

3/17/20

**Week 12: Rescue Life**

**Randy Robison and Sheila Walsh**

**Susan E. Isaacs**

**Randy:** Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm Randy Robison. And Sheila Walsh is here. We've got a fun program but yet also a very profound program, I think. What do you think?

**Sheila:** Well, I love the title of this book. It is called, *Angry Conversations with God*. It reminded me of the Psalms. Sometimes you just get to be real with God. So please, welcome our guest, Susan Isaacs! So great to have you here.

**Susan:** Thank you. It's great to be here.

**Sheila:** But you actually are by trade a playwright and a comedian?

**Susan:** I'm an author, comedian and an actor. And I also teach screen writing at Chapman University. Yep. Yep.

**Sheila:** Wow! I have to say when your book came across my desk I was like okay, I have no idea what this is about but I want to meet this woman. Because it is a very intriguing title. Because I think we're brought up to think that you're not supposed to have angry conversations with God. And yet we live in a world that is very difficult and life can be very challenging. What prompted, what was the Genesis of this?

**Susan:** Well, in one sentence I read the book, *The Sacred Romance* and he said, "Your relationship with God is like a marriage." And I'm like well then we need to go to counselling because we're not getting along. And in one year my father died, my mother

had a stroke, my acting career completely tanked in New York so then I went back to Los Angeles only to watch it die there too. This happened as my four best friends in New York all got their big acting breaks. In fact, one of my best friends in New York got cast on a hit television show in Los Angeles, a show that was created by my high school sweetheart.

**Sheila:** Wow!

**Susan:** Oh it gets worse. They all got married in New York just as the relationship that I was in for three years fell apart. So I flew back to New York to attend the weddings and when I got off the plane I prayed, God, whatever you have for me today, help me to see where you are and what you have for me. And a friend from church, a churchy friend, if you know what I mean, who always had a verse to throw at you, she wanted to take me to Central Park to like remind me that the sun was still shining and God was still on the throne. And I started to feel like okay, yeah, God is in control. Right when I started to feel that, like 50 feet in front of me walked past my newly ex-boyfriend with his new girlfriend. And they stopped at a pretzel cart and started to make out.

**Sheila:** Not a good day, really.

**Susan:** I was like, in a city of 12 million people, God orchestrated that. He must hate me. He must be cruel.

**Randy:** It's interesting because obviously, you have a sense of humor and you approach life very much in that and we will laugh through this show but that's a very serious issue. A lot of people think that God is not good.

**Susan:** Well, that's what happened. I realized that my perception of God was -- everything fell apart and it got me to this place like I don't know what God is like. I don't. Because why would he have done that to me? I need to completely start from zero.

So I went to a Christian therapist who is like, "I just want to hear what he sounds like, your God. Like speak out loud." And he was a jerk. I realized that my concept of God had gotten tweaked over time and I had to start from zero. A lot of us think because no one gets out of this world without going through hardship and we tend to think that, some problems are obviously of our own making but for the most part, life is about suffering and joy, suffering and joy, and learning through the process.

As J. Vernon McGee said, "I know one place in town where there is no lying or cheating or sadness -- it's the graveyard." That's what it is to be alive. And we then interpret the pain that we go through, is like what did I do wrong? Well, some things we've done wrong but for the most part that is just what it is to be human. And we have to rethink whatever struggle that we're in of God grieving with us, being angry at the hurt that's done to us and saying let me carry it and let me get you through it.

**Sheila:** Susan, take me back to your early spiritual roots. Like what was your upbringing and where do you think you picked up concepts of who God was that you discovered later that's not who he is.

**Susan:** I think, I grew up in a really wonderful Lutheran church where Jesus was really alive. But I do think that I got some of my concept, especially God the Father being like, oh really, you again! Of course, he had a British accent because he was just really... And then he was like I cannot even deal with you! And believe it or not, I actually got some of that from my mother because she was going through postpartum depression. She had me very late. She was old enough to be my grandmother, four kids, exhausted and dealing with postpartum depression. So obviously, you can see I was not what you would call a compliant quiet child. And I think my mother was like, Lord, help me! I don't want her to see my grief and I can't deal with her. And so that's...

