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Week 27: WFL

Sheila Walsh

Mission special #1

SHEILA: I'm Sheila Walsh. Welcome to *LIFE Today*. Today I want to take you on kind of an adventure. Let me start with going back a few years in my own life. I was brought up in a small fishing town on the West Coast of Scotland. I remember after I came into my own personal relationship with Jesus, really asking, what is my purpose here on this earth? What am I supposed to be doing?

I felt compelled to write three things in the back of my Bible when I was about 14 years old. And these were them: To tell other people no matter where they are that Jesus loves them. To teach the Word of God because I was the only Christian in my high school in Scotland and I thought I need to tell my friends about the power of the Word of God. And number three was to care for the poor; to hear the cries of those whose cries were being muffled or ignored.

And then just over five years ago, James and Betty Robison asked me to come to their house for lunch. We sat down and talked. They invited me to stand with them in this ministry at *LIFE Outreach International*. You know what's amazing? All those three things that I wrote in the back of my Bible as a young teenager have been able to be fulfilled through this ministry; to tell others, to tell you for example, if you don't know for yourself that Jesus loves you, I want you to know that right now, not based on your behavior, based on his heart. Number two: Teaching the Word of God. We get to do that every day. And number three: To hear the cries of those whose cries are muffled.

So today I want to take you on an adventure that was one of the most eye-opening and life-changing journeys for me. I've had the privilege of visiting so many nations that at

LIFE Today, we are committed to making a difference in.

One of the things I've always loved about the heart of James and Betty is that they don't just show up in a country and say, "We're here to help." No! They pay very careful attention to who is God using in this country? What works in this nation or in this nation and let's get behind them. And as long as we, as the body of Christ are on this earth, let's make a difference.

So today, we're going to talk about the most basic thing of all and that is the availability of clean water. So let me ask you a question. Can you imagine what it would be like to wake up tomorrow morning and discover that you are hours away from a water source and when you get there the water is filthy? That's happening right now. Would you watch this?

On the mission field:

SHEILA: Waterborne illness is a killer that knows no boundaries. The death of a child is the tragic result of having no choice but to drink contaminated water.

Miriam lives in a shack in Central America. She had to watch her son die in her arms because the only water source she has is a contaminated river.

In South Asia, the journey these women make each day to collect water is filled with potential danger; danger not from the rough terrain but from their water source that causes sickness, and all too often the death of a child.

Pitch is a young mother from a small village in Cambodia. She knows the water she collects is filled with contaminants, but she has no other option. One of her children has already died and the other one is sick.

Thousands of miles away in drought-stricken Angola, the rural clinics cannot keep up with the number of children dying from waterborne diseases.

JAMES: I am by a water source that is so typical of water sources all over the world. The water is contaminated. We know for a fact in this area disease is killing entire families and many children. Would you be an answer to the need of so many people right here and respond by giving them clean water? Thank you so much for doing it.

End of video

In the studio:

SHEILA: Initially, on my very first trip, I thought I understood the issue. In some parts of say Africa, the women were having to walk a long, long distance to get to hand-dug wells, which by the time they got there, depending on how many women got there before them, that water might be gone. And if it was there it was filthy.

But then we moved to other countries and I discovered horrors on a level that as a mom, honestly, it just broke my heart. I walked with a mom to the river where it's the only place they can get water for their children. And when the river is in full spate there are crocodiles in the river. And this one darling mother, she could have been my sister, she was just a couple years younger than me, she told me that one morning she sent her little girl off to get water and she didn't come back in time. And she said something just told me, something is wrong.

You know that feeling. With your children, you just think, there is something wrong here. Well, she walked to the edge of the river where her little daughter's friend said, "A crocodile took your daughter." It was three days before they were able to recover some of her daughter's body. And that's her fear today, even where you're sitting and where I'm sitting, that's a reality for her now.

Other countries that we work in, to get to the water the mothers have to climb down almost like a cliff face to get to the only water source. And if they slip they're badly injured but they have no choice. Now if you're a mom, if you're a grandmother, honestly, if you're a human being who loves God and feels the pain of others, you know this to be true, you would do anything for your child. Anything! I only have one son but I have to tell you there is nothing in this world, there's no boulder I would not move to save my child.

But what if I had been born in some of these countries where we work? What if I woke up at 4:00 in the morning to walk for miles to try and get some water? And if it's gone I have to come back again in the afternoon when that hand-dug well will have filled up once more. But if I do get water, I take it back to the hut where my children live, and I've already buried one child, and now I have this water and it's like Russian roulette. Will this cup of water take their life? They survived yesterday, but is this the day that they won't survive?

