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Week 34: Christmas Shoes and Smiles

Sheila Walsh

"Change Your Thoughts, Change Your Life"

Sheila: Hi! Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm Sheila Walsh. Thanks for tuning in. One of the things I've been thinking about a lot recently is the way that our thought life can kind of almost take us into a place of being really unbalanced. When you live through a year or a season or a situation where it is really difficult, how you think can really impact how you're living. So if I were to come up with a title for today's program, which I don't usually do, it would be this: "Change Your Thoughts, Change Your Life."

I was talking to my son the other day and he said, "Mom, some days I feel as if my head is going to explode." He said, "I have a hard time turning my mind off when I go to bed." We live in a world now where we're constantly being bombarded by information. I don't know how much you watch the news these days, but I've had to choose to limit what I take in every day. Because honestly, it is heartbreaking to see what's happening all around us. I know that we have to stay informed. Even just to know how to pray we have to stay informed. But when we have a daily diet of so much pain and loss, when we see so much anger and fear, it absolutely negatively impacts our thought life.

So I did a little research and I thought this was interesting. Experts estimate that we think about 60,000 thoughts per day. Wow! Which is roughly 3,000 thoughts per hour. So that means that on any given minute we have 50 thoughts, which is a little less than one thought per second. Now I have to say I'm not consciously aware of that, but they say there is thoughts going through our brains all the time. We are thinking machines. Which that's a wonderful thing about being human; thinking or reasoning is what sets us apart from other animals. We have minds, we have ideas, which is great except for this, not all of those thoughts are good thoughts.

The next thing I discovered was a little more discouraging. People who study these things tell us of the 60,000 thoughts on average we think in a day, 95% were exactly the same repetitive thoughts as the day before. And roughly 80% of them are negative. So think about that. That means that for every ten thoughts we think, eight of them aren't helpful at all. I don't know if you're conscious of the negative thoughts that go through your mind. They might sound a little bit like this: I'm not enough. This is never going to work. I'm not doing it right. Everything is going to go wrong. I'm a failure. Nobody likes me. Why did I say that? Why did I do that? Why can't I ever get it right?

Is it any wonder when you think about that that as a culture we're plagued by anxiety and depression? In the late 1970s, I don't know if you remember a gentleman called Francis Schaeffer. He was a brilliant theologian and philosopher. He opened a place in Switzerland called L'Abri and people would go, and they would study and they would discuss issues. But he wrote a very important book called, *How Should We Then Live?* And what he did in that book is he looked at the rise and fall of western thought and culture, what makes its society and its people thrive and what makes it come apart at the seams? But as I find myself looking at where we are today, I find myself asking that very same question of the Lord, with everything that's going on around us, how should we then live? And I'm absolutely convinced that if we want to change our lives, we have to change how we think.

When I think about that truth, I'm always drawn back to Paul's letter to the believers in Rome. In Romans chapter 12, verses one through two Paul said this, "And so dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice, the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you which is good and pleasing and perfect."

I don't know what your favorite translation of the Bible is, that's the New Living

translation. But the N.I.V. Translates the second verse, verse two this way: Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is -- his good, pleasing, and perfect will.

Now I love the way that Eugene Peterson paraphrased Romans 12, verse 1-2 in the message. It is much more kind of language of how you and I live every day. Here's how he paraphrases that passage: So here's what I want you to do. God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life, you're sleeping, eating, going to work, and walking around life -- and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.

I've just sat with that passage all week and I've read it in as many translations as I possibly could and I've gone into all my commentaries and studied what other great minds throughout the ages, how they've interpreted that scripture. Because if you think about it, in our day, we live in a culture that wants to control our minds -- the way we think, the way we act, what we believe, what we say to each other on social media. But Paul makes it clear in this text that although the world wants to control the way we think, God wants to transform the way we think.

Now the word that Paul uses here for *transform* in the Greek, it's the same word used in Matthew's gospel describing the transfiguration of Christ. Now I'm a big fan of Warren Wiersbe and I have his commentary on the Old Testament and his commentary on the New Testament. This is what he had to say in his New Testament commentary on the book of Romans; Romans 12:1 and 2. He writes this: "The world wants to change your mind so it exerts pressure from without, from outside yourself but the Holy Spirit changes your mind by releasing power from within."

