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Week 12: Rescue LIFE

Sheila Walsh

Lisa Harper #2

SHEILA: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm Sheila Walsh. I'm really glad you decided to just sit down, get yourself a cup of tea or coffee and join me.

I don't know how you think, as you think back on 2020, I don't know how you felt about the presence of God in the midst of the suffering you saw. I actually found comfort, unusually, in a book I would not have expected. That was in the book of Job. I actually found some redemption I hadn't seen before. And then I heard that one of my favorite people on the planet has done a Bible study on Job. And so I said I have to have Lisa Harper here!

Lisa, I have to tell you, first of all, welcome to *LIFE Today*. This is probably one of my favorite studies that you have ever done. You wouldn't expect to find comfort in the book of Job.

LISA: No. I was actually doing a word study for a class on the word “happy” in the Bible. Because usually it's translated in our English bibles as "blessed." But in the Old Testament it's *esher*; in the New Testament it's *makarios*. I was doing a study on that and I sense--you know how God sometimes God will speak to you and you go, surely that was just caffeine; that could not have been the voice of the Lord in my heart and mind. But I sensed God wanting me to study Job and to study suffering at the same time I was studying happiness.

And I was like, ooh yikers! I don't like--I have avoided Job like the plague, no pun intended, my whole life. But he was just insistent that I study the book of Job. I mean I spent a year in the book of Job before I ever wrote a word. It was so personally healing for me because I was afraid of pain my whole life. I thought if I sat in the deep end for too long, I was afraid it would swallow me and I wouldn't be able to get out of it. And one of the first things you see in Job is

that pain isn't--it's not punitive in the economy of God when he allows. I'm not saying all pain is divinely causative but when God allows pain in your life more often than not it's a promotion. It's him saying your shoulders are wide enough to carry this in a way that you'll bring me glory.

I think when people have been through stuff, I know some of the times you've prayed for me and spoken to me when I was in the dark. If you hadn't had your own difficulty I'd be like, "You're driving me nuts." Like, "Get away from me, Pollyanna. Go get a Tweety Bird tattoo." Because it just wouldn't have carried weight. But knowing you had suffered yourself and had walked through it and sensed God's presence, it's like your words carry weight. You become kind of a spiritual E.F. Hutton; only the over 40s who are listening will get that. But all of the sudden you will go, I have a credible testimony because it hasn't always been easy, but he has always been accessible.

SHEILA: One of the things that to me is one of the most fascinating, and I want you to dig deeper because you're a deep well, is that when all the bad news comes to Job, when it all comes, that suddenly you see the presence of devastating pain, and worship.

LISA: Oh! That was like my favorite. It's toward the end of chapter one. I want to say it's somewhere in the 20s, 20, 22, Job chapter one, and he's lost everything. He's lost everybody, his children have been killed. He's lost his health. He's lost his wealth. And he was a big deal. He would have been traded on Wall Street. I always think it was cool because his wealth was in agriculture and I tend to be drawn toward guys in Wranglers more than skinny jeans. So I kind of like that part of Job.

But he was legitimately a wealthy man and a good guy. It says before he lost all that that he helped the poor and the powerless. He loses everything through no fault of his own. So he doesn't do anything. There is no hidden sin, and you would think he'd be mad or--there is a million ways I would have reacted. He's very honest about his grief. It says he tears his robe, which is a sign of deep grief in that ancient era, and he shaves his head. So he's not faking it. Not pretending like everything is okay. But in that very same verse it says, he grieves, he tears his robes, and it says, "And he worships." And when I saw that, I went, no stinking way that you can

have a broken heart and raised hands at the same time. That it is not incongruent to be in grief and praise God knowing that somehow some way, even if I don't see it with my natural eyes, you are good and I'm going to trust you. So he was, I love his honest response. He grieves. He even gets mad at God, and God allows that, but he doesn't doubt God's presence.

