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Week 6: WFL

Sheila Walsh

Angie Smith

SHEILA: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm Sheila Walsh. I'm so glad you joined us. I'm particularly glad you joined us because I get to speak to one of my favorite people on the planet today. I was sent this book called, *Matchless*: "The life and love of Jesus" by my friend, Angie Smith. And so I took it with me on my trip. I had to fly to San Diego and then I had an evening there and I had to fly back. To be honest, I thought well, I'll flip through it and see. I read every single word. It is so, so good. So Angie, thank you so much for being with me.

ANGIE: Okay. Good start! I'm already crying.

SHEILA: But honestly, the thing that blew me away about it was I felt like I had this journey; that you started me in the Garden of Eden and we just flew over everything that mattered. And you trace this red thread from there all the way to the cross. And then you took us to the ascension of Christ. I wondered, what was the Genesis of this for you? Because I know you're a student. I know you love the Word of God and you study deep. What made you want to give yourself to this project?

ANGIE: I think that part of it is that a lot of times we know kind of the stories of scripture but without knowing the story of scripture. And I think in particular with Christ there is so much in the Old Testament that points to him in ways where you go, wait, this is real. This really... That sounds silly but because I do love to study and I kind of like to have everything highlighted and explained, it turns out in a plot twist that that's not how Jesus works. So you're never going to understand all of it.

I wrote it in the hardest time of my life. So I think part of it was me kind of going, all

right, Lord, if you're real, I need you to show up right now. I think that it's ironic that I probably would have just pushed away except that I had a deadline. So basically, I had to be doing it and I know that's the Lord's way of keeping me in it. But along the way I just felt like there is something about the humanity of Christ that is so beautiful. And I don't know that that's common in... Obviously, he is holy. He is all those things.

But for me, as I dug in and kind of where it started was me going like--you may have read this part--but just thinking, he traveled with the disciples, outside of the words that we read. They're friends and they're... It hit me like, which one snored? Which one did they make fun of because he was always late? Which one had people flirt with him all the time and they teased him? And it's just this humanity that I think is easy to separate from the story and forget that this was more than just these little pieces? It was a real man who was prophesied about for thousands of years before.

SHEILA: I felt like you have a very unique way of word because I felt like I was there. In particular, you have this thing when John's baptizing Jesus and you talk about a man bearing the weight of Christ under the water. That whole scene, Angie, I had to pause at that. That is so profound.

ANGIE: Well, you, as my friend, you and I both know that that one probably had extra meaning for you. That's definitely hitting on a nerve, "under water." Just that, the weight of what happened. But yeah, I think as I was going through it, I felt it. Not even having any reason to associate that with my story but just to imagine it. Again, the part that got me was just the fact that for some reason I never thought about the fact that two men, and I know it sounds silly, but it ends with the crucifixion and then we see he's buried and so on. But people had to take him down. This was work. They're carrying his lifeless body and looking at this face that they don't even recognize anymore.

So again, it just felt like there was this humanity that I connected to and that baptism was part of that. It was a real weight. This isn't just the story and what that must have looked like. So yeah, there were parts of it for me, there is the weight of understanding what he

has done comes out when you really can dig in and see him as experiencing it exactly how humanity experiences it, and what it would feel like and what it would look like. Sometimes I had to take a break from studying just because it felt like it became so personal. Again, I was in a really hard season and so I think I was already very emotional and that didn't help.

SHEILA: I never expected reading or being placed by the Jordan River and seeing Christ going under the water. I never expected that to give me hope for my father. The fact that my father had died by suicide in water. Because you then go on to say that Christ came down to lift us all up and that was such a beautiful picture for me; that even in our brokenness Christ experienced that so he could lift every single one of us up.

ANGIE: And I just saw a picture of your dad that you posted. I'd never seen him before. That was really special.

SHEILA: You say that you were going through a really difficult time while you were writing this because you don't write in an emotional, you're not closed off in a capsule, you're writing as life as is going on. What was going on for you while you were writing this?

ANGIE: Well, a little bit of what we just talked about with you, for different reasons, but the loss of a father. He passed away... [Emotional] [Voice breaking] He was my hero. I don't really know who I am without him. So in writing this, it just felt like, I said this when someone else interviewed me. It just kind of came out and I felt like they were true words that I really hadn't really thought of.

