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Week 32: WFL

Sheila Walsh

Jennifer Rothschild

SHEILA: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm Sheila Walsh. One of the perks of the job of being here, being in this ministry, is that every now and again, I get to have one of my favorite people on the planet on the show and on the sofa beside me, and that is true today. I want to ask you to help me welcome Jennifer Rothschild.

JENNIFER: I'm glad to be here with Sheila! It is! It is such a blessing we get to be together.

SHEILA: I've watched your life for many, many years. You were with us with Women of Faith. Then I've had the privilege of being with you at your Fresh Ground Faith, is that right?

JENNIFER: Fresh Grounded Faith, yeah!

SHEILA: Conferences, and honestly, you always amaze me, Jennifer. For those who don't know the backside of your story, would you--because you've written this book called, *Take Courage* and I think if there is a title that you have lived the life out of, it would be that. For those who maybe don't know a little of your story, would you just give us the CliffsNotes?

JENNIFER: Sure. I was 15 years old, and I could see perfectly fine. I loved art. I loved to draw. In fact, I was studying to get my driver's license, and I realized I would actually use my dad's magnifying glass to read the Florida drivers' handbook. I hadn't told my parents yet. But anyway, one night, I was walking with my mom upstairs to a friend's apartment; I was tripping up the stairs because I couldn't see them. It was the first time my mom said, "Jennifer, can you not see those stairs?" And of course, I was just as shocked, like you can?

So, of course, Sheila, that meant we went to the eye doctor who sent me to an eye hospital. And to make a very long, difficult story shorter, I was diagnosed with a disease called Retinitis Pigmentosa. It is in both of my eyes. And at that point, as a teenager, I was declared legally blind. But over the coming years, and now, at this age, I have lived in physical darkness longer than I lived in physical light. Because over the years, I just continued to lose the remainder of my retinas, and that meant the prognosis and the eventual reality was total blindness.

So yeah, my world has been in physical darkness. But it really has been the light of God's Word. There is a verse in Psalm 119 that says, "If it were not for your Word, I would have perished in my affliction." And girl, you know that is my story! Because blindness is hard on my best day, and taking courage is essential every day of my life. And God has used the classroom of blindness to show me the reality that he's here to give me the courage I need.

SHEILA: Now you have written this wonderful Bible study called *Take Courage*, a study of Haggai. First of all, what directed you to that particular book because that is a wee book?

JENNIFER: It is a wee book! It is. So Haggai only has two chapters. He is a minor prophet in the Old Testament. But the message of Haggai is that when you are the most weary when you're looking at your life, and all you see is the rubble of ruin and despair or disappointment or discouragement, that's when you can recognize that the Lord is with you. Therefore, you can take courage, and you can do what he is calling you to do, be who he is calling you to be.

And Sheila, when I was working on *Take Courage*, I realized that I thought I knew what courage was. Sometimes we think courage is just the absence of fear. She's gutsy. She's got courage. What I realized is courage is not the absence of fear; it's the reliance upon God.

And moreover, it is this perseverance that's born of perspective; that you build more than you see, no matter what you face. So whether it is disease, whether it is a relationship that is falling apart, whether it is losing your job, whether it's just the disappointment, you're standing in the rubble of a pandemic, that's when you can take courage; because, just like God was there for

those people in Haggai's day, he is here with us right now wherever we are.

SHEILA: One of the things that I remember hearing that, I don't know whether it was while you were writing the Bible study or after, just before, but you had an accident. I remember thinking, Lord, you've got to be kidding! Like one more thing?

JENNIFER: One more thing, right?

SHEILA: Tell us what happened.

JENNIFER: Well, we were getting ready for a Christmas party. My husband is a professor. So actually, my husband's name is Phil, as you know, Sheila, so that means I have my own Dr. Phil because he is a professor!

[Laughter]

So we always have his college students over for Christmas. And I had gotten the whole house ready. I had finished the last meal that I was preparing. I had put the last dish in the dishwasher. I had closed the dishwasher, and I was walking across the kitchen just to get a pitcher of water to fill the coffee pot. Well, as I was coming back to the sink to fill up this pitcher of water, I did not realize that my dishwasher had not snapped close, so it was open. Well, here I am walking way too fast for a blind woman, and with full confidence, I walk right into that open dishwasher. And I didn't just fall, I flew! And I did this beautiful, like I would have gotten a ten from the judges at the Olympics, you know what I'm saying? I landed on my wrist.

