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Week nine: WFL

Sheila Walsh

"Held and Healed"

In the studio

SHEILA: I'm Sheila Walsh. Welcome to *LIFE Today*! Do you believe that 30 minutes could change your life? I do. I believe that in the presence of God, he can move in our life and make a radical, radical change. So honestly, that's what I'm praying for today for you. I'm praying not that my words are anything, but that the Holy Spirit would so minister to you and show you things that you can be free of, things that you can let go of, things you can drop and make a huge difference. I read about it in someone else's life, and I want to share it with you.

But first of all, let me ask you this. Let me ask you to consider something. What to do long for in life? Like when you're sitting at a stoplight that doesn't change for a while and your mind wanders. Like where does it go? When you daydream, what do you imagine? What do you picture? A restored marriage? A redone kitchen? The homecoming of a lost son? Or just one holiday where everybody gets along? There is something that deep inside you longs for. That's just the way we're built. As humans, we're a yearning people. We want to fix what's broken, and we ache for what's lost. We were made to love the Lord above anyone and anything else, but we're human. And when there are broken pieces in our story, we long for them to be made whole again.

In Psalm 27, verse 24, David wrote these beautiful words: *The one thing I ask of the Lord, the thing I seek most is to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, delighting in the Lord's perfection and meditating in his temple.*

What a beautiful prayer! And most of us would say "amen" to that. But if we're honest, at

times, we're far more aware of our own imperfections than in the one who is perfect. We were made to love God first and above all, but here on earth, there are so many different pieces to the puzzle of our lives that seem to be missing. As humans, we want to be whole, we want to be healed, we want to be held, and we long for what is wrong to be made right.

I don't know if you read this book, but in 1853, Solomon Northrup published his memoir. It was called *Twelve Years a Slave*. He was born a free man in New York state, and Solomon had been tricked into taking a trip to Washington, D.C., where he was kidnapped and was sold into slavery. Northrup spent 12 years in cruel bondage to deep south plantation owners before finally getting secret messages to his family and friends who fought for his release.

The book and the film adaptation captivated audiences. Can you imagine knowing freedom and then having that taken away is unspeakably horrible! And then to be released and walk in freedom once again, restored to his own community, restored to health, it was indescribably wonderful. It makes me think of those who have been wrongly convicted, and after years in prison, they are finally exonerated.

Well, it was interesting. I realized that in the Bible, there is a recording of another 12-years-a-slave story. Do you remember her story? I'll read what Luke tells us in chapter eight of his gospel: *A woman in the crowd had suffered for 12 years with constant bleeding, and she could find no cure. Coming up behind Jesus, she touched the fringe of his robe. Immediately, the bleeding stopped.*

"Who touched me?" Jesus asked.

Everyone denied it, and Peter said, "Master, this whole crowd is pressing up against you."

But Jesus said, "Someone deliberately touched me, for I felt healing power go out from

me."

When the woman realized that she could not stay hidden, she began to tremble and fell to her knees in front of him. The whole crowd heard her explain why she'd touched him and that she had been immediately healed.

"Daughter," he said to her, "your faith has made you well. Go in peace."

Her story is also told in Mark's gospel and Matthew's gospel, but no one tells us her name. Initially, we only know her by her condition and her desperate longing to be healed. Hemorrhaging for 12 years, in bondage to a condition that would have made her perpetually unclean in Hebrew culture, and therefore, an outcast from the community, this woman suffered terribly because of her situation.

Mark tells us that she had spent herself time, all her time, and treasure, looking for help and for healing. She longed to be well so desperately that she risked approaching Jesus in her unclean state. In earthly terms, it would be similar to Solomon Northrup, while enslaved, approaching the president of the United States asking to be set free. But she didn't ask. She'd heard of Jesus' miraculous power, and she believed if she could just touch the fringe of his robe, she would be healed. She looked for her moment, and then she reached out and touched the tassel at the edge of Jesus' robe and was immediately healed.