Yeah, Job changed my life. For so long I was afraid to go, to really grieve, to really go to the deepest places of pain. Even from my past, some of the stuff we have similar stories with some of the abuse. I had some molestation. I just didn't want to go there. When I went there, I realized, oh my goodness! I didn't realize to trust God in the dark meant that he took the lid off my joy. I actually have experienced so much more joy and liberty. I was bound by fear for a long time. And it really was diving deep into the book of Job and seeing this unlikely joy.

And before everything is restored, I love the end, I love the whole book of Job, there are so many lessons. But when he says, "My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you." And it is before anything is restored. He is still broken. He is still just in every way, another human would look at him and say, "That's the saddest life I've ever seen." And yet Job says, "I have seen you." I love that's before everything was restored.

But yeah, that book more than... I've always, of course, loved the New Testament. I love the Psalms because it is God's iPod. But I've avoided the book of Job. And that book more than... it would be among my top three or four scripture now.

SHEILA: I'm thinking of some of our viewers. I get regular letters from viewers. Some are in prison. Some have lost everything, kind of a minuscule version of Job. And then, along come the friends.

LISA: The three stooges.

SHEILA: Yeah! But they almost reemphasize this kind of belief of well, you must have done something.

LISA: Even when we talk about God is sovereign, I think most of us live our lives under this kind of canopy of deservedness. If you live a good life there is some scale somewhere, some ethereal scale. If you do right, then good things will happen. That is not biblically defensible. That's karma, and that's what his friends say. His friends are like surely there is something you've done--maybe some late-night stuff on your iPad. I mean, have you got something secret? Because surely you brought this on yourself.

One of them goes so far as to say, your children deserve to die. And you go what a moron! I think one of the things we can learn from Job real basic is if you get to walk alongside a friend or family member who is grieving, you don't have to say much. Don't give them advice. Don't cross-stitch a verse, just walk with them, pray for them. But at the very beginning when his friends were good comforters all they did was sit with him on the ash heap.

SHEILA: Yeah! Seven days Shiva. I know that was... I think of the people who are told, "Well, I'm sorry your daughter got raped but if she hadn't been dressed like that..." Or just the way that we place blame onto people. But there is something about the umbrella of the sovereignty of God in Job. But to me it seems like you have to get to know him.

LISA: You do. And you have to get to trust him in the dark. I think we're always going, okay, God, if you'll show me the other part of the story where I have tight skin and a high metabolism, then I'll do the hard stuff for you. But Job just gets to that point of it's that Habakkuk point, "Though you slay me yet will I trust you." Because somehow some way, because you are a perfect redeemer.

I love that Job uses the word *redeemer* for Jesus; after basically saying this is the worst thing ever, I'm going to go eat a worm. Usually, the only verse anybody knows about Job comes from Nicole Mullen when she says, "My Redeemer Lives." We all know that one verse. But to understand the context of that verse; that Job is just about to throw in the towel.

And then he goes [GASPS] and he uses the word *goel*, which is a word they didn't use in that context. It is like he sees Jesus, he sees the shadow of Jesus before--2,000 years before Jesus

comes and he goes, "My Jesus is coming. My redeemer lives." So all this, in the context of Jesus, this is okay. It is hard and I'm grieving, and I don't like it. But in the context of divine redemption, I'll walk this out too.

So it is a beautiful story. But to me, the thing I always come back to is because we tend to think say Satan did this. Satan is a bit player. You don't hear from him again after chapter two. Even the word God uses in the Hebrew of God having a conversation with Satan, it is not a face-to-face conversation. It is not peer-to-peer.

SHEILA: I was going to ask you about that. Tell me about that.

LISA: Well, I don't remember how to pronounce the word. All my Hebrew sounds German because I can't do the guttural Hebrew thing. But the word there when it says God and Satan are talking, they're talking, he's saying, "Can I sift him?" Because he's saying, "Yeah, he looks like a good guy but as soon as he loses all of his followers on Instagram, he's going to curse you." And so God's like, "No. You can mess with Job." It is almost like his faithfulness is what made him credible to be in pain. You're like surely if you live a good life nothing bad will happen. Job lived such a good life that God said he will be faithful no matter what. But the word to describe that conversation was Satan, and I always call him "the lizard," the liar, is he condescended to let the enemy speak.

