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Week four: WFL

Sheila Walsh

Praying Women #1

Sheila: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm Sheila Walsh. I'm excited about the next few programs I'm going to get to do with you because this has just been released. It is called *Praying Women*, how to pray when you don't know what to say. Because over the past two years I've poured my heart into studying and learning about a subject that I believe is life-changing for every single one of us. It is one of the greatest weapons available to those of us who love Jesus Christ. But honestly, sometimes it is something that we struggle with. So yes, I'm talking about prayer.

Sometimes we find it hard to know what to say and you feel stuck. And sometimes we feel as if we're saying the same things over and over again. At times we just get distracted; we're halfway through praying and we're thinking, did I defrost the chicken? Or we just get busy and you find yourself falling into bed again at the end of the day and you've never really spent any real quality time just enjoying the presence of the Lord. And sometimes, if we're brutally honest, we just get bored. You might wonder, why keep praying when I'm not getting an answer? So sometimes we're tempted to just give up.

What I'm asking God to help each one of us understand is how to embrace the power of prayer in a bold, fresh new way. You may already be a prayer warrior or maybe you've just started praying. Maybe you've just recently come to faith and you're like, are there right words to say? Do I have to kneel? Is there something I need to do? But here's what I think. For many of us prayer is often the weapon that sits in the back of the closet, stuffed in the back with all the old Christmas ornaments. We mean to get to it but

"someday" never really comes and prayer is too important for that. It is too life changing.

There is nothing that Satan our enemy would love more than for you and I to stop praying or to never really start. As I've studied and prayed and waited on God, I've learned some simple powerful ways to reignite our prayer lives and begin our conversation with our Father again.

Over the first probably 30 years of my life I've prayed long prayers and short prayers -- I mean a lot of prayers. But for me, the turning point in prayer was when I had no words left. And sometimes, at the end of yourself that is the best place to start.

Some of you know that I have a diagnosis of clinical depression. At times I've really struggled to know how to pray through that, particularly when I was first hospitalized. The young girl in me who decided to follow Jesus at 11 years old and never fail him was bitterly disappointed in what my life had come to. I had promised to be perfect, to never disappoint God. And one night, probably that first night in the hospital, I'm on my face on the floor of my hospital room and I had no big words left, I had no big prayers left. The only words that I was able to cry out that first night were these, "Help me!"

Now I'll be honest, those words didn't sound like a prayer to me back then. I heard them as words of defeat. To me they were just like the sounds of a drowning woman. But I believe that heaven heard them as honest words of surrender. It was probably the first time in my life that I admitted to God and to myself that I was in trouble -- that I couldn't save myself. I wanted to be the perfect Christian, but I was worn out and broken.

You see, I thought God's love for me was based on my performance, all the things that I did right and the things I didn't do that were wrong. When you finally end up in a place like a psychiatric hospital and you have no words left, it felt to me like absolute failure.

I've heard... I was in seminary in London when I was in 19, I've heard and prayed some amazing prayers over the years but on that night, I was like a child again. Just two

words, "Help me!" When I had no words left, these two simple, honestly desperate words changed my life.

So for you, I don't know where you're at in your own life. I don't know where you're at in your spiritual life. I don't know if prayer is something you're comfortable with, or whether it is something that honestly makes you feel a little uncomfortable. You're not even sure if God is listening. Are my words going higher than the ceiling? Or maybe you find it really hard to pray in front of other people. I totally get that. But here's what I want to suggest. I encourage you to start where you are. Start with honest simple prayers.

Wherever you are right now talk to God about it. This is so important. If you get nothing else from what I say on this show, please hear this one thing, you are not alone, and God is listening. He's listening to you right now and he wants you to talk to him.

It's so funny. I think sometimes we're tempted to think that God would be more ready to listen to maybe your pastor or someone you respect and look up to as a Bible teacher. And you're like, well, if he's praying at the same time I'm praying, God is going to take his call first. But that is not so. You're not alone, and God is listening to you.