But the greatest miracle she received that day wasn't even one she was looking for. It wasn't even one she knew she needed. There's no doubt that this is a miraculous story. But what I want you and I to see is that the greatest miracle she received that day wasn't the one she reached out for because she didn't know how desperately she needed it. Here's the difference. She wanted to be healed, but Jesus wanted to make her whole.

The glorious thing about the grace of God seen in the face of Christ Jesus is that he sees beyond our cries to the very deepest longing of our hearts and answers prayers we didn't

even have the wisdom to pray if we will listen for him.

So let's take a bit of a closer look at her life. The first thing we see is that she is so severely afflicted. Mark tells us that she has used up every penny she has in an attempt to find a cure. And not only is she no better, but she is actually worse.

Now back in the day, what would be available to her was the Talmud. The Talmud offered 11 remedies that might bring relief to her condition. But honestly, when I read them, most of them seem so bizarre. For example, one treatment was to find a corn husk in the droppings of a white she-mule and carry it around with her, and it might help her. I can't even imagine how ridiculous that was.

She had suffered like this for 12 years. According to the original Greek language, the word used for suffering is a condition of deep distress and torment. So not only is she in much agony, she is in torment. But she was also an outcast; I think that's almost worse.

Most of us are familiar with the ten commandments, the big ten given to Moses. But those were just the beginning. There were 613 laws that applied to every Jewish man, woman, and child. And the one that impacted this woman the most, if you want to read it for yourself, it is found in Leviticus, chapter 15, verses 26 and 27. She was considered unclean. She couldn't even go to the house of God. Can you imagine? She couldn't even find comfort in the house of God. She was completely alone. Think through what life must have been like for this woman, an outcast in biblical times. If she had been married, she could no longer touch her husband. Even to hold his hand would make him ceremonially unclean. She would undoubtedly be unable to have children.

If you were her friend, you couldn't invite her to stop by for coffee because the chair she sat on would become unclean, as would the cup she'd use. If she was outside and began to slip and fall in the streets, anyone who knew of her condition would not be able to stop her fall. She was obliged by law to call out "unclean" if someone was about to bump into her and hadn't seen her. She was an absolute outcast for 12 years.

But in her desperation, she made her way to Jesus, and nothing was going to get in her way. Although Jesus was hurrying and the crowds surrounded him, she made her way and was determined she was going to touch this robe. But even as she determined that today she was going to push through the crowd and touch the hem of his garment, something happened that could have ruined it all. A prominent Jewish rabbi, his name was Jairus, fell at the feet of Jesus on behalf of his, interestingly enough, 12-year-old daughter, and she was dying. He begged Jesus to go with him to his home. This girl was everything that this woman was not: She was loved, she was fought for, she was treasured, she was Jairus's daughter.

This was a crossroads for this woman. Would she slip away again, even more bitterly disappointed than anything she had reached out to before? Or would she push through the crowd and touch Jesus? It was her moment. I think we all have these moments. Moments when we're desperate to hear from God. We just want God to speak to us. We know if we could just reach out. Maybe you're in church, and there's an invitation to something, and you think, Lord, I know I need this, but we just... Will we respond, or do we just go home? Do we just slip away into the shadows? I think God allows us to choose.

Someone once said to me something that was a turning point in my life. This is what they said: "When the pain of remaining the same is greater than the pain of change, then we're ready to change." When the pain of remaining the same is greater than the pain of change, then we're ready to change. She had heard all the talk about Jesus, and so she came behind him in the hope of touching his robe. Something about what she had heard compelled her to reach out.

Well, Jesus knew who had touched him, but he wasn't going to expose her because what she had done, she had just broken the law by touching Jesus. Plus, as far as she understood, Jesus was on his way to heal Jairus's daughter, and now she had made Jesus unclean. She didn't understand that when we come to Jesus in our filthy rags, we don't make him unclean -- he makes us clean.

This is what it says: *But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling and fell down before him and told him the whole truth.*

The Greek word used here for falling down is the same word used just a few verses before her story in Mark chapter 5 when a demon-possessed man fell at the feet of Jesus. The interpretation here is not simply somebody collapsing or falling over something but a falling in worship and humility, full of belief and understanding of her need for a healer.

