

6/29/21

Week 27: WFL

Randy Robison and Sheila Walsh

Hosanna Wong

SHEILA: Hey! Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm Sheila Walsh here with Randy Robison. We're so glad that you have stopped by. My guest today, our guest today is someone that I remember really clearly the first time I met her because I just thought, you know sometimes you look at somebody and you think, she's just so full of life and so full of compassion. And I couldn't wait to introduce her to you. So please, help Randy and I to welcome Hosanna Wong. It's just great to have you here.

HOSANNA: Thank you guys for having me. I'm so grateful.

SHEILA: I just came from being out in San Diego with Dr. Jeremiah's church, and with the high school students they have in their academy. You had been there maybe a week or two weeks before and they just raved about you. That's not easy connecting with high school students.

HOSANNA: It's really not. I appreciate it. I told you I was like after I preached to high school students I thought, maybe I *can't* preach. These jokes aren't landing. You're like, I'm sure you did great. I love getting to do that. I think I relate to them because I am them. I like the same music as them. I have the same insecurities as them. It's like Jesus can be involved and interact with your real life. Let's talk about it. I loved them. Thank you. I loved doing that.

RANDY: You have a new book out. It's available for preorder so if anybody wants to get it after the program they can go ahead and preorder.

HOSANNA: Yes! Please do!

SHEILA: It's really good.

RANDY: Tell us a little bit about it because you have an interesting take learning, I think it was C.S. Lewis said, "Much of what we learn is via negativity"--what not to do. I know I have, thankfully. Tell us about what you're communicating in the new book.

HOSANNA: Well, they told me to write about what I know. They said, "You have to write about what you're an expert at." I said, "Well, at this point in my life I don't think I'm an expert at much. But I am expert at how not to save the world."

SHEILA: Such a great title. I love it!

HOSANNA: I was like I know exactly how to push people far away and how to not do this well. Ten years ago this summer I packed my life into suitcases and started traveling the country trying to talk about Jesus. There are all these things I wasn't sure about. I wasn't sure how to love the people right next to me. I wasn't sure how to say yes to God or to step into my purpose. And I wasn't sure how to embrace community or what I even thought about the church.

My relationship with the church was complicated. How am I a part of this? How do I embrace this? I believed so many lies about my life and my purpose and the beauty of the church. So I got a lot of things wrong. I really fumbled through. I believed all these lies. All these lies like I have to rely on my own power. All these lies like I can do it all on my own. All these lies like I have to wait for it to be the perfect opportunity to say yes at all. I believed all these lies and I fumbled through it. And through my own fumbling, and through faithfully reading God's word I discovered man, I have really figured out how not to save the world.

But the truth is better. And so throughout my book, it's just 14 lies I've believed that have

stopped me from fighting for those I love and revealing God's love to the people around me and the truth about what God's word says about each and every one. And the truth is that every single person can know how loved they are by God. We are 100 percent a part of his mission to save the world.

SHEILA: It's so interesting though, because when I read your book, and it is great, by the way, so do preorder *How Not to Save the World* by Hosanna. But I related to so many of the things that you talked about. One of the things that was interesting to me that you struggled with, because I struggle with, was just this whole idea of community. You know a couple will invite you in and want to be a part of your life and you resisted it for a long time. What do you think was the root of that?

HOSANNA: I think a lot of viewers can maybe relate that you had a difficult relationship inside of the church. Maybe someone hurt you. Someone told you you couldn't. Someone talked down to you and then because of that relationship and that situation it gave you your perspective of the church at large for forever.

I grew up on the streets of San Francisco. My family has an outreach to those without homes and battling addiction and I thought, this is the real ministry. This is what real Christ followers do. I don't want to be a part of a community that just hurts people, because one person did, and part of a community that just lies to me, because one person did. I allowed this lie that I am better than the church. I don't need community. Those people aren't real. Those people don't love me.

As I traveled around the country, at local churches all over the country, I realized that the local church is the hope of the world, and this one bad apple did not represent the community of the church. And instead of me going outside of it and talking bad about all those other people I could say, we're the people we've been praying for. We can be the difference. We've been praying to God for. We can be the church that Jesus Christ asked the church to be. So I don't want to just be outside of it and say, I hate all those people. I'm going to be in it and say let's be the change from within.

