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Week 36: Christmas Shoes and Smiles

Sheila Walsh

"Praying God's Word Back to Him"

SHEILA: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm Sheila Walsh. Let me ask you a question. When you are praying, do you ever struggle to find the right words? Or do you ever feel as if, you know what? I say the same stuff over and over.

I was talking to a group of women recently up in Northern Michigan, which by the way, is one of the most gorgeous parts of the country. I'd never been there before. So I was asking them, what issues do you struggle with in prayer? Some of them said, "Sometimes I don't feel as if I'm praying with authority."

Well, I read this really interesting quote. I love studying church history, and I love going as far back as I can. There was a gentleman called Athanasius; he was a church father in the fourth century in Egypt. But here's what he said about the Word of God. He said:
"Most of scripture speaks to us, and the Psalms speak for us."

I remember writing that down and thinking. I'd never thought about it that way before. Thinking of the Psalms as a prayer book that we have been given. So you know, if you're praying a Psalm out loud, you know you're praying with power, and you know you're praying with authority because it is the Word of God.

But the other thing that I think is really wonderful is realizing that God has given us over 6,000 promises in the Word of God. I read a thing by Charles Spurgeon, and I'm not going to quote it exactly right, but he said something like just as a stream never tires of flowing or the sun of shining, God never tires of keeping his promises.

So that's what I want us to think about today—the power of actually praying God's word back to Him. Since I've started doing that, I'll do it every morning. I'll go out on my balcony, and I'll read a Psalm out loud. The thing that's beautiful about the Psalms, God's word doesn't pretend that life is always great. Because as you know, sometimes it's not. But whatever you're going through, whatever you're feeling, you will find yourself. So let's look at what it means to pray the Word of God back to him.

Begin video clip:

Praying Women

Session six: Praying God's Word Back to Him

Our prayer to God: "You are powerful!"

SHEILA: Hi! Welcome! Today we're going to look at the power of "Praying God's Word Back to Him." In the last session, we remembered that God is near. While that is amazing news, even better news exists -- God is powerful to save. The best news of all, we can tap into that unparalleled power anytime, any day, by praying God's word back to him.

Now that might be a new thought to you. You've read God's word, even studied God's word, but have you ever prayed God's word back to him? I have to tell you. This has been life-changing for me. There are days when I can't find the words to say everything I want to say to God, but he has given us our very own prayer book. What I do is I use the Psalms to put words to my prayers on the good days and the hard days. There is power when we pray the Word of God back to him.

Do you remember that Jesus, the son of God, used the Word of God to combat the enemy of God? Immediately after Jesus was baptized, as he prepared for his earthly ministry, he was led by the Spirit into the wilderness where he fasted for 40 days and 40 nights. Matthew Chapter four, verse two says that during that time, Jesus became very hungry.

And while Jesus was in this state of physical weakness, Satan came to tempt him.

The text says: The devil came and said to him, "If you are the son of God, tell these stones to become loaves of bread."

Jesus would not be tempted. "No!" he said. "The scriptures say, 'People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Well, next, the devil led Jesus to the holy city, Jerusalem, to the highest point of the Temple, and said, "If you are the Son of God, jump off! For the scriptures says, "He will order his angels to protect you. And they will hold you up with their hands so you won't even hurt your foot on a stone.""

Once again, Jesus used the Word of God to combat the enemy of God. *Jesus responded, "The scriptures also say, you must not test the Lord your God."*

Next, the devil took him to the peak of a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. "I'll give it all to you," he said, "if you'll kneel down and worship me." And a third time, Jesus quoted the scriptures, "Get out of here, Satan, for the scriptures say, 'You must worship the Lord your God and serve only him.'"

Three temptations are met with three powerful infusions of truth. And in response to that truth, verse 11 says the devil went away. There is an important lesson here for you and I to learn: God's word is *formidable*. It is powerful. It is *life-giving* when we are in need.

