord when I was 28.

Sheila: How did that happen?

Stormie: There was a girl I was singing with; her name was Terry. She kept talking

about the Lord and I thought, oh that's so nice for you! I feel so happy for you. She was really great. I loved hearing her talk about it but I thought, oh I don't relate to that. I'm such a mess! You have no idea what a mess I am and how many horrible things I've done. I just kept all of that secret.

And so one day I was really depressed, so depressed that I just thought I've got to end my life because I can't bear this pain anymore. It was so painful. The anxiety and the depression and the hurt -- that constant hurt that never goes away.

Sheila: That weight, to carry that weight.

Stormie: Yeah, it's always with you. And I thought, I can't handle it anymore and I can't keep up the front anymore. She says, "Why don't you come with me to meet my pastor?" And at that point I'm hesitating, going, "Well, let me think. Why can't I go?"

And she said, "Well, what have you got to lose?"

And with a quick examination of my life I thought, I have nothing to lose because I'm just collecting pills that I can just -- when I'm ready, I'm going to do it.

Sheila: I saw part of an interview you did where you said, it wasn't as easy to get them back then, but you'd been gathering two from this friend and two... Until you had enough.

Stormie: Until I had enough that I knew I could do it. Yeah, you couldn't get them back then. It wasn't like it's in every corner drugstore. Everyone's coffee table there was a mountain of pills like it can be at certain places. I was frequenting those places so I knew that people could get them, but I couldn't. You know what I'm saying?

So I went with her to meet her pastor. It was amazing. He told me that God had a way to, if I were to receive Jesus as Lord, and he told me the story about Jesus and what he had

done for me, as well as everyone else, and if I were to receive him he could change me from the inside out. He could transform my circumstances and my life. And I was fascinated. He gave me three books to read, and he said, "Come back next week and tell me what you think." The first book I read was the Gospel of John, just in a little book form.

Sheila: That's a great place to start.

Stormie: I know! It is my favorite, favorite book now. It says, you can live just in that book. I read it and I read the other two; one was on the reality of evil, which with all my occult practices said...

Sheila: Because you had dabbled in that once.

Stormie: Oh full force. I was trying to find anything that would give me some relief from the pain I felt inside. So I tried anything. The other one was on the power of the Holy Spirit. So I read those books and pastor said when I went back to see him, he said, "Well, what did you think of the books?"

I said, "I know they're the truth." I just knew it. I knew it was the truth and here I was searching for truth, something that would save my life. I knew it.

So I received the Lord in his office that day and my life began to change immediately. I had a sense of something I'd never had before and that was a sense of hope. I had a feeling of hope. I was like wow! What is that sensation? I feel like I have a future.

So that's when this whole story began. Where I began to go to church and read the Bible. I remember sitting in church and he was always teaching from the Bible and it was so fascinating. He said, "Now bring your bibles on Wednesday night." And I'm going, "You're supposed to read your own Bible?" Wow! They're really into it.

[Laughter]

Sheila: They're serious about this stuff.

Stormie: Yeah! They're serious! So I went out and got a Bible; this big one that had four translations, so I had to carry it like this. So I read it one translation at a time, and I read it and oh my gosh, my life, it was like all of the sudden those words came alive. It is amazing how when you have Jesus in your heart, the Holy Spirit of God leading you and speaking to you and teaching you and guiding you and all of that, and comforting you, and all the things that the Holy Spirit does, life comes alive. You read that word and all of the sudden you can see what it means. So that was the life-changing transition, where it began.

Sheila: I wanted to ask you, when you first gave your life to Christ and everything became real, did you ever wonder, God, where were you when I was five, six years old?

Stormie: Yes! Totally. In fact, the more I got to know him, the more I wondered that and asked him, is it just because no one in my family was born again? And so therefore he wasn't there? But it's really interesting that you mention that. Not long ago, three people, two different countries and three different states said to me the same thing. That they felt God had told them to tell me that God protected me in that closet; that he allowed me to go there because only God knows what could have happened with my mother. She was really crazy.

Sheila: You could have lost your life.

Stormie: Yes! Exactly! I could have gone out and been bit by three rattlesnakes and six black widows and she would not have known. She was in a dream world.

Sheila: It is interesting to see God's protection in what seemed like the worst place possible.

Stormie: And I never -- and that never entered my mind. And three different people, I think God knew that -- because the first one I went, "Oh! That's an interesting concept." I thought hmm, I can't imagine that. But then when I traveled to a different country, and there it is in Canada, someone else told me the same thing. And then the pastor's daughter told me the same thing.

Sheila: That's amazing!

Stormie: Yeah! Isn't it? Exactly the same thing.

Sheila: So if you think of that life, of that terrified little girl, then this Hollywood singer, entertainer, then you give your life to Christ, to today where I mentioned something like and I'm sure the numbers gone up since we started the program, 37 million...

[Laughing]

...of your books. Was *The Power of a Praying Woman* the very first one?

