

11/10/21

Week 46: Mission feeding

Sheila Walsh

"Holding On When You've Messed Up"

SHEILA: Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm Sheila Walsh. I was cleaning out drawers the other day, something I've been meaning to do for a long time, and I found an old journal that dates back to the month I spent in a psych hospital in 1992. Just reading through some of it kind of shook me. I remember the fear I felt -- deep, gut-level fear of what would happen when people found out that I had spent time in a psychiatric hospital. I remember how that felt. Mental illness, particularly in the church, held so much stigma. We've come a long way since then, and I'm sure we have a longer way to go. But when I was hospitalized, I didn't know of one other Christian who struggled with depression. As far as I knew, I was the only one who was falling apart and failing God.

For me, it was the perfect storm where my greatest fear crashed into my most deeply held belief: Don't let anyone see the real you, or they will leave. Bumping into: I'm too broken to be loved. I wonder what those deeply held beliefs are for you? We all have them. They're usually etched into our souls when we are young, and they are not all negative beliefs. Many beliefs are the strong foundation stones that set us up for healthy choices later in life.

When you look for a husband, for example, if you were raised by a dad who loved you well and spoke words of life over you, you're less likely to fall for someone who just tears you down. That message would sharply contradict with what you know to be true and how relationships should be.

If you were raised to believe that you were smart and gifted and God has an amazing plan

for your life, then you won't quit the first time someone says "no" to you when you want to go to a particular college or apply for a new job. If the initial responses are negative, you'll just keep trying until you succeed. Those kinds of deeply held beliefs are kind of like a balloon that lifts us up. But when the messages are negative, however, they're likely to be weights that pull us right back down to earth the moment that we try to rise.

I think of so many of the responses I've had whenever I ask that question on Facebook. Some of the messages are like these: You'll never amount to anything. You'll always be overweight. You don't deserve to be happy. You're a mistake. There is something wrong with you. You look awful in that outfit.

Well, those kinds of messages have very loud voices, and they're hard to ignore. So how do we counter something we've believed for a long time? How do you and I silence the lies? Well, I have some daily habits that have helped me, and they might sound simple, but they are genuinely foundation stones for me.

Number one: Studying God's word. I never, never let a single day go by without reading God's word. I mean, I read it out loud. I'll choose a particular verse and meditate on it during the day. I read what God says about my life no matter how I feel at that moment. If your deeply held beliefs tell you that you are worth loving, that you'll never change, then find some go-to verses that confront those lies.

Here are a couple of my favorites: *For the mountains may move and the hills disappear, but even then my faithful love for you will remain.*

And my very favorite read-it-every-day passage from Romans: *And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow -- not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or on the earth below -- indeed nothing in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that's revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Whatever your particular struggle is, find truth in God's word and read it over, over, over yourself every day as often as you need to silence the lies.

Okay, number two basic foundation stone: Prayer. Now I wrote a whole book about prayer called *Praying Women* in 2019 because I recognized this was a weak area in my life. So now I pray when I first get up in the morning. And honestly, when I'm first awake, it's more of a "Good morning, Lord" than anything else. It is my way of greeting a new day. But in God's presence. Then I have times when I'm specifically praying and interceding for a particular person or a situation. But I talk to my Father all day long when I'm in the car driving up to *LIFE*, when I'm waiting in the grocery line, when I'm happy, when I'm sad, when I'm worried, I talk to the Lord.

Number three foundation stone: Worship. Now, I have a worship playlist on my phone. I've chosen songs that have deep spiritual truth, songs that remind me of the unfailing love of God. I worship along when I'm having a good day or a bad day. When I feel myself sinking, I listen and allow the words to wash over me. You might want to do that. You might want, in fact, I'll put it on my Facebook page, SheilaWalshConnects. I'll put my worship playlist out there, but you can make your own, and it is just so good to be able to listen to truth when there is so much in our world that is so crazy.

Well, the fourth foundation stone: Thanksgiving. There is great power in gratitude and giving thanks for God's faithfulness and his love. When life is hard, though, it is challenging to be thankful. That's why I think of thanksgiving as an absolute choice, a discipline. Every day I thank God for five things, and some days they are things like a significant answer to prayer. And honestly, other days, it is something as simple as our older dog Tank sleeping through the night instead of needing to go out five times at 3:00 in the morning.

