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Week 11: Rescue Life

Sheila Walsh

Pray When You Need a Breakthrough

Sheila: Hi! I'm Sheila Walsh. Welcome to *LIFE Today*. The other night, I think it was Sunday night, I was doing a Facebook live and I was talking about prayer. I was talking about how important prayer is in our lives. Afterwards, I was reading all the comments that those who had been part of it posted on my page. There was a comment that seemed to occur over and over again. It was kind of a question. Maybe it is a question you've asked, "I've been praying and praying and praying and I don't see any change. So how do you keep praying when you just desperately need a breakthrough, but you don't see it coming?"

So let me just ask you, like today do you need a breakthrough in your life? I read a quote from a guy called Jon Bloom and I loved it. He said, "So if you're praying for a breakthrough and not seeing it, and in fact, experiencing more temptations to discouragement, frustration, weariness, doubt, and cynicism than before, do not give up. Increasingly intense fighting always precedes strategic breakthroughs." I love that!

There are times in life when everything goes wrong and we desperately need a breakthrough. You might be in a place like that right now where you're struggling to hold on to your marriage with everything you've got or maybe you have a child who has wandered away from their faith. That's so painful.

I got a letter the other day from a woman whose child is addicted to drugs and sometimes she doesn't even know where he is. Or maybe your own health that concerns you. You've been given a diagnosis that honestly feels overwhelming. In each one of those situations

or whatever else you may be facing, one thing is clear, you need a breakthrough from God.

Have you ever been in a place where that's exactly -- exactly what you need? Even as I read a few of those things you said, "Yeah! That's me!" You need a way through what's in front of you for all you can see is a wall. So how do you pray when you need a breakthrough?

I believe when we're asking God for a breakthrough what we're actually praying for is for heaven to invade earth. We're asking God to deliver us because we can't deliver ourselves. It is clear to us in those situations that only God, only God can bring the breakthrough we need. If you've been praying for a while, I want to encourage you to keep going, to keep asking, to keep knocking because God is listening.

I've experienced that so many times in my own life. When I was a student in seminary I went through a few months when life felt just overwhelming. I'd gone to seminary because I thought that God wanted me to be a missionary in India. But the more I prayed about that the less sure I was. I remember thinking, what if I'm not even supposed to be here? What if I got it all wrong and everyone else will graduate knowing exactly where they're going and I don't have a clue? Well, that continued for months and actually into the second and third year.

As graduation day grew closer, every morning I would go for a walk through the woods near my dorm before classes began and I would beg God to show me what to do. And each night I'd kneel by my bed in tears asking God for help. Honestly, I felt like a failure. I wanted to serve God with my whole life, but I didn't know what that would look like. Sometimes, I'm sure this was the enemy, but sometimes I'd think about my past, about where I'd come from and wonder if that was what was wrong. Would God choose someone whose father had committed suicide? Perhaps my dad's death had been my fault after all, and all the other students looked much more worthy to serve God than me. Honestly, I felt damaged. I prayed and I wept, and I prayed some more.

One morning my reading for that day was from Isaiah Chapter 43. This is what I read: "Remember not the former things, nor consider things of old. Behold, I'm doing a new thing. Now it springs forth. Do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert."

Obviously, I thought that was a beautiful promise, but I didn't apply it to my own life or my own situation. But in chapel later that day our professor preached from the exact same passage. So I underlined it in my Bible and went off to my class. That night as I knelt by my bed, I asked God one more time for a breakthrough. "Father, if you would just speak to me. Whatever -- whatever you want me to do, I'll do it. I just need to know you're with me."

Well, I was about to turn my lamp off when there was a gentle knock on my door. It was pretty strict in the seminary I was in, and it was past lights out and I knew that we weren't supposed to be in one another's room after that but I slipped out of bed and saw that an envelope had been pushed under my door. So I picked it up and I opened it. Inside was a message from one of my friends on a folded piece of paper. The note said she'd been trying to track me down all day because God had given her a message for me. So I unfolded the sheet of paper and there in her handwriting was this message from God: "Remember not the former things. Now consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert."

For me, that was a beautiful breakthrough. I still didn't know where I would go upon graduation, but I knew God was saying, "Trust me. I have a plan. I'm doing something new."