**Sheila:** Yeah, that's very painful.

**Susan:** And my mother loved the Lord so much and we healed all of that. But some of it

was that. And I think, some of it is just like great theology, messed up parenting, good parenting, messed up parenting and I just assimilated a lot of it. And also, I have to say this is something I came to realize in my book. It was really easy to paint God as a jerk because then it left me -- I got off the hook. You're just a jerk. Rather than okay, maybe some of it is your fault. Some of it is just life and that, maybe these things happen regardless of whether you're a Christian or not, whether you're doing things right or not, it just life. But by painting God as a jerk I could then push him away and say, you're a jerk rather than no, actually I'm really good and there's horrible things in the world that happen. Come on! These are middle class white girl problems. These aren't like super bad tragedies.

**Randy:** I'm curious. So when your life is falling apart, you're mad at God, you go to marriage counseling and you start vocalizing what God is like, the jerk in your mind, what did that sound like?

**Susan:** Well, he was like really, Susan, you're not in the Sudan so get over yourself!

**Randy:** An unimpressed God? A judgmental God? Was he angry at you like you were angry at him?

**Susan:** He was too tired of me to be angry.

**Randy:** So you had the old Father God.

**Sheila:** That's worse! That's apathy.

**Susan:** It is worse. It is apathy like, Oh God really? But -- that's when that came out of my mouth I'm like I know intellectually that's not what God is like.

**Randy:** So how did you find out what he was really like?

**Susan:** Well, a lot of counseling, a lot of angry conversations, a lot of just venting. And when I got all that out in front of God, he wasn't surprised or shocked, he was like, "There you are! Okay, now we can have a real conversation. And guess what? I'm mad too. I grieve with you. I'm sad. I'm mad too."

And sort of in the counseling thing, it's sort of like as I got that out I could almost hear God saying, "Can you stop speaking for me because I would like to actually speak in my own voice with my own words." Because he was like, you know, husbands, "Can I get a word in edgewise, please?"

**Sheila:** [Chuckling] No idea what you're talking about.

**Randy:** Nor do I, for the record, honey.

**Susan:** And I was shocked. So often we have to realize, you know God, I don't know what you're really like.

**Randy:** What did he say to reveal himself to you and how did you know it was him?

**Susan:** Well, he stopped speaking entirely. All my life from a very young age I could feel the Holy Spirit, I could sense God's presence but in this period of time it was like nothing. I thought there is no God, there is no meaning. I don't know anything. I had a meltdown.

I had a really great pastor who was like, "I got it. You can come in here and just vent as much as you want. I'll be there." And eventually I had to get it to a place where I'm like if I never get what I want out of life I have to love him anyway. If I never hear from God again I have to love him anyway. If it is like Mother Teresa and I hear him on my deathbed, fine.

And I had to come to a dark night of the soul, a death of all my expectations and it's like I

almost felt like God was saying, "Oh, if this is a marriage you married me for my money, for what you could get out of me." And then he stopped talking. I had to get to that place of saying, "Yet I know that my redeemer lives and at the last I shall stand on the earth and though my flesh burn off me, yeah, I will see God." And I had to be that.

**Randy:** So you were left with nothing but your faith.

**Susan:** No, it was like I don't have a faith, but God has a faith for me. And I was still in the church, I never gave up. But I was asleep. I woke up. I thought I heard someone yelling my name outside my window and I woke up and realized it was God. It's the only time I've ever heard an audible voice. And you know how, I forget which prophet describes the voice of many waters? It was like someone speaking and when they spoke they covered every single tone in the audio spectrum at the same time. It was the voice of many waters and it terrified me -- and it was over too soon.

**Randy:** What did it say?

**Sheila:** Just her name.

**Susan:** Just my name. And all the love and all the care and all the compassion and gravity of "I know you, I know your name, I know where you are."

**Sheila:** What is the best thing you discovered about who God actually is?

**Susan:** He's nothing like I would imagine him. He is so -- he is so smart not to give you what you want. He is so smart that he plays the long game with everyone. Whatever you're going through, however you make mistakes, however... And the fact that I could just rail at him and I felt like he just grabbed me in my arms and loved me. It was like, there is nothing we can do to shock, alarm or upset him. He's crazy about us.

**Sheila:** It's pretty amazing!

**Susan:** Yeah and that's not the God that was in my head. He ruined my life and it was the best thing that happened to me really.

**Sheila:** But I think a lot of us could say that. A lot of us could say at the point of our greatest undoing we discovered what we'd been longing for all our lives. A relationship with him based on nothing we brought to the table.

**Susan:** Exactly! We don't bring anything other than he's like I'm crazy about you.

**Randy:** What's it like to carry this point of view, this worldview into the L.A. world, the acting world? That whole scene?

