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Week 46: Fall Mission Feeding

Sheila Walsh

David Jeremiah #1

Sheila: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm Sheila Walsh and I'm so glad you're joining us for this program. One of my favorite authors, favorite Bible teachers on the planet has a fantastic new book out. It's called *Forward*: "Discovering God's presence and purpose in your tomorrow." Dr. Jeremiah, welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm so glad you're with us.

David: Thank you for having me. I feel honored to be with you.

Sheila: Tell me what was the inspiration behind writing *Forward* at this time in our history?

David: I think some of it was brewing in my heart over a period of time. But the catalyst that kicked off the project happened on the 14th of April. We had hosted that day Tommy Walker who is a wonderful musician. He writes some of our praise songs. He had stayed over that night to do a concert for us and at the very end of the concert he was almost ready to leave and then he said, "Before I leave, I want to share with you a new song that I've just written." He sang a song called "*Forward*." It gripped my heart. I turned to my wife and I said, "That's the name of my next book!" I've been thinking about this and he just put it all into a beautiful package. I began immediately to work on this book.

Sheila: With the message of *Forward*, is it a message written more for young people or is it a message for all ages?

David: I guess I can speak definitively about that, Sheila, because I've been all ages,

from the youngest to the oldest. What I've learned is amazing. And that is you always need to be going *forward*. If you ever decide that you don't need to be going *forward* no matter where you are in life you get stuck. That's not a good place to be.

Sheila: One of the things that I've loved about the way that the chapters are divided up that you give us these practical steps to take to move *forward*. The first one is "dream." As believers, as Christians, followers of Christ, how do we dream?

David: Well, we ask God to give us a vision for what we can do with what he has given to us in our gifts and talents to make a difference in our world. God, how do you want to use me? Give me a dream for my life. Give me a vision for my life. When we do that, God gives that to us. I don't know of anybody who has really seriously sought to know the will of God and have a dream for their life that God has not been faithful to show them what that is.

Sheila: What do you do with unfulfilled dreams? Sometimes people give up because they think, well, I did have a dream, but it didn't happen.

David: I think any one of us who are visionaries are going to have to deal somewhere along the way with a death of a dream. I've had to do that and just about everybody I know who is trying to make a difference has had to do that. It is interesting that in the Bible there is a great example of that. David had a dream to build the temple and God told him, "You can't do it." It was his big dream as he faced that portion of his life. But David didn't let that destroy him. He went on to help his son do that. He gave his dream to his legacy and his dream didn't really die, it just lived on after he died. That's the kind of things that dreams do.

Sheila: I remember after my father died my mom had two prayers; that she would live to see all three children serving Christ and in their chosen careers. And after my brother, the final one graduated, I flew home and I said to my mom, "I'm here to dream with you again because God has answered those prayers." Some people think that dreaming is just

for the young. What would you say to that?

David: I guess I must be the answer to that because I don't think you'd probably consider me young. I don't consider myself old but I'm dreaming as much now as I ever did. And what God is doing in these days in my life is truly amazing. There is a whole chapter in this book about how to finish. In that chapter I talk a lot about how to dream and how to walk with God all the way to the edge. I don't think God wants us to stop believing great things just because we've added some years to our age.

Sheila: What do you think the greatest challenge is for the church in these days? Because I think we've had churches that are closed, and people are watching online. What do you see God doing in the midst of all that?

David: Well, I can only tell you what God is doing in the church where I'm involved, and it is so amazing it is just hard to believe. It's hard to comprehend. I don't even know how to describe it. Who would think that in the shutdown of a pandemic you would have the greatest harvest of souls, the greatest income in terms of financial support, the greatest interest of people from all over? We now have church outdoors here in San Diego every Saturday and Sunday night and we fill up our amphitheater. The interesting thing is we don't even know half the people that come. They come from everywhere. We've had more people come to Christ over the internet than we've ever had at any period of time in this time.

So I think about that verse related to Joseph where he said, "You meant it for evil; but God meant it for good." That's how I feel about this pandemic. I don't like it any more than anybody else. I get up every day and I wonder when is normalcy going to return? But what I do is I don't worry about what I can't do; I try to concentrate on what I can do.

Sheila: You talk in the book, you talk in *Forward* about the power of prayer. I find it interesting that you chose Nehemiah to model prayer. What was it about Nehemiah's life that we can learn from?

