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Week 41: Rescue Life

Sheila Walsh

"God is in Control"

Sheila: Hi! I'm Sheila Walsh. Welcome to *LIFE Today*. We never take it for granted that you watch the program. The thing I love about our audience is that you don't just watch but you engage. It kind of feels like sitting around the dinner table and talking to family. I hope you feel that. I hope you know how... you see me on camera, you see James and Betty and Randy but I hope you know that there is a whole staff here who love you and pray for you and are so, so grateful for you. And I know at the moment things can seem out of control. A lot of people are afraid and maybe even tempted to ask God, "Where are you in all of this? Do you see what's going on in our world?"

I don't know how you personally are doing these days, but I want to assure you 100%, stake your life on it that no matter how things appear our God is in control. The more I was thinking about that today, I don't think any story in the Bible unpacks what that looks like more than the story of Joseph in the book of Genesis. I write what it looks like because often our idea of God being in control is radically different than what we see in this story. Because if you're like me, we want to believe if God is in control things will just fall into place in a way that makes sense to us and that is simply not Joseph's story. You probably remember it.

We read in the New Testament though, a reference to Joseph. When Stephen was about to be stoned for his faith, he stood before the Jewish high counsel and basically went through the Jewish history. He reminded them of God's hand on his people from the days of Abram onwards. But when he got to Joseph's story this is what he said, "But God was with him and rescued him from all his troubles." You find that in Acts Chapter 7 verse

ten. That's just 12 words. He told Joseph's story in just 12 words. But when we step back into Joseph's story and read the whole thing, we see it took 13 years for those 12 words to unfold. 13 years! That's a very long time to believe that God is with you when every circumstance of life says otherwise.

Now Joseph's story begins in Genesis Chapter 37 and it takes us right to the closing of the book of Genesis. But we're introduced to Joseph when he is just a teenage boy, the very beginning. It's very telling what we read. It says: Jacob, his father, loved Joseph more than any of his other children because Joseph had been born to him in his old age. So one day Jacob had a special gift made for Joseph, a beautiful robe. But his brothers hated Joseph before their father loved him more than the rest of them. They couldn't say a kind word to him. You find that in Genesis 37, I think three through four.

Jealousy can be a cancer in family relationships, particularly in blended families. In those days, men had more than one wife. Joseph's father had four wives, so his children had different mothers. I mean that's hard enough but then add in that Joseph was the baby of the family, and his mother was Jacob's favorite wife, Rachel. You can see it's a perfect storm on the horizon.

Well, Joseph not only received the coat, he wore it around his brothers even though it was clear that it irritated them because you have to think about it, he's just a boy. He's 17 and at 17 you do what seems good to you at the time. Medical science tells us the frontal lobe, the rational part of the brain, the C.E.O. if you will is not fully developed until 25. I know that, I have a son.

Well, anyway back to the story. One night Joseph had a dream and when he told his brothers about it they hated him more than ever. This is what we read. "Listen to this dream," he said. "We were out in the field tying up bundles of grain. Suddenly my bundle stood up and your bundles all gathered around mine and bowed low before mine."

His brothers responded, "So you think you will be our king, do you? Do you actually

think you will reign over us?" And they hated him all the more because of his dreams and the way he talked about them.

Well, sometime later Jacob the dad sent Joseph to see his brothers. I think perhaps he knew there was a breach in the relationship with his brothers and he probably knew that he had contributed to it by favoring this baby of the family. But sending Joseph out to be with his brothers would prove to be disastrous for Jacob and set him up for years of heartache.

Now when the brothers saw Joseph coming, they decided to get rid of him once and for all. They would kill him. Rubin, the eldest brother intervened and suggested they throw him into a well and leave him to die. And the other brothers agreed to that. So when Joseph arrived, they ripped his fancy coat off his back and they tossed him down the shaft of a well.

The thing is, Rubin intended to come back later and rescue Joseph but it would be too late. Well, the other brothers saw a caravan of camels heading to Egypt and they sold their baby brother as a slave. Joseph was a human trafficking victim. Well, Rubin was devastated when he realized that Joseph was gone. Regret, I think that's one of the most punishing emotions. I can't imagine what he felt. How he must have agonized over his choice to go along with part of a plan that was wrong.

