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Week 35: Christmas Shoes and Smiles

Sheila Walsh

"Keys to Powerful Prayer"

Sheila: Hi! Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm Sheila Walsh. I'm so happy to be with you.

I've talked to you in previous shows about the power of prayer. But I really want to revisit that today because I cannot think of anything more important. Prayer sustains us in the best days of our lives and in the worst.

When I wrote my book, I brought a copy with me today, *Praying Women*, honestly, I didn't actually write it to be something that would be published. When I looked at my own life I thought, I love studying the Word of God, it is like my hobby. I love diving deep into like the original Hebrew or the Greek and just finding the wealth that's in God's word. I love teaching. And I love doing this. But I asked the Holy Spirit, which is the weakest area in my life? And I really felt the Lord said, the weakest area of your life, Sheila is prayer.

So I began this project not because I wanted to put it out as a book. I wanted to understand more about prayer and the power of prayer. But I began to see that I wasn't the only one who struggled with prayer at times. So sometimes when I'm doing research on a subject, I'll throw a question out on Facebook.

By the way, if you don't follow me on Facebook its SheilaWalshConnects and I'll often go live in the evenings, just trying to share a word of encouragement. Or sometimes Barry, my husband joins me and sometimes the dogs join me too. So you never know.

But I threw out this question on Facebook and I said, "When I say the word *prayer*, what comes to your mind?" And I said, "Now don't say what you think you're supposed to say. Say what honestly comes to your mind." And there were so many responses in just the first hour.

So see if you can relate to any of these. Quite a few people said, "I get bored." I thought, well, that's pretty honest. And a lot of people said, "I get distracted. I'm praying and I'm suddenly thinking, oh did I defrost the chicken?" I get that too. But then some of them weighed more. One woman said, "God already knows what he's doing so why bother praying?"

And the one that hurt my heart the most was a woman who said, "I prayed that God would spare the life of my child and he didn't so I don't even want to talk to God anymore." I spent a lot of time that night praying for that woman and privately messaging her and trying to help her process her grief. But in the presence of God, not outside of the presence of God.

So if prayer, with the Word of God, is the greatest resource of the believer why is it then that more often than not, it is the most under used weapon we have? Just stop for a moment and think, why do you think that is? I think as human beings we want to think that we're doing something and in prayer we don't always feel as if we're doing something. But that is the lie of the enemy that he would love us to keep on believing.

So today I thought I would give you just a few keys to powerful, doable, daily prayer life. So number one: Start where you are. Sounds pretty simple but I'm serious, start where you are right now. John Bunyan wrote, "In prayer it's better to have a heart with no words than words with no heart." Prayer activates the power of God.

Maybe you think well, you don't understand, I'm not good at public speaking, I'm not good at -- I can't imagine talking out loud to God. I'm just not good at prayer. You know the interesting thing that I discovered at the darkest time of my life was one of the most profound lessons I ever learned about prayer. I've shared with you on previous programs that some time ago I was hospitalized for clinical depression. And by that point I had been in seminary, I had worked in Youth for Christ for years, I'd worked with Dr. Billy Graham in his crusades, I'd co-hosted the

700 Club with Pat Robertson for five years. So I was used to being able to pray loud prayers, quiet prayers, prayers on my face, praying for other people.

But that night when I ended up in the hospital, I had no words left. And I have this profound memory of laying on the floor of my room in this psych hospital and the only words I could squeeze out were these, "Help me!" I had nothing great left to say. It was simply, "Help me!" I have to tell you, I felt the Lord's presence more in those two broken wept through words than in so many of the mighty prayers that I had prayed before.

So if you're in a place right now where you just don't even know how to pray or maybe you're in a situation where you think, you know what? I don't know if God is listening to me. I don't know if my words are going on any higher than the ceiling, I just want to invite you into the vulnerability of that prayer, help me!

In fact, one of the stories in scripture that illustrates that, if you look at Matthew chapter 14. Remember the story of the disciples are out in the boat at night and Jesus had gone up into the mountains by himself to pray? He can see where they are and there is a storm blowing up. It's really wild. And Christ comes walking to them across the waves. When they first saw Jesus, they assumed it was a ghost. There was a belief back then that ghosts and evil spirits lived in the water. So when they see a person walking on the water, they assume it is a ghost.