Now if you know me at all you know I love God's word. It is literally life-saving for me. And there is so much that we read about prayer in scripture and we're going to get into that in the next few weeks. We're going to talk about things like what to do when you don't know what to say or how to pray. Or we'll look at what to do when you honestly just want to give up. We're going to look at how to pray hardest when it is hardest to pray. How to pray through your pain.

And one of the chapters I think is so important is how to keep going when God seems silent. We're going to talk about how to pray with the power of the Word of God. That's really what the Psalms are. I believe that God gave the Psalms to the people of God so that we could pray the Word of God back to him, how to pray with your full armor on and how to pray when you just need a breakthrough. And that will look at, what does it

mean to fast and pray?

There is so much I learned. You think you know certain things over the years but when you spend two years studying one subject and asking the Holy Spirit every day, please open these words to me, help me understand at a level I've never understood before. Well, sometimes you're not always desperate but you need to talk to God and ask for guidance and that's wonderful. God cares about every single aspect of your life. But some of you right now, maybe you are desperate. I want you to know God is listening to those prayers too.

One of the most honest, desperate prayers recorded in scripture were those actually of a drowning man. Do you remember the story? If you want to read it for yourself, you'll find it in Matthew chapter 14, verses 22 through 31.

It was a rough night for the disciples. They were exhausted after a long day. You might remember that's the story of the feeding of the 5,000. And as you probably know, in those days they only recorded men so you're talking about 8,000, 9,000 people on a hillside. And how on earth would they have enough food to be able to feed all those people?

But you might remember that Jesus did quite a miracle. All Jesus asked was, "What do you have?"

And one little boy offered up his Lunchables and Jesus fed the whole crowd with 12 baskets of food left over. One for each disciple as if to emphasize do you understand now it is not about you, it is not about you, it is not about you having enough. It is about you bringing your "not enough" to me and then I will do what only I can do.

So it was quite a day for the disciples and I'm sure they were exhausted. So Jesus told them to get in a boat and make that five-mile journey from Bethsaida toward Gennesaret. It was a very rough night.

Now the disciples were used to that, but they were rowing into the wind surrounded by high waves. Violent storms like this could descend on the Sea of Galilee without any warning. So they've been rowing, and it is now 3:00 in the morning, when suddenly they saw a figure walking toward them on the water.

I don't know if you know this, but they were superstitious beliefs in those days that demons inhabited the water. And so the disciples were terrified to see someone walk on the surface of the waves. Can you imagine? It's the middle of the night. Perhaps they can see a little by the moon, but you suddenly see someone is walking on the surface of the waves.

Well, they thought it was a ghost, but Jesus immediately reassured them, "Don't be afraid. Take courage. I am here. I am here."

I think for the disciples each day unveiled something new about Christ. We know because we've got scripture and we read all the things he's done but every time he did something new it was fresh news to the disciples. They saw that he could turn water into the best wine. He could heal the sick. They just saw he could feed an army from almost nothing. But now this? He could walk on water?

So Peter asked, "If it's really you, tell me to come to you." Now it's interesting to note to those who wanted to see Jesus perform miracles as if he were a side show entertainer, Jesus refused. But to the small amount of faith that was growing in Peter he said, "Come!" So Peter put one leg over the side of the boat and then the other. Can you imagine what his friends thought as they watched Peter, their friend, the fisherman they've grown up with walk on water?

Now scripture doesn't tell us how far he got or how far Christ was from the boat but it does tell us that when Peter took his eyes off Jesus for a moment and began to look down and around at the size of the waves, he panicked and he began to sink.

Well, that night Peter prayed one of the most honest, desperate, powerful prayers any one of us can ever pray, "Save me, Lord!"

Well, Jesus reached out and grabbed hold of him. Matthew goes on to tell us that the moment Christ was in the boat with Peter the sea was calm.

This is what it says in Matthew 14:32: When they climbed back into the boat, the wind stopped. "Help me, Lord!" "Save me, Lord!" Those kinds of prayers acknowledge something that honestly is always true but we're not always aware of it. We cannot save ourselves. This is a prayer of absolute surrender. Very simple, "Help me! Save me!"

