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Week 19: Spring Mission Feeding

Sheila Walsh

"Your Six-word Story"

Sheila: Hi! I'm Sheila Walsh. Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I have to say as the months and the years have gone on of me being here at *LIFE*, one of the things I love most is getting to meet some of you when I'm actually on the road. I love that! If you want to know where I'm going to be you can just look at SheilaWalsh.com and hit on events. But if I'm somewhere near your neighborhood, come out and say hi! I would really love that.

When I travel a lot, I'm not a big magazine reader. I usually have a book that I'm reading but Barry, my husband loves to read magazines. He was reading a magazine the other day and he said, "Read this article!" So I read this article in a magazine where they asked six well-known authors to do something that the writer Ernest Hemingway had done years before, tell an entire story in just six words.

I thought it was kind of a fascinating concept. I won't bore you with all the ones that were written but Stephen King wrote this: "Everyone believed he was getting better." Ooh! Salman Rushdie wrote, "Author of seven-word essay rejected. It was too long." I think that was supposed to be funny.

But anyway, it made me think. How would you, if you had to tell your story in six words what would that be? When I thought about it for my own life I actually came up with one of the lines from a song on my new worship album called *Brave Heart Worship*, and these are the six words: "Already done. Every battle already won."

So let's dive into what that means. For the past two years, I've shared this before, I've been living with one word, living with one word just like burning in my soul and that is: Prayer. And as I've lived with this six-letter word I realized a few things. One: Other than the blood of Jesus it is our most powerful weapon -- prayer. Other than the blood of Jesus, prayer is our most powerful weapon. Two: It's actually the most under used weapon in the church. And three: I think it is the most misunderstood.

So if you had to write your prayer story in six words what would they be? You can maybe sit with that for a while and think about it later. But God helped me to write my six-word story. It just took a lot longer than I thought it would. As I took a deep dive, the first thing I learned, I actually learned at the lowest point of my life and it was this: Talk to God, he is listening. That sounds so basic but have there been times in your life when you think, I don't even know if God is listening.

I was talking to a young girl I met at a conference last week in Birmingham, Alabama and she said, "Sometimes I find it hard to talk to God because I'm not sure he is listening. It's like I'm praying in my bedroom or I'm praying in my car but how do I know he's listening?"

I told her about the darkest night of my life. I was alone, I was crippled with clinical depression. I remember feeling desperate, hopeless; and worse than honestly all of that, I believe that God was disappointed with me, angry with me. I had no great prayers left to pray. I remember even opening my Bible and it just -- it felt at that moment like dead weight in my hands. And the only two words I could get out were these, "Help me!"

I have to say in the quiet of that night, although I've never heard the audible voice of God, I heard him in my spirit say, "I'm here and I'm listening."

In Psalm 23 we read this, "Even though I walk through the darkest valley I will fear no evil for you are with me." Some translations, I don't know what your favorite translation is, but some translations I remember growing up with, "Even though I walk through the

valley of the shadow of death," and so I always thought it meant like if you were dying or if you just lost someone that even there you would know the Lord's presence. But when you actually go and unpack the real meaning in the Hebrew what the writer of this Psalm, what David is saying is, "Even if you're walking through the darkest place you've ever been."

Many of you are kind enough to write me letters or let me in on some of the things you're walking through and some of you are walking through some really dark times. Times when you think, honestly, I don't know how I'm going to make it through this. And when you move on in the Psalm, when David says, he gives the reason for why he is not afraid. He says, "I will fear no evil for you are with me."

Well, I love... I'm not a great student of biblical languages but I do look up particular passages and I read a lot of other people who will unpack, who are really fluent in Hebrew or fluent in Greek and I get so much from them. But what I discovered in this particular verse is the words "are with," they're not there in the Hebrew. They were added so that the sentence made sense to us. The original, if you were reading in the original Hebrew language, it would actually say, "I will fear no evil for you me." There is no "are with" there.

