

11/24/21

Week 48: Fall Mission Feeding

Sheila Walsh

"Held By the God Who Rescues"

SHEILA: Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm Sheila Walsh. I want to thank you for the number of you who will write in little notes, or you'll put things on my Facebook page, which is SheilaWalshConnects, just little notes or send us prayer requests. We love that! We want to connect with you in as many ways as we can.

During the whole craziness of 2020, I started a study of what can we know absolutely for sure? Because so much was changing all the time.

One of the things I want to talk about today is the fact that we are "Held by the God Who Rescues." I love that. I love the scripture that says: But I trust in your unfailing love. I will rejoice because you have rescued me. I will sing to the Lord because he is good to me.

One night, my Christian and I were hurrying back to the car from the grocery store when he stopped, and he said, "Mom, do you hear that?" So I stopped, and I listened. At first, all I could hear was the traffic rushing past, but then I heard it. It was kind of faint, but I could hear something chirping on the ground. We both got down on our knees and looked underneath. It was hard to see at first, with the only light coming from the cars driving past. But then I saw it. There it was, a tiny baby bird resting against one of the tires. It was so little, probably just recently hatched.

Assuming it had fallen out of a nest, we looked to see if we could find where it might have fallen from or find a mother who might be looking for her baby. But no matter how hard we looked, nothing. And there were no other bird sounds. We knew we couldn't

leave him there. Whenever the owner of the truck returned and backed out of his parking spot, he would have unwittingly run over this little fellow.

So we decided we'd take him home and determine what to do from there. Christian went back into the store and asked if we could have a small cardboard box. I placed him carefully inside the box, and we drove home. And then it was like, what do you do with a baby bird? So Christian did a little online research and read the results out loud. "He needs to be fed every two to three hours from a dropper or a syringe." He said, "Scrambled eggs, Mom. We can feed him runny eggs."

I wasn't sure that would work, but it did. So every two hours when I opened the box, there he was, mouth wide open, waiting for the next course on that evening's menu. So after we went to bed, I set my alarm at two-hour intervals. And honestly, at first, I hoped he'd decide to just sleep through the night. But no! Mouth open wide at two a.m., four a.m., six a.m., and eight a.m. Right on schedule!

We named him Chirp. I knew we couldn't and shouldn't try to raise a baby bird. Chirp needed to be with his own kind. So we discovered that there is a wildlife sanctuary that caters just to birds about an hour from our home. So that morning, Christian and I drove to the sanctuary. What we saw inside was honestly unforgettable.

As we waited for someone to come and help us, I was captivated by the variety of birds inside. There was a white pelican, owls, hawks; quite a dazzling display of every conceivable kind of feathered friend. Soon a young man came over to help us. So I opened the box, and I showed him Chirp. He assured us that they could care for him and when he was strong enough, he could be returned to the wild.

I thanked him, and as I turned to leave, I saw a small barn owl perched beside a hawk. A sight I don't think you'd normally see in nature. So I asked him if owls and hawks usually get along. He said this, "Rescued ones do."

I thought about that for a long time. Being rescued changes you. It would seem to make sense that tragedy precedes rescue. You don't have to rescue a child who has fallen through the ice unless the ice has given away beneath him. A family doesn't need to be rescued from a burning house unless, obviously, the house is on fire. Well, those kinds of rescues make the evening news.

What about the tragedies? What about the ones that never make the news? What about the tragedies that you might feel inside? What if you feel right now as if the ice is cracking underneath you, but no one seems to see it? What if it feels to you, inside, as if the house is burning all around you, but no one else feels the heat or smells the smoke?

I often wonder how many people sit in church Sunday after Sunday, barely alive on the inside, longing for rescue but absolutely having no idea how to ask for help or if help is even available.

I know that because I did it for years. It wasn't as if I'd done something wrong and was in trouble. It was that I felt as if the trouble was in me. I prayed over and over for God to rescue me, but I would never have signed up for what was just around the corner. God's rescue plan felt absolutely brutal.

If you'd sat with me on the floor on that first night in the psychiatric hospital and told me that what was happening to me at that very moment was an answer to my prayer, was part of God's rescue plan, I don't think I would have believed you. My prayer for help had resulted in my greatest nightmare, a psych hospital.

It is hard to adequately express why I was so terrified of that place. I knew very little about the time my father spent in our local psych hospital. I knew that he had been heavily sedated at times. I knew that he'd undergone electric shock therapy before he drowned himself. But the rest was just a mystery to my young mind, and we did not talk about it. As with lots of children, my mind was quick to fill in with dark, disturbing images and nightmares.

Now here I was in that place, and although it is hard to imagine now, I actually begged God to take my life. Let me ask you something, have you ever prayed a prayer that now you're so grateful that God didn't answer? I prayed, God, if you have one ounce of mercy left in your heart, please take me home because I can't do this. I'm too afraid.

