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Week 33: WFL last week

Sheila Walsh

Dr. David Jeremiah #2

Sheila: Hi! I'm Sheila Walsh. Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I don't know how you've been surviving this year; 2020 has been a year like no other. And perhaps you've found yourself thinking, when will all of this end? Will life ever return to normal? How do we live in a new normal?

Well, one of the people that I always turn to in times where we have questions is Dr. David Jeremiah. He's written this wonderful new book called *Shelter in God: Your Refuge in Times of Trouble*. Dr. Jeremiah, welcome! Thank you so much for being with us here on *LIFE Today*.

David: It's really fun for me to do this, Sheila, and I'm glad I got the chance.

Sheila: Well, thank you. This book was released in a very significant time during the whole COVID-19 crisis but I wanted to ask you apart from this time, are there other times in world history or times in your own life when you've had to find your *Shelter in God*, not just this particular year?

David: You can go back in history and put a circle around some dates. Like Donna and I were in Dallas when President Kennedy was shot. I was a student at Dallas Seminary at the time. Donna was working at the BlueCross building and saw the President like five minutes before he was shot. I was working for the Wall Street Journal at the time. We were right in the middle of all that. I remember, I'll be honest with you, the first thing I wanted to do is find a phone someplace and call my mom. I just wanted to call her and talk to her. I needed somebody to remind me that there was some things that were still okay. That was the most bizarre thing I ever

remembered.

And of course, 9/11 was another one of those experiences where we all were shocked into going to church the next week. I remember right after that we had like four weeks of unbelievable attendances and then everybody just sort of went back to normal. That was an event but what we went through with the Coronavirus wasn't an event, it was say situation. I sort of think, sometimes I think, God said, "Okay, I'm going to try this. Here's an event to shake you up. And that didn't work so okay, here's several weeks to shake you up." And this is far more serious, and I think is going to have a much greater impact on a lot of lives than the aftermath of 9/11.

Sheila: It's interesting because when you see everything that happened and then there was all sorts of violence and looting, and that's still with the presence of the church on the planet, that's still with the restraint of the Holy Spirit. I can only imagine when the believers, when we're no longer here, I can't even imagine how devastating this world will be.

David: That's a very, very important insight, Sheila because the Bible says that one day all of the saints on this earth are going to be caught up together to be with the Lord and so shall we ever be with him. And when they go up the Holy Spirit is removed because the Holy Spirit lives within the hearts of believers. And the Bible says that the Holy Spirit is the restrainer. So when the restrainer is gone and everything is totally without any restraint whatsoever, it's going to be like what we're going through right now but 10, 15, 20 times worse.

And so you're absolutely right. What we're seeing right now is a little view into what it will be like during the tribulation period every single day for seven years.

Sheila: Wow! It's given me... I mean my upbringing, I joined Youth for Christ after seminary because my passion was for evangelism. But I have to say at this stage and day it's given me a fresh desire to reach people with the good news of Jesus while we still can.

David: Well, I think at least for a while we have a much more listening audience that we normally would have. I think people are starting to at least think about these things in ways they

haven't before. And as it goes on and as we've lived through all the aftermath of the death of that young man who was murdered and all the other things that happened after that, as we lived through all of that, we were just shaken to our core. And we're Christians. Can you imagine what it would be like if you didn't know Jesus Christ? If you didn't have anything to lean on or to rest on? So yeah, we're in a time when the gospel should be bearing fruit in ways it has not in the past.

Sheila: Your book, *Shelter in God*, I love the way that you help us understand what was going on in David's life when he wrote certain Psalms. But you also had this -- it was almost a funny observation because I realized you were talking to me. You talk about Psalm 121, and it's not just about me looking up to the mountains as if that's where my help is coming from. Unpack that a little bit about what David was actually saying in that song of a sense.

David: You know what, Sheila, we often have misinterpreted that Psalm. If you really look at it and study it, David is looking for help and he looks up at the mountains and he realizes that his help isn't coming from the mountains. We usually have interpreted that verse that says, I look to the mountains from whence comes my help but that's not the way it is. He looks to the mountains period. Then he asks the question, where does my help come from? It's not coming from within. And then he realizes his help is from God.

That Psalm has such a special place in my heart because a great piece of music was written from it as you know. And when I came back from cancer 20 years ago, that song was sung in the first service when I came back. And I remember the strain in that song that went, "You are the source of my strength. You are the strength of my life." I had experienced that so much. And I'll tell you what, I don't know why but every time I hear that now I start to cry because that's what I did the first time, just to be reminded. And that's what happened to David. He looked around, he looked up and then he realized, God, you are the source of my strength. You are the strength of my life.

