

10/30/19

Week 44: Mission: Rescue Life, last week

Sheila Walsh

"Finding Peace"

Sheila: Hi! I'm Sheila Walsh. Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I recently had the privilege of speaking at a couple of pastors' retreats, basically in an area of the country, New England, where it's hard to be a pastor. Did you know that about two percent of the population in New England would consider themselves evangelical Christians? I was really shocked by that statistic. Particularly when you think that some of the church sources tell us that in North Korea, five percent of the population consider themselves evangelical believers.

So to be in an area of the country where it is very hard to share the gospel, it was a wonderful privilege to be able to have about 500 of these pastors over two weekends where we basically just had the chance to pour back into their lives. And honestly for me, I found one of my biggest roles was simply listening. Listening to people tell their stories.

But on one particular night we gathered in a prayer group in a corner of the room and I got out a notebook and pencil and just went around each pastor and pastor's wife and asked them, "What's the number one prayer concern? How can my husband, Barry and I pray for you? Not just here tonight in this room but when we go home?"

When I read them later on it was just really startling to me the number of them who said that they deal with anxiety all the time; that they don't know how they're going to pay their bills, they have to have second jobs. And it was just a sense of being worried about their children, being worried about will they be able to continue in the ministry? But it made me think, kind of broadening out to all of us, and really asking the question, can

peace really be found in a troubled world?

While I was Googling some statistics, I read that today, anxiety disorders are the most common mental illness in the U.S. affecting around 40 million adults. And that's about one in five people. In 2017 the American Psychiatric Association ran a poll on just 1,000 random U.S. residents and they found that nearly two-thirds were extremely or somewhat anxious about health and safety for themselves and their families. And more than a third are more anxious overall that year than they were in the previous year.

Anxiety in the U.S. may be impacting millennials most. And they also noted that the millennials were the most anxious generation. I read all that and then I asked the Lord, what about in the church? Is anxiety less in the church community? I read this online from a pastor's wife who was struggling. She said, "When you're a pastor's wife you want to be strong around others. Expectations on pastors can be unrealistic. I was afraid if people in our church found out what I was really going through, they might think I was not a strong Christian or that my faith was weak."

I've seen that so many times. In fact, I remember maybe about a year after I had been released from a psychiatric hospital where I was treated for severe clinical depression getting a letter from a pastor just saying, "My wife is struggling but she doesn't want anyone in the church to know." He said, "I noticed that you were going to be in our area. Would you meet with my wife?"

I said, "Yes, I can find a private room in the hotel."

And remember at first, she was even reluctant to even make eye contact with me. She felt as if people knew that A: she was struggling with depression and anxiety, and B: she took medication that they wouldn't trust her and that it would harm her husband's ministry.

I'll never forget that day just spending a couple of hours sharing my own story with this beautiful woman who was living in the shadows and seeing Christ reach into her heart

and help her understand that she's loved just the way she is. I think we need to get over the stigma that is attached to any kind of mental illness because when we do that then we'll get help. But when we feel as if we have to hide what's going on in our lives then we end up isolated and lonely.

Well, I was reading through Paul's letter to the church in Philippi on my flight home last night and I paused at these verses. This is Philippians Chapter 4, verses six and seven: Don't worry about anything; instead pray about everything. Tell God what you need and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

Well, honestly, it's tempting at first read to say, well, that's easy for you to say, Paul. You don't know what I'm living with right now. As you're watching right now, perhaps you're struggling in your marriage. Perhaps you're struggling with your finances. You literally do not know how you're going to pay this month's bills. Or perhaps, a child that once was following the path that you'd pray for has gone severely off track and is really in trouble. You want to say to Paul, don't just say, "Don't worry. What am I going to do?"

But it's interesting to me to remember where Paul was when he wrote those words. He wasn't on vacation, sitting back on the beach saying, "Hey! Don't worry!" He hadn't received a pay raise or a new car. We're not exactly sure of the date when Paul wrote this letter but he's in his late 50s, 59, 60, 61, and he is in prison in Rome.

