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Week 17: Spring Mission Feeding

Sheila Walsh

Sarah Bowling

Sheila: Hi! Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm Sheila Walsh and I'm so glad you're joining us today. I had an interesting conversation with a woman I'd never met until today, actually. Talking about a book she was writing and asking me if I'd write the forward. The more she talked the more I thought I don't care what's on my schedule, I'm moving it off my schedule because what she is doing and who she is, is so important. And we have her today with us.

So please, welcome Sarah Bowling. And this is the amazing new book. It is called, *Hanging by a Thread: The Saving Moses Journey*. Now I'll give a wee back of background first of all. Your mom is Marilyn Hickey, who is a legend in the faith. Still serving God and speaking in all sorts of places. But I wanted to ask you when were your eyes opened to your own particular calling in life?

Sarah: Yeah, that's a great question because I think it is a little bit of exploring it, even year by year. I loved teaching. I found out I liked teaching. Started in my early 20s doing that. Love the Bible, always did. I don't know where and how I got that; that's kind of tongue in cheek probably because of my mom but I think kind of the Holy Spirit too. And started teaching the Bible, felt called to that. And reluctantly, because I was like hey, I don't want to do that stuff. That's for her not me. But then the work with Saving Moses, that was a bit of a journey and experiment. And I just kind of started trying stuff. What do I like? What resonates in my heart? What do I feel passionate about?

Sheila: So did you travel abroad somewhere to see if anything hit you?

Sarah: I did. I started, and the journey here, with our book, I talk about my first trip. I've traveled ever since I was five, so I was on a team, leading a team to Ethiopia and found some, we stumbled across babies in an orphanage, newborns that had been abandoned on a field. And the orphanage initially said, "No, we can't take the babies." And the police who rang them said, "If you don't take them, we have to put them back on the field because we have no other place."

And so I met them, and I held them in my arms. Their names were Sarah and Ruth. I just was a puddle because I was like -- newborn twin girls! That was kind of... I couldn't get it out of my head. So I started exploring, and just traveling and looking at different things. What makes me passionate?

And I think what really lit me up was going to Angola. A baby, my photographer donated blood for this little girl. We thought we'd landed on the scene right just in time, American saviors. And um, she died, and I was unraveled by that. A good solid two months, I was completely unraveled by it because that's not my normal.

Sheila: But you didn't... The interesting thing is, Sarah, you didn't turn away because of that. Because sometimes situations become so overwhelming that you think, you know what? I'll go serve somewhere else. How did the whole ministry come out of the unraveling?

Sarah: Yeah, so they said, "They need malnutrition formula." And so I said, "How much is that?" If we can prevent this, which we can, and they said, "Well, it's \$100,000." I'm like, "I'm in!"

[Laughter]

It's impulsive but that's what I did. Then I came home, and my mom is like, "Well, I'm

not paying for that." And my husband, he pastors, "We're not paying for it either!" And my friend's like, "You've got a lot of bake sales in front of you. That's \$8,000 a month!" And I'm like, "I know! I know!"

Sheila: So when did you start?

Sarah: So I thought, I didn't know what to do. Because I don't have a website. I mean, this is... Exactly! This is lunacy. But I made the commitment like in December, and in February I'm in the back parking lot of my kids' school, waiting to collect them in the carpool line and I get a phone call from the office, some random person and they said, "Hey, Sarah, this lady..." I'll never forget her name. I still call her from time to time just to say, "Hey, how are you, Jane?" And she donated \$110,000! I remember when I got that I just started crying in the car because I was like, who...? I felt like God said, I got you Sarah! I thought, well, okay. Let's keep going!

So that's kind of, it was really, really supernatural divine confirmation. I mean full on. Full on!

Sheila: Because I'll never forget my first time in a malnutrition clinic in Angola but it's as if God opens our eyes to different things depending on who we are and what our calling is because your particular kind of passion is for really little ones. Because didn't, there was one part, I think I read, where was it, UNICEF withdrew their support?