But you know, I take a lesson from that for myself. When we allow ourselves to even take one step in the wrong direction intending later to take two steps back, we don't always get that chance to make another choice. And it would be many years before Rubin would get to see that even though he didn't step up and save his brother, God did. God was in control.

Well, what about Joseph? Try to put yourself in his shoes. He knew he'd heard from God. He knew at some point his whole family would bow down and worship him. He just didn't know when, but he knew that God had revealed it to him in a dream. But think

about it, now he is bloodied and bruised at the bottom of a well. The natural question to ask is, "What happened? Where are you God? Did you see what happened here?"

Have you ever been tempted to ask that? The circumstances obviously will be different. Few of us will literally end up at the bottom of a well. But the principle stands. I was trying to think of different scenarios today. Perhaps you were engaged to be married. You had waited for the right one and finally God brought him or her along. Then at the last moment, some former love interest rears her uninvited head and the engagement is broken off. You wonder, how could this have happened? God, why did you let this happen? Or different situation. You knew that God was preparing you to take over the ladies' Bible study at your church. You waited patiently and then at the critical moment when the former teacher stepped down the church leadership chose somebody else. They made a mistake. They chose the wrong person.

Or what if you'd been married for years, you have children that you're committed to raise in a healthy family but then your spouse says, you know what? I want out. You do everything you can. You fight it, you pray over it, you fast and pray, but in the end, you have no control and they leave.

The question I want you to think about is this, have they messed up God's plan for your life? Are you condemned by someone else's choice? Are you condemned to live a second best life? Or maybe you've lived your life with integrity in the workplace or at church and then someone spreads a rumor about you that's not true. Initially, you're sure that no one will believe it because of who you are, because of your character. But they do. And you're heartbroken and you're outraged, and you feel so alone. And the natural temptation is to say, "God, why did you let this happen?" And perhaps you ask that question, did they just mess up God's plan for my life?

I want to say in the name of Jesus a resounding no! Can people harm your life? Yes, absolutely! Can people lie about you and break your heart? Yes! I actually had a colleague some years ago who told some people I was working with that I was a

pathological liar. He told them that I'd made up the story of my father's suicide to get sympathy. He said the whole story was a lie. I couldn't begin to fathom, A, why he would do that but what was much harder to bear were those who, at least at first, believed him.

I remember so clearly lying face down on my bedroom carpet sobbing until my eyes were so swollen I could hardly see. But later that same night I opened my Bible to one of my favorite Psalms, you know it well, Psalm 91. And I read these words: *Those who live in the shelter of the Most High will find rest in the shadow of the Almighty. This I declare about the Lord: He alone is my refuge, my place of safety. He is my God and I trust him. For he will rescue you from every trap and protect you from deadly disease. He will cover you with his feathers. He will shelter you with his wings. His faithful promises are your armor and protection.*

There are moments in life where there is nothing you can do to control what's happening around you. But in those times find your hiding place under the shelter of God's wings. That night I had to choose to let go of what I couldn't control and trust my Father.

As we look further into Joseph's story, we'll see several turns in the road that he could not have seen coming. But when he was finally reunited with his brothers, as they bowed before him as he said they would, begging for mercy, this is what Joseph said. Now he could have said, I told you. I told you. Now you're in a position where I can harm you the way you harmed me. That is not what he said. He said, *"You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good. He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people."*

Those two little words: "But God." I'm also blown away that Joseph didn't just say "but God," he said, "God intended it all for good." Not just parts of it -- all for good.

I've been so ministered to by reading Joseph's story again. Even when people intend to harm us, we need to stand on the truth, God is still in control. No matter what their motive was or how it impacts our life for a time, God is still with us and he will bring

good from it. That's what Paul was saying to the church in Rome when he reminded him that *God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love him and are called according to his purpose for them*. You know that verse, Romans 8:28.

But here's the distinction. He didn't say that all things were good or that all things feel good because you know that's not true. He simply reminded them and us that God has promised to bring good even from the most painful circumstances of life. It just doesn't always happen on our schedule.