I often pause at the last part of what Christ said to the woman. Now think about it. He told her to go and be healed. But she was healed. The minute she touched the edge of Christ's garment, the bleeding stopped. So what else needed to be healed? So much more! I believe she needed to be healed of all the tapes that played in her head over and over again for 12 years. I think she needed to be healed of the shame and the bitter disappointment of what had happened to her life. I think she needed to be healed of the self-hatred she must have worn around her shoulders like a heavy coat.

When we limit salvation to a single act or commitment we make to Christ, we miss the beauty and the depth of salvation. The Greek word for *salvation* is *sozo*, which means to save and heal and be made whole. Christ wants nothing less for you. Christ's work in our life is an ongoing process as he exposes the places where we are broken, where we have lost hope and invites us to bring that to him.

So let me ask you this. Have you ever told Jesus the whole truth? Have you told him about the things you have pushed deep into the cellar of your soul, hoping you'd never have to look at them again? Have you ever named out loud the disappointments in your life? Jesus offers to bring healing, restoration, wholeness, and peace, the kind that only he can bring.

Those are the places that the enemy loves to torment us, just as he tormented that woman for 12 years. It's only when you tell Jesus the whole truth and pour out everything within

you that you see as ugly, that you see as unredeemable, that then you experience the blessing of hearing him say in the deepest recesses of your heart, "Daughter, son, your faith has made you well. Go in peace and be healed of your disease."

Just pause for a moment and think about Jesus speaking to you lovingly and saying, loved one, go in peace. I just wonder what might be weighing you down today. Are you disappointed when you're being yourself? Or in other people? Or maybe even in God? What would keep you from telling Christ the whole truth, though we will never understand this side of heaven the depth of the love of God. But we have a glorious invitation to trade our disappointment for the sure and certain hope we have in Christ.

For years, this woman had been defined by one thing and one thing alone: She was a woman with an issue of blood. Now she was defined differently. She would no longer be defined by an *issue* but by her identity as a daughter of God. When you're a child of God, there is an identity that no one can touch. So for every "no" that you've had spoken over you, I want you to hear the "yes" that Christ speaks over your life that he accomplished on the cross.

As Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, outwardly, yeah, we are fading away, but inwardly, we are being renewed day after day. So we do not lose heart though our outer self is wasting away; our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.

So that's my invitation to you today. Would you tell Jesus the whole truth? The things that you have just shoved into the cellar of your soul, the things you have never spoken to another person. Here is the great news about the Word of God. God knows your whole story, and he loves you. You will never encounter someone who knows you more deeply than Christ. Or someone who loves you more profoundly than Christ. So I just invite you, I invite you to tell him the whole truth and hear him say to you, daughter, son, go in peace.

One of the things that we do at *LIFE* is we have this privilege of sharing the heart of the Father for those that are crying out. Perhaps, they've been suffering for 12 years. Perhaps, they've been losing children and been in agony and seen no hope or no help available. The great news is you and I get to be an answer to their prayer and help them reach out and touch the edge of his garment. Would you watch this?

On the mission field

SHEILA: You can probably see the road stretching out behind me. That's maybe, I don't know, I would guess about a mile. But do you know that many of the mothers, that's how far they have to walk each morning? I've asked several mothers, "So when do you get up?" They say we have to get up at 4:00 because we have to make the hour-long, 30-minutes, 40-minutes whatever walk to the hand-dug well where the water is filthy, it is contaminated. But they have to get there early, or there's no water left, knowing that the very water they're taking back to those they love might potentially be what kills them.

Honestly, I wasn't sure what a hand-dug well looked like. We walked up to it, and it is just literally -- it is just a hole in the ground. Most of them are surrounded by a tire. That's the kind of perimeter of it or a couple of sticks on either side. It takes two people a week to dig deep enough to get some water. One of the moms told me that so many of the children end up getting diarrhea that comes from drinking this kind of water.