During the self-isolation of the pandemic, everything that we were familiar with changed, and it was during this time that the ugly, self-protective side of brokenness showed up in

me again. Honestly, I thought I had put that to death over the years, but it had only been sleeping. I needed to rediscover what it means to repent. I know that is an old-fashioned word, but I have rediscovered that it is a life-changing gift.

So Barry and I talked with Christian one evening on a face time call. Christian was saying how grateful he was to see his friends' faces on zoom video calls because it made him feel less alone. I'd been worried about him. I was very grateful that he could still have some interaction with his friends. Well, my husband, Barry, is a noticer. He notices things that he thinks could be better, and halfway through the call, he notices something about Christian's appearance. He suggested to him that he shouldn't wear his ball cap on video calls. He told him he would look better without it. Now that's all he said, but it triggered something in me -- old feelings of never being enough, and I totally overreacted. It went a little like this. And I share this with both of their permission.

"You shouldn't wear your ball cap on calls, Christian. You look much better without it."

"It's just my friends, Dad. They don't care."

"Still, if you're going to be a clinical psychologist, you should get used to presenting a professional front."

"I don't want to be that kind of counselor, Dad. I want to be real, be myself, be approachable."

"I still think you would look better without it."

Enter me. "Why do you always have to make such shallow comments, Barry? You make me so angry. He looks great the way he is. Better than you do sitting there in your same old torn pajamas you've been wearing for months."

Phlbb! As you can probably imagine, the call went quiet after that. It shut Barry down, it

shut Christian down, and it was like a tsunami of guilt washed over me as I thought back to a counseling session the three of us had had just a few years before. The kind of Genesis of that session was that I felt that Barry, at times, was too critical of Christian. So we all had agreed to a family counseling session. I hoped the counselor could help Barry see the impact of criticism. But by the end of the session, I realized that the real problem was actually me. I asked Christian how I might be contributing to any tension in the home, and honestly, I expected him to say that it wasn't me, it was his dad. That's not what he said. He said this, "Mom, I don't want to hurt your feelings." I told him he had complete permission to hurt my feelings. This is what he said, "Mom, when you get in the middle, it makes things worse. Dad and I love each other. Yes, he's hard on me at times, but we can sort it out, the two of us."

Wow! I left that session determined to change. Proud of him that he was able to say what he was feeling because I could see that all I was doing was turning the heat up in a situation that they could honestly work through together. My emotional responses as a mother were far more difficult for them to handle than the differences they were experiencing as father and son.

But now, here we were again. This time on a face time call. I didn't know what to say. No, that's not true; I did. I should have asked for forgiveness straight away; I just didn't. Christian kind of laughed it off, saying he had a paper to write and signed off. Barry asked me if I wanted to talk, and I shook my head, so he headed upstairs to bed. And I sat on the sofa in our den feeling about five years old again, alone and trapped. When I resist quick repentance, I quickly fall into dark places. Old suicidal thoughts come back to torment me; despair and feelings of hopelessness rise up like floodwater in the basement of my soul. Familiar lies had found their voice once again. "You'll never change. You're too broken. Life is too hard. You can't do this."

But this is what I want you to hear. The most powerful lesson I've learned over the years is this: There is power in the name of the Lord. No matter what you're facing, no matter how hard it is or how dark it feels, there is power in the name of Jesus. As the tears began

to pour down my cheeks, I didn't wait a minute more. I called out his name. Jesus! I called his name over and over. Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! I got down on my knees in the den, and I asked for forgiveness. I raised my arms to heaven and felt the sweet presence of the Holy Spirit filling me with peace.

Simply put, I repented. Repentance is an old-fashioned sounding word, but it has a very simple, powerful, life-changing meaning. In the Old Testament, there are two Hebrew words to help us understand repentance. The first is the word *nacham*. This means to turn around or to change your mind. The second is the word *shub*. It's used hundreds of times in the Old Testament and is translated by words like turn, restore, or return. When you come to the New Testament, the Greek word translated "repent" is *metanoia*, which literally means to change your mind. Notice this. There is nothing here about being sorry. Repentance is not an emotion; it is an action. We can say "sorry" a million times over, but if we don't turn around, if we don't change our mind, then nothing changes.