Sometimes prayer, when we pray for a breakthrough, it comes quickly and other times we have to wait. God's word is full -- full of breakthroughs. But one of the most dramatic took place in the life of someone we meet in the Old Testament. His name is Daniel. And

we meet him when life for God's chosen people, really, things were at their worst.

When Daniel was about 15, he was just a teenaged boy, he was among the vast crowds of Israelites taken into captivity in Babylon. It was a catastrophic time. They had been warned over and over again through the prophets what would happen if they didn't repent and turn back to God but they ignored every warning.

Well, now Jerusalem and the temple had been destroyed and the people were living in a pagan land ordered to bow down to pagan gods. I love what Warren Wiersbe writes. He said, "God would rather have his people living in shameful captivity in a pagan land than living like pagans in the Holy Land and disgracing his name."

Well, this teenaged boy, Daniel proved himself to be a godly man no matter where he lived. As he grew, he was given a place of honor in the palace which did not sit well with others in authority. They were determined to get rid of Daniel. King Darius loved and respected Daniel, but he'd been tricked into signing a decree that if anyone prayed to any god apart from the king for the following 30 days he would be thrown into a lion's den.

Well, those in high office who didn't like Daniel knew that he prayed to the Lord three times a day and when they reported that Daniel had been seen praying, his fate was sealed. Here's what's deeply moving to me; is that Daniel's prayers were never hidden. People knew that Daniel prayed to his God. His windows faced towards the ruins of Jerusalem and three times a day Daniel threw open those windows and got down on his knees to pray. Now Daniel knew about the decree. He knew that to continue to pray put his life on the line and he prayed anyway.

Well, the king was distraught when those who hated Daniel reported he had been caught praying but he couldn't go back on a signed decree. In those days a signed decree by a king was irrevocable. His last words to Daniel before he was taken off to be torn apart were these: The king said to him, "May your God, whom you serve so faithfully, rescue you."

So they threw Daniel into the pit or cave and the entrance was sealed with the king's royal seal so that no one would break in and rescue him. If anyone had ever needed a breakthrough, it was Daniel. I've often wondered what that night was like. We read that angels were sent to seal the mouths of the lions. Well, that's a pretty spectacular breakthrough.

In the morning, the king had not been able to sleep all night, hurried down to the den, and before he had the heart to have the seal broken, he called out to Daniel. This is what he said, "Daniel! Servant of the living God! Was your God, whom you serve so faithfully, able to rescue you from the lions?"

Daniel answered, "Long live the king! My God sent his angel to shut the lions' mouths so that they would not hurt me for I have been found innocent in his sight. And I've not wronged you, your majesty."

The king was overjoyed and ordered that Daniel be lifted from the den. Not a scratch was found on him, for he had trusted in his God.

There are miraculous stories of deliverance throughout the Bible. Here Daniel had an immediate answer but sometimes, like you and like me, he had to wait. Later on we read that Daniel is now 85 years old. Now the previous year, 50,000 Jews had been allowed to go back to Jerusalem and begin to rebuild the temple. Now being part of the royal court, Daniel would get regular updates and he knew things were not going well. The foundations of the temple had been laid but there had been so much opposition, you can actually read about that in Ezra, Chapter 4 that everything had ground to a halt. Daniel was grieved that the work had stopped. What he didn't understand is that the 16-year delay was part of God's plan and the fulfillment of his promise to Jeremiah.

Do you remember this well-loved verse? "For I know the plans I have for you," said the Lord. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope." We

all know that -- Jeremiah 29:11.

We love the hope of that verse. But this is what the verse before it says. This is what the Lord says, "You will be in Babylon for 70 years. But then I will come and do for you all the good things I have promised, and I will bring you home again."

But at this point Daniel can't see the whole plan so he is grieved, and he is praying. This is actually where we get the Daniel fast from.

"At that time, I Daniel, mourned for three weeks. I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over."

So for three weeks Daniel prayed for a breakthrough and it seemed as if no breakthrough was coming. Then one day when Daniel was standing on the banks of the Tigris River, an angel appeared to him. I cannot imagine what that sight must have been like. It must have been magnificent for Daniel, the one who has faced lions, fainted!

The angel touched him and said this, "Don't be afraid Daniel. Since the first day you began to pray for understanding and to humble yourself before God your request has been heard in heaven. I have come in answer to your prayer. But for 21 days the spirit prince of the kingdom of Persia blocked my way. Then Michael, one of the archangels, came to help me, and I left him there with the spirit prince of the kingdom of Persia."

