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Week 50: Fall Mission Feeding

Sheila Walsh

"Regret"

Sheila: Hi! Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm Sheila Walsh. One of the things I enjoyed most about when Christian, our son was just a little boy was watching him try new things. He would go through all sorts of different stages. He wanted an aquarium at one point. And then he wanted some kind of lizard that you needed locusts to feed. It was like I had the plague of Egypt in the house.

But I remember him saying to me one time when he was thinking of doing...I think it was skateboarding, "What if I'm not good at it, mom?"

I said, "Darling, just try. When you get to be 70, you'll never regret that you tried something and it didn't work but you might regret not even trying."

It made me think about that. I was kind of thinking about today's program last night when I was just sitting out enjoying a final cup of tea in the evening. And I was thinking about that word *regret*. How does that word sit with you? When you hear it, how does it strike your heart? Regret is a small word but at times it reflects a decision as lightweight as say, I don't know, backing out of a movie or dinner plans. But sometimes and for some people *regret* can consume their lives.

You might regret your choice of college and are convinced your life would have turned out differently if you had gone to another school or chosen a different major. I got a letter a couple week ago from a woman saying she regretted her choice of a husband and fantasizes about what her life would be like if she'd married the guy who's just joined the church. Maybe you regret your decision to wait until your career was well established

before you tried to have children and now you're struggling.

When the consequences of a decision are weighty, regret can spiral out of control. It can literally torment people. You catch yourself often lost in that merciless world of "what ifs." What if I had said yes to flood insurance? It was a relatively small amount, how on earth will we recover from this disaster?

What if I'd refused...? This actually was a letter from a woman and it just broke my heart. What if I'd refused that abortion that my college boyfriend insisted on? She said, "I know that's why I can't have children now. God is punishing me." That is not the God we serve. But that was the regret that she was living with. Regret, it punishes us with no end or with no hope in sight. We're faced with the truth that much as we long to, we can't turn the clock back and make a different decision.

So I'm just wondering, if you just pause for a moment, can you identify your own regrets? They might not be as serious as some of the situations that I've listed but they can feel as if they are pulling you under. And regret that is not dealt with can literally ruin someone's life.

When Barry and I moved to Dallas we bought a house in an area that we thought would be ideal for our son who at that time, Christian was seven, and there were lots of other families with young children. But within a few months it was clear to us as for sale signs went up all around the neighborhood that where we had chosen was not the kind of dream neighborhood we'd imagined. We were very close to the local high school and teenage drivers would come racing down our street in their cars. Barry and I put signs out to slow them down, but it didn't make any difference. Well, after one incident when Christian was almost knocked off his bike by two boys racing each other past our home, I was so troubled and I said to Barry, "I think we need to move."

Well, the housing market back then was favorable to sellers. Remember those days? So we put our house up for sale. We had two couples that were very interested. And at the

same time we found a house in the neighborhood where we wanted to live. We knew it would be snapped up quickly and we didn't want to lose it.

Yep! I'm sure you can see where this is going. So we went ahead and put in an offer for the home we wanted, which was accepted. And almost before the ink was dry on our signatures the bottom fell out of the housing market and both couples backed out of purchasing our home.

For four long years we owned two homes. And honestly, it was a financial nightmare. I can't tell you how many days and nights Barry and I beat ourselves up for such a hasty decision. I mean if somebody said to me, "I found the perfect home. Mine hasn't quite sold yet but I think it will. Should I go ahead?" I would say with everything in me, "No! No! No! But I didn't listen to the prompting of the Holy Spirit in my own life. It caused us a lot of pain and regret.

My mom's favorite scripture verse was one that many hold on to in times of regret. Jeremiah 29:11, "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord. Plans for welfare, not for evil, to give you a future and a hope."

Well, it's tempting to take that one verse and make it the whole truth of that chapter. But if you take it out of context you make it what you want it to be. But Jeremiah is writing, he's writing this letter to God's people who are in exile in Babylon and they are dealing with the consequences of their sinful choices. In fact, if you read two verses before Jeremiah 29:11 you discover that they will be in captivity for 70 years before they will be able to return to their land. What Jeremiah wanted to remind them, and it speaks to us, is that no matter how many wrong choices we make, God is still in control and God is watching over us.

I thought today we'd take a look at a woman in the Old Testament who most likely lived with many regrets, but God took her life and positioned her with the ability to save her entire family. And not only that, he placed this woman who made so many bad choices

right into the lineage of Jesus Christ.