The writer of the book of Hebrews speaks of the scriptures as being living and active and full of power, making it operative, energizing, and effective. *It is sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating as far as the division of the soul and spirit [the completeness of a person], and of both joints and marrow [the deepest parts of our nature], exposing and judging the very thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

Alive.

Active.

Available for immediate use.

If you are looking for power, let me just tell you, the Word of God is the ultimate source. I've noticed an interesting dynamic at play where the Word of God is concerned. While most people long for the power it promises, they don't always want to do the daily work needed to obtain it.

We looked at Hebrews 4:12 in the Amplified version. Now here's what it says in the New Living Translation: *For the Word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.*

Alive!

Powerful!

Sharper than any sharpest sword!

Yes! Yeah! We want those things. Let me ask, do we want them badly enough to endure being cut and exposed? It sounds like a painful proposition, doesn't it? One, probably, we'd rather avoid. In the original text, cutting is rendered by a Greek word meaning: To reach through. The image is one of reaching through the superficial to the deeper layers beneath. As it relates to the Word of God, think of God's truth being able to look past what you say and do to expose the motivations behind those words and actions.

The truth of scripture reveals our intentions, going beyond the surface of our lives to the inner realities of our souls -- cutting to reach through. God pierces our lives not to punish us but rather to seek out ways to build us up. His counsel works not to reject us but to reform and rebuild our lives. His insight positions us not for destruction but for an eternity spent with him. Like a doctor who searches for an adequate diagnosis in order to

find a cure for our disease, God knows who we are and who we're becoming. And so he longs to show us exactly where we need shoring up, where we need strengthening.

Just think about your own life today. Where do you need God's power most? What would being built up look like for you right now? For me? Honestly, I experience being built up through the Word of God. Each morning I read God's word out loud so that my ears can hear what my eyes are reading.

Here are just a few of the building-up scriptures that I use in my own life. Psalm 119, verse 105 says this: *Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path.* Verse 111 says: *Your laws are my treasure: They are my delight.*

When Jesus spoke to his closest friends, he said this: *"I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn't produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. You have already been pruned and purified by the message I've given you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me."*

We only produce spiritual food when we remain in Christ. That's how we are built up. That's how we are strengthened in our faith. When Paul wanted to build up his younger brother, Timothy, in the faith, he wrote this: *All scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.*

God's word is alive. It is eternal. In fact, as Peter wrote: *For you have been born again, but not to a life that will quickly end. Your new life will last forever because it comes from the eternal, living Word of God.*

May I just say here, if you don't know Jesus in a personal way, and I'm not talking about

religion or church attendance. I mean a real relationship. Do you know that you can do that right now? Maybe you just happened upon this. Maybe a friend said, "Hey, you want to watch this?" And you ended up watching, but you realize that you really don't know this Jesus. Do you know that you can meet him like right now? When Paul, the apostle, wrote to the church in Rome, he said this: *If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right by God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved.*

So what do you think? Maybe you've gone to church because your parents told you to go to church. Maybe you go because it just seems like the right thing to do. Maybe you go because you think I'm not really proud of what I do during the week, so I'll go to church on Sunday and balance out the scales. But you can actually know Christ for yourself. You can have a real relationship with God. You don't have to have a fancy...

You can pray a simple prayer like this: Jesus, I know I'm a sinner. I believe that you are the son of God. I believe that you died and that you rose again. I want to become a follower of you. Please forgive me for my sin. Give me a new heart and a new beginning. Thank you for dying for me. Teach me how to live for you. Amen.

It is as simple as that. Then tell someone. If you want to let me know, I'd love that! You can connect with me on Facebook at [SheilaWalshConnects](#). Just tell me. I'll rejoice with you. And then, find a good church. And don't look for a perfect one because they don't exist. Just find a place where they love Jesus, and they'll love you and where they believe in the Word of God.

On the night that Jesus was betrayed, he prayed this to his Father: *"Now I am coming to you. I told them many things while I was with them in this world so they would be filled with my joy. I have given them your word. And the world hates them because they don't belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. I'm not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one. They do not belong to this world*

any more than I do. Make them holy by your truth; teach them your Word, which is truth. Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world. And I give myself as a holy sacrifice for them so they can be made holy by your truth."

