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Week 5: WFL

Sheila Walsh

Praying Women #2

Sheila: I'm Sheila Walsh. Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I was thinking last night when I was talking to my son on FaceTime how overwhelming life can be for most of us. It is just so crammed with things to do and sometimes it is hard to find the time, the space or the place to really spend time talking and listening to God if we're not careful. I totally get this. The world we live in is so distracting.

I hear this all the time on my Facebook page. "How can I pray when I don't know what to say? I don't have the right words." But there is great news. I will say this again and again because honestly it is so important to me. I want you to get this. You are not alone, and God is listening. I know sometimes it feels like you're all alone. You are not alone, and God is listening to you.

Well, I want to tell you the story of when Barry and I tried to find the "perfect place" to make our prayer place. So I woke up to the noise of our two dogs Maggie and Tink barking as if we had been invaded by a herd of cats. They were jumping up and down by the bedroom door frantic. I looked at my phone on the bedside table and it was just before 7:00 a.m. So I reached over to wake Barry thinking that he could take care of them, but I realized his side of the bed was empty and I was surprised. Whichever one of us wakes first in the morning always takes the dogs outside. So the fact that Barry wasn't there and the dogs were, it was a little unusual.

So I slipped out of bed and as I reached the bedroom door I stopped. I realized now why the dogs were barking. There were loud noises coming from downstairs. It actually sounded as if someone was turning our furniture over. My first thought was what is Barry

doing? And then a horrible thought crept into my mind. What if it's not Barry? What if we're being robbed and they've knocked him out?

So I called his cellphone and it went to voicemail. Not good. So I looked around the bedroom for a potential weapon. All I could find was a pair of high heel boots. I'm dismally prepared for defense, I thought. We should golf. I mean I'm Scottish, I should have golf clubs up here.

Well, I decided I was probably overreacting. Perhaps Barry had taken the dogs out earlier and brought them back upstairs and now he'd fallen over something which is not unusual in our home. We are a family of trippers. I took one boot with me just in case and the moment I opened the bedroom door the dogs flew downstairs barking all the way. Swinging my boot, I followed.

We live in a three-level town home and when the dogs reached the ground floor they stopped barking. I thought, this is either a really good sign or it's a really bad sign. So I called Barry's name and heard nothing. I called again and then I heard a familiar, yet muffled, "Morning!"

I put my weapon down and made my way to the bottom level. I found Barry and the dogs in the closet under the stairs up to their chins in boxes, blankets, and Christmas ornaments. This closet, you might have one in your own house, is if-we-don't-know-where-to-put-it-we-throw-it-in-here closet. I asked him, "What are you doing?" as I attempted to wade through the mess. I mean it's scattered everywhere.

He said to me, "I'm clearing out this closet."

"At seven in the morning? Why? And where are we going to put all this stuff?"

He said to me, "I don't know about that but this..." and there was like I can only describe it as a reverent pause as he gestured toward the closet, "This is our new prayer closet." He

told me he had been thinking about it for weeks and this was it.

"Wow!" I said. What else do you say?

So we spent the rest of that day finding new places to put the things we had no place for. Most of them ended up piled high in the garage or under one of the beds. So I vacuumed up all the glitter and by that evening, Barry had the closet just the way he wanted it. He brought down his favorite devotional books, his Bible, and a journal. Honestly, I liked the idea of a quiet place, just specifically for quiet time with God. So I joined, team prayer closet. I thought it would be good where we could close the door, and each could take time to be alone with God -- or so I thought.

Well, on that first day Barry realized that when you close the door there is no light in the closet. So he took in a flashlight with him. I didn't really like that idea. It felt too much like camping. So I brought in three candles, which worked until I knocked one over and set fire to my *Streams in the Desert* devotional.

The next day Barry seemed to spend quite a long time in there. At first, I thought, this is amazing how much time he is spending communing with the Lord but eventually it was so long I was a little concerned. So I opened the door, and as you probably have worked out, he was fast asleep on the floor with the dogs curled up beside him.

So by the end of week one I'd banged my head on the sloped ceiling twice, had to open the closet door and let the dogs in every time and discovered that I'm claustrophobic. Barry, sad to say wasn't much better. His prayer closet experiment had failed for us.

But here's what I discovered. That will probably work well for some of you. I know I still haven't seen the movie *War Room*, which is on my to-do list, but I know that that inspired many of you to do that. If that works for you that's fantastic but trying to find a special holy place didn't work for us. And the truth is for me, God isn't looking for specific holy place to meet with us. Because of Jesus we *are* the holy place and God is waiting to meet

with us wherever we are. Because of Jesus we can come into his presence and God is always waiting -- always waiting to meet us.

One of the things that became clear is for some people that will be your closet. It might be your shower, it might be in your office, it might be in your car, it might be as you walk your dog, as you wait in line at the grocery store. I got a note from a woman last night and she said, "The place that I meet with God is at my chemotherapy appointment." And the bottom line is, it is anywhere -- it's everywhere. This truth honestly is overwhelming to me. God invites you and I to just come into his present. It is amazing. I don't want you to pass over this. Come as you are right now and talk to him.