SHEILA: I love to know that.

LISA: Don't you love that! And then later on when he speaks to Job, it is a totally different Hebrew word for conversation. He allows Job to have a relational conversation with him. Not as a master with a slave but as one who loves somebody else. I loved just even that nuance.

SHEILA: Lisa, that's huge! Barry and I were sitting and talking about that just last night at dinner. Why was this lizard allowed to stand right in front of God and talk to him?

LISA: God was going to use Job's story to teach us, in the same way he did with Hosea and

Gomer. You're like oh my goodness, I'm so sure. The good guy marries the girl with the 1-900 number. It doesn't make sense in our human logic. God is not capricious. He is not punking us. But God goes, I'm going to show you a higher way, a bigger way. This very, very good man is going to lose everything, and he is going to walk this out in a way that ultimately ends up for his good but it brings me glory because he knows me. And he's not going to lose his hope when his circumstances are the opposite of what he even prayed for.

It will blow your hard drive because you go: pain is a promotion? Like that just doesn't compute. Because again we tend to live in that you deserve what you get. A friend that you know of mine, Eva Whittenton-Self was paralyzed in a car accident when she was 17. I mean, she... I always say in the world of faith she walks a lot faster than I do. I love her the way I love you.

But oftentimes I'll be with Eva, her spine was shattered, severed actually, in this car accident. But because she's in a wheelchair we'll be in places where people will go, "If only you had more faith you wouldn't be in that wheelchair." I want to punch them in the throat. Her response is much more redemptive. But Eva will say, "You know, God actually gave me this chair. He could have fused my back, back together had he wanted. But this chair has taken me places that I never would have seen, I never would have met my husband. I never would have had my daughters." She sees it as a means of grace. We tend to see pain as always destructive.

But David said, "In your faithfulness of you afflicted me." You've allowed me to ache so that I'll actually turn to you. I think that's part of it too, is "ache" can accelerate us moving toward the Lord for comfort.

SHEILA: I remember being at a big conference in Hawaii and there was an evangelist from Africa. He made this declaration, "Everybody here in the room tonight is going to be healed." I'd met this amazing guy who had been in a wheelchair for 11 years after a bad motorcycle accident. The evangelist spoke, prayed, and then was rushed off in a limo back to the airport.

Eventually, the tent empties out and it is just my friend still in the wheelchair and me. And so I walked up to him and he could tell, because I was crying. He said, "Sheila, come on. Don't cry. I

know God could heal me but until he does, I'll worship from here." And that just blew me away.

LISA: We see it from such a narrow human perspective of oh that's bad, instead of oh I wonder how God is going to use that for good? Because my mind is too dinky to see something that's hard.

Had I not, you walked with me when I lost an adoption at the 11th hour. I mean it ripped my guts out. I was so--I had the room decorated, I had the baby named. It was four days before I was bringing her home when that fell through. And I remember thinking, I don't think I'm going to be able to peel my heart up off the pavement after this one. I'm just not sure that I can actually... I mean I'll keep walking but I don't think I'm ever going to be able to lift my head up again. Had it not been for that excruciating loss and the grief, God used that.

I'm not saying that was God's will, but he always uses what the enemy intends for evil to just plow up places in my heart that were afraid. Because I don't think I would have, when they said, "There is a little girl in Haiti whose mama died of AIDS. She's been given two months to live. Would you consider?" I wouldn't have been brave enough to do that. I would have been like, no thank you, that's too scary. Had I not been through that dark season and God just carried me, I don't think I would have been prepared for the joy he had planned for me.

SHEILA: What I remember about that was, I was with you and the person said to you, "Why don't you pray about this?" And you said, "No, I've been praying about this for a long, long time."

LISA: Yeah. I'm so slow to understand and I'm so remedial when it comes to God's kindness. But he loves, Psalm 84:11, No good thing will he withhold from him whose walk is upright."

