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Week 47: Fall Mission Feeding

Sheila Walsh

Lysa TerKeurst #2

Sheila: Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm Sheila Walsh. I'm so glad you're joining us. One of the perks of the job, if you like, is that sometimes I'll get an early release copy of a book. This book just came out and you can grab a copy today. But when I read this book, I mean parts of it made me smile but a lot of it brought me to tears. And a lot of it I had to say, okay, I'm putting that down for a minute because I need to think about this. It's that kind of book. So please welcome my guest Lysa TerKeurst, *Forgiving What You Can't Forget*.

Lysa: Thank you, Sheila.

Sheila: How long did it take you to write this book?

Lysa: Well, I spent about six months resistant to wanting to forgive so that was not very convenient when I was wanting to write a book on forgiveness but refusing to forgive myself and trying to walk through the process. But feeling like surely there is an exception. Surely there is a loophole in the Bible. God really can't have given us this principle, this cornerstone of our faith, of forgiveness. Surely he didn't mean *always*.

And so I spent over 1,000 hours studying what the Bible actually does say and does not say about forgiveness. And forgiveness is a command by God but it is not a cruel command. It is actually his divine mercy. But it took me about six months to even warm up to that idea because I was so hurt. And then it took me about another eight months to write it.

Sheila: I wondered at what point in your journey because your journey wasn't, as you said on the other program, a devastating situation of repentance and a restoration. It was a long process. When did you actually determine to pursue forgiveness?

Lysa: Well, I did not decide to pursue forgiveness. I decided I needed help. And so I went to my counselor. This was after, I think it was still very much in the trauma season of my marriage where I thought we were about done with healing from the affair and the addictions that my husband had chosen that were so out of his character. It was just shocking on every level.

I had had a conversation with Art where I had to say, "I can love you and I will work on forgiving you but I will not share you." And I really thought our marriage was over because of choices that I finally realized I can't work harder on him that he is working on him.

So I went to my counselor. I was devastated. I hadn't taken a shower in several days. I couldn't remember when the last time it was that I'd washed my hair. So it was one of those seasons of life.

Sheila: It's just so not you.

Lysa: It's so not me. I remember walking into the counselor's office and thinking, I don't even know when the last time was that I actually put deodorant on and that's not acceptable. So I went into the bathroom and found some peach air freshener under the sink. I'm a resourceful person so I went into that counselling session smelling like a freshly baked peach cobbler.

My counselor looked at me and he said, "Lysa, do you want to heal?"

I said, "Yes. I do."

And he said, "Then today is a great day to start working on forgiveness."

And I remember looking at him and thinking, are you crazy? Are you high? Like if you said today is a great day to work on my personal hygiene, I would say yes, you are a good counselor. You are an intuitive counselor. Yes, I need to work on that. But forgiveness? Absolutely not. I don't know how this story is going to turn out yet. I don't even think that he is sorry. I don't think

that it is going to be possible for us to reconcile. I'm not done hurting.

And also, I'm not even sure that I want to forgive. If I forgive, is that me saying that what happened didn't matter? Because it does matter. Or is that me betraying myself and saying I really wasn't hurt by this? Because I was devastated by this. And so if I forgive doesn't that mean that at that point, I'm saying it is okay? It wasn't okay. So no! I remember looking at my counselor saying, absolutely not. I'm not going to work on forgiveness.

And that's when he looked at me and said, "Okay, Lysa, let's just start with the pain. Let's just start with your pain." He handed me this little stack of three by five cards, it actually wasn't little. It was pretty tall. He said, "Just start writing how you hurt and just write one thing on each card and then lay the card down on the floor."

Well, Sheila, I had so much hurt. So much hurt and so finally when I've written the very last thing down, I couldn't think of another thing, I looked, there were cards all over the floor. And I looked over at my counselor. And he did the best thing that someone can do when someone is hurting because of their life being shattered like mine was. And he simply looked back at me with tears in his eyes and he said, "I believe you." And it was such a gift to my heart. He said, "Lysa, what has happened to you was wrong and it was hurtful."

