

10/6/21

Week 41: Rescue Life

Sheila Walsh

"Holding On When You Want to Let Go"

SHEILA: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm Sheila Walsh. Today, it's on my heart to do something a little bit different. So often, I have the privilege of interviewing guests talking about their new books; about what God's doing in their lives. But today, when I was thinking about this particular show, I wanted to give you an update on what the Lord has been doing in my life in the last two years.

When COVID hit, it impacted all of our lives in different ways. For some people, it impacted the health of their families and their friends, and it was just devastating and scary. But when COVID hit, what I felt after the first few weeks -- the first few weeks, honestly, I quite enjoyed the fact that I did not have to wear makeup; I could stay in my pajamas. But I got disciplined; I had daytime pajamas and nighttime pajamas. I would watch reruns of the *Great British Baking Show*.

But then, something began to change. I found myself kind of spiraling again into quite a serious depression. Honestly, it surprised me because when I was diagnosed in 1992, I spent a month, as many of you know, in a psychiatric hospital. I learned so much, and I've been managing that pretty well. I still take my little pill with a prayer of thanksgiving every morning, knowing that this is something that God has provided for those of us who struggle in that particular area.

I know that back then, when I was initially diagnosed, and they wanted to prescribe medication, my first response was, "I don't want your happy pills."

They said, "No, Sheila, those are street drugs. We don't sell those," and explained that sometimes those of us who struggle with certain types of mental illness, our brains simply do not produce enough of the right chemicals to function the way that God has made us to function.

So over the years, I've been doing really well. I take my little pill, spend time in the Word of God, learn the depths and importance of worship, of thanksgiving. Try and get a little exercise; not as much as I should but still a little. And try to eat fairly well. So when this fresh wave hit me, I just felt, honestly, a little bit of despair.

Here's the thing that you probably won't read anywhere else, but I had started writing a new book, and I was writing a book on miracles. What are miracles? What does God's word have to say about miracles? What might be a miracle that we don't immediately recognize? And I'd got like two or three chapters into it.

But as I began to find myself waking up every morning with this feeling of dread inside, I sat down one morning and read what I wrote. And honestly, it didn't help me at all. Well, if this is not helping me, how can I hope and expect it to help you?

So what I began to do was to pray differently. Every single morning, even as I felt such a weight of heaviness on me, I would pray this prayer: Holy Spirit, please show me how to live in days like these because I don't know. I know how to live when things were the way they were before when I could come into this studio, and we'd tape our shows, and we'd have a studio audience. Or I would go out on weekends and speak at conferences. I don't think I realized how much I received just from being with other women in the body of Christ, just worshipping together.

So I began to ask the Lord, how do I live in days like these? One of my dearest friends, in fact, she was my spiritual mentor before she went home to be with Jesus, was Billy Graham's wife, Ruth. And sometimes, when Billy would be off doing crusades, I would go to the house and spend time with Ruth. We would sit on two chairs and just talk and

talk and talk. Mostly, I would listen because she had so much wealth, so much wisdom inside of her.

But I remember her telling me once, "Sheila, when you're researching a subject, if you're writing on something, don't just read what's current. It's good to read what's current but go as far back as you can in the history of God's children. Go back to what our forefathers, way in the first and second third century, what those brothers and sisters learned on their journey. Because even though the circumstances might have been different, the lessons they learned would be the same.

So I found this one gentleman, his name was Athanasius; he lived in the fourth century. One of his quotes that I wrote down in my journal was this. He said: "Whereas most of scripture speaks to us, the Psalms speak for us." They give us a language of lament, a language of questioning, a language of rejoicing, a language for sadness.

So what I began to do was, Barry and I live in a three-story townhome, and on the middle floor, there is a little balcony. So I began going out every single day, and I would read three Psalms out loud. I don't know what the neighbors think! But I read three Psalms aloud because it's so good for our ears to hear what our eyes are reading. I can't tell you the difference that has made in my life.

So I don't know how 2020, 2021, I don't know how that has affected you personally or your family, but first of all, I want to recommend to you to read the Psalms out loud. They're a prayerbook given to the people of God no matter what circumstances they are going through.