As soon as they came out, I was like okay, Lord. I think I just didn't know what to do with my spiritual life because who could ever take him? And there came a point where I was talking to someone and I said, "This is the season where I lost my dad and I tried to find my father." That's a really hard... And I will admit that most of the time I just wanted my dad. You understand. You go through seasons where there are people missing. I have

two girls, Sheila, in two weeks will turn 18.

SHEILA: What? Oh my gosh! I still them as little girls!

ANGIE: Yes! I know! And then college. And of course, there are all these, even the study coming out. And I know he is, but he just would have been so proud. It's just a bittersweet, the whole process was very bittersweet because he was the person I would always go to, to say, "Will you read this?" And he was so darn proud of me. He was prouder of me than I will ever be at myself. My grandmother passed away two months after he did, and my mom has struggled with serious mental illness.

So I will say during this season some miraculous things happened and I don't mind telling the story now. I don't know if you know this, Sheila, but she's been overmedicated, every pain... She's been basically unconscious for ten years. Just falling, if she stands. She's gone--and she is struggled with it through my life. But she had to have emergency brain surgery during this time while my sister is fighting breast cancer. It doesn't, it sounds like a movie you'd turn off within five minutes because you're going that's ridiculous! She had to have emergency brain surgery.

Well, of course, I'm P.O.A. Now. I'm power of attorney of the city of Nashville. Really! And so at one point I looked at my sister and I said, "I'm her power of attorney." And we went to the doctor and said, "Take her off of everything. Take her off." And they did. And she is a normal person.

I had never met my mother. She runs her assisted living place. She is the person they bring to greet. She plays bingo. She orders door decorations. She wants to... We have never met her--never! If you saw a video. She had a video that went viral of her trying to figure out Siri. She couldn't sit up.

And the other day, she has this Siri thing. She's like, "Angela, it is not working! I don't know what to do. I'm just trying..."

She loves movies about dogs. I'm like, "Are you trying to watch Air Bud again because you've rented that 78 times!" I'm like, "Mom!"

She's like, "It just won't bring it up."

I'm like, "Mom, let me hear you do it. I don't know what you're doing."

She goes, "Okay."

It was Alexa. She goes, "Alexa. Hey!"

I'm like, "Mom, you don't have to greet her. You can just tell her what you're looking for."

She is like oh! So it's bringing up all each, "Hey, Alexa." She was like, "I like her. I like her! She's nice."

[LAUGHTER]

She is a riot.

And Sheila, I don't think you know this. When this happened with my mother, it was such a pure miracle. My sister called me, and she said, "I cannot deny Jesus anymore. I think he is real." She goes to church. You don't always get to see it in the moment, and I know that years from now I'll look back, but the Lord gave me a few things like as someone who studies, they're undeniable. There's no amount of statistics or studies that could do this.

Anyway, that is the 48-minute long answer but it was the most incredibly difficult, with some things that were so beautiful, that you don't know where to land. It's a lot to process

and it's going to take me a long time, but I think a lot of that came out in *Matchless*. It was sort of my way of working through it and studying the Father.

SHEILA: Your overview, until you get to profound moments the whole way through the study, and by the way, people, I'm going to tell you how you can get your own copy in a minute. But then you come to that last week of Jesus' life. I think you stayed it, but I can sense when you read it, there is a shift there. It's like you're right there. What was that like for you?

ANGIE: It was very hard. And again, because I couldn't separate it from the humanity, to be quite frank, I'd been watching my father die of cancer for a year. I had been at his bedside, and at the hospital every other day and all the tests and him having several strokes and so he was... So I watched a death in a way that I could put my hands on.

And so again I think that it was so tangible that it transferred to when I was studying this. There was a part of me that was kind of picturing my father and just knowing that this... it isn't just a flannel board story. You're watching someone die in a way that is not nearly as excruciating as what Christ went through but there is... You would do anything. You would do anything to stop this.

And so even in that, I'm picturing, and I wrote about this, the part that hit me the hardest was that I had, I just don't know why I've never thought about it as a mother, Mary is watching this but what you don't think about is she was the one who nursed him. This is the woman who watched him fall down and she bandaged up his knees. This is the one who saw him run home from where he had been playing and cry. He was a human.

So that to me, just seeing what she was actually seeing in that moment that we will never see, just as a mother, I think it hit me in such a different way. It is easy for it to feel like it is black and white, and you know the story. But that part for me was extraordinarily difficult.

SHEILA: It's interesting because you talk about the fact that when Christ was born in that birthing cave, just like the Levitical lambs and wrapped in swaddling cloth, and that that's how he was wrapped in cloth again. But you had this really interesting little insights of what would be normal between a slave and a master that had huge significance. Tell us about that.

