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Week 51: Fall Mission Feeding

Sheila Walsh

Chrystal Evans Hurst

Sheila: Hi! Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm Sheila Walsh. Let me ask you a question. Do you ever think, okay, I'm going to start praying, I'm going to be faithful in it? I'm going to do it every morning. I'm going to do it every night. Then two days in, you kind of have fallen off. And then you feel guilty and you think, why can't I do this? Well, dun-ta-tada-dun! Well, we have a friend here today to help us. She's written a fantastic book called, *The 28-Day Prayer Journey*, Chrystal Evans Hurst. Thank you for being with us.

Chrystal: Thanks for having me. Glad to be here with you, Sheila.

Sheila: Let me ask about the back story of this book. What led to writing this?

Chrystal: So I don't have a problem with what to say to God. I hear a lot of people say they don't know what to say. I just don't take the opportunity consistently to say it. So it's the emergency prayer, the oh my gosh! Save me now! Save-me-yesterday prayer.

So the year that Priscilla was in War Room, which is a movie about prayer was not too far from the time my grandmother died. So there were a lot of conversations about my grandmother being a prayer warrior. Priscilla had dedicated the book that she wrote to go along with that to my grandmother. Because my grandmother had this spiral notebook that she would write our prayer requests in, and then she would check in with us and say, "How is it going?"

And then I would say, "Oh that already happened."

And she would say, "Well, you have to tell me because it is in my book. I keep praying about it until you..."

So all this talk about prayer, I just felt guilty. I just felt guilty that I don't pray consistently enough. I'm good to pray when there is a problem but not just because I get to talk to God.

So I'm a guinea pig person for myself meaning I will say I'm going to do something and then if I said I was going to do it then I feel accountable because I said I was going to do it. I'm

Enneagram three-person and all these different things, achiever, all that. So I said if I tell people on Instagram that I'm going to pray straight for 28 days and if I share my prayers on Instagram then I'll do it.

So I prayed throughout the day, but I would share at least six of my thoughts about prayer, thanksgiving, repentance, requests, yielding, surrender to God. I would share them every day and this was back when Instagram was chronological. So if they were on there, they would see it. It wouldn't be too far back.

So I put those up for 28 days and I had so many people say, "That was so helpful. Can we do that again?" So I did another 28-day prayer challenge on Instagram. And then it turned into a little seven-day download that was on my website. That was years ago. And then my publisher said, "So do you want to make that into a book?"

I said, "Well, I don't know if there is enough content."

Then we went and got all of it and there was a lot of content. You write six times a day for 28 days there is a lot of content. So that's how it came about. I wasn't trying to write a book. I was just trying to hold myself accountable to talking to God and to encourage

other people to do the same while I was doing that for myself.

Sheila: What I found really interesting and different is that I have a book, in fact it was Priscilla who recommended it, where it's a morning prayer and an evening prayer. But you have morning, afternoon, and evening. That's kind of different.

Chrystal: Again, it was six times a day on Instagram. I was like nobody is going to carry a book around and open it up six times a day but we all have the mind-set at least even if we don't eat three times a day, we have that ingrained, morning, afternoon, and evening meal. So if we can have that ingrained, I thought we can have this ingrained. And at least in the morning or around lunchtime or around the evening you can make time to talk to God and just check in.

Sheila: Why do you think so many of us who love God and have walked with God for years struggle with prayer?

Chrystal: Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. And prayer requires faith that a God who I can't see wants to be engaged in a conversation that to the naked eye is going to look like I'm talking to myself--literally! It is easier to pick up the phone when there is something exciting or to call a girlfriend or to say to your husband, "Hey! Guess what happened today." It is easier to complain about something that is driving you crazy than to reckon with the fact that you can take a concern to God, but he is just not interested in ongoing grumbling and complaining.

David teaches us that being honest with God is an option, asking questions, sharing your struggle, being honest and transparent and authentic. But to come to God to say, I actually want to talk to the person who knows more about this life than I do, who can do something about what concerns me, who wants to hear about my gratitude, and who desires for me to yield on an ongoing basis. And to do that with somebody I can't touch and feel, prayer is an act of faith that what you're feeling, what you're thinking, what's concerning you when you basically put it into the atmosphere in the form of a prayer and

say, hey God, I can't see you but I'm going to put all of my thoughts, I'm going to share my desires, I'm going to communicate my longings and trust that you hear me, that you're going to inculcate that into the plans that you have for my life. And then for the things I have no power to take care of on my own that you can.

Sheila: One of the things, I've been studying on prayer for two or three years but one of the things that I noticed about the Psalms in particular is David, mainly, but his brutal honesty in prayer. It wasn't this kind of always, "Bless the Lord, O my soul." Do you think we struggle to be authentic with God?