David: Well, Nehemiah had a dream, as you know. He wanted to go back and rebuild the walls of the city. He prayed about that dream before he undertook the task. What's interesting about Nehemiah is you can follow him all the way through the fulfillment of that dream and watch as he stops along the way to pray, usually, when he is being assaulted by an enemy. The Bible says, "I looked at him and I had a prayer." He is the poster child for spontaneous prayer in the Bible. And he teaches us a lot about, we don't just ask God to help us when we get a dream. We need him to stay with us all the way through because if it is a God dream it is way bigger than anything you can ever do by yourself.

Nehemiah's task was overwhelming but what you see is all the through, and then at the end this humongous praise session for what God did. He understands that you dream, then you pray.

Sheila: What does forward-focused prayer look like? Because for many at the moment, perhaps they're more concentrating in the rearview mirror than the road ahead.

David: There is a lot to say about that in this book: about learning how to live in risk, learning how to focus on the one thing, learning how to diminish your distractions. Prayer is you look *Forward*--is to ask God to help you understand what is coming before it ever comes; to ask for wisdom. I always have loved this wisdom, this wisdom definition: Wisdom is doing the right thing without a precedent. When you ask God for wisdom what you're asking him for is this, Lord, I don't have any way to know what to do so help me to know what to do. Wisdom is doing the right thing without a precedent. And oh my goodness, are we living in unprecedented times, Sheila? Has there ever been a time like this?

Sheila: No! The little book that you sent me with the Psalms and Proverbs, I'm now in my second time through and one of the things I realize, I never spent very much time studying the Proverbs before. I always read the Psalms. But I'm learning so much about

the gift of wisdom and if ever there is a time as a church, we need God's wisdom.

David: Sheila, I don't think, I've told our people this, I don't think I've ever said this little phrase more in the whole of my ministry than I have recently. Here is what it is: "Lord, I don't know what to do." We've just gone through a major war with the state officials and the county officials to reopen our school. On the one hand we don't want to be belligerent and disobedient. On the other hand we don't want to be manipulated either. So we try to walk that narrow road and do what we do as unto the Lord, and yet at the same time, not be afraid to stand up and do what's right. Sometimes you say, "Lord, I don't know what to do." But he always comes through. He always shows you.

Sheila: One of the steps that I found really helpful is choose--choosing your priorities because I think at the moment people feel pulled in a million different directions. How do you personally remove distraction and choose what matters most?

David: I think that's pretty much a lifelong progress. I don't think you can do that once for all. Another way to say that, Sheila, is and you know this better than anybody: he is, I'm always editing my life. Every time I turn around, I'm taking something out that I thought should be there so I can put in something that is more important. I've learned how to be comfortable with that. That used to irritate me. I'm a pretty routine guy and God said, "Okay, it's great to be routine but I'm not a routine God. I may want you to do something you don't have in your planner so you better be ready to get rid of that so that I can give you what I want you to do." That's a really important discipline to develop.

This is kind of interesting. I remember years ago I came up with a word. I'd never heard this word before and at least at that time it wasn't in the dictionary. Here was the word: Posteriority. We all know what a priority is, the things that you do in the order that you do them. A posteriority list are the things that you don't do in the order that you don't do them. I had a whole list full of things I couldn't do anymore. I used to do them but my life changed and now I have to get those off of the list so I can add things on that list that are in keeping with God's direction in my life.

Sheila: As a pastor who is so clearly loves your congregation, loves the flock that God has entrusted to you, I'm thinking about people at the moment who just feel as if they can't do anything that they used to do. They're stuck at home. They're just binge watching anything on Netflix. How do you--what advice would you give for people to live, how do I live now in these days when the things I used to do are not available to me?

David: I tell you what. We have to learn how to be creative. We have to learn how to realize that this is not a time for us, like you said to watch binge watch television. I had a guy tell me one time that when this thing first started, he had his nighttime pajamas and his daytime pajamas. All he did was go through the day and go through the night and sit on his couch. That will depress you, first of all if you watch television very much, that will depress you all by itself.

God will show you the things you can do. One of the things I've been so impressed with, many of the people in our congregation, some of them without a job, they found ways to serve, they found ways to help. We had a big feeding thing that we did at the beginning where we were feeding 1,000 families every week. It was such an incredible thing to see these people come out and pack boxes and help put them in cars. If you just ask God, what do you want me to do and how can I use this time that I never had before to make a difference, he will show you.

I think as people, as churches, that's one of the reasons why we need to get back to church, too. We need to continue to create structures for God's people. They want to come to church. That's one thing I know. Frankly, church isn't the church unless we gather. It is not the church on the online services, that's a good thing, but that's not the church. The Bible tells us we are not to forsake the gathering of ourselves together, that's the church.