So it changed my life, traveling the country, having families let me sleep on their cots in their living rooms while I was doing spoken word poems or speaking in prisons or churches or conferences, whatever and realized, I'm so sorry, God that I believed the lie that your church wasn't beautiful. That I allowed a few people to convince me to separate myself from this community. It turns out we can be a part of God's great plan to save the world. We can say yes to our purpose, but we actually can't do it alone. We have to be a part of the community of the church.

SHEILA: It's really important. You know one of the things you write about I so related to was finding your own voice and being comfortable in your own skin. I remember when I first was invited to co-host the 700 Club and someone took me out and bought me this dress and a scarf and pearls. I was like, Jesus, take me home! I now want to die. Because it was like they're trying to make me look like this church lady.

But you talk about, actually, I think it was when you were in a prison in Alaska that something was really changing inside of you.

HOSANNA: Yeah. One of the lies I talk about in the book that I believed for far too long is that I have to silence my story. It's one of the greatest lies, one of the perfect plans of *How Not to Save the World*, to silence your own story and to try to look like someone else or be like someone else.

The first Chinese woman I ever saw preach was me. It's really hard to do something or say yes to something you've never seen done before. I just felt like I needed to make my hair tamer to look like other people. My hero is my mentors not people that were trying to make me look like them. I just kind of projected that myself. To preach like the other preachers, to look like the other people, to try to tame my multiracial attributes, to try to hide the story of where I grew up on the streets. I tried to hide all of these things.

I spoke at a prison in Alaska and it was because so many people with their different

heritages thought I looked like their daughter or their niece because they saw all my different ethnicities. That's what made me more relatable was that I was all these different things. It was that I didn't wear a lot of makeup and my hair was really big and I had kind of a rough past and a rough childhood that made them be able to see that Jesus could interact with their real stories.

And I was just so convicted, I had been so wrong. I had believed so many lies. Why was I hiding the truth of what Jesus had done in my life? I was so convicted. And then soon after my mentors and my heroes who I tried to emulate, they were the ones that came to me and said, "Hey kid, it's time to tell your story. It's time to be who you are. And I think the more of who you are the more God's glory can shine through your life."

SHEILA: Amen! Amen!

RANDY: A part of your story that you do talk about was your father. He was big in your life and yet losing him was big in your life. Tell us a little bit about him.

HOSANNA: My dad was a heroin addict. He was a pimp. He was a man that... he had a totally different lifestyle and Jesus changed his whole life. He planted this outreach to those without homes and battling addictions and he led hundreds of people not living in homes to Jesus. So he's my hero and I love him, and I miss him. He's been gone for 13 years now.

But I think having someone in your life you've seen do extraordinary things, I just planned on serving him and his ministry. And when he was gone, it was like, what am I going to do now? Because I thought that I had to do something big to do something important. I had to learn that I am not him. That I'm not like him. That I have a different story, different background. Jesus has saved me from different sins. I look different. I do poetry. I don't think he could have done it. I don't think he could have done the poems.

SHEILA: And by the way, go on--do people go to YouTube to see you?

HOSANNA: Yeah! On my website, HosannaWong.com.

SHEILA: I'm serious, people. It's phenomenal. So you need to do it after this show.

HOSANNA: Yeah. But he did insert inside of me this passion to reach the lost. And after he passed, I learned I had to do it my way and not his way. And I had to learn the value of don't let your fear of something being too ordinary stop you from being obedient. God wants to use small things to do amazing things. What were you going to say?

SHEILA: I was just going to say that is perfectly illustrated in how your dad became a Christian. Because so often we think, someone might look at you and think, no wonder people would listen to her. Or you look at the people who are great at sharing amazing stories but the way that your dad became a believer was very simple. Simply somebody telling him about Jesus?

HOSANNA: Yeah. It's one of my favorite stories in the book. I'll tell you the past ten years I wasn't sure when the right time was to tell that story because it is so personal. You know you have these personal stories, and you think, God when is the right time to share it and to make it other people's stories not just mine? But my dad did all these extraordinary things and I never thought... I always thought you had to do something extraordinary to do something impactful and I was so wrong.