But then Peter cries out and realizes that it is the Lord. He said, "Lord, would you ask me to come out and join you?" So Jesus says to him, "Come on!" So with all the other disciples looking on and wondering what on earth is going happen, Peter steps out of the boat onto the waves and he's held up. And he walks toward Jesus but the minute he takes his eyes off of the Lord he begins to sink. Once he starts to look at all the waves and the wind around him. But do you remember what Peter's prayer was in Matthew 14? Two words, "Save me! Save me, Lord!" And the Lord reached out and grabbed hold of Peter.

So start where you are. You don't have to come up with fancy words. God is not looking for fancy words. He is looking for your heart. So that's number one.

Number two: Pray and don't give up. Pray and do not quit. One of my favorite stories on prayer, you'll find it in Luke's gospel in Chapter 18. And it is one of the most powerful stories that Jesus told about never ever giving up in prayer. When you hear me say, "Don't give up" you might think, that's fine for you, your life is not as busy as mine. But this is straight from Jesus.

This is what we read in verse one: *One day Jesus told his disciples a story to show that they should always pray and never give up.*

It doesn't get much clearer than that! And the story is all about this, you might remember, we call her "the relentless widow." She keeps coming to a judge asking for justice. He's the kind of judge that doesn't care about God. He doesn't care about the people who are looking to him. I would imagine if you want any kind of justice from this man there's probably going to have to be some money change hands. But she will not give up. So he walks out of his house in the morning and there she is. He goes for lunch and there she is. Wherever he goes, there she is and she will not quit.

And in the parable that Jesus says, eventually, because she won't stop, he finally grants her what she asks for. Not because he cares about her but just because she won't go away. And Jesus goes on then to teach, "Don't you think God your Father who loves you so much will be eager to answer?"

But I think sometimes there is something that God looks for in us, how committed are we to praying? Maybe you've prayed about something for a while and you think, well, God's not answering so I may as well quit. I want to encourage you in the name of the Lord, don't give up. Keep praying. Keep praying. Keep asking. Keep knocking. Keep seeking.

But the third thing is something that I've been thinking about a lot recently: Pray hardest when it is hardest to pray. Pray hardest when it is hardest to pray. There are some situations where prayer can just feel impossible. When a situation is overwhelming.

Every morning before I leave the house, I always ask, Lord, if there is anybody today that you want me to talk to, give me eyes to see them so I don't miss them. So I was getting coffee and when I came out there was a woman sitting on the sidewalk outside the coffee shop. I sat down a little distance from her. I said to her, "Are you okay?" Because she looked burdened down. And also it was strange to see a woman of, she was about the same age as me just sitting on the sidewalk.

And she turned to me and she said, "I just discovered that I have cancer."

I said to her, "Would you mind if I prayed for you?"

Her eyes filled with tears and she said, "I haven't prayed in years."

I said, "Well, if you don't mind, I would be honored to pray for you." So I prayed for her. We prayed together for a while.

She said, "Is this something that God cares about?"

I said, "I promise you this is something God cares about."

But I was just thinking of some of the recent letters or sometimes private messages that I get on Facebook and it is situations that seems so hard to pray about after a while. My son is on drugs again. I don't know where he is tonight.

I got a letter from a woman in Ireland and she said, "My husband was caught embezzling money from our church and now he is going to prison. How do I pray about that?"

A letter from another woman. She said, "I had an affair and now I'm pregnant. I've destroyed all our lives."

Now I don't know what you might be facing at the moment but what I want to ask is how do you

pray when the situation that you are facing is just overwhelming? Whenever I've found myself in a situation where I don't know what to do, I always turn to Mark 14. Because in Mark 14 we turn to Jesus and we are given a front row seat to how Christ prayed on the most devastating night of his life.

You remember where he went with the 11 disciples, Judas had already gone off to betray him. He asked Peter, James, and John, his three closest friends to come further down into the garden with him. He knew that on that night he would be betrayed. He knew that he would go through a mockery of a trial. And he knew that he would be brutally executed. And his prayer in the garden is one of the most, it feels like holy ground to me that we're allowed to see how Christ prayed.

But it is so interesting because there is two parts to it. There is honesty. In his humanity he wants this cup to pass from him. "Father, if there is any way let this cup pass from me." But then we come to this beautiful surrender, "But not my will, your will be done."