Chrystal: I think so. I think for many of us, first of all because we see prayer modeled in a professional way, there is the way that the pastors do it and the people who are good at prayer, they do it. And then if we're not praying like that then we don't feel like it is really prayer maybe, and so that's a part of it. But also, it's that we have an incorrect picture of God. That God is waiting at any moment to strike us with lightning if we say it the wrong way. Or that we can't unlock the goodness of God if we don't pray it a certain way. Because we don't think we know the way then we don't pray.

One of the things I love about David is that when Samuel was looking for the next king, God said, "I'm looking at the heart. I'm looking at the heart." And then in Acts he says, "David was a man after my own heart."

So in-between that we have a few things. We have the Psalms, all this brutal honesty but we also have David as a murderer and David as an adulterer. And still, he's referred to as "a man after God's own heart." One of the things that I think, at least it's given me some solace in my desire to be honest with God is that David was just willing to keep the lines of communication open, he always would come full circle, I'm mad, I'm upset, I'm scared, where are you? This is what I believe to be true about you. So he kept his faith in who God was even though he had to walk through the reality of his every day, and he just communicated about both simultaneously.

Really, Jesus did the same thing in the garden of Gethsemane. Jesus is God, right? So he's praying and he's acknowledging as he's sweating blood, "I really don't want to do this. Is there another way?" So Jesus knows I've got to die on the cross. This was the plan the whole time. But honest, I really don't want to do this. Is there another way to do this?

I figure if Jesus can be honest with his Father that way and if David can be a man after God's own heart and be honest about the ups and the downs of life, well, then me as a woman, since God already knows everything I'm thinking and feeling anyway, why don't I just keep it clean with God and just be honest? Because maybe in my honesty, maybe that's actually where the drawing close to God is.

Sheila: I loved hearing about your grandmother and her spiral notebook. But I also loved your mom and it's not been very long since your mom has passed. I just want to say how sorry we are and what a great gift she was, obviously to you as a mom. But I wondered how did prayer impact you in the midst of something that you don't want? Obviously, you wanted God to heal your mom.

Chrystal: Yeah. Well, if I can just be honest. Jesus and I still have conversations about that. I mean I just one of my prayer requests is that I know he doesn't owe me anything. God doesn't owe me anything. However I have asked, can I please see why? Can I please see...

Honestly, the timing of her passing was, I mean the choice of words is a little odd here but it was almost impeccable in the sense that she had been up and down with her health but when my dad, when we were celebrating him on a special weekend at our church for the launch of the commentary and the Bible, and celebrating that. She had been up and down in and out of that hospital. But that weekend, she was well enough to be a part of that in a very great way. It was a great weekend. We celebrated their birthdays, all these different things and she was a part of that.

She was able to be here for her birthday. We celebrated her birthday. That was the last

time that she came out of the house. I even looked at her a few weeks before she passed and she was, of course, when someone's in pain and you just reach that point where you're like I'm done. And I looked at her and I said, "But you can't leave me before Christmas."

Christmas was her favorite holiday. She kind of looked at me and blinked. And on Christmas morning I looked at her and I said, "Merry Christmas."

And she opened her eyes and kind of looked like, it is Christmas. In fact, she looked at me and she said, rolled her eyes like [Laughing] I'm here for you because you asked me to. Now leave me alone.

But even little things like that, and then we jump into 2020 and we're in the middle of a pandemic. I know a lot of people have had to care for people or have lost loved ones during 2020 but I think, man she was here for the most special opportunity for her and my dad to celebrate the culmination of all of his work. And then we didn't have to care for her or the stress of her being alone or even passing alone in 2020. That was a gift. That was a gift.

So God, if you were going to take her, the timing of you taking her was a gift. So while I wish she was still here and I do say to God, I would love to know why. You let her get to 70. You gave her 70 but I would love to...

Sheila: She was still a young woman.

Chrystal: Yeah! Young and healthy, it was just cancer out of nowhere that was just a crazy incurable cancer. She ate organic and worked out three times a week and they were on the cusp of what they were expecting to be some of the best years of their life together. So it is a prayer request. I'm like, God, I would love to see what it is that you're doing in the life of my father or the life of our family that had she been here it wouldn't have been able... I don't even know what that is. But I ask that question. I may never get

the answer but I just, that's a part of prayer too. Prayer isn't always neat and packaged. It is are you kidding me? It is are you serious? It is why? It is asking why.

But just like my children when they come to me, if they have questions, me as a parent, I want to know their heart. I want the communication. I don't want them quiet and sullen and locked away in a room. I would rather them come to me with their questions, with their frustration, with their tears, with their (respectful) but anger [Laughing], tell the truth but remember I'm the mom. I'd rather them come to me than withdraw and be quiet.