And I guess I just want to say today to anyone who might be really tracking with my story, maybe your story isn't like mine. Maybe it is just that you've been hurt too. You deserve to stop suffering because of what other people have done to you. And if no one else in this world has dared to bear witness to your pain, I will. What happened to you was wrong. And I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry for how they hurt you. I'm so sorry they didn't love you the way you should have been loved. I just want to say to you forgiveness is not another hard thing that you have to do. Forgiveness is the pathway to healing and I want to show you it is possible. It really is possible.

Sheila: One of the things that most resonated with me as an emotion, you said that when your reaction, it is hysterical, it is historical. I just put the book down at that point because I thought of the number of times I've reacted to something Barry, my husband, has done out of all proportion

to actually what he's done. And it makes me realize--at what point in your journey did you get that, that this is not just all about Art?

Lysa: I think it was, just like you described, when something happens, and you have an out-of-proportion reaction. I'm not usually a person that gets so emotionally charged that I lose it. That's just not usually what happens to me. But it kept happening to me. I kept getting triggered in my pain and what I started to realize is triggers are very inconvenient. It is not like I can schedule them on my calendar. Like on Tuesday evening I'll be sitting in the bathtub and I'll have my own communion set up. It's like nobody can see me so yes, in that moment I'll get triggered in my pain and be by myself and deal with it. That's not how it happens.

Triggers happen when I'm standing in the grocery store line and my phone sends me one of those memory movies from "Here's what happened four years ago on this day." Those kind of memories are precious until they cause so much grief and they're reminders of so much loss that they trigger you.

And I remember one time I was at the grocery store and I got so triggered by something that no one else in the world would have ever known would have caused an internal emotional melt down in me. And I literally just laid across the bananas like in the middle of the produce aisle and I was weeping. And you know, they do not pay the produce guy enough money to deal with somebody like this. And he came up and said, "Can I help you?" I remember standing in the grocery store, and I'm sure he is like, woman, you are bruising our bananas.

Sheila: And you will only eat a banana that is not bruised. I remember that about you.

Lysa: I was a walking contradiction in every aspect. But I remember him saying, "Can I help you?"

And I just looked back at him and said, "I wish you could." And I had to leave my cart, leave the grocery store.

And so yes, I like that my counselor equipped me with that saying, when it is hysterical, not like hysterical like ha-ha funny, but hysterical as in a flood of emotions that you just can't rein in, when it is hysterical it is historical. Because unhealed pain from the past will travel and find the present hurts of today, and it will multiply that, whatever that story is that we're telling ourself. And we all have a story that we're living and then we all have a story that we're telling ourselves. And we've just like got to make sure that the story that we're telling ourselves actually lines up with truth because most of the time it doesn't.

Sheila: You talk about a father that was very absent when you were growing up. You talk about abuse from a neighbor. And it was interesting because through this whole book and this journey you talk about still at your age and...every single one of your books is a New York Times bestseller. You have this phenomenal gift for writing and connecting. But you made some comment in there that sometimes you still question whether you're worth loving. And that kind of blew me away. In the midst of this process, has the determination to forgive helped heal that part of you?

Lysa: You know, I think what all this that I've learned with forgiveness has done for me, it has empowered me to understand I don't have to live as a victim to all of the abuse and heartbreak and circumstances that I didn't choose. And I think that's what has been so freeing for me is because for so long I felt like if other people didn't make different choices I would never be able to heal. I'm realizing I can unhitch my ability to heal from their choices and let their choices be their own. But I can be empowered to forgive.

And that day in that counselor's office after I laid out all of those cards my counselor said, "Now that you've gotten all of this pain out and you can see it, this is how you forgive, Lysa. You just go card by card by card and just individually have a marked moment where you say, 'I now forgive this person for this hurt.'" And all those cards that day were affiliated and associated with the hurt that I had gone through with my marriage.

But I could also see, sometimes I would get to a card and I could see, oh this isn't just about Art. This is about Art. This is about my dad. This is about my grandfather. This is about the boy in

high school that said something that I have remembered to this day that hurt me so deeply; that tainted the way that I even talk to myself in my own head. So it was so freeing.

But forgiveness, I think what I didn't understand for so long is I thought forgiveness added to my suffering. But in reality it is the only way, forgiveness is the only way we can sever the source of suffering so we can start healing.

