

10/13/21

Week 42: Rescue LIFE

Sheila Walsh

Holding on When Life Feels Out of Control

SHEILA: I'm Sheila Walsh. Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm so glad you tuned us in and hope you'll stay with us for the whole program. We have lots of things we want to share with you.

Have you ever wanted to write a book? So many people say to me, "One day, I want to write a book." Most people probably have a book in them, but it's just a kind of discipline of starting. When I wrote my first book, I came to realize how important an editor is because when I handed in my manuscript, I was, I don't know, probably 24. The editor read it and said, "This is like rabbit trails everywhere." So I've learned over the years the value of having a really good editor.

A couple of years ago, I started to write a new book. I wanted to write on the subject of miracles. What is a genuine miracle? What does the Bible, what does God's word say about miracles? Well, I got a couple of chapters into the book, and then, as you know, the COVID-19 virus hit. And as the weeks turned into months, I found myself spiraling with depression again. And honestly, I was surprised by the level of despair that I felt. When I read what I'd written, it didn't help me at all, so I realized, if it didn't help me, it probably wouldn't help you.

So I did what every author dreads, I hit the *delete* button, and I asked the Holy Spirit, how do we live in these days? What do you and I know for sure, no matter what is happening all around us? How do we hold on when life feels as if it is falling apart?

Well, that journey led me to write a totally different book, *Holding on When You Want to Let Go*: "Clinging to hope when life is falling apart." I think it is probably the most deeply personal book I've written about recent struggles. So over the next few weeks, I want to share with you the lessons that I have been learning. Basically, I want to send a tidal wave of hope in your direction. And today, what I want to talk about is holding on when *LIFE* feels out of control.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the church in Corinth: *Our great power is from God, not from ourselves. We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed. We are perplexed, but we are not driven to despair. We are hunted down but never, never abandoned by God. We get knocked down, but we are not destroyed.* Don't miss this. *Pressed but not crushed. Perplexed but not driven to despair. Hunted down but never abandoned. Knocked down, but not destroyed.*

I believe this with all my heart. But to be perfectly honest, there have been days when I felt, probably, a little bit more like the conquered than the conqueror. So today, I want us to look at three key truths that will help us to hold on to hope each and every day, no matter what you and I might be struggling with.

So let's look at truth number one: *We were not made to do life on our own. We need to let people into our stories.*

Then truth number two: *Jesus is still writing your story, and he holds all the pieces.*

Truth number three: *No matter how things appear, no matter how things feel, God is in control.*

For many people, 2020 and the COVID-19 pandemic became synonymous with profound loneliness. We were isolated from our friends at church, work, school. Others were separated from their dearest loved ones. The pandemic experience brought to light a biblical principle that God highlighted several millennia ago: "It is not good for the

man to be alone." We read that in Genesis chapter two, verse 18. Just think about that! This stunning proclamation came after God had created a glorious world of sea, land, and sky, all teeming with life, and with the advent of stars and planets, dragonflies, and dolphins. God pronounced, "It is good." And it was.

Then the Lord made man in his own image, filling Adam with dignity and divine purpose. Adam enjoyed unbroken fellowship with God in the garden. We don't even know what that would be like, absolutely, unbroken fellowship. So what could possibly be wrong with this perfect picture? Our Lord identified only one thing as not good: Isolation. The man was not meant to be alone, and neither were you.

So let's look at truth number one: *We were not made to do life on our own; we need to let people into our stories.*

One of the hardest challenges for me in 2020 was being separated from my son, Christian when he contracted the virus. He was in Houston, and we were in Dallas. I wanted to be with him, and I couldn't. We all face things that we've never faced before. So many days were overwhelming and heartbreaking. I found myself every day crying out to God for help. Crying out for hope. I knew that I wasn't the only one hurting. We were all hurting.

I also began to see the number of one another statements in the Bible, "Pray for one another; love one another; bear one another's burdens." The truth is we need one another desperately. I know now in a way that I don't think I ever understood completely before that when our hearts are broken, we need to be able to say it out loud. If we don't, we sink deeper into despair -- deeper, deeper into the pit. We need each other. We need to let people into our pain when it is too much to carry by ourselves.

Prayer for ourselves and others is one of the main ways we hold on to Jesus in hope. In Galatians chapter six, verse two, God can commands, *"Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."* The Greek word used here for burden (baros) literally means a heavyweight or stone someone is required to carry for a long distance or a ship's load.

We all face those moments when the weight we're carrying is just too much -- it is too much to carry by ourselves. The weight of unexpected sickness. The weight of uninvited sorrow. The weight of unresolved conflict. The weight of secret shame. The weight of financial struggle. God did not design us to carry these burdens by ourselves.

That's one of the reasons that we are here at *LIFE*. We are here to help you carry your burdens. So if you're carrying a heavy load today, listen to this invitation from the scripture. In First Peter chapter 5, verse seven, we read this: *Cast all your anxiety (all your cares) on him because he cares for you.*

What a promise! I love the Word of God. It has literally saved my life. So when I study, I love to dig deep, and I'll use various different translations. You might want to try that. It is not as hard as you might imagine. I like to use my English Standard Version Study Bible for the helpful notes. I love the readability of the New Living Translation, but I also enjoy The Message, which renders biblical language in such beautiful, accessible, and more practical ways.

