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Week 19: Spring Mission Feeding

Sheila Walsh

Lisa Whittle

SHEILA: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm Sheila Walsh. I'm so glad you stopped by. I'm particularly glad because I have a guest today that I really admire. I admire her courage. I admire her honesty. I admire her humor. When I got a copy of her book, *Jesus Over Everything*, I thought yes! Lisa Whittle, I just want to welcome you to the show. It's so good you're here!

LISA: Thank you, Sheila. This is my delight.

SHEILA: Honestly, when I read even your introduction, I so connected with that. Because you talked about a time where life seemed so simple where your only job was catching kittens. And how much more complicated life has become. What was kind of the Genesis of this book for you?

LISA: Oh goodness! I think it was that thought in myself about wow! Life used to be so much simpler. It is so complicated. It feels so complicated now. Longing--that longing for the simpler life, longing for the sense of home, which I feel like we all have and feel simpler in some ways, right? It was also conversations I heard people having, which were, "My life feels very complicated, and I don't really know how to fix it."

And then also the conversation I was having with other believers which was, "I really want Jesus to be first in my life, but I also don't know how to do that."

So I began to dig into what that might look like. Those two things: Life being complicated, Jesus being first and the correlation there. And so I wanted to see what might happen if we put Jesus first, could our lives be less complicated? And the answer

was an astounding yes. And then what does that look like on a daily basis?

SHEILA: Which is what I really appreciated about this book, is not just we should be doing this, it is a walk through how do we do this? Take us back a little bit to your life when you were younger. Were you brought up in a Christian home?

LISA: Yes. Brought up in a Christian home, a pastor's home.

SHEILA: Aah! PK!

LISA: I know what they say about PK's!

[LAUGHTER]

Yeah, brought up in a pastor's home. I loved my life. My life was good. It was that sort of simple life. At least I felt like it was on many levels running around chasing kittens. We usually lived remotely. My dad liked to live on land. I think because he was in the church and around people all the time he longed for that sort of respite. And so we usually lived out on some land. So chasing kittens around, a tree house; I loved that life. And so when I think back on that I think about peace and I think about simplicity. I know I can't go back to that. And I know that there were problems then. I think we idealize that sometimes, right?

SHEILA: But one of the things I think is interesting is you talk about a point where you felt you were living a double life and needed to kind of confess that to your parents, which is a very difficult thing to do at that age.

LISA: It is difficult to do. I was a sophomore in college. It is particularly difficult to do when you have a mother like I have who is incredible, and godly, and in many ways, we have very different personalities. So she is soft and sweet. I like to think I'm sweet, but she is a different kind--a different kind of woman that I deeply admire. But it's hard to

confess things like hey, I've been kind of living a double life. I've been this party girl in college.

The Lord had worked in my life a lot that sophomore year but that freshman year I'd really gone off the rails. So there were some things that the Lord was dealing with me that I needed to come clean about. I didn't want to do it, Sheila. I wanted to continue the facade, but it was clear that it was time. That in order for my life to be all that God wanted it to be, I needed to come clean. And I was at the point where I was tired of being sick. I was tired of the games. I longed to be free more than I longed to have secrets from the people that I loved and had lied to and had sort of pulled the wool over their eyes for a while.

So in the middle of a night, it was a snowy night, I drove home from college and confessed to my mother.

SHEILA: Wow! How did your mom respond?

LISA: Oh wow. Well, I had prayed first of all on the way there that my father wouldn't wake up.

[LAUGHTER]

That's the truth! Because I wanted to tell my mom first. We had that kind of relationship and I needed to tell her first. And he didn't wake up, which was interesting. Because that would be jarring your child waking you up in the middle of the night. Now that I'm a parent, I can't imagine. But she woke up almost as if she was waiting on me to tell her something, which I know was the Lord. Came out to the car. We went out to the car and I told her some things that I needed to tell her. She was gracious and she said, "I just wish that I had been there with you and for you."

SHEILA: Wow! What a beautiful response.

LISA: Yes, it was.

SHEILA: Do you think there was a healing power in confession like that? Because I think of a number of people. I get letters from some of our viewers who live with secrets and think well, I'm not like that now so I can move on. But I wonder how much of a hold they still have when you're not able to confess it out loud.