So, think about it, if the world controls your thinking, then you're a conformer. If God controls your thinking, then you're a transformer. Remember that program?

Transformers -- here to something to something. I can't remember how it went. But I remember my son had lots of them. But I love that! So the question for today is do you want to be a conformer or a transformer? If I just take a daily diet of everything that's on the news, of everything that's on social media, do you ever check your screen time to see how much time you've actually spent scrolling through other people's stuff? If you had a daily diet of only that then of course, we're going to become conformers.

But what I'm praying for myself right now, for my family, for my husband, and my son and for you, because you're part of our family, is that we want to be transformed by the Holy Spirit from inside out. So how do we do that? How do we do our part to work hand-in-hand with the Holy Spirit?

Well, for me, number one, it's through the Word of God. I've always loved the Word of God since I was a child. I remember the very first Bible I was given when I was just a little girl. I have the very first Bible my mom was ever given. So I've always loved the Word of God.

But it's not enough just to read it. We need to meditate on the word. Because I used to think, I'll read the word and I would often go to Bible studies when I lived in Nashville. And Lisa Harper, one of my dear friends, she led the women's ministry there at that time and she would have a Wednesday night Bible study. I always got there early because I wanted a front row seat. A: Because I wanted to be close to her. And B: Because she handed out chocolate, and if you're on the front you have a much better chance of getting some. But she used to say, it's okay, it's great to read the Word of God. It's wonderful to study the Word of God, but if you don't know how to apply the Word of God to your life then we remain unchanged.

And the other thing that I'm doing at the moment is memorizing scriptures. Now when I

was younger that was easier for me to do. I remember one of the first chapters I memorized was Hebrews Chapter 11, the great "faith chapter." And I would memorize whole Psalms. At this stage and age, it's a wee bit more difficult. So I give myself grace to write a scripture down on a card each day. I take it with me. In fact, because today I knew that we were doing this, I have been meditating on Romans 12:1 and 2 since I got up this morning. Because when we meditate on the Word of God, which is just letting it sink as deep as we can into our spirit, then our thoughts will be straight from the heart of God and the next time a negative thought comes to mind, choose to replace it with one of these thoughts.

Now I've chosen for you some short verses in case you're like me and find it hard to remember long texts now. Jeremiah 31:3 says this: God loves me with an everlasting love. Just sit with that for a while. Right now, wherever you're watching this program, you might be watching it on television, you might be watching on your computer but just think about that, God loves me with an everlasting love. When you allow those words to sink deep into your spirit, it kind of pushes those negative thoughts out.

I also love this scripture, this is Ephesians Chapter 2, verse ten -- and for those of you who, I get so many notes and letters and little things left on my Facebook page, particularly from women, although I would imagine men perhaps they struggle with this too. When you look into the mirror and instead of seeing who you are, you see what's wrong with yourself. When you're tempted to do that, memorize Ephesians two, verse ten because here's what it says: "I am God's masterpiece and he has created me for good works." Now think about that.

You might even be somebody who is out of a job at the moment and you think, I feel useless. I feel like I've lost my purpose. But let that truth sink in. This is what's true. You are God's masterpiece. He has created you for good works. And one of the things that I used to talk to our son about when he was just a little boy, it was one of the first texts that he memorized was, sometimes he would say, "Mom, what does God care about in life? Does he just care about that I go to church and that I don't lie, and I read the Bible?"

And I would tell him over and over, remember when you broke your crayons the other day? Do you know God cares about that? You know when you fell, and you scraped your knee? Do you know God cares about that?

I'm just thinking, what about you right now? What's going on in your life? Maybe you're thinking, I don't know how I'm going to pay my bills this month. Or maybe you're thinking, I don't even know where my son is anymore. He seems to have gone off the path. Whatever you're feeling, this is what we read in Psalm 37, verse 23: "God delights in the details of my life." It's not just that even God is aware. God delights in the details of your life.

Sometimes I think, within western Christianity we've got things upside down. We look at people who are on platforms or podiums or even on TV and we think, of course, God cares about all the details of your life. But you know what? God sees everything that you do.

I got a sweet letter from a lady the other day. She is 93 years young. And she said to me, "I used to be able to go around my neighborhood. I would bake things for people. And now I just don't have the strength and I can't really do that. My legs aren't so reliable." She said, "So now I sit here and I pray."