The other thing that is good to remember, that gives such weight to these words, is that at this point in his life, Paul has suffered so much. He details it to the church in Corinth. He said, "I have worked harder, been put in prison more often, been whipped times without number, and faced death again and again. Five different times the Jewish leaders gave me 39 lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. Once I spent a whole night and a day adrift at sea. I have traveled on many long journeys. I've faced danger from rivers and from robbers. I have faced danger from

my own people, the Jews, as well as from the Gentiles. I have faced danger in the cities, in the deserts, and on the seas. I have faced danger from men who claim to be believers but are not. I have worked hard and long, enduring many sleepless nights. I have been hungry and thirsty and have often gone without food. I have shivered in the cold without enough clothing to keep me warm.

So just sitting with that for a minute and letting it sink in. When Paul at this stage in his life, when our brother tells us the four things that kept him at peace, peace in heart and mind through the Holy Spirit, he has left us with a gift, almost like a map for navigating difficult circumstances.

So the first thing he said, "Don't worry about anything." Part of me wants to say, well, if it was that easy, I wouldn't! But then we have to remember that Christ our savior talked about it too.

Remember in Matthew: "That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life -- whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to aware. Isn't life more than food, and your body more than clothing? Look at the birds. They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns. But your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren't you far more valuable to him than they are? Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?

It might be good to take a moment and write down all your concerns. There is something good about actually looking at it and saying, okay, here is what I'm worried about. Here's what I'm worried about.

And then that leads to the second thing Paul said, number two: Instead, pray about everything.

I think when we acknowledge what we're actually worried about and we put it down there, it is not as scary on paper, sometimes. You actually put it down and then commit to pray about everything. Too often prayer is like a last resort. We think, well, I'll do whatever I can to get out of this mess. If worse comes to worse, I'm just pray about it.

Prayer should be our first instinct. As Corrie ten Boom once said, "Is prayer your steering wheel or your rearview mirror?" It should be the very thing that gets us through our life.

Think about the amount of time that Christ took to pray. One scripture says: Despite Jesus' instructions, the report of his power spread even faster, and vast crowds came to hear him preach and to be healed of their diseases. But Jesus often withdrew to the wilderness for prayer.

Just think about that. This is the son of God. He often withdrew to the wilderness to pray. I think sometimes the busier we get, the more prayer gets relegated down the list. But if Christ knew that he needed to pray, he needed to withdraw from crowds and pray often, then so do we. There is something about those two acts, listing your concerns but then praying over every single one of them, about lifting them into the hands of the Lord.

Well, the next thing Paul tells us is this: Tell God what you need.

Ever since our son, Christian was a little boy he's taken great joy, he still does it to this day and he is 23, in making up his Christmas list. And it is never, I learned pretty early on, I can't go with list number one. I need to wait for revision number six. But it's so funny. He will be really, really specific but he'll always put at the end, "These are just things I would like. I don't need any of them. If this is too much don't worry about it."

But I love the fact that he is always so specific. And nowadays, of course, he'll even give me the link to hit on so it will take me to Amazon, so I know exactly which one he wants. But I want to encourage you to be specific with your Father. If there are things... you need to remember, this is not you trying to squeeze some request out of somebody who is reluctant. This is your heavenly Father who loves you. He wants to bless your life. And so often, we don't get because we don't ask.

I'm trying to think of who it was that told me this and I can't remember or I would give

them credit but somebody told me once what it would be like if you got to heaven and the Lord shows you your mansion and in one whole room it is full of gifts. You're like, "Lord, I don't need gifts. I'm here with you."

He said, "These are all the things I wanted to give you while you were on the earth, but you never asked."

Be specific. Your Father loves you. Write it all down. And then read it off to your Father. Well, here's my list.

But then finally, the fourth thing Paul said is: Thank him for all he has done.

