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Week 28: WFL

Sheila Walsh

Sarah Jakes Roberts

SHEILA: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm so glad you joined us today. You're going to be really glad too. Someone sent me a book recently. The first impression was wow, that cover is stunning! But then, as I began to dive in, I thought, wow! This message is revolutionary. I'm very glad to say that the author of this book, Sarah Jakes Roberts is with me today. Sarah, I'm so glad you're with us.

SARAH: I'm so glad to be here. Thank you so much for having me.

SHEILA: First of all, gorgeous cover! And when I saw that this book has just fairly recently come out, it made me think, did you have to shoot this cover during the pandemic?

SARAH: We did. This was early on in the pandemic too. Everything was closed, so we found a florist who would make us an arch. I stuffed myself into something from Amazon. And we just like, get up close, we shot it, and it was done. It's a wonder it turned out looking like that.

SHEILA: Well, it is beautiful, and it is doing so, so well. I was checking the charts this morning, and your book is just zooming. It's phenomenal. So congratulations. But here's what I want to say. What was it? You're writing about Eve, probably the most vilified woman on the planet. What was the catalyst to starting writing this?

SARAH: You know, Sheila, I was at this conference, and at the conference, they had on these shirts that said, "Sarah, Mary, Esther, Ruth" and then "#E, squad goals." I just thought to myself in just this petty moment in my mind, I was like, I know why they don't have Eve on that shirt.

Because Eve ruined it for us all! Here I am at a women's conference about to speak, and I'm thinking to myself, Eve is just this terrible woman. And I felt really convicted by that because I am all about empowering women. Yet, the first woman I couldn't understand.

So I went back to the scriptures. I started studying her life. I just kept hearing over and over again she knew better but didn't do better. And like a ton of bricks hit me because I know what it is like to know better and not do better. But her story doesn't end there. There is restoration and redemption connected to her story that we hardly ever talk about. I felt like if I could rescue Eve, then I could rescue any woman who has ever known better but didn't do better.

SHEILA: Which honestly, I think is all of us. I think every single one of us knows better but didn't do better at some point in our life. Was there anything in particular about Eve's story that touched you personally at a deeper level?

SARAH: Oh my goodness. This notion of forbidden fruit, forbidden fruit. I have been reconciling with this moment that I had with forbidden fruit. I was 13 years old, Sheila. You know my story; I got pregnant at 13. I had my son at 14 years old, and then it was ten years of toxic cycles, toxic self-talk, toxic relationships with others. And I just kept eating from the forbidden fruit, and it was like I couldn't stop. And yet, in Genesis 3:15, after Eve has eaten from this forbidden fruit, God gives a promise in the middle of the curse. He tells the serpent, "I'm going to enmity between you and the woman." That word *enmity* is hostility. "Between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed. And his seed will bruise your head, and your seed will bruise his heel."

Right there in the scripture, in the middle of her despair, in the middle of her darkness, God says, "I've got a way out of this. I'm going to save everything that happened at this moment." But it is on the woman's job to produce seed even inside of her hurt.

Here I am, 18 years since I got pregnant as a teenager, and I'm producing seed from the place of that hurt. I think what God has done with this book is just a sign of what he even did in the

garden of being fruitful and multiplying the work of the woman who lays her life down. Behold what God has for her.

SHEILA: When I read through your book, my thought was, it's like you've thrown open prison doors and said to women, come on. Come out. This was not the end. This was just really the beginning.

I wonder how the process of your own suffering has impacted you. You always seem to me like this gorgeous warrior woman. Like you're just not going to take any more what from the devil. Do you think that was born out of suffering?

SARAH: For sure. I love, when I started, I'm like all obsessed now with this story. When I started thinking about the word *enmity*, I thought about how many times we feel like the enemy is doing this. The serpent is doing this; life is beating me up. I feel like there is enmity every time I turn around.

But he says, "I'm going to put enmity between you and the woman." That means that the woman can have hostility towards the enemy too. I think what you see happening down on the inside of me is I finally got upset with the enemy. Whatever your enemy is, whether it is depression, whether it is anxiety, low self-esteem, insecurity, we have the power to overcome whatever is standing in our way when we partner with God. But we have to get angry with that thing that is standing in front of us.

And sometimes I have to get angry on behalf of other women. When I was writing *Woman Evolve*, I was coming for women who didn't even know that I was on the way for them. Because I do believe that we all have the ability to walk in freedom and the knowledge of who we are called to be in Jesus. And sometimes, you need someone to push you in that direction.

SHEILA: And it is interesting because in the book you talk about the fact, and it was something that I grew up in a small Baptist church in Scotland and was told never to use the word *hate* because hate is a bad, bad word. But you kind of even redeemed that word.