LISA: I believe that's true. And I believe confession makes you well. I believe there are just some places you can't move to, Sheila until you experience that. I think you and the Lord know what those are. I think that's something private that he reveals to you. I think for me, I certainly knew that because there had been some deceit that involved my parents, I knew that I needed to confess to my parents in order to move on. When I look back now, I really believe that might have been one of the first *Jesus Over Everything* decisions that I made.

SHEILA: Because in your book you talk about "Honesty Over Hiding." And I think that's huge. It will be different for all of us. For me, it was confessing that I was not okay; that I was falling apart; that I had contemplated suicide. It was all those things. And somehow, when you shine the light of Christ into those dark places, I kind of feel like the enemy loses ground.

LISA: Absolutely. Because he terrorizes us with those secrets. He continues to prod us every single day, well, if they knew. Or if everyone knew. Or you know. And so we live with those secrets and they make us sick, and they make us unable to move on with certain things in our life because we're constantly hounded by these things.

So I think it is a hugely important part of our process. That chapter, "Honesty Over Hiding" is important because it is a *Jesus Over Everything* decision. Honesty makes us well and truth is something that is obviously talked about in the word all the time. He is the truth. And so it's very, very important. It is a *Jesus Over Everything* decision that we

make daily, I believe.

SHEILA: You've got great steps in this book. And the other one that I felt was a fascinating one, "Holiness Over Freedom." Unpack that because that's an interesting title.

LISA: Well, it's the chapter in the book, Sheila that I wanted to write the least. It is the last chapter in the book that I wrote because it was a tough one to write. I knew that it would be hard for maybe us to digest as believers; it is hard for me in many ways but so important. And ironically, it's the chapter that's resonated with folks the very most.

SHEILA: I'm not surprised.

LISA: Because here's why it's so important: Because we want freedom, and we crave it so much. But in the process of our choosing our own freedoms, we believe that we can make our own lives free, we're actually becoming enslaved by the choices that we're free to make.

SHEILA: Wow! Interesting.

LISA: So what I talk about in that chapter is the choice for holiness, which by the way is a lifelong journey, I believe. But it is formed by our daily choices. The choice for holiness is really choosing God's way and it will provide for us the greatest measure of freedom we'll ever know.

SHEILA: "Steady Over Hype"--we live in a hype culture. What do you mean by "Steady Over Hype"?

LISA: Well, you know steadiness, faithfulness--yeah, that's the call to every believer. That's not a Lisa Whittle idea, that's in the word; that's a Bible idea. And it is so important in this day and time. I think how that relates to us and how that affects us is in a very profound way because if we think about society, if we think about social media, if we

think about how hype, I call it hype but we can call it emotions that run high, bandwagon, getting on the societal trends and so forth, it just affects us in such a profound way because if we are about that, we really might speak out of turn. We might struggle with relationships.

But the steadiness of a believer is to be faithful to the word, is to be faithful to what God has called us to do and that is what we need in this day and time more than ever.

SHEILA: Your whole title, *Jesus Over Everything* really resonated with me because some days I find social media quite a challenge. I find myself, not so much these days, but like going through Instagram and there is a bunch of friends I know and they're all at something and I'm thinking, I wonder why they didn't ask me to go? And there is something about, it's kind of a siren call, as opposed to being faithful to the Lord, and being who God has created you to be and taking the next step. Do you ever struggle with that?

LISA: Absolutely. And when you said that it reminded me of what I write about in chapter one, which is called "The Land of the Deadly Overs." I attack that first. Because our lives are complicated, Sheila we come up with our methods and our ways of trying to uncomplicate our lives. We get into these behaviors, which I call "the deadly overs" which are things like over-apologizing, over-analyzing, overworking, overindulging, things like that. And over-analyzing is something I've struggled with a lot.

When you talk about why didn't I get invited to this? Or why didn't someone text me back? Or these things that sound silly, but these things can eat our lunch for days and days and days because we over-analyze and we overthink. What we think is, I need to control this situation right now. Or this relationship feels complicated so let me uncomplicate it by I over-apologizing for why I didn't come to someone's party. But what really happens is, as we well know, we complicate it more.

And so putting Jesus over our relationships, putting Jesus over that fracture that's there

between us and someone else, trusting that he is enough, trusting that he can help us have the wisdom to be able to know when to speak and when not to speak out on social media and things like that. Those things are so important.

SHEILA: How did 2020 hit you just as a woman, as a follower of Christ, as a mother, what was that like for you?