When I read through the Psalms, that's kind of a daily thing I do. I pray the Psalms out loud. Well, Psalm 103, verses one and two says this: Praise the Lord, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all his benefits.

The Psalmist David is often saying, "Bless the Lord, O my soul." Have you ever asked yourself, well, how do I do that? How do I bless the Lord? We remember all he has done, and it is good for our soul. I know I'm sounding like a writing instructor at the moment but write down all the things the Lord has done and then when you face a difficult day you can take out that book and open it and remember when God showed up here and he showed up there and it looked like no help was coming, God showed up there. Write it all down. Make it a practice every day to remember to thank him, to remind ourselves of how good our God is.

The other thing I would tag on to what Paul said is that we guard our heart and our mind. I love this scripture and I take it very, very seriously: Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable -- if anything is excellent or praiseworthy -- think about these things.

That's what Paul wrote to the church in Philippi while he was in prison. But he wrote to them and said, "Listen, there is a lot of craziness going on." They were facing major persecution, they were being arrested. It was a devastating time. But Paul said, "No, no! Don't focus on all of those things that are going on, think about things that are true, things that are noble, things that are honorable.

It's so easy to just get home and flop down on the sofa and turn on the TV and let it just wash over us in waves. But so often, I think that part of the reason we struggle with anxiety is because of what we allow into our hearts and our minds. And I'm not saying don't watch TV or else you wouldn't be here with me and that wouldn't be good. But what I am saying is just be careful, be wise in what you allow to take into your life because we all struggle in different ways. We live in these fragile bodies until Jesus returns or takes us home.

But Paul, our brother calls to us through church history and tells us that when we practice these disciplines, don't worry, pray about everything, tell God what you need, thank him for all he has done then comes his promise, then you will experience God's peace which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

One of my favorite sayings, and it is not just because I think it sounds fun. It is because I absolutely believe it as deep as the marrow in my bones, is that peace is not the absence of trouble. It's the presence of Christ. No matter what you're going through right now you can know peace because Christ, the author of peace, is with you.

Can I pray for you? Father God, I want to pray right now for anyone who is struggling with anxiety, with fear, just filled with overwhelming thoughts of tomorrow and the future and what's going on in our world. Lord, you are the Prince of peace and you promised us your presence. So I ask right now for all my friends, who are watching or listening in, Lord Jesus, would you give us a fresh awareness that you are with us and

that you speak peace over our lives. You say, "Peace be still." And I ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

I really encourage you, friends, to do that. Get yourself like a good journal and just begin this habit of writing down your concerns and then telling God about it all, letting the Father know what you need and then giving space for thanksgiving for all he has done. It really makes a shift in your heart and your mind and Christ wants you to have that. He wants you to have his peace no matter what is going on.

One of the places that we see so much anxiety and fear is when we travel around the world to where young girls are being held against their will, trapped into a life that they never imagined. And even as they are crying out for peace, we can hear their cry and you and I can be an answer to prayers they don't even know how to pray. Would you watch this?

On the mission field:

Kirie: I can't think of anything worse to happen to a child.

[Translator]

Kirie: I'm so sorry a human did that to you. It's not your fault.

Open Captions:

>> One day, when I was seven years old, I was out working in the field. Two strangers lured me away with candy and took me across the border. I was given to a family and I had to work as their maid. I was forced to do these chores for about 18 months.

Then when I was eight or nine, they took me to another place. I saw all these men and they explained what I had to do. I was only nine years old. They said they would kill me

if I didn't do what they said. Every day I wished that someone would get me out of there. But no one came to help for many, many years.

Kirie: Mara has taken the time to open up her heart and relive horrible, horrible experiences and wounds so you understand what's going on. Many of you have no idea and cannot even imagine that something this horrible could happen to a child -- but it happens every day. We can stop that.

So if you're watching us today and in your heart you feel like well, that really speaks to me. I'm asking you to go beyond that thought and to take action. We can't get back her childhood, but we could keep others from experiencing this horrible way of living.