I wrote back to her and I said, "You've just been promoted to the biggest assignment of your life! Do you know how much that matters? Do you know how much God delights that you do that? Maybe you're a mom and maybe you're just thinking, if I have to do one more load of laundry, I will self-combust. God delights in all the details of your life.

So try a little experiment at home, just for one minute -- 60 seconds! Choose to tell your brain what to think instead of letting your thoughts take control of you. And when that minute is up, do it again, make the same choice. Now here's what I think I've discovered in my own life. This won't just accidentally happen. We have to be intentional. We've

lived with negative thoughts for so long so it will take time and discipline to change how we think. Some of the negative thinking is what we think about ourselves, but I wonder how many of your negative thoughts revolve around mistakes you've made in the past; regrets, things you wish you could do over. Although those of us who have placed our trust in Christ believe that he has taken care of our sin and that we're forgiven, we don't always live that way.

Let me ask you a final question, what is the best movie you've ever seen? I polled a few of my friends and here are some of the movies that landed at the top of the list. There was: *The*

Greatest Showman, *Lord of the Rings*, *Forest Gump*, my husband's favorite, *The Wizard of Oz*. And one of mine, *The Shawshank Redemption*.

Now I didn't ask these same people about the worst movie they've ever seen but I'm sure those answers would have been interesting too. What do you think if I told the people I polled that for the next year they had to watch not their favorite movie but their least favorite movie every single day? Who would sign up for that? No one! If you hate a movie, you don't even want to watch it twice let alone 365 times. Why would anybody say yes to that? But you know what? That's exactly what we're doing whenever we hang on to negative thinking and replaying mistakes we've made over and over in our minds. It is like a bad movie that we keep pushing "play" day after day.

I want to remind you that God's word makes it clear where we confess our sin to God, it's taken care of. First John one, verses 8 through nine says this: If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.

And not only that, scripture tells us in Psalm 103, the Lord is compassionate and merciful, slow to get angry, filled with unfailing love. He will not constantly accuse us, nor remain angry forever. He does not punish us for all our sins; he doesn't deal harshly with us as we deserve for his unfailing love toward those who fear him is as great as the

height of the heavens above the earth. He has removed our sins as far as the east is from the west. Hebrews 8:12 says: He will remember them no more.

You and I are living in challenging days. It is easy to get sucked into the way the world thinks. But let's determine, you and I together, that in Jesus' name and in the power of his Spirit, we're not going to be conformers to this world, we're going to be transformers. Just start where you are. Don't get discouraged when you fall back. Determine tomorrow is a brand-new day and I'm going to start again. God's mercy and his faithfulness are new every morning.

And then when you begin to be changed from the inside out, God opens your eyes and you see the world differently and you see that you actually can be used in a powerful way to impact somebody else's life. Would you watch this with me?

On the mission field:

James: I love you!

Announcer: For a child living in poverty in a developing country their smile may be the most valuable thing they own. But imagine if that child was born without a big beautiful smile.

People told me not to dream
To live in their reality
But I am walking through those doors
Because I am sure
There's something more
Than what I've been told
Oh, I know I found my way
Oh, tomorrow is a brand-new day
And the whole world is going know my name

Announcer: More than a decade ago, *LIFE Outreach* started an annual mission campaign called, "Christmas Shoes and Smiles." In addition to providing over two million children with a new pair of shoes, *LIFE* and its mission partners have also changed the lives of over 2,000 children born with a cleft lip or cleft palate by providing the surgery needed to give them their very own brand-new smile.

Tony: A big thank you to the *LIFE Outreach* family. It's a privilege to serve with you as we share the gospel of Christ and as we provide life-changing surgeries in our part of the world. Our partnership has resulted in children's lives being transformed; from disfigured faces to faces beaming with smiles all because of your generosity in providing these surgeries.

Our world is going to know my name.

End of video

In the studio:

Sheila: What a precious little one! I have to tell you, I look forward to this campaign every year -- Christmas Shoes and Smiles. I remember when our son was born on December the 13th, 1996 at 5:20 in the morning. I remember the first thing that Barry my husband said was, "He's got ten toes! He's got ten fingers." I'm like, "Good! That's the average number."