LISA: I think like a lot of us it made me stop and evaluate. It made me evaluate what am I doing that matters? Am I living out the gospel in a way that makes a difference? How am I resting? How am I taking care of people that I love? And what do I want to be doing to be found faithful to the Lord? Certainly I think there was a weariness that came over me. That's real. And for the first time, Sheila, I experienced something that I don't typically experience because I'm introvert.

SHEILA: Oh me too!

LISA: Are you?

SHEILA: Yes!

LISA: Well, I experienced something and maybe you did too. I experienced loneliness.

SHEILA: Yes.

LISA: I don't typically. I can be in my home for a very long time and not feel lonely as an introvert but for the first time I felt lonely. Maybe not for the first time, but certainly I felt lonely in a different way.

SHEILA: I found myself having to ask the Holy Spirit, how do I live in these days? Because I had like 30 events that were canceled, all the things that we usually go do. And I found myself kind of spiraling a little and thinking, like Lord, how do I live in a way

that is honoring to you when everything I do has been taken away and it's just us? But I think for me it was a really good thing. It reminded me, like the message of your book, *Jesus Over Everything*, that you can even put Christian ministry in the place of where Jesus should be.

LISA: One hundred percent. I think it did that for a lot of folks that serve Jesus in one way or another. It caused us to pause. And when you're so busy serving Jesus, whatever you're doing, you can get in such a routine and you can get into such habits and they can even be good habits but when you have to pause, and you have to stop, you have to look inside yourself and sometimes that's uncomfortable. You know that book came out a day before we went under lockdown.

SHEILA: Oh gosh! Don't you just love that?

LISA: It was like Lord, what is going on? But what was going on was: is Jesus going to be over everything even in a pandemic? Is he going to be over having to stay home, having to readjust your life? Do you believe what you wrote? I was faced with those things. I was very glad, I have to tell you, Sheila, I was very glad to have written a book that I could stand behind in those moments.

SHEILA: I follow you on Instagram. I think you're hilarious. You said that you noticed that holiness over freedom really resonated with women because you had this little campaign where you had people hold up cards. What else in the book did you find most resonated with others?

LISA: Well, certainly the deadly overs resonated with people. Also, I talk about doing a shopping fast for a whole year.

SHEILA: A year! What exactly did you mean by that? Obviously, you still got groceries.

LISA: Yes. And we got deodorant.

[LAUGHTER]

SHEILA: May God be praised!

LISA: And toothpaste. What I fasted from in shopping for a year was from things that I struggled with that I would find myself buying a lot, which were clothes, because I enjoy some clothes. And shoes and things like that that were items. Also, decorative things for my home because I love to decorate. I would have loved, on some level, to have been an interior decorator. I love it!

But yes. But those were things I continued to buy a lot of, and in the sense that they would fill something for me when I caught myself feeling lonely or fearful or life was complicated, and I just needed a fix or whatever the case may be. We all have our things that we go to. And in the book we talk about overindulging and those were my areas. So for a year I did not shop for those things. And it did not start that way. It started out I was going to do it for six weeks and then the Lord said to me, "You're not done." And so there we go, and I did it for a year. Yeah, I talk about it in the book.

SHEILA: I found that one of the most helpful things because everything, I think Blaise Pascal made the most profound quote but it's like we're made to worship. I used to think that was only those people who had found Jesus or hadn't found Jesus. But I think when we restrict our Christianity to a Sunday morning or a Wednesday evening or whatever, what are we worshipping the rest of the time? That that's why I'm really excited about your book.

In fact, I'm going to let you know how you can get a copy of Lisa's book, *Jesus Over Everything* because it really is my heart's passion at the moment that I find myself on my best days and my worst days worshipping him. That when I'm lonely I sit with him in the loneliness. When I'm sad I sit with him in the sadness rather than think, well, I'll just go to Starbucks and that will wake me up. I'm trying to be more awake to Jesus. So I'm

really grateful for this book. I'm going to tell you all how you can get a hold of it.

But first of all, there is something very much on our hearts here at *LIFE Today*. Do you know that even as Lisa and I are sitting here in this studio, there are moms in Africa who are on their knees begging God that somebody would hear their hearts' cry? Their only thing today is thinking, where on this arid, dry soil can I scrape enough to find something to make a meal for my children? They're looking for something that is very practical, very real, and the need is now. So watch this and then I'll tell you how you can get a hold of Lisa's book.