Here's what I think, I don't think you can get to the place of surrender until you've come through the doorway of honesty. You might be facing something right now that you think, God, if you loved me, why did you let this happen? So what I want to encourage you to do is, so often we think we're supposed to say the right thing to God. No! You come as you are. If you're angry, then you tell God you're angry. If you're disappointed, if you're hurting, if you're broken, lay it all out. Pour out your pain. Pour it out on the Lord! And what you'll discover is you've made more space for grace. And then you're able to say, Lord, not my will, but your will be done.

Which brings me to the fourth thing: Pray through your pain. Something that I believe at this stage of my life is where your wounds are, there lies your authority. When you have walked through something with Christ and he's brought you through, you have an authority you didn't have before.

I have one of those garden stones that people can make and put all sorts of patterns on. I have one in our backyard. If you ever come over, I'll show it to you. But it was made by my son and

it's got sorts of little pieces of glass and pottery. And then he wrote in the middle before the cement hardened, "I love you, mom!" I have it there for the obvious reason. I love my son and I treasure that.

But the other reason I have it there is I go out every morning with my coffee and I look at it and it's a daily reminder to me of a profound spiritual truth. It is a beautiful thing that God will do with a broken life if you give him all the pieces. Maybe you think your life is not as pretty as it used to be but if you will give God all the brokenness, he will make something beautiful with it.

My friend Darlene Zschech and I were in, oh gosh, I can't remember the state. I think it was maybe North Carolina. We were both speaking at a woman's conference there. There was about 5,000 women. And Darlene had just walked through a two-year journey with breast cancer that had been pretty rough. As she spoke that night --.

I've always loved her, you might know her from the worship song she wrote called "Shout to the Lord" years ago but she is a powerful teacher.

That night she paused halfway through her message and she asked the women in the audience, "How many of you, this is part of your story too? If you are walking through breast cancer or if you're on the other side of it, I want to ask you will you stand?" Well, it was mind-blowing to me, as all these women around the arena stood. And she prayed for them. And boy, did she pray for them!

Because see, here's the thing. When you've walked through a tough battle, but you've walked through it with the Lord and you've come through the other side, you have an authority. And as she prayed, I saw that you become a mighty warrior in love's army when you bring all of your pain to the Lord.

Prayer is so life-changing. It might not always change the heart of God. We see some situations where like Moses said, "Hey, please forgive the people. Please I beg you!" And God changed his mind. But what I've discovered most about prayer is that it changes me.

In fact, have you ever read the book by C.S. Lewis called *The Screwtape Letters*? It's letters, it's kind of an interesting way of writing. A senior devil writing to his nephew, Wormwood. Screwtape is the uncle. And he's trying to talk to him about one of the most devastating things that can happen is when a believer finds out that God is not responding the way they thought he would and still trusts him anyway.

And I guess that's point number five: Pray when heaven seems silent. This is what this devil writes. And when he refers to our enemy, he is talking about our God. And this is what he says to his nephew: "Our cause is never more in danger than when a human, no longer desiring, but still intending to do our enemy's (God's) will, looks around upon a universe from which every trace of him seems to have vanished and asks why he's been forsaken and still obeys."

Do you know what that does? Can you imagine the celebration that goes on in heaven that the angels have? That even though you're not getting all your prayers answered the way you wished, you still get down on your knees and you still worship. Let's be those who are fervent in our prayer. We start, we come as we are, we are fervent in our prayer and even when heaven seems silent we say, God, I don't understand everything but I trust you and I worship you and we silence the enemy. That's powerful!

And now I want to show you something powerful that you and I can do together. Watch this.

On the mission field:

Announcer: It's been one of the most unique years in living memory and it is not even over. But you have helped us hold firm in our commitment to share God's love in word and deed. Because you chose to love the overlooked, thirsty villages who lack safe drinking water are now blessed with clean water wells. Because you chose to value the sanctity of life, hungry children have been saved from starvation through your gift of a daily bowl of food. And when we minister to the body, the door is opened for us to minister to the soul.

Ralph: Heavenly Father, we know you love Sadawa. We know he's created by you in your hands. We place him in your hands today.

