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Week 13: Rescue LIFE

Sheila Walsh

"Who God Is"

SHEILA: Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm Sheila Walsh. I'm so glad you're taking time to be with us today on the program. One of the things we pray for most at *Life Today* is that you would be encouraged in your own walk with Christ.

I don't know who you are, you might just be flipping through channels, and you paused on something for a moment; maybe you don't even have a relationship with God. One of the things I would want you to know is whether you are aware of God, whether you give him a second thought or not, I want you to know, he gives you so much thought and so much love. Our prayer at *LIFE* is that somehow we would help you on your journey towards discovering why we're here. What is the purpose of our life?

One of the fun things about being on television is that every now and again I'll get stopped by someone because they think, I think I know your face; honestly, probably, it's more my accent. So I was stopped by a young woman in a coffee shop the other day and she asked me this question. She said, "You talk a lot on television about trusting God. Let me ask you this, how can I trust a God that I've never seen?" It's a good question.

So if we've been asked, as believers, if you are a believer, if you've been asked to give everything you've got to God to trust him with your family, with your finances, with your future, then obviously we want to know who is God? So today, I want us to look at six of the characteristics of who God is. And when life feels completely out of control, I want you to know there are certain things, not from my perspective but from the Word of God that we can absolutely stake our lives on.

So number one: God is omniscient. Now that is a fancy word. And if you're unfamiliar with that word it is very simple. It simply means God knows everything. That was one of the things that were kind of life-changing for me when I spent a season where it felt like my life had just fallen apart. I had tried for so many years to be a perfect Christian because that's what I thought God wanted. I hid so much of my own personal pain. When I ended up with my life kind of on the floor, my life kind of fell apart, one of the things I began to understand was that God already knew everything and invited me to come with everything to him. I mean, every single fear, every heartache, every struggle, every temptation, God says, "Come as you are."

Don't you think that would change our lives if we began to really understand and act like that? That you don't have to hide from God and pretend that everything is just great. If every single day we woke up and said, Today, Lord, I just want to live in your presence. And when I'm happy, I'll bring that to you, when I'm sad, when I'm questioning, when I'm angry. Because God already knows.

I love, love, love this scripture. This is from David where he wrote this: *O Lord, you have examined my heart and you know everything about me. You know when I sit down or stand up. You know my thoughts even when I'm far away. You see me when I travel and when I rest at home. You know everything I do. You know what I'm going to say even before I say it, Lord.* That's in Psalm 139, the first four verses. But read the whole Psalm it is so beautiful!

If you're ever tempted to question whether God sees what's happening in your life, he does! You are not alone. Now, you may be tempted to think, I'm not so sure that's good news. He knows everything? Somebody wrote to me on my Facebook page the other night and they said you talk a lot also about the love of God. How can God love me if he knows everything I've done? They didn't go on to expand about their own life but that was the question.

And so this is what I wrote back to them. I said okay, imagine that a movie -- and I want

you to imagine this too. Imagine a movie was made of your life, everything -- everything you've ever said, everything you've ever done, the things that you haven't actually told anyone because you're ashamed of them, the secrets, the abortion, the affair, the whatever, and a movie was made, and it was put up on the screen for everyone to watch. Let me just ask you, how would you feel about that? Nothing is hidden? You know the great news about the Word of God is this, God has seen your movie and he loves you. He's seen your movie and he loves you.

Do you remember Christ's encounter with a Samaritan woman at a well one day? You can read her story in John chapter four, but we have this dialogue between them where we don't know a lot about her, John doesn't give us her name but what we do know is she has been married five times and she is now living with a man that is not her husband.

So Jesus says, "Go and get your husband."

And what does she say? Because she believes, she is not quite sure who Jesus is, but she thinks you have to be a prophet if you know those details about my life. And so what does she say? She tells the littlest bit of the truth. She says, "I don't have a husband."

And Jesus says to her, "I know you don't. I know that you've been married five times. And I also know that the person you're living with now is not your husband."

Now, why would Jesus do that? Was he trying to shame her? No! Unless we believe that God knows the worst there is to know about us, we will never fully grasp how much we are loved.

Would you just pause with that thought just for a moment? Reflect over your life the things that you're proud of, the things you've put on your resume, the things that you never talk about, the things that are just, well, that was in the past, but it still casts a shadow onto you today. I just want you to know Christ wants you to be free. He knows everything -- everything and he loves you. There will never be anyone who knows

absolutely everything about you more than God. And there will never be anyone who loves you more than God. So that's God is omniscient.

So let's move on to number two: God is omnipresent. What does that mean? It just means God is everywhere. There is nowhere you can go on this planet that God is not. Think about that. God is with you wherever you're watching. He is here with me in the studio. He is with the underground church in China. He is with those on their knees in prayer in the Ukraine. He's with you when you get your chemotherapy treatment. He is with you when you're on your own with tears pouring down your cheeks. There is never going to be a moment when you are alone without the presence of the Lord.

I don't know what's going on in your life right now but no matter -- no matter how out of control life feels, God is with you. I think too, some of you as parents, where perhaps your kids have gone off to college and they don't seem to be following the way that you brought them up. They don't seem to want to go to church. Some nights you wonder where they are. But do you know the amazing thing? God knows where they are. His presence is with us wherever we are.