Well, another amazing thing that I'm learning, you can process your pain in the presence of God. No matter what you're feeling or what you're going through, God is waiting for you. That's why I think the Psalms are so revolutionary for me because what you see in the Psalms is at times David will be angry. Sometimes you want to almost say, "Whoa! Cool it a little there, David." He'll be saying, "Smash their jaw bones. Crush their teeth." And you're thinking, oh David, that's such anger.

But here's the key to what David is doing. Sometimes we'll go to church and we think, the right way to pray is to use nice words and be really careful in God's presence. But what David is doing is he is bringing all who he is, but he is bringing it into God's presence. He is praying through his pain.

If you are on social media much these days, you see a lot of anger. People are tearing one another apart. And not just in a secular world but within the church, within the body of Christ and I hate that. I don't think there is any place for that. You'll say, so what am I supposed to do if I am angry, if I read something that somebody wrote and I'm angry about it? Talk to God about it. Process your emotions in the presence of God.

The Bible is full of God teaching us about prayer, how to pray. If you look back at the Old Testament, those who lived before the time of Christ could never have imagined such

an invitation to come before God just as they were and talk with him and have a relationship with him. Back then people had no direct access to God, yet God wanted his presence to be with his people. So he told Moses, "Have the people of Israel build me a holy sanctuary so I can live among them."

I don't know if you've ever seen a picture or a model of the temple but there was an outer court where the priests could go and offer sacrifices but the holy of holies where God's presence and his glory rested could only be accessed once a year and only by the high priest. An embroidered veil, the width of a man's hand separated the holy place from the holy of holies.

But now let's move to the New Testament and see where everything changed for you and for me. The life and death of Jesus changed everything. His last cry from the cross you then hear that the veil was torn in two. This is what it actually says: "Then Jesus uttered another loud cry and breathed his last. And the curtain in the sanctuary of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom."

I love that we read, "It was torn from top to bottom." Only God could have done that. Only God. He was saying to you and I, "Come on in now. I'm waiting for you anytime, anywhere." The barrier between God and man was torn in two.

Scriptures says for we are the temple of the living God. As God said, "I will live in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they will be my people."

So let's look at this practically. What does a life of prayer look like? It's different for every one of us. The most important thing is to come. And for me, in the morning I like to take my Bible and a cup of coffee outside in the morning and I sit with my Father in one of the garden chairs. And some of the time I spend worshipping God. Some of the time I tell God how glorious he is, how much I love him. Some of the time I'll bring my requests before him. And then some of the time I just sit in his presence just enjoying being with him.

Now Barry takes the dogs for a long walk at night, and as he walks, he prays out loud when he thinks he is alone. And quite a surprise to some of our neighbors if they're out getting their mail. I'm sure a lot of our neighbors think we're a little crazy.

The truth is there is no one right place to meet with God. You may have a prayer closet and it's the perfect place for you. You may have a favorite chair to sit in or a place that you love to walk. The bottom line is this, wherever you choose you'll discover you're not alone, God is waiting for you. God's not waiting for a perfect place because you are the perfect place for God to live. God is not out there somewhere waiting for you to be able to track him down and find him. He is right here with you, right now when you call on his name.

Psalm 145 verse 18 says this: The Lord is close to all who call on him, yes, to all who call on him in truth.

Not just to some, not just to those who manage to fill in all their Bible study notes -- to all. If you're still wondering where to begin, what to say, one of the most powerful, intimate prayers I love that invites the presence of God is this: "Have mercy, God on me."

If you look through the Old Testament, but then particularly as we move into the New Testament Jesus said to his friends, "When you pray, pray this way." Not "if you pray" but "when you pray." So often we kind of use prayer almost as a last resort. Maybe I don't know what you might be struggling with right now. Perhaps you're struggling with health issues or financial issues, and you think I'll do everything I can. And as a last resort, Lord, please help me. Prayer should never be our last resort. It should be the first instinct of a believer.

Maybe it's because we call it "prayer" that we think it is something separate but really all prayer is is communion with the God who loves you, who knows you, and for those of you who are tempted to think, well, you don't know me. You don't know what things I've

done or whatever. Yeah, I get that. I don't but God does.

One of the things I often ask an audience if I'm out speaking somewhere on the weekend is I'll say to them, "Imagine that when you came in tonight we said, change of plan. Instead of Sheila speaking, we're going to show a movie of your life. Everything you've ever said, everything you've ever done; no bits edited out. This is the full director's cut." Even the things that you think, well, technically that is not a sin because I didn't actually do it, I just thought about it a lot. But how would you feel if you had to sit in a room with others and a movie of your entire life was played out?

You know what the good news of God's word is? The good news about our faith is this, God has seen your movie and he loves you. Do you get that? There is nothing you've ever said or done, there is nothing you've buried so deep that God doesn't know about, and that's why I talk often about processing your pain in the presence of God. There might be some things in your life that you think, I can't talk to anybody else about that. You can talk to God. You can bring your failures, you can bring your fears, you can bring it all into his presence. If you're angry with God, if you're disappointed with him. If you even wonder if he is listening. You get to tell the truth. That's why I always recommend reading the Psalms. Whatever you're going through, you will find a Psalm that reflects that.