ANGIE: Yes. So basically, I hope I tell it right and you can correct me because it's been a little while.

SHEILA: I just read it yesterday!

ANGIE: Okay good! You'll probably tell it better than I will. Tradition said that if the master was eating a meal the servant would come and serve the meal. And if the servant saw the master get up and fold his napkin, if he threw it down and it was crumpled it meant that he was done; right?

SHEILA: Yes!

ANGIE: I'm thinking it through in my head. So if he threw it down and it was crumpled up on the table it meant you can take the food away, I'm finished. But if it was folded the way that we saw Christ burial clothing folded, then it meant that the master was coming back.

SHEILA: That just gave me chills!

ANGIE: I know. That was another one. I could tell you where I was sitting when I read that because it was like, are you kidding me? That he folded it and it meant I'm coming back. This isn't done. Yeah. It gives me goose bumps still!

SHEILA: Me too.

ANGIE: It's been a long time since I thought about that story, but it gets me.

SHEILA: You have an interesting phrase where you write, "The Old Testament is forced, and the New Testament is asked." What did you mean by that?

ANGIE: Yeah. I think most people would probably say that the God that they understand in the Old Testament feels very punitive and very distant and objective, and not nearby. It just doesn't have any sense of relationship. There are definitely moments where people are falling on the ground, that his holiness is totally evident but you don't see the personal relationship that you do in the New Testament. And so when you look at the old, it feels like people are being forced to do things because they were laws, because they had to, because they had to show off. Because everything was laws, laws, laws.

And then when you get to the New Testament it feels like what it is saying is, "I'm going to present this to you and the reason is me. I'm not going to force you to but I'm going to ask you to." And so that intentionality with him reaching out and making this personal connection is, it feels totally different. It's an invitation and not this list of things that you have to do to be a servant of God. That was revolutionary. Up until then it was totally based on everything exterior. And then he is coming and saying, "It doesn't matter if you look like you're doing stuff, I actually care about your heart." So which is you know, wasn't the best news for people who were really into their long tassels.

[LAUGHTER]

SHEILA: Before I tell people how to get a hold of your study, what would you say to the person who is thinking, you know what? I don't know if I could do this. I'm not a great student of the Bible. What if I don't get it all? Is this written for everybody?

ANGIE: No! It is written for seminary students who are at least in their third year of Hebrew.

SHEILA: She's kidding!

ANGIE: I am! I don't have anything to back up me being able to do any of those things, so you know I'm kidding. It is, and the heart of it, Sheila, and this is my passion, it was written for everyone. It wasn't written for the seminary guys. The Bible was written so that we could understand it--anyone! And it is so intimidating that for me, I think one of my passions is to study and try and figure out ways to simplify things and present them in a way that can connect. I love doing that.

So I don't think that anyone would be intimidated by it because it really feels like a book that you would read. So no, it's written for everyone. And some of my favorite stories are the people who are like, I thought that I was dumb, or I thought I would never understand this or everyone was smarter than me. I'm just going to tell you, probably, a solid 80 percent of people who would call themselves believer, many of them from the womb, do not know a lot of this. So don't feel dumb. You're in really good company.

SHEILA: Well, I'm going to tell you how to get a hold of this because honestly, I'm just going to tell you people, this is one of the best Bible studies I've ever done. I'm going to tell you how you can get a hold of your own copy right after this.

I want to take you on a trip with us to Africa and let you see what happens when there is no clean water available to people. And then I'll tell you how to get a hold of Angie's book. Watch this.

On the mission field:

Ralph: Sheila, you've been around the world. You have seen some of these water sources that are just contaminated with all kinds of feces and garbage and dirt. You've seen where these people are trying to drink from to bring life to their family when in reality, they're bringing death. Right here?

Quantino: Yeah, this one. This is a well. As you can see.

Ralph: Wow! That's way down there.

Quantino: Yeah, it's very deep.

Ralph: But there is no water. I don't see anything.

Quantino: There is just a little water. Just a little.

Open Captions:

>> The water makes my children ill, so I take them to a clinic for treatment. But they get sick again from our water, so we go back to the clinic.

Ralph: We've even heard stories this week of children who have died from drinking this water.

