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Week 8: WFL

Sheila Walsh

Praying Women #4

Sheila: Hi! I'm Sheila Walsh. Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm so glad you determined to spend this time with us. In fact, I got a couple of really sweet notes over the last few weeks. One gentleman wrote that he has to go for kidney dialysis, and he said they each have little TV monitors. And while he is sitting there having that procedure take place, he watches our show and it encourages him.

So if you're watching today, just know that we care for you and we've been praying for you. Another lady said that when she is getting her chemo for breast cancer she sits and watches too. Don't you love that? That's one of the great things about television or even with our computers that we can connect because I just want you to know, you're never alone. Sometimes we feel alone but God is with you. You are never alone, and you have a lot of people, not just me, a lot of people here at *LIFE Today* who care for you.

I'm excited to spend the next few weeks talking about prayer. I think there is nothing more important than us understanding the power of prayer. Whether you've been a Christian for 50 years or 10 minutes this is a weapon that God has given us. But there are some questions, so I want to address a few of the questions that you have kind of let me know through social media or in mail.

And this is one: Have you ever spent a season in intense prayer over an issue and the burden is simply not getting any lighter? You've been persistent as scriptures talks about. You've been relentless but the burden you're carrying is actually getting heavier. Then you realize that more than an answer to prayer, what you realize need is the presence of

God. That rings true so deep within me. There is times in life when an answer isn't enough. What we need is the overwhelming presence of God because an answered prayer might give information, but God's presence gives peace no matter what the answer is.

Now in my own life, fairly recently, I remember when I was about to discover how much I needed that peace that comes with the presence of God. Well, as you probably know I travel a lot. I've flown more than 3 million miles on one airline alone. Suffice it to say, at times I get tired just like you do, but on this particular day it felt more than simple travel fatigue. I had the worst headache I'd ever had in my life. I've never had a migraine before, but this certainly felt like friends of mine have described. It was as if there was like an iron band around my head and it was being slowly tightened. So I took two Advil and I laid down in my bed with the lights off, but it didn't lift at all. It just got worse.

So I called my doctor's office to see if I could get an appointment that day, but they were swamped with a recent flu epidemic, so Barry decided to take me to a local drop-in clinic. We waited for a while before a young nurse took me back to a treatment room. My blood pressure was sky high, which was a little concerning, but I thought, if I have the flu perhaps that might affect it.

When the doctor came in he commented on my blood pressure and then asked me what my main complaint was. I told him I have a terrible headache. He asked what I now know to be a key medical question: "Is this the worst headache you've ever had?" I told him it was.

The next question changed the atmosphere in that room, "Has anyone in your family ever had an aneurism?" When I told him that my dad had a brain aneurism when he was 34 his body language immediately changed. He stood up and told Barry to take me straight to the closest hospital emergency room. He said, "Tell them that you need a C.T. Scan with dye, and you need it now."

Well, we drove in silence to the emergency room and pieces of my dad's story flashed

through my mind. His brain aneurism didn't kill him, but it changed his life and the lives of our whole family overnight. The immediate impact was that he was paralyzed down one side and lost the ability to speak. But there was a far, far greater storm on the horizon. As days turned into weeks his behavior began to deteriorate. He went from being just a loving, kind dad to an angry, unpredictable and ultimately violent stranger. When it was no longer safe for us to have him in our home he was taken to our local psychiatric hospital. He managed to escape one night and took his own life, drowning in the river that runs through our town.

I've often wondered, what was going on in his mind and heart in those last few minutes on this earth. Was it regret over the violence and the terror he saw in his children's eyes? Was it despair over his own profound limitations? Only God knows the answer to those questions. Whatever was happening I know now that my dad healed and whole is safely home with Jesus. But as a child seeing every day the changes that took place in him were terrifying.