For example, listen to this well-known passage from the last two verses of Matthew chapter 11 in The Message: *"Are you tired? Worn out? Come to me. Get away with me, and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me -- watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me, and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."*

Let me ask you a question. How do you think your life right now would be different if you kept company with God? Learning to live freely and lightly in the unforced rhythms of grace? Let me just say it's not a quick fix. Following Christ is not just a quick fix. It is a process. But Jesus himself has invited you and I to walk it out with him.

As we've read, Paul encouraged the church in Galatia, and you and me, to carry one

another's burdens. So let me ask you a question. Have you ever considered that this verse implies that we must help carry the burdens of others and that we must allow others to help bear our own burdens? Sometimes, I think if we're honest, that's more difficult.

I was asked many years ago by a counselor to do a practical exercise. He asked me to use modeling clay to tell part of my story. I initially thought it was a ridiculous idea. I don't have a natural affinity for sculpting. But I eventually gave in, and I started working with a piece of clay he had given me. And when I was done, I was surprised by what I'd made. I discovered I'd made a little girl with abnormally long arms surrounded by a high wall. Without intending to, I had made a representation of an unspoken belief I carried at that time, and that was I'm available to you. I'm available to help anybody else at any time, but no one else can get close, close enough to me to be able to help me. I lived protected. And I'm confident, pretty confident that God, my Father, looked down on the loneliness of my heart and proclaimed, "It is not good for Sheila to be alone." It is not good for you to be alone either.

I want to ask you if you'd ask the Holy Spirit to bring to mind just one person with whom you can share the burden you are currently carrying. Reaching out for prayer, letting others know that we're hurting, and even asking for help can feel pretty humbling. I want you to know, it can also be very healing.

I have two girls I call "my safe sisters" that I share my life with; they know me inside and out. We all need that. And praise God too that we have a Savior who humbled himself and became vulnerable for your sake and for mine.

Remember what Paul said about Jesus Christ: *"Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges. He took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he and in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross."*

Jesus set the perfect example of humility. He's inviting us to experience the freedom and power of laying down our pride, our fear, our shame. So let's look at truth number two: *Jesus is still writing your story, and he holds all the pieces.*

Some years ago, I received an awesome lion jigsaw puzzle as a gift. I spent hours and hours putting the pieces together, and things were going amazingly until they weren't. If your stomach is clenching with secondhand anxiety, you may know what's coming. Yes! One piece -- one piece was missing, and it wasn't the kind of piece you could shrug off. The piece contained one of the lion's eyes. And for one shining moment, the idea of creating an eye patch for my lion puzzle did not seem too weird. But despite my best efforts in house cleaning, I simply couldn't find the piece. So imagine my shock when two years later I found the mangled piece buried at the bottom of my dog's toy basket. I guess I didn't clean that out often enough. Even though I now think I have that piece, it didn't fit. It was too chewed up.

Most of us don't like incomplete or unfinished things. But I want to say this. When it comes to your journey, to my journey of faith, the word *unfinished* takes on a different meaning. The fact that neither your story nor mine is finished means God is still writing our story. He holds all the pieces. No matter how painful the past, no matter how hard the present circumstances are, no matter how bleak the future may look at times, nothing -- nothing is beyond the scope of God's redemptive power. Nothing is too hard for our Almighty God. In the savior's hands, the puzzle of your life has no missing pieces.

Finally, I want to look at truth number three: *No matter how things appear, God is in control.* Let me just ask, on a scale of one to ten, how hard do you try to control the circumstances of your life, your family's life? If you're looking for an 11 on the scale, I understand. In all honesty, when life feels out of control, my first reaction isn't always to immediately thank God; so often, it is to try to make things work.

Sometimes I just want to bring life back into control. I'm sure you know how well that goes. Life overflows with anxiety-producing, out-of-control circumstances. I don't think

it is a coincidence that God tells us not to be afraid well over 300 times from Genesis to Revelation. But the Bible tells us even more often that our God is perfectly sovereign. God is in all and over all. Nothing -- nothing is outside the control of God.

In fact, in First Timothy, chapter six, verse 15, Paul writes this to his young friend:
"Jesus is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords."

What that means for you and for me is God is in control. It doesn't mean that we always understand what's going on. It doesn't mean that we are always able to say this will happen at this time and that it will happen at that time. But what I want you to know is God is good. God is for you. God is in control. And when you're able to take all the pieces of your life, even the broken pieces, and offer them up to him, I promise you, not one piece of your story is lost. And in God's perfect timing, he will bring things to pass.

The interesting thing for me as I was writing my book was, out of one of the times of greatest insecurity and questioning for me has come the greatest hope and understanding that nothing is out of control -- nothing is out of the care of our Father. God is writing our stories, and he's not finished yet. And we can trust him.