I get great comfort out of that knowing -- I remember when I was traveling on one of my very first trips with *LIFE*. I think we were going to go to Angola, in Africa. My son was younger then and he was like, "Mom, that makes me scared. What if something happens to you?" And I read him the whole Psalm 139. I said, "Here's the good news. He is going to be with you and dad at home and he's going to be with me in Africa." Scripture tells us that he's with us when we travel, and I take great comfort in that.

So let's go to number three: God is omnipotent. That simply means God is in control. No matter what you read or what you've been told, no matter what you fear, no matter what the nightly news tells you, God is still on the throne. He is all-powerful. Don't let anyone tell you that life is out of control. God is still on the throne.

Let me read you this: *Have you never heard? Have you never understood? The Lord is*

the everlasting God, the Creator of all the earth. He never grows weak or weary. No one can measure the depth of his understanding. He gives power to the weak and strength to the powerless. Even youths will become weak and tired and young men will fall in exhaustion. But those who trust in the Lord will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.

When we trust that our God is all-powerful, and I know that's hard sometimes. I remember a conversation I had with a woman who said, "I don't see how God can be loving and powerful. Because bad things happen in the world. So either God is loving but he is not powerful because he doesn't stop them, or God is powerful but he's not loving because they continue to happen."

I think that's one of the greatest challenges to a real on-fire, committed, following-Jesus-all-the-way home faith is holding those two things together. God is powerful, and God is loving, and God is in control.

One of my favorite attributes of God is: God is faithful. Let me read to you from Psalm 91. I'm just going to read you the first four verses. But read the whole Psalm for yourself, it is so good. *Those who live in the shelter of the Most High will find rest in the shadow of the Almighty. This I declare about the Lord: He alone is my refuge, my place of safety; he is my God, and I trust him. For he will rescue you from every trap and protect you from deadly disease. He will cover you with his feathers. He will shelter you with his wings. His faithful promises are your armor and protection.*

I may have shared this story with you before so forgive me if I'm repeating myself. My mom told me a story of a terrible fire on a farm one night in Scotland. It was just one of those devastating fires that took out all the buildings and took out all the livestock. And it was just terrible. And in the morning when the farmer was looking at everything that was gone, he noticed this hen, charred body, feathers singed at the side of the road. He gently moved the hen over to the edge. And there, underneath, were six little chicks and they were still alive. Because that mother hen had spread her wings over her little ones to

protect them from the fire.

That's how much you are loved. That God in Christ spread his life over us. He took the heat that we deserved so that we could be saved, and we could be free. That's how faithful God is. We are loved and we are covered.

So, number five: God is changeless. We live in a world, I mean, it's changing at record speed, like no time I've ever known before. The scripture tells us in Hebrews Chapter 13, verse eight, *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.*

One of my favorite scriptures is this one found in Lamentations chapter three, verse 22: *The faithful love of the Lord never ends! His mercies never cease. Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each morning.*

Isn't that amazing? I've heard people say, "When are things going to get back to normal?" I read this somewhere, it was on a T-shirt. It said, "Normal is not coming back but Jesus is." I think that's true. In these changing times, where almost every day we get a fresh piece of information and something shifts, I want you to know you can rest in the changeless nature of our Lord. He never changes.

And finally, one of my favorite attributes of God: God is love. When I was in college, I had a crush on a guy and I remember so clearly being amazed when he asked me out because he was one of those people that all the girls liked. He was captain of the tennis team and he played soccer and he was just a really good-looking guy. And when he chose me to invite out on a date, I was blown away. Until he told me this, "If you could lose ten pounds, I'd be really interested in you." I cannot tell you how as a young woman that devastated me. If you could lose this, then I'd be interested in you. So much of human love is conditional but that's not God. He doesn't say if you could stop smoking, I'd love you more. If you could be thinner, I'd love you more. If you read your Bible more, I'd love you more. If you could be a better mother, a better father, there is no "if you could" with Jesus. What there is, is a "come unto me." Come as you are.

At the end of Matthew's gospel, the end of chapter 11, the last two verses talk about Jesus saying, "Come unto me all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." It's interesting, if you've been on the earth in that part of the world when Jesus was alive, every single Jew who wanted to honor God woke up under what was called, "The burden of the law" every morning; 613 things that they had to do; 365 things to do; 248 things not to do. Interestingly enough, 365, clearly all the days of the year, 244 all the bones in the human body. So every Jew, when they opened their eyes every morning, knew that with every single bit of their being, every single day, they had all these rules to obey. That's why what they heard that day is different from when you and I read it. When Jesus said to them, "Come unto me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest, take my yoke upon you and learn of me because my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

That was revolutionary for those people. But sometimes I think it's just as revolutionary for you and I. I don't know how long you've walked with the Lord or if you do, but can you honestly say that you lay all your burdens before him? That you simply take up what he's designed you to carry? And not only that, if you've ever seen oxen yoked together, they're side by side, and this big piece of wood links them and they walk together. That's what Jesus is offering you today: I'll walk with you. I'll walk through every situation with you.