I asked my dad, who pointed you to Jesus? And he kind of brushed it off. He was like, "I was selling vacuum cleaners door to door when I was living in sin and doing drugs. And this woman opened a door for me, invited me in, invited me in, sat at her kitchen table, and had a conversation with me. Told me about how she also was lost and broken, and Jesus saved her life and asked if I wanted to change my life too and I said yes."

He was so nonchalant about it but I'm sitting there crying as we're playing Guess Who

with our little flippy game. I was like, "Dad, what?" And it's like, "Dad, I've always had this unrealistic standard of what it looks like to save the world and you're telling me one woman, where she was, doing chores in her home, opened the door for you? I, for the rest of my life am committed to opening doors, where I am."

I realized, what did she do? She made an invitation. She had a conversation and then she shared her story. I just thought, God, don't ever let me believe the lie that I have to do something big to do something impactful. But let me make invitations where I am, have honest conversations where I am, and just share my story. Because I think all the time what if she didn't open the door? So God, let me be a girl that opens doors.

SHEILA: I love that! The thing I love about that is that every single one of us, those of us here in the studio, all our viewers at home, we can all do that. We think that...

When I was living in Virginia at one point, I remember I was driving someplace to go and speak, and I suddenly saw these homeless people on the edge of the road. I thought, you know what? There is something wrong with this picture. Because I kind of got my eyes closed to these people because I'm heading off to go speak to people who have already heard it anyway.

But you have an interesting take on the Good Samaritan in your book. Tell us about that because I found that really fascinating.

HOSANNA: So you hear the story of the Good Samaritan and... I don't know. What do you think is interesting about it because to me...

SHEILA: You say we're the inn keepers.

HOSANNA: Yeah! We're the inn keepers. I think we feel this unrealistic pressure. Once you give your life to Jesus, sometimes, this is my experience, now you have to go change the world. Now you have to go save the word. The story of the Good Samaritan, it's a great one, we know it, we love it. Here we are and we see you need to not pass by the

people right in front of you. You need to pay attention. That's a good word. That will preach, right? Pay attention to the people next to you. Do what you can to the people. Don't pass by, don't pass by, be like the Good Samaritan.

But the reason why Jesus was sharing this story was because someone asked him, "What do I have to do in order to be saved?" There was a religious guy who was saying give me a checklist. Make this not about faith but make this about works. "What can I do to earn salvation?"

So Jesus is actually responding to someone that wants to make it all about works. And says, "Okay, here's a story. This guy is beat up on the side of the road. He is a Samaritan, someone you don't really like. This guy passes by, this guy passes by, now this guy stops." And Jesus was actually demonstrating to him you can't stop for every person on the side of the road. What happens?

We should. We should love everybody. We should try to pay attention and stop. But what happens when you can't pay everybody's medical bills? What happens when you can't bandage up every hurting person? And the great news is that this story isn't just about bad guys and good guys, or Samaritan guys or religious guys. It's actually about a specific guy, Jesus. And he is saying, "I want you to know it is about faith and it is not about works. Because when you can't do everything and stop for everybody I can."

And there is a case, Saint Augustine says there is a case for that we are the inn keepers. The Good Samaritan brings those hurting to the inn. The Good Samaritan says, "Whatever you need I'll pay for. Take care of him. Whatever you got I'll pay for. I have all the resources and I've got all the money, and I've got all the time." And the inn keeper, where the inn keeper is takes care of the person that was brought.

So I just say we've got to love the people next to us but don't feel overwhelmed that you can't help everybody. At your inn, at your post, in your home with your little brother, with your dad, with your spouse, with your cousin, how can you serve with who God has

brought into your life? Because great news, he is the Good Samaritan in the story and he has all the resources and all the money and all the time.

SHEILA: It's just really a fascinating perspective.

RANDY: I've never heard that or considered it and it just rings really, really true. Because it takes the burden of being something we're not off of us and saying, look, God will bring you opportunities, you just have to open your door, like you said, open your heart to him. He's got all the resources, I don't have to.