One of my mom's favorite scriptures was this classic from Jeremiah: *"For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord. "They are plans for good, and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope."*

Well, you know what? I've seen that scripture on bumper stickers, on a wall, and it's tempting to pull an encouraging verse like that, one verse of scripture and put it on a T-shirt. But when we do that, we actually miss the context and actually, we miss the greater hope. Because if you go back just one verse in Jeremiah 29 to verse ten, this is what you read: This is what the Lord says, *"You will be in Babylon for 70 years. But then I will come and do for you all the good things I have promised, and I will bring you home again."* I have yet to see that verse on a T-shirt.

Now before you change the channel because I've ruined your favorite verse, just sit with it for a while. Because here's what was happening. God in his mercy was preparing his people for what was ahead. It is like he gently says to us, no matter what's going on in your life right this minute, don't panic. He was saying to his people, don't panic that you've been carried away. Don't think that everything is out of control. I'm letting you know that this will take some time so that you won't fix your eyes on what you see but on what I have promised.

And Jesus did the very same thing. In the last conversation he had with his closest friends recorded in John's gospel, he tried to prepare them for the events that were about to

unfold. They couldn't understand at the time, but they would be able to look back and remember what Jesus said. *John 16:1: "I have told you these things so that you won't abandon your faith."*

These are not days to panic. These are days to hold on, to trust, to believe in the truth. That no matter how things appear, God is in control.

I don't know how much time you spend on a daily basis studying God's word. I have to tell you, I've been a Christian for a long, long, long time but I spend more time in God's word now than I ever had because what we have there is an eternal truth. God is not man that he should lie. Whatever God has said in his word you can stake your life on it.

So why don't you take a moment today to reflect on the things that perhaps seem out of control? It might be your finances. Maybe you're struggling to pay your bills. It could be your marriage. Maybe you've all been under the same roof for too long and you're starting to get on one another's nerves. Or you're concerned about your children. But you know what? When we determine to turn our eyes upon Jesus, to look full in his wonderful face then the things of this earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace.

I pray the peace of Christ over you today. I pray that you would know that you've never lived an unloved moment in your life. That God is for you. That he is watching over you. And he is in control.

I want to introduce you to some darling girls who think that life is very out of control, who wonder if there is anybody on earth or in heaven who can hear their cry. Well, I want you to know that I heard their cry. And in your name, we have been able to go and let some people who are living in darkness know that Christ's light was about to shine into the darkest corners and bring them hope and bring them healing. Would you watch this with me?

On the mission field:

Open Captions: Behind locked doors.

Announcer: In rooms hidden out of sight for most people is a world filled with young girls. Girls who became entangled in a web known as sex trafficking. Most of them set out to find legitimate work in hopes of bettering their lives only to end up being taken captive by a sex predator. Sheila tells what happened to one young girl she met.

Sheila: This girl who is now 15 started going out when she was 12, 13; thought she was going with a friend to get a job. I'll try and do whatever I can to provide for my brothers and sisters. And she thought she was going to be like a waitress. When she went into the place they offered her food, which seemed really compassionate and kind but the food was drugged. And she lost consciousness and when she came to she was in a small locked room with a man. She was naked. And she realized that for the first time in her life that she had been raped. What is she supposed to do?

Announcer: The evil of human trafficking is driven by the fact that it's a multi-billion-dollar industry. The real tragedy is the resulting physical and emotional scars inflicted on millions of young girls and children.

Sheila: Let's decide enough! Let's just say enough! We will rise up and we will change this. And we will do it because think of -- our whole thing here at *LIFE* is reach, rescue, restore. The value that God places on their life is not diminished by what they have to do every night. And because of that, we get to tell them, you're not a number -- you're a name, and God knows your name and we're coming in His name to let you know. Time is coming for you to be free.

End of video

In the studio:

Sheila: There is some evil and heartache in this world that is situational. You happen to be born in a country where there is very little money, where the crops fail, where there is not enough rain, where there is no clean water. But there are situations where it is pure evil. The heartache and the pain and the agony, I believe comes straight from the pit of hell.