Sometimes the answers I have wouldn't be enough for them. They wouldn't understand. They would still have questions and sometimes I can't answer because I don't have it at that moment. But that doesn't mean I don't want them coming to me because our relationship isn't about my answer, it's about our communication and that's what prayer is. It isn't about our answer. That's what happens when we reduce prayer to getting an answer. What if prayer is not about finding an answer, it's about finding God.

Sheila: I think that's huge, Chrystal because I know at one of the darkest places in my life and I wanted an answer for something, but I fasted and prayed and I discovered what I really wanted was the presence of Christ. Because an answer gives you an answer. But the presence of Christ changes everything. You've included a lot of things in this book that are really helpful. You talk about the role of gratitude. Why is that so important?

Chrystal: It is about changing your perspective. We went to Disney World a few years ago and right at the end of our Disney World trip my husband got sick and we had to, the last night, had to put him in the hospital and we ended up doubling our stay.

Sheila: Oh my gosh!

Chrystal: In Orlando because he was in the hospital for a week. He had an infection and we had to sit there until he could get all the antibiotics. Now today, if you ask my children what they remember about that trip, they don't really remember, they don't focus

on the fact that he was in the hospital. They focus on the fact that we had a great time because what I framed from that trip wasn't the hospital visit. It was the fun time, the time at the pool, the time on the roller coaster, that's what I framed.

And what gratitude does is it chooses what you frame. It doesn't mean that bad things don't happen. It doesn't mean that there aren't difficulties. It doesn't mean that there aren't things that you wish you could change but it does mean that you get to have a different perspective. And gratitude frames what God has done. Gratitude frames the goodness that God has given. And when you are focused on what God has done it even changes your expectation for what he can do.

What was the problem with the children of Israel? They just keep grumbling and complaining. They begged him to get out of Egypt, he did that. Then they're like we're hungry. Then he gave them manna, and then they complained about that. They were sick of the bread. Then he gave them quail and it made them sick and then they were mad at him for... It was just the never-ending grumbling story. What it did is it kept them going in circles. And the thing is gratitude keeps you looking at what's right, helps you to recognize what's good, and it keeps your expectation for what is good that can come.

And also, we know that the power of life and death is in the tongue. When you frame what's good in your life then you are expecting good things, not just with your thoughts but also with what you're saying about your life and about the life of the people that you love.

Sheila: You also use a word in here that I think is very misunderstood. You talk about repentance.

Chrystal: We don't like to talk about repentance, but it is a great word!

Sheila: It is great but even as a culture, so often it is more about being caught or being told we have to change as opposed to having a genuine heart of repentance. What did

repentance do for us?

Chrystal: It clears up the air. If you have a relationship that's important to you and that you want to enjoy full on authentic transparent communication and there is something that's not quite right but you value that relationship, you want to clear the air. We all have had a relationship situation. Maybe it is with a girlfriend where she kind of said or did something and it struck you the wrong way. And then she maybe doesn't even know that you were bothered. So then she may come to you and say, or you go to her and say, "Hey, somethings a little different, and if I offended you..." Or "When I said this the other day, if I offended you, I'm sorry." It clears the air!

In a relationship with my husband, who wants to on apologize? Let's be real? Who wants to acknowledge you're in the wrong? But the truth of the matter is if you enjoy your relationship with your spouse and there is a friction that's happening, for you to say, I'm sorry. I know when I said that the other day, that just was not the right thing, or I said it the wrong way. And relationships are better when the air is clear.

And God is holy, and God is righteous, and sometimes we say I'm sorry, we don't even know what for. We just know, I really haven't been really focused on honoring you with my life. Or other times it is specifically, I lied yesterday. And apart from the damage that that may have done to that relationship, that offended you and I'm sorry. I don't want to do anything that blocks our communication, that blocks the Holy Spirit's work in my life, that blocks his power in my heart. And so I'm sorry so that the air is clear.

Sheila: I like that phrase, "clearing the air" because you can tell when there is that intimate communication and you can tell. An interesting thing, Chrystal is we've been married for like 26 years and it's taken me 20 of those to learn how to say sorry quickly. There is something in me that I just kind of wanted to frame it differently or be defensive rather than--it takes humility to ask for forgiveness, I think.

Chrystal: It does. And we tend towards pride.

Sheila: Yeah! I know. The other thing you talk about is you say surrender is satisfying. What do you mean by that?

Chrystal: Well, the thing is we are prideful creatures. We would rather hold our own autonomy, do things our own way. And we think that in holding tight to our own idea of power, to our idea of autonomy that we gain something, instead of realizing that when we surrender our will, our desires, even sometimes the decisions we'd rather make that we can enjoy not having to be the heavy--not having to be the heavy. And realizing that in surrender there is the fullness of joy, and joy brings satisfaction.