SARAH: I do because if we are not hating the thing that keeps us from knowing who Jesus is in our lives, if we're not hating that thing that is keeping us from becoming whole and living righteous lives, then we are learning to live casually with barriers and obstacles that keep us from tapping into the knowledge and power and resources of God.

I feel like giving us permission to say, I don't want this anymore. I believe God has better for me. I want to believe I'm fearfully and wonderfully made. And so I feel like that is a type of energy this it requires us to finally make some decisions that lead us into making the right choices for our lives.

SHEILA: Sometimes, I think within the Christian community, and with women, one of the biggest traps we fall into is comparison. That's one of the things when I first joined Women of Faith, I remember listening to the other speakers and thinking, I should not be here. I'm not as funny as her. I'm not as clever as her. You address comparison here because it is such a lead weight on our calling.

SARAH: Oh, it sure is. Let me tell you, I did Women of Faith for just like the last year, and I was so blessed to be able to do it with you. And I felt all of those feelings. It was like some of my first moments in speaking, and I just felt so unqualified. And yet, I realized as long as I was looking at someone else's journey that I had no opportunity to kind of work on my own steps and work on what God was calling me to do.

And comparison is not just something that ends up beating us up on the inside it also keeps us from growing on the inside. I feel like if we realize that my growth can't happen at the same time that I'm comparing that we'll begin to take inventory of what we do have and begin working it so that we can see it come to its fullest potential.

SHEILA: What would you say to women who think, well, I didn't get pregnant at 13? I don't really have forbidden fruit. Forbidden fruit appears in all sorts of different ways, doesn't it?

SARAH: Yes, girl. Listen. Eating the French fries in the car, spending more than we should, negative self-talk; like there are so many things that we just look at casually. We know we shouldn't do them, but we have survived doing them before, so why not just do it again? You know all of us have sinned. We have all fallen short, right? That's what the Bible teaches us. And if we don't see the areas of our life where we need God, then we're out here living life in our own strength, and that's not what we're called to do. And his strength is made perfect in our weakness. There is nothing wrong with identifying the weakness. I would dare even say that that is where the glory exists for our lives.

SHEILA: I so agree! So, so agree.

I was reading a letter this morning before I came to the studio; from a young girl who said, "I've been addicted to online porn for a while. My family is Christian, so I can't possibly tell them. I've tried to stop, but last night I fell down again. So where's God? Why won't he help me?"

Sometimes we want change like that, [snaps fingers] not understanding the process of God's working.

SARAH: Oh, absolutely. I will tell you a lot of times I feel like we get upset with ourselves about the fruit of our actions. Our actions are fruit, right? But there is a deeper root. And a lot of times, we get upset because we keep engaging in this fruit. But what we really need to focus on is the root. Why am I making these choices? Why am I making these decisions?

That's what happened to me. I was frustrated. Because I was in this toxic, abusive relationship, I felt like if I just ended the relationship, I'll be fine. But I needed to dissect why I was in the relationship in the first place. What were those thoughts and images that were in my mind about myself, about God?

So focusing on the root, and sometimes you need help. You need therapy to sometimes get to the root. You need to change your environment to get to the root. But don't spend so much time

focusing on the fruit that you miss the opportunity to uproot that thing you're trying to change in your life.

SHEILA: I think that honestly is huge, Sarah. Because I remember, I worked for a time many years ago with some people that I felt were very destructive and very shaming. I thought, I just need to get away from them. But I discovered I took me with me when I left.

Talk about shame because I think I was just speaking at a high school recently, and I asked them all to write down the thing they were struggling with most. 50 percent of them wrote down either shame or porn or failure. Why do you think it is such that even as believers we still struggle so much with shame?

SARAH: Oh goodness. I think the projection of what we think other people will think about us has a lot to do with our shame. I also think that we are armed with the results of the action when we look back in hindsight, so what's difficult for us is to see any other outcome. But when we're in the moment before we engage in whatever brings shame, we don't have a lot of compassion for ourselves.

Before I got pregnant, I forgot that I was lost, that I was insecure, that I was hoping to fit in, that I felt like I was in a world bigger than me as T.D. Jakes' daughter. All I could see is that I had this teenage pregnancy. Shame, I believe, has to loosen its hold when we're there to love the person we were in the moment that we committed this sin. When God looks at us, he sees his child even in the middle of sin. His heart breaks because we're in it, but he still sees us through the eyes of love.

And when we're able to receive God's lens, God's lens of love for those moments, I think it does loosen that shame. Now I'm able to embrace that part of myself and then lead her to truth and righteousness.

SHEILA: So beautiful! I'm going to tell women in a moment how they can get a hold of your book because that is my recommendation. We need to read this book. But what are some of the lies that we believe about ourselves?

SARAH: We're not worthy. We don't have value. I'm just here to exist; I have no purpose. God is good to everyone else, but he doesn't fully have a plan for my life. These are all things that I believe are a reflection of feeling like we don't have promise, value, or worth.