End of video

In the studio:

Sheila: If that doesn't make you and I want to do something, there's something wrong with our hearts. Seven years old? Lured away with candy? Can you imagine if you have children, a little girl like that, and as if it wasn't bad enough that she had to work as a slave for a family, then at nine she's introduced to the unthinkable.

Here's the thing, she's not the only one. We have met hundreds and thousands of these girls, just innocent young girls, told lies, promised a life that they're never going to have and then they find themselves literally trapped. It's heartbreaking. I can't imagine what it does to the heart of our Father. I can't imagine what that does to Christ who always saw the broken.

But that's our passion. This is our last week of our rescue mission. We call it "*Reach, Rescue, and Restore*" because we want to get to little girls before they ever end up believing the lies of some man that promises them candy. We go up the villages, up into the mountains and teach them what to avoid. "If somebody tells you this, if somebody wants this, run for your life. Stay in twos. Take the hand of a friend. Don't walk alone.

Use your voice. Run!" So that's *reach*.

Then *rescue*, how many years that precious girl spent trapped in a literal prison praying that somebody would come and get her and that's what our teams do. That's what they do on the ground at the border. They literally are snatching them when they're 30 seconds away from being forced into a life that is very hard to escape.

But then we have this wonderful other part for their future, *restore* where we can take them to a place where they can learn a skill, where they can be told, "You are worth something. You have value." And then we have the right to tell them there is a God in heaven who heard your prayers and we are coming in his names.

I need you to join me. Will you please help us? This is, as I said, is our last week and we have some wonderful friends who have put up a matching gift of \$320,000, which means that it used to be \$128 is what we calculated to begin this process of reaching, rescue, and then introducing them to a life that would restore them. It used to be \$128 but now if you're able to put that \$128 up, they will match it, so it rescues two girls. If you can only do \$64, now that will be matched and rescue one girl. \$1280, matched rescues 20 girls.

Let me ask you, if you live next door to that house and you heard that girl screaming, if you heard her crying in the middle of the night, wouldn't you do everything in your power to rescue her? Well, we've made it possible for you to do that. Will you please call that number on your screen? Give the best gift possible. Let's go beyond feeling; let's take action in Jesus' name.

Begin video clip

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

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

And with your donation of any amount we'll send you the faith, hope, love tea towel set. These beautifully woven hand towels are a wonderful reminder to remain steadfast in faith, hope, and love each day.

With your gift of \$128 or more you'll receive the life-giving Proverbs journal bound in genuine leather. This journal is filled with wisdom and daily encouragement from Proverbs, featuring lined pages for your personal notes as you reflect on godly instruction to success in life.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1,280 which will now help rescue 20 children! And you may request our beautiful bronze sculpture, "Safe in the Shepherd's Arms."

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

End of video

On the mission field:

Sheila: Vulnerable little children need three things. They need to be reached. We need to continue going into the villages, going into the places where children are vulnerable and warning them, educating them.

They need rescued. We have talked with some of the most amazing SWAT teams are going in and rescuing these little girls and seeing traffickers go to prison.

But then the most beautiful part of this is this restore, reach, rescue, restore. We have seen where these girls are taken, and they are loved.

Is our work here over? Absolutely not. I think it's never been more urgent, but we need you to continue this work. God is moving in the darkness and saving lives one life at a time.

End of video

In the studio:

Sheila: Thank you so much. Keep calling. Here's the good news about the restore part. Mahan, that you saw there, she is now helping little girls who have been rescued. That's the whole Second Corinthians, comfort others with the same comfort with which you've been comforted.

We are breaking the cycle. But this is our last week. Please help us. Help us to reach, rescue, and restore as many girls as possible. That's why as the body of Christ we're on this earth to do the work of Christ. So thank you so much for the way you care, the way you pray, and the way you give.

From all of us here at *LIFE Today*, we love you and we'll see you next time!