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Week 49: Fall Mission Feeding

Sheila Walsh

"Help Me, Lord"

Sheila: Hi! Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm Sheila Walsh. I'm so glad that you're stopping and sitting here with me for just a few minutes. Over the years we've had the privilege of inviting you to partner with us in helping so many people around the world. I just want you to know that we think about you too. That you matter to us. That when you need us, when you need prayer we're here. You'll see me, or you'll see Randy and I, or Betty and James but there is a whole amazing staff here who are committed to you knowing how much God loves you and that you matter to him.

If you'd asked, if you asked a lot of people okay, give me one word for the year 2020 I'm sure we would get a few doozies. But honestly for me, if you ask me, I would say "prayer." That's the word that became so important to me in 2020.

Over the past few years I've literally poured my heart into studying and learning about that very subject that I believe can be life-changing for every one of us. It is one of the greatest weapons available to those of us who love Jesus Christ. But honestly, sometimes it is something we struggle with. We struggle with knowing how to pray. It doesn't matter the words that we use, the position we adopt. And sometimes we find it hard to know what to say and maybe you feel stuck. And sometimes, honestly, we feel as if we're saying the same things over and over again. And at times we just get distracted or we get too busy. And honestly, sometimes I think we get bored. You may even ask this question, why keep praying when God doesn't seem to be answering? Or why keep praying if God already knows what he's going to do?

At times if you struggle with any of those things it can be tempting to just give up. Don't give up!

What I'm asking God is to help each one of us how to understand and embrace the power of prayer in a bold, in a fresh and in a new way whether you are, perhaps you're already a prayer warrior, if you are we thank you. We need you. Maybe you've just started in your journey of learning how to pray.

For so many of us prayer is often the weapon that kind of sits in the closet stuffed into the back with the old Christmas ornaments. We really mean to get it out some day but someday never comes. I just want to say, prayer is too important for that. There is nothing that Satan our enemy would love more than for you and I to stop praying or to never start. As I've studied and prayed and waited on God, I've learned some simple, powerful ways to reignite our prayer lives and begin our conversations with our Father again.

Over the first 30 years of my life I prayed long prayers, short prayers--I prayed a lot of prayers. But the turning point in prayer for me was when I literally had no words left. Sometimes that's the best place to start. If you watch this program for any length of time you know I have a diagnosis of clinical depression and at times I've really struggled to know how to pray but never more so than on that first night when I was hospitalized.

The little girl in me who decided to follow Jesus with everything she had at 11 years of age was bitterly disappointed in who I felt I'd become and where I'd ended up. I had promised God that I would be perfect, to never disappoint him. And one night there I am first night--first night in a psychiatric hospital. It's even surprising to me to say that now. I thought of all the great prayers I'd prayed over all the years. But that night the only words I prayed were these, help me!

To be honest with you, those words didn't even sound like a prayer back then. I heard them almost as words of defeat because I was so used to be able to pray bold prayers. And to me, those two words, they sounded like a prayer of a drowning woman. But I believe that heaven, that God our Father heard them as honest words of surrender. I think for the first time in my life I admitted to God and to myself that I was in trouble. That I couldn't save myself. I wanted to be the perfect Christian, but I was worn out and broken.

I'm wondering if that's where you are right now. Maybe the days that we are living in are too much for you. And maybe you feel like when you look in the mirror, this is not the life that I thought I would be living. This is not the person I thought I would be. Maybe you're struggling with some anxiety or depression during these difficult days when we don't know what tomorrow brings. But one of the things I've learned is even in the days when I thought I was in control I wasn't--I never was. I think maybe the word *surrender* is really important for you and I right now. I had heard and prayed some amazing prayers over the years but there I was like a child again just two words, "Help me!" When I had no words left in me those two simple desperate words literally changed my life.

So for you, I want to encourage you to start where you are. Start with honest simple prayers. Wherever you find yourself right now talk to God about it. It is so important. If you get nothing else from what I say on this show today, please hear this. You are not alone, God is listening. He is listening to you right now and he wants you to talk to him. Now that may be a struggle for you.

I got a letter the other day from a gentleman who is an inmate in one of our prisons and he said, "When I was a young boy I would go to church with my grandmother and I learned to pray prayers at bedtime or before a meal or something," but he said, "but I've made so many bad choices and now I'm writing you from a prison cell. Does God still want to hear from me?"

Man, I could not get the letter in the mail quick enough to let him know, and if you're watching, to remind you that it doesn't matter where you are, God is with you and God is listening. And the great thing about God is you don't have to clean yourself up or put on a special suit. You don't need to do any of that. You simply come as you are. And sometimes that's a good prayer to pray, "Help me!"

I know that right now some of you are desperate. These are difficult days, but God is still on the throne and he is listening.

I was reading through the gospels last week and one of the most honest, desperate prayers

recorded in scripture were those of literally a drowning man. Do you remember the story? If you want to read it for yourself, you'll find it in Matthew's gospel, Matthew Chapter 14. You can read from verse 22 through 31.