But yet, the very fact that we are a partaker of God's divine nature, that he breathed his breath on the inside of our lungs, means that I carry the essence of God with me wherever I go. And if I have any value on the presence of God and it dwells in me, then automatically, my worth, my value, has increased as well. So it is difficult to make that connection.

I will say this, Sheila, sometimes we have to practice. We have to practice loving ourselves the way God that God loves us. People feel if I can't turn on the switch, then there is something wrong with me. But it takes practice. You have to take those thoughts captive and then introduce the new thought and practice those thoughts until they become your reality.

SHEILA: One of the things you mentioned in the book that I never really thought about before, but after Adam and Eve are led out of the garden, so their perfection is gone, but Eve still remained true to her purpose. She still produced seed. And yet, the first two sons that are mentioned, Cain then goes and kills his brother.

I just wondered, how was she able to pick herself up again? Because I sometimes think when we make mistakes and then something bad happens again, we think that's because of the mistake I made and nothing will ever change.

SARAH: You know, Sheila, discovering this revelation about this moment was so powerful for me because it made me realize, sometimes we serve God because we just want a particular outcome. And when we don't get that outcome, then all of a sudden, we throw everything away.

But I feel like Eve, conceiving again in which she conceived Seth. That generation began to call on the name of the Lord again. I felt like that was a commitment to Eve, saying, listen, I'm committed to being in the presence of God and the will of God. I'm going to continue doing what God has told me to do, even if the outcome doesn't look like what I had in mind. Because I trust that being in the will of God will produce the will of God for my life, and I dare not stray again.

So the hardest thing that any of us can do is throw another seed at something that didn't work out in the way we anticipated. Not because we want the fruit of it, but because we want the obedience of being in line with what God has for our lives.

SHEILA: I have to honestly tell you that I found 2020 really hard for a multitude of reasons. I just want you to know, your book has really helped me. I know it's going to help thousands and thousands and thousands of women, but just personally, I just want to thank you because your book really helped me to kind of get out of... I tend to, because I sometimes struggle with depression, I can easily kind of spiral when things are not lining up. But your book, really, was a tool in God's hand to help me. So I'm just very grateful. What is your prayer for every woman that reads this book? That by the time she closes it, what do you pray for?

SARAH: Sheila, you just answered it. When I was writing this book, there were so many things that I was like, this feels crazy to honor Eve's life in this way. It feels crazy to write it in such a way that feels somewhat informal, as if I'm writing to friends, and yet I just get...

SHEILA: I love that!

SARAH: You know I didn't write it like this know-it-all. I'm like, girl, we've got some work to do.

[Laughter]

But that was so true to how I felt like God was telling me. My prayer is that women will realize the revolution of your soul is closer than it appears, no matter how far we feel from God or how much we question where he is in the middle of what our storm and trial is. That he's there; he's closer than he appears.

And as they read this book, I pray, Sheila, that people would have divine encounters with God. That it would transcend a book and become a womb that birthed the best version of every woman. So my prayer is that we'll have a lot of warrior women out here having enmity with the enemy.

SHEILA: One of the things I'm pretty sure about is the minute that you enter glory, you're going to get the largest high five from Eve that has ever happened. Just like, girl! You told my story. Thank you!

SARAH: I'm counting on it! I'm counting on it.

[Laughter]

SHEILA: One of the things I wondered about is a woman who might look at you; because my first impression of you when you first came to Women of Faith was A, how beautiful you were and how stylish. But how strong; you just seemed like a strong woman. What would you say to women who think, Sarah, I'm not strong? I'm not like you.

SARAH: Oh girl, I'm not strong either. I'm not strong. If I look strong, I think we have this way of looking at other women. I think it is through that lens of comparison as well. But even when they say that it is hard, we don't believe it is as hard as it is for them as it is for us. You know we find a way of excluding ourselves from the narrative.

What I will say is this. I came to a place where I've been low, Sheila--so, so low. I am so beyond what I ever thought was possible for my life.

When I walk into a room, I'm literally so glad to be there because I just know that the alternatives were very grave. I found something that was bigger than me. And every woman, whether it is on Women of Faith or walking into your kitchen, there is something at that moment that is bigger than you. What we're doing at the job, the fact that we're all connected to one another. And humanity means that we get to play a role that is bigger than us. And I honor the bigger than me that exists in my everyday life. And it grows me, and I think it probably makes me look stronger than I actually feel.

SHEILA: Well, I just... It's a phenomenal book, Sarah. It really is. I'm going to tell our viewers how they can get a hold of your book. But first of all, I'm going to ask them to take a look at something that matters to us a lot here at *LIFE*. When you begin to fully embrace your purpose, it makes you want to see other women set free as well. So please watch this.