It is important to remember that when we are praying for a breakthrough, God send his holy ambassadors to do battles, not just for Daniel back then, to do battle for you and for me.

We read in Hebrews Chapter 1 verse 14: "Are not all angels ministering spirit sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?"

Sometimes honestly, we don't get the breakthrough. Families pray fervently. Gather

prayer warriors and don't get the answer they long for. In those heartbreaking times we hold on to the goodness of God, even when we don't understand the ways of God. If you've been there. If you're there right now, I want you to know it has nothing to do with how you prayed, how often you prayed, how desperately you prayed.

One day when you see Jesus face to face, all the questions will be gone. Until then, don't allow the enemy or even a well-meaning friend, to suggest that somehow you've failed? God has a plan that's way bigger than our understanding and he has promised to bring good from everything that happens to you. Not that everything is good, not that everything feels good but that he will bring good to those who love him. God has a unique purpose for your life and the lives of those you love. And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.

Sometimes a breakthrough is like that. Sometimes it is delayed and honestly, sometimes we don't see the breakthrough that we ask for at all. I wonder if in those dark times if the breakthrough God is looking for is maybe a breakthrough in us. Perhaps that is the most significant breakthrough of all.

I think of Moses, ever since the children of Israel had been delivered in slavery in Egypt they had done nothing but complain. While Moses was receiving the Ten Commandments, the people were partying below making idols out of gold. God is done with them. He says to Moses, "Get going, you and the people you brought up from the land of Egypt. Go up to the land I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. I told them I will give this land to your descendants. Go up into this land that flows with milk and honey. But I will not travel with you, for you are a rebellious and stubborn people."

How will Moses and the people respond to this offer from God? Think about it. God is saying I'll give you everything. All the things I promised. You can have the land promised to Abraham, flowing with milk and honey. There is just one catch, God won't be going with them.

How would you answer? If God said to you right now, "I will answer every single prayer, give you the child, the husband, the career you've asked for, the only difference is that my presence won't be with you -- my presence won't be with you." How would you respond?

My prayer is that you and I will respond as Moses did. Then Moses said, "If you don't personally go with us, don't make us leave this place."

I love his response. He's saying I would rather wander around in the wilderness forever with you than move on without you. That's my response to you. Everything -- everything without God is nothing. Nothing with God is everything. When you finally get to that place, what freedom -- what victory! That is spiritual breakthrough.

One of the things I want to ask you to do in a few moments is I want you to help us here at *LIFE Today* bring real significant breakthrough for some people who are in, if not a literal prison but in a prison that seems far darker, far, far more bleak. There are some people at the moment who have been praying perhaps for years that someone would hear their prayer, that someone would come and help them. And the amazing great news is you and I get to be an answer to this prayer. They've wondered, will anyone ever come in? Does anywhere ever know where I am? We want to say yes! And we're coming in Jesus' name. Would you please watch this?

On the mission field:

Sheila: Sex trafficking is the worst kind of prison I've ever seen. I've been in maximum security prisons. I've talked to women on death row. There is a worse kind of prison than that and that's sex trafficking because it is pure evil.

Open captions:

>> I was blindfolded and locked inside a room. A guard at the door brought in many men every night.

>> The men make me take drugs. If I don't do what they want I will get beaten.

>> They said, "We have no problem in killing you. We have done it many times. We will kill you and throw you out of the window. There will be no help for you."

Sheila: We will rise up and we will change this, and we will do it because -- our whole thing here at *LIFE* is reach, rescue, restore. Reach her and let her know, hey! There is a better way for you to live your life. You don't have to do this. Rescue -- go into these horrible bars and clubs and brothels and rescue these girls. And then restore them; bring them to a place where they can learn their value in Christ. The value that God places on their life is not diminished by what they have to do every night. And because of that we get to tell them you're not a number. We will step in. We will say, "Let us be your spiritual mom and dad much let us be your big sister in Christ. Let us be the ones who come and fight for you because you are worth fighting for."

End of video

In the studio:

Sheila: Can you imagine that? Just a little girl! And having to be beaten if she doesn't do what she's told. Locked in a room with a guard who allows different men in. When I was that age I was playing with Barbie dolls and wanting a puppy. That's all I wanted in life. And these are innocent beautiful children! And they get tricked into it.