Trafficking is one of the greatest evils on this earth. And having been there, having walked through those streets, having sat and talked with these girls -- and they're just little girls! It's not like some mature woman who has decided this is what she wants to do; although frankly, I don't believe any woman on this earth ever thinks this is what I'd like to do with my life. These are just little children! And so often you'll talk to girls and they might be like 12 or 13 and they have been kidnapped and they wake up and they discover themselves besides some man. And you might be tempted to think, then why don't they just leave? Well, for a couple of really good reasons.

These people who hold these girls are brutal. One girl showed us the marks on her back where she had been hit with a cord. Reason number two is even more heartbreaking. One girl said to us, "Well, they've told me they know where I live, and I have younger sisters. And they have said if I ever try and escape, they will go after them." That is wrong!

I want to read you something from Psalm 82. It says this: *Rescue the poor and helpless. Deliver them from the grasp of evil people.*

It doesn't get much more clear than that. From the Word of God, "Rescue the poor and helpless. Deliver them from the grasp of evil people." Traffickers are very well organized and very well-funded; and we have to, in the name of Jesus, be as organized and as funded. So I'm asking you today, this mission is so close to my heart because I love when we do mission feeding, I love when we put wells in. I love that! It's so important! But this is a situation where young girls have been captured by evil, and in the name of Jesus we

need to go in and reach them in the villages before anyone ever gets to them, rescue them when they've ended up in a brothel, and restore them.

But we need your help. We can't do it by ourselves. But we have some amazing friends who at the moment have put up \$250,000 as a matching gift. It used to be it takes well, it still does, takes \$128 to reach, to rescue or to restore a child. But because of the matching gift, now for \$64 that will be combined, and you will reach, rescue, and restore. We need your help. Even as I'm speaking girls are being trafficked. Even as I'm speaking, girls are waking up in a place that's so far from home. We are the body of Christ on the planet at this moment and we need to go in there. God is a warrior king. He is not just a gentle shepherd. He is a warrior king and we want to stand up to this evil. So please! Call the number on your screen. Give the best gift you can. Thank you!

Begin video clip

Announcer: Behind the bright lights there is a darkness where a world of innocence is lost, and abuse runs rampant scarring the souls of children with no one and nowhere to turn for help. With bodies broken and hopes crushed, these young victims are trapped in a never-ending nightmare.

Today you can shine the light of God's love in this dark world to reach, rescue, and restore these young ones to the life God designed for them to live. With a generous \$250,000 matching gift now your gift of \$128 to help reach, rescue, or restore one child can be doubled to help two children. Your \$64 gift will be matched to help save one child from the horrors of human trafficking. And a \$32 mission rescue gift will be doubled to \$64.

With your gift we'll send you *Natural Remedies*. This beautifully illustrated and essential book explores ancient nutrition and the health benefits found in God's creation, a valuable reference with biblical insight to help you live your best life.

With your gift of \$128 or more, you'll receive this beautiful prayer box inscribed with the words from Philippians 4:6. This wonderful keepsake includes pencil and paper to write down prayer requests you want to give to God.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1280 which will now help rescue 20 children. And you may request "A Mother's Strength" bronze sculpture.

Please call, write, or make your gift online.

End of video

On the mission field:

Randy: What you're seeing behind me right now are some villagers who are learning how to not be lured into sex trafficking. We know for a fact that some girls have some disappeared from this area and have not been heard of again. It is critical that we reach into areas like this and educate them so that they will know what to look for. So when the sex traffickers come back to this area, no more will be taken.

We're doing all that we can to reach into places like this, to rescue the girls that have been taken and to restore their lives, and to restore their families, and restore their villages. I hope you'll go to the phone right now, go online, do what you can. The Rescue Life program is making a huge impact in areas that really need the love of God. Do what you can. Thank you so much!

End of video

In the studio:

Sheila: Thanks for staying with me. This is really, really important. And for a gift of \$128 we're going to send you this beautiful prayer box. I've got one of these at home. You just write your prayer request down, put it in there and what I love to do is at the end of the year see how God has answered prayer. So would love to send that to you.

But please, keep calling. Let's be God's boots on the ground in Jesus' name. So for all of us here at *LIFE Today* we'll see you next time! God bless you.