**Susan:** Well, I always felt sort of like too wild for the church, too tame for the world. I never really fit in.

**Sheila:** We like you just the way you are.

**Susan:** Thank you! Well, people are hungry -- people are hungry for God and they may be looking for it in other things. I mentioned this earlier like I'd gone to a yoga studio and there's like a little statue of the Buddha and some other like Hindu... and I was like yuck! And I felt God saying, "Susan, the field are white with harvest. Pray that the Lord send someone to the harvest."

I think like in improv, in improv you never deny what someone else is saying, you add, you say, "yes and..." So people are hungry and you say "yes and..." And I'm in a couple of 12 step programs and they say you cannot convince someone to get sober. All you can say is, "I'll tell you what happened to me."

So it's building relationships and having people see something different and playing "yes and" when their hunger for justice or love or connection with whatever else is out there,

whatever words they're using you say, "Yes and..."

**Randy:** Affirming their need and then pointing them in the right direction.

**Susan:** Yeah! Because someone said to me, "You cannot convince someone of heaven but you can make them hungry for it."

**Sheila:** I like that. What would be the best way that we could pray for you?

**Susan:** Well, um, I'm working on a second book right now. It's about finding love late in life, at the 11th hour and all the really great and really terrible advice I was given by the secular and the church communities about marriage and intimacy. And I really want to get it finished. Oh yeah! I actually took the eHarmony test and was rejected three times.

**Sheila:** You can get rejected?

**Susan:** Oh yeah! They're like, "Oh, we can't help you."

**Sheila:** I did not know that was possible!

**Randy:** Is she telling us the truth or is that part of the humor?

**Sheila:** I think you should --

**Susan:** I found out later because it was a FOX morning show they had me on and they had a guy from eHarmony. He's like, "Look, its algorithm. If you see the complexities in life and variances and the grays and you're a complex thinker, we cannot help you."

I'm like, "That's why! I'm a complex thinker!"

[Laughter]



**Randy:** Look on the bright side!

**Susan:** I'm like I stand justified. But I did meet my husband online. Yeah. Yeah. On a site that was a disaster for a month and then they kept saying come back for five free days, come back for ten free days. And I was like, "I'm on a drive by for the weekend but here's my email." And that's how we met.

**Sheila:** Weight Watchers does that with me, "Come back for five free days." Yeah!

[Laughter]

So far not.

**Susan:** Shame you like, O God! Yeah.

**Sheila:** If you were to sum up one of the most important things that you could say to people who are right now where you were, who are just like, "You know what? I've prayed and God doesn't answer. I've prayed and the worst thing that could have happened happened. How can you talk about a God of love when that's not how he's been with me?"

**Susan:** I would say keep railing. Keep just... empty it out. Find safe people who can carry that with you. And like I said, my problems are middle class white girls' problems. There are things that are far worse. And you need to find people who love God and will grieve with you and be angry with you on your behalf. And you need to ask God to open your eyes. Where is he? If he is there where is he? Because it's not like we're going to get someone calling our name or all of the sudden our fortunes reversed. And also it just takes time. Anyone who has a timetable like, "You've been sad for two months. It is time to stop it and be joyful in Jesus" that is not a safe person!

[Laughter]

That's an annoying jerk!

**Sheila:** You heard it here, people!

**Randy:** Highlight material right there! I hear you though. And all of your -- a bit eccentric expression, I hear someone who says you know what? I didn't understand God but I desperately wanted to know him. And I sought him out and he met me on my own terms and spoke my own language to let me know how much he loved me. Is that a fair summation?

**Susan:** That is a real sort of like ridiculous... No, no I'm sorry! That's exactly it! I'm like, you don't have... No! Yes! That's exactly it. And that God is like, take it. I can take it. I can take it. I can take it. The things that we bury because we don't think God can take it, that's like I want that. There is an adage, you're only as sick as your secrets. And you know, we underestimate the compassion and love and patience and understanding of God. We really do. We do! And he met me in all of that.

**Randy:** That's exactly where I was going. Because he says draw near to him and he will draw near to you. So even in the times of fighting and wondering where are you, God? And what's going on and why hasn't that worked out? If we draw close to him, we'll find he draws close to us. It is a promise. It is a beautiful testimony.

There are a lot of people out there right now that are wondering where God is. And they're asking, and they're asking for help. Sheila, we've been in different places in the world and we've seen this. I was in Cambodia on a Water for LIFE trip, not even looking for the sex trafficking issues that we're dealing with and it was there. It surprised us. But it's everywhere, it's in our own country now.