Let me just kind of summarize for you. It was a rough night for the disciples. They were exhausted after a really long day. What had happened that day was what we call, "The feeding of the 5,000." We know that because in scripture in those days they only counted the men so it's really the feeding of the 8,000 or 9,000. Can you imagine that size of a crowd on a hillside listening to Jesus?

And then the disciples are given the task, once Jesus breaks the loaves and fishes, and there is enough for everybody on the hillside plus 12 baskets left over. So the disciples were busy all day. And now it is evening, and they're exhausted. So Jesus told the disciples to get in the boat and make the five-mile journey from Bethsaida towards Gennesaret. Well, it was a particularly rough night, and they were rowing into the wind surrounded by high waves. Violent storms like this could descend on the Sea of Galilee without warning.

Well, it is now 3:00 in the morning and they see a figure walking toward them on the water. It would be hard to see at first who it was. There are waves splashing over this person as they continue walking toward the boat. Now in those days there were all sorts of superstitious beliefs that demons inhabited the water so the disciples, I'm sure they were terrified to see somebody walking the surface of the waves. I mean they thought it was a ghost, but Jesus immediately reassured them, "Don't be afraid! Take courage. I'm here. I'm here!"

When you think about it, for the disciples every single day unveiled something new about Jesus. At the wedding in Cana they discovered wow! He can turn water into the best wine. And then they saw my gosh, he can heal the sick. And then they'd seen that day he could feed an army for almost nothing. But now this! Now he can walk on water.

So Peter asked, "If it really is you, tell me to come to you."

Now to those who wanted to see Jesus perform miracles as if he were a side show entertainer Jesus refused but to that small amount of faith that was growing inside Peter he said, "Come."

So I can't even imagine what the other disciples thought as Peter put one leg over the side of the boat and then the other onto this incredibly stormy sea. Can you imagine what his friends thought as they watched Peter walk on water?

Now we don't actually know how far he got or how far Christ was from the boat but we do know this, when Peter took his eyes off of Jesus for a moment and began to look around at the size of the waves he panicked and he began to sink. And that night he prayed one of the most honest, desperate, powerful prayers anyone of us can ever pray, "Save me, Lord!" I love that prayer.

I even think of, I was with some friends of mine, Steve Arterburn and Henry Cloud, and they were discussing the kind of issues that the church is struggling with. And the percentage of those within the church who are struggling with online pornography is off the charts. But like mental illness used to be, it is one of those subjects we just don't talk about. We think well that is not very seemly to be talking about.

If one member of the body of Christ is struggling with it, we should be talking about it because here is a prayer that would be a powerful prayer. Whether it's you're reaching for a bottle of alcohol and you said you'd never touch it again or you're about to go onto that website and you said you'd never do it again. This is a powerful prayer, "Save me, Lord!"

Well, Jesus responded. He reached out and he grabbed hold of Peter. And Matthew goes on to tell us that the moment Christ was in the boat with Peter the sea suddenly became calm. Matthew 14, verse 32 when he climbed back into the boat the wind stopped. "Help me, Lord!" "Save me, Lord!" Those kinds of prayers acknowledge something that is always true but we're not always aware of it. You and I, we cannot save ourselves. This is a prayer of absolute surrender. It's very simple, help me! '

When I prayed that broken prayer through heaving sobs on the floor of my hospital room that I

told you about earlier, the words of one of my favorite Psalms washed over me in waves. The Lord is close to the brokenhearted. He rescues those whose spirits are crushed.

No matter what's going on in our lives you and I are invited to pray. We're invited to pray no matter where we are. You don't need a special place. Some people like to, you can pray in your closet, you can pray in your shower, you can pray in your office, in your car. My husband Barry, when he walks the dogs at night, he prays out loud, which is entertaining for our neighbors. You can wait in line... you can pray as you wait in line at the grocery store. You can pray at your chemotherapy appointment. You can pray anywhere. You can pray everywhere. This truth when we stop and think about it is overwhelming. God invites you and me to just come into his presence. Amazing! And I don't want you to pass over this so let me just say this one more time, come as you are right now and talk to him.

Another amazing thing I've learned, you get to process your pain in the presence of God. No matter what you're feeling or what you're going through, God is waiting for you. The Bible is full of God teaching us about prayer. Those who lived before the time of Christ could never have imagined the invitation to come before God just the way you are and talk to him and have a relationship with him. Back then people had no direct access to God. But God wanted his presence to be with his people so he told Moses have the people of Israel build me a holy sanctuary so I can live among them.

Well, I don't know if you've ever seen a picture or model of the temple but there was an outer court where the priests could go and offer sacrifices. But the holy of holies, where God's presence and his glory rested could only be accessed once a year and only by the high priest. An embroidered veil the width of a man's hand separated the holy place from the holy of holies. But remember what happened?

Let's go to the New Testament and see where everything changed for you and me. The life and death of Jesus changed everything. His last cry from the cross tore that embroidered veil in two. We read Jesus uttered another loud cry and breathed his last and the curtain in the sanctuary of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. I love that we are told that it was torn from top to

bottom. Only God could have done that. Only God!