So to me, that's even Job. If you keep moving toward Jesus, whether you're limping, crawling, just keep moving toward Jesus, he will redeem it. There will be good things in your story. So many people listen to you who are in grief right now. And I think the world tells them, "Just paste a happy face on it." Because the world has a hard time handling grief. Mostly it's like we'll

grieve for that. We'll sit Shiva for seven days; after that put on your big girl pants and quit whining. And to actually walk in a way that's redemptive with someone who has A, someone who has lost a child, someone who lost their job with COVID and to go, "I'm not going to say a platitude. I'm not going to say something pithy. I just believe that God will use this ultimately for your good. But you can trust him enough to cry with him."

SHEILA: It's interesting too, Lisa, at the end of Job's story, you have these three friends and then the young dude who are supposedly saying all the right things, but in the end the only one that God said that spoke rightly about him was Job. He kind of cuts those guys down. It's like if Job doesn't pray for you guys, you're real in the hot seat.

LISA: That's right. You know what I think is so cool there too is his wife gets such a bad rap because she says, "Curse God and die." But she's lost her children. I can't even imagine what I would say if God allowed me to lose Missy. So you're like oh my goodness! Let the poor woman grieve and say a few bad words in traffic. She has been through heck and back. But God doesn't discipline her.

At the end of the story she is reconciled with Job and then they have more children. And he names the daughters. And in that culture women weren't named because their names were considered profane. And he gives them an inheritance. And so I go, oh my goodness, even there, just the redemption is so much... it's much bigger than what would have happened in human context. God's ways are always better.

SHEILA: For any gift at all, we're going to send you the Job study, which you're going to want the study guide. But you're going to want, is it like seven teaching sessions with videos?

LISA: It is. Yeah.

SHEILA: So you're going to want to go on to Lifeway.com?

LISA: Lifeway.com and they're like maybe \$2 or \$3 apiece for the teaching, the video teaching

that goes concurrent with this study guide.

SHEILA: You're going to want those. You're going to want it because you can tell when you sat in a book of God for a year, the wealth that pours out is amazing.

But one of the things I would like to ask you to do for us, one of the greatest passions in my heart here at *LIFE* is what we call Rescue Life where we go in and reach, rescue, and restore girls in sex trafficking. I want to take you with me and let you see what happened on our very last trip.

On the mission field:

SHEILA: There is a little trick that's helped me through some of my darkest days in the field with *LIFE Outreach International*. I smile. I smile not to trivialize the unimaginable despair of those who are suffering but to remind everyone, including myself that a little kindness can bring some light to a dark world. And it can be such a dark world!

The sexual abuse of children has been industrialized and brought to scale in what I believe to be one of the starkest examples of demonic activity on earth today.

I asked her, "Who do you have who is caring for you?" She has no one. She started out trying to sell cookies and she couldn't make enough to live on. So she ended up having to sell her own body.

Now I'm no stranger to the plight of a desperate soul but the young women I've spoken with, young children have left a mark on my life that will stay with me forever. This precious girl was begging for money on the streets when she was first abducted at the age of nine. Her captors raped her and forced her to sleep with up to four men a night.

Open Captions: I'm scared when I have to go out at night. I just want a good home with food to eat and a place to sleep.

SHEILA: It's horrific to think of the unspeakable torment that children face and I'm grateful

when they survive it. But survival is a far cry from healing. God has given you and me the sacred power to help reach, rescue, and restore a precious life from the evils of human trafficking. Right now the choice of whether to exercise that power is ours to make.

End of video

In the studio:

SHEILA: I love all our missions here at *LIFE*. I love when we have our Water for LIFE, I love Mission Feeding, I love it all, but I don't think anything has scarred my heart as much as Rescue Life.

In Southeast Asia so many of the countries where we work, I've seen girls, they're literally, they're not 18, 19, they're 10, 11, and 12. They are little girls! And they have been sold and told that they are worthless. So many of them have a number tattooed to their thigh so that the guy doesn't even have to know their name. They can just say, "I'll take number three."