So I went card by card by card and said I forgive this person for this. But my counselor equipped me with this added statement. He said, "And whatever my feelings will not yet allow for, the blood of Jesus will surely cover."

Sheila: Oh! I love that. Wow!

Lysa: And the reason that's so important is because I wanted to forgive but I didn't want to feel fake. I would come upon some things, a lot of things and my feelings were not yet signing on to this process. And I didn't want to just say I'm doing this because I'm checking off this good Christian checklist of things like be nice, forgive, don't cuss, play Christian music.

Sheila: My top four!

Lysa: Right? So I didn't want to feel like I was faking it, especially not in front of God. But I realized that's the beauty of what Jesus did for us. We can make the decision to forgive because of what he did. And whatever my feelings will not yet allow for the blood of Jesus will surely cover it. So that is how I made the decision to forgive.

But also, Sheila, have you ever been in a situation where, okay you've made the decision to forgive. No one can take that away from you. You've been obedient to God. But then that person says something or does something and even though you've forgiven them you're like, oh no you didn't! And all those feelings, the anxiety, and frustration, anger, they just flood back on top of you. So also we have to remember we make the decision to forgive but we also have to walk through the process of forgiveness.

Sheila: I think that's huge!

Lysa: It's really huge. And it helped me so much. Just because you have those feelings that come back, that doesn't make you a forgiveness failure. It means you forgave for the fact of what happened; that was a decision and that was your obedience to God. But now you have to walk through the process of forgiving for the impact, the emotional cost that that had on you was great, and that process of forgiveness can take a long time. But when you get triggered, you don't have to be hijacked by that trigger. You can have another marked moment and you can say, okay, I now forgive this person for the impact that they've had on me and whatever my feelings will not yet allow for the blood of Jesus will surely cover it.

Sheila: One of the things that I found very healing about some of the things you wrote was when I, as your friend first heard, I was like I'm going to fly there and I'm going to hurt him and then ask Jesus to forgive me. [Laughing] But you talk about you realizing that you both had things that you needed forgiveness for. That's--that's moving way further down the line. Because when somebody has obviously decimated your life then they are the bad guy. But you saw things in a different perspective.

Lysa: Well, I couldn't at first. And I think in counseling whenever Art would say something like, "Well, you know, Lysa, you need to work on things too" I was so resistant to it because I was afraid that if I said, "Yes, I have things to work on too" that I was saying that because I had things to work on that it gave him permission. Like it was okay to have an affair. Affairs are never okay. So what I did would have been a good call for counseling help but it did not justify the affair.

And then I remember in one particular counseling session, I did a lot of counselling on my own, but every now and then we would have counseling together. Many times those did not go well. But on this one time, the counselor looked at Art and said, "You need to free her to work on what she needs to work on by owning that there was no excuse for the affair."

And he did that. That was a very courageous thing for Art to do and he owned it. And slowly, I started to be able to feel like okay, I can work on some of my stuff too. And what I started to realize is if I forever saw myself as the saint and Art as the sinner, I wouldn't be able to forgive him.

But when I started to recognize, Jesus only calls us both to be servants. And in the Lord's Prayer in Matthew chapter six, isn't it interesting how confession comes before forgiveness? Like God forgive me for the sins I have done as I forgive others for the debts that they've created, the things they've done to me. Confession with God. If I think I need forgiveness and I know I need forgiveness, that's how his forgiveness flows to me. And then forgiveness is how it can flow through me. Confession is so beautiful. It quiets the chaos inside of me and forgiveness quiets the chaos between us.

Sheila: As you can see, you're going to want to get a hold of this book and I will be glad to send it to you.

But I would love if you would help us do something. As you know here at *LIFE Today* we're very committed to taking care of some of the very real needs around the world. Even as I sit here in this studio there are mothers sitting with their children taking their last breath because they don't have enough food and you and I can change that. Watch this.

On the mission field:

Announcer: What sort of choices could a child possibly make to go from looking like this--to looking like this? It's not even fair to call them choices but rather, it is the lack of choice. Starving children have little to no options for food. While we usually think of progress as a positive trend, for children like these, the progression of malnutrition is measured by ever-increasing despair.

Ralph: When I walked into the clinic today, I saw Pedro. My heart was just broken. It all goes

back to that malnutrition. Where there is no food, there is no nutrition in this village for these children like Pedro.