I'm asking you to help us. The need here is urgent. So here's what I'm thinking. Can you think of one thing that you can live without to give them the one thing they can't live without? What they need is clean water. I'm not asking for a car or a television. They just want to provide their children with clean, healthy water so that they don't get sick. It will give mothers hope, and it will give children a future.

End of video

In the studio

SHEILA: Not a lot to ask for, is it? They're just looking to be able to give their children clean water. Can you imagine that you have to get up at 4:00 every single morning? But you know this if you're a mom or you're a dad, if it's for your kids, you'll do what you need to do. But you walk, and you walk, and you walk. And sometimes, when you get to that hand-dug well, there is already a line of people. By the time it is your turn, whatever water was there has now gone away, and you have to wait hours for that to begin to slowly fill up again. And then you walk all the way back, knowing that the very thing you're putting in the hands of your little boy or your little girl potentially could kill them because it has already killed other children.

It seems crazy to me in this world that we live in with all our modern technology and space travel and how everything has advanced, that there are still so many people in the world, and all they're asking for is a clean water source. Yet, we will never stop telling their story.

What we want to do this year is to be able to drill 350 new wells in over 20 nations. If I could take you with me, you could see the difference it makes. I went on one day of being in a village where all they've got is horrible hand-dug wells, and the water is filthy. And then, we moved on and drove for a few more hours to a village like you saw there where there is a well that's been drilled. It said, "Given by the partners of *LIFE Outreach International*." I wanted to dance the first time I saw it! Because it was like, here's the problem, here's the solution, we can do this.

So we're asking, even if you've given a lot in the past, would you do it again? It costs about \$4800 to drill a well, and it will last for about 70 years. It will give the whole village clean water. That's doable for some, way too much for others. But let me ask you, what could you give up that you don't really need to give these children something they can't live without? Maybe it's going out for a meal. Maybe it's going to see a movie. Maybe it's cutting down on one of your subscriptions for television. Whatever it is, is there something you would be willing to give up so that we can give clean water?

For \$48, you can provide clean water for ten children. If they were standing in front of you right now, you would do it in a heartbeat. But that's why we go so we can bring them to stand in your living room and ask for help. \$144 will give clean water to 30 people. That's outrageous! And it's the little ones that need our help most. The little ones are so vulnerable; their immune system is so weakened. Let's change that. Let's be the good news in Jesus' name.

So please, please call that number on your screen. And just give the best that you can. Let's give up what we don't need to give them what they cannot live without. Thank you!

Begin video clip

ANNOUNCER: Waterborne illness is a killer that strikes the most vulnerable. For many impoverished families, the death of a child is the tragic result of having no choice but to drink contaminated water. But with your help, they won't have to make this choice ever again. Mission: Water for LIFE provides clean, fresh drinking water for thousands of children and their families, giving them a life free from the fear of death.

With your gift today, you can help drill and establish 350 water wells this year. Your gift of \$24 will help provide clean water for five children. A gift of \$48 will help provide for ten. \$72 will provide for 15. And \$144 will help provide life-giving water for 30 people for a lifetime.

With your gift, we'll send you *Bible Promises For Life*, the ultimate handbook to everything God guarantees you in his word. A powerful resource that will give you the confidence to face life's troubles. With your gift of \$100 or more, please request the "I Will Give You Rest" throw. It is a reminder of our Savior's promise of rest to those who trust in His grace and love.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1200 to help provide water for 250 people or a gift of

\$4800 to help sponsor a complete well. You may request our new, inspiring bronze sculpture, "Let the Children Come."

Please call, write, or make your gift online.

End of video

In the studio

SHEILA: Thank you so much. And for any gift at all, we would love to send you this beautiful book, *Bible Promises For Life*; "The ultimate handbook for your every need." It is beautiful! It will really encourage you.

As you reach out to help others, we want to constantly be there for you and reach out and help you. So, if you tried to get through and the lines were busy, please call again. Let's do this! I would love to see us exceeding our goal this year.

I just want to say on behalf of James and Betty and all of us here at *Life Today*, God bless you, and we'll see you next time!