So one night, I decided I would go onto my Facebook page. My Facebook is SheilaWalshConnects. Often, I'll just hop on there, and we'll talk something through together. Or I'll ask people how they're doing. On this one particular night, when I was feeling a weight of heaviness and sadness, I just typed in -- well, I guess I didn't type it in; I was Facebook live. I said, "How are you doing? Like right now, wherever you are,

what's going on in your life? How are you doing?" And I sat there for a long time reading all the responses. And honestly, it was overwhelming. People would tell me things like, "I've never been so lonely in my life." "I feel so cut off." "I'm so afraid. My family is struggling with COVID."

One of the saddest ones was a woman who said, "My husband is in the hospital, and I'm not allowed to go visit him. He's in I.C.U. I don't know if he's going to survive this. So I have to stand outside the window and hold up signs that the nurses can read to him."

So I began to see that we are all struggling in ways that perhaps, we hadn't before. So I sat back down with my Bible, a notebook, and my laptop, and I began to write down everything that the Holy Spirit was teaching me.

So the book that I ended up writing was called *Holding on When You Want to Let Go*: "Clinging to hope when life is falling apart." Let me just read you some of the chapter titles so you can see where I was going with this: "Holding on When Life Feels Out of Control." Have you ever felt that way? Perhaps more in the last few months than ever. It's like what is going on, Lord? Do you see what's happening? Do you see what's happening in my family? Do you see what's happening to my finances? Lord, is life out of control?

And then: "Holding On When You Feel Alone." I think that's one of the things that so many of us have experienced during this time; just being cut off initially, not even being able to go to church, having to stay away, having to self-isolate. I think it is so interesting that if you go way back to the beginning of the Bible to chapter three in Genesis, God has spoken through Christ this beautiful world into existence. And every single thing he creates, "This is good! This is good! This is good!" But the only thing that he said this is not good is, "It's not good for man to be alone."

Now think about this. This is before the Fall. This is before anything has gone wrong. Adam is living in a perfect world -- everything is perfect with the constant companionship of God. And yet our Father looked at Adam and said, "It is not good for

you to be alone." And it is not good for you to be alone.

And then: "Holding On When God is Silent." Have you ever gone through a time like that? When you're praying, and you're praying, and you think, Lord, are you listening to me? Before I was hospitalized in 1992, not knowing what was going on, not understanding this weight of sadness that I felt every day, I actually took a little time off work, and I fasted and prayed for 21 days. This was my prayer: Lord, if there is anything in my life that's not pleasing to you, please show me. Is there anyone I need to ask forgiveness of? Is there anything in my behavior that grieves you? Please show me. But at the end of 21 days, God did not condemn me. But God did not comfort me. I felt as if heaven was silent. So together, we'll look at that.

"Holding On When You're Afraid." I think there is nothing worse than when something is happening to your family, your husband, your wife, and your children. Or you literally don't know how you're going to face tomorrow. We'll look at that.

And then one of my favorite chapters: "Holding On When You've Messed Up." Do you know that God is the God of the messer-upper? Jesus said, "I didn't come for people who have got their act altogether. I came for people who are lost." That's what we read when he is talking to Zacchaeus. But if you take that little Greek word there and you look at what it means, it means "ruined, broken beyond repair." That's why Jesus came.

So if you feel you have messed up, the good news for you is God is the God of the messer-upper.

But then I want to shift a little, and I wanted to send a tidal wave of hope in your direction: "Held By the Promises of God." Do you know there are over 6,000 promises in the Word of God? Over 6,000! And we also read, "God is not a man that he should lie." If God has promised something, you can stake your life on it.

Then we have: "Held By the God Who Rescues." That's what I discovered the night that

I ended up in a psych hospital; that God had a rescue plan. He had one for me, and God has a rescue plan for you. It's who he is. He always does -- He is the Always God.

And then: "Held By the God of Miracles." I take a fresh look at what miracles really are and how from literally, the first book of the Bible all the way through to the revelation given to John, God is a God of miracles. Now sometimes, they don't happen in our timing. We think we've prayed for something, and we don't see an answer, but do you remember in the book of Daniel where he realizes the devastation that has happened to Jerusalem when he is praying? And 21 days later, an angel came to him and said, "Daniel, from the first minute you prayed, God heard and sent the answer. But there's been spiritual warfare going on, and it took 21 days to get to you." So if you've been praying for a miracle, don't give up hope. God heard your prayer the first time you prayed it, and help is on the way.