See, I wanted out of my nightmare, but that wasn't God's rescue plan. His plan was to walk me right through it to the other side, never leaving me for one minute. That's what God wants to do for each one of us. He'll walk us through the things we're most afraid of, and he'll never leave us alone.

Sometimes, if you watch someone else walking through something that's really hard, you think, if that happened to me, I could not survive that. But what we're forgetting in those moments is the grace of God available to the one in the circumstance. I remember hearing my darling friend, Jennifer Rothschild, speak about the difference between what she called "participant grace" and "spectator grace." There is a grace given by God to the one who is walking through a dark night that's different than the grace given to the one who is watching.

Well, I received that "participant grace." Instead of the hospital being a place of nightmares, it was a place of comfort and understanding. It became a place of community for me, the community of the broken and unafraid. It's such a relief to fall off the shelf where you've kept yourself safe and cold and join those who love Jesus but are human, who struggle, for those who need rescuing. There was no going back to normal. God's rescue plan had a new normal. Being rescued absolutely changed me. Not only that, God's rescue plan included a depth of grace and glory and the pure joy of being held that nothing else could ever, ever have provided.

I wrote this in my journal a few months later. It is a little piece of poetry, so just hang with me: *Love falls gently on each wound like snow upon the frozen ground. And life that seemed a distant dream will waken in the promised Spring.*

That very season that felt like the coldest winter of my life was actually God's perfect plan of watering the life he knew was underneath the frozen ground. And I want that life for you. I want you to know that although your story is different than my story, God is committed to your rescue. It's a promise.

In Psalm 91, verses 14 and 15, we read this: *The Lord says, "I will rescue those who love me. I will protect those who trust in my name. When they call on me, I will answer; I will be with them in trouble. I will rescue and honor them."*

To stake your life on that, to believe that promise, you have to trust God 100 percent. One of my favorite scriptures is found in Proverbs three. You probably know it. *Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path take.*

Have you ever read a verse like that or promise like that, and you may be underlining them in your Bible, but you've struggled to know, how do I apply that to my life? Or perhaps, you've even tried to apply it, but it doesn't seem to quite be working. So you say, I want to know what God's will is, but how do I find that?

Do you know I'm asked that question more than almost anything else? So let's go back to the beginning of this proverb and read what precedes this promise. *My child, never forget the things I have taught you. Store my commands in your heart. If you do this, you will live many years and your life will be satisfying.*

Simply put, the will of God is in the Word of God. Now I know that sounds very simple, hardly "breaking news," but it is the truth. When everything around us is shifting and changing, the Word of God remains steadfast. I would imagine that you're probably with me on that; God's Word can be trusted 100 percent. So what does this one little word *trust* actually mean? What does that look like for your life? We all have unique stories, so what is the common thread that no matter whether you're in a sweet place or a difficult

place, what is that common thread that unites each one of us? And not only that, what needs to happen in us, so we're utterly convinced we're being held by the God who rescues?

It has to be trust, but I want to dig a little deeper. What does it actually mean to trust God when you're longing to be rescued? What does that look like? If you look up the word *trust* in most Bible dictionaries, you'll be directed to faith as if they're one and the same. In HarperCollins Bible Dictionary, we read: Faith is related to trusting God to provide extraordinary help in desperate circumstances. I love that! But it's more than that. It's a daily confidence not just in desperate circumstances, in all circumstances that we can walk into any day, any situation, anyplace, at peace because we're convinced that God can be trusted.

Now trusting God is not about ignoring your feelings or ignoring reality. It is not pretending that everything is okay when it is clearly not. It is not even about depending on any certain outcome but rather being sure of Christ's presence no matter the outcome. It's resting, resting in the care of the one who loves you and is for you, believing that no matter what happens, God is with you and committed to your good, committed to your rescue.

If you and I, with the help of the Holy Spirit, could grasp hold of this one truth that God can be trusted 100 percent of the time, I believe it would change our lives. If that unchanging truth anchored our lives, then no matter how things seem, we would know that even if we feel we've been left flapping out in the wind, we are not. We are being held by the God who can be trusted to rescue his people.

Think about Noah, told to build a boat the length of four football fields in the middle of the desert where most theologians agree it had never rained on earth before. And no one had a clue what a boat was. Or think of Abraham and Sarah, told they would have a son when Abraham is 100 years old, and Sarah was 90! What must it have been like for 17-year-old Joseph? God had told him in a dream that his family would bow down before

him. Well, it didn't look good when he was at the bottom of an abandoned well.

God's love story is all about rescue. It just doesn't happen on our schedule or the way that we would have written it. But you can trust who he is. If there was ever a moment when we need to grasp hold of that truth, surely it's now. Things are going to get crazier in our world, but I promise you, we can trust him. In his way and in his time, he is the God who rescued his children.