What the Psalmist is trying to say is if you are in the darkest night of your life right now, if you're thinking Lord, I don't know how I'll make it through this. What he wants you to know is I will fear no evil for you, me. God is right there. That's how close God is when you're in the worst moments of your life. And like shepherds in Israel, Christ is the shepherd who goes ahead of us to prepare a path for us.

I grew up with an image of so many shepherds and sheep in Scotland. In Scotland, the shepherd comes behind the sheep but never in Israel -- always ahead. But there will be a couple of dogs behind to make sure that no sheep gets lost.

I love this! I can't remember who said this or I would quote them but just know that I

didn't come up with this myself, but I love it. Do you know that those two dogs are in Psalm 23? They're called goodness and love -- or goodness and mercy. Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life. Now some translations give us goodness and mercy but the thought there is that we will be dogged by goodness and love all the days of our lives.

And from that place of desperation, when I was in that darkest place, but with that confidence of realizing that Christ goes ahead and we're followed up by his love, I learned to do this, take your pain to God because he is your healer.

I've shared the story before but let me just for those of you who perhaps don't always watch, Barry and I, we married later in life. I was 38 when we got married so we took the business of getting pregnant very seriously because we really, really wanted to have our own children. But month after month it was just disappointment -- and some of you know what that is like. And honestly, we'd almost given up hope of being able to birth our own child when one morning I saw that little pink plus sign on the very last testing kit from this massive box that I bought at Cosco. We were so excited. I remember at our ultrasound, I'll never forget, the nurse asked if we'd like to know the sex of our baby. And we said, "Well sure! But we already do, we're going to call her Alexandra."

And she said, "He might not like that name."

Well, we were excited it was going to be a boy. I'm a bit of a tomboy so the idea of having a boy where I didn't learn how to tie ribbons was very good. We were so excited. We drove home and bought five little blue outfits.

Well, a couple weeks later my doctor called and said that there was something troubling in my bloodwork and she wants to do more tests. And finally, after a few more tests she asked us to do an amniocentesis and that was a very different experience than the ultrasound. We were actually in the same room, but it was a very different experience. If you've gone through that you know what I mean.

Well, she called us back into her office a few days later and she used a phrase I'd never heard before. She said, "I'm really sorry to tell you both this but your baby is incompatible with life."

Never heard that. She suggested a termination and honestly, we both sat there shocked, unable to say a word other than, "No." I remember saying, "No!"

And we drove home in silence and Barry went inside the house and I drove to the ocean, we lived in California at that point. And I had my Bible with me. I read this in Psalm 139, verses 15 and 16: My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

But I remember talking to this little one inside and I said, "Did you hear those scripture verses little one? God's got your back! He'll be the one who decides how many days you get to live. Not a doctor and not me!"

But you know what? I knew that just as God had my little one's back, I knew that Jesus had to have mine. I prayed like I'd never prayed before. I remember walking down to the edge of the ocean and it was kind of an overcast day. There was nobody on the beach. It was just me and a few random seagulls. But I remember praying this prayer. I remember saying, "Jesus, my heart is aching. I don't understand this at all. But I just want to declare here and now that we are in this together. I've always needed you, but I know right now that I need you more than I ever have. I don't know how this will end but I'm not letting go of you for one moment! You didn't promise me happiness, but you did promise you would never leave me so I'm not letting go and I'm not giving up. You, me -- we're in this together."

So I had to go every week for fetal monitoring and honestly, some weeks I felt strong and

I was doing great. Other weeks I was broken. But I'd learned something from that darkest night of my life, I'd learned to process my pain in the presence of God. I learned that I don't have to say the right things. If you're struggling right now, if you're suffering right now, do you know you get to tell God the whole truth? Pour out your pain. Pour out your anger. Pour out your questions. In my own life what I discovered is that when you pour out all of that agony, you make more space for the grace of God, for his goodness and mercy to come flooding in.

Well, I made it all the way to 35 weeks and then my doctor called me and told me that on the day that my results came back the results of another 40-year-old patient came back and our results got mixed up. There had never been anything wrong with our baby boy. I remember dropping to my knees and praying for that other woman who was getting a very different phone call.