Then: "Held By the One Who Changed Everything." I think this is probably my favorite chapter to write because it is all about Jesus. It's all about the one who took our place, who faced shame and pain and punishment and torture simply because he loves you and he loves me so much.

I was reading something this morning that just kind of summarized the greatness of God. It was by A.W. Tozer, and he was giving this great comparison. "The one who knows the worst there is to know about you is the one who loves you more than anyone." Isn't that amazing? That the God who knows the things you've never told another soul because you think, if you knew this about me, you wouldn't like me. God knows everything about your story. He knows everything, and he loves you more than anyone else ever has or ever will. Remember, he's the God of the messer-upper.

And the final chapter is: "Let Go! You Are Being Held." There are times in life where you think, honestly, Lord, I don't know how I'm going to hold on for one more minute. That's when I want you to remember, you are being held. I love the fact that in the book of Romans, one of my favorite books in the Bible, in chapter 8, my favorite chapter, Paul

reminds us that even in those times when we can't even squeeze out a prayer, things are so dark, so difficult that the Holy Spirit prays for us.

Have you thought about that in your days right now even? Whatever you're worrying about, whatever you're struggling with, whatever you're hoping for, but cannot see any hope on the horizon, the Spirit who knows the will of God is praying for you in line with God's will.

And then, when I got to the end, I thought I was finished. Honestly, I was about to send it to my publisher, and something happened. I've had a missing piece in my life for almost all of my life. And it was something that I thought, you know what? I just don't think I'll ever get an answer to that. I think it is one of those things that I'll have to leave with the Lord, and when I get to heaven, I'll understand.

Before I hit send on the manuscript, God did a miracle for me. That final missing piece from a part of the puzzle of my life was put back in place, and I was able to add it at the end of the book.

It's just been a journey for me. But what I want you to know is God is still writing your story. The pieces of your story are not lost. That God is a miracle worker. God is the God of the messer-upper. He is in control no matter what you read in the newspapers, no matter what you see on the evening news, no matter what is happening in our world -- and let's be honest, things have been getting darker every day. But God is still on the throne. He has a plan for your life. He has a plan for your family. He has a plan for every single one of us who has put our faith in him. So when you feel you're the most fragile and most vulnerable, just remember you are being held.

And because of that, I want to ask you now to help some people who are literally holding on by a thread. There are some young girls in the world at the moment who think I'm not going to survive this. I'm not going to make it. Nobody on this earth cares about me. But these prayers, these desperate prayers, have risen up to the throne of God. And now, the

Lord is going to allow you and me to be the answer to those cries.

I want you to watch something. And then afterward, I want to tell you that you can get a copy of my brand-new book for any gift at all, which I hope will impact your life. But I'm going to ask you to do something that will impact the lives of so many people who are barely holding on, who want to let go, but God is going to send you and me to the rescue, in Jesus' name. Please watch this.

On the mission field:

SHEILA: How do you hold on when you want to let go? When you're at your darkest point? What keeps you moving to the light? I've met some young girls that are living in the dark. They're surrounded by evil, and the light must seem so dim to them.

You see, these girls are victims of human trafficking. Their lives have been turned upside down by cruel, ruthless, money-hungry individuals who see these girls and boys as nothing but a commodity to be traded and sold.

Most of these victims were tricked, lied to, or even kidnapped into brothels around the world, and now they're being held captive by chains, violent threats, and emotional abuse. So what keeps these girls and boys holding on? What is the dim light in their darkness? It's hope. A hope that this torment will end someday. A hope that they can return to their families. A hope that they can get a safe, productive job to support themselves. A hope that God has a plan for their life.

I can't imagine having to hold on to such a dim possibility of hope, but we can help provide a bright hope that will light up their darkness. We can help save these girls and boys. We can rescue them out of their darkness and start the healing process so that they can see God's bright plan for their lives.

But we have to do it now. They're waiting. Don't let their hope die.

End of video

In the studio:

SHEILA: I remember those young girls so well. Sweet little girls who should be getting ready for school or getting tucked up and put into bed with their mom or their dad reading them a bedtime story, just like you've done with your children, and my husband and I have done with Christian.