So we know these things:

1. *We know God's word is truth.*
2. *We are made holy by this truth.*
3. *We survive the pain of this about this truth.*
4. *We are changed into the image of Jesus by this truth.*
5. *It is by this truth alone that we live.*

In Luke 11, verse 28, Jesus said this: *"Blessed are all who hear the Word of God and put it into practice."*

Let me pray for you. Father, what a joy it is to know your truth. We read that those who know your truth will be set free. Lord, I pray right now for anyone who prayed that prayer to come to know you. Lord Jesus, just fill them with your Holy Spirit. Let them know that they are loved and forgiven, that they have a new beginning.

Father, we are hungry to know you more. And I thank you that you have given us your word, sharper than any two-edged sword so that we can grow up to become more like Jesus every single day. I ask this in your powerful name. Amen!

End of video

In the studio:

SHEILA: I'd love to send you this book, *Praying Women*. I really pray it will be a source to help you, to guide you, to give you fresh tools. But one of the things I took from that session that I wrote down again was in Second Timothy Chapter 3, verses 16-17, and I'm just reading part of it. But it says this: *All scripture is God-breathed... So that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

Not just that we would be thoroughly equipped to feel better about ourselves or to know that we're going to heaven, or to have more self-confidence. No! Better equipped for every good work. And that is kind of our mantra here at *LIFE Today*. That we want to have eyes that see where there is a need, it's one of the things I've loved about James and Betty as long as I've known them, that they look to see who God is using around the world, and then they undergird that work. They don't just blow into town with here's some new people with some new ideas. They're saying, God, who are you using here? And how can we help them do this work?

One of the things that we get very excited about at this time of year, and I know it is a little early to be talking about Christmas, but do you know that there are some children in the world who have never in their lives worn a pair of shoes? And you and I, this Christmas, have the chance to not only receive A, the gift of Christ coming as a baby, and B, sharing gifts with our family, but we have this enormous privilege of reaching out in Jesus' name and giving gifts, putting shoes on little feet all around the world that honestly, sometimes would literally save their lives. This is very exciting. So I want you to watch this.

On the mission field:

***Announcer:** What if you could put a smile on a child's face by giving them something they have never had? What if with that gift you could save a child from getting parasites? And what if you could actually save the life of a child with that gift? You can do all these things by simply giving a pair of shoes to children around the world.*

Ralph: Today has been one of those special days because so many kids in this environment, they don't have any shoes -- haven't had. Many of them have never owned a pair of shoes. In the terrain they have to walk through and work in, it just tears up their little feet. Doesn't really make them sore but they get diseases in their feet, it climbs

through their system in their bodies and even brings death.

But today has been a good day. We're able to bring shoes to their lives. These light shoes that are provided by so many of our generous donors. Today, little Tewin here, he is going to get a pair of shoes and now he'll never have to go barefooted again. He can always run. See, he loves this stuff. He can run through the woods, wherever he goes now, with a good pair of shoes and not have to worry about infection.

So I want to say thank you again to all of our partners for giving so generously. But this Christmas season, please, I just want to ask you to give again so that you can bring change to little children's lives like Tewin. God bless you and may you have a merry Christmas.

End of video

In the studio:

SHEILA: I'll never forget on one of my very first trips in Africa, just as Ralph showed you there, that we were in villages where the children had no shoes -- had never worn a pair of shoes. And some of them were in real pain, infections that had got into their feet, and ultimately, even travel to their brain. It can cause irreparable damage. Sometimes it can actually cost their lives.

But we were able to get down on our hands and knees and put these great little shoes on every child in the village. It was -- I can't even describe what it is like when a child for the first time feels something between them and the rough terrain, and the water, and everything. Just to watch them literally dance was beautiful.