On the mission field:

SHEILA: You want to translate so she can understand? Lord Jesus Christ, I pray for my sister. I cannot imagine what it is like to lose a child. But I ask you to comfort her heart.

ANNOUNCER: A lack of drinking water can be a death sentence. But in our experience, and the data bears this out, it's not the scarcity of water that causes most fatalities. After all, desperate people are resourceful in finding at least some water. Rather, what most often leads to water-related deaths is the water's condition. As our mission team witnessed in Zambia, it is a problem that's all too common.

RALPH: We're walking through another gravesite here. Heard a story today about a little boy, died very young, very small. This seems to happen too often. In fact, here in this country, we're in Zambia, and they're in their dry season. They can't even find water many times. But then the water they do find is so contaminated.

Here we have another little boy who just died senselessly simply because they could not find safe water.

SHEILA: These people are doing absolutely everything they can. They get up at four or five o'clock in the morning. They walk as many hours as they have to to find some water. And it is not clean water. I wouldn't let my dogs drink this water! And this is all these children have.

They need water wells. It's a privilege, not an obligation to change their lives. Let's do it, in Jesus' name.

[Laughter]

End of video

In the studio:

SHEILA: Gosh, that takes me right back to that trip. I remember it so clearly. It was actually the last trip we were able to go on before COVID-19 kind of closed international travel down for a time.

But I remember that woman you saw at the beginning, her name is Merci. And Janice, who is our photographer, and I walked with her to the place where she had buried her child. It's just... It's just right outside the village, and there are all these little mounds. And the care that they've taken; they don't put up a gravestone. They don't have any resources like that. But they lay these sticks as carefully as they can as a way of saying, this is where my child is laying.

And the fact that this is something that is so preventable. There are some diseases that you hear about, and I heard just recently of a friend of mine who has been given a very dire diagnosis with cancer. And obviously, they're going to try everything, and they're going to pray, and they're going to believe for God, but that's kind of out of their hands in a way.

This is not! Here's the irony. It's out of the hands of these mothers. I felt put to shame by some of these mothers by the fact that they get up so early.

Because of the lack of rain, even the little wells they dig were maybe six feet deep, the water goes quickly.

So they have to get up sometimes at 4:00 in the morning and walk to get in line to hopefully get some water that could potentially kill their children. I mean, how crazy is that? But they know that if they don't have that, there is no worse way to die in many ways than to die of a lack of water. It is a very painful death.

So they're left with this horrible choice. What do I do? Do I give my child no water? I can't do that! Do I give them this water that potentially could kill them? What choice do they have? And that's why I said at the end, this isn't an obligation, it is a privilege. We get to do this.

It's our commitment here at *LIFE* to drill 350 wells in over 20 nations. The way that breaks down is if you can give \$48, that will give clean water for ten people for their life. \$144 will provide clean water for 30; that's like for five families in a village. And if you're able to drill a well, and some of you have done that, and thank you, \$4800 will drill a whole well that will give Water for LIFE to a thousand people.

Now I mentioned in this show, Sarah's book really impacted me. It was a challenge, and I felt like it was kind of a bit of a wake-up call. So for any gift at all, please say, "I want Sarah Jakes Roberts' book." It's called *Woman Evolve*.

But please, will you call? Will you call right now? Will you give the best gift possible? Let's make sure we don't just meet a woman named Merci. Let's make sure that Merci receives mercy.

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

On the mission field

James: You know what's amazing? We're just walking here by a dump and by just contaminated water and little old children will come over to us and just want a hug. They just want somebody to love them.

Betty: They do! Children do. They draw to that love and affection when they see it, James. Don't you think?

James: Oh absolutely! We can notice them, and we can say we want to help them but the only way we can give water to children like this and give them a better future is for you to care enough. We can come and see the need, we can pray about it, we can weep over it, but we can't meet the need unless you help us do it.

Betty: That's when the difference is made is when it is not only our gift but your gift and others' gifts that we can really make -- we can make a change in these areas where it is so desperately needed. Please join with us and let's do that.

End of clip

In the studio

SHEILA: Thank you so much. Remember, if our lines are busy, please keep calling. Let's be the kind of women who rise up and realize that we're engaged in this battle, and we get to make a change in the world.

Sarah, just one more time, I just want to thank you so much for writing this beautiful, beautiful book!

SARAH: Thank you, Sheila! Thank you for honoring this work. I have so much admiration for you ever since I saw you at Women of Faith. I felt like if I could do what she does the way she does, then I'll be really good at this. And I still feel that way. You are incredible in every way. Thank you for this opportunity.

SHEILA: Thank you! Remember, for any gift at all, say I want this book. Get one for your mom, your sister, for the woman you don't like; it will make a difference in her life. We'll see you next time on *LIFE Today*! God bless you all.