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Week 18: Spring Mission Feeding

Sheila Walsh

"Healed, Held, and Whole"

SHEILA: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm Sheila Walsh. One of the things I wanted to do today was to kind of give you a little bit of a quiz. So I'm going to ask you a couple of questions and I want you to actually really think about them rather than just think well, this is a TV program, I don't have to speak back.

So here's what I'd like to ask you. What do you want out of life? And what do you really want? Imagine you're stuck at a long stoplight and your mind wanders. Where does it go like if you daydream? What do you kind of visualize? Whether you picture, it could be something as serious as a restored marriage. If your marriage is in trouble and it was interesting, 2020 put a lot of pressure on marriages. I read some statistics of the number of couples that did not survive that.

So it might be that you think in your quieter moments, God, I wish you could just restore my marriage. It could be something as simple as I don't know, a redone kitchen if you watch H.G.T.V. like my husband and I do. It could be something like the homecoming of a lost son. Someone, a child of yours that you've just lost touch with and you're not sure where they are. Or it might be just a holiday where everybody gets along. There is no controversy. But there is something you long for.

How do I know that there is something that each one of us longs for? It's because humans, we are yearning people. We want to fix what's broken. We ache for what's lost. We want what we want so desperately. But as followers of Jesus Christ we know that we should desire only one thing.

In fact, the Psalmist in one of my very favorite Psalms, Psalm 27, here's what he said. This is Psalm 27, verse four: The one thing I ask of the Lord--the thing I seek most--is to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, delighting in the Lord's perfections and meditating in his temple.

It's beautiful! If we're honest however, if we evaluate our stoplight daydreams, I think a lot of us will see we have a lot of other desires trying to smuggle their way into our hearts. You and I were made to love God first and above everything. Here on earth our hearts, we seek fulfillment in too many lesser loves that disappoint us.

The idea that love will right every wrong seems very prevalent in modern culture. You might remember that line from the movie Jerry McGuire which I've never seen by the way. I've just heard the line, "You complete me!" It became one of the most frequently quoted lines in all movie history. But I think probably for good reasons, humans want wholeness. We want to be healed. We want to be held. But what kind of love are people looking to for completeness? Who or what are you looking to?

I want us to look at two truths today. Number one, when you reach out and touch the edge of Christ's robe you will find healing. And secondly, only in Jesus you're held and whole. In 1853 Solomon Northup published his memoir, *12 Years a Slave*. He was born a free man in New York State, but Solomon had been tricked into taking a trip to Washington D.C. where he was kidnapped and sold into slavery.

Northup spent 12 years in cruel bondage in the Deep South at a plantation before finally being able to get secret messages to his family and friends who fought for his release. Both the book and the film adaptation captivated the audience to know freedom, and then being enslaved. I mean it was unthinkable. It was terrible! And to be released and to walk in freedom once again! He was restored to community, restored to health. It was indescribable. It was very, very moving.

Well, the Bible records another 12 years a slave story. You'll find it in Luke's gospel.

You'll also find it Matthew and Mark. So let me read a little bit from Mark's account because he gives some details that the other gospel writers don't include. So let's read this: A woman in the crowd had suffered for 12 years with constant bleeding. She had suffered a great deal from many doctors and over the years she had spent everything she had to pay them. But she had gotten no better. In fact, she had gotten worse. She had heard about Jesus, so she came up behind him through the crowd and touched his robe. For she thought to herself, "If I can just touch his robe, I will be healed." Immediately the bleeding stopped, and she could feel in her body that she had been healed of her terrible condition. Jesus realized at once that healing power had gone out from him, so he turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who touched my robe?"

Well, his disciples said to him, "Look at this crowd pressing around you. How can you ask, 'Who touched me?'" But he kept looking around to see who had done it. Then the frightened woman, trembling at the realization of what had happened to her came and fell to her knees in front of him and told him what she had done.

He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace. Your suffering is over."

Hemorrhaging for 12 years, in bondage to a condition that would have made her perpetually unclean in Hebrew culture, and therefore she was an outcast from community. This woman suffered terribly because of her situation. She spent herself, her time, her treasure looking for help and healing and I would have done too.