And many of you have written and said, "Well, why are they out there? Where are their parents?"

So many of these girls that I have been with, their father is in prison. They're in debt. If you have to get medicine for a child, they have to borrow money from money lenders and then they're in debt. What else is a girl to do? Most of them go out at night, between 11:00 at night till two in the morning and they gather up beer cans from outside of the clubs because they can sell like 6 or 8 cans for the equivalent of like a quarter. But that's when they're trying to do that and they're trying to help their family, that's when they're snatched. Sometimes they're given a meal. What they don't know is the meal is drugged and they wake up in the morning and suddenly all their innocence is gone.

So we are committed here at *LIFE* for as long as the Lord tarries, we're committed to this mission. What we want to do is three parts. Reach: First of all we go into the villages and we warn the children. Some of the things, we've had to tell children, I'm like oh my gosh, I can't

believe we're doing this! It's probably the most important news they'll ever get. If you see this, if a man says this, run! Shout as loud as you can. Never go out by yourself. Always go out with a friend. So we teach them.

Then we rescue. Some of the teams we have, literally, we'll go out at midnight and kick down doors and rescue these darling little ones and watch three traffickers being hauled off to prison. But then we have so many beautiful places that you have helped us build where these girls can come and be restored. We told them, you're not a number. You're precious. You matter to God. You have a future. You have a hope.

So please would you help us? We have some amazing friends who have given us a matching gift for this whole mission, \$320,000 is a matching gift. Normally, it would take about \$128 to put a girl in that process of being reached, rescued, restored but now if you could do \$64, that will be matched. So together with somebody you might not meet until we're all home, you'll have that impact. \$128, normally one girl but because it is a matched gift, two. If you're able to give \$1280 that will be matched, and 20 girls will be literally snatched from the gates of hell and brought into freedom and told that they're loved.

So please, would you call? Just give what you can. And together, when we all do that, we will invade the kingdom of darkness with the kingdom of light in Jesus' name.

Begin video clip:

Announcer: Human trafficking is one of the world's darkest sources of criminal activity and money. As a result, children and young people are being abducted and sold at the hands of violent predators into a never-ending nightmare.

Through Mission: Rescue Life you can reach out to warn children who are at the risk of being trafficked, rescue those already enslaved and restore young lives giving them a future. With a generous \$320,000 matching gift now your gift of \$128 to help reach, rescue, or restore one child

can be doubled to help two children. Your \$64 gift will be matched to help save one child from the horrors of human trafficking. And a \$32 mission rescue gift will be doubled to \$64.

With your gift today, we'll send you *Natural Remedies*. This beautifully illustrated and essential book explores ancient nutrition and the health benefits found in God's creation. A valuable reference with biblical insight to help you live your best life.

With your gift of \$128 or more, you'll receive the *Jesus My Refuge* journal and pen set filled with scriptures reminding you of God's covering in times of need. You'll also be reminded to pray for those seeking refuge from the horrors of human trafficking.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1280, which will now help rescue 20 children! And you may request our inspiring bronze sculpture, "Divine Servant."

Please call, write, or make your gift online.

End of video

In the studio:

SHEILA: Thank you. Thank you for caring. This really, really matters. This is not just poverty, this is an attack from hell, and we can do something in Jesus' name. And I know that's close to your heart too.

LISA: You know Missy would have been trafficked in Haiti. There were some places where God rescued her. But yeah, this is very, very close to my heart. You can't believe that this still exists in our world; this kind of wickedness and just the horror of it. I love that y'all are doing this.

SHEILA: I don't know if you know this, it's a \$150 billion industry. We need to match that. So ask for Lisa's *Job* study. It's amazing. Thank you for diving deep into Job. It's really made an

impact. Thanks for being here with us.

LISA: I love being with you. I'm going to follow you home.

SHEILA: We will see you next time. Thanks so much for being with us here at *LIFE*. I'm Sheila Walsh. I'll see you next time!