Do you know that through the ministry of *LIFE Outreach International* over the years, do you know how many pairs of shoes you have helped us put on the feet of children? Two million pairs of shoes! Isn't that amazing? So let's not stop there. We've made a commitment that for this Christmas, we want to put shoes on the feet of 150,000 children.

Now here's how that breaks down. If you are able to give a gift of \$36, do you know that that will provide ten pairs of shoes? You couldn't go into a shoe store and get a decent pair of shoes for \$36. But because we work with this wonderful company that makes these amazing little shoes for \$36, you will be sending shoes to ten children. \$72 provides shoes for 20 children. And if you are able to give \$180, that will provide shoes for 50 children.

For any gift at all, I want to send you my book, *Praying Women*: How to pray when you don't know what to say. It is just our way of saying thank you. I know it probably seems a little early to be talking about Christmas shoes, but the reason for that is we want to get all 150,000 pairs in early so we can have them shipped to our partners who were waiting on the ground to put smiles on to faces.

And that's the other thing that we do. If you are able to give \$500, do you know that will give surgery to a child born with cleft lip or cleft palate? It literally will change their life. And since we began doing this, do you know that there are 2,000 children running around today who have a brand-new smile?

Let's make this Christmas not about us, because who needs one more sweater, one more whatever? Let's reach out in Jesus' name. Think how great it will be on Christmas Eve or Christmas morning to know that not only are we with our family and celebrating but there are some children way across the world who are celebrating because you made a difference. Please call now. Please give the very best gift you can.

Begin video clip:

Announcer: Poverty is a killer, and because of it, children needlessly suffer, not only from a lack of food and clean water but also from a lack of things we often take for granted -- like a simple pair of shoes. Far too many children living in extreme poverty

have never owned a new pair of shoes. And while that may seem minor in light of all their needs, walking with bare feet puts them at risk with life-threatening infections and diseases that could lead to crippling consequences and even death.

By responding today, you will help secure and make ready 150,000 Christmas shoes to be shipped and delivered to children around the world just in time for the holidays. Your gift of \$36 will help provide ten pairs of shoes. A gift of \$72 will provide 20 pairs, and a gift of \$180 will help provide 50 pairs of Christmas shoes for children in need.

As a thank you for your gift of support, be sure to request this beautifully crafted, green crystal shoe ornament, a treasure to display each Christmas. With your gift of \$100 or more, you may also request this keepsake boxed set of all four shoe ornaments celebrating the various outreaches of LIFE.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1,000 or more to help provide over 275 pairs of shoes or two children with corrective cleft lip or palate surgeries. And you may request the beautiful "Divine Servant" bronze scripture.

Please call, write, or make your gift online today.

End of video

On the mission field:

DR. HODGES: Many people don't realize the impact that a cleft lip and cleft palate can have on a young child in the family. With the cleft palate, they will not be able to breastfeed, and that can cause real problems for nutrition. And it can also cause them to have, more commonly, chest infections that can even lead to death. But if the child survives, as they grow, they will then start to realize that they have this cleft palate, and they will really suffer psychologically.

Thanks to partners like *LIFE Outreach International*, we are able to make lasting changes

in children's lives through corrective surgery. Several children that we have operated on their lips and their palates; the children are healthy, they look normal. There is so much more work to be done. Literally, thousands of families are waiting for help, but we can only do it with your continuing support. God bless you!

End of video

In the studio:

SHEILA: Isn't that great? I love that we get to do this. And for any gift at all, you will get this darling, little, green shoe. But if you're able to give \$100, you get the whole box. And the thing I love about this, and this is brand-new this year, we've never done that; when you get your shoes, you'll notice on each one of the four ribbons represents a different ministry here at *LIFE Outreach International*. What a wonderful way to celebrate! And for any gift at all, you can request *Praying Women*. We'll be glad to send that to you.

Let's make this a family project this year, something that we do together as a family. So even on Christmas morning, we can maybe pause for just a few minutes and pray for the feet that received the shoes that you sent. What a joyful Christmas that will be. So for all of us here at *LIFE Outreach International* and *LIFE Today*, I just want to say we love you, and we'll see you next time!