Growing up I would have nightmares sometimes that the same thing that hit him like a rogue wave would hit me too. Now driving to the hospital it felt as if that might become my reality. I wonder if you've ever been in that kind of place. I'm sure the circumstances might be different but the impact, the possibilities are the same. What do you do when out of nowhere an unexpected wave hits you? What's your first response when your feet are knocked out from underneath you and you can hardly breathe? We all face those moments in life. These experiences are outside the normal day-to-day challenges that you and I face because they're places that we've never been before.

I think of my friend whose husband has a brain tumor. Actually, the woman who stopped me recently in a coffee shop to tell me that she had just come from her doctor's office and he told her that she has cancer. The shock on her face was heartbreaking. It is that same look when you're blindsided by a piece of news that nothing could have prepared you for. It is like one moment you're thinking what to cook for dinner and the next you wonder if you'll be around to cook many more dinners.

I love this amazing promise for when life is really, really tough: So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.

I love that! Not hope but we will find grace when we need it most. Sometimes our need is overwhelming, but God is faithful always. The best news in this scenario, when you're in a place that you think, I've never been here before, is that Jesus himself gave us a blueprint of how to pray when it is hardest to pray.

Remember with me as the clock continued to count down to Christ's betrayal, he took his friends into the olive grove called Gethsemane. That night, leaving eight of them by the entrance, he took Peter, James, and John further into the garden to be with him. The full extent of what was about to take place washed over Christ in overwhelming waves. He knew what was ahead and now was only a few hours away.

I have a hard time, honestly reading the next few verses. We're invited into the very private agony of our savior. If you've ever asked yourself how do I pray in this place, this unfamiliar, devastating territory, then listen in because Jesus invites us into his own.

We read: He took Peter, James, and John with him, and he became deeply troubled and distressed. He told them, "My soul is crushed with grief to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me." He went on a little farther and fell to the ground. He prayed that, if it were possible, the awful hour awaiting him might pass him by. "Abba, Father," he cried out, "everything is possible for you. Please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine." We read that in Mark Chapter 14.

I'm honestly stunned by Christ's vulnerability and brutal honesty here. Even though he has set his face to walk through this hell there is no hint of bravado, no indication Christ was putting on a brave face. Jesus was honest, crushed with grief to the point of death.

Luke, the doctor out of the four gospel writers gives a detail that Mark's account omits. It would be significant to a medical man. Luke 22, verse 44 says this: He prayed more fervently, and he was in such agony of spirit that his sweat fell to the ground like great drops of blood. The perfect Lamb of God has made it crystal clear, there are some things that are simply too hard to face. Some things that you can't do on your own.

Jesus asked his closest friends to be with him as he prayed. Friends can't take the pain of life away but it can make us feel less alone. When you're in a Gethsemane of your own, you don't really want another person's words, you just want their presence. Is that why Jesus asked them to watch with him? Perhaps Jesus wanted them to stay awake as he prayed to prepare them for the violent night that lay ahead. Perhaps, maybe they were unwitting lookouts for the sound of marching boots and flaming torches so that Jesus could have the time he needed to talk to his Father.

As Jesus falls to the ground and begins to pray, it's clear who he is turning to for strength. He is not depending on his friends for strength but on his father, his Abba, Father. Do you know this is the only recorded time that Jesus calls God Abba? It is such an intimate, personal way for a son to call out to his Papaw. The term Abba, Father is actually only found in scripture three times, once by Jesus, and twice by Paul. Paul used this intimate term in writing to the European church in Rome and to the church in Galatia, which we now know is central Turkey. Abba is an Aramaic word. I've never done this but if you ever take a trip to Israel you can hear young children call to their fathers in the crowded market places, "Abba, Papaw!" In his agony, Christ uses the most familiar, and familial term of all -- Abba.

Jesus prayed two critical things that we need to understand when we face our darkest days. First, he begged for a way out. He cried out, "Everything is possible for you. Please take this cup of suffering away from me."