I think back to that young girl in the coffee shop asking me that question, "How can I trust a God that I can't see?" Well, I could not encourage you more than to read your Bible and find out about this God. I came across this great quote the other day and it talks about what happened at Calvary. "Ambrose says, quaintly enough, that the form of the cross is that of a sword with the point downward; above is the hilt toward heaven, as if in the hand of God; below is the point toward earth, as if thrust through the head of the old serpent, the devil."

Well, it may have looked like defeat, it was the greatest victory ever won. And it is ours

through Jesus.

But there are some people right now who are wondering, is it possible to know freedom? Is it possible to know that there is a good God watching over me? I want you to know that there is a way that we can be an answer to that prayer and reach out our hands in love in Jesus's name. And I'll tell you how after this. Would you watch this?

On the mission field

Announcer: This is a prison. Not a real prison run by a government and police officers, but it is a prison nonetheless. Room after room contains not much more than a bed. Depraved visitors to these types of prisons pour millions of dollars into human trafficking worldwide. The prisoners are scared young girls held captive by violent slave traders but the prisoners that live here did nothing wrong. They have broken no laws. The girl in cell 4D is innocent.

Open Captions

I have no control over my own body. I don't want to do the things they make me do. I feel trapped here like I'm in bondage. Even my heart feels like it is in bondage. My life is over. I have no more hope. When my life gets really bad, I cry out, "If there is a god, please save me."

Jesus was sent to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, and that the oppressed will be set free.

ANNOUNCER: Jesus told us that the captives will be released, and the oppressed will be set free. The mission of Rescue LIFE is to be the hands and feet of Jesus. So together we can rescue enslaved girls around the world.

End of clip

In the studio

SHEILA: You can just see in their eyes the absolute hopelessness thinking that no one is

coming to help them. That beautiful young woman saying, "Please save me!" The amazing thing about Rescue LIFE, and we've been doing this for a long time, is it works - it makes a difference.

It's three parts for us here at *LIFE Outreach* and with the partners, we work with who are on the ground right now, boots on the ground in Jesus' name. It is reach, rescue, and restore. *Reach* is where we actually go into the villages and warn these young girls. If a man comes and offers to take you to town for a meal or to give you a job or wants to show you a puppy or something, run for your life! Always travel in twos.

And we have to tell these children who are so young, things that I could never imagine having to tell a child, but it might be the most important thing they've ever heard in their lives.

The second part is *rescue*. For girls like you just saw, we literally go in and knock down the doors and rescue these girls and have those who have captured them arrested and held accountable for what they've done.

And then *restore*, where they're brought to a place where they can learn to be loved, learn to trust, learn that there is a God who loves them. That there is a God who heard their prayers and sent us in his name.

And I'm asking you, please will you help us? We have some wonderful partners of *LIFE* who have said they will put up a matching gift of \$320,000. That simply means that whatever you're able to give, they will match that and double the impact of your gift. Usually, it takes about \$128 to begin that process of reach, rescue, or restore. And if you're able to do that today, they will match that gift and two girls will be brought out of that place of darkness. That may be too much for your budget, but could you give \$64? That will be matched and that will go to one girl knowing that God heard her prayers and sent us as an answer. For some of you, you're able to give more than that. You might be able to give \$1280. Do you know that that will be matched, and 20 girls will be brought

to freedom?

We've lots of beautiful gifts that we'd love to send you, but I know you don't do it for the gifts. It is our way of saying, A, thank you, and B, remember to pray for them. But this isn't something that is happening in the future or the past, this is happening right now. Right now young girls are praying, God, if you are alive, if there is a God, please, please send someone to save me! And we're coming! And we're coming in Jesus's name.

So please call now. Give the very best gift you can. Let's reach, let's rescue, let's restore in Jesus's name. Thank you!

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 warn children who are at risk for sex trafficking, rescue those already enslaved, restore young lives and give them a future.

We have 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 the *Prayers For Life* Journal, a perfect book to write down your prayers as you reflect on your relationship with Christ. With your gift of \$128 or more, you'll also receive the N.I.V. Thinline Bible, along with 365 days of *Prayer For Life*, a beautiful devotional filled with scriptures and key thoughts for each day of the year. Keep all three resources close by for your daily prayer time as you meditate on

God's Word.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1280, which will now help save 20 children. And you may request our inspiring bronze sculpture, "Let the Children Come."

Please call, write, or make your gift online.

End of video

In the studio

SHEILA: Thank you! Isn't this an amazing privilege that we get to do this? So often, I reflect on everything Christ has done for me. And I'm thinking, Lord, no matter what I do with the rest of my life, it will never be enough to thank you. But we get to do this in his name! We get to do the things that Jesus would do if he was walking on this earth.

So if you tried to get through and the line's busy, please keep calling. Just give the very best gift you can because whatever your gift today will be matched. We've lots of lovely presents that we'd like to send you. But this is something that is so close to the heart of God, to rescue those who are being held against their will and let them know Jesus came for you.

So for all of us here at *Life Today*, I'm Sheila Walsh saying thank you and we'll see you next time.