Sarah: Yep! So for zero to five! That's my niche. That's totally my niche. And what I found is nobody -- there is not one organization that is devoted to that age space. And so I'm like sign me up. I want that. I want zero to five. Give me that. That's my sweet spot. I figure if I can do that, then everybody else gets a good head start because I own that and I'm all over that. So exactly, UNICEF said, "We're not doing it anymore." And I'm like, okay, I'll do it.

Sheila: So how do you go from thinking, I'm owning it. I'm all in to actually physically

setting up and doing it? How do you do that?

Sarah: Yeah, that's part of the journey in this. And a little bit is you try it and you stub your toe. You stub your toe and you learn a little bit, and this works and that works. This doesn't work. Finding really good people that you can trust on the ground in the field to make sure that okay, the milk gets distributed right, measured, it goes to the need, the beneficiaries, the people who need it the most.

And the other thing that we've done too is we feed the moms in those clinics. Right, so that clinic that you visited, those moms often leave because there is no food for the moms, of course. Moms have to feed themselves. So we said, well, if we want to keep the moms there so that the babies will stay the whole time, then we have to feed the moms. So we started doing that too. Then that way the babies can get the whole benefit of all the malnutrition formula, the whole scheme of it.

Sheila: Do you now take the formula, actually to the villages so those babies never end up in the malnutrition clinics?

Sarah: See now that's a great question because they just, they communicated within the last few months we want to do that. Preventive instead of remedy. So I said okay, let's do that. But to do that I was like oh, that cost. They were telling me the uptick on the money and I'm like, that's exciting. Maybe we can't do that full in one year but incrementally, that's our end game.

Sheila: Where are you Jane when we need you?

Sarah: Exactly! Come out, Jane!

Sheila: So what are you seeing happening through Saving Moses now?

Sarah: So with the malnutrition we've expanded. So we're in Angola, six malnutrition

clinics there. And then we're also now in the D.R.C., the Democratic Republic of Congo on the east side where they just finished up that Ebola outbreak. So now we have a clinic there as well. And that clinic, it was hard last year, of course because it was Ebola. So we've expanded there. And that's been really good -- really good. I haven't been able to get there, because they're like Ebola, I really don't want Ebola.

Sheila: No! Very few of us do, actually. One of the statistics in your book was fascinating to me. I didn't know that Afghanistan has the highest rate of infant mortality.

Sarah: Yep, yep! And that's recorded. So they go in and they actually can measure that. But they consistently, year after year after year have the highest because of the instability. I think two combinations, military and political instability, and the lack of education.

So for example. I heard the story, we went in to do some training into the rural areas and there was a dad that we were training on how to deliver a baby safely. And when we gave the training to the dad the dad said, "If I had known what you told me, I would have four children still alive now."

They don't know when a baby is born not breathing to slap the butt to kind of get it to breathe. They don't do that. When the baby is not breathing, they put it in the corner because it is dead. That's what they think. Right?

Sheila: Oh my gosh! So this whole thing must be like just this huge learning curve all the time. It's like oh! Didn't think of that.

Sarah: The lights go on and you just think, aah! These are easy buttons. They're not like rocket science. We don't have to have calculus degrees to do this. This is like just with a compassionate heart. That's it.

Sheila: Now your book is divided into two because you talk about working in malnutrition clinics but then you talk about something that is really close to my heart. In

fact, to Janice, our photographer and me, I think our Rescue Life program where we work with girls who are caught up in sex trafficking is something that's just kind of carved into my soul. But you are doing something completely different called "Night Care." How did you even discover that that was something that was so desperately needed?

Sarah: Right, because no one is doing night care. So I watched a documentary, a British photographer came to a brothel in India and wanted to take pictures in the brothel and the brothel wouldn't let her. So she made friends with some of the kids from the women in the brothel and gave them disposable cameras and those kids went in and took pictures. So I watched that documentary because I was like wow!