SHEILA: You tell, also a fascinating story about it was very hard for you when you lost your dad. It was really hard for your little brother. When you realized how wounded he was, you found ways of entering his world. I think that speaks to all of us. What did you do, Hosanna to help him?

HOSANNA: It's the most important story of my whole life is that story. My baby brother was 12 years old when my daddy died, and he shut down emotionally. He wouldn't talk about my dad or God. And none of us could get through to him. But I noticed that whenever I would try to talk to him about something spiritual or vulnerable, he would just always talk about comic books. He loves D.C. Comics, Marvel. He wanted to talk about these superheroes. So I realized that I could not bring him into my world, but I could step into his.

So I became obsessed with comic books. So we would read comic books together. Whenever I would go into town, my college was about seven hours away, so whenever I would drive in, we would go to thrift stores and look at comic books. And it was years and years and years of me having to become obsessed with Batman and Superman and Green Lantern and all the other weird things, years and years of me having to learn his language. The Bible talks about how we're Christ's ambassadors. We have to know the language of God, what he says and the language of other people, the words and ways of God and the words and ways of other people. So we can translate, so we can

communicate.

But so often we want people to change their behavior first, right? We want them to step into our world and understand what we're saying. They can't hear us. So I learned how to be obsessed with comic books. And then years later I was the closest relationship in my brother's life, the one person he trusted because he knew I was there with him. And finally, one day, I just asked him, "How do you feel?"

And he said, "I'm mad."

And it was the first time, years later that my brother actually opened up about how he felt about losing our dad. And we just sat there and cried together. I didn't have all the perfect words because I know how to not save the world. But I knew, don't talk! And we just cried together. I think a lot of times your greatest witness will be your witness. Jesus is not far and above, out of reach from the real problems we're going through. He is Emanuel, God with us in the real hurts and the real pains.

And just being with my brother, how can we show a world that Jesus is with them if we don't even want to be with them? Our greatest witness will be our witness. Who are you coming along side of in the real dirt of their lives? Because Jesus wants to come and interact with our real pains and bring real healing to our real hurts.

So anyways, that started that. When I married my husband, he also became obsessed with superheroes with us. We kept spending time with Elijah and just listening to him and believing him and crying with him. And it was years later where one day he was over at our house and he said, "The joy and the peace you have, how you forgive people, how you fight for people, I know what you have is Jesus, so I want that. Can you help me give my life to Jesus?"

I'm sure I didn't say it with the perfect words. I'm sure any kid that's a freshman at a Christian college could tear apart that I didn't do it perfectly, theologically, but my baby

brother gave his life to Jesus. He chose Jesus as his number one. We started going through the gospels together over Zoom.

You know, it took having a real relationship with Jesus myself, in a real relationship with my little brother, really knowing God's words and God's ways and really knowing the ways and words of my baby brother, Elijah. Maybe that was through X-Men and the Justice League but my baby brother knows Jesus now. That's why I believe so much in this message. I believe that you can fight for the people you love to never stop praying for them. I believe that every single person you know can know how much God loves them and that starts with us loving them, opening the door, sitting at the table and telling the truth.

SHEILA: That's so powerful. You want to get a hold of this book. You can preorder it now, *How Not to Save the World*. Beautiful, powerful lessons Hosanna has learned. And honestly, that's part of who we are here at *LIFE Today*; that we want to fight for every single person who has a need right now. And you can help us. Would you watch this?

On the mission field:

Open Captions: Republic of Burundi, East Africa

RALPH: We're going to the home of little Stanina. She actually lost a little sister with the contaminated water here. They use the same water to drink, to wash their clothes, to clean the house, and also washing dishes. And then they drink the same water, so it is a very startling scenario.

She has to walk about two kilometers, about a mile and a half one way to collect water, and then bring it back home to her mother. What she showed me here, I was just really surprised that somebody would actually drink this water. Her little sister died at about three years old from drinking this water. They couldn't save her life. She got so sick and so ill they just couldn't bring her back. So she's lost a little sibling drinking this water

from the river.