Can you imagine if you're in that kind of situation where you're completely isolated? You're not allowed to hug anyone. You're not allowed to touch anyone. You had to be by yourself. And here's one of the things that's one of the hardest blows of all, she couldn't go to the temple. She would not have been welcomed in the house of God.

Well, she longed to be well so desperately that she risked approaching Jesus in her unclean state. In earthly terms it would have been similar to Solomon Northup, while

enslaved, approaching the President of the United States and asking to be set free.

Well, ask, however this woman did not. She had heard of Jesus' miraculous power. Mark 5:27 tells us this explicitly. She believed that if she could just touch the fringe of his robe, she would be healed. Well, touch she did. And indeed, healed she was.

Jesus' final words to this woman are recorded in Mark 5:34: "Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace. Your suffering is over."

Can you imagine hearing this from Jesus himself? "Go in peace. Your suffering is over." When I was reading that passage this morning, I was thinking of so many people that I know who are walking through difficult things and I wondered what that would be like for them to hear Jesus say that. No more multiple sclerosis or muscular dystrophy. No more financial problems created by his gambling addiction, in one letter. No more panic attacks. No more prison sentences for a mother's son once more convicted of a drug offense. How we long for this. We want our suffering to end.

Well, I praise God that mercifully some of our suffering does end. This side of heaven, however not everyone sees an end to all their suffering. So what do we do with our longing for healing, our desire for wholeness when suffering persists?

Here's another question what enables us to hold on in faith, and with hope when it is a long obedience in the same direction without an answer? Well, Jesus told the woman who touched the fringe of his robe that her faith had made her well. The Greek root used here *sozo* is a richly nuanced term that can mean rescued or delivered from danger. It can mean... in fact, when the disciples were in the boat with Jesus and there was a storm and Christ fell asleep, and they said, "Lord save us!" That's the word they used, *sozo*.

It can be physical healing. When Peter was accused in Acts of healing someone on the Sabbath and that was the word he used, this healing came from Jesus--same word. It is also a word used for salvation. It means to save and to heal; to make whole.

So whether you need physical healing, rescued from a past that haunts you or emotional strength and stability in the midst of a storm of suffering, Jesus is able to heal. Now I cannot promise you that healing will look exactly as you hope. I can promise however that Jesus will meet you in your need right now.

Elisabeth Elliot was a dear friend of mine whose husband was murdered by the Ecuadorian tribe they traveled to evangelize. She once wrote this to her daughter Valerie. She said, "Your father, not yet my fiancé, made the three-week voyage by sea from San Pedro, California to Ecuador stopping at fascinating ports along the way from which he sent me fascinating letters. He began to study Spanish in Quito without me. He made his first trip to the jungle where he was later to work. He had his first opportunity to do medical work. His first crack at an unwritten language. All of these things were things I myself longed to do and longed desperately to do with him. But he wrote to me and said, 'Let not our longing slay the appetite of our living.' He wrote that to me, and those words have helped me very often since. We accept and thank God for what is given, not allowing the not-given to spoil it."

"Let not our longing slay the appetite of our living." I thought about that for a long time. Even the desire for something good, the end of suffering, or the suffering of those you love can actually spoil our lives if we allow it to. All too often, and this is human, I totally understand it, we focus on the not given and ignore so many ways that God has worked in our lives. Gratitude should be the response to life, falling on our knees in thanksgiving changes us internally.

Psalms 103, verse two says this: Let all that I am praise the Lord; may I never forget the good things he does for me.

Or as the message puts it: Don't forget a single blessing. There is healing power in gratitude. Gratitude unleashes *sozo*, saved and healing power in your life. I've kept... I have on my glass table in our den a little wooden bowl and I have little pieces of paper in

it. I write down each day something that I'm grateful for. Even when I've had a really rough day.

Not so long ago we lost a dear friend who fought this faithful battle against brain cancer for ten years and never one time said, Lord, why me? When he passed and went to be with the Lord, I was heartbroken that day because his wife is a good friend of mine and their boys, my son grew up with their boys. But I wrote in there, "Thank you that I got to watch one of your servants love you right until his very final breath."