I read, I love what Augustine said, when you read the Psalms, it says if the Psalms lament, then you lament. If it shouts for joy, then you shout for joy. If it cries in pain, then you cry in pain. All of human life is expressed in the Psalms and God gave us those Psalms to give us language to be able to pray back to him.

Honestly, when you spend two years researching a subject it changes you. That's why I'm so excited to be able to share my new book with you, *Praying Women: How to pray when you don't know what to say*. I'll be thrilled to get a copy to you. I pray that it will change your life as it's changing mine.

But first of all, I want to ask, if you will help us with something. For years James and Betty have faithfully gone to wherever the greatest needs are in the world and they've brought them back and shared them with you and me where there is a need for clean water. So many mothers at this very moment are on their knees asking God, "Please, would you send someone who will help us get clean water?"

Well, you and I can be the answer to that very prayer. Will you watch this with me now?
Thank you!

On the mission field:

James: Here's a well right here for a family. It's a hand dug well. They've got a container like this that they lower down into the well. Again, you look at this water and it looks pretty clean, but it's actually got sewage in it. And this is very, very typical of many places near population centers.

Open Captions:

>> My name is Salefi. We get our water from a hand dug well and the water is not clean. The ground is open. Sometimes even dirty things get in there. We try to remove the dirty things and drink.

Announcer: For mothers around the world like Salefi hand dug wells are the only source for drinking water. But hand dug wells fail to stop contaminants from seeping into that drinking water.

Open Captions:

>> My son became sick for four days, he had diarrhea. After the fourth day he died. [Crying]

Announcer: The death of a child is always tragic. A death caused by what was supposed

to have been a source of life is almost too much to bear. When we left Salefi her remaining children were still drinking from that same hand dug well. A safely drilled water well sealed off from outside contamination saves lives. Help bring safe and clean water to villages like these. Help give Water for LIFE.

End of video

In the studio:

Sheila: I had the hardest time that morning with Salefi because obviously she gave the water to her children and it was like everything inside me wanted to say, stop! Don't do it! But that's so naive of me. That's all she has. She knows the potential that's in that water. And one of the sad things she said, I don't know if you picked it up from watching that was, "I take the dirty things out." Because I watched the water as she would pour it in and there would be obviously bits of waste in there and bits of leaves and things, and she would remove those with her hand thinking that now the water was cleaner.

But you and I know the water is not any cleaner. That is potentially deadly, and it is all she's got. Jesus said, this is -- Jesus said this himself, "I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink."

It says that when this life is over and we're finally in the presence of the Lord, and when he says that to you or to me, "I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink," that you'll say, "Lord, when did I do that? I would love to have given you water, but when?"

Jesus said, "Whenever you did it for the least of these you did it for me."

You ever wonder how you can bless the Lord with your life? It's by doing what Jesus asked. He said, "I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink." That's what's happening to all these mothers. They know their children are thirsty. It's so hard. When we were there in Africa, it's so hot and dusty and dry. And so the children want to drink water but in some of these villages the only water the mother has is that filthy

contaminated water. They have no choice.

But you and I can help. The fact that Salefi was born in Zambia, Africa and I was born in Ayr, Scotland had nothing to do with either of our choices. That's just where we were born. From the moment I was born I had access to clean drinking water. From the moment Salefi was born she did not. Do you know that she has never in her life tasted clean water? And neither have her children. So let's change that.

Will you please help us? For \$48 you can provide clean water for ten people. \$144 provides clean water for 30 people. You can put a whole well in. You can even do this as a church group or a Bible study group. \$4800 will put a well in a village that will give clean water to the whole village for the rest of their lives.

And for any gift at all we'll send you my book, *Praying Women*. I know you don't do it for the gifts but we want to bless you. But please, please let's change this. Will you go to your phone and make the best gift you can? Let's give Jesus clean water.

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

In the studio

Randy: The water behind me has already taken the lives of two children that we know of. I know because I just left their parents and their younger remaining sister in the graveyard. It is not right that children should die. It is not right that they should die with a waterborne disease that we can so easily stop. Let's give them fresh water. Let's give them water that will not kill them. Let's give them water that will bring them life. Let's give these children a hope and a future by giving them clean drinking water.

Go to the phone, go online, do it right now. Make the best gift you can. Help us bring this village and so many other villages like it a source of fresh clean water. Let's give them Water for LIFE. Let's give them a hope and a future. We can do it with your help.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: Thank you. Thank you so much. From James and Betty and all of us here at *LIFE Today*, we're so grateful for your faithful partnership through the years. But we can't stop now. We want to be able to put a clean water well in villages around the world where children are literally dying simply because they've never had a cup of clean water.

So if the lines were busy keep calling and for any gift at all I'd love to send you my brand-new book *Praying Women*. If you're able to give \$100 we will send you "The Power of Prayer" bundle. Whatever -- whatever you do, I just pray you will do something in Jesus' name. Let's let Salefi know God heard your prayer and he sent us. Until next time!