Some of you have written on my page and asked me, "Well, how do these girls get involved in that? Why don't they just leave?" I understand the questions, but it is so much more complicated. So often a girl stays because she's got a younger sister or a sister who is even younger than that, maybe two or three, and the traffickers tell her, if you don't do what we've told you to do, we will go, we know where you live, we will go and get your sister. When they don't do the things, and they're supposed to look like they're happy to be there. And when they don't do that then they're beaten. One girl took her shirt

off and showed me the marks on her back where she had been beaten.

Let me tell you what you and I have the privilege of doing. This is Psalm ten, verses 17 and 18: Lord, you know the hopes of the helpless. Surely you will hear their cries and comfort them. You will bring justice to the orphans and the oppressed so mere people can no longer terrify them.

Because that's what's happening. These little ones are terrified, but you and I have the privilege of rescuing them. What we do here at *LIFE*, it's a very calculated, a very thought out, prayed out method. We go into the villages before predators ever get to them and we tell these girls, listen, if someone shows up and says these kinds of things to you run! Scream as loudly as you can! Because honestly, our number one prayer is to reach these kids before they're ever trafficked. But once they are in that terrible situation then we go in with our teams on the ground who are amazing. When you see SWAT teams who love Jesus praying before they go in, and then breaking down these doors and rescuing these girls. And then there is beautiful places where we can take them where their life can be restored.

But we need you to help us. Some amazing people have been very moved by this particular mission and they've said, listen, we will put up \$250,000. So we will literally match what people give. It used to take us \$128 to be able to begin that process of reaching, rescuing, and restoring but now for \$64 they'll match it with their \$64 and you'll be able to see one girl begin that process of being taken out of this devastating lifestyle. If you're able to give \$128, instead of reaching, rescuing, or restoring one girl you will now do it for two.

So please, will you go to your phone? Will you give the very best gift possible? And honestly, when you do for any gift, we're going to send you this little bracelet made by one of the girls rescued from trafficking as a gift to say to you, thank you, thank you! So please, go to your phone, make the best gift possible.

Begin video clip

Announcer: Behind the bright lights there is 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 \$250,000 matching gift, now your gift of \$128 to reach, rescue, or restore one child can be doubled to help *two* children. Your \$64 gift will be matched to help save one child from the horrors of human trafficking. And a \$32 mission rescue gift will be doubled to \$64.

With your gift we'll send you this beautiful "Freedom" bracelet handcrafted by survivors of human trafficking who want to say thank you for helping those still trapped. Wear it as a wonderful reminder to pray for the outreach.

With your gift of \$128 or more you'll receive the "Freedom" tote. This quality canvas tote bag is made by trafficked survivors who are now learning a new trade and includes spiritual life resources such as books, devotionals, CD's, or DVD's.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1280 which will now help rescue 20 children! And you may request our beautiful new bronze sculpture, "A Mother's Strength." Please call, write, or make your gift online.

End of video

In the studio:

Sheila: The situation here, you can probably tell by my circumstances, there was abject poverty. The people who are using and trafficking these little girls are very organized, they're very well-financed. They know what they're doing. I asked one of the girls, have you thought of just trying to escape? Their thing is, if I try and escape, they will come up to my parents because my parents are so poor. My parents are desperate. They have no money. So I'm forced into this life.

But you and I can do something. So what I'm asking you to do, would you let these little girls here who think nobody cares about them know there is a God in heaven who knows their name and who loves them. But he has a people who are committed to reaching out. So please, go to your phone, go online, make the very best gift possible and let's bring life to these trapped beautiful little girls.

Sheila: Thank you so much. If you're able to give \$128, which will now begin that process of reaching, rescuing, restoring, it will now just do one girl it will do two. We will send you this beautiful tote they made; and we have some things in here, some resources from *LIFE* that I know you will love. If you'd like to get my book on how to become relentless in your prayer, how to pray for a breakthrough, we would love to send that to you as well. We have a beautiful bronze for \$1280 it's called "A Mother's Strength." Something to put up and remind you of the work that you're helping us do. I know you don't do it for the gifts. It's just our way of say thank you.

If you didn't get through, please call! I'm Sheila Walsh. I'll see you next time on *LIFE Today*.