I think that's what struck me the first time is how young these girls are. When I used to think of prostitution and red-light districts around the world, for some reason, I always thought of girls being late teenagers, into their 20s, or that this was a choice. I have discovered that both of those were wrong.

So many of these young girls are literally 12, 13, 14, 15, and it was not their choice. If you wonder, well, how could they get into a situation like that? So many of these are vulnerable because they live in extreme abject poverty. Sometimes there's only one parent present. If a parent gets sick, then they have to borrow money from a moneylender who will up the ante all the time; the interest is ridiculous. And if nobody in the family who is older can work, these young girls go onto the streets about 10:00 or 11:00 at night, when the bars throw out cans that have been consumed during the evening. These little girls collect the cans and can sell them. They don't get much for them, but it's something. It's enough to put food on the table for their siblings.

But that's when so often they're snatched by these men who come by on motorbikes and literally pick the girls off the streets. And often, they are drugged by either a meal or something to drink, something that they think is an act of kindness, perhaps. But it turns into the opening door into a life of hell where these little ones wake up and discover their life has changed forever.

From that first trip to Southeast Asia, I committed before the Lord that I would keep telling their stories. And so, during this Rescue Life time, we have a \$320,000 matching gift from friends, maybe some of you watching right now, who care for this ministry. Thank you, thank you, thank you! What they've made possible is that it used to take \$128 to begin the process of reaching into the villages where the children are, warning them; rescuing those who have already been trafficked; restoring them to a life where they know they are loved by God, and given a future. It used to take about \$128. Now with this matching gift, if you're able to give \$64, that will be matched, and one girl, one precious girl, will be grabbed from the pits of hell and given a life.

So please, will you go to your phone right now? Will you give the very best gift you can? For any gift at all, I'll be happy to send my book to you. But let's do it in Jesus' name. Let's do it now.

Begin video clip:

ANNOUNCER: Innocent children and young people, longing to be loved and cared for, are being abducted and sold at the hands of violent predators, forced into the evil industry of human trafficking.

Through Mission: Rescue *LIFE*, you can reach out to educate children at risk of being trafficked, rescue those already enslaved, and restore young lives giving them a future.

With a generous \$320,000 matching gift, now your gift of \$128 to help reach, rescue, or restore one child can be doubled to help two children. Your \$64 gift will be matched to help save one child from the horrors of human trafficking. And a \$32 mission rescue gift will be doubled to \$64.

With your gift today, we'll send you Sheila Walsh's brand-new book, *Holding on When You Want to Let Go*; "A lifeline of hope for those who feel their life is falling apart."

With your gift of \$128 or more, you'll receive the *Beauty Out of Ashes* puzzle set featuring an image taken by our team while on a trip to the mission field. This 500-piece puzzle forms a beautiful portrait of hope in the midst of despair. Included is a 24-piece puzzle for your children and grandchildren.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1280, which will now help rescue 20 children. 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:

RALPH: One of our goals at *LIFE Outreach* is to prevent human trafficking, to rescue girls caught in human trafficking, and of course, restore those that are rescued back into a normal life as much as we can. This border crossing here is somewhat of a mixture of the first two because these girls have literally been caught in trafficking. They haven't had to go across the border yet and disappear. They're being intercepted on this side of the border, so they're being prevented from having a disastrous future.

If you can imagine, it is almost like they're going to fall off a cliff. They haven't fallen yet, but our mission partners were able to catch them -- just before they fall off that cliff. And they're able to bring them to safety and bring them to a life of nurturing, a life that gives them a hope and a future. So this type of mixture of prevention and rescuing is vitally important to our mission. So please continue to give and support this ministry. It is a beautiful thing to see.

In the studio:

SHEILA: Thank you so much. Remember, for any gift at all, please ask for a copy of *Holding on When You Want to Let Go*: "Clinging to hope when life is falling apart." And

that's what we're going to be bringing to these girls, and we will bring you the stories. You give faithfully, and we'll bring you the stories. We'll show you the difference it made.

Let's do this! It's not something we *have* to do; it's this glorious privilege that God gives us to make a difference in the lives of others because of how he has redeemed us. If the lines are busy, please, please keep calling. Let's take advantage of this phenomenal matching gift and make the biggest difference we can, in Jesus' name.

So I'm Sheila Walsh. For all of us here at *LIFE*, God bless you. We'll see you next time.