Stormie: No. The first one was *The Power of a Praying Parent*. Because what happened was when I started going to church and I was working in Hollywood at that time doing all the different TV shows and all that, so I met my husband on one of the recording sessions, my future husband, on a recording session, not knowing that's who he was. Then we met again in church, at the church I was going to. He was going to that for the first time. He was coming from another church and he went there, and we saw each other. And "I know you!" So we married about a year later. We started dating and married about a year later.

And the church was growing so fast. It was like 300 people when we started, and it was growing by thousand by thousand. It ended up being around ten or 12,000 people. So it was growing so fast that they asked us to be home group leaders; that's how fast it was

growing.

[Laughter]

They were desperate for help.

Sheila: Receive the Lord, okay, we need to move you.

Stormie: Yes! Exactly! So we became home group leaders. So one Sunday a month we led our home groups, a lot of the couples did. So we'd have people there. Michael would do the worship, of course, because he is musical.

Sheila: "Michael Omartian is musical." That's like saying God's nice.

Stormie: Yeah, it's true. He's really amazing.

Sheila: He's brilliant.

Stormie: He is. He really is. Then he would do the teaching, and then I would lead the prayer time. We didn't know what we were doing. We just were staying ahead, a week ahead from everybody else, that's all. But we were sincere and just, we took it really seriously and wanted to do the best we could.

But the prayer time was so -- I'm telling you, it was so -- well, people, on the first Sunday, I left the half hour for prayer, everybody had prayer requests and we ended up going an hour over. And I thought, oh my gosh. This happened every Sunday. There was so many prayer requests and we prayed for one another.

So I realized that I had to have another prayer meeting in the month just to pray. But everybody attended it. We would go till one in the morning praying. It was the most wonderful thing. People were into it. They knew the power of prayer. They knew what

the word says. And they had needs.

And then that group became so big and was staying so late, I thought, oh, we've got to divide this group up. So we divided it up for people who just wanted to pray about their kids, another one where they wanted to pray about their marriages, another one wanted to pray about just their ministries, people who are in ministry.

So we had all these prayer groups and it was packed and long. It was powerful. We saw answers to prayer that were miraculous. And then this prayer group we had for kids, we prayed and one Saturday twice a year, all the parents bring their kids and we pray for all of them, each one individually.

Sheila: I love that!

Stormie: It was perfect. We did it all day, with food and everything. It was always well attended. And anyway, that's where all my prayer books came from was those experiences of seeing how people prayed and how the answers to prayer were astounding. All of us were just blown away.

Sheila: So from that was that when you thought, maybe I need to put some of this down for other people to understand?

Stormie: Exactly! Because I thought, we've got to get this out. I don't know if people know that prayer works. We've got to get this out!

Sheila: Absolutely! When you wrote that first book, did you have any sense of what God was about to do?

Stormie: Not how wide it would be, widely it would be accepted, but I had just a sense of mission about it. I thought, I've got to get this to as many parents as I can because we've seen answers to prayer that were just phenomenal. And how to pray, I've got to

show them how to pray about certain issues and how to just have a 30-ways to pray for your children. You might not think about it. You might not think about praying that way.

So I was willing when we first did it, I would go around to grade schools or any kind of school who would let me do it, let me speak and I would talk to them, talk to the parents. They would turn out. I'm telling you, the women of prayer would turn out. It was really amazing. So they let me speak at all these different schools and I was just doing it because I felt like I was on a mission.

Sheila: Well sure!

Stormie: That's how this started. So *Praying Parent* came first. Then I thought, well, it's working for our kids. I wonder if it could possibly work for our marriages.

Sheila: Who knows?

Stormie: God can do anything.

Sheila: That's what the Bible says.

Stormie: Exactly! And I didn't know when God started speaking to me about how to pray for your husband and he said, "You've got to stop praying, change him, Lord. You've got to stop praying it."

Sheila: It's so tempting!

[Laughter]

Stormie: Yes. And you've got to start praying, change me, Lord. And I was going...

Sheila: That's actually a revolutionary shift.

Stormie: Yes! It was for me too. I was like what? But he's the one that needs changing! In case you didn't notice. No, God says everybody needs to change. If you're willing to change, he said I can start with you. I can use you as an instrument of deliverance for him just by praying for him.

Sheila: Because there's a humility in that before the Lord to you.

Stormie: Totally! Totally! It is so right. It is so right even though some women said they threw that book across the room and it hit the wall, went down behind the couch. And they said, because they said, "I'm not doing that! I'm not doing that!" They said about a year later they went searching for it behind the couch and they said, "It works! It does work!"

Sheila: Someone actually said on my social media, I posted that you were going to be here, and she said, "When I got the power of a praying husband, I hit my husband with it." She said but then six months later she said, "She actually threw the book across the room and hit him."

Stormie: She hit him?