Now when I prayed that broken prayer through heaving sobs on the floor of my hospital room that I told you about earlier, the words of one of my favorite Psalms washed over me in waves: The Lord is close to the brokenhearted; he rescues those whose spirits are crushed.

I just want us all to call out to him. You don't need fancy words. Honestly, you don't even need a lot of faith. You simply start right where you are. You just start talking because he longs for a relationship with us and that includes prayer, a conversation. I read this quote by John Bunyan that I loved. It said: "It's better to have a heart with no words than words with no heart."

So I just want to pause for a minute and ask you, where are you in your prayer journey? On one of the other shows I'm going to share the time when my husband and I decided we would set aside a prayer closet and it was an absolute disaster. But what I discovered that day is that you don't have to find a holy place, necessarily, to pray. If you love Jesus, you are the holy place.

For those of you who think, well, you don't really know my story. You don't know my life. I got a letter recently from a prisoner who is, he has what they call "a toe tag sentence." He will be in for the rest of his life.

And if you're watching today, just know that I pray for you. You're on my prayer list.

But prayer has never been about us bringing everything that's right about us to God. Prayer is about coming as we are, not as we wish we were. And prayer can be as simple as, sometimes it is one of the most powerful prayers is the word *Jesus*. That's what this prisoner wrote to me. He said, "I didn't get much of an education, I never finished high school. Sometimes I struggle to understand the Bible, but I've discovered that when I feel so lonely or so dark or so lost that sometimes the most powerful prayer for me is just the name of Jesus.

I don't know if you're 14 or 94, I don't know if you've been in church all your life or you've never actually darkened the door of a church. I don't know if worshipping feels natural to you or maybe you've walked away from church because you feel I can't be myself here.

I had a conversation recently with a woman who came to a conference and she was sitting by herself in the very back row. And at one of the breaks I went and sat beside her and I said,

"I just want to say welcome. Thanks for coming. Was it hard to get a friend to come with you?"

She said, "Actually, no. All the women down there on the front row, I know who they are. They're from the church I used to go to."

She said something really sad. She said, "I'm not welcome where I'm known." I won't go into her story; that's hers to tell. But obviously there was a story there.

I want you to know something. You are always welcome in the presence of God. And praying can just be as simple as saying, "God, I don't even know if you're listening to me right now, but I want to know you better."

Do you mind if I just quickly pray for you?

Father, I want to thank you for this great privilege. But Lord, I pray for those who are watching right now, those who think that they know that they're welcomed into your presence and those who really doubt that. Lord, I pray that you will draw each one of us closer to you because we want to talk to you, and I know that you are listening.

This book that I have literally poured my heart into for two years, I'm going to tell you in a few minutes how you can get this book, but it actually comes by you and I becoming the answer to somebody else's prayer. I met some beautiful moms recently and I want you and I to be the answer to their prayers. Would you watch this?

On the mission field:

Announcer: It has been said that water is life and the reality is, without water no one can survive. But when water is contaminated, the risk of a person becoming sick or even worse, dying from a waterborne disease increases dramatically.

Sheila: Just over my shoulder in that clump of trees several children are buried. I can't even imagine what that's like to have a grove of trees that contains the bodies of little ones who have died. They are lying now so close to their killer.

The reason these children died is because of the water. This is the only water source for this village. But the water that's in here is filthy and contaminated, and it has become what should be a source of life, water has become the source of death.

Announcer: The mothers in these villages have no other choice but to let their children drink from unsafe water sources.

Open Captions:

>> [Alice] My son's last words were, "Mom, can you carry me on your back? My legs and back hurt." When I put him down, he started vomiting and walked out and collapsed and died.

Sheila: So sorry! I just have one son and I can't imagine how painful it would be to say good-bye to my boy. It's just not something that we think oh, what a tragedy! But there is nothing we can do. We can do something. What this village needs, what this mom needs is fresh clean water. Will you help us? You're a good mom. You're a good, good mom!