So finding something every single day to thank Christ for, it changes us. Indeed, the Bible tells us that the woman Jesus called "daughter," the woman set free after 12 years a slave, was not the only one who touched the fringe of his robe. If you were a follower of Christ, you've experienced God's *sozo* power. You've been saved from your sin, delivered from eternal death. You've seen God at work in your life bringing the pieces of your life together making you more complete day by day.

Too, life is not perfect for any of us. In fact, you might even be hurting deeply today. But no matter where you're at, do you know you can bring someone else to Jesus for *sozo* healing? Indeed, one of the ways we learn to hold onto Jesus by faith is by praying for others in need. When you reach out to Jesus in faith, even when all you can do is touch the fringe of his robe, you will find help and he will hold you and he will never let you go. Indeed, one of the ways we learn to hold onto Jesus in faith is by praying for others in need. By reaching others in need.

When I spent a month in a psychiatric hospital several years ago, I was at the lowest point in my life. I couldn't have reached out and done anything. I didn't even know how to pray anymore. I would read my Bible and I couldn't take anything in. I remember the very first day I had to sit down with my psychiatrist, and he asked me this question. He said, "Who are you?"

And I thought he meant my name. So I said, "Sheila, Sheila Walsh."

He said, "No, I know your name, Sheila. Who are you?"

At that point I was the co-host of the 700 Club program on the C.B.N. network and so I said, "I'm the co-host of the 700 Club."

He said, "No, I didn't ask for your job title, Sheila. I asked, who are you?"

I said, "I have no idea."

But I wanted to tell you after that month, I was able in tears on the floor in my room to reach out and touch the edge of Jesus' garment, and to know his presence, and to know his love, and to know how close he is to us when our hearts are breaking. And so on the day that I was released from hospital, I'll never forget I was making my way across the parking lot to my car. My doctor's study was on that side of the building. He opened his window and he called out to me and he said, "Sheila, who are you?"

I turned around and I said, "Daughter! I'm a daughter of the King of kings."

I think so often of those of you who are faithful and pray for us here at *LIFE*. I think of those of you who casually flip through channels and you think, well, there's somebody with a funny accent. I'll listen to that for a minute. But I want you to know that on your worst days and on your best days you are loved by God. You can reach out and just touch the edge of his garment. Sometimes the most powerful prayer is just one word, it is just, "Jesus." Or "Help me!" But I want you to know that as you are right now you are completely loved by him.

Isn't it interesting that the Lord Jesus was in this crowd like it was Target on black Friday? But one person touched him in faith, and he knew it. And he turned around and he changed her life. See, the bleeding stopping was a healing, but the greater miracle was looking into the eyes of Jesus and hearing him say, "Daughter, your faith has made you

well. Go in peace."

Honestly, for all of us here at *LIFE* that's what we want for you. We want you to know that you're a beloved son, a beloved daughter, and because of Christ we get to go in peace. And one of the things that we're very committed to here at *LIFE*, especially at this moment in our history is something that is going on in another part of the world. And we want to bring the peace and the light and the love of Christ to them. Would you watch this?

On the mission field:

ANNOUNCER: South Sudan is a nation in crisis. Stricken with famine, and now record-setting floods throughout the region, much of the world will dismiss South Sudan as an insurmountable problem if they even consider it at all.

But the believer sees an opportunity to preserve and protect one of God's most treasured gifts, precious children created in his image. This mother, Nuyat has worked feverishly to protect her son in one of the harshest climates on earth.

Open Captions:

>> We fled into the bushes. We spent eight days without food and water.

ANNOUNCER: When we received this footage in March, we were shocked at the visible extent that Tahnyan's malnutrition. Tahnyan, and many children like him, are on the precipice of agonizing death from starvation and malnutrition.

Open Captions:

>> My child would die if he wasn't put in the nutrition program. I have nothing at all to feed him.

ANNOUNCER: But there is hope. Mission feeding teams are ready to provide these

children with the food they so desperately need. Your gift today could be their miracle of life.