And I couldn't see it, but I knew. I just held it and "Phil, we need to go to the hospital." I said it way too calmly. So he didn't jump fast enough. But anyway, he ended up texting his students, saying, "Have fun, clean up, we'll be at the hospital." But this was right as I was finishing my manuscript. It's hard enough to be blind with two hands but one-handed, I couldn't type, I couldn't dress myself, I couldn't--and even leading up to finishing the manuscript and getting ready to film, I still had this broken wrist, and it wasn't healing right. And three days before I

filmed the video teachings, I learned that I was going to have to have surgery. I was just so discouraged. And I remember sitting on my worn-out carpet in front of my fireplace just saying, God, I'm such a hypocrite. I can't take courage. I have written this whole study, and I can't do it. I can't take courage. I can't take one more thing."

And that's when, Sheila, I realized what it meant to take courage. It was as if God just so gently and beautifully showed me that what I thought "take courage" meant was that I needed to man up, pull myself up by my bootstraps and be strong. But to take courage means to receive it. It means to lift up our feeble hand of faith and say, Okay, God, I just don't have it. I can't take courage myself, but I can take courage from you. And as he came and just filled all my broken places with his wholeness, I walked in courage, not because of my strength but because I had taken courage from the God who was with me.

I have to tell you one geeky thing that just thrills me about this.

SHEILA: We love geeky things!

JENNIFER: We love geeky! In the original Hebrew, the words *take courage* in the book of Haggai is called a passive imperative. An imperative is a to-do list, right? But a passive is something that is done to you. So to take courage means you simply receive the courage that is given to you. You cooperate with that reality that God is implanting within you. That's what it means to take courage.

I don't ever want a broken wrist and blindness all at the same time because they don't play nice, but it sure did teach me that I can take courage, and I don't ever want to settle for less.

SHEILA: But Jennifer, do you have any idea of how your life has impacted thousands and thousands and thousands? I'm thinking of people; I get letters from prisoners who watch this program. Do you know what that means to people when you are willing, through the things that would have broken you, but you allow us to see the light of Christ?

JENNIFER: Well, I think it is through our brokenness that we most clearly see the light of Christ. So if anyone can see that in me, then it's an encouragement to whoever is watching or listening right now to know that whatever their broken pieces are, they are not for their destruction. God has just put them in a perfect place for Him to construct through all those broken pieces a stronger and better person who is created in the image of his son. That's what hope is. It is that Christ in us that's the hope of glory.

SHEILA: When we get to heaven, will you tell Jesus I said hello because I think you're going to be closer.

JENNIFER: [Laughing] I don't think so, Sheila! I don't think so! I think you and I are going to be sitting right next to him. Actually, I think we're going to be kneeling at his feet.

SHEILA: Oh gosh! Absolutely. I can't wait.

2020 was such a year of discouragement for so many people in so many different ways. Sometimes when I'd read my Facebook page, it would make me weep for people. What do you see as the antidote to discouragement?

JENNIFER: Sometimes, we think that the antidote for discouragement is courage. I'm just going to be brave. I'm just going to man up and move forward. But I think the antidote for discouragement is surrender. Because when we surrender our need for control, when we surrender our disappointment, when we surrender our desire that things should have been one way and they aren't, that's when we're able to receive courage from God. We are encouraged; we are infused with courage because suddenly our hands are loosened; that grip of control is loosened.

And I know for me, Sheila, I remember my daughter-in-law, she is brand-new to the family, she was sitting at our kitchen bar, and I was trying to impress her, you know?

SHEILA: We do.

JENNIFER: Yes, as we do when they're new members of the family. But I was having such a hard time. Like I burned my hand on the pot that was on the stove. I forgot to close the cabinet, and I banged into it, and I was embarrassed, right? So finally, I kind of paused, and I'm trying to regroup, and she's a precious girl. She says, "Blindness must be really hard." And, of course, it is. And I was fighting discouragement and embarrassment standing there in front of her. I said to her, "A reminder to me of why I can be encouraged no matter what is happening." I told her, "Yes, it is discouraging. Yes, I'm embarrassed. Yes, it's hard. But earth is short, and heaven is long, and we've got to keep our eyes on that greater reality."

In that Bible study in Haggai, that's what those people had to do also. They were building a temple, and they didn't know they were building more than they saw. They didn't know that 500 years later, Jesus himself would be walking in that temple. So that's why we have courage. That's why we're faithful. That's why we surrender our plans and just say, I'm going to trust you, Lord. I'm going to take courage from you and do the next right thing.

SHEILA: One of our mutual friends, Lucy Swindoll, went home to be with the Lord recently, and I got this huge package from her. One of the things in it was this mug that she got when she took a trip to Oxford. So you have an interesting story about a trip to Oxford.