End of video**In the studio:**

Sheila: "Mom, will you carry me?" Gosh, I think of the number of times when my son Christian was a little boy and we'd be traveling somewhere and he would be tired and he would say, "Mom, would you carry me?" It's the most natural thing in life as a mom to reach down and pick up your little one. But can you imagine the horror of putting your little one down and he literally takes a few steps away from you and collapses and dies?

This last trip, this last Water for LIFE trip has totally changed my life. I can't -- I will not -- I mean I will not be the same again because I saw with my own eyes the only thing they have available to them. And some of the moms, some of the stories that we will bring to you through this Water for LIFE campaign you will see the mothers break down and weep. But that one mom, she was so stoic. It was like she was holding her pain inside trying to be strong for the children that she has left. But I could tell in her eyes, there's something that happens to a mother when you lose a child. You don't ever recover from that.

And the thing that became so clear to me was the answer. This is not something that we just think, oh! What a national disaster. There is nothing we can do. This is something you and I can do something about. Here at *LIFE Outreach* we're committed to putting in

water wells wherever they are needed around the world so that moms like that will not have to say good-bye to their children simply because there is no clean water.

So I'm asking you -- I'm asking you if you'll join with us. We're all in different stages. I remember when my mom lived on what was called a widow's pension in Scotland, which was very little, but she always put money aside, not just her tithe to the church but to be able to do something. So whatever you could do, do you know that \$48 will give clean water for ten people? I mean \$48 in our culture doesn't go anywhere. \$144 will give clean water for 30 people.

Now somebody has asked me recently, "What does it cost to put a whole well in?" Well, for \$4800 -- \$4,800 that will put a whole well in a village where they drill down deep and the well is sealed so no dirt gets into it, no filthy animal waste, and that will give clean water for 1,000 people -- literally a whole village will be able to give their children clean water.

You and I can do this. We can do it together in Jesus' name. Please go to your phone. Go online, give the best gift you can and let's be an answer to that mom's prayer.

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's a mother to do?

With your help clean water is on the way. Mission Water for LIFE is the answer to a mother's prayer to save the lives of her children, to offer them a bright future free from the fear of death. With your gift today you can help drill and establish 350 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 people. \$72 will provide for 15. \$144 will help provide life-giving water for 30 people for a lifetime.

With your gift we'll send you *Praying Women*: "How to pray when you don't know what to say." In her new book, Sheila Walsh shows you how to reignite your conversation with God to become a strong praying woman.

With your gift of \$100 or more, please request the "*Power of Prayer*" bundle. This bundle includes a cozy throw blanket adorned with words of The Lord's Prayer, a decorative pillow cover, as well as Sheila's book. All three are encouraging reminders of how there's power in your faith-filled prayers!

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 brand-new commemorative bronze sculpture, "A Mother's Strength."

Please call, write or make your gift online!

End of video

On the mission field:

Sheila: So I'm here in this village in Zambia where these beautiful children live. And as you can perhaps see, this is what they call "the dry season." It is a season to be dreaded. Everything has dried up. There's almost no water.

The moms and their children have to walk to a very rough hand dug well not very far down but it's the only thing they can access, and the water there is contaminated. I'm really coming to you in the name of these children. These children need clean water. We

need a well dug in this village that will give them access to fresh water that will not make them sick, that they will not lose their lives. The only water available at the moment is running out quickly. It is a hand dug well and the water is contaminated and so many of these precious little ones are getting sick and some of them are dying.

So please, would you help us put a well in their village?

End of video

In the studio:

Sheila: Thank you! Let's do this together. If the lines are busy, keep calling. And for any gift at all, I'll send you my book, *Praying Women*. For \$100 we've got "The Power of Prayer" bundle, which is beautiful; a daily reminder of God's presence with you. And if you're able to give \$1200 then the beautiful bronze of "A Mother's Strength." I've seen that picture over and over again; mothers carrying that water that seems way too much a weight, but they do it because of their commitment to their children. So thank you so much for joining us. Remember, each one of us makes a difference when we reach out in Jesus' name.

So it was lovely to be with you today. I'm Sheila Walsh. From all of us here at *LIFE Today*, God bless you!