I don't know what's happening in your life right now, but I do want you to know that God knows you, that he sees you, that he's with you, and he is holding every single missing piece. Life is not out of control. You can trust the God who never lets go.

One of the things that I'm excited about is that we have a new project in Southeast Asia and different parts of the world. We are going in to people who literally feel there is no reason to hope anymore. And let them know, no, hope is on the way. Watch this.

On the mission field:

SHEILA: I'm riding in a tuk-tuk in the red-light district here in Southeast Asia. It can

look -- some of them almost look kind of glamorous. The girls are smiling and inviting men to come in and have a drink. When it is daylight, and there's no one watching them, their pimps are not watching them, the difference is unbelievable. Then it is not smiles and makeup; then it is tears, and tears and brokenness, and hopelessness. And underneath the makeup and the short skirts is just a little girl -- they're just little girls like your daughters.

This is a place of absolute living hell. There is not one girl on these streets, and I don't care whether she's smiling and calling people in, there is not one girl here who values their life because they think if you can be sold every night, what are you worth?

So I asked one of the girls we met today, "Who on this earth cares for you?"

And she said, "No one. There is no one who cares for me."

And we want each one of these girls to know there is a God in heaven who cares for you.

Let me tell you, if there is any place where the body of Christ should be showing up and caring for people, it is on these streets of this red-light district where girls are being sold every night, time after time after time. You and I, as God's sons and daughters, we've got to be the ones telling these girls, "You have a future, and you have a purpose, and you have a hope. And there is a God who loves you."

They need our help, and they need it now.

End of video

In the studio:

SHEILA: I remember asking one of the pastors that we work with on the ground in Southeast Asia, how do you convey to a girl her value and her worth? And he said something I'd never heard in my life before. He said, "Well, initially, I tell them they're

worth more than a chicken." I said, "I don't even understand what that means." He said, "Because a chicken is sold for more than a girl is."

Can you imagine that that's the kind of value that's placed on your life? So many of those girls that you saw at the beginning of that piece almost look like they're having a good time, and I promise you, they are not having a good time. But, when that makeup is removed, when those clothes they have to dress up in, when that's all gone, what you have left is little girls, like the ones you saw, who think there is nobody on this earth who cares about me.

When I got back from my second trip to Southeast Asia, I just kind of did a whole new look at my faith through the eyes of that experience. I thought about the things that I think about or worry about or maybe save up for, things I think that matter, and I thought, if the whole purpose of our life as believers is to glorify God and to spread the good news, if that's it, it's basically to glorify our Father, to become more like Jesus, and to reach others with the good news. This is what matters.

Through Rescue LIFE, we have this incredible system set up. It is a three-part system: Reach, rescue, and restore. *Reach* means we go into the villages before these girls have ever been trafficked. That's our number one priority. Can we get to the girls before this has ever happened to them and warn them about the danger? But so many of them have already been trafficked, and they've ended up in these devastating brothels.

So then it is to *rescue*. Our teams on the ground just blow me away. They will go into these brothels at midnight. They will kick down the doors. They will literally carry these girls to freedom and make sure the traffickers are arrested.

But then we bring them to a place of hope. That's where *restore* comes in, where we can teach them that they are loved by God and that they have value. They're not worth less than a chicken! They are worth the death of Jesus Christ; He died for every single one of them.

So please, will you help us in this mission? We have a matching gift at the moment of \$320,000 from some of our incredibly faithful donors. If you're watching, thank you! But it means that instead of \$128 being required to begin the process of reach, rescue, and restore, now for \$64, that will be matched, and one girl will be reached. If you're able to do more. If you could do \$1280, that will be matched; 20 girls will be brought into freedom. We can all do something.

And for any gift at all, please request my book. I'll be honored to send it to you. Let's all do something in Jesus' name. Please call that number on your screen, or go online and make the best gift you can. Let's bring hope to the hopeless.

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:

RANDY: This is the educational portion of Rescue LIFE where we explain to the villagers what to look for, who to watch out for, the danger signs, if you will, of those who are trying to lure them into sex trafficking. Education is obviously a critical part of Rescue LIFE.

I hope that you will go to the phone, you'll go online, you'll do whatever you can to support Rescue LIFE as we seek to reach into areas like this, rescue the girls who have been taken and restore the lives of individuals, families, and communities. Do what you can. Help us as we help rescue lives all over the world.

In the studio:

SHEILA: Thank you. Thank you. Your gift matters. If you ever question yourself. If you ever think, \$64, what difference is that going to make? You tell that one girl who has been rescued that it didn't make a difference, and she will look right back at you and say, "Thank you! You literally saved my life."

We can all do something so let's do that. Let's make sure these girls who are crying out in the darkness receive the light of Christ. For any gift at all, I'll be honored to send you my book,

Holding on When You Want to Let Go. I know you don't do it for the gifts. It is just our way, here at *LIFE*, of wanting to be a blessing to you. So please, keep calling. Give the best gift you can, and just remember, here at *LIFE*, we love you, and so does God. We'll see you next time!