Listen to this scripture from the message: *I said to myself, "Relax and rest. God has showered you with blessings. Soul, you've been rescued from death; Eye, you've been rescued from tears. And you, Foot, were kept from stumbling."*

I love that. Let me just bring this prayer to you: *I fall to my knees and pray to the Father, the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth. I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down and to God's love and keep you strong. And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. May you experience his love, the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.*

What a beautiful prayer from Paul. I just want to say to you, my friend, God's Word will never fail you. Remember that Jesus sees the end of your story from the beginning. Your life is not out of control. God has a good strong hold on you. He can be trusted, and he is the God who rescues his children.

And part of the overflow of that glorious rescue is that he allows us to become part of the rescue process. We become like his special agents on this earth. There are so many mothers, children, grandfathers, parents at the moment who are in desperate need of rescuing, but what they need rescuing from is something probably very different than you, and I have ever experienced. They need rescuing from the devastation of

malnutrition, of poverty, and you and I can be part of God's rescue team. Watch this.

On the mission field

ISAK: We're here in this village where they've really been suffering from a bad drought. They've had no real rain here in the last year. You can just see how dry everything is. This is an area where they would normally plant crops, but there are no crops being planted here. There is no food. There is also no life.

ANNOUNCER: In Southern Africa, drought and famine have deprived entire villages of food. For the mothers of children in these areas, their only way of life is to plan for death.

ISAK: Grave after grave after grave. For children who have a name, children who mean the world to their mothers and to their families. Children who don't deserve to die simply because their village was ravaged by drought. Because they didn't have mission feeding.

You see, we can stop children from filling these graves. We can bring the cycle of death to an end if we just act. You say, but what do I do? How do I stop children from dying? This is how you do it. You open your heart, you give out of what you have, you give the best gift that you can give, you give mission feeding. You give life -- life in the form of a bowl of food that not only fills their stomach but empties a grave.

Please do it for the mother that doesn't want to lose another child. Do it for the children that don't deserve to die.

End of video

In the studio

SHEILA: Perhaps, as you watch that, you think, that's like another world. Do you know what was surprising to me? It probably sounds crazy. It's like I get on a flight from Dallas Airport, and a few hours later, I'm there. I'm walking where Isak is walking, beside those

tiny graves that should never be. The situation can seem so overwhelming. But you know one of the things I've always respected so much about James and Betty? They have never been the kind of people who say, we're just going to come in, and we're going to be the great heroes. They have looked to see who is God using in this area to meet this need and how can we get underneath and support that work? And that's what's happening in Southern Africa. But it's never been worse. It's got so much worse over the last year. The need is catastrophic. So many of these children, by the time they get to a malnutrition clinic, they're so weak, and it's so hard to reverse that process from death back to life.

So many of these children in those clinics don't make a sound. I remember thinking, looking at one darling little boy, and I thought he was probably about four months, he was two and a half years old, and his hair was red. And they said it's because there is no protein, there's nothing in his system. That's why he looks the way he looks. That's why he is so fragile. That's why he is so silent.

But then I was able to go to one of the villages where we had already established mission feeding. Hope in a bowl. I can't tell you how I love this. We're able to put into these bowls nutritious food with the protein, the vitamins the children need in that particular area of the world.

We've made a commitment here at *LIFE* that we will feed 350,000 children this year. How do we do it? Let me tell you. If you can give \$30, you will feed three children for three months. Just think about that. If you go into a grocery store or go to a fast-food restaurant, \$30 is gone like that! Do you know that if you invest that, it will feed three children, not for a week, but for three months! \$50 will feed five children. \$1,000 will feed 100 children for three months. What an amazing privilege!

When I see sights like Isak showed us, where the mothers are desperate, the children are so thin, where those little graves are being prepared, I want to ask, will you help us make sure those graves are never filled with little bodies who should be given a chance to live? We want to bring them the gospel of Jesus Christ, but you can't hear when your tummy's

empty. So let's help them.

Will you please go to your phone? Give the best gift you possibly can, and together, we can change the situation for those mothers. We can be God's rescue agents to those who are struggling. Please call now.

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

On the mission field

SHEILA: One of the things at *LIFE* that we care about so much is bringing the hope of Jesus Christ. But first of all, we want to bring hope to a mother that she can feed her children. So many times, she has to put these two to bed hungry, and she tries to encourage them. You know what she says to them? "Who knows what tomorrow will bring." She is trying to keep hope alive.

That's why mission feeding is so critical. This is not, "Let's do this sometime next week, next month, next year." No! It's life and death right now. And mission feeding saves lives. We've done it before, but the need has never been greater. We need your help today. We need your help now.

End of video

In the studio:

SHEILA: And remember, for any gift at all, you can request my new book, *Holding on When You Want to Let Go*: Talk more about the God who rescues. But please, let us be those who rescue, in Jesus' name.

If you haven't called, please call. Another great need is that many of our desperately needed malnutrition clinics were washed away with severe flooding in South Sudan. We have made a commitment to rebuild them. We don't want mothers walking to clinics that are no longer there. To rebuild one clinic, it's \$24,500. Perhaps you would be able to do that. Whatever you can do, do it in Jesus' name, and he will bless you greatly.

From all of us here at *LIFE*, we'll see you next time.