Sheila: I remember you teaching on that in one of your end time studies. You said particularly as the days are getting later, or I can't remember the exact reference, but

you've talked about that.

David: Well, the Bible says as you see the day approaching, you should gather more. And that's exactly the opposite of the way it is for many. When I first started going to church, I used to make the joke that I was on drugs--I was drug to church every time the door was open. I had a drug problem. But the bottom line was in my church growing up we had Sunday morning, Sunday night, Wednesday night prayer meeting. We usual had visitation on Thursday night. People look back on that and say, "Well, that's too busy a life." And it probably was. But what we've done now is we've gotten church down to one hour a week and don't ask for any more of my time? And all of the sudden you look up and you realize that you were born to serve the Lord and you've pushed that priority to the edge. When you do that, your life begins to feel really strange. It begins to feel without purpose, and you can't live that way.

Sheila: Yeah, I think a lot of people that live that way feel anchorless. You talk about making the one thing the main thing. And then you tell this interesting story. Then you call it the carrot principle. What is that about?

David: Well, it's very interesting because one of my good friends is a guy who used to own the largest carrot company in America, maybe in the world. At one time I know they were producing 30 percent of all the carrots that were eaten in the United States, this one company. I visited his company. I was just overwhelmed by it. After my visit he went into the green room where we were going to have lunch, went up to the white board and he drew a carrot in the middle of the white board. And then he started to show everything that they did with the carrot. How they got carrot juice and little baby carrots and they used the other part of the carrot for pulp in food. There were 24 different products that came out of that carrot. I asked him, "How much of the carrot do you waste?" He said, "We try not to waste any of it. We try to find a way to use the carrot in its totality."

Well, I came home, and I went to the board in my staff room and I drew a picture of the Bible in the middle of the white board. And I said, "This is my carrot. We need to figure

out how we can use the Word of God in every way." We began to talk about all the ways the Word of God was what we do at Turning Point and we actually had more products than the carrot man because the Bible, we're able to use the Word of God in myriads of ways to make a difference. That became our one thing. We can't do everything, but we can do that and when you focus on that it just frees you up and gives you freedom to do what you're trying to do.

Sheila: That's fantastic. In a moment I'm going to offer your book to all of our viewers, but I wondered if you have anything you would share with those who feel discouraged at the moment? Who wonder when is this going to get back to normal? When am I going to be able, when can my children get back to school? Or who just feel, where are you God in the midst of all this chaos?

David: Well, there are certainly many people who feel that way. I would just suggest first of all that you don't allow yourself to be idle, that you don't allow yourself to sit and think those thoughts throughout the day. Ask God to show you how you can make a difference in the kingdom. You need to spend time in prayer, obviously, and in the Word of God but this depression that's taking over in so many Christian lives is just the result of not knowing what to do. Everybody, you have to get creative.

In our own family, Sheila, you know Donna well, we're talking about it one day and I'd get up in the morning during this time to go to work and she would be left at home all by herself, and the things that she would normally do she couldn't do. So I came up with this idea and we've been doing it pretty faithfully. We had heard at one time that there were 100 restaurants in the city of San Diego; that there were even way more than that if you counted the little ones. That if you went to these restaurants you could go to a different one every day. So we tried to find out if that was true.

I came home for lunch every day and we went to lunch together. And I didn't make any bones about the fact that it was going to be a two or three-hour lunch. We would go on and find someplace to eat and sit and talk. And we both said what a difference that's

made. How it breaks up the day, it gives you something to look forward to in the morning. By the time you're finished it's time to get ready for...You see what I'm saying? Don't let it overwhelm you. Don't run from it, run to it, and attack it.

I know that doesn't sound really spiritual, I'm not saying don't pray but you can still get depressed if all you do is sit home and pray and read the Bible. You're not made to do that. You are made to be active. So ask God to show you how you can get creative in this time.

Sheila: I love that! I want you to know that we're going to make Dr. Jeremiah's book, *Forward* available to you. But first of all you know that we are very committed here to feeding people in Africa who are not just affected by malnutrition but also this pandemic, it's become even worse. So please watch this and then I'll let you know how you can get a hold of Dr. Jeremiah's book.

On the mission field:

Open Captions: Who will be next?

Announcer: Almost everyone knows about the world crisis that is being called a pandemic. But there is another crisis in Africa that is going to take more lives than COVID-19--it is a hunger crisis.

Isak: Mother after mother telling us how they are losing their children. Children are dying, they say because they have no food. I say to them, how did your child die? Well, they just died of no food. They had nothing to eat.