The thing that just breaks my heart is that this is something that you and I can do something about. I mean from, if you're 14 years old watching this program or if you're 84, if you still have a pulse it is not too late to say, Jesus, I want to be part of the answer. And I want to introduce you to a woman who will never leave my heart. Her name is Merci.

On the mission field:

Sheila: In the driest regions of Africa, there is often only one place to find water, deep underground. So deep in fact that it takes two people a full week of digging to reach it. Well, despite their efforts these hand-dug wells aren't deep enough and the water remains unclean causing widespread illness from waterborne diseases. Recently, we learned of another danger we did not expect.

Open Captions:

>> My daughter went to the hole to get water. She was gone too long, and we began to worry. I went to check on her but only found her bucket. When I looked further down into the hole, I saw my daughter. She had fallen in and drowned.

Sheila: It's an unimaginable tragedy. A mother's worst nightmare! And yet the reality surrounding Merci and her family, the utter lack of safe water sources demands that they live with the risk.

Open Captions:

>> I feel so much pain when I think about what happened to her. It's crippling. And I have so much fear for my other children. If I send them to draw water, will the same thing happen to them?

Sheila: I don't want one more mother to go through what Merci has gone through. But this is something you and I can do something about. This did not need to happen. And that's why we're here. She's not asking for a lot. She's just looking for a place to send her children to actually get for the first time in their lives clean water.

End of video

In the studio:

SHEILA: I wish you could have met her. I mean I will never forget Merci. She is now included in my prayers; I have a list of people that I pray for. And I've had the privilege of meeting many, many mothers in many, many countries but there is something about Merci that was so vulnerable and real. When she told us that story it was unthinkable to me to look into a well and to see your precious child there.

I asked our translator, our interpreter, "How many weeks, months, had it been?" They told us it was several months. And her daughter was buried just a few hundred yards away. I asked Merci, has she been back to that place where her daughter's buried since

that terrible day? And her eyes just filled with tears and she said no. Honestly, I felt bad for even asking that. But then she did something that was just different. She said, she asked me, "Would you like to come with me?" I said it would be a privilege.

So we walked together, just two moms, just two women to the place. And as we got closer, it was like a grove of trees, as we got closer to the graves, I actually had to almost carry her in the end. She just was overwhelmed, broken. Because the thing is she knows that what she gave to her daughter, that job of going to that filthy well was actually what took her daughter's life.

I could tell you a hundred stories of mothers who lost their children in a river or in a well or simply through the only water source they have. But the reason that I am here today is to tell you we have the cure for this devastating tragedy that is happening in over 20 nations that we work in.

What we have made as a commitment this year is that we will drill 350 new wells in over 20 nations. That might seem like a lot but here's the thing. When you and I both do our part, this is doable. If you are able to contribute \$48, now if you think about it, if you and your family maybe go out for a meal, \$48 doesn't go very far these days. Let me tell you that when you put \$48 into the hands of Jesus like that little boy did with his lunch, with his loaves and fishes, he blesses it and he breaks it and that will provide clean water for ten children for their lives. The average lifespan of our wells is about 70 years. Now some of you might be able to do more. For \$144 in the hands of Christ through our people on the ground right now that will give 30 children clean water for their lives.

One or two of you have written to me recently and said, "I would like to put in a whole well." What a joy that is! Do you know that for \$4800 you can put a well into a village that will provide water for 1,000 people, basically for their lifetime? That's why we call it Water for *LIFE*.

This is happening right at this very moment. At this very moment I'm not able to travel

back to so many of the countries we work in but we have our partners on the ground that despite everything else that's going on, whatever kind of pandemic is hitting, they're still there and they're still committed. And we've determined that a year that could be a year of loss is going to be a year that we're going to push ahead. But we need you to do it. Would you go to your phone? Would you call that number? Would you give the very best gift you can?

I promise you, when I'm able to go back, I'm going to bring you stories of the difference it made. I just feel as long as we are Christians we should be the answer to the aching need of so many. So please, go to your phone, give the very, very best gift you can and we can change the world for so many of these mothers.

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:

ANNOUNCER: Is there anything more miraculous, more precious than God's gift of children? Remarkable and sometimes confusing little versions of ourselves, yet so incredibly unique. We plan, sacrifice, stress, and pray over our decisions, over their decisions; all that we want for them and the legacy we hope to leave. There is a breath of immortality in those generations that follow us. But that all assumes those generations don't end with us.