Sheila: No, she hit him! She said six months later she got it out and began to pray that prayer and it revolutionized her life and her marriage.

Stormie: It did. It does because it is a place of humility. You think, God, use me as your instrument. Change me. Make me the woman you want me to be and the wife you want me to be.

Sheila: Well, I'm going to try and persuade Stormie to stay so we can have another program because there's so much more I want to share also about a new book that she has coming out.

But one of the great privileges we have here at *LIFE Today* is that we get to reach out and touch people that we might never meet on this earth but we hope by the power of the Word of God and the power of love in action that we might get to meet them in eternity. So we have this great project coming up for Christmas and I want you to be a part of it. So will you take a look at this?

On the mission field:

Announcer: Mountain villages like this in Southeast Asia are home to many poverty stricken families who struggle with the usual obstacles of life. And it is here that the ministry partners of *LIFE Outreach* are able to help some of these families who face a unique challenge.

This is Seuanine. He was born with a cleft lip and cleft palate. He struggles just to swallow milk and oftentimes, his lungs will fill with fluid putting him in grave danger. But Seuanine's life would soon change.

After learning of his condition, *LIFE's* mission partners moved into action. These dedicated missionaries arranged for the long drive into the city and provided the corrective surgery that could save Seuanine's life.

Tony: You know we were able to say yes to that distraught mother and help Seuanine only because of the *LIFE Outreach family*. It was *LIFE Outreach's* prayer and financial support that saved that little boy.

Seuanine's disfigurement became a beautiful smile matched only by the smile of his loving mother. With tears in her eyes she says, "Thank you for helping my son."

A big thank you to the *LIFE Outreach* family and to you, Sheila and Randy. It is a privilege to serve with you as we share the gospel of Christ and as we provide

life-changing cleft palate surgeries in our part of the world.

End of video

In the studio:

Sheila: So I have a thought. How about we reclaim Christmas? Do you remember what it is actually about? It's about when we were lost and broken and helpless and hopeless, God came in human flesh. God with a shoe size. Can you imagine that? To save us! And now Christmas has become this overindulgent, all about me, how much money can I spend? How much debt can I get into?

We as the body of Christ on this planet, wouldn't it be great if we just started to live so differently that people wanted to know, as it says in First Peter, a reason for the hope that's in us? That's what my husband Barry and I, and our son Christian want to do this Christmas. Instead of getting a lot of gifts that none of us really need we want to be able to provide a surgery for one of these children.

Now the amazing thing is that the doctors we work with, they're so sacrificial. They love the Lord. They have worship services before they go into surgery. And for \$500 we can provide a surgery like that.

Because what you might not know, when a child is born with cleft lip and cleft palate in so many of these countries, there's a lot of superstition and misunderstanding and that child is often seen as somebody who is cursed and they won't let their other children be around them. They don't want that child in school. Let's let these children and these moms know, your life is not cursed. There is a God in heaven, and he heard your prayer and he sent us to be the answer.

So if you're able to do that, that would be fantastic! But this is also the very last week of our shoes -- Christmas shoes. The number of children around the world who don't have one single pair of shoes, and because of that, because they walk around on rough ground

and they get cuts and infections, it can literally take the life of a child.

But do you know that these amazing little shoes, we get these made for like \$3.60? So what we want to do for Christmas is make sure that 150,000 children get their very first pair of shoes. Now we can do it together for \$36. You can provide shoes for ten. For \$72, 20 children get shoes. \$180, I mean you spend that nowadays, a big family going to a movie and then going out for dinner -- 50 children will get shoes.

Now we have this amazing thing at the moment. We have these little Christmas shoes that for any gift at all you can hang that on your Christmas tree, and it will remind you that God came in human shoes to save us and now we have the privilege of reaching out in his name.

Now it is a lot, 150,000 children -- it's a lot with the cleft lip and cleft palate surgery, so that's why if we do it together, let's make this the Christmas that we decided as God's people to reclaim Christmas and to make it about giving. Would you call that number on your screen? Just give the best gift you can, that's all we're asking but do it in Jesus' name with a glad heart.

Begin video clip

Announcer: Poverty is a killer and because of it children needlessly suffer, not only from a lack of 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:

Sheila: Thank you so much! If the lines are busy, keep calling! And for any gift at all too, we want to send you *The Power of a Praying Woman*. Over two million sold! It's probably more than that, isn't it now?

Stormie: It is. Yeah. I don't know what the total is right now, but this has been out a few years.

Sheila: Wow! Well, just on behalf of all the women watching around the world, this show is in Australia and South Africa and all sorts of different countries, I just want to say thank you. Thank you for being obedient to the call of God on your life, Stormie. It's changed us all.

Stormie: Praise God! Thank you so much. I really appreciate that, and it's changed me too. Hearing from the other people all over the world has been so touching.

Sheila: Well, I think she's going to stay on, so we'll see you next time on *LIFE Today*! I'm Sheila Walsh.
See you next time!