Sheila: Beautiful! How does your book *Shelter in God* help people seek God's presence when they're in a dark place?

David: Well, a lot of people think that when they're in a dark place that means God is absent and that's just not true. God is never absent. When we go through trouble... let's speak to it as if we're Christians now, when we go through trouble what happens is we feel the presence of God. And we say to our pastor, "You know what, Pastor, when I went through that, when I lost my husband, I never felt God's presence like I did then. He drew so close to me during that time."

Well, to be theological about it, God doesn't -- he doesn't get closer to us at any one time than any other. He's always close to us. But trouble makes us aware of his presence and that's what happened. And so the Psalms are like that. David takes us through the routine of what he's going through and then all of a sudden in the midst of it all, he realizes he is not alone.

That's the experience I think you and I feel like when we read the Psalms. We walk with David and we can identify with his problems and then all at once he has that moment when he realizes, oh yeah but God, you're here. I'm not alone. What a message of hope that is for us, especially in times like this.

Sheila: I think one of the things I found so encouraging about that we write about the Psalms is the Psalms, it's almost like a gymnasium for the soul. It's like you get to be honest. You start with where you are. You don't... Because I actually got a comment on one of my Facebook posts. I talked about the fact that that morning I felt discouraged and anxious. And somebody kind of rebuked me and said, "You should not be doing that if your trust is in God." So let me throw that back at you. Is it a sin to be discouraged?

David: You know, a lot of people have said that, and especially not just discouraged, depression, I've read over the years several people, some people you'd be surprised to hear their name actually say depression is sin and if you're distressed you're away from God. The problem with that is many prominent believers in the scripture went through depression and there is not a word in there about depression separating them from God. It did the exact opposite, it drew them to God.

David was in the cave he said, "My soul is depressed." He uses the word for indentation actually. He said, "There is an indentation in my soul." And in the midst of that, David finds the presence of God. He finds that God is sufficient.

You know, Sheila, you and I have talked about this in previous interviews how as Christians sometimes we get this little Christianese up here that is so unreal and so unrealistic. Being a Christian doesn't mean you stop living in the world. When you're a Christian you keep living and the magnificent difference is you don't live alone anymore. You have an ally, you have the Lord Jesus Christ. He is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

When I first got to know him, he was my Savior. But the longer I have walked with him, he's become my friend. When I go through these dark times, and we all do, and we have issues with our kids and our grandkids and our loved ones and our friends, what would you do without God? I don't know how people get through a time like this if they don't know the wonder of God the Father and the presence of Jesus Christ.

Sheila: I always loved Psalm 46 but the way that you unpack it and you tell us what was going on at that time, you have Sennacherib threatening Judah. And then you see King Hezekiah and it's like the odds against him are terrible and yet, you talk about the way... I found that one of the most encouraging parts of the book.

David: Well, that Psalm is the Psalm that Martin Luther was so connected to. He and Philip Melancthon who were a part of the reformation, whenever they would get discouraged, they would get Psalm 46 out and they would sing it together. When Luther would be depressed, he would say, "Hey, Philip! Get the Psalm. We've got to sing it." And they would sing it out. So "A Mighty Refuge is our God," this great hymn that came from Martin Luther, that's part of that Psalm. It's got such great history. Like you said, it just resonates with our souls in ways that are hard to understand.

Sheila: You talk in the book about journaling. That was interesting to me because I've always been terrible at journaling. You talk about that is a positive thing to do.

David: When I was going through cancer everybody said you need to keep track of what God is doing in you. You need to journal.

I'll be honest with you. I always thought journaling was for women and mystics. And since I wasn't either one, I didn't want to journal. And then somebody gave me a book by Gordon MacDonald and the book was called, *The Life God Blesses*. And in that book Gordon talked about keeping a journal in his computer. And I thought, that's pretty manly. You can do that. If you do it in your computer, it will be fine!

So all during the time I was going through that time of testing in my life, I kept a pretty daily journal of what God was doing. It was very, very helpful to me to write down the things. Sometimes I go back, I haven't kept all of it, and I'll go back and read some of them and it reminds me again how good God has been to me and how blessed I am, how grateful I am for his provision in my life because I was a pretty sick dude.

Sheila: It's interesting too because you talk about kind of a shift within psychiatric treatment or counseling. That instead of just revisiting the past over and over and reliving every negative thing, but to remember to actually consciously go over and over the good things that God has done. I'm beginning to do that, and I see that it makes a significant difference.