I've heard the essence of that prayer from thousands of women over the years in a multitude of ways: God you're big enough to take this away. Nothing is impossible for

you. I have faith in you. I believe you can change this. I don't want to do this. Please, please take this away. Save my marriage! Heal me! Save my child! You know you can. Please God! I'm begging you.

If Christ begged to be released from what lay ahead why should we think it is a lack of faith when we pray that way? You get to be real with God. You're invited to come just as you are right now, emotions raw, heartbroken and desperate.

Having wept until we have no tears, no words left, we listen in again as Christ continues to pray. "Nevertheless, I want your will." I have wept with friends as they too have bowed their broken hearts to our God whose ways are higher than ours, whose thoughts are so far beyond our understanding. Those prayers turn your living room carpet into holy ground. I want my life to glorify you Lord. I know you can change this but if that is not your will, I want your will. I don't understand it, but I accept it. I love you and if this is the way it should be then I say yes.

You and I, we serve a loving Father who weeps with us, who collect our tears. I love this promise in Psalm 56, verse eight: You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book.

The traffic was terrible that day as Barry finally got me to the hospital. It's usually bad but that day it seemed particularly slow. I knew he was anxious and worried as he uncharacteristically honked at the car in front of us to move; that's more like me. But I was somewhere else. What I needed wasn't an answer, I needed Jesus. I put my head back and closed my eyes and I talked that day to my Abba, to my Father. I don't know what this is. I'm scared. There is something in my brain that's about to burst. Please stop it. I don't want to do this to Christian. It would be too hard. Please help me.

Suddenly the traffic began to move and before I knew what was happening, Barry and I had pulled outside the emergency room. We walked into a room filled with people, some with desperate looks on their faces and others, as if they'd been there since the place was

built. In one corner there is a child crying as his mother held a bloody towel over his arm.

Barry told me to take a seat as he talked to the woman at the check-in desk. I don't know what he said but I was suddenly taken back to a room and a young doctor began to ask me questions. Everything happened so quickly. I was changed into robe and I was taken back for a C.T. Scan within minutes. I lay flat on my back as the table went into the scanner. It was cold and hard. Things -- I don't know if you've ever had one, but things swirled around my head as I was told to lie still and not move.

I looked as if I was alone in there. But I wasn't. Here we are, Lord. It's kind of scary. So glad you're with me. So here's what I think. I'd like there to be nothing wrong but more than that I want your will, I really do. You are my everything. If this thing bursts and everything changes, you'll still be with me. And you love Barry and Christian more than I could ever do. So right now I'm letting go. I love you, Jesus!

When the scan was over I was taken back to a room where we waited and finally the doctor came in and said, "Good news! Everything is fine. You might be working a bit too hard. Take a day off every now and then." And then he disappeared to the next patient.

But do you know what I want you to know today? I don't know what you are facing at this moment. I don't know if your circumstances seem overwhelming, but I do want you to know this, Christ our savior, Christ our Lord has left the perfect blueprint of how to pray in that place. You pour your heart out to him and having done that, then we're able to say, you know what, Lord? You're so great and so amazing, I want your will to be done. Don't be afraid to show up and be who you really are because the more you're able to pour out what's really in you, the more space you've made for the grace that God wants to pour into you.

We're getting kind of close to the end of our time in our outreach for water so I want to take you to a place and show you the difference that we can make when that grace as soaked you and I to the skin. Would you watch this?

On the mission field

Announcer: Is there anything more miraculous, more precious than God's gift of children? -- Remarkable and sometimes confusing little versions of ourselves. Yet so incredibly unique. We plan, sacrifice, stress, and pray over our decisions -- over their decisions, all that we want for them and the legacy we hope to leave. There is a breath of immortality in those generations that follow us. But that all assumes those generations don't end with us.

In Cambodia, what we encountered floored us. Mother after mother, who because of something as basic as water, had lost child after child. Contaminated water filled with disease, their only source.