Open Captions: When I drink the bad water, I feel it in my stomach. Before my sister died, we did everything together. I now have a broken heart because I lost my best friend. During my sister's funeral I got very sad because I fear that my little brother will die too.

RALPH: It just kind of disturbs your soul when you know that it's a very simple solution--just a cup of clean water would have saved little Stanina's little sister.

End of video

In the studio:

SHEILA: So let me take you with me. I get in my car and drive to the airport and park. I check in. I do all the normal stuff. Get on a flight. Change planes somewhere. Then within hours I'm landing in Zambia. And just the day before, I was in Dallas when I bought a bottle of water for the plane, and now suddenly I'm in these villages and I'm walking with these mothers to the only water source they have.

And I'll never forget my first trip, I was horrified. I just didn't even know what to do. Part of me wanted to say to this one child who was about to drink, don't do that! And then I was who are you to tell him what to do? This is all they have got. And I watched these mothers who get up at 4 o'clock in the morning and walk for miles to this hand-dug well or a river that is filthy. The same water is used for bathing, for the animals, for drinking--for everything! And that's all that they've got. I remember that first night saying to the Lord, I will never forget what I saw, and I will never stop telling their story.

We have made a commitment here at *LIFE* that we're never going to stop telling their story because wherever you're sitting right now with a cup of coffee or whatever is happening, this is going on right now. Right now mothers are walking to that filthy river and praying that somebody will hear their cry. We have made a commitment here at *LIFE* to drill 350 fresh new water wells in 20 countries and we can only do it if you will help

us.

RANDY: You know, Sheila, I've been there, in different places and in one village I literally started asking, "Why don't you catch rain water?"

They said, "Yeah. We've got gutters where we can and rain barrels. Come look at the rain barrel."

Eh! Still not good water. "You can boil it."

They're like, "In what?" Most of the water is in plastic or wood containers. Literally, these people are so poor, it's "abject poverty" is the term we use because they don't have another choice.

Sheila, when we froze over here in Texas back in February of 2021, it was just a few days and we're like, "We don't know what to do. We don't have any water." It is that fast.

When you consider these people live there all the time and over not just months but years, the water supplies are contaminated or they evaporate, they literally have no choice. But we have a choice. We have a choice to go into those places, drill a water well and give them clean water. Then they can live.

I'm asking you to make the choice right now to go to the phone or go online, give the best gift you can. Give \$48 which will provide an average of ten people with clean water for a lifetime. Give \$144 which will provide that water of life for 30 people for a lifetime. Or if you can drill an entire well by yourself, \$4800 do it. Drill two, drill three, do what you can. I'm asking you to make that choice that they don't have to give them life.

Begin video clip:

ANNOUNCER: Waterborne illness is a killer that strikes the most vulnerable. For many

impoverished families, the death of a child is the tragic result of having no choice but to drink contaminated water. But with your help, they won't have to make this choice ever again. Mission: Water for LIFE provides clean, fresh drinking 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 for 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 James Robison's book *Living Amazed* full of inspirational true stories. You'll learn how divine encounters can change your life. In addition you'll also receive Randy Robison's brand-new devotional, *Upgrade: "Seven moves in seven weeks to a better life."*

With your gift of \$100 or more please request the N.I.V. Thinline Bible with easy-to-read large print. 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 inspiring bronze sculpture, "Divine Servant."

Please call, write, or make your gift online.

End of video

In the studio:

RANDY: I pray you are going online or going to the phone right now and making the best gift you can. You can save a life. However you cannot save the entire world, can you Sheila?

SHEILA: I just want to, Hosanna, first of all, thank you so much. I want to encourage people to go online and preorder *How Not to Save the World* but how can they connect

with you?

HOSANNA: The best way to connect with me is to go to HosannaWong.com/savetheworld, as well as on Instagram on @Hosanna.Wong or on Facebook on Hosanna Wong. But HosannaWong.com/savetheworld will give you resources, and we can connect really well.

SHEILA: Fantastic! Thank you so much.

HOSANNA: Thank you for having me!

SHEILA: And thanks for being with us. Please join us next time on *LIFE Today*.