Announcer: This upcoming Christmas, we want to give special attention to soles of a different kind -- the soles of precious children's feet because good health starts from the ground up.

Ralph: Some of these feet are so torn up. They're just bruised and scarred.

Announcer: These are what unprotected feet look like. In developing countries especially, bare feet easily become infected and are deadly targets for hookworm which threaten their very lives.

Ralph: Some children have never owned a pair of shoes, so this is a happy day for these little guys. It is a happy day for us because we get to put them on their little precious feet.

Announcer: This coming Christmas, we need your help to remind children like these that their lives have value by protecting their health with a special gift they'll never forget. Help us give the gift of Christmas shoes. [Children laughing]

End of video

In the studio:

Sheila: Oh I cannot tell you how many ways I love that. It's been such a challenging year for everybody. People have lost their jobs, they've lost a lot of finances, they've lost their health, and some have even lost their lives. I think the enemy would love nothing more than if we say, 2020, we just want to be done with you. But I want to come up with a challenge. Why don't we determine, you know what 2020? You came in really, really rough but we're going to end up in a celebration because we, as a body of Christ are going on to rise up and give out of our nothing, give out of our lack and make a difference. And every single one of us can do that.

You might be saying, why are you coming to us so early with a Christmas appeal? It's simply because we've made a commitment that we want to provide 150,000 pairs of shoes to children who have probably never had a pair of shoes in their life. And you saw the feet on those darling wee ones that get so torn up. They get all sorts of diseases.

This is one of my favorite appeals because we can all do something. Do you know that for \$36 you provide ten pairs of shoes? You can't buy one pair of shoes basically for \$36 anymore. But ten pairs of shoes! \$72, 20 pairs of shoes. If you can do \$180, 50 pairs of shoes. If you're thinking, well, it's a little hard at the moment to come up with that, let me tell you one of the things that I've done. There are sites where you can take your shoes, because I have too many shoes, so I put them on a couple of those sites, and I've sold a couple of pairs. I sold a couple pairs and made enough to provide 20 pairs of Christmas shoes.

So let's be creative this year. Let's come up with new ways to go above and beyond. I think the enemy would love, remember we don't just fight our earthly battles, we don't just fight viruses, we're in a spiritual battle. And so I think there's never been a greater Christmas for the body of Christ to say, you know what? We're not going to lie down. We're going to stand up in Jesus' name and we're going to make a difference.

Wouldn't it be amazing if we could provide shoes for 300,000 children? I'm going to whisper that in case James and Betty hear but they would say a big loud amen, I can tell you that. So please, will you go to your phone and make the very best gift possible?

Now remember, we also, it's called Christmas Shoes and Smiles. For \$500 you can provide corrective surgery to a child born with cleft lip or cleft palate. But let's every single one of us do something. And for any gift at all, you'll get this darling little shoe. This year it's a cobalt blue crystal. If you can do \$1,000 you can provide shoes for 275 children or two surgeries.

So please, go to your phone, make the very best gift possible. Let's end this year in a triumphant note because of Jesus.

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:**

Isak: I've got to tell you what a happy day this is for me. I'm here with 20 kids who have all received shoes today because someone like you was generous enough to say I'll give \$72. Or maybe two of you gave \$36 and that gift of \$36 meant that ten or \$72 meant that 20 children got

shoes here today.

What that would mean is you would extend this line just that much further. You would extend the expression of God's heart and his hands to these children and you would extend the joy in villages just like this by giving these children the precious gift of a pair of shoes.

Please do it today. Get online or dial that number on your screen and give -- give a gift, an extra-special-above-normal gift that is the gift of shoes, the gift of joy.

End of video

In the studio:

Sheila: Isn't this a joy to do this? I'm so excited about this. If you would like my book called *Praying Women*, you can request that for any gift at all. We'll also be happy to send you this darling little shoe. But I know you don't do it for that but it is always a great reminder when you see those shoes that we have, different ones each year sparkling on your Christmas tree, it's a reminder to pray for those children. I feel this surge of hope in the midst of a difficult year that we're going to be able to make a difference -- provide those surgeries, provide those shoes. And what a joy it will be as we celebrate the birth of our savior to know that we're able to impact other people's lives.

So I'll see you next time. This is Sheila Walsh saying good-bye. God bless you!