Open Captions:

>> One morning at six a.m. my daughter was sick with diarrhea. We were at home, so I used brown sugar and salt to help her. But at 6:00 p.m. the next day she died. [Weeping]

Ralph: Quantino, you have a big job. We have viewers back home. They love to help people because we know these are real people and they're drinking disease-infested water. And I want to ask the viewers today to please take it to heart. God can use us together to stop the death.

Quantino: Sheila, thank you for coming here in Zambia with your team. We will pray hard that you can also spread it to the world where they need clean water. Thank you.

End of video

In the studio:

SHEILA: Thank you, Quantino and Ralph. When you see that mom there, and all the resources she has when her child is desperately sick is brown sugar and salt? I wouldn't even know what that would do. But obviously, it wouldn't cure what was happening to her little one.

I cannot tell you the number of moms we met on that trip. Every single mother that we spent time with had lost at least one child. And not from some terrible illness like cancer, but from something that is 100 percent preventable if you have access to clean water. Can you imagine what that would be like?

Those wells, those hand-dug wells that you saw Ralph looking into, they're horrible! First of all, they're just filthy. There are animals, there's disease, there's waste that goes into the water. Little ones fall into the well and lose their lives. But the water that comes out, that's the only access to water they have for long, long, I mean sometimes hundreds of miles. They know potentially it could kill their children.

What a *Sophie's Choice*? It's like I give my child nothing to drink and they will die that way, or I give them water. It must feel like you're playing Russian roulette with your children. But this is something that you and I can change. I've also been where we moved on from that hand-dug well to a village where you guys, when I saw on this well, "Gifted from *LIFE Today*," I danced around the well I was so, so excited.

So here's what we can do. To put in a whole well is \$4800. Some of you can do that. God has blessed some of your businesses and you can do that. Some of you, that would be impossible. But let me ask you this, could you do \$48? If you could do \$48 that will provide clean water for ten people basically for their life. That's why we call it Water for LIFE. Once the well has gone in, it will last sometimes 60-70 years.

Some of you could actually do \$144. That will give clean water to 30 people for the rest

of their lives. So please, if we all do something! And for any gift at all, you can ask for Angie's wonderful Bible study, *Matchless*. Then your soul will be fed as you reach out and touch the lives of people that we're going back to see again. We're going back to let them know we heard that cry, we heard that prayer and our wonderful viewers responded.

So please, go to your phone. Give the very best gift that you can and together we can change the world one glass of clean water at a time. So please, please call now! Thank you!

Begin video clip

Announcer: Dirty disease-filled water. How desperate would a mother need to be to consider giving this contaminated substance to her child? For many mothers and their families living in extreme poverty, this is their only choice.

But with your help they won't have to make this choice ever again. Mission: Water for LIFE provides clean, disease-free water for thousands of children and their families giving them a life free from the fear of death. With your gift today you can help drill and establish 350 water wells this year. Your gift of \$24 will help provide clean water for five children. A gift of \$48 will help provide ten. \$72 will provide for 15. And \$144 will help provide life-giving water for 30 people for a lifetime.

With your gift, we'll send you *Speak Your Name* devotions and declarations on the reality of Jesus. Filled with stunning imagery, these 40 encouraging devotions by Laney Rene serve as a reminder of the power of Jesus' name.

With your gift of \$100 or more, please request the "Be Refreshed" pitcher. This beautiful ceramic pitcher is decorated with Proverbs 11:25 and is sure to make a lovely addition to your table or home.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1200 to help provide water for 250 people or a gift of

\$4800 to help sponsor a complete well. And you may request our brand-new, inspiring bronze sculpture, "Divine Servant."

Please call, write or make your gift online.

End of video

On the mission field:

SHEILA: This hand-dug well is full of contaminated water. It is the only source of water for this village. The mothers and their children, they come out here every day with their buckets and they gather water. The mothers know there is a potential that this water will kill their children because there's all sorts of animal dung. But this is the water that is killing these children and that is why they need a well, a drilled well that will go down deep and get fresh, clean water. This should not be normal for any child. And we want to give them a new normal in Jesus' name. Fresh, clean, safe water!

SHEILA: Thank you so much. Just request for any gift at all, please say, "I want *Matchless*: "The life and love of Jesus" from Angie Smith and we'll be happy to send it to you. It will be a book that will mark your life and your journey.

Angie, it's been pure joy to see your face and to talk to you. And thank you for writing this amazing Bible study.

ANGIE: I'm really honored that would say that. You know how much I love you. It means the world.

SHEILA: Thank you! Love you too. And we will see you next time on *LIFE Today*. God bless!