And in that, I saw a toddler who was chained to a rail. And right when I saw that I was like what happens to these babies? Because there's babies, this industry facilitates babies. So what happens to them while their moms are working? What do they do? And so that was kind of my first epiphany. Like oh my goodness, we have to do night care. We *have* to do night care because these babies and toddlers are right in the thick of the entire industry.

Sheila: See, I didn't even think of that. Although when I think back in our last trip I remember seeing a couple of children just kind of in little hammocks. I looked to see where their families were and there was no one. So just to help our viewers understand. That's like when these girls go to work at night and they have little children, what had been happening to these children?

Sarah: So, depending on where. I was in Cambodia, walking on the streets in Phnom Penh at nighttime and I literally almost stumbled, almost tripped over babies on cardboard on the street -- like on the street not attended by their mom. Nobody is around. They're just on the street. And the rain, it's raining on them and they're sleeping. So the babies are kind of put some place safe. I know in Bangladesh I interviewed in a brothel there, eight out of ten of the moms said, "The baby is on the bed with me as I'm working." And immediately said, "It is not uncommon for a client to finish with me and

roll over and molest my toddler." So that's -- that's kind of their normal.

So more moms that I met, one gave me like, handed me this twine, like a whole thing of twine and said, "I tie this to my toddler's ankle and to myself so that I don't lose my toddler while I'm working." Because the other one, another mom had said to me, "I lost my baby." I'm like, maybe a miscarriage or something? She said, "No, no, no. I was working. I sat my little 16-month old in a space where I thought she'd be safe and after I finished working, I came back to get her and she was gone. I never found her again. I lost her."

So when I hear that, I think babies and toddlers, I mean that's like in the thick of desperate, desperate need.

Sheila: So when you opened up your first Night Care Clinic, how did you get the moms to trust you and to bring the children?

Sarah: Yeah! That's a learning curve. Because initially, I thought they'd flood in. And then I was like, oh! Brilliant blinding flash! They obviously don't trust you. Why don't they? Well, duh Sarah. You're an idiot. I'm like okay.

So what I did was we just were consistent. We did what we said. We invited the moms, we invited the whole community, come in, see what we do. Explore. We'll have an open house and we'll give you biscuits, cookies, whatever and you can meet the nannies who work here; just to build trust. And then we went into their neighborhoods and interviewed the moms there and the nannies would come, and so created relationships and connections.

Sheila: Did you find some of the moms were not willing to bring their children? And if so, why would they not?

Sarah: They didn't trust us. So they're like, hey. And the questions they asked: Are you

going to sell my baby? Are you going to kill my baby and sell the parts? Like are you going to sell my baby's liver? Because they had heard these horror stories for like medical income. What are you going to do? Are you going to hurt my baby?

And so these are some of the hurdles. They were questions. I was like, what kind of... I couldn't fathom. But this is their reality.

Sheila: What have you seen happening among some of the little ones and their moms?

Sarah: So great! So, so great! So one of the things, we had one little girl. She would come consistently all the time to Night Care, and her mom came and talked with us and said, because in Cambodia we're able to pray with our babies and have little circle times and tell them about Jesus. And this little three-year old, that's about how old she was. She would go home and pray for her mom.

Sheila: Wow! That's beautiful!

Sarah: And the mom came and said, "I really appreciate her prayers. Can you tell me more about what she is doing?" So that has been phenomenal -- I mean phenomenal! You get to see some of that transition a little bit.

And then sometimes for our moms when they ask us because some moms, they want to get out of the industry. So we can bridge them to other organizations. We're not a one-stop shop. We'll do the babies and toddlers, but everybody is partnership -- everybody works together.

Sheila: What's the greatest challenge that's facing your ministry at the moment? And how can our viewers help you?

Sarah: I think one of the things, simple things, is just doing, raising awareness. So lots of social media places where you can share posts and do all that. Of course, finances are

always helpful. We take a team every July and if somebody wants to come there is an application process. We bring people to Cambodia on a team trip. Yeah, a limited amount, 20 people; they cap it. Again, it is an application. So we don't just say yes to everybody for obvious reasons. So there are some cool ways to get involved.