So, what could I have done that night when Barry's comments triggered such a sinful response in me? Well, I could have told them the truth. I could have said, "Wow! I'm not sure what is going on with me, but those comments made me feel bad inside. I think I need a few moments alone." I could have locked myself in the bathroom in God's presence and let him love me.

I love, love, love this quote from Tim Keller: "The gospel is this: We're more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope."

It's the worst news and the best news in the same sentence, and the order matters. If we only focus on the love and acceptance of Jesus, we see no need to own our flaws. Sin is not just about doing bad things; it is about putting anything else in the place that only God can fill. God doesn't want our stuff. He wants us. He wants our whole self, our 100 percent; this is who I am, good, bad, and ugly self. The truth is that we are all messed up. Some of us just do a much better job at concealing it than others.

But here's the great news. We don't have to hide anymore. I believe that God is offering us a whole new way to live. A way to live in radical freedom and grace. What might that look like? Let me give you a little picture. I have a friend whose son used to love to run outside naked when he was about four years old. I remember asking him one day why he liked to do that. He said, "It just feels good to have the sun all over me."

I'm not suggesting for a moment that we should adopt this darling boy's interesting habit. What I am saying is that don't you think it would be wonderful to be spiritually naked before God? No secrets, no closed doors, no hiding at all? When we mess up in big or little ways, to live in the grace of quick repentance. Can you imagine how good it would feel, how good it would be to feel the love of God all over you? It would be a whole new way to live and to love.

Now honestly, I'm not proud of that outburst that happened. I'd love to say it was 20 years ago, but it wasn't. It was just about a year ago. But the great lesson in all of it is, no matter whether we've known the Lord for five minutes or 50 years, we're still all going to mess up. You know that in your own life. Particularly in our families, where the family dynamic is always shifting. Sometimes, that's the hardest place to say "sorry."

But I have to tell you, even that one instance with Barry and Christian and I where my response was not helpful at all, once I was able to repent and asked God to forgive me. Then I went upstairs, and I talked to Barry. And, of course, he quickly forgave me. And I called Christian and talked to him. But since then, the three of us have been able to sit down and talk about those things. Because so often, we feel we have to kind of hide that part of ourselves from God and from one another.

But I think that that's a trick of the enemy to keep our darker side in the darkness, whereas the invitation from God is right now, to bring all of who you are into the light no matter what it is. And I've discovered I never feel more fully human and alive in Christ than when I ask for forgiveness. It is just like standing under a waterfall and being

washed from head to toe.

So I don't know if you feel right now like you have messed up, but I just want you to remember, God is the God of the messer-upper, and that's why Jesus came. I would love to send you my book *Holding on When You Want to Let Go*. The teaching from today's "Holding On" story, which was "Holding On When You Feel Like You've Messed Up," is in that. But I would love you to help us here, help some people who feel as if everything in life is messed up and can't see a way out. But I want them to know, and I want you to help me show them, yes, hope is on the way. Watch this.

On the mission field:

Announcer: Perhaps the greatest fear of parents concerns the health of their children. It is especially true in Africa. Adriano is a godly father in Angola who wants to pride in his ability to provide for his family. But tragedy has changed that.

Open Captions:

>> We lost our two children and it's like we lost part of us. That's why we're working, but not with full power.

Announcer: Adriano told us food and health are two critical issues in his community. You see when parents take care of sick children, there is little time to farm and produce food. But without food children's immune systems become weak and more susceptible to disease. It's a vicious cycle.

Sheila: When you look at a little one like this. This little one's name is Balvine Natula. This color of hair, this red hair means that the body has stopped sending nutrients to the hair. So there is no protein. These are terrible sights. And it's why mission feeding is absolutely vital for us. We want to be able to get to where help is needed now and help is needed now in these villages to feed their bodies so that they have strength that we can

feed their souls and spirits. You can't hear that Jesus loves you when you are starving to death.