JENNIFER: Oh! I learned so much about courage from this. Okay. I was in Oxford, England, and there is this cross etched on Broad Street there in Oxford, and it is to commemorate something that happened in 1555. And it is a picture of courage because in 1555, for the historians out there, they may know, that was when Mary Tudor was on the throne. She is known as Bloody Mary. There were a lot of protestants; it was a very difficult time for their nation. So protestants were being burned at the stake, and there were these two bishops, Bishop Latimer and Bishop Ridley. And they wouldn't recant their faith in Christ by justification by faith, and so, of course, they were led to the stakes right there near that spot in Oxford. They were about to be burned at the stake. It is interesting, Sheila; they had a bag of gunpowder placed around each of their necks so they would burn faster. Can you imagine? That's really an act of compassion.

But the story goes that Latimer calls out to his friend Ridley, and this is a picture of what it means to take courage and have that kind of earth-is-short perspective. He said, "Be of good comfort, Master Ridley!" Now I can't say this as well as you could with the accent.

SHEILA: Oh, you're doing pretty well.

JENNIFER: "But be of good comfort, Master Ridley and play the man." In other words, take courage. "For we shall, by God's grace, this day start such a fire in England that we shall light such a candle in England that I pray shall never be put out."

And that's when we think of what courage is, "to play the man," as he said, it means that we have perseverance because we have perspective. That we build more than we see. That our light and temporary afflictions and troubles here, though they are hard, they are working within us and for us a far greater weight of glory. And that's why we take courage.

SHEILA: One of the great things you unpack in your *Take Courage* Bible study on Haggai, you talk about Haggai's writing to people in exile. When you think about where we are as a nation, and all the things that are happening around the world, a lot of people feel like that. The world doesn't feel familiar anymore.

JENNIFER: No. In fact, the people who had just returned to the Promised Land after exile, that's all they had known for decade after decade. One of the things that have ministered to me is in Jeremiah 29. It is a letter to those people who are in exile. And I believe it is written to us as we're in our exile today. And one of my favorite verses in Jeremiah 29, God through Jeremiah is saying to his people who are worn out and ragged and just wishing for their normal lives again, he says, "When it is time, when it is time, I will come get you, and I will bring you back to this land that I promised you." And it is such a picture that exile doesn't last forever, but God's faithfulness does. So, therefore, we're patient with the process of exile because God's got a purpose in it.

I remember walking with my sweet daddy. We were on the beach, and my daddy has passed

away, and he was very frail near the end. His whole body hurt. He got smaller and smaller; he was such a giant on the inside. So he had just gotten well enough, surprised us at the beach. It was just me and my dad. So we wanted to walk down to the shoreline. So here you've got him, and he's kind of wobbly and frail, and here you've got me with my cane. I'm sure people looked at us; who is helping who in that little duet? But anyway, we're wobbling and walking our way down to the beach. I can tell every step is hurting my daddy. And he's been in this physical exile for so long. And of course, I'm living in my own blindness exile, and so I asked him, "Dad, how do you do it?"

He said, "Well, I've just learned, you've got to be patient with yourself. You've got to be patient with others. And you've got to be patient with God."

I've never forgotten those words, Sheila.

SHEILA: Those are great words. Wow!

JENNIFER: Because when we're in exile, we can get impatient with ourselves and think, I should be better quicker. I should be able to fix myself sooner! Or we get impatient with others because we don't have as much tolerance for their struggle as we do for our own. Sometimes we get impatient with God because we don't realize that he knows the plans that he has for us, and they are plans for good.

So we're patient, we're patient with the exile because it is not going to last one second longer than God intends.

SHEILA: I don't usually do this, but I'm going to ask you to pray for our audience. I think so many who are watching right now are just struggling; they feel as if they're hanging by a thread. So, just out of the depth of the wisdom and richness in your spirit, would you pray for our audience?

JENNIFER: Father, I know that though Sheila and I are unaware of each heart that is trembling

right now, you are holding that heart in your hand. And God, I'm so thankful that we can trust you with our uncertainty. I'm so thankful that we can trust you with our fear. I'm so thankful that you, Jesus, are our savior, and you are fully acquainted with every tear that falls.

And I ask you, God, right now with your gentle hands of mercy to hold each heart and to give each heart hope. God, for those who have been striving, I pray they cease striving and just rest in the reality that you are God and that you are good; that you see them and that you will minister to their every need through your Word, through your people, and through the love of Jesus. And it is in his worthy name that we say thank you. Amen!

SHEILA: Thank you, Jennifer. I'm going to tell you how to get a hold of this beautiful study, a study of Haggai. You just literally open your arms and receive courage. But first of all, I want to ask you to help us with something that we care very much about today at *LIFE*. There are some people in our nation struggling, but there are many people struggling all around the world. And what they're asking for is something really simple. And the great news is you and I can do something about it. So would you watch this piece? And then, after that, I'll tell you how you can get a hold of this fantastic Bible study by Jennifer Rothschild, take courage. Watch this.