On the mission field:

Open Captions:

Malnutrition contributes to the death of over three million children under the age of five every year.

>> It is not a new problem. And it is easy to be overwhelmed by its size, so many statistics laid before us. Of course, they're important but as we look at numbers, we can sometimes lose sight of what's behind them. So what is behind these numbers, among those masses? Well, there is Martino, Branco, Vida, Idalena, Antonia, Rusadya, Victoria, Maria, Sabena, Anna Paula, Mateo, Jenerosa, Adriana, Dinanona, Nasa, Paula, Azikia, Gendenia, Fernanda, Esperanza, Alena, Myodi, Estari, Myosa, Cecilia, Tatinia, Roberto, Thomas, Immanuel, Jenny.

When it comes to numbers the most important of all may be one. Just start by helping one.

End of video

In the studio:

SHEILA: You know what I love about that piece? So often we look at pieces like this and it is just like a big need, a group of children. But to give each child their name. The first time I had the privilege of being in Angola and being the one that was allowed to hand that bowl of food to those children who are hungry, I asked our translator if he could ask the children to tell me their names as each one come up; just have a moment to look in their eyes and make contact and know that this is not just a need--this is a child. This is Anton. This is Maria. To know their names.

There is such an urgent need right now in Africa. Africa is in a very, very dangerous position at the moment. To the south there is this unprecedented historical drought where literally we're watching women scrape through the ground to try and find any kind of pods that they could cook enough to fill their children's bellies. But there is no nutrition, no protein.

Then we go up to the north, to South Sudan, and there is historic flooding where so many women are traveling for miles to try and get their child to a place where there is dry land. And worse than that, we have had 16 of our malnutrition clinics washed away by the flooding. When I heard that, it broke my heart because I know that some of these mothers whose children are so severely malnourished, they've got literally hours, days to live. And they will walk for miles to get to the malnutrition clinic. And suddenly, in South Sudan they're gone.

So here's our commitment at *LIFE*. We have made a commitment to feed 350,000 children and we're going to do that this year. And there is an entry point for each one of us: \$30 will feed three children for three months. If I take \$30 into the grocery store it's gone like that. The thought that that would feed three children for three months is overwhelming; \$50 feeds five; \$100 feeds ten. The need has never been greater than it is right now.

But I want to ask some of you who are able to if you could give an extra gift. We need to help rebuild these 16 clinics. It's going to take roughly \$24,500 for each clinic to put beds

in, to put medicine in, to staff it so that when that mother with the last glimmer of hope makes her way to the clinic it's there. Can you imagine showing up with your desperately malnourished sick child and the clinic is gone?

We are the body of Christ on the earth at this moment. It is not an accident that you're watching. It's not an accident that I'm here. Together we can change this. So please, will you go to the phone and just make the best gift you can? Not what you can't--but if we all do what we can, we can change the world. Please call now. Please call and let's help them in Jesus' name.

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: I've seen in ways I've never imagined. I've seen what death looks like in a child's eyes. And now what I see, I see life in every bowl. If you want to be a part of this and like why wouldn't you want to be a part of this? Then just go to your phone right now and say, "Hey, I want to keep..." There you go, darling. I want to be a part. I want to keep this going. I want to make sure that not just in this village but in every other village where children are starving that we're able to simply give them one bowl of food.

I mean I've seen what happens when this is not available, and I've seen what happens when it is available. This works! This literally changes lives one life at a time, one bowl at a time and we can't stop now.

End of video

In the studio:

SHEILA: Thank you so much! It really is an urgent need and we're committed to help. And when you give any gift at all please say, I want this book, *Jesus Over Everything* by Lisa Whittle. It literally will be a life-changing journey for you and your family.

Lisa, I just want to thank you. I love this, "Uncomplicating the daily struggle to put Jesus first." Thank you for this book!

LISA: Thank you so much. Thank you!

SHEILA: It will make a big difference. So I just want to thank you for tuning in. Thanks for staying with us, thanks for staying right to the end. Remember, when you call and make your

pledge to make a difference in the lives of these precious children, everyone has a name, say,
"Can I get Lisa's, *Jesus Over Everything?*" And we will send it to you. Until next time, I'm
Sheila Walsh. God bless you!