See here's what God was saying to you and me. Come on in. You're welcome. I'm waiting for you. Anytime, anywhere, the barrier between God and you, between God and me was torn in two.

You know one of the beautiful things in the Old Testament with the inner holy of holies, you have the Ark of the Covenant where the glory of the Lord and where the Ten Commandments were but on top of the ark was the mercy seat. And that's where the blood would be sprinkled when the priests made atonement for the sins of the people. But now Jesus' blood has been sprinkled over you and I, and now we get to come right into the very presence of God. We can live a transformed life if we begin to understand the power of prayer.

And maybe you're watching this and maybe you're 14 and you think am I too young? No! Maybe you're 94; is it too late to start? No! Come to God as you are. Pray, talk to him. You don't need fancy words. He is not looking for fancy words he just welcomes your presence. I love it says in scripture, "I will live in them and walk among them. I will be their God and they will be my people."

You know there are some people around the world at the moment that are very much on our hearts and minds here at *LIFE Today*. Moms who bring little ones into the world and all they want to do is to be able to feed their children. But they have to put their children to bed at night literally starving. But there is something that you and I can do about that. Watch this.

On the mission field:

Announcer: *LIFE Outreach International* teams, along with our mission partners travel the world documenting the needs of families who lack the very basics of life. Without a doubt, Africa's children always tear at the heart of our teams when they see them struggling with extreme circumstances.

Sheila: I cannot imagine what it would be like to be a mother like this and want desperately to help your child. This is the hospital that some of these moms had to walk 10 or 15 kilometers with a seriously malnourished baby just to try to get some help. And if they can get here in time then there is some hope. But time is everything here as you can see.

Translator: I remember when my brother died. We were hungry and he was so thin. My mom took him to a clinic that was very far away, and he died on the way there.

Announcer: It is now up to us to do something to help relieve the plight of these little ones. A bowl of food a day provided through our mission feeding program can make the difference between life and death for young children.

Sheila: But my prayer is that we can save hundreds of other children before they get to this stage. No child should ever get to this stage. No mom should have to ever watch this. So if we do something now, we can stop this from happening.

End of video

In the studio:

Sheila: I will never forget what it was like to walk into a malnutrition clinic the first time. Honestly, I'd seen things on television before. I'd watched specials. In fact, years before I worked at *LIFE Today*, I would watch James and Betty and I would watch the stories that they brought. But it is really different when you walk in there and you sit beside a mom and look at her little one and realize that that child may simply have moments, hours left to live. And not because a mom doesn't care. That's the thing that's the most heartbreaking thing. These mothers love their children every bit as much as I love my son, or you love your children. They've just been born in an area of the world where there is extreme poverty and extreme malnutrition. But that's why I love the ministry of mission feeding. It is hope. It is hope in a bowl!

Here's our commitment for this year. We want to be able to feed 350,000 children. That might seem like wow! How are you going to do that? Here's how we're going to it. Do you know that for \$30 we can feed three children for three months? Think about that. Maybe you have three children. \$30 wouldn't feed a family for one night.

But in Africa because of the people we work with on the ground, because of the nutritious food that's specifically made for children in that area of the world, \$30 will feed three children not for a night, not for a week, but for three whole months. We can all do that.

Maybe you can do a little more. \$50 will feed five children for three months. \$100 will feed ten. And if you're able to \$1,000 would feed 100 children for three months. Think about the way we just waste money. We go through a drive through and pick up food and don't really think about it. But there are mothers who are literally on their knees right now and they're saying, "God, please hear my prayer."

I've encountered some amazing faith-filled women in the least likely places. Women that you would think would have given up on God, but they have not! And we are not going to give up on them. So I'm asking you, please, will you at least do something? Go to your phone. Make the very best gift possible. \$30--we can give up something and \$30 would feed three children for three whole months. That's literally life-changing. And when we stand before the Lord finally and hear him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

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: No way for me to tell you how grateful I am to see these bags of food; I'm told over 70,000 meals on this one load. Betty and I started out really helping Peter feed 10,000 children. Now we're approaching nearly a half million.

I just say thank God because I've seen so many things happen. Children that were dying are now being fed and going to school.

It's all because of the food factory. It's all because of mission feeding and mission feeding is all because of you.

I'm saying to you right here from a miracle in Africa, you are the reason for the miracle. To God be the glory but it is God's love being expressed through you and you are glorifying God by your action and by your gifts. Thank you for helping. Let's keep doing it.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: Thank you so much! If you tried to get through and the lines are busy, keep, keep calling. And for a gift of \$100 we're sending these beautiful tea towels but these bowls, I love these bowls! A blessing in every bowl. I'm just thinking, what a great way to teach your children. Put their cereal in it in the morning or put some apple slices and remind them why you have the bowls because you reached out and you made a difference in the lives of children all around the world.

So thank you for doing that. We don't take it for granted but we never ever apologize for asking in the name of Jesus because we have seen the difference that you can make. So for all of us here at *LIFE Today*, God bless you and we'll see you next time.