Every year, Christian is now 23. He's a student at Houston Baptist, he's in graduate school. But every year on Christian's birthday, I find a few moments just to get alone and I get down on my knees and I pray for that mom. Because I don't know what happened. I wasn't allowed to know what happened in her story, but I pray for her. And I pray that God will be close to her.

But I'm thinking of you right now. Whatever you're dealing with, take your pain to God. Process your pain in the presence of God. Pour your heart out. Hold nothing back.

But you know the other thing that has been important in my own life is to trust God to defeat the lies of the enemy. There is so many lies that they sound so kind of believable that they're easy to just accept. I think of so many things I've read from you that you've maybe put on my Facebook page or dropped a note or told me on Twitter or Instagram, but here's some of the most common ones I hear: I'm not enough. I'm not worth loving. I'm not a good mom. I'll never change. I will never get past my past. I don't belong. I'm not forgiven. I'll never be enough. I hear that one over and over and over.

You know what is interesting when I thought about that? I thought, well, I thought that most of my life. I never feel like enough. But then I've come to this place where I think I don't think we're supposed to feel enough. That's why Jesus came. That it is not about you and I being the best mom or the best friend or the best whatever it is that you judge yourself on because we're always going to fall short. And I think we buy into our popular culture's myth of you can be the best this, the best that, you can excel in everything. Frankly, it's exhausting!

But here's what I love. In Jesus he has made us enough. The enemy is a liar. We know scripture actually calls him "the father of lies" which means every lie that's on this earth that you and I have ever heard or believed originated with him. So how do you combat the lies of the enemy?

I was asked at a conference last weekend, one of the questions that came up, I was doing an event with Jennifer Rothschild and there was a Q and A session and one of the questions was, "How can you tell the difference between conviction and condemnation? How do I know if what I'm feeling is a lie of the enemy or if it is something that has actually come from God?"

I thought it was a great question and here was my answer. I'm sure there is other answers but here was mine. I think if you read Romans Chapter 8, the beginning of that chapter, we read this, Romans eight verse one says this: "There is now therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

Here's what I think condemnation does. Condemnation pushes us further away from God. It's that time when you had a really bad Saturday night and you did something you said you wouldn't do, or you drank too much and you said you'd never pick up a bottle again. And then Sunday morning comes, and you feel so condemned that you don't go to church. That is never from God! That's the enemy.

Conviction is different. Conviction is from the Holy Spirit. And conviction has a way of

pulling us closer to the Father. So when you feel condemned and judged, just know that is not the Lord -- that is not the Holy Spirit. The enemy would love to make you feel less than, so you stay away from God.

And one of the biggest areas he would love to compromise our life is to get us to stop praying. If you stop praying the enemy feels like he has won a victory. The thing is, God is not looking for perfect words, he is just looking for your presence. He is not looking for -- I read a quote by John Bunyan where it said, let me get it right, "It is better to have a heart with no words than words with no heart."

In that hospital I discovered one of the most perfect prayers is simply, "Help me!" But do you know what I think the most powerful one-word prayer on the planet is? Jesus! There is power in the name of the Lord. If you find yourself in a dark place right now and you cannot find words for a great prayer, just call on the name of the Lord.

One of the great things is when we find his presence just shepherding us through our days and bringing up the rear with goodness and love, it makes us want to do the same, to reach out to those who are hurting and struggling and do the same for them.

I want to take you with me on a trip that I took some time ago and I'm going to tell you how you and I can make a real difference for someone else. Watch this.

On the mission field

Sheila: I woke up this morning in this village, this is my first time in Angola and I honestly don't know what I expected but I didn't expect what I experienced. I didn't expect to see a child who is a year and five months old and weighs six pounds. How does a child like that even survive?

I think one of the things that surprised me most was the profound affinity I felt with the

moms. If you're a mom, all you want is for your child to be healthy. You want to be able to put a meal on the table at night and know that your children go to bed with a full tummy. But here I've seen what the ravages of malnutrition do.