David: I got a letter that I got a couple weeks ago during some of the hard times that we were going through. And this girl wrote me, and she said -- I heard you mention this. She said, "Dr. Jeremiah, I made a list of the ten most important things God has done for me in my whole life." She said, "I started out with a long list and I got it down to the top 10." She says, "I read them every morning and I am so filled with gratitude. My God has been so good to me."

What she was saying is, when you're going through hard times you lose sight of the good times. When you're experiencing difficult things you forget that God is with you. And one of the reasons I wrote that list at the beginning of the book was to remind people that God has always been there for his people. And when he puts us in times of sheltering, he's always up to

something. And if you know that that's what God does and what he has done in the past, then you can be encouraged to look for it in the future.

We don't know all that God is doing right now yet, it's too early but we know a lot of things he's doing. There are some things that probably couldn't have happened without the anguish of what we've been through.

Sheila: I was talking to some of my son's friends. They're all in grad school but kind of self-isolating at the moment. And they were talking about the fact that we can't go to the movies, we can't really go out for dinner. And you draw this interesting distinction in your book between amusement and pleasure. And perhaps how amusement has been removed but our pleasure is found, you say, in God alone.

David: Well, amusements are what people use to try to figure out why they don't have any pleasure. Amusements are the things, what was that book that came out several years ago -- *Amusing Ourselves to Death*. We try to find something to fill the emptiness in our heart.

But the Bible says that at the right hand of God are pleasures forever more. And when you get to know God in the midst of things that are challenging, it's not that you're in a giddy mood of laughter but pleasure is the settlement in your soul that God is in charge and there is joy because you know you know him and he's got this all under control. And whatever happens, he knows the end from the beginning and you're his. And you're in his hand and he is going to help you and keep you in the midst of it all. That's what pleasure is.

Sheila: Yeah! You know the COVID-19 pandemic, for many, many weeks church doors were closed. But I'm wondering when things get back to as much normal as they will, how do you think or how do you hope that the shape of the church changes?

David: Well, you know Sheila. We've been working through that for a long time because here where I live, they keep moving the date. When we were going through this and trying to figure out when we could open, we would think it was now and then no, you can't do it. And then there

was a court settlement and then the Supreme Court got involved. So we were always a little bit ahead of where we were going. And every time we would meet, we would ask ourselves how are things going to be different?

Well, of course, just from the standpoint of the pandemic we know that we couldn't taking offerings the way we used to take them. We couldn't take communion the way we used to take it. We couldn't shake hands and embrace like we used to. I told people, "I've spent my whole life trying to get you people to be cordial and love each other and shake hands. And now I've got to tell you stop it! Don't do that anymore!" It's really, it strips your gears right to the core.

But what I think will happen and what I know will happen, really is we will appreciate the privilege of being with each other like we never have before. We have small groups at Shadow Mountain that have stayed together through Zoom. I think almost all of our small groups, they haven't lost touch with each other, but Zoom isn't everything it is cracked up to be and it is not certainly like being with somebody. So I think one of the things that will happen when we get back together, we will treasure our togetherness like never before -- at least for a period of time.

And then I also think we have developed a sensitivity to the hurts and needs of others during this time, that we have lost a little bit because we've been in such good times. Let's face it. Just like the country's economy was the greatest it had ever been, things in our churches were great. We saw growth, we saw so many good things happening.

And then all of the sudden, it was just shut down tighter than a drum. And you have to look around and realize, okay, the church isn't buildings, it's not budgets, it's not programs. The church is the spirit of God living within people. And we're going to go back to our buildings and our budgets and our programs but I hope we go back to those things realizing those are just vehicles that God has given us to do the real work of the church, which is evangelism and worship and fellowship and outreach. Those are things that are real, and they've survived all of this that we've gone through.

Sheila: So true. I'm going to tell you in a minute how you can get a hold of Dr. Jeremiah's

book, *Shelter in God*: Your refuge in times of trouble. It is a wonderful book! But this is our last week in water wells. And we've made a commitment to put in 350 water wells around the world and we want to meet that commitment. So I'm going to ask you to take a little look at this video and then we'll be back to say good-bye to Dr. Jeremiah. Watch this.

On the mission field:

Sheila: I've just visited the graveside of a nine-month old baby boy. I'm standing right beside his killer. It was water from this exact well that this darling boy is now getting his water from. It is a hand-dug well. It's not very deep and the water is filthy. Mosquitoes lay their eggs in there. Children get malaria; they get diarrhea.