But we can be that answer for those people that are crying out saying where's God? Why

won't he intervene in some sort of way? Does he exist? Does he love us? I think God's looking at his people going, are you going to answer that call? Let me tell you, we can answer that call and I want to show you how. Please watch this.

### **On the mission field:**

**Randy:** I'm here at a very remote part of Cambodia. There is nothing around here except for a few shacks. There is just not much here. And yet still, a human trafficker came through here many months ago and promised this young lady's sister a better life and some things -- lured her away. They haven't heard from her. She is, as far as they know gone. They have her picture and they have the prayer that she'll come back, the hope that they will see her again. She's very likely being forced to do things that no girl should be forced to do in places that are not fit for human living.

This is the reality here and in places all over the world. That's why Rescue Life is critical. We must first reach into places like this with education so that they'll know what to look out for when these predators come through. We must rescue the girls that we can and get them out of the sex trade. And we must restore them. We must give them a hope and a future.

We can do that. We can do it on a larger scale, but we have to have your help. I pray you'll help us as we try to help so many girls. We have to stop this abuse. It is not right. You can do something. Join with us as we Rescue Life.

### **End of video**

### **In the studio:**

**Randy:** Sheila, the amazing thing was that they didn't know where she was. And when we started talking to people that knew she had probably been taken out of Cambodia into an area. You've been to some of those areas where these girls are trafficked.

**Sheila:** And the hard thing, Randy, the devastating thing is that so many of these girls think they're going for a better life. Their parents have no money. Sometimes there's only a mother. So this girl is told, "Hey, just over the border you're going to get a great job. You can work in the food industry. It will be amazing!" And the minute they get there, they're offered a meal, and so many of the girls that I talk to, their meal is drugged and they wake up in a small room with a man that they've never met in their life before and they realize that they're a prisoner. And it's the most devastating reality.

All our missions impact me but I have to tell you, that our Rescue Life has left a profound impact on me because this is evil from the pit of hell. These people are so well organized and it is innocence -- it is little girls. I've talked to so many little girls who said to me, "At night I would lay there and it would be the sixth or seventh man that would come in." Sometimes I would say, "God, if there is a God, will you please send somebody to help?"

And we can do something. That's the thing. We have to be as organized as they are because they are very organized but we can do something. We have partners on the ground in Southeast Asia where once we've reached these girls, once we've rescued them, there is a place to take them to restore but it means that we all have to do our part, Randy.

**Randy:** Absolutely! And we approach this thing, because it is a big problem, reach, rescue, restore. We reach in there, we tell young children what signs to look out for so that they don't get caught, they don't get duped. We rescue ones that are already in it, like Sheila, I know you've sat and hugged these poor girls. It just breaks your heart and it makes, as a father, it makes me angry at the same time.

**Sheila:** We've kicked down doors at midnight and brought five girls out.

**Randy:** Amen! And we'll restore, we'll give them a hope, we'll give them a future. And literally, that means oftentimes giving them skills, giving them something to do, a way to

earn a living. In fact, Sheila, would you show them your bracelet?

**Sheila:** I love this! And it's just a thank you. The girls that we've taken out and rescued, they make these. And for any gift at all, we're going to send you one of these. I'm praying God will so restore the souls of these girls that they will rise up to become prayer warriors in their nations and see God use their lives to make a difference! But we need you to help us.

**Randy:** Make the best gift you can. We've done this for a few years now, Sheila, so we have an idea of how much it kind of costs on average to get a child out of this and it comes up \$128. We have got a wonderful matching gift right now where a \$64 gift will have the same effect.

But here's the bottom line. We can do something -- all of us can do something and the more of us that do something the more we can reach in there and rescue, and give hope and get these people, these young, mainly girls, out of hell on earth.

Will you go online? Will you go to the phone right now? Do what you can. And know that when you join in *Rescue Life* you really are rescuing lives. Do it right now.

### **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:**

**Randy:** I pray you will make the best gift you can -- \$128 if you can -- \$1280 if you can. If God has given you the means, by gosh this is a great place to do something great for the kingdom. Sheila?

**Sheila:** Yeah. It really will. If the line's busy, just keep calling. Let's do this in Jesus' name.

Would you help me thank our guest, Susan Isaacs? You are a pistol! Thank you so much.

And thanks for being with us. And we'll see you next time on *LIFE Today*. God bless!