This morning, I'm sitting in my tent and I open my Bible. I'm just doing one of those going-through-the-Bible-in-a-year and here's what I read. Isaiah 58: Share your food with the hungry, give shelter to the homeless, give clothes to those who need them. Then your salvation will come like the dawn and your wounds will quickly heal, your godliness will lead you forward, and the glory of the Lord will protect you from behind. Then when you call the Lord will answer, "Yes, I'm here." He will quickly reply, "Feed the hungry, help those in trouble; then your light will shine out from the darkness and the darkness around you will be bright as noon."

Mission Feeding is not some great idea we came up with. It's simply living out the gospel of Christ. And when we put one simple bowl of food into the hands of these children in Africa, it changes their lives forever -- thousands and thousands and thousands of lives, one life at a time.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: That's the reality right now, right at this moment. That trip we took two or three years ago, but that is the reality right at this moment. These malnutrition clinics are full of little ones like that who don't even have the energy to cry. It's the strangest thing to see so many children who are just... It's as if... it takes any energy they have left just to take one more breath.

But what is heartbreaking apart from that is to watch the moms. These moms who... they are no different than you and me! They love their children. Think of the joy you've had when you sit a meal down and you all gather around. Christian is off at college now, but I

think of the nights we would sit and put food on the table. I don't think he ever got up from the table without saying, "That was great, mom!" I'm sure some of it wasn't that great. I'm not that brilliant of a cook. But he always would say, "That was great, mom." And that made my heart so happy, as a mom to be able to provide my son with a meal.

These moms don't love their children any less than I love my son. They've just have been born in a different part of the world where the situation there is staggering. They don't get rain. There is no crops. We've watched mothers literally with their fingers digging through the dirt to see if they can find anything that they could put on the table as a meal for their children. And if they're able to find something then those mothers go to bed with nothing. But to be able to hear a child cry from hunger in the middle of the night has got to be one of the most painful things.

But here's the great news. You and I can change that. We've made a commitment here at *LIFE Outreach* to feed 350,000 children this year. That sounds like a huge task but if you and I do it together here's how it breaks down and makes it doable. If you're able to give a gift of \$30 that will feed three children for three months. \$30! Three children for three months. \$50 will feed five children! \$100 will feed ten children for three months! For those of you who have a little more to spare, \$1,000 would feed 100 children for three months!

Would you go to your phone? I know that you've given before. We're so grateful for our partners. But the need is now. The need has not gone down. The need has increased. So please, would you help us? Thank you for what you've done in the past but would you continue to help us? We promised our partners on the ground that we're coming with help. But that help comes from you and from me.

So please, go to your phone, dial that number on the screen, give the best gift possible and let's make sure those little ones go to sleep at night with a full tummy in Jesus' name.

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:

James: Betty, you look at this long line and boy, it goes all the way back to the big four-wheel-drive truck. You started praying years ago that God would make the line to feed the children longer than the line to be fed. I think God's answered your prayer.

Betty: He has, James. At the same time, the line gets longer so we need to help our line to reach them, continue to grow and you to reach out more because I know you're blessed as you see these children being fed here. Let's don't let it stop. Let's keep soup in the barrel so they can come and line up and get fed.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: Thank you so much. For any gift at all, we will send you the *Global Impact of Life Journal*. You'll be able to see what you have done through this ministry.

If you're able to give a gift of \$100 or more, we will send you the *Global Impact Bible*. It's a little different. Not all the articles are about Christians, believers but the amazing thing is how the Word of God has impacted culture, art, music, movies. I'm finding this a fascinating Bible. I know you don't give for the gifts. It is just our way of saying thank you.

If you had a hard time getting through, please persevere. No child -- no child on this earth should go to sleep at night with an empty tummy. So please, let's make sure we follow Jesus' command and feed the hungry.

I'm Sheila Walsh, thanks for watching today!