It is like eating a meal. I could totally eat all the things I wanted to but with that comes a cost.

[Laughter]

You know? But the reality is when I eat to satisfaction there is a joy in that and surrendering to what I don't want to do, which is to stop here brings enough satisfaction. And God has more in store for us than we do for ourselves. And what if we are indulging on things that add to our load when what he has for us actually meets exactly what we need and brings satisfaction without the strain and the stress unnecessarily on us carrying it all ourselves. But we never know that if we don't surrender.

Sheila: As you can tell, there is a lot more in Chrystal's book, *The 28-Day Prayer Journey*: A daily guide to conversations with God.

One of the things that we love here at *LIFE* is the privilege we have of reaching out and touching people who we might never meet on this earth but making a difference in Jesus' name because he's made a difference in our lives. I want you to watch something and then I'm going to tell you how you can help.

On the mission field

Open Captions:

>> We're asking this lady here if she can talk about... She lost, I think she had three children, four children. Was there a sickness or was it hunger?

>> Yes, it was hunger.

>> I had four children who died. I took them to the hospital, but they couldn't help. They died because of hunger.

>> I lost three children. They died from hunger and a lack of medicine.

Sheila: I know when I've seen pictures of malnourished children -- severely malnourished children before, I thought it is too late, there is nothing I can do. But what I discovered while I was here is that with the first bowl of food you reverse the process. The minute nutrition begins to enter the body of a child it is as if death turns a corner and life marches in.

It is amazing what every single one of us can do! So you might look at these pictures and think like I did, this is overwhelming. It might seem that way but that's just a lie of the enemy. This is fixable. We can do this. We can turn from death to life in a moment.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: When I came back from that trip, I began to see that it's just, I make it sound there, I guess it was my first time being in Angola, I make it sound like it's automatic. And it is not but it is the beginning of a life-giving process when we are able to get to

children before they get to that place. We want to help children before they end up in the malnutrition clinics because once they're there, they're in such a bad place. And so often, we met mothers who had walked ten kilometers to bring a desperately sick child to a clinic.

What we want to do is set up feeding programs in the villages before a child would ever get to that place. We have amazing partners on the ground. One of the things I love most about James and Betty is they have never gone into any country and said, here we are. We're going to fix everything. They always say, God, who are you using in this country? How can we underwrite that? How can we support that?

And we have amazing partners on the ground. And we've made a commitment to them to be able to feed 350,000 children this year. I don't want us to fall one child short of that. And it is very doable. No matter where you find yourself, no matter what kind of income level you have, every single one of us can do something. Do you know that \$30 will feed three children for three whole months? You couldn't conceive of that here. But the food that we provide is made in Africa, especially for these children and with the nutrients they need and the protein they need, it is very cost effective. I mean, \$30, what can you do with \$30 these days? But you could feed three children for three months. If you're able to do \$50 that will feed five children for three months. For some of you who perhaps you have a business or God has blessed your finances this year, although I know it's been a struggle for many people, \$1,000 would feed 100 children for three months.

Let me tell you, I've sat with mothers and wept with mothers in the malnutrition clinics, and then I've gone the next day to a village where we've already got a feeding program in place and it's the way you want to see children. They're laughing and they're playing and they're in school and they're learning and you're changing the future for these children. Who knows who God has in some of these countries, that they're going to rise up and become a president or someone who makes an incredible impact. They just need a little help, but they really need it now.

So please, will you go to your phone? Just give what you can. If we all give what we can, we can make such a huge difference! You know with the whole COVID situation the need is even more desperate. To see mothers sitting in clinics with masks on and a desperately sick child. And honestly, malnutrition will get them before COVID ever does because they're so weak. But you and I have the power to reach out and change that. So please, go to your phone. Just give the best gift you possibly can.

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

In the studio:

Sheila: Thank you. Thanks for watching all the way through. I know it's hard sometimes to watch these things, but you and I can make a difference.

Now for any gift at all that you send in, we will send you Chrystal's book, *The 28-Day Prayer Journey*. What's your hope for women, men too, when they finish this book?

Chrystal: My hope is that they are addicted to prayer. That they are enjoying the opportunity that we have to talk to the God of the universe as often as we like.

Sheila: I love that! Thank you so much for being with us, Chrystal.

Chrystal: Thank you for having me!

Sheila: It's been awesome. If you're able to give \$100 we will send you these darling little bowls where you can sit and talk as a family every morning or put their soup in it at night and say, look at what we get to do in Jesus' name!

So for all of us here at *LIFE Today*, we'll see you next time!