This little one, this nine-month old boy died with diarrhea. The mom took him to the clinic to see if he could get some medicine. They gave him medicine but by that point he was so sick he couldn't even take the medicine. He vomited it up again and died in her arms.

It's unthinkable! I would never ever let a child of mine drink this, but they have no choice! The need is urgent. I've never felt such a sense of despair. I've visited four children's graves and I've been here three days.

And I've asked mothers, "What do you do when you lose a child?"

And every single one of them said, "We are just simply praying. We pray to God that he will send help."

Well, here we are. We are the help. You and I are the help. So please help us change the world. This is their normal -- they need a *new normal* where for the first time in their lives they drink clean, fresh, life-giving water.

End of video

In the studio:

Sheila: Sometimes I wish I could take you with me. I wish you could actually have got on the plane and sit beside me, and we'll land there and we'll get in some kind of vehicle and drive, usually a few hours to get to these villages that are so remote.

I wish I could introduce you to these moms because they're just like you and me. So often we think that's the other side of the world. We have nothing in common. That is not true. If you are a mom, if you have a heart, we have everything in common. And so many of these women, the thing that blows me away, so many of these women still trust God. Even though they've buried their child. Can you imagine a little nine-month old little one having to lay them to rest? But they still pray to God and ask him, "Please send help!" And that's us!

As long as you and I, the body of Christ are on the earth at this time then this is our -- it not our obligation, it is our privilege. If that child, if that mom lived next door to you and you found out the water was off, they had no water, you'd be over there in a heartbeat helping. So this is what we can do now through television. We can bring these people and put them right beside you and say, "Take a look."

This is our last week and we still have a lot of money to raise because we made a commitment to so many of our partners on the ground that we work with. And they always say, "Please go home and share our story." We made a commitment to put in 350 wells. We still have to put in -- we still have to raise the money for 150 wells. This is the last week, but we can do it.

If you and I will simply do our best and ask the Holy Spirit, "What do you want me to do?" Because I'm not trying to pressure you. All I want to do is show you the need because I know so many of you when you see the need you're like, in fact, last week I got a letter from a young girl and she said, "I just became a Christian a couple weeks ago and I saw one of your programs on water so here's my \$60." It blew me away. She had been a Christian two weeks.

So here's what you can do. For \$48 you can provide clean water for ten people for life. \$144 you can provide clean water for 30 people for their life. If you're able to, you can make a

commitment, perhaps, even just your little church group or your Sunday school group or whatever, your Bible study, your women's group; \$4800 puts a whole well in that will give clean, fresh, life-giving water to 1,000 people.

What I'd love to do is for any gift at all, I want to send you this amazing book by Dr. David Jeremiah, it is called *Shelter in God*. I love his writings anyway, but this really encouraged and strengthened me. So please go to your phone. Dial that number. Give the best gift you can. Let's do this in Jesus' name.

Begin video clip

Announcer: Dirty, diseased filled water! How desperate would a mother need to be to consider giving this contaminated substance to her child? For many mothers and their families living in extreme poverties, this is their only choice.

With your help, they won't have to make this choice ever again. Mission Water for Life provides clean disease-free water for thousands of children and their families, giving them a life free from the fear of death.

With your gift today, you can help drill and establish the final 150 water wells this year. Your gift of \$48 will help provide water for ten people. \$72 will provide for 15. \$144 will help provide life-giving water for 30 people for a lifetime. And a gift of \$4,800 will help sponsor a complete well, serving up to 1,000 people.

With your gift we'll send you Today is a Good Day, seasonal devotional sets, broken out into the four seasons of the year. This beautiful set features a daily scripture, inspirational thoughts, and a place for you to journal your own thoughts, prayers and insights from God's word.

With your gift of \$100 or more, request the leather-bound life-giving Proverbs Journal, filled with wisdom and daily encouragement from Proverbs, including lined pages for your personal

notes.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1,200 to help provide water for 250 people or a gift of \$4,800 to help sponsor a complete well. And you may request “A Mother’s Strength” bronze sculpture.

This is the last week! Please call, write, or make your gift online!

End of video

In the studio:

Sheila: Thank you so much. And just remember for any gift at all just request your copy of Dr. David Jeremiah's book, *Shelter in God*, Your Refuge in Times of Trouble. Dr. Jeremiah, thank you so much for your wisdom, for your compassion, for your grace and thanks for spending time with us here on *LIFE Today*.

David: Sheila, whenever you call, I answer. I'm always glad to talk with you about anything because I know your heart. It's so wonderful to be a partner with you in ministry. So thank you for having me.

Sheila: Thank you so much. And we'll see you next time on *LIFE Today*!