But it is somebody about when you look at your little one for the first time and they're just perfect. You think, this is the most beautiful baby in the whole wide world! Can you imagine what it is like to see your child for the first time and realize that there is a cleft lip or a cleft palate? And in so many countries it is looked on almost as if that little one is cursed by God. So they're not able to have a normal life. They're kind of put to the sidelines.

But we have these amazing doctors that we work with on the ground. To have that kind of surgery here in America, I can't even imagine what it would cost. But do you know that for \$500 we can do a corrective surgery on a child like that and give them their smile back? It is one of the most beautiful things on this earth.

We did this last year, but Barry and I have agreed again this year. This year we're slightly tighter financially for many of us, about we've been putting some money away. And so for Christmas, what I've asked Barry for is for corrective surgery for a little boy or girl; and he's asked the same for me. And so that's what we're going to do. So I want to ask you to join us.

Can you imagine what that would be like? What a gift to give to a mom and to that child? And also, Christmas shoes! I'll never forget being in Angola, Africa and putting shoes on little ones for the first time. Can you imagine children that have never worn a pair of shoes? It's not just that... we get these made very inexpensively, very cost effectively. It's only \$3.60 for one pair of shoes! So perhaps the \$500 for corrective surgery is too much and I understand that, although Sunday school class, why don't you all get together and determine to do it together? But for \$36, do you know that you will send ten pairs of shoes to children that have never had them before?

And you see them running around on garbage dumps and rough ground and getting their feet cut and all sorts of diseases and infections. But we can change that. We can all do something because this isn't a lot. And for anything that you send in, this is this year's little shoe. I love it! If you've been with us for a while it's a different color every year. This year it's Dallas Cowboy's blue. It is not officially that but that's what I'm calling it when it's on my tree. So please! This is an exciting time. As we move toward Christmas, we need to get these things in now so that they can be there when they need to be. So please, make the best gift you can possibly! Call that number. Call that number! Let's do this in Jesus' name.

Begin video clip

Announcer: Poverty is a killer and because of it children needlessly suffer, not only from a lack of food and clean water, but also from a lack of things we often take for granted like a simple pair of shoes. Far too many children living in extreme poverty have never owned a new pair of shoes. And while that may seem minor in light of all their needs, walking with bare feet puts them at risk of life-threatening infections and disease that could lead to crippling consequences and even death.

By responding today, you will help secure and make ready 150,000 Christmas shoes to be shipped and delivered to children around the world just in time for the holidays. Your gift of \$36 will help provide ten pairs of shoes. A gift of \$72 will help provide 20 pairs. And a gift of \$180 will help provide 50 pairs of Christmas shoes for children in need.

As a thank you for your gift of support, be sure to request this beautifully crafted blue crystal shoe ornament. A treasure to display at each Christmas. With your gift of \$100 or more, you may also request this keepsake boxed set of all *LIFE's* Christmas shoe ornaments.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1,000 or more to help provide 275 pairs of shoes or two children with corrective cleft lip or palate surgeries. And you may request the beautiful "A Mother's Strength" bronze sculpture.

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

End of video**On the mission field**

Tammy: This is just one of millions of children all around the world in desperate need of a simple pair of shoes. I am so privileged to be a part of *LIFE Outreach* who not only brings Water for LIFE, Rescue for LIFE, food programs but also shoes; shoes to children who desperately need them to protect their little feet from cuts, from tears, from even

waterborne illness that may get into the cut and infect it. Gosh, we can go on and on and on until the end result is that they could lose their very feet.

Please why don't you join me today? Go to your phone or go online and do whatever you can to make a difference just one child at a time -- one pair of shoes at a time.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: I know we're coming to you a wee bit early, but we have to do it so that we can... Because we've committed to be able to provide a pair of shoes for 150,000 children. So we need everybody. If you've done it before, let's do it again. What joy it will bring this Christmas season! Not just to those children who will get their first pair of shoes, but to us as we sit around our table and celebrate our families and remember, that we've made a difference.

So please! If the line was busy, keep calling. I want to exceed what we've committed to. Wouldn't that be amazing? If this became our most selfless year as the body of Christ. So thanks for joining me on *LIFE Today*. I'm Sheila Walsh and I will see you next time!