Open captions:

>> I lost two children.

Announcer: In the villages we visited, it became harder to find mothers who had not lost a child to contaminated water than it was to find one who had.

Open captions:

>> I lost four children.

>> I lost five children.

Announcer: Our children are supposed to outlive us. These mothers have lost more children than the average American has even brought into this world.

Open captions:

>> I lost one child.

>> I lost three children.

>> I lost one child.

>> I lost five children.

>> I lost five children.

Announcer: Of all the things we, as parents, might struggle to provide for our children, it's unlikely that clean water is ever one of them. Why should it be any different for these mothers?

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: The water was clean, the cup I'm not so sure about. But it was just amazing because just the day before we had been in a village where there is no clean water. We had walked with mothers to one of those hand-dug wells, which is so full of contaminated water, and all sorts of animal waste and snakes. It was just horrifying to me.

And to see the moms pulling the bucket out and giving that water out to their children, it took everything in me to hold myself back because I just wanted to say, don't drink it! But it's all they had. And you go from that one day where I couldn't sleep that night to the next day and to see our name on the side of the well. The whole team, we went nuts! *LIFE Outreach International!* Some of you did that! And the difference it's made is just night and day -- death and life.

We want to do it again. An honestly, we will put in as many wells as you make possible and every one of us can do something. You can enter at some level. For \$48 you can provide clean water for ten children. Imagine ten children, and for \$48 you're providing clean water for them. Some of you will be able to give a little more, \$144 would give

clean water for 30 children. And for some of you, perhaps you own a business and you think, you know what? I would like for us as a company to do something. Wouldn't it be great for you to put in a whole well there and to see *LIFE Outreach International*?

A sweet lady wrote to me a couple of weeks ago and said that she's put that in our will; that she wants a well to be put in in one of the places that we are drilling. You can do that for \$4800. Now for any gift at all we're going to send you my new book that I'm excited -- I've written a lot of books, but none has actually personally impacted me more than this.

So for any gift at all, you'll get *Praying Women*. For \$100 you'll get "The Power of Prayer" bundle. And for \$1200 a beautiful bronze called "A Mother's Strength." We saw that over and over when we were last in Africa. Mothers carrying water on their heads. But we want them to be carrying clean water, giving life to their children. The thing that makes me feel so urgent about this, A, we're coming to the end soon of our Water for LIFE campaign but we promised in so many of these villages that we will go home and we will tell our partners the need and what a difference clean water makes.

Some of these moms get up at 4:00 in the morning and walk a long way to stand in line for filthy water. Let's bring the clean water right to their village. Let's make sure these mothers don't have to lose one more child. Would you go to your phone? Would you call that number? Would you give the very best gift possible? Thank you!

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:

James: Betty, we've seen the effect of the cholera because we've gotten the reports in this area here, from just these water sources. And then we went and saw a well. Their teacher told us that they're not sick anymore and the kids can come to school. It's a simple solution but it is only simple if people will help us.

Betty: That's right, James. And the water is such a need -- a life and death situation, James. I saw a mother actually drinking the water a while ago and it broke my heart.

But you know, we have to give them a choice. They don't have a choice right now in so many places all over the world. Because they don't have that choice, their bodies are being contaminated with this bad water and their families are dying. We can give them the choice of fresh clean water. I hope you will help us.

In the studio:

Sheila: Thank you so much. If the lines are busy persevere. We're going to make a difference in Jesus' name. And for any gift at all, I'd love to send you my new book, *Praying Women*. The content that I shared on this show and a few other shows come from that book. I want you and I to become prayer warriors. I think the more we pray the closer we get to the heart of God, the more we want to make an impact in the lives of other people.

We're going back to Africa soon and we want to go back with good news because you cared and you responded and you made a difference. So if you call that number before and the line was busy, just keep calling. Let's determine that not on our watch will this happen. We're going to make a difference in Jesus' name. See you next time! God bless you.