Announcer: Mothers throughout this region are still grieving at the loss of their children because they had no food. Yangu buried her four-year old daughter just three days ago. And KK recently buried one of her twins.

Isak: I'm appealing to you from the bottom of my heart to please help us do something for this lady and for the women that she represents all over this area. Women who are desperate for something called food. But it is actually called life because that's what it does, it brings life and it saves life. This lady lost two of her five children in just one month. Who will be next? This story will end with yet another tragedy, another child stolen, maybe all three. You see we can't wind back the clock on the two children she's lost already but we can stop her from losing another one. You and I can do it, but I need you to partner with me. I need you to open your heart today and I need you to give that gift because your gift is the gift of life.

End of video

In the studio:

Sheila: I can't even imagine what that would be like as a mom to lose two children within one month? I mean the loss of one child is a devastating tragedy. I have a friend who lost a child and it's probably six, six and a half years now and the grief and the pain is still there. But to lose two children within a month? And sometimes we're tempted to think, well, it's over on the other side of the world and that's what happens there, and perhaps they even get used to it. Let me tell you, no mother will ever, ever get used to losing a child. And I can't imagine the agony, the daily ongoing agony of watching your children lie down at night to go to sleep and you hear their little bellies rumbling because they're so hungry. Everything within a mother or a father, all our instincts are to take care of our children's most basic needs, enough food to eat.

And for so many of these mothers, when James and Betty started this ministry so many years ago, we started with a kind of doable number which seemed like a big goal. But you faithfully responded. And so what our commitment is this year to our partners on the ground who are facing, we think the COVID pandemic affects us here in America and Europe and Australia, but it also affects so many of these places in Africa where we are working.

So we have made a commitment that this year that we want to feed 350,000 children. Now there is an entry level for every one of us in this. Do you know that just \$30 will feed three children for three months? Where else could you do that? Where else could you invest \$30 in the kingdom of God saying God, you have blessed me, and I want to bless others. Three children for three months; \$50 will feed five children; \$100 feeds ten children for three months.

Some of you have been blessed this year, even though it's been a difficult year, somehow God has blessed you. Do you know that if you gave \$1,000 that would feed 100 children for three months! Can you imagine the joy that you would bring to those mothers' lives? We want to get back to our partners, like Isak there on the ground and say, "Listen, our friends have heard your cry and they are responding like never before."

This could be a year when we all back off a bit because it's been difficult or does God's sons and daughters say this is the year when we're going to move forward and make a difference in Jesus' name. So please, will you call now? Call that number on your screen. Give the best gift possible and answer those mothers' prayers. Please call now!

Begin video clip

Announcer: Today on top of the daily fight for life and food, families and children across Africa are now forced to deal with the challenges of a global health crisis. Because of COVID-19 food scarcity has increased drastically and the fear of dying from lack of food is far greater than the virus itself.

Even in these unprecedented times, mission feeding won't stop. With your help, mission feeding will continue to be a daily source of food, encouragement, and health for the 350,000 children counting on us.

Call now with your lifesaving 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 *40 Days of Healing Promises*. This beautiful hardcover devotional will encourage you in your faith as you dive deep into the healing promises that are yours in Jesus' name.

With your gift of \$100 or more please request the "Blessings for your Home" bowls and tea towel set. This set of bowls and two beautifully designed tea towels will make a wonderful addition to your home and serve as a reminder of your help in blessing others as a friend of *LIFE*.

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: Beautiful children! They're lining up because of love. Not just food -- they're lining up because of love. I just thank God for his love. And then I thank God for the love that you expressed that is the love of God for all these children. Betty is here right now, and she is serving up the soup.

Betty: We've seen lots of lines over in states, kids lined up for games, kids lined up for parks, kids lined up to go to a movie. But these lines are different. These kids are lined up for food for life.

Won't you join with us? These are the kind of lines that really count. These children need our help. They need someone to make a good choice for them and that's for life. Please join with us and help us with the mission feeding. Thank you so much!

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: Thank you so much for watching this. Just keep calling. There is such a need, and we can be the answer. And for any gift at all today we're going to send you this fantastic new book by Dr. David Jeremiah, *Forward*: "Discovering God's presence and purpose in your tomorrow."

Dr. Jeremiah, I just want to thank you so much for the wisdom that you impart every time we get to listen to you.

David: Thank you, Sheila. Thank you for having me.

Sheila: And we will see you next time on *LIFE Today*. Take care. God bless you!