Well, we begin the story by looking at Joshua chapter two, verses one and two. You might remember:

Then Joshua secretly sent out two spies from the Israelite camp at Acacia Grove. He instructed them, "Scout out the land on the other side of the Jordan River, especially around Jericho."

Well, this was just the beginning of a new day for God's people. It was time to take the land that God had promised to their forefather Abraham. So Joshua sent two spies into Jericho to scope out the situation. Not to see if it was possible because God said it was, and this time they believed it but to devise a strategy.

Jericho, archaeologists think, may well be the world's oldest city. It was built about 6,000 years before the death of Moses. Actually, its ruins can still be seen 17 miles northeast of Jerusalem. It stood as the Gateway to the land God promised his people, Canaan. It was a big city, sizable city that could probably hold about 2,000 people within the city gates and others beyond. It was well-fortified, supplied by strong springs.

And now it was time for the spies to go in. So this is what we read:

So the two men set out and came to the house of a prostitute named Rahab and stayed there that night.

Now you might be tempted to think that is a strange choice for two men on a mission from God. But really, if you think about it, it is very strategic. People would be used to seeing strangers going in and out of a prostitute's home. But more importantly than that, and this is the big deal, God saw Rahab's heart and knew that she was ready to step out of her regrets and into a relationship with him.

Her home built into the city wall probably gave her a vantage point to observe travelers coming into the city and scope out new clients. But Rahab picked up more than that. She had heard about the God of Israel. We read this:

Before the spies went to sleep that night, Rahab went up on the roof to talk with them. "I know the Lord has given you this land," She told them. "We are all afraid of you. Everyone in the land is living in terror for we have heard how the Lord made a dry path for you through the Red Sea when you left Egypt. And we know what you did to Sihon and Og, the two Amorite kings east of the Jordan River, whose people you completely destroyed. No wonder our hearts have melted in fear! No one has the courage to fight after hearing such things.

This is what she says. Remember this is a prostitute.

"For the Lord your God is the supreme God of the heavens above and the earth below."

What a confession of faith! Before the two spies ever knocked on Rahab's door, God, our loving father had been knocking on her heart. Can you see the grace and the mercy of God here? No matter what choices Rahab had ever made in her life, no matter how many bitter regrets she nursed that no one else could see, God saw. And he sent two men right to her door to save her. Rahab knew the sign was from God and she was ready to act. She was obviously, a very courageous woman who not only wanted to save her own life, she wanted to save the lives of her family.

Rahab risked her life by sheltering the two spies when the king's men came to her door demanding she give them up. She told them that the men had been there, but they left the city just as the gates were about to close for the night. The soldiers left and the spies were safe for the moment, and it was time for Rahab to make her request. This is what she said,

"Now swear to me by the Lord that you will be kind to me and my family since I have helped you. Give me some guarantee that when Jericho is conquered, you will let me live, along with my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all their families."

We offer our own lives as a guarantee for your safety, "The men agreed. If you don't betray us, we will keep our promise and be kind to you when the Lord gives us the land."

I love the sign the spies gave Rahab. She was told, you might remember, to hang a scarlet rope from her window and when the city fell, she and all her family would be saved. A scarlet rope--it's always been our sign. Whether it was a scarlet trickle of blood in the Garden of Eden when God made coats of skin for Adam and Eve or lambs' blood on the door post of God's people held captive in Egypt, our story is one always told in scarlet. Our salvation and deliverance is in Christ and no other.

Rahab was marked by her faith in God. Do you know that Rahab is one of only five women mentioned in the lineage of Christ? I mean that's the outrageous grace of the gospel that a woman can move from prostitute to family. And not only family, but also the line from which Christ would come.

I worked out Rahab was King David's great, great, great-grandmother. And in Hebrews 11 Rahab is listed as one saved by her faith. Scripture salutes not only her faith but in James she is also commended for her actions. This is what we read in James:

"Rahab the prostitute is another example. She was shown to be right with God by her actions when she hid knows messengers and sent them safely away on a different road."

When the city walls collapsed and the Israelites stormed into Jericho, only one family survived. Yeah! Rahab's. They survived because of a scarlet cord hanging from a

window. We don't know anything about the lives of Rahab's family, what kind of people they were because it didn't matter. What saved them, what saves you and me, is a scarlet cord, the blood over the door post, the shed blood of Christ.