In Cambodia, *LIFE's* mission team discovered a tragic reality: Mother after mother, who because of something as basic as water had lost child after child. Contaminated water filled with disease--their only source.

Open Captions: I lost two children.

ANNOUNCER: In the villages our team visited, it became harder to find mothers who had not lost a child to contaminated water than it was to find one who had.

Open Captions: I lost four children.

I lost five children.

ANNOUNCER: Our children are supposed to outlive us. These mothers have lost more

children than the average American has even brought into this world.

Open Captions: I lost one child.

I lost three children.

I lost one child.

I lost five children.

I lost five children.

ANNOUNCER: Of all the things we, as parents, might struggle to provide for our children, it is unlikely that clean water is ever one of them. Why should it be any different for these mothers?

End of video

In the studio:

SHEILA: I remember the first time that I watched that piece and I looked into the eyes of these moms saying how many children they'd lost. Do you realize that whole entire families are being wiped out as if they were never there? And if you have children, if you have grandchildren, you know that the legacy you want to pass on is that they would do better than you did and they would be provided for.

But in places where we work right now so many of these mothers have no choice. Whenever you hear of a mother or a father having to bury a child it is like as if everything in you thinks, that's not the way life is supposed to be! When that happens in our nations it's unusual, it's something drastic. But can you imagine if that becomes the norm? That for every single mother...

I remember sitting in one village and all these mothers gathered around and told a little of their story. And that was the thing that was overwhelming to me that every single one of them had had to bury a child. The agony and the glory in this situation is, the agony is this is reality right at this moment. The glory is that we can do something about it.

In our own nation we've become very overindulgent. If we want something we want it now and we want it delivered before we've almost ordered it; it's on the door step within a few hours. But wouldn't it be wonderful if we moved away from that mind-set and entered into what Christ said, "Whenever you give a cup of water in my name you're doing it for me." I wonder if we take that seriously. That Jesus said that when you feed, when you clothe, when you visit the prisoners and you give a cup of water in my name you're doing it for me. Can you imagine how it makes the heart of God glad when you and I, as his children say, "Lord, absolutely we will do this." Could you skip something, something that you normally do and say you know what? I can live without that. But the truth is they can't live without clean water.

So remember our commitment is to drill 350 fresh wells, deep down into the ground where the clear water is, in over 20 nations. Here's how you can help: \$48 will provide clean water for ten children for their life, \$144, 30 children for life, and if you or maybe your Sunday School group or your extended family could decide we're going to do a well, \$4800 will drill a well that will give over 1,000 people clean water for life!

So please, I'm asking you in Jesus' name, will you go to your phone, will you give the very best gift you can? Let's bring water for 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.

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This is the last day! Please call, write, or make your gift online.

End of video

On the mission field:

TAMMY: This is my first time to Burundi, Africa. I've seen some of the worst water source conditions that I've ever seen. Here's another one. It's filled with waterborne illness. It's literally killing people. I got to sit down and talk with a mother yesterday who has lost two children in the same week because of this very water right here. But they don't have any other option. That's what breaks my heart. They have no other option. Nowhere else to go. They will dig and dig and dig to try and find fresh clean water and they just can't get there. It's underneath their feet but they need help.

And we can help them! We can help them get that water. We can come in here and we can drill a well that would change everything for these children, these mothers for the rest of their lives. Please go to your phones right now. Call that number. Go to the website, do

whatever you can do. Pray about it. Ask God to lead you, to guide you and then move. Don't hesitate. Too many times we hesitate and we miss opportunities. God is giving us an opportunity right now to move and to act so let's do it together and let's change this village for them for the rest of their lives.

End of video

In the studio:

SHEILA: Thank you so much! If the lines are busy, please persist. Please keep calling. I want to thank you, thanks for staying with me. I know sometimes when you're watching something and it perhaps makes you a little uncomfortable, it's tempting just to flip through the channels. But you didn't do that; you stayed with me. I just want to say thank you so much.

This is our last day of our Water for Life campaign. Our partners are on the ground waiting to hear good news. Waiting at the end of a telephone to hear yes, our partners responded. The people who faithfully watch this program have done more than we even imagined. So if you haven't given yet, if you've been holding back or waiting, please do it now even if it's \$48 to provide clean water for ten children for life! That's a joy.

So for James, Betty, in fact, all of us here at Life Outreach International, thank you so much. We'll see you next time!