End of video

In the studio:

SHEILA: It's hard to watch pictures like that, isn't it? If you're a mom or dad or a grandma, if you've ever had children, to listen to your child cry like that and not to be able to do something is heartbreaking. I know when my son was little, whenever he cried, I would immediately try to work out what is it? Are you hungry? Are you thirsty? Are you in pain? And the thing is I would be able to do something about it, the way that I'm sure you were with your children.

But can you imagine what it's like to be that mother? If you saw the little band they had around that little one's arm, that's to see exactly how far the malnutrition has gone and what they need to do immediately to have any hope of saving that child.

At *LIFE Today*, and it is one of the reasons I'm so honored to be part of this family is this commitment to feeding 350,000 children every year. We've made that commitment to our partners on the ground. We will do that, and we will not back off. And each one of you can help. For as little \$30 you can feed three children. If you have three children, imagine that! For three months! That would be like May, June, July you could feed them for \$30; \$50 will feed five children.

Now we have that commitment every year and we will not back down. But there is a desperate situation going on at the moment in South Sudan. The flooding has destroyed 16 of our malnutrition clinics. When I heard that, it just made my heart ache. I have walked into these malnutrition clinics and seen just the need that's there. I've seen the beginning, the glimmer of hope in a mother's eyes that perhaps you can help my child. And the fact that 16 of those clinics have been washed away is devastating.

So apart from our commitment to continue feeding 350,000 children, to be able to rebuild 16 clinics is going to cost an additional \$392,000--\$392,000 in addition to what we've already committed to, to rebuild those 16 clinics. Can you imagine as a mom? You've heard there is hope. You've heard there is a clinic. You make your way there and it's gone! It's washed away. That is hopelessness.

So what we're asking is, as well as helping us with our ongoing commitment to feeding those children, would you please consider giving an extra gift to put one of those clinics back in place with all the medications, with the beds, with the staff that's needed? That's about \$24,500, about that to build each clinic. Would you consider this time giving an additional perhaps \$1,000 gift? It will make all the difference between life and death for so many of these families.

Please help us now. Would you go to your phone and give the very best gift that you can? Thank you.

On the mission field:

Announcer: Across the continent of Africa, children are suffering facing severe malnutrition and even death. With food reserves gone and many areas experiencing severe famine, we urgently need to replenish supplies to keep feeding the 350,000 children who are counting on us.

Call now with your life-saving gift of \$30, \$50, or \$100 to help feed and care for three, five or ten children for three full months. Also, please consider an extra gift to help immediately rebuild malnutrition clinics destroyed by record flooding in South Sudan. The urgent need is \$392,000 above our normal feeding budget and is critical to help save the lives of those who are suffering most.

With your gift of any amount we will send you "It is Well" Quiet Time Bundle featuring an instrumental music CD with 12 classic hymns and a 31-day prayer booklet to help

renew your soul.

With your gift of \$100 or more, request the "No Greater Love" framed print. This portrait is a reminder of our Savior's love and the price that was paid for our salvation.

Finally with your gift of \$1,000 or more to help feed and care for 100 children be sure to request our inspiring bronze sculpture, "Divine Servant." Please call, write, or make your gift online today!

End of video

On the mission field

Sheila: Can you hear them coughing? Can you hear that deep chest cough? Because their resistance is so low that the least little thing becomes a serious life or death issue for these children.

I don't know if you realize that every time you pick up the phone and call, or every time you go online, these are the people whose lives you are changing. Our prayer is that we can save this little one. But my prayer is that we can save hundreds of other children before they get to this stage. No child should ever get to this stage. No mom should ever have to watch this.

So if we do something now, we can stop this from happening.

End of clip

In the studio

SHEILA: Thank you so much. If the lines are busy, please keep calling. There is an urgent need right at this moment. We've told our partners on the ground, "We hear you and we will send help."

And if you're able to give \$100, we're going to send you this beautiful print, "No Greater Love." "Greater love has no one than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends." Christ gave everything so that you and I could live. So let's reach out in his name and bring life and healing and help and hope to so many who need it.

We're so grateful for you. I want you to know we never take it for granted. So for all of us here at *LIFE Today*, I'm Sheila Walsh saying good-bye, God bless you, and we'll see you next time.