End of video

In the studio:

SHEILA: These malnutrition clinics are heartbreaking. And I think for me, one of the things that were the first impression I got was the desperation in the eyes of the mothers. Some of these mothers have to walk for miles to find a clinic. By then, their children are usually so weak, sometimes some of the mothers have literally lost their children on the way to the clinic.

And sitting beside these moms, looking at these precious little ones who have no resistance to anything, as a mom, I can't imagine what it is like to watch my children at night knowing that they are starving. It is not as if these people are lazy. These people work their fingers literally to the bone. Sometimes they have to dig in the dirt because in some areas, it is like this huge irony, South Sudan's ridiculous flooding, and even so much so that some of our clinics have been washed away. We're determined to rebuild these clinics. But in other parts like Angola, the drought, there is just nothing growing. So they will dig in the dirt to try and find enough to give their children something. But there are no nutrients in it.

Our partners on the ground right now are waiting for you and me to help. We've made a commitment to feed 350,000 children. Now that might seem like an overwhelming task, but here's how we break it down. If you were able today, if you were able to right now to give \$30, that would feed three children for three months. What could you do with \$30 these days? \$50 will feed five children. \$100 feeds ten. But you were able to give a gift today of \$1,000 that will feed 100 children! That's like bringing hope to an entire village.

I have walked with some of these mothers where they're trying to find their way to get help. Can you imagine if your child is dying and you've determined no matter how long it

takes you, you're going to get to a malnutrition clinic? And when you get there, it's been washed away! Unthinkable! So we need to rebuild 16 clinics. Some of them are mobile, and some of them are absolutely established in an area. For each of those, it's \$24,500 to put a whole clinic in; and that's to staff and equip it.

But each one of us can do something. Can you do \$30? Can you do \$50? Could you do \$100? Betty once said that her prayer is that the line of children will never be longer than the food we have in the bowls. So let's make sure that never happens. Will you please call now? The need is urgent. Please call. Please call now and give the very best gift that you can. Thank you!

Begin video clip:

ANNOUNCER: Across the continent of Africa, children are suffering, facing severe malnutrition and even death. With food reserves gone and many areas experiencing severe famine, we urgently need to replenish supplies to keep feeding the 350,000 children who are counting on us.

Call now with your lifesaving gift of \$30, \$50, or \$100 to help feed and care for three, five, or ten children for three full months. Also, please consider an extra gift to help immediately rebuild malnutrition clinics destroyed by record flooding in South Sudan. This urgent need is \$392,000 above our normal feeding budget and is critical to help save the lives of those suffering most.

With your gift of any amount, we will send you *Christmas Grace*. This eye-opening, new 31-day devotional will give you a fresh perspective on the greatest gift ever given and the life-transforming hope found in Christ's birth.

With your gift of \$100 or more, request the "Love and Thanks" tumbler set with

scriptures reminding us that "God's love never fails" and to always "Give thanks." These tumblers will keep drinks hot or cold wherever you go.

Finally, with your gift of \$1,000 or more to help feed and care for 100 children, be sure to request our inspiring bronze sculpture, "Divine Servant."

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

End of video

Begin video clip:

DAVID: I'm thrilled beyond words to know that as you partner with *LIFE Today* to bring nutrition and hope to those who are in such desperate need, that you'll receive my newest devotional, *Christmas Grace*, as an expression of their profound thanks. I believe with all my heart if you'll request this new devotional and follow it through the holiday season, right up to the New Year, you'll come away with new insights about the birth of the Savior and a deeper love for him. Call or go online right now to share and request your copy today.

End of video

In the studio:

SHEILA: Thank you so much. What a privilege! For any gift at all, we'd love to send you this beautiful book, *Christmas Grace: "31 Meditations and Declarations on the Greatest Gift Ever Given."* For a gift of \$100 or more, we'll send you these beautiful tumblers, a daily reminder of the goodness and grace of God.

But please, help us today. Let's make this the best Christmas for us and the best Christmas for these people because we have reached out and changed their circumstances. Those of us who have received so much from the Lord, let's be ones who

give out of a grateful heart.

So for all of us here at *LIFE*, we love you. Thanks for being with us. We'll see you next time.