On the mission field:

ANNOUNCER: Happy children running and playing is a familiar sight in rural African villages. But in villages like Kenenya, happiness has been overshadowed by despair because of a silent killer.

Open Captions: There was a lot of fear in the village because people kept dying and we didn't know anything about the disease. Symptoms kept happening until someone told us it was cholera.

ANNOUNCER: It was not long after discovering that cholera was the killer responsible for so many people dying, that Gorith's youngest daughter, three-year-old Lebrod became sick.

Open Captions: She vomited the first day. The second day, she began to have diarrhea. And then she was doing really bad, so I took her to the clinic. But she died on the way.

ANNOUNCER: The impact of Lebrod's death on her other children made them not only sad for losing their sister, but it created fear for them of having to return to the same river for their drinking water that had caused her to get sick and die.

Open Captions: I was very sad when my daughter died because I knew it was from the bad water. And I want to believe to have a choice to have clean water for my family. But I am very happy seeing you today because I am hopeful we will get clean water.

End of video

In the studio:

SHEILA: That was our commitment to that mom that we will come back, and we will make sure that a well is drilled in your village. Because honestly, I've heard her story over and over and over from countless women. Because if you think about it, if your child gets a little sick, you might put them to bed, maybe just kind of keep an eye on them, see how they're doing the next day.

What you need to understand is that waterborne illness is a quick killer. You heard from that darling mom, first of all, she vomited, then she had diarrhea. By day three, she's on the road with her child. But sometimes you have to walk for hours there or sell the one chicken you have to get a ride on the back of some kind of moped thing. But before she gets to the clinic, her child has died.

I've heard that over and over and over. Every single one of us can do something. That's the thing I love about it. This isn't some guilt-trip obligation. This is a privilege as a daughter, as a son of the King of kings, to be able to be his hands and his feet. That's why we call it Water for LIFE. It literally gives life to a village.

Our commitment for this year is to drill 350 wells in over 20 nations. That probably sounds overwhelming, but you break it down because we are the body of Christ. So for \$48, that will give clean water to ten children; not for three months, not for a year, that will give them clean water for life! What can you do these days with \$48? If you can give a little bit more, \$144 will give clean water to 30 children for their life! So \$4800, you'll actually be able to drill a well.

I had a beautiful conversation two nights ago with this sweet lady who lives up in Canada and watches *LIFE Today*. She said, "It's been hard for me since my husband went home, and so I've decided in my husband's honor I'm going to drill a whole well." Isn't that awesome? You get to be a part of that.

If you can give \$48, fantastic! If you can give more, great! You can get your whole Sunday School group together and say, let's drill a well that will give a whole village, approximately 1,000 people, clean water for a lifetime!

And for any gift at all, you can request *Living Amazed* by James as an updated version. It is fantastic. It will show how God has been showing up in his life since he was just a little boy. And Randy, my co-host so often, has got a fantastic devotional called *Upgrade*. We just want to give it as a way of saying thank you.

So please, will you go to your phone? Will you give the best gift? Let's be an answer to that darling mother and thousands like her around the world. And let's do it in Jesus' name.

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: Let me just say this about the well. Here we are in an area where over 2,000 children have just been fed but the whole thing started not only with a need for food but also providing water which became the center of life. Now there is a school here. So you've got school feeding, you've got fresh water. They're not only drinking it and the whole village here are using it as a water source but they're washing -- their desperate to clean up their dishes with clean water.

I'm telling you, the wells like this that you can have a part in of either giving the well or giving a portion of it, it changes everything in the entire area. If you can help give other wells all over the world, please do it because it is going to take all of us working together, and it takes people just

like you providing as love provided here. Do what you can to help us drill more wells, please.

End of clip

In the studio:

SHEILA: Thank you so much! For any gift at all, please request this wonderful study, *Take Courage*, a study on Haggai. Jennifer, how do you think your life gets changed? Like when you pour yourself into a project, and I often think the enemy hates that, and so more struggle comes your way. What do you feel is the greatest thing you took out personally from this study?

JENNIFER: Personally, what I learned from studying the book of Haggai was that courage is a choice, but courage is a gift. And when you cooperate with the gift of courage that God has given you, then not only is your faith unstoppable, but you suddenly become this conduit of all the hope that is in Christ. So he not only gives us hope but then he allows that hope to flow through us.

SHEILA: Well, we have certainly seen that today. And on behalf of all our viewers, thank you, Jennifer. You are just a gem!

JENNIFER: Thank you.

SHEILA: And we'll see you next time. For all of us here at *LIFE Today*, I'm Sheila Walsh. God bless you.