Sheila: What do you see is the future of Night Care? Is your plan or hope to just expand to different places?

Sarah: Multiple countries because when I start looking at it I see the need. We've already scoped out another three to five countries that we want to open in. And then we also want to open in Africa as well, because the need in Africa, people don't think of that but like I've heard the statistics and I plan to go and see. So when I go and see these places, like I was outside of Bangkok too just a couple months ago and saw, and I was like aah!! It just takes your breath away.

Sheila: I'm thinking of just our regular normal viewer, mom who loves her kids, and it's like this is another world. This is horrifying the kind of... But you obviously believe that this is how to be Jesus' hands and feet to those who are desperate and who are alone. Do you see many of the moms or the people you work with impacted by the love of God because of the practical help?

Sarah: Yes! Because when you love their baby, as a mom, you and me, we're moms, you love on my kid, you got me. I'm all in both feet. It's similar, not all the moms, because you have moms who are addicts, drug addicts, and there's sometimes bad stuff but a lot of those moms, when you're looking after their baby, they're all in with both feet. They're like, yeah! I love! You love me. That's the thing, it is genuine love. And it's for the least of these. Jesus said that, "When you do this for the least of these, you do this for me." So I'm all like sweet!

Sheila: So when a mom drops off her little ones, what does a night like in a Night Care facility?

Sarah: Sure! So the little baby gets a bath because they're toddlers, because their dirty. Their environments are super. Then we give them dinner because a lot of times that's the only meal they have. They have playtime with age-appropriate toys. Then there's circle time where we do like activities and sing and all that. Then we put them down for bed. They sleep through the night and moms collect them in the morning when they're done sleeping and done working.

Sheila: Wow! I cannot tell you how grateful I am that there is someone called Sarah Bowling on the earth at this moment doing what she is doing. I'm going to tell you how to get hold of Sarah's book, *Hanging by a Thread: The Saving Moses Journey*. But Sarah talked about when some of these little ones come to the malnutrition clinic they are just in a desperate place. And what you know about us here at *LIFE* is that through our mission feeding our prayer is to get to some of these little ones before they ever end up in a malnutrition clinic. So would you watch this and then I'll show you how you can help both of us.

On the mission field:

Announcer: *LIFE Outreach International* teams, along with our mission partners travel the world documenting the needs of families who lack the very basics of life. Without a doubt, Africa's children always tear at the heart of our teams when they see them struggling in extreme circumstances.

Sheila: I cannot imagine what it would be like to be a mother like this and want desperately to help your child. This is the hospital that some of these moms had to walk 10-15 kilometers with a seriously malnourished baby just to try and get some help. And if they can get here in time, then there is some hope. But time is everything here as you can see.

>> I remember when my brother died. We were hungry and he was so thin. My mom

took him to a clinic that was very far away, and he died on the way there.

Announcer: It is now up to us to do something to help relieve the plight of these little ones. A bowl of food a day provided through our mission feeding program can make the difference between life and death for young children.

Sheila: But my prayer is that we can save hundreds of other children before they get to this stage. No child should ever get to this stage. No mom should ever have to watch this. So if we do something now, we can stop this from happening.

End of video

In the studio:

Sheila: So if you're still tuned, still didn't flip the channel, thanks! I know how easy that is. Sometimes we see that kind of devastation and pain and we just want to flip through to something else. But you didn't. You stayed here. So yay you!

We can really make a difference. Sometimes it is overwhelming when you see something like that and you think, it's too much. I can't do anything -- but that is a lie from the pit of hell. When you feel like you can't do anything, that's just the enemy trying to make you think, just walk away, turn away.

But as long as we are the body of Christ on the earth at this moment, we can do something. We've made a commitment here at *LIFE* this year to be able to provide nutritious food for 350,000 children. We have amazing partners on the ground and every time we're with them, we tell them, "We will go home, and we will tell our people" because I know that you care. I know that so many of you have helped us for so many years, but the need has not gone away -- the need has increased.