Don't allow regret for what you have done to rob you of the joy of who you are in Christ.

For as high as the heavens are above the earth so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him, as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him.

We read that in Psalm 103.

Isn't that amazing to think that God could have chosen anyone to hide the spies? Literally anyone in Jericho. He could have had a nice little family that have been taking care of people for years. He chose Rahab the harlot, a woman most likely despised by society. And as he brought the Israelites into the Promised Land, Rahab was part of his grand scheme.

So you might be sitting there thinking, well, nice story, Sheila, but how does that impact me and the regrets that I carry? Well, admittedly it is unlikely that spies will show up on your door step checking out the security of your home before they march around the wall seven times blowing trumpets but there are steps we can take to lay our regrets down. Take your deepest regrets to the cross. Own them. Allow yourself to feel the weight.

The old English root of the word *regret* is *regrata* which speaks of sorrow and lament. Sometimes we try and just brush over things. There is value in sorrow and lament. Speak them out to your Father and let him exchange what you cannot carry for what he has designed just for you. It's the Father's heart that we would move from regret to rest. Be honest about your regret. Stuffing regret down into the basement of your soul is not dealing with it.

The enemy loves to rifle through regret and drag it back upstairs. No! We admit it. We confess it. And we ask Christ to forgive us for what we have done or what we have left undone. And then we make amends whenever possible. If you regret something you did or failed to do that wounded someone else, do all you can to repair that breach asking nothing of the one you wounded other than forgiveness. Allow yourself to grieve your losses. Feel the pain of the things you wish had been or once were. Grieving is a painful but honestly it is a healing process. Allow yourself to be human after all.

And then forgive. Forgive yourself and those who play the part in the regrets of your life. When you forgive, you're the one who is set free. Ask God for the courage to live again. Don't allow the enemy to convince you that you've forfeited your part in the great redemption plan of God. That is a lie. We are God's children.

I'm just thinking of you right now and praying that by the grace of God, whatever your regrets are, you would bring them to Jesus and lay them down and do not pick them up anymore. When we ask for forgiveness, his blood covers us. That scarlet cord is thrown over our lives and he remembers it no more. And from that freedom, that new freedom it is like the Lord washes our eyes for the second time and we suddenly see people differently.

That's part of our heart here at LIFE that we want to see people. And there are some people who have a great need at the moment, but the amazing thing is you and I can be an answer to their prayer. We can cast that scarlet cord right over them. Watch this.

On the mission field

Announcer: I am a mother's worst nightmare. I thrive on the pain of children. I do not discriminate, and I show no mercy.

Sheila: You look into the eyes of a child who is seriously malnourished and there is just nothing. It is like somebody just turned the light off.

Announcer: You won't see me coming but you will soon hear me in your children's cries.

[Children crying]

My touch brings bloated stomachs, thinning hair that changes color, painful skin disorders and tiny bodies so thin and frail they appear as living skeletons.

Sheila: To see this little helpless one with the skin literally peeling off his arms and his legs was such a horrifying sight.

Announcer: I am slow but sure. My name is malnutrition, and my legacy is death.

Sheila: I heard someone on the news one day make a comment about the devastating deaths of children in some countries in Africa. And yet the reporter suggested that perhaps the mothers there were "more accustomed to that because it is very much a part of their life." [Sighing] I've seen with my own eyes what I knew in my gut -- no mother will ever become accustomed to burying a child.

The thing that really has blown me away the most, all of this is reversible.

[Children Laughing]

End of clip

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:

Isak: You can see here how our staff are actually busy measuring the arm circumference of these children. So what they do is they measure their arm circumference, they measure their height, they measure their weight and then they gauge that against the age of the child. Because for many of these children they're suffering from severe malnutrition. And the shocking thing is we find children in this area that literally are five, six, seven, eight years old and yet, they are the weight and the size of a child half their age.

This is a crisis and crisis require a massive action and that's what I'm asking you today, to give a massive action, an action of life -- lifesaving by providing food to these children to their mothers, to this village that so desperately needs it.

End of video

In the studio:

Sheila: Isn't that amazing? Don't you love that we get to do this? If you're able to give a gift of \$100 or more, we'll send you these wonderful bowls. I love these! Share life in word and deed. Life, live it, give it. Great place to have your morning cereal in and talk to your kids about this privilege we have as God's sons and daughters to make a difference in the lives of others.

So for James and Betty and all of us here at *LIFE Today*, God bless you. We'll see you next time!