Announcer: The pandemic of 2020 wreaked havoc on the world's economies and severely diminished the capacity of families in rural Africa to earn a living. Sadly, those most affected have been children who are beginning to show the unmistakable signs of malnutrition brought on by a lack of food.

Ralph: Without food these children will not survive. They're not wondering what they're going to eat tomorrow, they're wondering are they going to eat tomorrow. So mission feeding is so important. It gets their life back to living. It gets them going to school.

Announcer: Your gift of mission feeding today will reverse the course of malnutrition in a child like Pedro and will be a gift of life for a special child who is desperate to live.

End of video

In the studio:

Sheila: I'll never forget that first trip. I remember getting off the plane in Angola and kind of saying to the Lord, "Open my eyes to see what you want me to see. Help me to notice the things that I might miss apart from you." There is no way that I even needed to pray that prayer because the needs are so there.

That first day that we walked into the malnutrition clinic, one of the things that surprised me that I did not anticipate was the silence of the broken. You expect that the child is in pain or the child is suffering then there would be noise. But so many of these little ones who are laying in these beds in the malnutrition clinic, there was no noise at all. If anything, it was the mothers who are crying. And the children are just simply using all the energy they had just to take one more breath.

And it was just horrifying to me because you know what I thought? I thought half of us, I mean

if you think of us in America, most of us are on diets because we eat too much. And then you look at these children who are dying literally because they don't have one bowl of food a day.

But then I got to go and meet our workers on the ground. You saw a shot there of me being able to hand out the food. I thought before I hand it out to these children, I want to taste it myself because it looked like oatmeal. And it's not, it's a very special recipe that kind of gives all the nutrients and vitamins that children in that part of the world need.

And the contrast between the malnutrition clinic on one day, where I literally went back to, actually we were staying in tents, and laid on my face and said, "Lord, I don't know what to do here." And felt the Lord say, "Sheila, get up! We're not done here."

And then the next day going to a village where we already have set up mission feeding and looking at the children the way you would look at children playing at school. Happy, their bright faces, just interacting with one another. And all because of mission feeding.

We have some amazing partners on the ground who are waiting right now because the commitment that we have made to them is that we will provide enough food for 350,000 children this year. That sounds like a lot, but it is so doable because \$30 will feed three children for three months. I mean you couldn't get one meal for three children for \$30 now but in Africa, that's how far it goes. \$50 feeds five children. \$100 feeds ten children.

Honestly, for any gift you give today, we will send you Lysa's amazing new book, *Forgiving What You Can't Forget*. This will dive deep into your soul as you dive deep and reach out to those who desperately need your help.

So please, will you call now? Will you give the very best gift you can and let's get the help out to those children now in Jesus' name? Thank you!

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:**

Isak: My heart is just broken sitting here in this cemetery surrounded by graves that are each and every one of them, graves for children--little lives that have been stolen by malnutrition, children who have starved to death because they didn't have enough food. It truly breaks my heart.

You know what breaks my heart even more is the fact that we could have avoided this. We could have changed this. We could have stopped these graves from being filled with these little lives. We could have saved these children if we'd just been able to act in time, if we would have been able to get to their village, take Mission Feeding and give them a bowl of food a day.

I need your help today. I need you to help me to ensure that the next grave doesn't get filled with another child who died for no good reason. Please! Give a gift of life today. Give the gift of mission feeding. If you can give \$30, \$50 or \$100 you can save three, five or ten children. Ten children's lives that are relying on you. Ten mothers that are saying please! Please give that gift today. Please help save my child's life.

End of video

In the studio:

Sheila: Thank you so, so much. If the lines are busy, keep calling. Let's do this.

And remember, for any gift at all we will send you Lysa's book, *Forgiving What You Can't Forget*. This book weighs a lot because it cost you a lot but I just want to thank you for the way that you're going to help so many of us move forward in our journey to healing.

Lysa: Thank you, Sheila.

Sheila: So thanks for being with us. You might want to get two copies, get one for a friend. If you know somebody who is hurting and can't forgive, this will be an ideal gift. So until next time, I'm Sheila Walsh saying good-bye and God bless you.