So here's how we break down so that you and I, if you're a teenager watching or if you're on a very restrictive budget; my mom grew up on a widow's pension, very little money but she always managed to do something more for those who needed help.

So \$30 will feed three little ones for three months. What can you do here for \$30? To think that you could actually put food into the hands and the tummies of three children, not for a week, not for two weeks but for three months! \$50 will feed five children. \$100 will feed ten.

And for those of you who have been placed in a better situation and you maybe have some money that you're thinking, Lord, what do you want me to do with this? Do you know that \$1,000 would feed 100 children? That's like a whole village! And these children come to school to get their meal. You probably seen them there lined up with their red bowls to get their meal because then it breaks that cycle of poverty that goes from generation to generation. They get an education. Who knows among some of these children that God wants to raise up men and women to impact their nations for Christ?

But it starts with you and me. We're going back to Angola soon and we want to be able to tell our faithful partners on the ground, and these moms that have entrusted us with their stories. We took it back and our people, our viewers heard your story and they care. And we're not just back with us, we're back with help.

So please, would you go to your phone? Would you just give the best gift you can? And for any gift at all we're going to send you this beautiful *Global Impact Life Journal*. You'll see some of our photographer's fantastic photography and a place for you to journal. If you're able to give \$100 we have a *Global Impact Bible*, which actually shows the impact of the Word of God on our whole culture. I know you don't do it for the gifts, but please would you give now?

Begin video clip

Announcer: Mission feeding began with a promise to be there in times of crisis for thousands of hurting and hungry children in their time of need. Now more than ever we need your help to save lives by feeding and caring for children across the continent of Africa.

With food reserves gone and many areas experiencing severe famine, we urgently need to replenish our supplies to reach the 350,000 children who are counting on us.

Your gift of love can be the miracle answer to a desperate mother's prayer. Call now with your life saving gift of \$30, \$50, or \$100 that will help feed and care for three, five or ten children for three full months. With your gift we'll send you the *Global Impact of Life Journal*. This softcover journal includes pictures from the mission field and inspiring scriptures as a reminder of your impact in giving to bless lives around the world.

With your gift of \$100 or more, please request the *Global Impact Bible*. This English Standard Version presents a fascinating guide to the impact of the bestselling book of all time filled with quotes from well-known figures, photographs and reproductions of fine art. It highlights the many surprising ways scripture has shaped civilization.

Finally with your gift of \$1,000 or more to help feed and care for 100 children be sure to request our commemorative bronze sculpture, "A Mother's Strength."

Please call, write, or make your gift online today.

End of video**On the mission field:**

Sheila: Here you go, darling!

When my son was five, he saw the appeal on *LIFE* for these soup bowls and he began collecting money from his allowance. There you go darling! And brought this huge bag of coins to James and Betty. Remember? When he brought them in to the studio? Because he said, "Mom, no kid should go hungry because they simply don't even have a bowl to put their food in."

So we've got to keep this going on. I mean look at the hope! That's a line of hope right there. I've seen a line of despair, I've seen a ward of despair, and what I see here today is a line of joy and hope. And one bowl of food made all the difference. On behalf of the moms and dads of these kids, I just want to say thank you.

Hey, baby! There you go. But let's keep it going. Let's make sure there is never a day that these kids line up and we don't have food to give them.

End of video

In the studio:

Sheila: Thank you so much! If the lines are busy, please be determined, keep, keep calling. I said at the top, Sarah, I actually... Well, maybe I didn't say this at the top. I meant to! I actually met you through the people who love you, through the people in my life who, like Ralph who works in our missions, Janice who takes our photographs, and it's just been such a delight to meet you and to hear of the work that you're doing. So *Hanging by a Thread* is out now?

Sarah: It is. It is. People can get it on Amazon, anywhere.

Sheila: So for any gift at all, we would love to send you *Hanging by a Thread* by Sarah Bowling and it will tell you how you can get involved with the Saving Moses Journey and make a difference. So thank you so much for being here.

Sarah: Thank you, thank you.

Sheila: And we'll see you next time on *LIFE Today*! God bless!